

IN THIS ISSUE: **FREE PLATE OF BILLY BUNTER!**

The **Penny** **1 1/2**  
**Popular**

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New Series.

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



**BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL-ORDER ARRIVES—AT LAST!**



## BILLY BUNTER'S POSTAL-ORDER!

A Splendid Long, Complete Tale, dealing with the Early Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### A Most Important Anniversary.

"It's lucky it comes on a half-holiday!" remarked Billy Bunter of the Remove at Greyfriars.

No one replied.

Bunter's remark was not made to anyone in particular, and no one in particular felt bound to make any answer.

Besides, no one knew to what the remark referred.

Billy Bunter had been sitting quite silent and thoughtful in the armchair in Study No. 1 for a good five minutes.

He had broken the silence with that observation, and Harry Wharton, or Frank Nugent, or Hurree Janset Ram Singh hadn't the faintest idea what he was driving at.

So, as they were busy mending a "busted" football, and had their attention fully occupied, they didn't even look at Bunter.

The fat junior blinked at them through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—" he remarked.

Wharton gave a grunt.

"I say, you know," said Bunter, "it's lucky it's a half-holiday!"

"It's not a half-holiday," said Nugent, looking up at last. "What are you jabbering about? To-day's Tuesday, and Tuesday's not a half-holiday."

"I wasn't speaking about to-day, Nugent."

Nugent grunted.

"I was speaking about to-morrow," said Bunter, with emphasis, "and I said it's lucky it comes on a half-holiday!"

"Ass! Wednesday's always a half-holiday, isn't it?" growled Nugent. "Are you off your silly onion?"

"Oh, really—"

"Cheese it, Bunter!" said Wharton. "Can't you see we're busy?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I think you might give me a minute on an important occasion that occurs only once a year!"

"Eh?"

"To-morrow being a half-holiday, we shall be able to celebrate it—"

"Celebrate what?"

"My birthday."

"Your what?"

"It's my birthday to-morrow," explained Bunter.

"Well, there's nothing important about that," said Wharton.

"Oh, really! I suppose this study is going to get up some little celebration?" said the fat junior indignantly. "I should think you'd have the decency to stand some sort of feed, anyway!"

"What rot!" said Wharton. "We don't celebrate our own birthdays, except with a few extra tarts for tea, or something of that sort. You see—"

"But it's different in my case."

"How so?"

"Well, as I'm the most important member of this study, it's only right that more attention should be paid to my birthday."

"Of all the cheek—"

"I don't see it. I was thinking of a big party, with all the best fellows in the Remove invited, and the girls from Cliff House!" said Bunter enthusiastically. "I think it would be ripping; and as it fortunately comes on a half-holiday, it's very convenient."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another. The astounding coolness of the Owl of the Remove took their breath away.

Billy Bunter did not seem to see it. He blinked at them from the armchair with a perfectly satisfied expression.

"But where are the funds to come from?" Wharton asked at last.

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Bunter snorted.

"Isn't that just like you?" he exclaimed. "I call it a low, money-grubbing mind that's always thinking of considerations of that sort. I take a much higher view of things. The money will come from somewhere."

"From somebody, you mean," said Nugent.

"Well, I'm expecting a postal-order this evening," said Bunter. "As a matter of fact, I'm expecting several postal-orders to-morrow, as it's my birthday. But, in any case, should there be any delay in the delivery of my postal-orders—"

"There might be, you know," Nugent suggested sarcastically.

"Well, in that case, I suppose you fellows would be ready to stand something, and I could settle it afterwards when my remittances arrive."

"No fear!" said Wharton. "We've had enough of lending you money on postal-orders that never arrive!"

"Well, money will have to be raised somehow," said Bunter. "As I've got guests coming, it's absolutely necessary."

"Guests—eh? What guests?"

"Well, there are the Cliff House girls—Marjorie, and Miss Clara, and several others, and—"

"You've had the cheek to ask them?" demanded Wharton.

"Why not?"

"And who's going to pay for the feed?"

"Well, my postal-orders will arrive to-morrow, or even to-night, and—"

"They won't!" said Nugent. "In fact, they never do!"

"Well, if they're delayed in the post—"

"It'll mean that we shall have to stand a feed to keep up appearances!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Wharton! I—"

"You fat young scoundrel!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "Do you think we're going to be bounced out of a fortnight's pocket-money in this way?"

"Well, the guests are coming now—"

"You shouldn't have asked them!" said Wharton angrily. "If you had the money to feed them, it would be all right; but—"

"I shall have the money," said Bunter. "My postal-orders are bound to arrive—"

"I don't think!"

"Well, if I happen to be short of funds I suppose you won't let honoured guests go away hungry? It'll give them a nice opinion of Greyfriars' hospitality, I must say!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another, and rose from their chairs.

The same thought was in every mind. Billy Bunter blinked at them inquiringly.

"Well, have you thought it over?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And what have you decided upon?"

"We've decided to give you a jolly good bumping for your fearful cheek," said Wharton. "Collar him, you fellows!"

[Billy Bunter was promptly "collared."

"Ow! Leggo!" he shrieked. "Help! Murder! Fire!"

"Bump him!"

Bump!

"Yarooooogh!"

Bump!

"Ow!"

And then the fat junior was swung to the doorway, and sent along the passage with a powerful heave which sent him skidding on the imoleum almost to the end of the stairs. He stopped there, and sat blinking.

"Ow! Beasts!" he roared. "Look here! I say, you fellows—"

But at that moment the door of Study No. 1 slammed, and Bunter was left to address his eloquent discourse to the desert air.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### Bulstrode Has an Idea.

**B**ULSTRODE, Hazeldene, and Tom Brown the New Zealander, were in their study when the door opened, and a large pair of spectacles glimmered in.

Behind them came the fat face of Billy Bunter.

The three juniors looked round at Bunter, and Bulstrode's hand strayed idly towards the inkpot.

Bunter was too short-sighted to see that, or to notice Bulstrode's expression, and he came cheerfully in.

"I say, you fellows," he said, "you haven't forgotten about to-morrow?"

"No," said Hazeldene; "that's all right."

"Your sister is coming—and Miss Clara?"

Hazeldene laughed.

"Yes; if there's a feed I'll bring them," he said. "I sha'n't say a word to them about it until the feed's a cert, though."

"Oh, really—"

"We know you, you see, Buntie."

"Oh, that's all right! I've written to Marjorie, and told her you're coming over to fetch her," said Bunter, blinking.

"You cheeky young beggar!" said Hazeldene indignantly.

"Well, I thought I'd better give Marjorie plenty of notice," said Bunter. "She might want to wear something special, you know, on the occasion of my birthday. But I really came here to speak to Bulstrode. If you fellows wouldn't mind giving me a minute I—"

Tom Brown rose, with a grin, and Hazeldene looked at Bulstrode. The burly Removeite shook his head.

"Don't trouble to go," he said. "Bunter may want a private interview with me, but I don't want one with him. I know his game."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"And I'm not going to give him any money."

"I hope you don't think I came here to ask for money, Bulstrode," said Bunter, with dignity.

The burly Removeite stared at him in astonishment.

"What do you want, then?" he asked. "If you don't want money, I suppose the age of miracles has come again then, and so it's possible that you want to pay some of what you owe me—a good many pounds by this time, I think."

"I keep careful account of any little sums I borrow," said Bunter. "I'm not the kind of fellow to be under monetary obligations to anybody, I hope."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! Look here, the trouble is that the country post is so unreliable, and I may not get a remittance I'm expecting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So if you liked to advance me five pounds, I'd give you my written promise to pay—"

"Better make it five hundred," said Tom Brown sarcastically; "then I'd contribute a halfpenny."

"Well, I could make a pound do."

"Don't stint yourself," said Bulstrode. "You're quite as likely to get five pounds out of me as one."

"Well, you see, I must have the money, and I don't think my guests ought to go away hungry because my postal-order hasn't arrived."

"Have you done?"

