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



POOR OLD BUNTER!

(An Amusing Incident from the Long Complete Tale of HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
contained in this Issue.)

THE 'FIRST' AT GREYFRIARS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Wheeze!

HE, he, he!" It was a sudden and unmelodious cackle of laughter, and it proceeded from a fat junior sitting in the armchair in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"He, he, he!" It was a windy March evening, and the trees in the Close were rustling and groaning. But Study No. 1 looked very cosy.

The blind was drawn, and the fire blazing, and Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh, the chums of the Remove, were at the table, cheerfully working.

Billy Bunter, as usual, occupied the armchair, and he had pulled it round to the front of the fire, and put both his feet on the fender, so that he had most of the fire, too.

But that was Billy Bunter's little way. It never seemed to occur to the Owl of the Remove that there was anything beside his personal comfort to be considered.

"He, he, he!" Billy Bunter had been buried in thought, and he had suddenly started out of a reverie with that irrepressible cackle. The chums of the Remove looked up from their work.

"Anything wrong, Bunter?" asked Nugent.

"Wrong? No!" "Oh! It sounded as if the machinery was out of order, that's all. I've heard a bike go like that when it wanted oiling."

"Oh, really, Nugent—" "It reminds me more of a hen with the croup," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" "The croupfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "If the esteemed Bunter was trying to produce the musical sound, he has achieved a terrific failure. The silence of the honourable fat Bunter would be the boonful blessing."

"Look here, Inky—" "You're interrupting the work," said Nugent. "Why don't you do your prep, Billy, instead of sitting there cackling? You'll hear from Quelch in the morning."

"Plenty of time for prep, Nugent. I'm thinking of something else. Do you fellows know what to-morrow is?"

"To-morrow!" "Yes. Do you know what it is?" "It's a day, I suppose, the same as any other," said Harry Wharton, looking puzzled. "What are you driving at?" "It's not quite the same as any other. It's the First of April."

"Oh!" "All Fools' Day!" said Billy Bunter. "Then you and the others ought to celebrate it," said Nugent kindly. "But it doesn't matter so much to us."

"Oh, really, Nugent— I say, you fellows," said Bunter, sitting bolt-upright in the armchair, and blinking at the juniors—"I say, I've thought of a splendid First of April wheeze."

"Oh, rats! We know your wheezes." "But this is simply ripping. I was thinking we could work off the April 1st dodge on the girls at Cliff House."

"What?" "That 'what' ought to have warned Billy Bunter of danger, but he was too deeply occupied with his brilliant ideas to note the tone in which it was uttered. He went fatuously on:

"You see, it would be awfully good fun to fool Marjorie & Co., and make them look duffers. I've got a little scheme—"

Harry Wharton rose, took the fat junior by the back of the collar, and jerked him out of the armchair.

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"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! You're chook-chook-chook-choking me!"

Wharton shook him energetically. "Now, you fat worm—" "Oh!"

"If you venture to play any of your tricks on the Cliff House girls—" "Ow!"

"I'll give you the licking of your life." "Yaroo!"

"You can take this shaking to go on with. But if you try to jape Marjorie & Co., I'll make you sorry for yourself. Do you understand?"

"Yow!" "Then mind you keep your giddy sense of humour within bounds, that's all."

"Groo! You're chook-choking me! Leggo!" Wharton let go.

He did it so suddenly that Bunter was not prepared, and the fat junior sat down with considerable force upon the study floor.

"Bump!" "Ow!"

Billy Bunter sat gasping for breath, and blinking at the grinning juniors. Wharton sat down quietly, and went on with his work, as if nothing had happened.

"You—you beasts!" gasped Bunter. "This is rotten jealousy, because I'm the only chap in this study who ever has any clever ideas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I'll jape the Cliff House girls as much as I like—" "Better not," said Wharton, with a warning shake of the finger. "I know your japes. Caddish, all of them."

Bunter staggered to his feet, and moved towards the door. "I'm done with you rotters!" he said, opening the door. "You're mean beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And beastly rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And howling cads!"

"Good!" "And rotten outsiders!" roared Bunter, exasperated at not being able to disturb the equanimity of the chums of the Remove.

"Go it!" "And—low beasts!" "Keep it up."

"I decline to associate with you any longer!" "Hurray!"

Billy Bunter bestowed one last indignant blink on the juniors, and went out, and slammed the door with a noise that rang the whole length of the Remove passage.

A shout of laughter from Study No. 1 followed him as he stamped wrathfully away. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior, was in the passage, and Billy Bunter stopped as he saw him.

"Wun Lung, old chap—" "Old chap" from Billy Bunter meant that he wanted money. Wun Lung put on his most stupidly stolid look. The little Chinese never understood a thing if he did not choose to do so.

"Wun Lung, old chap, I want to speak to you."

"Me velly plenty glad speakee Buntee." "I wanted to ask you to a feed—" "Me come."

"But I've been disappointed about a postal order," explained Billy Bunter, "so I sha'n't be able to. It's a great disappointment—to me."

"Me sorry." "I've got a big jape on for to-morrow," said Bunter confidentially. "You know it's All Fools' Day, of course?"

"Me knowee." "I want a little cash to carry it out—" "No savvy."

"I'm willing to let you into the thing, if you like."

"No savvy." "If you could stand me ten shillings off my postal order—it's bound to come by the first or second post to-morrow—"

"No savvy." "Now, look here, Wun Lung—" "No savvy."

"My postal order is absolutely certain to come to-morrow morning," said Bunter patiently. "You'll see that there's a registered letter for me, you know. If you like to stand me five shillings off it now—"

"No savvy." "A bob would do—" "No savvy."

"You heathen beast!" said Billy Bunter. "You know that you savvy perfectly well. You're a rotten Confucian heathen waster! You're not fit to live in a decent school!"

"No savvy," said Wun Lung imperturbably.

"Will you lend me sixpence?" "No savvy."

"A couple of postage-stamps would do," said Bunter. "I simply must have them."

"No savvy." Bunter, exasperated, made a swinging blow at the little Chinese's head. Wun Lung dodged quickly, and Bunter's knuckles crashed on the wall against which he had been standing. There was a terrific yell from Billy Bunter.

"Oh, oh, oh!" Wun Lung chuckled softly. He doubted up for a moment or two in a silent paroxysm of merriment, and then glided away, leaving Billy Bunter almost dancing, and sucking his damaged knuckles.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming along the passage. "What on earth's the matter, Bunter? Are you practising a new breakdown?"

"Ow! I've hurt my knuckles. Ow! I say, Cherry, will you lend me ten bob—" "Better make it ten pounds," said Bob Cherry genially. "It's a larger amount, you know, and you're just as likely to get it."

"Oh, really, Cherry—" Bob Cherry grinned and walked on. Billy Bunter left off sucking his knuckles, and hurried after him.

"I say, Cherry, hold on a minute! There's a jolly good First of April jape I'm going to work off on the Cliff House girls"

Bob Cherry turned round suddenly. He did not speak, but his strong arm rose, and Billy Bunter suddenly found himself twisted round, and flattened on the floor with a mighty bump.

Then Bob walked on, leaving the fat junior gasping and breathless.

"Beast!" muttered Bunter, as he staggered up. "Beast! They're all beasts! I've a jolly good mind not to stay in this school! Yah!"

He went on disconsolately. It was really too bad that a fellow, simply bursting with ripping ideas, should be treated in this way. He looked into Study No. 2, which was shared by Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and Tom Brown, of New Zealand. All three of them were there, doing their prep—which Bunter ought to have been doing.

"I suppose I can use some of your postage-stamps, Bulstrode?" said Bunter, blinking at the burly Removite.

Bulstrode looked up. "I suppose you can't," he said. "Oh, really, you know—" "Get out!" said Hazeldene. "You're bothering me!"

"Look here, I've got an idea of working off a splendid jape on the Cliff House girls on the First of April— Yow!"

A cushion, hurled by Tom Brown, caught the fat junior on the chest, and he staggered out of the open doorway and fell in the passage with a bump.

Tom Brown kicked the door shut after him.
Bunter sat still for some moments. "Oh!" he gasped at last. "Ow! I—I won't offer to take anybody else into the scheme! The beasts! I'll work the wheeze all on my own. I'll make those Cliff House girls sit up, and Wharton and his set, too."
With these projects in view, Bunter grunted and went on his way.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Unexpected Visitors.

HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"On the ball!"
"Hold on!"
"What's the matter?"
"Look!"
It was the next morning—April 1st. Bob Cherry had suddenly stopped himself in a run up the footer field, and Wharton had bumped into him with considerable force. But Bob did not seem to mind. He was staring away blankly towards the gates of Greyfriars.
Harry followed his glance, and then he echoed Bob's exclamation of astonishment. "My hat!"
"The hatfulness is terrific!" exclaimed Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "What is the causefulness of this?"
The juniors had reason to be astonished. In at the gates of Greyfriars came three well-known figures. They were Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Alice Bell, from Cliff House.
The juniors stopped footer at once. They ran off the field, and towards the new

holiday—and we should have thought you would have selected that."
"Just so!" said Miss Clara.
"You—you see—" stammered Harry.
"Still, it's all right," said Miss Clara. "We were very pleased to come."
"Very pleased indeed," said Marjorie.
"We—we're awfully pleased," said Harry.
"It—it was so kind of you to come."
"Well, after your kind letter, we couldn't think of refusing," said Marjorie. "It only depended upon whether Miss Primrose gave us leave."
"My—my letter!"
"Yes. But how careless of you to post it without a stamp!"
"With—without a stamp!"
"Yes. Miss Primrose had to pay twopence upon it."
Harry Wharton thought at once of Billy Bunter.
This, then, was the intended jape of the fat junior upon Cliff House.
Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment. He would have given a term's pocket-money to be in a quiet corner with Billy Bunter at that moment. The fat junior had got the Greyfriars chums into an extremely awkward position.
It was not only that they were not prepared in the least for a visit—it was not only that there was nothing ready in the study for anything in the shape of a lunch—but the Greyfriars chums were short of money, too.
How they were to get out of the difficulty was a mystery. Wharton did not care to tell the visitors, naturally, that they had not

mild now that it is really warm enough for picnicking."
"Yes, certainly, in the open air," said Harry.
"Good!" said Miss Clara. "Where shall we have lunch, then?"
"In—in the study."
"Eh?"
"In the study, you know."
"I thought you said in the open air," said Miss Clara, looking very curiously at the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.
Harry turned red.
"Yes, ye-es, of course," he agreed at once. "In the open air. I—I mean you might come and wait in the study while—while it's getting ready."
"Then you're late?"
"Late?"
"Yes. You said exactly half-past twelve in your letter, and now look at the clock," said Miss Clara, triumphantly pointing with her parasol at the Greyfriars clock-tower. "It's five minutes past the half-hour."
"S-s-s-o it is!"
"Of course, it doesn't matter," said Marjorie. "We will wait in the study, with pleasure."
"Good!" said Harry. "There's a jolly good fire there, and it's awfully cold to-day, isn't it?"
"I was just saying that it was warm," said Miss Clara.
"Ye-es, that's what I mean—awfully warm."
Miss Clara did not deign any reply to that remark. She thought that Harry Wharton was very strange indeed.
As a matter of fact, Wharton was so con-

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arrivals, to meet them, but they were feeling puzzled.
"I don't quite make it out," Hazeldene remarked. "Marjorie saw me yesterday, and she never said anything about coming over."
And Hazeldene, who perhaps was not quite so keen to see his sister as the other fellows were, went on punting the footer about with a few of the Remove.
Harry Wharton & Co. hurried down to the gates.
"Marjorie!"
The girl nodded, with a bright smile. "Well, we've come," she said sweetly. "How jolly good!" said Bob Cherry. "We couldn't all come."
"Eh?"
"But Miss Primrose gave us three permission," said Miss Clara. "We had to beg ever so hard, though."
"D-d-did you?"
"Yes; and she gave in at last," said Marjorie. "Of course, she felt how disappointed you would be if we didn't come."
"Ye-es," stammered Wharton, wondering whether he was awake.
"Especially after preparing such a beautiful lunch," said Miss Clara.
"Yes, certainly," murmured Harry.
"It was very good of you to invite us," said Marjorie.
"Oh, not at all!" stammered Wharton.
"Yes, it was; but why to-day?" asked Marjorie. "To-morrow is Saturday—a half-

been invited at all, but were the victims of a First of April joke.
"That's too bad," said Bob Cherry. "You must have been careless, Harry."
"Ye-es," stammered Harry.
"Awfully careless," said Nugent.
"Oh, it's nothing!" said Marjorie. "We received the letter, that's the chief thing."
"Ye-es," said Harry, "that's the chief thing."
"Is your hand any better?" asked Miss Hazeldene, with solicitude.
Wharton started.
"My hand!"
"Yes."
"My—my hand!"
"Yes," said Marjorie wonderingly. "You hurt it playing leapfrog, you know, and so you had to ask Bunter to write the letter for you."
"D-d-d-d-did I?"
"Well, you said so in the letter."
"Ye-es, of course," said Harry, recognising at once another trick of the fat junior, a trick, of course, to account to the girls for the letter being in his handwriting. "I—I had forgotten for the moment."
"Then your hand isn't very much hurt?"
"Oh, no! Not at all—I—I mean not very much!"
"I think it would be a good idea to have lunch in the open air," said Miss Clara, looking round. "The weather is getting so

fused and dismayed by the result of Bunter's trickery, that he hardly knew what he was saying or doing.
He did not speak again as he led the way to Study No. 1 in the Remove passage.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Hot Chase.

MARJORIE & Co. came into the study. They could not help glancing at the grate. Wharton had said, in the hurry of the moment, that there was a good fire there; but, as a matter of fact, the grate was cold and black.
The girls did not quite understand Wharton, and neither did his chums, for that matter. Bob Cherry and Nugent were both glancing at him very curiously.
"You'll—you'll sit by the fire, won't you?" said Harry, pulling out the armchair. "You see—"
"There isn't any blessed fire," said Bob Cherry. "But we'll jolly soon have one going."
"Oh, don't trouble," said Marjorie.
"No trouble at all."
"But really—"
"Oh, that's all right! Brown, old chap, buzz off and get some coal. There's none in the locker."
"Really—" said Marjorie.

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There was a terrific yell from Billy Bunter as his knuckles biffed against the wall instead of against Wun Lung's head. "Ow! Oh! Yow!" yelled the fat junior wildly; while the little Chinese doubled up in a paroxysm of silent mirth.

Tom Brown buzzed off. He buzzed to his own study, and brought a supply of his own coal. The New Zealand junior was prepared to make sacrifices in the common cause.

Bob Cherry raked out the grate with a cricket stump, sending up a cloud of dust and ashes that made the girls scurry back in great haste.

"Oh!" said Miss Clara.

Bob Cherry looked round.

"Anything up?"

"Only dust," said Nugent. "You'd better let me do that, Bob. You'll be making the room into a muck."

"Oh, bosh!"

"Look here—"

"You buzz off and get some wood."

"But—"

"Look here, if you don't get some wood, how am I to light the fire?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Get off and get some, and don't talk. If you can't find any wood, get a chair out of one of the studies and chop it up."