"Yes," said Bunter, blinking.  
 "Well, there's the door."  
 "Eh? The door?"  
 "Yes. A door's an article used for keeping silly asses out of a room," explained Bulstrode patiently. "You go out into the passage, close the door behind you, latch it, and then it's all right. Savvy?"  
 "Oh, really—"  
 "You've got all you're likely to get here," said Bulstrode. "You may as well cut."  
 Bulstrode's hand closed on the inkpot now.  
 "But, I say, you fellows—"  
 "Do you want anything more?" asked Bulstrode.  
 "Yes. I—"  
 "Well, here it is."  
 Bulstrode's hand jerked, and a skilfully projected stream of ink caught Billy Bunter fairly upon his fat little nose, and scattered over his fat face.  
 The Owl of the Remove gave a wild yell.  
 "Oh!"  
 "Do you want anything more?" asked Bulstrode kindly. "I've some gum here if you'd like it. Hand over the gum-bottle, Brown."  
 "Here you are!"  
 But Billy Bunter was already outside the study.  
 The three juniors roared with laughter as the door closed.  
 Bunter went down the passage, dripping with ink, and was greeted with loud laughter by all he passed on his way to the nearest bath-room.  
 In Bulstrode's study there was no sound but laughter for several minutes.  
 "The cheeky ass!" said Hazeldene, at last. "That's his way—to ask fellows to a feed, and then expect them to stand the exes. It's Bunter all over."  
 Bulstrode grinned.  
 "I've got an idea!" he exclaimed. "Bunter's expecting postal-orders. Why shouldn't he have some?"  
 "Eh?"  
 "Well, you can get 'em for a shilling each," said Bulstrode; "and a lot of fun could be got for a few bob that way. By Jove, I'll do it! There's time to get down to the post-office before the next collection."  
 "But—"  
 "Keep it dark!" exclaimed Bulstrode, getting up, and taking his cap.  
 Next moment he had departed from the study.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**Bunter Receives a Postal-Order.**

"LETTERS!" said Harry Wharton, that evening. "Anybody expecting a letter? Here's the evening post."  
 Billy Bunter came quickly forward.  
 "I'm expecting a postal-order," he remarked. "Any for me, old man? Name of Bunter."  
 "Yes, sir," said the postman.  
 "Oh, good!"  
 Billy Bunter took the letter. He opened it at once, and uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.  
 "It's come!"  
 A dozen pairs of eyes were upon him at once.  
 "What's come?"  
 "Not the postal-order?"  
 "Great Scott!"  
 Billy Bunter smiled serenely.  
 The envelope addressed to him had contained a postal-order.  
 There was no letter with it; but Bunter did not mind that.  
 The latter had doubtless been forgotten; but Bunter did not mind the letter being forgotten so long as his correspondent did not forget the postal-order.  
 An interesting ring of juniors gathered round Bunter.  
 The Owl of the Remove had talked so much about his expected postal-orders, and he received them so very seldom, that the event was a really interesting one.  
 "It's a real postal-order!" said Ogilvy, as Bunter unfolded it. "Warranted genuine!"  
 "Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "Wonders will never cease, intirely!"  
 "How much is it for?" asked Hazeldene.  
 Bunter blinked at it in the light.  
 "H'm! It's not a very big one," he confessed. "But—"  
 "It's a bob!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Well, a bob's a bob!" said Bunter, blinking round at the juniors. "This isn't really

the postal-order I was expecting. This is another. I'm expecting a much bigger one, you know."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "I think I'll pop over to Mrs. Mimble's and have a snack with—"  
 "Haden't you better put that bob towards the feed to-morrow?" asked Wharton.  
 "Oh, there's no need to do that!" said Bunter quickly. "The other postal-orders I'm expecting will pay for the feed."  
 "Look here—"  
 But Bunter was only looking in one direction that moment, and that was in the direction of the tuckshop.  
 He scuttled across the dusky Close as fast as his fat legs would carry him.  
 Bulstrode and Skinner and several other juniors followed him, and entered the tuckshop, to find the Owl of the Remove tapping on the counter.  
 Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour with a grim frown.  
 "I want you to cash a postal-order for me, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter.  
 "Oh!" ejaculated Mrs. Mimble.  
 "Here it is."  
 "Dear me! You really have a postal-order, then!" exclaimed Mrs. Mimble in astonishment.  
 The fat junior glared.

"I'm sorry, Master Bunter. I can't help it."  
 "Let me have the tarts, and take the postal-order as security," suggested Bunter. "I'll go down to the village to-morrow and cash it."  
 Mrs. Mimble replied with a shake of the head.  
 The disconsolate junior turned to Bulstrode, who was grinning with enjoyment.  
 "I say, Bulstrode, will you cash this for me? You know you can get the money on it."  
 "Rats!"  
 "Oh, really—"  
 "And you weren't going to let me have a single tart!" said Bulstrode, with a grin.  
 "My dear chap, your coolness is too good. The best thing you can do is to write to the chap who sent you the postal-order, and blow him up for his carelessness."  
 "Oh, I couldn't do that!" said Bunter. "It's from my rich uncle—"  
 "What?"  
 "It's from one of my rich uncles, you know, and I shouldn't care to offend him. I expect to get about ten thousand pounds in his will."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Bunter blinked at the burly Removite.  
 "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at,



**BILLY BUNTER IN A BAD MOOD!**

"You just cash it, and hand out some tarts!" he said.  
 "Good!" said Bulstrode. "We'll all have some tarts, as Bunter's standing treat!"  
 "I'm sincerely sorry, Bulstrode, but the money won't run to it. You see, I've only got a bob, and that's not really enough for myself. I'm not greedy, you know, but I have to keep up a delicate constitution by taking constant nourishment. That's how it is."  
 Mrs. Mimble was looking at the postal-order dubiously.  
 She put on her glasses, and blinked at it through them, and Bunter blinked at her.  
 "Well, what's the matter?" asked the fat junior sarcastically. "Do you think it isn't a good one? Think I wrote it out myself in the study?"  
 Mrs. Mimble shook her head.  
 "I'm afraid I can't cash this, Master Bunter," she said. "I don't think I could get the money for it myself."  
 "What rot! I—"  
 "You see, it's made payable to you by name, and the post-office where payment is to be made is filled in," explained Mrs. Mimble. "It's all right, but you'll have to go down to Friardale yourself to cash it at the post-office."  
 Bunter snorted.  
 "It's too far, and the gates are locked now, too."

Bulstrode! I've got several rich uncles, and a good many titled relations, and I get my postal-orders from them."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Oh, really, Bulstrode—"  
 "But I thought there wasn't a letter with this postal-order?" suggested Bulstrode.  
 "How do you know which uncle it's from?"  
 "Oh, I recognised the writing, of course!"  
 "The writing?" shrieked Bulstrode.  
 "Yes, certainly. I suppose I ought to know my rich uncle's writing?"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "What's the matter?"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 And Bulstrode staggered out of the tuckshop, roaring with laughter.  
 Billy Bunter blinked after him in astonishment. He didn't know why his recognition of the handwriting of his rich uncle should afford Bulstrode so much merriment.  
 He took up the postal-order.  
 "You sure you can't cash this, Mrs. Mimble?" he asked.  
 "I'm sorry, Master Bunter, but I'm quite sure."  
 "If I have to take it down to the village I shall spend it at Uncle Clegg's shop, you know!" said Bunter warningly.  
 "Very well, Master Bunter."  
 Bunter grunted.  
 "I think you're a most unreasonable

woman, Mrs. Mimble. You'll lose one of your best customers one of these days, from your lack of business ability."

Mrs. Mimble smiled, and returned to her little parlour, and Billy Bunter disconsolately left the tuckshop.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. More Postal-Orders.

**T**HERE was a weight upon the mind of William George Bunter for the remainder of that evening.

His face was clouded when he went up to bed with the rest of the Remove.

It was not that he had no prospect of raising the promised feast for the morrow—unless his friends came to his aid—but he had a postal-order upon him which was uncashable.

He had never been in such a situation before, and he found it most unpleasant.

He had tried to palm the postal-order off on other fellows, in vain.

He had offered it to Gatty of the Second

"Oh, really—"

"You know which one it is, by the handwriting, you know," said Bulstrode.

And there was a roar of laughter.

Bulstrode had confided his little plot to a good many of the Remove, and most of the others guessed that Bunter was being japed in some way.

But the fat junior never thought of that himself.

He could never have understood anybody parting with hard cash for a jape; and if Bulstrode had confessed to him, Bunter would probably not have believed a word of it.

Bunter went to bed in a sulky temper.

He was hungry, as usual, and all the more so because he had, as it were, six twopenny tarts, or twelve penny ones, or a dozen buns, in the form of paper money, which he could not eat.

Bob Cherry's suggestion that he should eat the postal-order was received with laughter by all the juniors excepting Bunter, who preserved a sulky silence.

Billy Bunter went to sleep after lights

Bunter draw the bedclothes round him.

"I think I should like an extra snooze this morning," he remarked. "It's pretty hard cheese if a chap can't have an extra snooze on his birthday. Suppose you went to the Head and mentioned it, Wharton."

Wharton laughed.

"Get up, and don't be an ass!" he said.

Bunter unwillingly turned out of bed.

He was the last down of the Remove, as usual, though he did the least washing in the morning.

But as he reached the bottom of the stairs Skinner called out to him.

"Expecting a letter this morning, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter, quickening his footsteps. "Is there one for me?"

"Yes."

Bunter came up with a rolling run.

The letter was there sure enough.

It felt very thin, and when he opened it he found there was nothing inside but a postal-order.

But Bunter would have preferred a postal-order to any number of letters.

"My hat!" said Bulstrode. "It's raining postal-orders!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"That's the best of having rich relations and titled friends," he remarked. "A fellow is bound to get decent tips."

"Is that from your rich uncle?" asked Bulstrode, with interest.

"Yes; another rich uncle."

"How ripping to have a bagful of rich uncles!" said Bulstrode. "I suppose you know which uncle it is by the handwriting?"

"Yes," said Bunter, blinking at the postal-order. "It's only for a bob, but that's a mistake; he meant to put in a pound one as well, and make it a guinea. However, this will do for a snack before breakfast."

"Mrs. Mimble hasn't opened yet," said Trevor, as the fat junior hurried off to the door.

"She'll jolly well have to open, then!"

And in two minutes Billy Bunter was pounding at the door of the school shop.

Mrs. Mimble opened it after some minutes' delay; she did not look very pleased at seeing Bunter.

"Really, Master Bunter, you should not come here before the shop is opened!" she exclaimed, with asperity.

"I've got a postal-order—"

"I've already told you I cannot cash it."

"But this is another one—from another uncle!" said Bunter. "You must cash this one, Mrs. Mimble! The name of the office isn't filled in."

"Well, give it to me!" said Mrs. Mimble ungraciously.

Bunter handed her the postal-order.

"I'll have tarts," he said. "Jam-tarts—"

Mrs. Mimble uttered an exclamation.

"I cannot take this, Master Bunter!"

"What? Why?"

"It's crossed."

"Crossed!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Look at it!"

Bunter blinked at the two pen-strokes crossing the postal-order from top to bottom, and then blinked at Mrs. Mimble.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," said Mrs. Mimble impatiently, "when a postal-order's crossed, it can only be paid through a banker. You ought to know that. It is of no use to me."

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

The dame closed the door with a slam.

Bunter stood with the postal-order in his hand, his fat face full of dismay.

"Well, of all the rotten things, I think this is about the rottenest!" he exclaimed.

"Fancy a chap being loaded up with postal-orders, and not being able to get any grub! It's rotten—it's awful!"

Bunter toddled back to the School House. Snoop stood in the doorway waving a letter.

"That for me?" asked Bunter.

"Yes; you've overlooked this one."

"Oh, good!"

Bunter took the letter—another very thin one.

There was a postal order inside when he slit the envelope.

It was for a shilling, and to his great relief it was not crossed.

"Mrs. Mimble will take this," he remarked, with satisfaction.

Snoop chuckled as he looked over his shoulder.

"She won't," he remarked.

"Why not?"

"It's payable to you at the post-office in Courtfield. You'll have to walk to Courtfield to cash it."

Bunter gave a gasp.

**THIS  
SPLENDID  
PLATE  
WILL BE  
GIVEN FREE  
WITH—**



**NEXT  
FRIDAY'S  
ISSUE OF  
THE PENNY  
POPULAR!**

Form for ninepence, but Gatty wasn't taking any.

Even Snoop wouldn't give him sixpence for it.

Snoop knew very well that the postal-order could only be cashed by Bunter himself, and so he would have to trust it into the fat junior's hands for that purpose.

And once it was in his hands again, by Bunter's peculiar mental processes, he would certainly regard it as his own, and keep the shilling.

Bunter was not to be trusted, and so, although he explained almost with tears in his eyes that the postal-order was as good as solid money, he couldn't persuade anybody to give him solid money for it.

In his mind, Bunter had spent that shilling a dozen times already.

Mentally, he had devoured it in the form of tarts, in the form of cakes, doughnuts, and table jelly, of cream puffs and gingerbread.

Sovereigns would not have really purchased the delicacies Bunter felt he could have had if he could only have turned that piece of printed paper into money.

But he couldn't.

"Got rid of that postal-order?" asked Bulstrode, when the fat junior came into the Remove dormitory.

Bunter blinked at him reproachfully.

"No, I haven't," he said. "If you like to take it—"

"Why not send a wire to your rich uncle?"

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out; a few things short of earthquakes and tornadoes would have kept him awake.

But his sleep was troubled; he could not help dreaming of the postal-order which he could not turn into eatables.

He woke up several times in imaginary efforts to convince Mrs. Mimble that, as a business woman, she was bound to take the postal-order, and immediately hand out the required jam-tarts.

Once he dreamed that he actually had the tarts, and was eating them; and from this blissful vision he was aroused by the clang of the rising-bell.

Bunter blinked, and sat up in bed.

No one looked at him in particular, and a frown gathered on the brow of the fat junior.

He felt that his natal day ought to be taken some more notice of than that.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Rising-bell's stopped," said Bob Cherry. "You'd better get up."

"I say, it's my birthday, you know!"

"Well, you have got to get up on a birthday, same as any other day."

"Well, I think you might wish a chap many happy returns of the day, at all events," said Bunter indignantly.

"But we don't," said Nugent. "If you're as much trouble on all other birthdays as on this one, the fewer you have the better."

"Oh, really—"

"Anyway, you'd better turn out," said Harry Wharton, "otherwise some prefect will come and celebrate your birthday for you with a licking."

"Oh, really—"  
 "Careless of your uncles!" said Bulstrode, with a grin. "Another uncle, I suppose?"  
 "Ye-es," stammered Bunter.  
 "Never knew a chap with so many careless uncles," said Bulstrode. "You must have brought them up very badly, Bunter! Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Bunter did not laugh.  
 He had three postal-orders, and not one of them was worth a twopenny tart to him at the present moment.  
 Billy Bunter looked at them, and his feelings were too deep for words.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**

**A Pleasant Prospect for Bunter.**

**H**ARRY WHARTON wore a worried look.

He signed to his chums to join him as he went out into the Close after breakfast for the brief interval till morning prayers.

"We've got to settle about this afternoon!" he exclaimed. "Bunter has invited Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara and several more of the Cliff House girls. We shall be glad to see them, of course, but it's a difficult position. That young cad has no right to ask people he can't entertain. We might all be occupied this afternoon, for all he knew or cared!"

"The mightfulness is great!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his peculiar English.

"Fortunately we are not. We've the time to look after guests, but not the tin. I'm in a pretty stony state!"

"Same here!" said Bob Cherry.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"What about you, Nugent?"

Nugent turned his trousers-pockets inside out. The action was eloquent enough, without words.

"And Wun Lung's low down, too," said Bob Cherry. "He's generally got tin; but he's short now, I know, or I'd borrow from him."

"Well, we've got to stand a decent feed!" said Wharton.

"That's so!"

"But a decent feed costs money. Shall we decide to raise it?"

"How can we?"

Wharton coloured a little.

"I shall ask Mr. Quelch to advance me some of my pocket-money," he replied. "He has said that he would do so if ever I needed it."

The chums were silent.

Such a resource was not unknown at Greyfriars, but to Harry Wharton, who had a strong feeling against getting into debt, it was peculiarly repugnant.

But Bunter's action had left him no alternative.

"Well, it seems the only way," said Bob at last.

"Looks like it."

Wharton nodded abruptly.

"Then I'll do it!" he said. "That's settled!"

"But, hang it all!" said Nugent. "It's a bit thick if Bunter is to score all along the line like this, after acting the goat in that way! It will encourage him to do it again, too, whenever he wants a feed. He'll only have to ask somebody whose feelings we don't want to hurt, and then he'll get what he wants."

Wharton smiled grimly.

"He'll get more than he wants," he said.

"Bunter has met his match this time. We're going to stand the feed because he's let us in for it; but Billy Bunter's not going to be there."

"What?"

"Bunter won't be there."

"Ha, ha! Not at his own birthday-feed?"

"It's not going to be his birthday-feed. We'll have the little party, and Bunter won't be there. And it will be a lesson to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But how will you keep him away?" asked Nugent.

"Wild horses wouldn't drag Bunter away from a feed if he once got on the scent of it."

"We'll have the feed in the open air, as the weather's so fine," said Harry. "We can manage it al fresco. We'll have it under the trees near the old tower."

"Good!"

"And we'll shove Bunter in the tower, and lock him up there so that he can't get out. And he can have the pleasure of watching us from the window."

Bob Cherry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors yelled at the idea.

The mere thought of Bunter watching his own birthday feast without being able to join

in it was excruciating; and there was no doubt that it would be a much-needed lesson to the fat junior.

His habit of causing an awkward situation and leaving it to others to straighten out was one that called for correction. And if his present scheme had proved a success, there was not the slightest doubt that he would have repeated it often enough.

Before prayers Harry Wharton went in to see Mr. Quelch, and, with unusual colour in his cheeks, asked him if he could have an advance on his pocket-money.

The Form-master asked him no questions, to his great relief, and handed out thirty shillings at once, and Wharton thanked him and departed.

Bunter was looking for Harry, but he did not see him until prayers.

Then he captured him on the way to the Form-room.

"I say, Wharton," he exclaimed, tugging at Harry's sleeve—"I say! Have you fellows made any arrangements about this afternoon yet?"

they went out Snoop pointed out the letter to Bunter in the rack.

Bunter annexed it at once, and opened it on the spot.

"Postal-order?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, rather!"

"How much?"

"Ha, ha! Another bob!" said Tom Brown.

"Well, the bobs mount up," said Bunter.