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry raked away industriously. The cloud of dust and blacks floated about the study, and the girls exchanged glances of dismay. They were thinking of their nice bright spring frocks, but politeness forbade them to say anything.

Tom Brown came in with the coal, and Nugent with the wood. Harry Wharton had placed chairs for the girls, and they sat down in a row.

Bob Cherry soon had a fire going. It roared up the chimney, and Bob piled on more wood and more coal with a liberal hand. "You will have the chimney on fire," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bob confidently. "It's a jolly good chimney. It's only been on fire twice this term."

"I—I'll go and see how the lunch is getting on," said Harry at last.

"You must not hurry," said Marjorie.

"Oh, no, not at all—I mean yes, certainly."

Harry reddened, and hurried out of the study. Nugent and Tom Brown followed him. Bob Cherry rose from the grate.

"Now, that's all right," he remarked. "That fire will burn. I think I'll go and wash some of the black off my hands."

And he left the study, too. Marjorie and Clara exchanged glances.

"There is something the matter, Marjorie," whispered Miss Clara.

Marjorie nodded.

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"They must have expected us."

"Oh, yes, Clara!"

"Yet they seem to be taken by surprise."

"It is very strange."

"Harry is talking at random all the time. If he were a man, I should suspect that he had been drinking," said Miss Clara.

"Oh, Clara!"

"I should, really! Marjorie, they must have forgotten that we were coming, and never thought of it till they saw us at the gates."

"Oh, impossible!"

"I jolly well think so!" declared Miss Clara, in her boyish way. "It would be a good idea to walk away now, and not stay for lunch."

"We couldn't, Clara."

"Well, I suppose not; but it would serve them right. I am certain that they had forgotten that we were coming. It was awfully rude of them."

"Very rude."

Meanwhile, the Greyfriars chums had followed Harry Wharton down the passage, and as soon as they were out of hearing of Study No. 1, they had commenced to make remarks.

They surrounded the unfortunate captain of the Remove, and spoke their minds in painfully plain English.

"You burbling ass!" said Nugent. "Why didn't you tell us you had invited Marjorie & Co. over to lunch?"

"Fancy never even referring to it!" said Bob Cherry. "Had you forgotten?"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on, you duffers!" exclaimed Harry. "I tell you I didn't know anything about the matter any more than you do. I hadn't the faintest idea they were coming."

"You wrote the letter."

"I didn't!"

"What?"

"I never wrote it. I hadn't the faintest idea that it was written," said Harry savagely. "Can't you see what it is? It's a First of April joke!"

"Phew!"

"It's a joke of that silly young ass Bunter. Don't you see? That was the jape he mentioned yesterday—to fool the Cliff House girls," said Wharton. "He's sent them a spoof invitation to lunch here."

"The—young rotter!"

"He wrote the letter in my name, and put in a yarn about writing it for me because

I had hurt my hand. Marjorie never had a suspicion."

"The deep beast!" said Bob Cherry. "That fat duffer will finish his career in prison if he's not jolly careful."

"We can't tell the girls it's a jape," said Tom Brown thoughtfully. "They'd never forgive us. It would be too rotten."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Impossible. We must play up now, and keep up appearances. We shall have to turn to and raise a jolly good lunch somehow."

"Phew! Where's the tin?"

"That's the question. We've got to—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was coming up. There was a curious expression upon the fat junior's face—a combination of nervous uneasiness and an ingratiating smirk.

He evidently did not know what kind of a reception he would get from Harry Wharton & Co.

"I—I say, you fellows," he said nervously. "I—I see the Cliff House girls have come. I—I rather thought they would, you know."

"You young rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I suppose this is your idea of a jape," said Wharton angrily. "I told you you were not to play off any of your silly tricks on the girls."

"I—I—it was a jape, you know. Awfully funny, don't you think so? He, he, he!"

"You—you—"

"Besides, we can stand them a lunch now they're here," went on Bunter hurriedly. "I'm willing to do all the shopping and cooking, and anything in that line. I'm really willing to be obliging in every way. I can't say fairer than that."

"Collar him!"

"Oh, oh, really. I—I—"

Billy Bunter dodged along the passage as the juniors rushed upon him. However they got out of the present difficulty, or failed to get out of it, there would be some satisfaction in inflicting condign punishment upon the Owl of the Remove for getting them into it.

Billy Bunter dodged and ran. He knew that the girls were in Study No. 1, and he ran desperately for that apartment.

The juniors rushed after him like a pack in full cry, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that Marjorie & Co. were in the study, and that the door was open.

The crash of footsteps in the passage could hardly fail to reach the ears of the girls.

Billy Bunter had almost reached the door of the study when Bob Cherry overtook him, and grasped his shoulder.

Bunter gave a terrified whimper, and rolled on the floor, and Bob Cherry fell over him and sprawled upon the linoleum.

At the same moment Marjorie and Clara appeared in the doorway, and looked out upon the scene in great surprise.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Bunter the Invalid.

BOB CHERRY sat up, gasping, and looked dazedly at Marjorie. Billy Bunter groaned and gasped for breath.

The rest of the juniors came to a sudden halt, looking decidedly sheepish.

Marjorie and Clara looked at them, and they looked at Marjorie and Clara, and their faces grew very red.

Marjorie was looking amazed, but a gleam of fun was dancing in Clara's eyes. She saw more than Marjorie did.

"You are having a foot-race?" she asked innocently.

Harry Wharton jumped at the explanation with great relief.

"Ye-es," he exclaimed. "We—we were racing along the passage, you know. B-b-bob Cherry won."

"Ye-es," said Bob, staggering up; "I—I fell over Bunter."

"Ow!"

"Get up, Bunter!"

"Ow!"

"We—we've got to see about lunch," said Nugent. "Come on, Bunter; we shall need you to help us."

"Ow!"

"He is hurt!" said Marjorie, with a look of concern. "You must have fallen on him very heavily, Bob."

Bob Cherry glared at the fat junior. He knew perfectly well that the fat junior was only malingering, and pretending to be hurt, for the sake of extorting sympathy from the girls.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way.

WHAT luck?" Harry Wharton asked the question eagerly as he met the chums at the end of the Remove passage. Their expressions did not look hopeful.

As most of the Greyfriars juniors received their pocket-money on a Saturday, Friday was not a good day for borrowing. Money was generally "tight" by the middle of the week, and in a state of great scarcity by Friday. And so it was now.

Bob Cherry opened two empty hands to show that he had nothing. Frank Nugent held out a shilling. Mark Linley had a sixpence. Tom Brown had a collection of pennies and halfpennies. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh showed two shillings. Harry Wharton looked at the collection in dismay.

The juniors might have stood a little feed on that sum, but a really ripping lunch was required; a first-class feed, of course.

Marjorie and Clara had been led to expect that there was something out of the common to come, and Billy Bunter had seen to it that details were not neglected.

"Well, what on earth are we going to do?" said Nugent at last.

"The whatfulness is terrific!" Harry Wharton gave a shrug of the shoulders.

"We can't raise the wind," he said. "We can't tell the girls that they've been taken in, and there's no lunch. Besides, they've missed lunch at Cliff House; they wouldn't get any when they went in, anyway. It would be rather rough—"

"My hat! I should say so!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we've got to manage it somehow. There's only one thing to do."

"We'll do it, whatever it is," said Bob Cherry. "But what is it? Blessed if I can see any way out."

"Well, it's the only way I can think of," said Wharton. "It will be risky, but it's the only thing to be done."

"Never mind the risk. What is it?"

"We shall have to raid the grub."

"Raid it!"

Wharton nodded coolly.

"Yes. We shall have to raid it—we can make it up afterwards to the owners—but it's the only thing to be done. In times of stress, you know, you have to commandeer

things. We've been raided often enough, if you come to that."

"Good! But who are we to raid?" said Nugent. "All the Remove studies are like ours on Friday—as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard."

"I wasn't thinking of the Remove."

"Well, the Upper Fourth are not much better off," said Mark Linley, with a shake of the head. "Temple might have something, but most of the chaps are at low water, the same as we are."

"I wasn't thinking of the Upper Fourth."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"The Fifth! Well, it would be risky, but a good joke—on the First of April, too!"

"I wasn't thinking of the Fifth."

"Eh!" "What price the Sixth?" said Wharton coolly. "May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. The Sixth are living in clover, while we're down to our uppers—speaking grubfully, as Inky would put it. We could raise enough provender in the Sixth Form passage to stand a dozen feeds—all first-class stuff, too."

The juniors stared silently at their leader.

Study raids were common enough at Greyfriars, and nobody ever felt quite sure that his provisions were his own till he had eaten them; but for fellows in the Lower Fourth to raid the Sixth, that was a little out of the common.

If they were caught, they knew what the punishment would be—especially if they were caught by such fellows as Loder and Carne and Ionides. But even good-natured fellows like Wincate and Courtney would cut up rough at finding fags raiding their studies.

It was a risky business, there was no mistake about that.

But it was the only way.

"Well, it's the First of April, and we might as well distinguish ourselves on such a date," grinned Bob Cherry. "If we're caught we shall look the fools, but if it comes off all right, it will be a big joke on the Sixth."

"Yes, rather!"

"The rafterfulness is terrific!"

"It's the only way," said Wharton resolutely. "In case of trouble, we won't have the feed in Study No. 1, though. They could track us there too easily."

"What-ho! But where?"

"Well, it's warm enough out of doors. Suppose we say in the old tower?"

"Good!"

"Now, get to business; every chap collar

Wharton exchanged a look with Bob Cherry, and Bob grunted. They stooped and picked Bunter up, and carried him into the study. They placed him in the armchair, and as they did so Billy Bunter uttered a most tremendous yell.

"Yar-r-o-o-o-oo!"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Marjorie, in alarm. "What—what is the matter?"

"Ow!"

"Have you a pain?"

"Ow! Somebody pinched me. Ow! It was Bob Cherry. Ow!"

Bob's face was crimson.

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" he muttered.

"Ow! I've been pinched! I'm hurt! Ow!"

Bob rushed from the study, not daring to meet Marjorie's accusing eyes. He had not been able to avoid giving the malingering that pinch on the spur of the moment.

But Bunter was not the fellow to take an attention of that sort in silence. He made his woes known at the top of his voice.

He lay in the chair and moaned.

"Do you feel much pain now?" asked Miss Clara sympathetically.

"Ow! Yes. Ow!"

"Where is it?"

"It's—it's everywhere," said Bunter feebly. "I—I have a general feeling all over of being hurt, you see. Perhaps something to eat would revive me."

"I'll bet it would!" growled Nugent, as he hurried from the study. "If I keep near that fat bouncer any longer I shall jump on him!"

"The jumpfulness would be terrific in my esteemed case also," murmured the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

Wharton breathed hard through his nose as they went down the passage.

"It's all humbug, of course!" he said. "He's not hurt. But he's imposing on the girls. He means to be petted and made much of, and fed. Fah!"

"It's just one of Bunter's tricks," said Nugent. "Never mind; after the girls are gone—"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry, with great emphasis. And that "What-ho!" meant troublous times in store for the Owl of the Remove.

"Now, about the blessed feed!" said Harry Wharton, with a contracted brow. "How are we going to manage it? I'm stony."

"And I," said Nugent.

"I've got a bob," said Bob Cherry, turning that coin out with a grimy finger. "I contribute it to the funds with pleasure. How much have you got, Brown?"

"As much as I generally have on a Friday," grinned Tom Brown. "Twopence."

"Phew!"

"What's your little lot, Inky?"

"I have the honour of possessing the esteemed sixpence," said the Nabob of Bhanipur rucfully.

Wharton gathered the contributions in his palm, and looked at them with extreme dissatisfaction.

"One-and-eightpence!" he said. "My hat!"

"It's no good."

"The no-goodfulness is terrific!"

"We shall have to raise the wind somehow," said Wharton desperately. "Let's go round and borrow of the fellows. The worst of it is, that the time's passing, and the girls will be wondering why the lunch doesn't arrive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no blessed laughing matter, though," said Harry, with a worried look. "You see, the girls have obtained permission from Miss Penelope Primrose to miss their lunch at Cliff House, to lunch with us over here. We shall have to provide something—and something decent, too. And they mustn't be allowed to have any suspicion that they've been done either."

"Great Scott—no!"

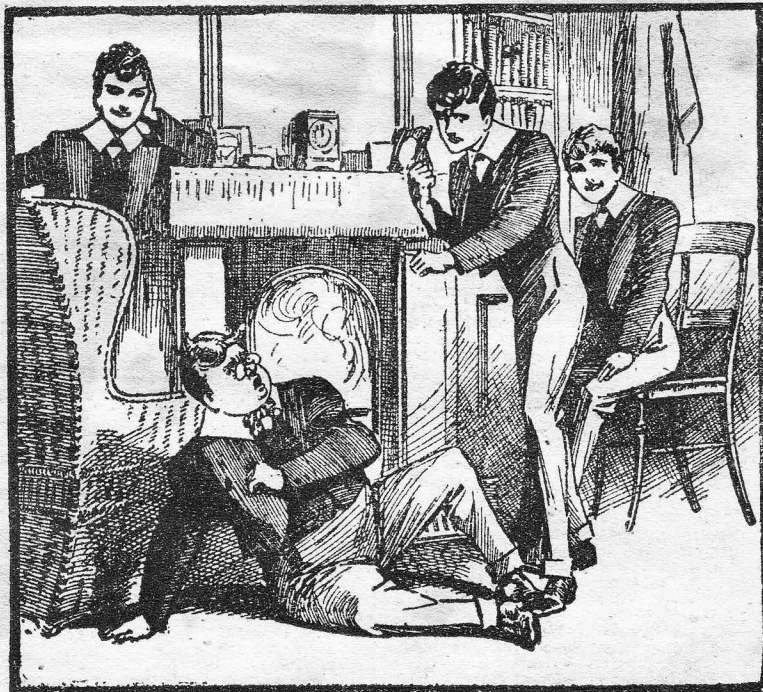
"Then it's jolly well not safe to leave Bunter with them," said Nugent.

Wharton nodded.

"I'll go and tell them lunch is coming," he remarked. "You fellows raise all the tin you can, and I'll come back here in a few minutes."

"Right you are!"

The juniors scattered, in quest of lenders, and Harry Wharton returned to Study No. 1.



"Now, you fat worm," said Harry Wharton, letting the fat junior down on the floor with a bump. "If you venture to play any of your tricks on the Cliff House girls, I'll give you the licking of your life!"

all he can, and bunk with it to the old tower," said Wharton. "If anybody's caught, he must take his medicine without making a row, or giving the others away."

"Right-ho!"
"I'll take the girls to the tower," said Wharton. "May as well get them out of hearing of any shindy. I'll fill up as much time as I possibly can in getting them there, so as to allow you chaps time to get the grub in. Mind, when you get to the tower, you're to look as calm as if nothing had happened. Don't come bolting in with your collars torn out, or anything of that sort. It might make the girls suspicious."

"Ha, ha! So it might."
"Then I'll buzz off. Don't lose any time."

Wharton returned to the study, and asked the girls to follow him to the old tower. Marjorie & Co. readily consented—and so did Bunter. In his eagerness to obtain a free feed, the Owl of the Remove suddenly forgot his aches and pains.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tells.

"HERE they come!"
Marjorie Hazeldene made the remark as Bob Cherry and the other Removites entered the old tower laden with food and plates and knives, etc. Harry Wharton had been on tenterhooks for the last five minutes, wondering whether the others would succeed in their quest for grub.

His face lighted up at sight of his chums. "Now we sha'n't be long," he said. "Hand me the cloth, Bob, old son."

The cloth was spread, and soon the eatables were spread out before the Cliff House girls. The meal started, and very quickly the spirits of the Removites revived considerably, and they forgot the events which had led up to the feed in their eagerness to make the Cliff House girls' visit a memorable one.

It was the first picnic of the season, and it had to be voted a great success.

Tom Brown made coffee on the spirit-stove, and the coffee was superb. It washed down a meal that offered every variety to the palate.

The juniors were in high spirits. They had got out of the difficult position created by Bunter's trick, and got out of it well.

The girls would have to leave immediately after lunch, for afternoon school at Cliff House, and the inevitable trouble with the Sixth would come later.

So long as Marjorie & Co. had a good time, and departed without being made aware of the trick that had been played upon them, Harry Wharton & Co. would be satisfied.

And there seemed to be little to fear now. "Another slice of ham, Clara?"
"No, thank you."

"Try the jam-puffs," said Bunter, looking up. "They're prime. Did you get the jam-puffs at Mrs. Mibble's, Harry?"

"They came from there," said Harry.

"They're jolly good. Where did you get the marmalade-farts?"
"Same place."

"Good! Mrs. Mibble can make these things," said Billy Bunter. "She's an awfully intelligent woman in cooking, you know, only she's very stupid in business. She can't understand that the whole modern commercial system is built up on credit. Except for that, she's a most intelligent woman."

"Another scone, Marjorie!"

"No, thank you."

"Another cup of coffee?"

"I think not, thanks."

Marjorie looked at her little watch.

"We shall have to leave in ten minutes," she said.

"Oh, come, it won't be time then!" exclaimed Bob Cherry warmly.

"Oh, yes, we shall have just time to walk home to Cliff House for afternoon school that's all," said Marjorie, with a smile.

"By Jove! How the time flies!"

Marjorie laughed.

"Yes, doesn't it? We must thank you for a very pleasant lunch. It was such a good idea of yours to celebrate the First of April in this way; so different from the usual way of celebrating it."

Harry turned red.

"Yes; it—wasn't a bad idea, was it?" he said.

"Jolly good," said Miss Clara. "Do you know, when the note first came, and I saw

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it was in Bunter's writing, I half-suspected for a moment that it might be a joke."

"Oh, really—"

"Did you?" said Harry, with a sickly smile.

"Yes, indeed; but when I found Bunter had simply written it for you, because you had hurt your hand, of course I knew it was all right."

"Of—of course."

Bunter finished the last tart, and chuckled.

"That was awfully funny," he remarked.

"Do you know—Ow!"

Bunter broke off with a yell of anguish as Bob Cherry stamped on his foot. Bob put, perhaps, unnecessary force into that stamp.

Bunter jumped up, and danced on one foot, nursing the other in his hands, and yelling.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Yow!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"What's the matter?"

"Ow! Yaroo!"

"Is it the pain again?"

"Yow! Bob Cherry's stamped on my foot! Yah!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Bob, turning red.

"I—I wanted to see whether I could make you jump up, you know."

"Ow! You ass! Yow!"

"Never mind—"

"But I do mind!" shrieked Bunter. "I'm hurt!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Ogilvy. "We hear nothing but of you and your blessed damages, Bunter! Why don't you take a back seat?"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

Marjorie and Clara looked curiously at Bob Cherry, as Bunter sat down groaning. They wondered why he had stamped on the fat junior's foot. Bunter was silent for a few minutes, but as the pain abated he started again.

"I say, you fellows! I think we ought to tell them—"

"Oh, sorry!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

There was a wild yell from Bunter. Tom had been reaching across a cup of coffee, and he had dropped it fairly upon Bunter's head.

The fat junior leaped up, startled almost out of his wits, and streaming with coffee.

"Ow!" yelled Bunter. "Yah! Groo! Ooch!"

"Sorry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! I'm wet! You ass! Ow!"

"Never mind," said Tom Brown consolingly.

"Lucky for you the coffee's cool. It might have been scalding hot, you know."

"Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You clumsy ass! Ow! Lend me your handkerchief, Wharton! I'm wet! Oh!"

"Bosh!" said Harry. "Go in and get a towel!"

"I—I'm too tired to walk to the School House—"

"Rats!"

"You know I'm ill—"

"Stuff!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! You might lend me a handkerchief, Bob Cherry!"

"No fear!" said Bob promptly.

Bunter mopped away at the coffee with his own handkerchief. That handkerchief was speedily reduced to a limp, brown rag.

Bunter mopped, and grunted. When he had mopped away the coffee, as well as he could, he crammed the soaking handkerchief into his pocket.

"I'm still wet," he growled. "Will you lend me your handkerchief, Nugent?"

"There's one of mine in the study that you can have," said Nugent. "You'll find it—"

"I jolly well sha'n't find it. I'm not going to the study."

"Then go without, my son."

"I say, Marjorie—"

"We may as well stroll down to the gate," said Wharton hurriedly. "You'd better stay here, Bunter; you're tired."

Bunter stood up.

"I'm not so tired now, Wharton; and, anyway, I want to see Marjorie and Clara off at the gates. Besides, I've got something to tell them."

"Would you like some toffee, Bunter?" asked Mark Linley.

"Yes, rather!"

"Here you are"

Bunter took the toffee. He selected a chunk, and crammed it into his mouth. Marjorie, Clara, and Alice rose to their feet. It was time to go, and the three girls walked out of the tower with the Removites.

Billy Bunter poked the toffee into one side of his mouth, where it made his cheek bulge out in a lump, and hurried out with Marjorie and Clara.

In the presence of the girls the juniors could not use any violence, and the fat junior had to be given "his head," as Bob Cherry would have put it.

There was plenty of time for an easy stroll to the gate, and Wharton could not quicken his pace without being guilty of the discourtesy of appearing to be eager to get rid of his visitors. And so there was no dodging Bunter.

"I say, you fellows—I mean you girls, it was awfully funny," he began. "Ow! Stop showing me, Bob Cherry! I'm going to tell Marjorie if I like."

Marjorie looked round, and Bob turned the colour of a beetroot, and dropped behind. He felt that it was all up now.

"It was a jolly good jape, anyway," said Bunter, with his fat chuckle. "He, he, he!"

"What was a good jape?" asked Miss Clara.

"First of April you know. He, he, he!"

"I don't quite understand," said Marjorie, looking from Bunter to Wharton, and back again to the fat junior, and a very cold look came over her face. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

"He, he, he! You see—"

"It's nothing," said Harry quickly. "Bunter is always talking rot, as you know. Don't take any notice of him. I—"

"Oh, really—"

"Come on, Bunt old man," said Nugent, in a hearty tone, slipping his arm in Bunter's. "I've got something to show you."

"Ow! Leggo! I won't go!" roared Bunter.

"But—but—"

"Leggo!"

Nugent turned very red, and let go. It was impossible to drag the fat junior away by main force. Marjorie and Clara were looking very cold and quiet. The juniors were at a loss. They felt that they could do nothing more.

"You lemme alone!" said Bunter wrathfully. "I say, Marjorie—"

"Well?"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"He, he, he! First of April, you know. It was a jolly good jape inviting you over here to lunch, you know. He, he, he!"

"I do not see the joke," said Marjorie.

"It's only Bunter's fancy," began Wharton desperately.

"He, he, he! I wrote the letter, you see, to take you in. Wharton doesn't want me to tell you, but I'm not going to let him spoil a good joke. It was a spoof invitation, you see, and you were taken in. He, he, he!"

"Oh!" said Marjorie.

The colour flushed into the girl's cheek. She looked directly at Harry, and his glance fell before hers.

"Jolly good joke, wasn't it," went on Bunter fatuously. "I did it, you know. You can't deny that you were taken in. And when Wharton saw you coming over—he, he, he!"

Wharton was crimson and dumb.

"And you never told me, Harry?" said Marjorie, her cheeks and her ears burning, and her eyes fastened upon Wharton's face.

"Well, you see—"

"It—it was cruel," murmured Marjorie.

"It was mean and cowardly of Bunter, but you, Harry, you might have told us."

"I—I'm sorry—"

"We—we're all sorry," stammered Bob Cherry.

"Good-bye," said Marjorie quietly.

The girls walked down the road. Harry Wharton & Co. did not dare to offer to accompany them. They only stood in dismayed silence, while the graceful forms disappeared down the lane, and were lost to sight.

The silence was broken by the fat chuckle of Billy Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

Then the juniors turned upon him. A crowd of red and wrathful faces glared upon the self-satisfied Owl of the Remove.

"You worm!" said Wharton, between his closed lips.

"You cad!"

"You rotter!"

"You waster!"

"You crawling apology for a worm!"

Bunter stared and blinked at the angry juniors in astonishment. Apparently he was not aware that he had done anything to excite wrathful feelings.

"Oh, I say, you fellows!" he remonstrated. "Draw it mild, you know. I—"

"Oh!"

They did not waste any more time in words.

They laid hands upon the great joker of the Remove. There was a deep ditch flowing on the other side of the road. Wharton made a gesture towards it, and the others understood.

Billy Bunter, struggling vainly, was whisked across the road in a twinkling. He yelled and roared at the sight of the ditch, as he realised the intention of the avengers. "Oh! Ow! Stop! I didn't do it! I won't do it again! Hold on! Leggo! Oh! Ow! Ooch!"

Splash! Right into the muddy ditch went Billy Bunter.

The water closed over him, and he came up the next second soaked, and gasping, and spluttering and spluttering.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You beasts! Ow! Oh! I—"

The juniors turned and walked away, leaving him standing there. They did not give him a word. Bunter blinked at them furiously through his dimmed glasses.

"Beasts!" he said, once more.

And then he crawled in at the gates of Greyfriars, feeling as if life were not worth living.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

After the Feast—The Reckoning.

THE April afternoon wore away. There was sunshine in the Close, and a soft breeze rustled the branches of the old elms, growing green now under the genial influence of spring.

The lengthening of the days made outdoor games after school once more possible. As a rule, an afternoon breathing with the new energy of spring would have made the Remove long to escape from the dusky classroom and pour out into the sunshine, and lessons would have seemed endless.

But to-day it was different. Harry Wharton & Co.—for once, at least—weren't at all anxious for classes to be dismissed.

Mr. Quelch, ignorant of the feelings of his pupils, closed the afternoon's attendance at the usual hour.

As the school clock chimed out the half-hour after four, the Form-master closed his book.

As Mr. Quelch had other matters to attend to, he did not linger in the class-room, but left almost immediately, while the Remove were still fling out.

Some of them did not file out. Harry Wharton and the rest of the raiders remained in the Form-room to discuss the situation.

Ogilvy went to the door and looked out into the passage, and popped back quickly.

"Phew!" he said.

"What's the row?"

"We're in for it! The Sixth are on the warpath!" said the Scottish junior, with a dismayed look. "There's a chap watching each end of the passage—Loder at one end and Carne at the other!"

"My hat!"

"They don't mean to let us get away," said Harry, forcing a laugh. "We're in for it, and we shall have to face the music."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!" roared half a dozen voices.

"We've got to go through the mill," said Morgan. "I suppose it's no good thinking of putting up a fight?"

"It's really according to how many there are of them—"

"We can't fight if Wingate's among them," said Harry quietly, "or Courtney; but if there are only seniors who are not prefects we'll do our little best."

"Right-ho!"

"As for Ionides and Loder and Carne, we're up against them all the time, and if they lay a finger on us we'll give the best we can in exchange."

"Hear, hear!"

"I can hear 'em coming!" said Ogilvy.

"Line up," said Harry. "If Wingate's there we'll try argument; if he isn't, we'll fight, and try to get through."

"What-ho!"

There was a tramp of feet in the passage. The Removites, feeling ludicrously like rats in a trap with a dog about to be let loose on them, waited in painful anxiety.

They had raided the Sixth, and they were ready to face the music, but the nearer it came the less pleasant it seemed to face.

"Here they are!"

It was Loder's voice. He looked into the Form-room, and then entered. Ionides and Carne followed him, and then Walker and North and Courtney.

There were six of the seniors, and the odds, at least, were on the side of the Remove. But a moment later Wingate entered. The hardest of the juniors never dreamed of resisting the captain of Greyfriars, who was not only armed with authority by the Head, but was the most popular fellow in the school.

Wingate had a cane in his hand, and the juniors looked at that cane with painful interest. He glanced grimly at the silent group.

"So you're here!" he said.

"Yes, we're here!" said Wharton cheerfully—as cheerfully as he could. "Glad to see you, Wingate."

"You'll be gladder to see the last of me, I expect," said Wingate. "It seems that you have been raiding the Sixth-Form studies."

"Well, not exactly raiding," said Harry cautiously. "You see, we were hard up—in particularly hard circumstances—and we wanted a loan of some grub. It was a raid in one sense, as we forgot to ask permission to borrow the grub, but we really regarded it as a borrowing expedition."

"You young hound—" began Ionides furiously, but Wingate cut him short.

"Enough of that!" he said. "We didn't come here for a slanging match. Now, you kids, I don't object to a little fun, especially on the First of April, but you know as well as I do that raiding the Sixth is overstepping the line. It would serve you right to report you to the Head, and get you a flogging all round. I'm not going to do that, but I'm jolly well going to give you the licking you deserve."

"Oh, all right!" said Harry resignedly. "You're a decent chap, Wingate, and I dare say you're right. Anyway, if you think we ought to be licked we're ready to take our medicine."

"Quite ready," said Hazeldene; "only do lay it on gently, there's a good chap."

Wingate turned to the Sixth-Formers.

"What do you fellows say?" he asked. "It wouldn't be playing the game to have it both ways. So shall they be licked for their check or allowed to make up the loss?"

"Licked!" said the Sixth-Formers, with one voice.

The Removites exchanged a feeble grin. "Of course, it's just as you like," said Wharton. "But as business chaps, you know, you'd find it better to let us make up the loss."

"This way, Wharton," said Wingate, taking a business-like grip on the cane. "Your turn first."

"You see—"

"I'm waiting!"

Harry Wharton said no more. Argument was evidently useless. He stepped up to take his "gruel" first, and hold out his hand.

Wingate could generally be relied upon to lay it on lightly. As captain of the school, he frequently had to lick the juniors, but he usually tempered justice with mercy. But Wingate was very much in earnest on the present occasion.

He took the juniors in turn, giving them six cuts—three on each hand—and each cut was hard enough to make the recipient gasp and wriggle.

The Remove went through it bravely. Billy Bunter was trying to keep out of sight behind the master's desk. The fat junior watched the punishment with a sort of fascinated stare through his big spectacles.

But when Wingate had finished with Harry Wharton & Co., he showed that the

fat junior had not succeeded in escaping his sight. He beckoned to Bunter.

"Come here!"

The Owl of the Remove tried to effect himself behind the desk, Wingate raised his voice.

"Bunter!"

"Ye-es!"

"Come here!"

"Oh, I say, Wingate—"

"Do you want me to come and fetch you?"