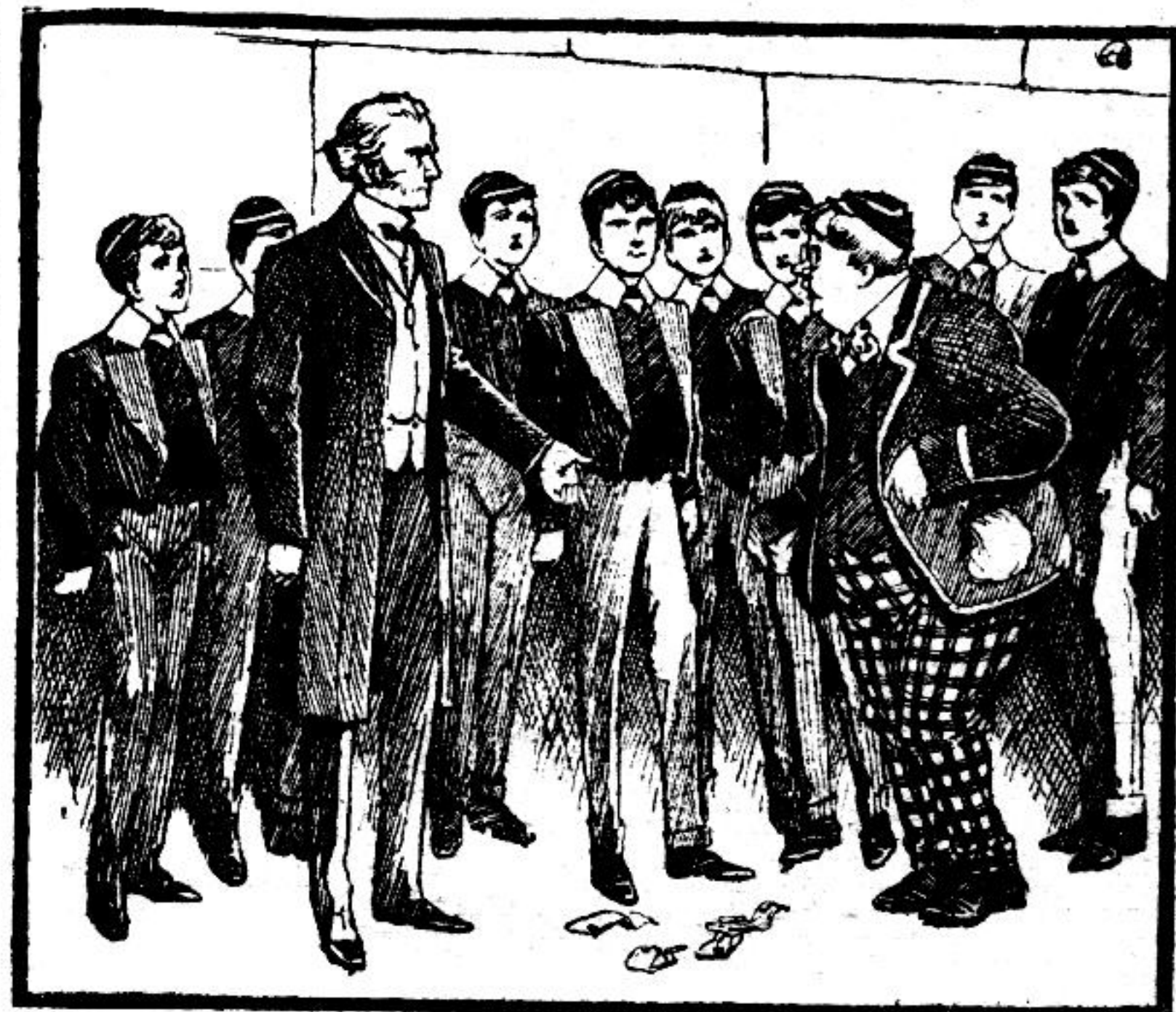
"It ain't every chap who gets a regular rain of postal-orders on his birthday. I think my relations are rallying up in a very good style. This makes four bob altogether; and I've no doubt I shall get another by every post to day. I think it's very decent of my relations and my titled friends to think of me like this."

"Another uncle, I suppose?" said Bulstrode, with a grin.

Bunter blinked at the postal-order.

"No; this is from my cousin, Major Bunter," he said. "He's an officer in the Indian Army, you know—very much in Society."

"And he can only spare you a bob?" said



**BILLY BUNTER MAKES A BLUNDER!**

"Yes!" said Harry curtly.

"There's going to be a feed?"

"Yes."

"A big one?"

"Yes."

Bunter rubbed his fat hands, and blinked with satisfaction.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's the tune!"

"But you won't be there!" said Wharton.

Bunter stared.

"Eh?"

"You heard what I said!"

"You said I wouldn't be there," said Bunter, in wonder. "I don't know what you mean. I suppose a fellow is going to be at his own birthday-feed?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders, and made no further reply.

He had warned Bunter what to expect, and that was enough.

But as the juniors walked into the Form-room there was a very puzzled expression on the fat junior's face.

He was thoroughly bewildered by Wharton's remark.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.**

**Bunter Gets Rid of the Postal-Orders.**

**L**ETTER for you, Bunter!"

"What?"

"There's another letter for you!"

"My word!"

Letters for Bunter seemed to be raining.

The Remove had left the Form-room for the morning lessons at eleven o'clock, and as

Frank Nugent. "He should really have left off bridge one evening and saved another shilling, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where does he live?" asked Ogilvy.

"Oh, he has chambers in Piccadilly, and a big country house in—in Shropshire!" said Bunter, in his airiest way.

"How curious!"

"What's curious?"

"That a chap who lives in Piccadilly and Shropshire should come to a little village like Friardale, in this part of the country, to buy a shilling postal-order," said the Scottish junior blandly.

"Eh?"

"That postal-order was bought in Friardale last night, as you can see by the stamp on it," said Ogilvy.

"Oh!"

"The major must be staying there," said Ogilvy. "It would be a good idea for a lot of us to go and see him this afternoon, as he's there, and it's a half-holiday."

Bunter flushed.

The major was a figment of his fertile imagination—as the other fellows knew, in point of fact.

"I—I don't think he'd like to be disturbed, you know!" stammered Bunter. "I—I think I'd better cut off to Mrs. Mimble with this postal-order. I feel that I ought to have a snack to keep up my strength."

And the fat junior hurried off, leaving the other fellows grinning.

They had noticed something about the

postal-order which had escaped the attention of the short-sighted Owl of the Remove.

Mrs. Mimble did not look any too amiable as Bunter presented himself with a postal-order in his hand.

She was getting "fed up," as it were, with Billy Bunter and his postal-orders.

"I want you to cash this, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter, with considerable dignity. "It's a new one. I'm getting quite a lot!"

Mrs. Mimble glanced at the order.

"I can't!" she said curtly.

"Why not?"

"The name of the post-office at Laverock is filled in. You will have to go there to cash it."

Bunter blinked at the order.

Sure enough, there was the name of a town five miles at least from Greyfriars, and Bunter knew that the return fare by railway would be at least a shilling.

"Oh dear!" he murmured.

He left the tuckshop disconsolately.

"Well," exclaimed Bulstrode, meeting him, "had a good feed?"

"No!" grunted Bunter. "Mrs. Mimble is so unbusinesslike. She's afraid to take paper-money, you see. She won't cash my postal-orders. I suppose you wouldn't mind taking them, Bulstrode?"

"Certainly not!"

Bunter brightened up.

"There are four now, and they're a bob each," he said. "Here they are."

"Sure you don't want them?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You want me to take them?"

"Certainly!" said Bunter, wondering why the juniors standing round Bulstrode were grinning. "I shall be very much obliged."

"Oh, all right, then!"

Bulstrode took the postal-orders that Bunter held out, put them in his pocket, and walked away.

The fat junior blinked after him, and then ran and caught him by the sleeve.

"I say, Bulstrode, you haven't given me the money!" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

"The money!"

"What money?" demanded the burly Removite, with an expression of surprise. "I don't owe you any money, Bunter!"

"The postal-orders, you know. It's four bob."

"Nonsense!"

"They're a shilling each, you know!"

"Stuff! You gave them to me!"

"What?"

"And all the fellows heard you say that you didn't want them, and that you wanted me to take them!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Didn't he, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather!" said Skinner. "I heard him!"

"And he never said a word about my handing him any money, did he?"

"He certainly didn't."

"But I—I say—"

"It doesn't matter what you say now," said Bulstrode loftily. "It's too late! You should have said what you meant at the time."

"But—"

"It's settled now."

Bulstrode walked away again.

Bunter stared at him in speechless amazement and rage for a moment, and then bounded in pursuit.

Bulstrode quickened his pace, and Bunter followed, the juniors crowding after them in great glee.

The Owl of the Remove caught Bulstrode by the sleeve and stopped him.

"Are you going to give me four bob?" he shouted.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"Will you give me three for them, then?"

"Certainly not!"

"What will you offer for the four?"

"Nothing!"

"Then give them back to me, you blessed thief!" exclaimed Bunter. "Give me my postal-orders! Hand them over! D'you hear?"

"They're not yours—they're mine!"

"Look here—"

"Did he give them to me, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!" came the chorus.

"Give them to me!" shrieked Bunter, clinging to Bulstrode, as he made a motion to walk away again. "Gimme my postal-orders!"

Bulstrode grinned, and grasped the fat junior to throw him off.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 1.

As he threw his arms round Bunter he easily contrived to slip the four postal-orders in a bunch into the fat junior's jacket-pocket without Bunter being in the least aware of the action.

Then he twisted Bunter over and sat him on the ground, and walked away.