Billy Bunter came out from behind the desk reluctantly. He blinked nervously at Wingate and at the cane as he approached.

Harry Wharton looked on grimly. They were not sorry to see the Owl of the Remove share the punishment. He had been the cause of all the trouble.

He had made the raid necessary, and had rendered it useless afterwards by betraying the facts of the case to the Cliff House girls.

He had caused that severe punishment, and he had caused the added galling consciousness that it was all for nothing. It was only fair that Bunter should taste the same medicine.

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"Oh, I say, you know—"

"Quick!"

"I—I say, I wasn't in the raid!" gasped Bunter, backing away again. "I—ask any of the fellows; they'll say I wasn't with them."

Wingate glanced at the juniors.

"Is that true?"

"Oh, really, Wingate, I hope you don't doubt my word!"

"Shut up, Bunter! Is he telling the truth, you kids?"

"He wasn't in the raid," said Wharton. "I wasn't myself, for that matter, if that makes any difference. It was only my idea, and Bunter was the cause of the whole affair."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"The fat worm!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "After causing the whole trouble, to try and sneak out of the licking! You fat porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter!"

"I—I wasn't in the raid!"

"Did you eat any of the grub?" demanded Wingate.

"I—I—I—"

"Yes or no?"

"Well, I—I—perhaps I had a snack," stammered Bunter. "I—I couldn't very well refuse when they pressed me so hard."

"Yes, I can guess how much pressing you needed," said Wingate. "I suppose, as a matter of fact, you scoffed about half the lot. Hold out your hand. Everybody who was in the feed is entitled to a licking, and I'm not going to deprive you of your due."

"Oh, really—"

Wingate made a threatening gesture, and Bunter held out his hand. He received exactly the same punishment as the others, but he made more noise about it than all the rest put together.

He wriggled and squirmed, and roared and howled.

"Oh, stop that row, you cowardly worm!" said Wingate, putting the cane under his arm. "Now, you kids, I hope that will be a lesson to you. I won't say it has hurt me as much as it has hurt you, like the good teacher in the story-book, because it hasn't. But I don't like the trouble of licking you, so I hope you'll keep off the grass a little more carefully in future."

"Thanks!" said Harry, with a faint grin.

"We'll try."

And Wingate and the other seniors went out, most of them grinning. The heroes of the Remove looked at one another with ghastly smiles.

"Well, this is a jolly ending to All Fools' Day!" said Bob Cherry, grinning at last. "I rather think the happenings of to-day have been quite appropriate to the date, and we can consider ourselves all fools."

And the smarting juniors agreed that they could.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Barred!

ANYBODY seen Jimmy Silver?" Arthur Edward Lovell's stentorian voice could be heard near and far.

Several fellows who were standing in the hall turned their faces in the Classical junior's direction.

Some turned their backs on Lovell at once, whilst others sniffed loudly enough for the Classical junior to hear.

But no one deigned to reply to Lovell's question.

In fact, they seemed to be utterly disinterested in the fact that Arthur Edward was in quest of information.

Lovell snorted in disgust and grabbed hold of Topham, the nut of the Fourth.

"Seen Jimmy Silver, Toppo?" he demanded angrily.

Topham shook himself free, and walked away with his nose high in the air.

Lovell glared and turned to the next junior nearest to him, who happened to be Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell.

"Have you seen Jimmy Silver, Smythey?" he asked.

Adolphus fixed his monocle into his eye and stepped backwards.

"I'll trouble you not to talk to me," drawled the dandy ungraciously.

"Shut up, Smythey!" exclaimed Hooker of the Fourth.

Lovell started.

"What—what—" he began; and then he broke off, for the juniors had suddenly turned on their heels and walked away.

On the notice-board was a sheet of foolscap paper on which was scrawled the following words:

**"WE WILL NOT TOLERATE LIARS!
LIARS ARE BARRED!
AND SO IS LOVELL OF THE FOURTH."**

Arthur Edward Lovell saw the notice, and the colour rose in his cheeks.

When the juniors had refused to answer his question he had not guessed the reason why.

But now the truth was forced home on him.

He was barred! The fellows had sent him to Coventry because they considered he had been guilty of telling lies.

The insult cut the junior to the quick. He tore the notice down, and tearing it into a hundred pieces, flung them broadcast into the quad.

Then he continued his quest for Jimmy Silver.

He went up the stairs two at a time, and, upon entering the Fourth Form passage, he came face to face with Townsend of the Fourth.

Townsend endeavoured to dodge round the determined-looking Lovell, but the latter pulled him up sharply.

"Have you seen Jimmy Silver?" he demanded.

Townsend made no reply.

Lovell stamped his feet impatiently.

"Have you gone mad like the rest of the silly idiots," he exclaimed fiercely. "Why the dickens can't you answer me?"

Townsend remained dumb.

"Look here, Towny," cried Arthur Edward Lovell, losing his patience. "I'm not going to put up with any more of this. Have you seen Jimmy Silver—yes or no?"

Still Townsend did not answer.

He tried to make for the stairs, but Lovell clutched him by the arm, and refused to let him go.

"You silly ass!" he exclaimed indignantly. "If you think I'm going to be treated like a blessed leper, you're jolly well mistaken! I'll give you one more chance. Have you seen Jimmy Silver anywhere?"

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Townsend backed towards the wall. Lovell clenched his fist, and held it before the dandy.

"Answer me, or—"

"You're in Coventry," said Townsend softly. "I'm not allowed to talk to you. You've proved yourself to be a liar, and—"

Townsend broke off abruptly, for he had suddenly caught sight of a grim look on Lovell's face.

Arthur Edward held his fist out threateningly over the dandy's head.

At the same moment three juniors—Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome—came round the corner of the passage at a run.

"Hallo!" shouted Jimmy Silver in surprise. "What's the giddy row about?"

Lovell dropped his hands to his side, and turned round quickly.

"This silly ass called me a liar!" he explained.

"Oh!"

"And so you are!"

Lovell looked over his shoulder and observed three juniors coming up the stairs.

They were Smythe and Howard of the Shell, and Topham of the Fourth.

"If you say that again, Toppo—" began Lovell fiercely.

"I'll say it a hundred times if you like," said Topham boldly. It was not like Topham to be bold, but Toppo knew that half a dozen other juniors were coming up the stairs, and he saw little chance of his being made to suffer for his boldness.

"You're a liar," he added in a loud voice. "You're a disgrace to the Form, and—"

"Shut up, Toppo!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I sha'n't shut up, Silver!" said Topham resolutely. "I shall say just what I like. Lovell's a cad!"

"Yaas, a beastly low-down cad!" drawled Adolphus Smythe.

Jimmy Silver's eyes flashed.

"Lovell is not a cad!" he roared.

"He's worse than that," cried Topham. "He's a liar!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Why did he smash up old Mack's furniture, and swear to the Head that he didn't?"

"I didn't do it," yelled Lovell savagely.

"If you say—"

"I refuse to speak to you, Lovell," said Topham disdainfully, with a wave of the hand.

"You cad!" roared Lovell. "Put your fists up. I'll give you a thundering good hiding if—"

"Hold on, Lovell, old son," urged Jimmy Silver, laying a restraining hand on his chum's arm.

"Yaas, keep the wild beast quiet," said Adolphus Smythe. "It'll be positively dangerous to walk about soon if somebody doesn't look after him, by gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver faced the wrathful juniors.

"Look here, you fellows," he said plainly. "You're dead off the mark if you think that it was Lovell who wrecked Mack's furniture."

"But it was Lovell who disguised himself as a Hun, and japed old Mack," protested Howard.

"Yes, but—"

"Well, it was Lovell who bashed up the show."

"I tell you it wasn't."

"Rats! Who else could it have been?" said Howard with an air of disgust.

"You're not going to suggest that somebody else disguised himself as a Hun as well, and ragged old Mack directly after Lovell had left the place?"

"It's quite possible, but—"

"Piffle!" said Howard with a sniff. "You're trying to make paltry excuses. You know the chap's guilty, but you think you ought to shield him. I wouldn't say a

word if he'd admitted his guilt to the Head. But he didn't. He told the Head deliberate lies. He's a disgrace to the Form. We bar liars; that's so, isn't it, you fellows?"

"What-ho!" yelled the "fellows."

"We've sent Lovell to Coventry until he owns up and apologises for having disgraced the Form," said Howard.

"Hear, hear!"

"If you refuse to fall into line with us—"

"I do, most decidedly," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "It's all a lot of rot you're jabbering. Lovell's as innocent as I am. He ragged old Mack; I'll admit, but he didn't smash up his furniture."

"Well, you'd better prove it then," said Howard.

"Yaas," drawled Townsend, exhibiting a sudden spasm of boldness. "If Silver thinks the cad's innocent, it's up to him to prove it."

"And I will, too," said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Townsend & Co. Jimmy Silver turned to his three chums.

"Come on, you fellows," he said.

"Half a minute," said Lovell. "I'm going to smash these silly idiots first."

"Another time," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Let's find the giddy culprit first. Then you can smash him as much as you like!"

"But—"

"Come on!"

And Lovell went, propelled along by his three chums.

As they departed there was a long drawn-out hiss from Townsend & Co., followed by a loud exclamation from at least a dozen throats.

"Liar!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Price of Silence.

THE Fistical Four went back to their study, with deep, thoughtful expressions on their faces.

They had plenty of food for thought.

Old Mack, the porter, had seen fit to report the Classical juniors for returning late to the school.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had resented the action, and had decided to get their revenge on the porter.

Lovell had disguised himself as a German, and worked a most successful jape on old Mack, but somebody else—they knew not whom—had entered the porter's lodge directly afterwards, disguised in the same manner, and had wrecked the whole place.

Mack had placed his report before the Head, with the result that Lovell had been compelled to admit his guilt.

But he had flatly denied having destroyed a single article of the porter's belongings.

The Head had refused to believe his statement, and had punished him accordingly.

The majority of the juniors, led by Townsend, had also refused to credit Lovell's explanation, and had forthwith sent him to Coventry.

Lovell was naturally very wrathful at the turn of affairs, and so were Jimmy Silver & Co. for that matter.

They believed explicitly in their chum; but, all the same, they were forced to confess that the affair looked very fishy.

"I wish I had a clue to work on," remarked Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Why trouble about a piffing clue," said Lovell disgruntledly. "I'm innocent, and that's enough!"

"It's enough for us," said Jimmy Silver, "but it's not enough for those silly idiots. They think you're a liar, and they won't let it rest until we've found the giddy culprit."

"I suppose not, but—"

"My hat!"
 "Hallo! What's the matter with you, Jimmy?"

"I've got a wheeze, my son," said Jimmy Silver, with a grin. "It might not work; but, on the other hand, it might."
 "Go hon!" said Newcome. "That's logic, if you like."

"Look here," said Jimmy Silver, closing and locking the door in case of listeners in the passage. "Supposing somebody advertised in the local paper for a German disguise."

"Supposing," remarked Newcome casually. "I'd sell him that one I wore for ragging Mack," said Lovell disinterestedly. "It's caused enough trouble, and—"

"Quite so," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But supposing somebody else in the school was hard up, and had a similar costume to sell—"

"What the dickens are you driving at, Jimmy?"

"Fathead! Can't you see?"

"No, I can't!"

Jimmy Silver made a despairing gesture. "Look here," he said, "whoever it was who smashed up old Mack's furniture, wore a German costume similar to the one Lovell wore."

"Quite so."

"Well, there must be some more German wigs and moustaches knocking about the school," went on Jimmy Silver fervently. "We've got to find out who possesses that costume."

"Hear, hear!"

"My idea is to insert a notice in the 'Coombe Times,' to the effect that we'll pay a big price for theatrical togs," said Jimmy wisely. "We'll read out the ad. in the common-room, so that all the fellows can hear, and it's ten chances to one that the chap who owns the togs will make a bid for the money."

"But if he sees our names in the advertisement—"

"He won't see them," said Jimmy Silver.

"But—"

"They won't be there," explained Jimmy. "We shall insert the advertisement under a box number—504, or something like that. All letters addressed like that will be kept at the office until we call for them."

"Supposing the chap doesn't see the advertisement," argued Newcome. "And supposing he doesn't want to sell the things?"

"What's the good of finding a thousand and one difficulties," said Jimmy Silver irritably. "We've got to chance all those things. It's possible that the fellow will see the advert, and it's possible, too, that he will answer it. That's what we've got to bank on."

"Oh, all right!" said Newcome resignedly. "Go ahead! As it's your wheeze you'd better write out the advertisement."

Jimmy Silver drew out a sheet of note-paper and a pen, and commenced to write.

"Listen, you chaps!" he said at length, surveying the sheet of paper before him. "This is how the advertisement runs: 'Wanted—For Amateur Theatricals. Costumes of all kinds, and other articles. Good prices paid for articles suitable for a German character, and firearms of all kinds. £10 will be paid for a complete costume suitable for German or Austrian character.'"

"That's all right," said Lovell. "But I doubt whether the chap will—"

"Oh—rats!" growled Jimmy Silver. "What's the good of being a Doubting Thomas. We've got to trust to luck!"

"All right, Jimmy. Don't get your wool off. You'd better buck up, and a buzz down to the newspaper office. It's a quarter to six now, and they close at six."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy. "I'll go now!"

Jimmy Silver slipped the advertisement into his pocket, and darted out of the study. A little later, Leggett, the cad of the Modern side, passed along the Classical Fourth passage.

He opened the door of Townsend's study quietly, and looked in.

He smiled with satisfaction as he observed that Townsend was the only occupant of the study.

"By gad!" drawled Townsend in surprise. "What the dickens do you want, Leggett?"

"I just thought I'd pay you a visit," said the cad of the Fourth calmly. "You're a pretty wealthy chap, Towner, aren't you?"

"By gad! What's that to do with you?"
 "Don't be so beastly abrupt," said Leggett with an offended air. "I haven't come here to row. I've come to ask for your assistance."

"By gad!"

"I'm in the very dickens of a hole," went on Leggett, lowering his voice. "I've got mixed up with that pal of yours, Joey Hook, the bookmaker, and—"

"Joey Hook's no pal of mine!" said Townsend untruthfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Leggett. "D'you mean to say you've never made bets with the man?"

"Of course not!"

"Oh, come off it, Towner," said Leggett.

"You tell lies like Lovell!"

"I—I—" faltered Townsend, and his face paled noticeably.

"It's no business of mine, though," went on the cad of the Fourth. "If you don't want to admit having had dealings with the man, I don't mind. Personally, I'm jolly sorry I ever met him. I owe him five pounds, and—"

"That's your own fault, Leggett, dear boy!" drawled Townsend.

"Quite so," said Leggett. "But—but I'm in a rotten hole. Hook's a beastly rotter. He threatens to come up to the school if I don't pay him."

"Hard lines, dear boy!" said Townsend, endeavouring to appear sympathetic. "I'm afraid you'll have to face the music, though. It's rotten—jolly rotten!"

elm while Lovell was ragging Mack. When he'd gone, you stepped in and wrecked the blessed show. Supposing I told Jimmy Silver that I saw you? What do you think—"

"You wouldn't!"

"Not likely!" said Leggett at once. "I never believe in giving a chap away. I always like to help a chap when he's in a difficulty. It's the sporty thing to do, you know. But I reckon you ought to help me."

"By gad, do you really need help, dear boy? I thought you were joking, you know."

"No fear!" said Leggett. "I want five pounds at once, otherwise I'm booked for the sack. I came to you as I knew you were always well supplied with money."

"By gad, I'll help you like a shot!" said Townsend, bringing his notebook to view. "I'm not quite sure whether I've got five pounds. Let me see— Ah, just got it!"

Townsend held out the notes to the young rascal. Leggett grabbed them quickly and slipped them into his pocket.

"Thanks, Towner!" he said graciously.

"You're a sport. I sha'n't forget this."

He turned towards the door.

"I—I—I say, Leggett, dear boy," said Townsend anxiously, "you won't say a word, will you?"



"Hallo!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, dashing up just at the moment Lovell prepared to strike the dandy of the Fourth. "What's the row about?"

"I thought perhaps you'd lend the money," remarked Leggett hopefully. "You've always got plenty of money, and—"

"I'm broke, dear boy—stony broke!"

"But surely you've got a fiver you could lend?"

"I haven't got a quid note even, dear boy. If I had, I'd lend it to you like a shot!"

Leggett hung his head.

"What the dickens am I to do?" he said dismally. "I'm in a worse hole than you are, Towner."

"Wh-wh-what do you mean?" stammered the dandy. "I'm in no hole that I know of."

"You've forgotten jolly quickly then," said Leggett.

Townsend's lips twitched with nervousness. "I don't understand?" he said softly.

"What—"

"Have you forgotten that jape you played on old Mack?" asked the cad of the Fourth artfully. "Have you forgotten that you disguised yourself as a German, and smashed up all the furniture in Mack's parlour?"

"I—I—I didn't!" faltered the dandy nervously. "It was—"

"But I say you did," insisted Leggett. "I saw you myself, you were hiding by the old

"Not likely!" said Leggett. "I sha'n't give you away!"

And, chucking to himself, the cad left the study.

Townsend was not quite so cheerful. The knowledge that Leggett knew his secret—knew that it was he, and not Lovell, who had wrecked old Mack's property—was not pleasing to him.

Townsend was not great at heroics. He knew that if he was bowled out, Jimmy Silver & Co. would make him suffer for his misdeeds.

The dandy wanted to avoid such suffering. Thus he had paid the price of silence.

But Townsend was not by any means out of the wood yet.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
 The Advertisement.

THE following evening the Fourth Form common-room was crowded. Jimmy Silver and his chums entered, and sat down by the fire.

After a while Jimmy drew a copy of the 'Coombe Times' out of his pocket, and commenced to read.

Suddenly he turned to his chums. "Listen to this, you fellows," he said. "There's a chap here who wants to buy theatrical costumes."

"Well, he's welcome to buy them," said Raby, who attempted not to be interested.

"But he's offering to pay a jolly good price," went on Jimmy fervently. "Listen! I'll read it out to you."

And Jimmy Silver read out the advertisement in a voice which was certainly too loud if he wanted only his chums to hear.

But Jimmy wanted every fellow in the common-room to hear, and he took care to see that everybody did hear.

"It's jolly kind of the johnny," said Newcome, playing his part well. "All the same, I've got nothing to sell. Perhaps Lovell might care to sell those togs he wore when he ragged old Mack."

"Can't be done!" said Jimmy. "That costume belongs to the Dramatic Society. Mustn't sell that. If only—Hallo, what do you want, Leggett?"

His curiosity aroused, Leggett had stepped forward to obtain further particulars.

The cad of the Fourth never missed a chance of making money.

"Do you mind if I have a look at the paper?" he asked.

"If you like," said Jimmy Silver, handing him the copy of the "Coombe Times." "You needn't trouble to return it. I've finished with it."

"Oh, thanks!" said Leggett, and he walked off with the paper.

A little later the Fistical Four left the common-room.

Having perused the paper, Leggett followed soon after, leaving the paper on a chair.

One of the last fellows to depart from the common-room was Townsend.

Towny had stayed behind on purpose. He wanted to gain possession of the paper, but he did not wish anybody to observe him taking it.

The dandy had been considerably disturbed by the fact that Leggett was acquainted with his secret.

The dandy knew Leggett of old—knew that this cad would extort further money from him if he had the chance.

He reasoned that if he got rid of the various things he had used to disguise himself as a German, he would be able to defy the cad—to deny ever possessing such articles.

Admitted he could burn them, or leave them on a lonely spot on the moor. But Townsend saw a chance of making money over the things, and of also getting out of the clutches of the cad of the Fourth.

Townsend did not intend to let either chance slip by.

He procured the copy of the "Coombe Times," and a little later that evening, when sitting alone in his study, he composed a letter in reply to the advertisement.

That letter was posted before the dandy went to bed, and it arrived at the office of the "Coombe Times" by the first post in the morning.

That same letter was collected by Jimmy Silver and his chums after afternoon lessons.

Jimmy Silver scrutinised the letter as soon as they were outside the newspaper office.

"The writing looks familiar," he remarked casually, as he opened the letter. "I wonder—My hat! Cecil Townsend!"

"Townsend!" exclaimed Lovell and Raby and Newcome in one voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jimmy Silver. "Just listen to this:

"Dear Sir,—In answer to your advertisement, I beg to inform you that I have several articles for sale, amongst them a German moustache, wig, an old-fashioned revolver, and one or two knives. If you would care to see my articles, I shall be delighted to bring them for your inspection if you will write to me, making an appointment.—Yours faithfully,
CECIL TOWNSEND."

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Newcome exuberantly. "He's bowled himself out with a vengeance!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad Lovell's cleared!" remarked Raby thankfully.

"So am I," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Not that I ever doubted him, only—"

"Only things did look a bit black," concluded Lovell, with a laugh.

"Ye-es."

"Well, what's the next move, Jimmy?" asked Newcome. "Are we going to beard the giddy lion in his den?"

"Well, I don't know that we're going to do it," said Jimmy blandly. "I think we ought to leave that to Lovell."

"Me?" said Lovell.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver. "There's no reason why you shouldn't perpetrate another disguise. You'll have to dress yourself up as a middle-aged gentleman, and interview Towny in answer to his letter."

"But is there any need for that? Can't we tackle him when we get back to the school?"

"We could," said Jimmy Silver, "but he'd probably deny having written the letter. In fact, he might tell any old lie to get out of the affair."

"Oh, all right," said Lovell resignedly. "I'll work the oracle all right."

The Fistical Four, elated at their discovery, wended their way back to the school.

They locked themselves in the end study, and brought to view all the properties of the Rookwood Dramatic Society.

Suitable articles of clothing were soon discovered, and the task of disguising Arthur Edward Lovell was commenced.

It proved to be quite an easy task, and at length Lovell surveyed himself in the looking-glass with an air of approval.

He was dressed as a short, stocky man of middle age, with a heavy moustache and bushy beard. He certainly did not look like a junior of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School.

"Come on, Lovell, old son," said Jimmy Silver, dragging his disguised chum out of the study. "I'd better introduce you to our friend, Towny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver led the way to Townsend's study. He tapped softly on the door.

There was no answer.

Jimmy tapped again, and as there still came no reply, he turned the handle of the door.

He discovered to his surprise that the door was locked.

Townsend & Co. often locked the door of their study when they wanted to indulge in a quiet game of cards.

Evidently such a game was in progress now.

"Towny!" called out Jimmy Silver through the keyhole.

"Hallo! What do you want, Silver, dear boy?" came the drawing voice of Townsend.

"Gentleman to see you, Towny," said Jimmy Silver loudly. "Jolly important, I believe. He's been waiting a dickens of a time!"

"By gad!"

There came the sound of chairs being moved, and the mutterings of several voices.

Jimmy laughed to himself. He guessed what was happening. The nuts were clearing away the cards and cigarettes from the table.

"Sha'n't be a minute, Silver," sang out Townsend, and the tremor in his voice was audible to Jimmy and Lovell.

At length the door was opened, and Jimmy Silver led the way into the room, in which the nuts were seated, gazing sheepishly at the disguised Lovell.

"This is Townsend, sir," said Jimmy Silver, with a wave of the hand in the direction of the dandy of the Fourth. Then he left the study.

"Ah! Mr. Townsend," said the disguised junior, in a deep voice, "I am very pleased

to meet you. I received your letter, and—"

Lovell paused, for a scared look had suddenly entered Towny's face.

The dandy turned to his chums.

"I—I—I say, you fellows," he said, with a quiver in his voice, "I—I—I wonder whether you'd mind leaving me for a minute or two?"

"Not at all, dear boy!" said Adolphus Smythe graciously. "Anything to oblige!"

The disguised junior raised his hand.

"Please don't go for me," he said quickly. "I sha'n't be more than a minute or two."

"B-b-but I'd rather they did," said Townsend. "You'll go, Smythe, won't you, dear boy?"

"Oh, if you like," said Adolphus willingly. "Come along, dear boys!"

With that the "dear boys" quitted the study. Outside they met Jimmy Silver. Jimmy had several words to say to them. What he said was not heard by Townsend or the disguised Lovell.

"About your letter, Mr. Townsend," said Lovell, in a low voice. "I understand you have several articles which you wish to dispose of?"

"Y-y-yes," faltered Townsend. "I—I—I will show them to you."

"Thank you."

Townsend stooped to a locker, and brought several theatrical articles to view.

Amongst them was an old-fashioned revolver, a German moustache, a long-haired wig, an imitation bomb, and several other things Townsend had worn on the occasion on which he had ragged old Mack, the porter.

"You wish to sell these?" asked the disguised Lovell.

"Y-y-yes."

"You don't fear to keep them, I suppose?"

"N-n-no. But why—"

"You're not afraid of getting into trouble if you keep them?"

Townsend stared at the disguised junior in amazement.

"Of course I'm not," he exclaimed. "Why should I be?"

"Well, I didn't know whether you'd be afraid somebody would find out that it was you who smashed old Mack's property."

"By gad!" gasped Townsend, aghast. "What do you know about—"

"I know more than you thought I knew," said Lovell, this time in his natural voice.

"You're bowled out, my son. You've fairly given the game away!"

"Lovell, my gad!" muttered the dandy, as Lovell removed his disguise.

"Right, Towny, old son," said Lovell. "I think you must admit that I've played my part well. Come in, Jimmy!"

The next instant Jimmy Silver burst into his study, followed by his chums and Topham and Smythe and Howard.

The three nuts looked at their chum in amazement. They wanted to stand by him, but they had heard every word of the conversation between Lovell and Townsend, and they knew that there was no denying his guilt.

Townsend saw the game was up, and he tried to plead with Lovell.

"Look here, Lovell," he said slowly, "I'm sorry—beastly sorry—"

"Go hon!" laughed Lovell. "You needn't be afraid we're going to kill you. All you've got to do is to fight me, and—"

"No, I—" began Townsend in protest.

"I say yes," said Lovell. "You'll meet me in the gym after lessons to-morrow morning."

And, very much against his will, this is what Townsend did. He had great cause to regret having embarked upon his scheme for disgracing Arthur Edward Lovell, for that worthy gave him the biggest hiding he had received in the boxing ring. Nobody was more pleased than Jimmy Silver and his chums, who had done their utmost to see a wrong righted!

THE END.

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TAGGLES' BENEFIT!

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Under Suspicious Circumstances.

YOUNG raskils!" said Taggles. That was Taggles' fixed opinion. As Taggles was school porter at St. Jim's, and had seen generations of schoolboys come and go at the old college, Taggles certainly ought to have known. "Hup to some mischief, as usual!" growled Taggles, glowering in the direction of the wood-shed. "I wonder wot it is now?" "Hallo, Taggy, old son!" said a cheery voice, as Tom Merry of the Shell came by. "Lovely afternoon, isn't it? That's why you're looking so good-tempered?" Taggles rested upon his stable broom, and regarded Tom Merry with much disfavour. "Wot is it now, Master Merry?" he demanded.

"That depends," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "What is what?"

"Wot's the little game?"

"Game?" said Tom innocently.

"Yes!" said Taggles emphatically. "Fust I seed Master Blake slip across to the wood-shed. Then I seed Master Herries foller him there. Then I seed Master D'Arcy. Then I seed Master Manners and Master Lowther. And I says, says I, wot's the little game, I says?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a meeting," he explained.

"Hoh!" said Taggles.

"A very important meeting, about a very important person," said Tom Merry mysteriously. "We're meeting in the wood-shed to discuss a very important subject."

"Hoh!"

"By the way, it's your birthday to-morrow, isn't it, Taggles?"

"Yes, Master Merry," said Taggles, thawing a little; "it are!"

"By Jove," said Tom, "you keep awfully youthful Taggy! Nobody would take you for ninety to look at you!"

Taggles turned purple.

"I ain't ninety!" he roared. "I'm sixty-five to-morrer!"

"My mistake," said Tom Merry blandly. "I didn't know you were such a kid!"

Taggles jabbed away savagely with the stable broom, and declined to answer. Tom Merry whistled cheerfully, and walked on, and disappeared into the wood-shed.

Three juniors came by arm-in-arm a few minutes later, evidently bound for that important meeting in the wood-shed. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House at St. Jim's, and the deadly rivals of Tom Merry & Co.

"Hoh!" said Taggles. "I know wot it is now—another of their blessed 'Ouse rows, and my wood-shed is goin' to be turned upside down! Hoh! Master Figgins!"

Figgins & Co. halted, and bestowed pleasant smiles upon Taggles.

"Feeling fit this afternoon?" asked Figgins genially.

"I'm fit enough!" growled Taggles.

"You're wearing jolly well, Taggles," said Kerr encouragingly. "It isn't every school porter who makes a century, not out!"

"I ain't made a century!" howled the exasperated Taggles. "I'm sixty-five to-morrer, Master Kerr, and well you know it!"

"Well, sixty-five isn't a bad innings," said Fatty Wynn, "and no sign of the wicket going down yet, either!"

"Look here," said Taggles. "I ain't 'aving it! You mark my words, I ain't!"

"Ain't 'aving what?" asked Figgins.

"No blooming 'Ouse rows in my wood-shed!" said Taggles, shaking a warning forefinger at the New House trio. "I warns yer fair and square. Only the hotter day my wood-shed was mucked up, and I 'ad to stack up all the faggots again, and I'm fed up! I ain't 'aving any more of it! I'll report yer!"

Figgins grinned.

"Tisn't a House row this time, Taggy," he said. "We're going to a very important meeting."

Taggles grunted.

"Now, don't lose your temper the day before your birthday, Taggy!" said Kerr. "Try to keep pleasant till you've fairly turned ninety-four—"

"I ain't ninety-four, you-you—you—"

Figgins & Co. walked on before Taggles could finish. They disappeared into the wood-shed.

Taggles jammed his broom into a corner, and snorted again. Truly enough, the last time New House had met School House in the wood-shed there had been a "scrap," and the order and tidiness of the wood-shed had suffered in consequence.

Tom Merry had explained that in time of war non-combatants often got it "in the neck" as well as combatants; but Taggles wasn't satisfied.

"I'll keep a heye on them," said Taggles, "and at the fust sign of a row I'll report 'em! I'll bring Master Knox down on 'em! Master Knox is always glad to catch 'em out! I'm not goin' to be worried to death by a parcel of young raskils!"