Bunter sat dazed for a moment, and then leaped up like a Jack-in-the-box, and dashed after Bulstrode, yelling:

"Stop, thief!"

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Little Too Hasty.

"MY goodness!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. The Head of Greyfriars was stepping out of the School House, and he stopped in astonishment as he heard a shout of "Stop, thief!"

Bulstrode was striding towards the House, grinning, and Billy Bunter was pelting after him as fast as his fat little legs could go, and the others crowded after Bunter.

Dr. Locke looked at them in surprise.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Bless my soul! Bulstrode, stop! What is the matter? Bunter, what do you mean?"

"The Head!"

"Phew!"

"My hat!"

Bulstrode stopped.

Bunter came up, panting, and the other juniors quieted down.

It was all fun, but there was never any telling how a matter might end when the Head got mixed up in it.

Bulstrode was quite cool, however.

"Bunter," said the Head sternly, "how dare you call out such a thing after Bulstrode?"

Bunter panted.

"Let him give me my postal-orders, sir!"

"What?"

"He's got my money!"

"Your money?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Locke turned his stern glance upon the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode met it without finching.

"Have you any of Bunter's money, Bulstrode?" asked the Head.

"No, sir."

"Liar!" ejaculated Bunter.

"You must not use that word, Bunter." "But he's got it, sir—postal-orders! It's the same thing."

Dr. Locke frowned.

"I hope you are not merely prevaricating, Bulstrode?" he said severely. "Have you either money or postal-orders belonging to Bunter?"

"No, sir."

"It's a lie!" shrieked Bunter.

"Bunter!"

"He's got four postal-orders, sir. I gave them to him to cash, and he didn't give me any money, and he won't give them back."

The Head looked worried.

"I cannot understand this," he said. "I cannot think that Bulstrode would keep any money belonging to you, Bunter."

"He's got it, sir!"

"But—"

"Have him searched, sir! I believe he's got the postal-orders crumpled up in his hand, sir! He had just now."

"Open your hands, Bulstrode!"

The Removite obeyed. They were certainly empty.

"Well, he's got them in his pocket, sir," said Bunter. "He ought to be searched! He's got my postal-orders!"

"I haven't," said Bulstrode. "It's my belief that you've got them in your own pocket all the time."

"Liar!"

"Bunter!"

"Well, sir, make him give me my postal-orders!"

"He's got them himself," said Bulstrode. "I haven't!"

"Turn out your pockets, and let's see!" exclaimed Skinner, who had witnessed Bulstrode's trick on the fat junior.

"Rubbish!" said Bunter. "I know I haven't got them. Bulstrode has them."

"Turn out your pockets, Bunter!" said Dr. Locke. "We must first make certain that you have not made a mistake."

"But, sir—"

"Do as I tell you!"

"Oh, all right, sir."

Bunter discontentedly turned out his jacket-pockets.

Four postal-orders fluttered to the ground.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Bunter.

He picked up the postal-orders.

"Well?" said Dr. Locke, in a portentous voice, as the fat junior blinked at each order in dismay. "Well, Bunter?"

"It's—it's all right, sir," stammered Bunter.

"They are your postal-orders?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"They were in your pocket all the time?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. I suppose so."

"And you accused Bulstrode—"

"I—I don't understand it, sir. I—I gave them to Bulstrode, and he wouldn't give them back, and—"

"Let this be a lesson to you, Bunter, not to make hasty accusations," said the Head severely.

"Ye-e-e-es, sir."

"And in order to impress it on your mind you will take a hundred lines," said the Head. And he walked majestically away.

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He stood blinking at the postal-orders. The amazement in his face was so absurd that the juniors yelled with laughter.

"I—I don't quite understand," said Bunter. "How did the blessed things come into my pocket? Bulstrode knows he wouldn't give them to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young ass!" roared Bulstrode. "I put them there, you chump!"

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It—it was a rotten joke," said Bunter. "You ought to have owned up to the Head, and got me out of the row, if it was a jape."

"By George, so he ought!" said Ogilvy.

Bulstrode grunted.

"It's all right; I'll do the lines," he said. "But you'll have to thank me for the splendid birthday presents I sent you."

Bunter glared at the burly Removite.

"You haven't sent me any presents," he said. "One thing, I never expected anything from you."

"Why, I sent you four postal-orders."

"You jolly well didn't!"

"Yes, I did," said Bulstrode. "You've got 'em in your pocket now."

"I haven't."

"Don't tell lies, Bunter!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "There are four postal-orders in your pocket."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Bunter, "but they came from my rich uncles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors burst into a roar of laughter.

Bunter glared at them indignantly.

"You fat chump!" said Bulstrode, grinning. "Those postal-orders came from Friardale Post Office, and I bought them all last evening, and addressed them to you."

"You—you—"

"Mr. Coots promised to post them to catch different posts for me."

"Oh!"

"And to hear the young ass roll out lies about his uncles and aunts!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "And he knew which uncle and which aunt by the handwriting, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's face was a study.

"You rotters!" he cried indignantly. "I—I never thought you'd do anything like that. And as for you, Bulstrode, you're jolly well not going to have those postal-orders back."

"Aren't I?" said Bulstrode, striding towards the fat junior.

But Bunter saw him coming, and he scuttled across the quad as fast as his fat legs would carry him.

Bulstrode and the others roared with laughter; evidently they were perfectly satisfied with the success of the scheme.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter's Birthday.

"TEA!" said Bob Cherry. "Spirit-stove. Kettle of water, and extra jug of same. Sugar, milk, and a tin of condensed milk to fall back upon. That's my little lot."

And he set down his burdens on the spot chosen for the picnic.

Hurree Singh and Wharton had also brought several articles, and they placed them on the ground beside those of Bob Cherry's.

During the last half-hour the chums of the Remove had been very busy in preparing the feed that was to take place that afternoon.

The Cliff House girls had not arrived yet, but two cane chairs were ready for them on the picnic ground as soon as they should appear.

"Can't see Bunter anywhere," said Bob Cherry, as he placed the kettle on the spirit-stove.

"I expect Nugent will manage him all right," said Harry Wharton.

He looked back in the direction of the school.

The old tower blocked up the view, with the green trees round and near it.

He wondered how Nugent was getting on with Bunter.

Frank Nugent had been given the task of capturing the fat junior, and bringing him to the old tower.

But Wharton need not have been anxious.

Frank Nugent was quite equal to the task that had been assigned to him.

Billy Bunter was following the chums of the Remove to the scene of the picnic when Nugent slipped his arm into his.

"This way, Bunter," he said.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh? What for?"

"This way, my son."

"But—"

"Here you are!"

Bunter stared at Nugent in amazement, but with a strong grip on his arm he was unable to help himself.

Nugent calmly walked the fat junior off in the direction of the tower.

"I—I say, Nugent," he exclaimed, as they entered the tower, "what—what's the little game?"

"Come on!"

"But—but I say—"

"This way!"

They went upstairs to the first floor.

Bunter hung back, and sat on the steps.

Nugent took a pin from his cuff.

"This way, Bunter!" he said.

"I'm not coming. I—Ow!"

Bunter yelled before the pin touched him.

Nugent gave him the slightest prick with it, and Bunter wriggled and yelled.

"Come on, chapple!"

"I—I won't! I—I mean, I will! All right!"

"Buck up, then!"

Bunter rolled into the room that had been prepared for him.

He stared about it, and glared at Nugent.

There was a chair in the room, a roll of bread, and a jug of water.

The room was quite bare of anything else.

"I—I don't understand this," said Bunter.

Nugent pointed to the window.

"Look!" he said.

Bunter went to the window, and blinked out into the Close.

In the distance he could see the trees surrounding the spot selected for the picnic, and through an opening in the foliage he saw the place itself, with a white cloth spread on the grass, and the juniors and the girls of Cliff House round it.

He turned back to Nugent.

"Well, what do you mean?" he asked.

"That's all the feed you're going to have," said Frank, pointing to the bread and water. "Savvy?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You've acted like a worm!" went on Nugent, holding up his finger magisterially. "You've got us into standing a feed this afternoon without our having intended anything of the sort. You thought you could blackmail us—that's the word—into feeding you, because we shouldn't want to look inhospitable to outside people. You thought you had us."

"Oh, really—"

"Well, we're standing the feed, and we're

going to stand it for ourselves, not for you," said Nugent. "You won't have a bite!"

"I—"

"You can celebrate your birthday—if it really is your birthday—here, on bread and water," said Nugent. "Good-bye!"

"I won't stay here!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"You rotter! I—"

"Stand back!"

"I—I won't! I—"

Nugent laughed, and pushed the fat junior back as he ran to the door.

Bunter sat on the floor.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"Good-bye!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! Don't be a beast, you know! I— Oh!"

Slam!

The door closed, and Nugent turned the key on the outside.

He removed the key, in case anyone should chance to enter the tower; he did not mean to leave Bunter a loophole of escape.

With the key in his pocket he left the old tower.

Bunter hammered on the door of the room.

"Nugent! I say, Nugent!"

Only the echo of his own voice answered him.