And Taggles approached the wood-shed. Taggles was a tactician in his way. He did not approach the door of the shed, but walked very quietly towards the corner. At the window he could hear all that was going on, and a corner of the shed screened him from the sight of any fresh arrivals.

Inside the shed there was a buzz of voices. Nearly a dozen juniors of both Houses had met there, and Tom Merry was addressing the meeting:

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows—"

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting heartily.

"This meeting has been called—"

The door opened, and Kangaroo of the Shell came in, followed by Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence—three New House fellows. Reilly and Kerruish and Ray of the School House followed them in. Reilly pushed back his cuffs as he entered.

"Sure, and I'm ready!" he exclaimed.

"Here's the New House bouders! Pile in!"

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry. "This isn't a scrapping match!"

"Sure, what are we here for, then?" demanded Reilly, in surprise.

"Ass! It's a meeting—a peaceful meeting—"

"Oh!" said Reilly, with a perceptible waning of enthusiasm. "Is it intirely?"

"Order!"

"Gentlemen, this meeting has been called in the wood-shed as a common ground upon which both Houses may meet without rows," said Tom Merry, with a severe glance at Reilly.

"Oh, all right," said Reilly. "I'll be as peaceable as a little lamb! But phwat is it about intirely?"

"Taggles!"

"Taggles!" repeated Reilly, and several other voices chimed in: "Taggles!"

"Yes. Mind, Taggles mustn't know a word about it," added Tom Merry, in a warning voice.

And Taggles, outside the window, chuckled grimly.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Kerruish. "Get to the washing!"

"We're going to give Taggles a surprise—a big surprise—the surprise of his life!" said Tom Merry impressively.

Taggles, outside the window, grunted.

"Hoh, har you!" he murmured. "Har you, indeed? Taggles will 'ave something to say about that, I think. Har you? I'll report yer!"

And Taggles glided silently away, and went in search of Knox of the Sixth—the most unpleasant prefect of St. Jim's, who was the special enemy of Tom Merry & Co. And the meeting remained in blissful unconsciousness of the fact that Taggles had overheard them, and had gone to report them to the prefect.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Interrupted Meeting.

TOM MERRY glanced round upon the meeting, pleased with the impression he had made. The juniors were all listening with great attention.

Taggles was an exceedingly crusty old gentleman, and he had had many and many a rub with the junior boys for both Houses.

A surprise for Taggles, of course, seemed to the juniors to mean, naturally, a jape of some sort on the school porter, and they were all prepared to rally round Tom Merry for that purpose. As Redfern nobly said, this was no time for House rows.

"Go ahead!" said Blake.

"Pile in!" said Herries. "I'm with you all the way, kid. Taggles threw a stick at my bulldog the other day—actually chucked it at him, you know. You know what an inoffensive animal Towser is, too. Poor old Towser had just nipped hold of his trousers—that was all. He's so playful!"

"Wally, Hewwies, I have often remarked that that wotten bulldog of yours has no respect for a fellow's twousahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"I've remarked just as often that you are an ass—"

"I wufuse to be called an ass—"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Merry, "some of you appear to be labouring under a misapprehension—"

There was a gasp of surprise from the juniors.

"Jolly good word, that!" said Kangaroo cordially. "I'll back that both ways."

"Misapprehension," said Tom Merry firmly. "This meeting is not called for the purpose of ragging Taggles."

"Oh!"

"Taggles has a birthday to-morrow."

"Oh!"

"And we're going to surprise him on his birthday."

"Not half a bad wheeze!" said Redfern. "What do you suggest—a band outside his window playing 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! We're going to give Taggles a pleasant surprise, you ass! That's my idea. He's getting old, and my idea is to give him a benefit."

"A—a—a—a what?"

"A benefit. We're going to raise funds, and give him a testimonial, and a purse containing something in cash, you know, as a

sign of appreciation on the part of the juniors of St. Jim's.

Monty Lowther and Manners and Figgins, who were in the secret already, nodded approval. The other fellows looked astounded.

"In honouring Taggles," went on Tom Merry, who had evidently prepared a little speech in advance, "we are honouring ourselves, and the old school, and old age, you know. Of course, Taggles isn't so very old—sixty-five is quite youthful in these days. But he has been here from—from—"

"From time immemorial," suggested Blake. "Good!" said Tom Merry. "I like that. We'll put that in the testimonial. Taggles has been here from time immemorial, and we're going to recognise his long and faithful service on his sixty-fifth birthday."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It's a half-holiday this afternoon, and we've got lots of time, especially as Abbotsford have scratched their match at the last moment," said Tom Merry. "My idea is to put our heads together and raise funds for giving Taggles a stunning surprise on his birthday."

"Hear, hear!" "Both Houses will stand together in the matter," added Tom Merry. "All House rows are off now. It's pax."

"Hear, hear!" "And, mind, not a word to Taggles. It's got to come as a great surprise."

"Yaas, wathah!" "Agreed!" said Figgins heartily. "We're quite ready to take the matter in hand, if you School House chaps will back us up."

"Oh, quite!" said Kerr. "That isn't exactly what's wanted," said Tom Merry grimly. "You see, we're managing the affair ourselves, and we want you New House chaps to back us up."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on Figgins. "I'm surprised at you, Figgins!"

Figgins snuffed. "Well, you see, you School House kids will make a muck of it," he explained. "You'd better leave it in our hands."

"Sensible thing to do," said Redfern. "Don't be funny, Figgins!"

"Don't be an ass, Tom Merry!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"Order!" roared Monty Lowther. "Yaas, wathah! Ordah, deah boys! All you New House boundahs, shut up! I'm goin' to make a speech—"

"Mercy!"

"You uttah ass—"

"Order yourselves!" said Redfern indignantly. "Of course, the New House will have to manage it. Don't you want it to be a success?"

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Funds will have to be raised," said Figgins. "A subscription amongst ourselves won't amount to much. We've got to raise funds, and that will require ideas; and where will you School House chaps be then?"

"Echo answers Where!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Rats!"

"We jolly well sha'n't come to the New House for ideas!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"What you fellows have got to do is to back us up—"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Piffle!"

"Look here, you New House fatheads—"

"Yah! School House duffers! Rats!"

"Oh, chuck them out intirely!" exclaimed Reilly. "Sure, and I knew there would be trouble with them. Chuck them out on their necks!"

"Like to see you do it!" said Figgins belligerently.

"Faith, and I'll—"

"Yah! Go home!"

"Ye New House spalpeen!"

"You bog-trotter!"

That was enough for Reilly. He rushed at Figgins, and clasped him in a loving embrace, and they waltzed round the wood-shed. There was a crash as they bumped into a pile of faggots and brought them to the ground.

"Order!" roared Tom Merry. He rushed to separate the combatants, and grasped Figgins by the ears. Kerr promptly rushed to his chum's rescue, and dragged Tom Merry off. Tom Merry and Kerr were rolling on the floor in another moment.

"Order!"

"Stop it!"

"Order! Order!"

There was a roar of voices in the wood-shed. In the midst of the din the door opened, and Taggles appeared, followed by Knox, the prefect.

"'Ere they are!" roared Taggles. "I knew wot it would be—wreckin' my wood-shed, same as they did before! Young raskils!"

"Stop that row!" commanded Knox. "Crash!"

Figgins and Reilly bumped into the prefect, and sent him flying. Knox gave a yell, and sat down in the doorway.

"Ow! The young villains! Ow!"

"I'll fetch Mr. Ralinton!" said Taggles. "Well, you blessed ungrateful old sinner!"

exclaimed Monty Lowther indignantly. "I told yer I'd report yer!"

"You—you—"

Knox scrambled to his feet. "Clear out of here at once!" he exclaimed.

"Every boy present will take fifty lines! You, Reilly, and you, Figgins, will report yourselves to the Head for assaulting a prefect! Now clear off at once!"

The meeting broke up in dismay. Taggles chuckled as the juniors retired from the wood-shed. Tom Merry gave him a reproachful look.

"That's too jolly bad of you, Taggles!" he said.

Taggles snorted.

"I ain't aving any!" he said. "I told you as 'ow I'd report yer!"

"'Bai Jove, Taggles, deah boy—"

"We'll jolly well chuck the idea now!" exclaimed Manners wrathfully.

"No, we won't!" said Tom Merry. "We'll heap coals of fire on his head!"

"Wot?" roared Taggles. "Let me catch you a-trying to put coals on my 'ead, that's all! I'll report yer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors departed, leaving Taggles with a brow like thunder. He was looking a little alarmed, too. The juniors were very exasperated, and there was no telling what wild young rascals like Tom Merry & Co. might do.

"I'll report 'em to the 'ead!" gasped Taggles at last. "So that's the idea, is it—the surprise they was goin' to give me—heapin' coals of fire on my 'ead! My word!"

And Taggles stumped away to the School House, to report to the Head that horrible scheme of heaping coals of fire on his head.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Before the Head.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, laid down his pen as patiently as he could.

Reilly and Figgins had come into his study, followed by Knox.

"Well, what is it?" asked the Head.

"Nothing, sir," said Figgins promptly.

"Nothing at all, sir," said Reilly.

"There has been a very serious disturbance, sir," said Knox. "Taggles reported to me that the juniors were wrecking the wood-shed, and I went to stop them."

"Quite right, Knox."

"And these two boys, sir, rushed at me, and bumped me over," said the prefect.

Dr. Holmes frowned at the two juniors. "That was very, very wrong of you," he said.

"Sure, it was an accident, sir!" said Reilly.

"Knox is makin' a mountain out of a mole-hill, sir. We bumped into him by accident."

"Didn't even see him, sir," said Figgins.

The Head pursed his lips.

"I really think you might settle these trivial matters, Knox, without taking up my time, which you know is valuable," said Dr. Holmes. "Dear me, what is this?"

Taggles burst into the study.

"Sir! Dr. Holmes—"

"Well, Taggles?"

"I ain't aving it, sir! My life ain't safe!" howled Taggles.

"What?"

"Them young rips, sir—"

"Taggles!"

"Them juniors, I mean, sir. I ain't saying anything about them busting up my wood-shed; but when it comes to puttin' burning coals on a man's 'ead—"

The doctor started.

"What—what! Nonsense, Taggles!"

"Burnin' coals, sir, on my 'ead!" said

Taggles. "My life ain't safe, with them young rips—Master Merry and the rest—"

"What do you mean, Taggles? Do you tell me that Master Merry has put coals on your head?" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, in bewilderment.

"Which he ain't done it yet, sir, but that was what they was a-plottin' of," said Taggles.

"Nonsense!"

"Master Merry himself said so, sir."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "There must be some mistake! Master Merry could not possibly think of such a cruel and wicked action."

"Which he said so himself, sir—burnin', flamin' coals to be put on my 'ead, sir! Which my life ain't safe!"

"Knox, kindly fetch Master Merry here at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said the prefect.

He left the study. He returned in a few minutes with Tom Merry of the Shell.

Dr. Holmes regarded Tom sternly.

"What is this Taggles is telling me, Merry?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"He says that you have threatened to place burning coals on his head."

Tom Merry jumped.

"I, sir!"

"I knew it must be a mistake—a most absurd mistake," said the Head, relieved. "I am sure you would not think of anything of the sort, Merry."

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Which he said so!" howled Taggles. "He said so with his own mouth, sir!"

"I couldn't say it with anybody else's mouth, certainly," said Tom Merry. "But you're dreaming, Taggles."

"I ain't! You said yourself that you was goin' to put burnin', flamin' coals on my 'ead, because I fetched Master Knox to stop your goings-on in the wood-shed."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry suddenly, understanding at last.

"Merry!" said the Head severely. "This is not a laughing matter."

"Excuse me, sir! Ha, ha, ha! Taggles has made a little mistake," gasped Tom Merry. "I was speaking figuratively, sir."

"What did you actually say?"

"Some of the fellows were ratty, sir, at Taggles sneaking about us to Knox, but I suggested heaping coals of fire on his head."

"That's it!" said Taggles. "Burnin', flamin' coals! That's it!"

"Coals of fire!" said the doctor.

"Yes, sir."

"Reg'lar murderous, I call it!" said Taggles. "Crool—that's the word! Why, it might kill me at my age—sixty-five to-morrow!"

The Head smiled.

"You are under a misapprehension, Taggles. Master Merry was speaking in a figurative sense. Heaping coals of fire upon one's head does not mean actually burning coals, Taggles. It means that he would treat you with kindness instead of retaliating for the supposed injury you had done him."

Taggles jumped.

"Hoh!" he said.

"That's it, Taggy," grinned Tom Merry.

"Hoh!" said Taggles, only half convinced.

"Well, that's all right. But if anybody begins puttin' coals of fire on my 'ead—"

"You may go, Taggles."

"Which my wood-shed is messed up, sir, and in lawful disorder—"

"The delinquents will be properly punished. You may return to your duties, Taggles."

And Taggles, grunting, retired to his duties.

"I will deal with the juniors, Knox," said the Head.

And the prefect, understanding that that was his dismissal, retired from the study.

"Now, my boys," said the Head. "I cannot allow these disturbances, and I cannot have Taggles troubled, especially as it is his birthday to-morrow. I suppose this was one of your House quarrels?"

"Well, it ended something like that, sir," said Tom Merry ruefully. "But it was a peaceful meeting to begin with. The fact is, sir, we're going to surprise Taggles on his birthday. We're getting up a testimonial and a birthday-present for him, and the meeting was called to discuss ways and means."

Dr. Holmes smiled genially.

"That is a very good idea, my boys, and I approve of it highly. I suppose Taggles was not aware of it?"

"Oh, no, sir! We're keeping it dark till we're sure it's going to be a success, sir."

The Head coughed.

"Ahem! If Taggles had been aware of that laudable object of the meeting, he would probably not have reported you to Knox," he remarked. "Under the circumstances, you need not do the lines."

"Thank you, sir."

"But please try to carry out this laudable scheme without any more disturbances," said the Head. "I am sure you will find it better to work in harmony."

"Oh, yes, sir! But the New House chaps are rather obstinate—"

"The School House fellows are a bit pig-headed, sir," said Figgins; "but—"

"You may go," said the Head, with a smile and a wave of the hand.

And the juniors left the study.

"Sure the Head's a brick," said Reilly enthusiastically. "Sure, if we'd known it was going to turn out loike this we might have given Knox another bump."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Taggles is a blessed old worm, and doesn't deserve a testimonial at all," growled Figgins.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "We'll heap coals of fire on his head—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Taggles!"

"Like good little boys!" said Tom. "Eric out-Ericked, you know! All you New House chaps have got to do is to back us up—"

"Knock you down, more likely!" said Figgins.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, if you won't back us up, and we won't back you up, the only thing to do is to run the thing separately," he said. "You chaps see what funds you can raise, and we'll do the same in the School House, and then we'll hold a committee meeting about the way to expend 'em to the best-advantage. The first thing to be done is to raise the funds."

"Done!" said Figgins. "And I'll guarantee that we'll beat the School House in raising a fund, same as we do in footer and cricket—"

"And in gas!" grinned Tom Merry.

And so it was agreed. And the rival juniors of St. Jim's put their heads together in their two Houses to discuss ways and means, while the unconscious and ungrateful Taggles confided to Mrs. Taggles his fixed opinion that all boys ought to me "drowned" at birth—and especially Tom Merry & Co.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Figgins' Great Wheezo.

"HALLO!"

"Look here!"

"What on earth—"

The Terrible Three of the Shell had just come downstairs after a consultation in their study. Monty Lowther caught sight of a notice on the school board, and drew the attention of his chums to it.

The notice was written out in Figgins' sprawling handwriting, and the wording of it made the juniors exclaim in wonder. For this is how it ran:

NOTICE!

"At 4 p.m. precisely, on the junior cricket-ground, will take place a performance of Figgins & Co.'s Circus."

Pavilion seats, One Shilling. Standing room round the ground, Sixpence.

Only paying chaps admitted to the ground. Free list entirely suspended. Any chap found looking on without paying will be walloped.

"All proceeds for the Benefit Fund."

(Signed) G. FIGGINS."

The Terrible Three whistled.

"Figgins' Circus!" said Manners, in amazement. "What is it, I wonder? Figgins & Co. as a troupe of performing donkeys, perhaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seen this?" called out Tom Merry, as Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, came along.

"No," said Blake. "What is it?"

"Read it!"

"My hat! Figgys' Circus! Must be a hoax!"

"Bai Jove!"

"A New House dodge for raising funds for the benefit," grinned Tom Merry. "But I don't quite see where Figgys has got his

circus from. It's a stunning idea, if there's anything in it."

"If!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah; I wogard that as a vewy big 'if.'"

"Hallo, here's Figgins!"

The chums of the School House had reached the cricket-ground. On the senior ground, close at hand, the Sixth Form were playing the Fifth.

It was a senior Form-match, and the seniors were very busy, and most of the members of the Sixth and Fifth who were not playing were gathered round the ground.

Kildare was batting just now to the bowling of Cutts of the Fifth, and it was well worth watching. But the juniors were too busy to think about such things as Upper-Form cricket matches.

Round the junior ground New House juniors were posted, at distances of a few feet from one another, evidently to guard the pitch from invasion.

Outside the junior pavilion was the great Figgins himself, with the Co.

Figgins bestowed an amiable and condescending nod upon the School House fellows.

"Coming to the circus?" he asked. "A

some of their animals to give a show. You remember Jaggars' Circus, where Tom Merry wrestled with a Japanese chap. Well, they're at Wayland now, and it occurred to me that a circus performance here at St. Jim's would be the right thing at the right moment. Chaps will pay to see a circus, where you might offer 'em Shakespeare for dogs' ages and they'd only pay you to leave off, if they paid you at all. So I buzzed over on my bike, and struck a bargain with Jaggars."

"My hat!"

"He's sending the animals over in charge of his men, you know—a performing elephant and a buck-jumping horse. He's doing it cheap for the advertisement—expects to get a crowd of St. Jim's chaps over to see the real show afterwards, you know. They don't want the animals till to-night for their regular show, and it doesn't hurt Jaggars to turn an honest quid by hiring them out. Don't you think a buck-jumping horse and a performing elephant are worth paying a tanner to see?"

"Bai Jove!"

"What about the cricket pitch?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, that can be rolled afterwards," said



"Take him away!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Take him away—ooch!" Splash! A spout of water flew from the elephant's trunk, and swamped all over the New House master.

shilling for a seat, or sixpence standing-room."

"What circus?"

"My circus," said Figgins.

"Performing porpoise?" asked Monty Lowther, with an interested glance at Fatty Wynn; and the School House juniors grinned.

"Oh, don't be funny," said Fatty Wynn crossly. "This show is jolly well going to knock spots off the School House, anyway. If all the pavilion seats are sold, it will come to four quid at least, and we ought to raise another three or four from the standing-room. That will beat anything you can do!"

"Yes, rather!" said Kerr emphatically.

"But what circus?" demanded Tom Merry. "Where is it? What is it?"

"Yaas, wathah. Explain that, deah boys."

"Certainly," said Figgins airily. "Jaggars' Circus is at Wayland, and we've borrowed

Figgins cheerfully. "We had to give the performance somewhere, you know, and we couldn't give it in the quad or the Form-room, could we?"

"Ha, ha! No. But—"

"But it will wuin the pitch!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, blow the pitch!" said Figgins. "This isn't a time to think of the pitch. Besides, it can be rolled—we'll roll it. I'll make all you fellows stewards, if you like, to see that everybody who comes to the show pays up. Lots of fellows may come strolling round and looking on, without shelling out."

"School House chaps!" remarked Kerr.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry. "I hope you've got your performing elephant under proper control. It would cause trouble if he broke loose and wandered away."

"Oh, that's all right! The elephant-tamer comes with him," said Figgins. "But a New House chap is going to ride him, you

see, to make it more interesting. Now then, we ought to have a drum or something to attract the crowd—"

"I'll get my cornet, if you like!" said Herries.

"H'm! That might drive 'em away instead of attracting 'em—"

Herries snorted.
"Never mind, get it!" said Figgins. "Fellows will come along to see what's the matter, so it will be all right. Fatty is going to work the cymbals. He's made them himself out of two sauceman-lids. Get your cornet, Herries, old man. Start on the cymbals, Fatty! It's time we began to take the money!"

"Well, of all the wheezes—" said Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Don't you think it's a jolly good one?" demanded Figgins.

"Ha, ha! Yes—if it works all right."

"Oh, this wheeze will work all right! It isn't under School House management."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you got the Head's permission to bring elephants and wild horses into the school?" gasped Tom Merry.

"We've got his permission to give a performance to raise funds for the benefit. We didn't mention the elephants or the horses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle! Lend us a hand in taking the money."

"Right-ho! If there's any to take."
The crowd were already arriving.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Levison Takes a Hand.

CRASH, crash, crash!
Toot-toot—root-toot!
Fatty Wynn, with the home-made cymbals, and Herries, with the cornet, outside the pavilion, made noise enough to attract all St. Jim's to the spot.

The cymbals and the cornet were certain to draw attention to Figgins' Circus. Indeed, they might have been heard at a considerable distance from St. Jim's.

The New House juniors had made their preparations. A canvas tent had been hastily run up next to the pavilion to shelter the animals till the performance began. The performing animals were there, with their attendants.

The news of Figgins' Circus spread over St. Jim's like wildfire. Fellows came from near and far.

A dozen New House fellows, and an equal number of School House juniors, had been appointed stewards, to collect the entrance fees from all comers.

They had some difficulty in collecting it. The fellows seemed to have an idea that they were entitled to walk on their own cricket-ground without paying, if they liked.

Tom Merry & Co. undecieved them on that point.

Tom Merry and Lowther and Manners, Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn of the Shell, and Vavasour, and the chums of Study No. 6, and Reilly, did splendid service as collectors of cash.

Fellows who didn't want to pay for admission were invited to clear off, on pain of being summarily ejected "on their necks."

Gore and Crooke and Levison and Mellish came down in a party by themselves, and stationed themselves outside the pavilion. Clifton Dane came up to them with a plate in his hand.

"What's that for?" asked Levison.

"Are you sitting or standing?" asked Dane.

"Standing at present."

"Then you pay sixpence."

"Rats!"

"Are you going to pay or clear off?" demanded the Canadian junior.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Neither," he said calmly. "I suppose a chap can stand on his own cricket-ground if he wants to."

"I should jolly well think so!" said Mellish.

"You've come here to see the circus?" said Dane.

"Well, we shall see what's going, I suppose," said Crooke. "But I'm jolly well not going to pay anything, for one."

"Same here!" said Levison.

"Pay up!" said Clifton Dane, frowning.

"Rats!"

"Then clear off!"

"More rats!"

"Oh, I'll pay!" said Gore, throwing a sixpence into the plate. "There's your tanner!"

"You others going to pay?"

"No fear!"

"Kick them out, chaps!" said Dane.

And half a dozen stewards seized upon Crooke and Levison and Mellish, and they were hurled forth, with loud and angry expostulations.

"You rotters!" howled Levison, picking himself up. "I'm not going!"

"Kick him out!"

Several boots were at once forthcoming for the service. Levison raced off the cricket-ground with a powerful propulsion behind.

He retreated to the School House, gritting his teeth. Mellish and Crooke, on second thoughts, paid up, and stayed on the ground. The cash-collectors had plenty to do.

Fellows were coming up in crowds, some of them with dire threats of what they would do to Herries if he didn't leave off. Herries did not heed. He blew away at the cornet, with puffed cheeks and bulging eyes, as if he were blowing for a wager.

Four o'clock chimed out from the old tower of St. Jim's.

"Time for the performance," said Tom Merry.

"Must finish taking the money first!" said Figgins.

Fresh crowds of fellows were arriving. From a distance Levison of the Fourth was watching the scene, with a dark look on his face.

The cad of the Fourth had been handled rather roughly, though not more roughly than he deserved. Partly on that account, and partly from the impish desire to cause mischief, which was his ruling passion, Levison was turning a peculiar scheme over in his mind.

He strolled away from the School House, and made his way to the back of the cricket pavilion. The canvas shelter for the animals had been fixed at the side of the building, simply a slope of canvas from the top of the pavilion to the ground, with flaps covering in the ends. From behind the building Levison raised the flap of the canvas and looked into the enclosure.

Inside, the buck-jumping steed, not looking very fery just now—was tethered to a peg in the ground. The elephant was not even tethered. The two men in charge of the animals had gone out of the tent, watching the scene on the cricket-pitch.

It was Levison's opportunity.

His eyes gleamed as he crawled in under the canvas flap and approached the horse. The steed was saddled ready for the performance, and Levison approached him with outstretched hand and soothing words.

The horse blinked at him, and went on munching from a bundle of hay.

Levison stroked him with treacherous kindness, and with a deft hand inserted a small stone under the girth.

The horse moved a little, and Levison backed away from him. As soon as the buck-jumping began that jagged stone under the girth would irritate the animal, and the buck-jumping was likely to be a little more in earnest than usual.

It was a cruel trick, and very like Levison.

Then the cad of the Fourth turned his attention to the elephant. The huge animal, evidently the tamest of the tame, took no notice of him. There was a gaily decorated howdah upon his back, fastened by girths passing under the great body.

Levison approached the great animal with some trepidation. If the elephant were alarmed or angered, one movement of the huge foot would have been enough to crush the cad of the Fourth.

But the elephant was as tame as a household cat. Levison stroked him, and he took no notice. The junior inserted his finger under the tight girth, still without alarming the elephant.

Then he rammed in a stone—a larger one, with jagged edges. The elephant made a movement and turned his great head, and in a second his trunk was winding round the cad of the Fourth.

Levison tried to spring away—too late!

He was in the grip of the elephant's trunk, and was swept off his feet, and the earth and the tent swam round him.

A yell of terror broke from the frightened junior.

"Oh, help, help, help!"

He struggled wildly in the grip of the elephant's trunk.

A man ran into the tent. It was Captain Cambon, the elephant-tamer, a Frenchman. He uttered an angry exclamation.

"Mon Dieu! You could not meddle viz ze animals, garcon! But he vill not hurt you. It is ze trick zat he perform! Arretez, Abdullah!"

At his master's word the elephant set the

junior upon his feet unharmed, and blinked his sleepy eyes at Cambon.

"You could not come in here!" said the performer. "It is not safe to meddle viz ze animals, mon garcon. Go you out!"

Levison panted for breath. His head was swimming, and he could hardly realise yet that he was out of danger. In the dreadful moment when he had been elevated in the elephant's trunk he had seen himself, in his terrified imagination, dashed upon the hard ground and crushed to death.

Figgins looked into the tent.

"Ready?" he said. "Why, what are you doing here, Levison—sneaking in without paying, you cad! Clear out!"

"I—I—"

"Clear out!" roared Figgins.

And Levison was glad enough to crawl under the flap of the canvas and disappear.

He was still trembling as he hurried away, and his face was very white. But there was a gleam of spiteful satisfaction in his eyes. "I fancy that performance won't go just as they want it!" he muttered, between his teeth. "There will be a surprise for them when it starts—hang them! But—but Figgins saw me there! I—I wonder if they will suspect me now?"

And that thought was quite enough to dash the satisfaction of the cad of the Fourth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Buck-jumping Extraordinary.

GENTLEMEN—

Bang, bang! Clang! Crash!
"Gentlemen—"

Toot-toot-rooty-too-toot!

"Gentlemen, the circus is now open! The performance is about to begin! Gentlemen, this performance is the catch of the season! Allow me to present to you Cowboy Kit, the famous, celebrated, and well-known buck-jumping rider of the Far, Far West!"

Thus Figgins.

And the crowd cheered as Cowboy Kit led the buck-jumping steed out of the tent upon the pitch. The horse seemed a little restless.

"Hurrah!"

Cowboy Kit, who was clad in his circus costume of a cowboy of the Wild West, mounted the fiery mustang.

He rode round the pitch at a great speed, cracking his whip in the air with a succession of reports like pistol-shots.

Then he put the steed through an exhibition of buck-jumping.

It was very realistic.

All the onlookers realised that the horse was in an excited state, and the earnest look on the cowboy's face was very convincing.

The rattle of hoofs in the turf, the snorting of the horse, and the deep breathing of the rider, were very realistic indeed.

"My hat!" murmured Jack Blake.

"Blessed if that looks like a show performance at all! I come from Yorkshire, and I know something about horses. I'll bet you that that geegee is jolly near out of hand!"

"Looks like it, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'arcy, turning his famous monocle upon the buck-jumper and his rider.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"They do this every evening in the circus," he said. "It's the usual performance, you know. I must say it's jolly realistic!"

"Yaas, wathah! A little bit too much, dear boy. There's somethin' w'ong with the horse."

"My hat!" roared Clifton Dane. "Look there!"

The mustang was rearing savagely, and as the rider forced him down he swept round his head, and made a savage catch at Cowboy Kit's leg with his teeth.

The cowboy's whip descended upon the head with a crashing blow.

Cowboy Kit's face was paler now, and hard set.

A murmur ran through the juniors.

They realised now that it was not merely a circus performance they were seeing. The horse was out of hand!

Some unknown cause had rendered it savage, and it was trying with desperate strength to unseat its rider and break away. And the circus rider knew it.

He was struggling with the horse, striving to quell its savage spirit, and he was striving in vain.

The mustang was getting more and more out of control.

Figgins looked startled.

"My word! This is more than we bargained for!" he said. "The chap can't manage his own horse!"

"Somethin's gone w'ong with it, deah boy."
"What on earth could go wrong with it? It was all right when they brought it here," said Kerr.

"Nobody's been meddling with it, I suppose?" said Tom Merry anxiously.

Figgins jumped.
"My hat! I found Levison in there—"
"Levison!"

"Yes. But he couldn't have—"
"He jolly well could have, and would have!" growled Herries. "He's a beast to animals! You remember the trouble there was over his tormenting my bulldog?"

"Yaas, wathah!"
"Good heavens!" muttered Figgins. "If he's done anything to the horse, he ought to be boiled in oil! Pass the word to the fellows to clear back, in case he breaks away! It wouldn't be a joke to be run over!"
"Bai Jove, it wouldn't!"