"Nugent, come back! I—I say, you know. I'm sorry—sincerely sorry! I won't do it again! Do come and open the door! Help! Fire!"

The echoes answered.

Nugent was evidently gone.

Bunter wrenched at the door without being able to open it.

The lock was too strong for any efforts the fat junior could possibly make.

Bunter gave that up, and went to the window.

Beyond the sunny Close, through the green trees, he saw the shady scene of the picnic, and there he saw bright and merry faces.

The feed was beginning.

Bunter yelled and shouted, in the hope of making his voice heard.

But the distance was too great, especially as glass covered the narrow window, and could not be opened.

The bars set in the stonework prevented Bunter from reaching the dusty, cobwebby glass outside them.

He saw Nugent cross at a lazy stroll towards the picnickers.

Bunter was red with rage.

He had hoped against hope that it was a joke—that the chums of the Remove did not mean to inflict this well-deserved punishment upon him. But he realised now that the juniors were in deadly earnest.

As he watched the picnic through the barred window, it was borne in upon him that there was no hope!

At the sight of eating and drinking Bunter felt a wolfish hunger rise within him.

He turned to the roll of bread.

He had eaten enough that day for any two fellows, but he was quite ready to begin again.

He stood at the window, blinking at the picnic and munching the roll.

That was Billy Bunter's birthday feed!

That picnic outside the old tower proved to be one of the most enjoyable Harry Wharton & Co. had participated in.

Marjorie Hazeldene inquired the reason why Bunter was not present.

"He's not coming," said Harry Wharton, as he poured out the tea.

"But I understood it was his birthday-party," said Marjorie.

"Exactly; and you may be sure he'll come if he can!" said Harry Wharton. "He won't fail to turn up unless he's utterly prevented; and in that case, I'm sure you'll excuse him."

"Oh, yes!" said Marjorie. And she gave Wharton a quick glance.

She was not suspicious, but she could not help feeling that there was something a little odd about Bunter's not coming.

But Wharton's face was quite expressionless.

He turned from pouring out tea to cutting ham, and went on cutting it without moving a muscle, and Marjorie was half satisfied.

Anyway, there was no ignoring the undoubted fact that the party was better without Bunter.

And when at length it came to an end, the Remove chums saw the Cliff House girls back to their school.

Not once was Bunter's name mentioned.

But when Harry Wharton & Co. were on the homeward run Bob Cherry broke into a sudden chuckle.

"It's about time we let Bunter out, I think!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors strolled into the old tower.

It was getting dark, and the room was very dusky as they threw open the door, and looked for Bunter.

There was a fat form curled up in the chair, and the first sound that greeted the juniors was a deep, prolonged, and decidedly unmusical snore.

Bob Cherry shook the fat junior by the shoulder.

Bunter started, and awoke.

"Hallo! I—I say, you fellows, what's the row? Why, it's not light yet, and—and I can't hear the rising-bell!"

Bob Cherry roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! He thinks he's in the dorm!"

"Wake up, Bunter!"

Bunter rubbed his eyes, and adjusted his spectacles on his fat little nose.

He stood up, and blinked at the juniors.

He remembered all now.

"You—you beasts!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I might have perished with hunger here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On my birthday, too! Of all the rotten tricks—"

"The one you played on us was the rottenest!" said Bob Cherry. "You've been caught in your own trap this time, and serve you jolly well right! Don't you think so?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

The chums of the Remove left the tower.

Bunter toddled after them, and caught hold of Wharton's sleeve.

"I—I say, Wharton, I suppose the feed's all over?"

"Of course!"

"Everything gone?"

"Everything."

Bunter groaned.

"Ow! I'm hungry!"

Wharton relented.

"Well, you fat young fraud, if you like to admit that you deserved all you got, here's a two-bob-piece, and you can cut over to the tuckshop," he said.

Bunter blinked at the silver piece glistening in Harry Wharton's hand.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—I— Of course, I admit it! You're quite right. Gimme the two bob. I'll put it down to the account."

Three seconds later Billy Bunter was in the tuckshop, solacing himself to the exact extent of two shillings. But it was a long while before the fat junior gave up thinking of the feed he had missed and of the postal-orders which he had been unable to cash.

THE END.

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

## "BUNTER, THE FOOTBALLER!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Please order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance!

# THE RIVALS AT ROOKWOOD!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.



## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Chucked Out!

**J**IMMY SILVER sat in the corner of the crowded carriage listening to the buzz about him.

There were nine fellows in the carriage, and as each of them seemed bent upon making the greatest noise possible the din in that carriage was terrific.

Most of the other carriages in the long train were crowded, too, and from many of them proceeded an uproar of voices and musical instruments.

For it was the first day of the new term at Rookwood School, and two hundred odd boys were returning to the academic shades of Rookwood; not to mention a sprinkling of new boys, of whom Jimmy Silver was one.

In Jimmy Silver's carriage the hubbub became noisier than ever.

Everybody was talking at once, excepting Jimmy.

He was speaking to nobody, and nobody was speaking to him.

He was only a new boy.

He looked on and listened, greatly interested in the talk of his future schoolfellows, and wondering whether any of these old hands would condescend to notice his existence before they arrived at Rookwood.

"Nother quarter of an hour!" said a boy with curly hair and a prominent nose, looking at a big silver watch. "Mind you fellows keep an eye open for the first brake!"

"Right-ho, Tommy Dodd!"

"There's never enough brakes," went on Tommy Dodd, "and if we don't buck up Lovell and his crew will do us in the eye. I tell you, you chaps, we're simply going to give those Classical cads the kybosh this term!"

"Hear, hear!"

"All very well with your 'Hear, hear!' Tommy Cook. But how can a fellow 'Hear, hear!' when Doyle is making such a thumping row on that mouth-organ?" said Tommy Dodd. "Chuck it, Tommy, for goodness' sake!"

Doyle—evidently the youth with the mouth-organ was Doyle—blew harder, glaring defiance over the mouth-organ.

Jimmy Silver regarded the three with interest.

All three of those cheerful youths seemed to rejoice in the Christian name of Thomas.

From their previous talk Jimmy had guessed that they were pals.

Tommy Dodd put his fingers to his ears, as the noise Tommy Doyle was making on his mouth-organ got worse still.

"Throw that blessed thing out of the window!" roared Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Doyle took the mouth-organ away from his lips and glared at his chum.

"Apparently you don't like music, Tommy Dodd!" said Doyle disdainfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tommy Dodd. "I like music all right, but I couldn't stand that blessed row you were making. Besides, think of the new boy!"

"What about him?"

"Well, it's hardly fair to make him listen to your old squeaker."

"Oh, blow him!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Blow anything you like, my son, except that awful mouth-organ!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Go out into the corridor and play it to the Classics! They deserve it!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Order!" said Tommy Dodd, holding up his hand. "I'm going to talk to the new boy!" He turned to Jimmy Silver. "Stand up!" he ordered.

Jimmy Silver blinked at Tommy Dodd.

"Deaf?" demanded that youth.

"Are you speaking to me?" demanded Jimmy in his turn.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 1.

"Of course I'm speaking to you! You're the only new boy here, ain't you? Stand up!"

Jimmy Silver stood up.

"Now, what's your name?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Jimmy Silver."

"And you're coming to Rookwood with a name like that?" said Tommy Dodd disparagingly.

"I—I suppose so. But what's wrong with my name?" asked Jimmy Silver rather warmly.

"Not so much as there is wrong with your face," replied Tommy Dodd cheerfully. "When did you have your accident?"

"My—my accident? I haven't had an accident."

"You haven't?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd in great surprise. "You mean to say that you were born with your face like that?"

There was a chuckle from the other juniors in recognition of Master Dodd's pleasantry.

The face in question became quite crimson.

As a matter of fact it was a handsome, sunburnt face, and there was no call whatever for Tommy Dodd's personal remarks.

"You let my face alone!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, a little nettled. "What price your own, anyway? Was it an elephant that trod on it?"

Tommy Dodd's breath seemed to be taken away for a moment at that question.

He pushed back his cuffs, and then nobly restrained his feelings.

"Don't you be cheeky!" he said in a warning voice. "New boys at Rookwood have to mind their P's and Q's, I can tell you. Otherwise they are liable to be found lying about in need of first aid. Now, which side are you on?"

"Which what?"

"Oh, I forgot you were only a new boy!" said Tommy Dodd patronisingly. "Understand, then, my innocent youth, that there are two sides at Rookwood. There's the mouldy old side that dates back from the time of the Flood, and is quite played out and out of date—that's the Classical side. The other side is called the Modern side, and, of course, it is the best side. I belong to the Modern side."

"Oh!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, which are you? Out with it!"

"I'm going into the Classical side," said the new boy modestly.

There was a general groan from all the company.

Evidently Jimmy Silver had got into a carriage occupied only by Modern boys.

Jimmy began to understand, too, that Classics and Moderns were "up against" one another—at least, among the juniors.

"A measly Classical!" said Tommy Dodd, more in sorrow than in anger. "Let's cluck him out!"

Jimmy Silver put up his hands.

"Keep off, you silly asses!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not going out! I shall—"

"Collar him!" roared Tommy Dodd. "All hands on deck!"