The fellows round the field were already crowding back, in case the horse should bolt. The struggle between the mustang and its rider was growing harder and fiercer.

Cowboy Kit's white, set face showed how earnest it was with him. He was using the whip now, but the heavy blows did not seem to quell the savage spirit of his steed.

"Clear away!" shouted the circus-rider suddenly. "Something's wrong with him! can't hold him! Stand back!"

The crowd cleared back in hot haste. The circus-rider had an iron grip on the reins, and he was trying to keep the mustang to circling round the pitch. But the animal broke away at last, and bolted from the cricket-pitch, and careered away across the quadrangle.

Crash, crash, crash! went the thundering hoofs.

But there was no sign of the cad of the Fourth. He was keeping at a safe distance. "Better have the other turn on now," said Kerr. "The first one has ended rather suddenly, but the performing elephant will be all right."

"Yes; bring the elephant on, Captain Cambon!"

"Oui, oui!" said Cambon.

Crash, crash, crash! went the cymbals; toot-root-toot! the cornet.

The elephant was on the scene!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Ratcliff Gets Wet!

"HURRAY!"

The juniors cheered the elephant and his skilful rider.

Captain Cambon—regiment unknown—was a good performer, and he could do all sorts of tricks on the elephant's back.

The great animal trotted solemnly round the pitch, with the Frenchman performing acrobatic feats on his back, turning somersaults, or holding on to the howdah with one foot, or allowing himself to be lifted in the great trunk.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "that's wippin'!"

And the juniors cheered. After the unfortunate experience with the buck-jumper, it was a great relief to Figgins & Co. to see the elephant turn going well.

But Abdullah, the elephant, soon began to show signs of irritation.

After lumbering round the pitch several times he stood quite still, and refused to budge.

Abdullah paused, and looked down at the back of Taggies, as if wondering what it was. Then he curled his trunk round Taggies' hat, and jerked it off.

Taggies gave a yell.
"None of your tricks!" he yelled. "Don't you come into this ere garden. It ain't allowed! I'll report yer! I—oh, crikey!"

The words died on Taggies' tongue as he looked up and saw the elephant.

He stared blankly at the huge beast, frozen with terror.

The elephant snuffed round him, and wound his trunk about the gasping and helpless school-porter, and lifted him from his feet. Then Taggies found his voice.

"Ow! 'Elp! 'Elp!"
"Don't struggle!" shrieked Cambon, dashing up. "He will not hurt you if it is zat you do not struggle viz him."

"'Elp!" moaned Taggies. "This is a 'orrid dream! 'Elp!"

Abdullah trotted on, carrying Taggies across the garden.

Splash!
Taggies was dropped bodily into the artificial lake in the garden, and the elephant turned away, leaving him spluttering and foundering there.

"'Elp!" shrieked Taggies.
Tom Merry and Figgins hastened to drag him out. Taggies lay gasping on the grass, in the middle of a pool of water that ran from his clothes.

"Ow!" moaned Taggies. "It's a 'orrid dream! Ow!"

The elephant lumbered on, followed at a respectful distance by the amazed and dismayed juniors.

Abdullah reached the New House, and

A MATTER OF REGRET.

MY DEAR READERS,

I have this week to make an announcement which you will receive, I am sure, with feelings of the deepest regret. Owing to the tremendous shortage of paper, it has been found absolutely impossible to continue the publication of the PENNY POPULAR after this issue.

This drastic measure has had to be taken entirely on account of the present paper shortage. During the last year or so the PENNY POPULAR has increased in popularity by leaps and bounds, but in these serious times, when there is practically a famine in paper, even some of the most popular journals are compelled to suspend publication.

For the present the PENNY POPULAR will be incorporated with the "Boys' Friend." As soon as increased supplies of paper enter this country, the PENNY POPULAR will again make its appearance on the market. That I can rely upon your earnest support when this occurs is the wish of—

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

"Good heayens!"

"Look!"

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Figgins & Co. stared after the flying horse in dismay. His rider was holding him well, but he could not stop him. He could only guide him, and he was guiding him towards the school gates. Outside, in the open country, the infuriated animal would be able to do less harm.

With foaming mouth and lashing hoofs, the mustang careered through the gateway, and disappeared.

There was a buzz on the cricket-field.
"Bai Jove! Jollay glad he's gone!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I suppose the chap will wide him back to the circus at Wayland—he'll be tired out by then."

"Rotten thing to happen!" growled Figgins. "Mucked up the first half of the show!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This what you call an entertainment?" sneered Croke. "Got the cheek to charge us a tanner for seeing a silly horse run away with a silly ass?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Figgins, with a worried look.

"Well, I think it's rotten!"

"Nobody wants to know what you think!" said Herries. "I dare say you had a hand in it—whatever it was Levison did to the horse!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Is Levison here?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

His surprised master urged him and coaxed him, but it was of no use.

The elephant seemed to have made up his mind, and he would not move.

"Bai Jove, is there somethin' w'ong with the elephant as well as with the horse?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in surprise.

It certainly looked like it.

Captain Cambon was growing annoyed. He struck the elephant at last, and the great animal took him up in his trunk.

"He's starting again," said Figgins.

"Bwavo!"

The elephant carried the captain along for a short distance, and set him down upon his feet, and then lumbered away.

"Look out!" shouted Gore, as the great quadruped bore down upon the ropes.

The juniors scattered.

Abdullah trampled on, and left the pitch, proceeding in the direction of the Head's garden.

He tramped on to the little gate, and tore it off its hinges with one wrench of his trunk.

Then he thundered into the garden.

Taggies was there, at work with a lawn-mower, or, rather, he had been at work with a lawn-mower. Just at the present moment he was sitting on the lawn-mower, under the shade of a tree, taking a well-earned rest, and mopping his brow with a handkerchief.

He had his back to Abdullah, and did not trouble to turn his head at the sound of the elephant's footsteps; which were soft enough on the lawn.

began rubbing his side against the stone porch.

"There's something irritating him in the girth," said Tom Merry.

"Might get it off him," said Blake.

"I zink zat is it," said Captain Cambon,

"I zink I try him."

He rushed up to the elephant. Abdullah did not wait for him. He trampled into the New House, through the wide-open doorway, and the strong oaken floor sounded and creaked under his heavy tread.

"And Ratty's at home!" groaned Figgins.

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, was indeed in his study. The New House master was busy upon examination papers, and at such times he liked to be very quiet.

The noise he had already heard from the cricket-pitch had annoyed him very much. The sound of a giant's footsteps in the house filled the cup of his wrath to overflowing.

The sound of Abdullah walking in the passage was like unto somebody rolling heavy weights about, and the Housemaster was naturally indignant.

He jumped up, and opened the door of his study.

"What is this?" he shouted. "How dare you make such a disturbance! How dare you—why—what—what—what—"

Mr. Ratcliff recoiled into his study in terror.

Abdullah was just outside his door.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Help! Help!"

Abdullah strode in.

Mr. Ratcliff, almost fainting with terror, backed away towards the window.

Crash!

The elephant had brushed against the table, and the table went flying, and its contents shot off to the floor.

He was still coming on, and Mr. Ratcliff executed a strategic retreat through the open window.

Mr. Ratcliff was not an athlete, but he performed that jump through the window in a very creditable manner.

He rolled over as he landed on the ground outside, and sat up dazedly, and looked up. The head and trunk and tusks of Abdullah protruded from the study window.

"Good heavens!" spluttered the New House master. "Help, help!"

He picked himself up and ran.

Captain Cambon dashed into the house. He ran into the Housemaster's study, and found Abdullah rubbing himself on the door-post, evidently to remove something under his girth that irritated him.

Cambon hurriedly searched for it, and found the jagged stone. The cause of the elephant's peculiar outbreak of temper was now explained. Cambon succeeded in persuading him out of the house, and he lumbered out into the quadrangle again. He stopped at the fountain in the quad, and began to drink, drawing up the water with his trunk.

"It is all right now, mes garçons!" gasped Cambon. "Look at zis zat I have found; some wicked boy he have place zat zero undair ze girth!"

"Levison!" said Figgins, between his teeth. "For goodness' sake get the beast away before he does any more damage!" said Tom Merry.

Mr. Ratcliff came up, trembling with rage. The sight of the elephant peacefully drinking at the fountain reassured the Housemaster; he understood that he had not to deal with some ferocious wild beast as, in his terror, he had fancied at first.

"Was this animal purposely brought into the precincts of the school?" he thundered. "Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly. "We've been giving a show!"

"How dare you! You shall be flogged for this! Take the brute off the premises at once. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir, I—"

"Take him away!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "Take the brute away!"

Abdullah looked round. He was not in an amiable temper yet, and perhaps the Housemaster's loud, rasping voice irritated him. He lumbered towards Mr. Ratcliff, and the Housemaster backed away in terror.

"Take him away! Take him away—ow—ooh!"

Splash!

A spout of water flew from the elephant's trunk, and swamped all over Mr. Ratcliff. The Housemaster staggered back drenched. There was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff yelled, too—but not with laughter. He gathered his gown about him and fled madly into the New House, and disappeared.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Jack Blake, wiping his eyes. "There will be trouble over this! But Ratty got it in the neck that time! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take him away!" moaned Tom Merry. "Take him away. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Captain Cambon succeeded in leading the recalcitrant elephant out of the gates at last, much to the relief of the St. Jim's juniors.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Levison Catches It.

DR. HOLMES had heard the uproar in the quadrangle, and it had drawn him to his window. He had seen Mr. Ratcliff's mishap, and so he was not surprised when the New House master burst into the study with face aflame.

"Dr. Holmes, I—I—most outrageous—most unparalleled—most—"

Dr. Holmes made a soothing gesture.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff—"

"I have been assaulted—I have been—"

"I saw it all from my window!" said the Head. "It is a very serious thing. How did that animal come here at all?"

"I understand that some of the juniors brought him here for a performance, or something of the sort!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"The severest punishment—the severest possible punishment—"

"I will send for the boys who seem to have been concerned."

And Toby the page was despatched in search of Tom Merry and Blake and Figgins.

The three juniors came into the Head's study looking dismayed, as they felt. Dr. Holmes fixed a very stern glance upon them.

"Am I to understand that you were responsible for introducing that dangerous animal into the school grounds?" he exclaimed severely.

"I did it," said Figgins. "These chaps didn't have anything to do with it, sir. It was my idea."

"We were backing you up, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "We're all in it, sir. But we didn't mean any harm. The elephant was going to be used in giving a show."

"You gave me permission to give a show for the Benefit Fund," said Figgins.

The Head coughed.

"True. But you did not mention that you intended to introduce a dangerous animal into the show, Figgins."

"He isn't dangerous, sir."

"The brute has invaded and wrecked my study!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "I was compelled to throw myself from the window. Then he drenched me with water from the fountain—squirting it upon me with his trunk, sir."

"I saw it," said the Head.

"But—but it was the fault of the rotter who irritated him, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Some cad put a sharp stone under his girth, to irritate the skin, and made him wild."

"Is it possible that any St. Jim's boy would be so cruel and so wicked?" exclaimed the Head, shocked and angry.

"The stone was found there, sir."

"Do you know who did it?"

The juniors looked uncomfortable. They knew that it was Levison, and they intended to make Levison smart for it; but they did not want to sneak even about the end of the Fourth.

Before the Head could speak again there was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Captain Cambon came in.

"Monsieur," he exclaimed, "it is zat you are headmaster of zis school. Is it zat you permit ze cruelty to ze inoffensive animals?"

"Certainly not," said the Head.

"Zen look at zat!" said Cambon, holding up the stone. "Look at zat, monsieur! It is wild viz himself, n'est-ce-pas? Ze vicked stiek undair ze girth to drive my elephant wild viz himself, n'est-ce-pas? Ze vicked garçon!"

"Can you give me the boy's name, monsieur?" asked the Head.

"I do not know ze boy, sair, but I heard ze ozzers talk him Levison."

"Levison!" said the Head, frowning. "A boy who has been found guilty on a previous occasion of cruelty to animals." The Head rang for Toby again. "Kindly fetch Master Levison here at once!"

In a few minutes Levison entered the study. He was looking a little pale, but quite calm and collected.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, Levison," said the Head, regarding him sternly. "You are accused of having designedly played a trick to goad this gentleman's elephant—a cruel trick!"

"If Tom Merry says—"

"Merry has said nothing. This gentleman accuses you."

"Captain Cambon found him in the tent with the animals, and I saw him there,"

said Figgins, with a glare of angry contempt at the end of the Fourth.

"What have you to say, Levison?"

"I haven't done anything, sir."

"You were in the tent?"

"I just went in to see the animals, sir," said Levison meekly. "No harm in that, sir. I'm studying natural history specially, and I wanted to see the elephant at close quarters. I did nothing whatever to irritate him, sir."

"Ze vicked boy?" said Captain Cambon.

"If it was not you, zen who was it that placed zat stone where it would irritate ze elephant?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Levison.

"Perhaps Figgins may have done it."

"What!" roared Figgins.

"Silence!" said the Head. "I believe you are guilty, Levison."

Levison bit his lip.

"There is no evidence, sir!" he stammered. "I was there—but anybody else might have got into the tent just as easily as I did."

"It is true that the evidence is circumstantial," said the Head; "but the chief evidence against you, Levison, is furnished by your own character. You have been convicted before of cruelty to animals, which shows that there is a cowardly and cruel strain in your nature. I shall do my best to eradicate it. I am going to cane you severely, Levison."

"Oh, sir!"

"Silence! You may leave this matter to me, Mr. Ratcliff. Levison is undoubtedly the only person to blame, and he will be severely punished. But understand, Figgins, that I forbid you to introduce elephants or any such animals into the precincts of the school again."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins meekly.

And the juniors departed, and Captain Cambon followed them. The New House master came out, only half satisfied. He had suffered very much, and he would have been better pleased to see half a dozen fellows, at least, caned.

Still, there was something consoling in hearing the wild howls that proceeded from the Head's study after he left. Levison was "going through it," experiencing the only form of appeal to his feelings that he really understood—a severe caning.

"Jolly well out of that!" said Figgins, as the juniors emerged, relieved, into the quad.

"And although I wouldn't have given Levison away, I'm jolly glad he's got it in the neck."

"Yes, rather; the cad!"

"All might," asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, joining them.

"Right as rain!" said Figgins.

"The show's been wathah a fwost," said Arthur Augustus, with a grin.

"But we've got the takings, that's the chief point, and it will be a jolly good leg-up for the fund!" said Figgins.

"Yass, wathah; that's true enough."

"How much?" asked Tom Merry.

"We've got to pile in and count it up, but it must be three pounds at least."

And when the stewards piled together their takings, and added them up, they found that the total amount was three pounds five shillings—a very substantial sum, as Figgins proudly declared.

The School House juniors were anxious to devise some scheme for beating the result of Figgins & Co.'s effort, but it was decided that the sum obtained, together with subscriptions from the School House fellows, would be sufficient.

Altogether the sum of five pounds was raised, and on the following morning this amount was presented to Taggles, whose amazement knew no bounds. Never before had the old porter been so pleased, and for quite a good length of time such phrases as "I'll report yer!" and "Young rips!" were never thought of—let alone uttered—by Ephraim Taggles.

THE END.

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