In a moment more Jimmy Silver was in the midst of a wild and whirling mass of juniors.

He put up a tremendous fight, and Cook and Doyle and Webb went down among the feet of their comrades, roaring.

Then many hands seized the new boy, and before he knew what was happening, he was shot bodily out of the carriage into the corridor.

There he came into violent contact with three juniors who were chatting together in the corridor, bowling one of them completely over.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. More Trouble!

**O**W!" "Oh, my hat!" Jimmy Silver sat on the dusty floor of the corridor in a somewhat dizzy state of mind.

He blinked dazedly at the fellow he had knocked over, who sat a yard away from him blinking wrathfully, and holding his nose.

Two other juniors were looking on, and laughing.

"My hat!" gasped the youth on the floor. "I'll smash him! A blessed new boy run into me like that—"

"Go easy, Lovell, old man!" said one of the two lookers-on. "Those Modern duffers chucked him out. He couldn't help it."

"That's all very well, Raby—"

"Of course it is," said Raby, helping Lovell to his feet. "Next time mind where you're running, young 'un, when you're kicked out!"

Jimmy Silver staggered up breathlessly.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry," he said. "I couldn't help it. Those silly idiots pitched me out because I'm going to be on the Classical side at Rookwood!"

"Oh, you're a Classical, are you?" asked Raby, looking at him. "You don't mean to say you put up a fight against all that crowd?"

"What-ho!" said Jimmy promptly. "I wasn't going to be chucked out if I could help it. Are you fellows Classics?"

"Listen to that, Newcome," said Raby, addressing the third junior. "He asks if we're Classics. Shows he's a new boy. Don't you know, young 'un, that all the decent fellows at Rookwood are Classics? No fellow with any self-respect would be found dead on the new side."

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"What's the grin about?" demanded Lovell.

"I heard it rather differently in that carriage," said Jimmy, jerking his thumb in the direction of the compartment occupied by the Modern juniors. "They told me the best side was the Modern side."

"They would," said Lovell. "They'd tell a new kid anything. Hallo! We're getting near now. Keep an eye open for the brakes, you fellows. It would be just like those Modern duffers to bag the first brake, if they could."

"What-ho!"

"We're going to begin this term by putting those Modern asses in their places," said Lovell fervently. "You can back up, too, Silver."

"Oh, rather!"

"Here we are!"

The train pulled up at the station, and a crowd of fellows poured out.

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were soon joined by a number of other juniors, evidently on the same side, and they walked out of the little station in a body.

Jimmy Silver kept with them.

Outside the station three brakes were drawn up.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were swooping down on one of them, and Tommy Dodd was first in.

"Back up!" roared Lovell to his followers. "Back up, Classics!"

But a rush of Modern juniors swept Lovell and his friends aside.

"Come on!" yelled Jimmy Silver, highly excited. "Back up!"

And Jimmy clambered on the brake, in spite of shoves, pushes, and thumps from the swarm of Modern juniors.

"Hallo! Here's that new boy again!" roared Tommy Dodd. "A Classic! Kick him out!"

"Back up!"

Jimmy Silver went, whirring off the brake.



He caught Lovell by the arm as the Classics were swept back in a crowd.

"Come on!" he panted.  
"N.G.!" snapped Lovell. "There's too many of them."

"What about the other brakes?"  
"Mustn't touch them; they're for the seniors."

"Both of them?"  
"Yes; one of them belongs to the Classical seniors—can't interfere with that."

"What about the other?"  
"That's Knowles' brake, you fathead!"

"Who's Knowles?"  
"Knowles is a Modern prefect, and a pretty rotten one at that."

Jimmy Silver grinned.  
"Well, why shouldn't we collar that brake?"

"Because it belongs to Knowles."  
"But Knowles is a Modern, and ain't we up against the Moderns?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Let's buck up and scoff it!"  
Lovell & Co. stared at the new boy speechlessly.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Raby at last.  
"Collar a senior brake! Why, they'd raise Cain! They'd scalp us! They'd—"

"Let 'em!"  
"Let 'em! Why, you—you ass— But I say," broke off Raby, "it would be a jolly lark if we did! Tommy Dodd & Co. wouldn't dare to scoff a senior brake!"

"But the driver wouldn't go if we told him," said Lovell.  
"The driver's gone to get a drink," said Jimmy Silver.

"Then who's to drive, fathead?"  
"I will!"

"Oh, crumbs! You cheeky fathead! My hat, Knowles would be waxy! We might get a licking all round, but—but it would be a dot in the eye for the Moderns!" exclaimed Lovell, his eyes glistening. "Are you fellows game?"

"Game as pie!" said Raby promptly.  
"Good!" said Lovell. "We'll chance it. Buck up!"

No more time was wasted in words.  
Jimmy Silver clambered into the driver's seat and gathered up the reins.

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome piled into the brake and shouted to their friends.  
In very quick time fifteen or sixteen other Classics clambered in.

Jimmy Silver cracked his whip, and the two horses started.  
At the same moment there came a shout from the tuckshop.

Knowles had been partaking of some ginger-pop in the tuckshop, and had happened to look out at the moment the brake moved off.

"Bring that brake back, you young sweeps!" he yelled.  
But Jimmy Silver turned a deaf ear.

He gave the horses a flick, and they broke into a rapid trot.  
Knowles started to run after the brake, shaking his fist at the daring juniors.

"Yah! Go home, Knowles!" shouted Lovell.  
"Put it on, Knowles!"

"Race you to the school!"  
But Knowles had no intention of attempting such a task.

He pulled up short, and shouted threats of vengeance at the Classical juniors.  
A moment later the brake turned a bend in the road, and Knowles strode back to the tuckshop, his brow as black as thunder.

But the crowd of Classical juniors in the brake were laughing and cheering excitedly.  
They had scored over the Modern prefect with a vengeance.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

**The Race to Rookwood.**

"DON'T turn us over in the ditch!" shouted Lovell, as the brake careered across the road.

To which Jimmy Silver responded with:  
"Oh, rot!"

Jimmy Silver evidently knew how to handle horses.  
He was driving exceedingly well.

On his first day at Rookwood he had learned the "ropes" in a really remarkable manner, and was helping in a big score over the rival side.

"Hallo, there's old Bulkeley!" exclaimed Lovell, as the Classical senior brake was sighted ahead. "Can you pass him?"

"What-ho!" replied Jimmy Silver.

"Give him a cheer as we go by," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver cracked his whip loudly, and the Classical seniors looked back in surprise.

Bulkeley stared at them as the brake swept by.  
"You young sweeps!" exclaimed the captain of Rookwood. "What are you doing in that brake?"

But the Classical juniors did not see fit to reply to that question.  
They cheered Bulkeley instead.

"Hurrah! Good old Bulkeley! Hurrah for the captain of Rookwood, and down with the measly Moderns! Hip, hip!"

Bulkeley grinned a little, and the junior brake swept on.  
The horses were fairly going now, and the senior brake was soon left behind.

The Modern brake was soon sighted in the lane.  
Jimmy Silver was quickly close behind, cracking his whip loudly.

Tommy Dodd & Co. looked back, and their eyes almost started from their heads at the sight of the Classical juniors crowded in a senior brake.

"Pass 'em—pass 'em!" roared the Classics.

"Yah!"  
"Get aside!" bellowed Jimmy Silver. "We'll run you down!"

"Rafs! Yah!"  
But the staid old driver of the Modern brake did not see eye to eye with his youthful passengers.

He looked round, and seeing a vehicle trying to pass, he drew naturally to the right to give room.

"Thompson, you idiot, you're not going to let those idiots pass!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Pull out! Do you hear? Pull out, I tell you!"

But as pulling out would have led the Modern brake to lock wheels with the other, the driver was not likely to obey.

The horses were neck and neck now, and the two brakes, dashing on side by side, filled up the lane from hedge to hedge.

The Moderns raved with wrath.  
"Buck up!" shrieked Tommy Cook. "You're letting them beat us! Put it on!"

But the driver was obdurate.  
Farther ahead was a sharp turn, and a race round that corner would almost cer-



**JIMMY SILVER'S LITTLE JOKE!**

"Look at 'em!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "They—they—they've collared a senior brake! The cheeky rotters! My hat!"

"Yah! Modern duffers! Get aside!"  
"That's the new boy!" howled Tommy Dodd. "That's the new boy driving and yelping to us to let him pass. Catch us!"

"Get to the side of the road!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Do you youngsters want to be run down?"

The Modern juniors almost danced with rage.  
To be called youngsters by a new kid was a little too much.

They glared at Jimmy Silver, who was handling the brake as if he had driven a pair of horses all his life.

"The cheeky cad!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Youngsters! My hat! What is Rookwood coming to?"

"That chap Silver has got more cheek than the whole Classical side lumped together!" said Tommy Cook. "But we're not letting him pass—not much!"

"No fear!" said Tommy Dodd emphatically.  
And the Modern crowd yelled and shook their fists at the brake behind in defiance and contempt.

The noses of Jimmy Silver's horses were almost touching the Modern brake now, but there was not room to pass unless the leading vehicle drew to the side.

tainly have led to one or both of the vehicles coming to grief.

So the prudent driver declined absolutely to "put it on," and the Classical brake forged ahead.

The Classical juniors yelled with joy as they swept past their rivals.  
Tommy Dodd & Co. raved and stamped and shook their fists.

But they were hopelessly beaten.  
"Good-bye, Bluebell!" shrieked Raby. "See you later at Rookwood! Ta-ta!"

"Oh, you rotters! You spoofers!" yelled the Moderns.

"Done!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "Done by the Classics! Done by a new boy! Oh, take me away and kick me, somebody!"

And in helpless wrath the Moderns watched the Classical brake sweep round the corner ahead and disappear from sight.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**Study-Mates.**

"BEGINNING to look ship-shape!" remarked Newcome.  
The three Classical chums were in their study—the famous end study.

They were putting it to rights for the new term.  
The tremendous cleaning done during the

vacation had left the study spotless as a new pin, after all the wear and tear of the previous term.

It was not likely to remain long in that happy state.

So far, however, only one inkpot had been upset, and a can of cycle-oil had leaked.

That was really nothing.

Lovell & Co. were glad to get back into their old quarters.

They had succeeded in bagging their old study; though it had been necessary to eject one or two rivals "on their necks."

That, however, had been promptly and efficaciously done, and the three were in possession.

And they had the cheery prospect of having the study to themselves for the whole term.

There was only one new kid on the Classical side, and no reason why he should be planted on them.

In a very cheery mood, after having had tea in Hall, the three chums had come up to put their study to rights before call-over.

They had brought some possessions from home to improve their quarters.

Lovell had a nice new pair of curtains, which were hung up amid great satisfaction.

Raby had brought a new copper kettle, which gleamed like a new penny.

Newcome had a picture.

It was not exactly a work of art, but it had four colours in it, all prominent, not to say glaring, and Newcome said it would give an artistic touch to the study.

There was one corner of the study, farthest from the two windows, which was a little dusky, and Newcome said that picture would brighten it up.

Raby agreed that it had better be put in the dusky corner.

Otherwise, in Raby's opinion, it might have a startling effect on visitors—might even produce apoplexy or something.

There was a pause in the proceedings while Newcome told Raby what he thought of him and his opinions.

Then the three chums proceeded to hang the picture.

They were hanging the picture—at least, Newcome was driving a four-inch nail into the wall with terrific blows from a coke-hammer, and Raby and Lovell was advising him not to make a tunnel into the next study—when the door opened, and Jimmy Silver came in.

The new boy had been interviewing Mr. Bootles, his Form-master, and Lovell & Co. had not seen him since tea.

They looked round as he came in, Newcome pausing to take breath.

Two inches of the nail still remained to be driven in, and the wall was showing signs of damage.

Newcome did not hit the wicket every time.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Only you! Blessed if I didn't think the Germans were bombarding the school!"

"Don't you come bothering here!" said Newcome testily. "We don't want a new kid here being funny when we're putting our study to rights. You can have a go at that nail, Raby, if you like. We want to hang that picture before second call."

Raby took the hammer and stepped on the chair.

There was a clatter of falling plaster after his first doughty blow.

"My hat!" ejaculated Silver involuntarily. Raby glared down at him.

"Kick that new kid out!" he bawled. "Do you think I'm going to hang your rotten picture with him standing there cackling like a Cheshire cheese—I mean cat?"

"Here, hold on!" said Jimmy Silver, as Lovell and Newcome made for him.

"Clear out!"

"I'm not going out! Mr. Bootles—"

"Blow Bootles! Have you come here to talk about Bootles? Go and tell somebody else about him! Get out!"

"But Mr. Bootles sent me here!"

"What ever for?" demanded Lovell.

"I'm to share this study."

"What?"

"Mr. Bootles said as there were only three in this room, and it's the largest, I'm to come here," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rot!" said Raby. "Go down the passage and look for another study. Bootles won't say anything. He doesn't care a tup-penny rap."

"But I do," said Jimmy Silver. "This is the best study in the passage, and I like it."

"He likes us!" roared the exasperated Lovell. "He likes our study! We'll give him something he doesn't like—"

"I shall hit out!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "I warn you!"

"Why, you—you greenhorn!" said Lovell. "Hit out! Do you know that we three are the top-hole fighting-men in the Fourth? They call us the Fistical Three."

"Bow-wow!"

That "Bow-wow!" was not respectful, and it was too much for the Classical trio.

They simply piled on Jimmy Silver. The new boy put up a tussle that drew other juniors to the doorway.

In the course of the battle the new lace curtains suffered somewhat, the study table was pitched into the fire-grate, and the clock came off the mantelpiece with a crash.

But the odds were too great.

Jimmy Silver's powers as a fighting-man won wide admiration from the juniors in the doorway.

But the Classical three got him at last. He was hurled bodily into the passage, and collapsed there, without an ounce of breath left in him.

The door slammed on him.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Jimmy Silver dazedly.

"Fancy tackling the three of them!" remarked Jones minor. "What was the row about, kid?"

"That's my study," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm going in!"

"They'll eat you if you do!" said Jones minor.

"I tell you I'm going in!"

"Well, good luck to you, kid," said Jones minor. "It's time for call-over, and I should advise you to leave going into that study until a bit later."

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy Silver. And he was left to recover his breath, whilst the others went downstairs to Big Hall.

The new boy listened. His brain was working. Roll-call in Big Hall was close at hand, and the three juniors who had ejected him had to turn up, like the rest, or be looked for by a prefect with a cane.

Jimmy Silver whipped a length of whipcord from his pocket, made a loop at the end, and slipped it quietly over the door-handle of the end study, and drew it tight.

Then he passed the cord to the handle of a door opposite, and fastened it securely.

That was the beginning.

He looked into Jones minor's study, where he had seen a box uncoiled.

The rope was lying on the floor.

Jimmy Silver picked it up quickly, and, returning to the end study, he added it to the whipcord, considerably strengthening it.

A few moments later the bell rang, followed by a tug from within the end study.

Then there came a surprised exclamation: "Hallo! The door's jammed!"

Jimmy Silver grinned, and waited developments.

"Lay hold!" panted Newcome desperately. "I'll take the handle in both hands, and you hold on to me, and all pull together!"

"Right-ho!"

The door strained and creaked, but it did not open.

"N. G.!" howled Lovell. "Let up! 'Tain't jammed! Some young idiot has fastened the door outside! I'll skin him! I'll slaughter him! I'll—"

"Shut up!" roared Raby. "No time for jaw now! The bell's stopped. Hallo, out there! Undo this door at once, whoever you are! Do you hear?"

"Hear, hear!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Why—why, it's that new boy!" exclaimed Lovell, in tones of concentrated wrath. "Open this door at once, you out there!"

"Rats!"

"I tell you we've got to get down to roll-call!" yelled Lovell. "We shall be gated for a half-holiday, and licked—licked, you idiot! Open the door!"

"Good-bye!"

"Come and let us out, some of you fellows!" shrieked Newcome.

"They're all gone!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "And I'm going! Good-bye! And keep your peckers up. It's a long, long way to calling-over, but I wish you luck!"

"Hold on!" shouted Lovell. "I say, you new boy, don't go! I say, I'll stand you a whack in my hamper, and I won't lick you, if you let us out!"

"Not good enough!" replied Jimmy Silver. "What do you want, you young villain?" yelled the hapless three together.

"I want my study," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "I'm sharing that study with you. I want you to let me in and take it in a friendly way."

"Never, you rotter!"

"Good-bye, then!"

"Here, hold on!" shouted Lovell through the keyhole.

"Sorry I can't stop! I shall be late for roll-call," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "Good-bye!"

"I say, Silver, let us out, there's a good chap!" said Raby.

"Well, let me into my own study, and keep the peace, or I'm off!" said Jimmy Silver. "Quick's the word!"

"Oh, I'll let you in, you bouncer!" said Raby.

"So will I," said Newcome. "Now buck up and open the door, Silver!"

"What about Lovell?" asked the new boy. "I—I'll smash you! I'll squash you! I'll—I'll—I'll—" said Lovell incoherently. "I'll make little pieces of you! I say, don't go, you young villain! We must get out! Open the door!"

"Well, promise, then!"

"I promise," said Lovell reluctantly.

"Right-ho!"

Jimmy Silver's pocket-knife whipped through the rope and the whipcord, and the study door flew open.

Three infuriated juniors came out, panting. "All serene!" said Jimmy Silver, smiling.

"We'll be pally yet. Better get a move on, or you'll be late."

And the three discomfited juniors promptly got a "move on."

After roll-call Jimmy Silver carefully carried his books into the end study.

No attempt was made to eject him.

Jimmy Silver found the atmosphere of the study decidedly chilly; but he did not seem to mind much.

"Don't be ratty," he urged his new study-mates. "You know I'm in the right. And you'll find me all right—A1; in fact, top-hole! I'm quite an easy chap to get on with."

The Classical chums glared, and did not reply.

"Never mind," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I'll stand it as long as you do. I'll wait till you come round."

And the new boy, comfortably ensconced in the end study, and utterly undismayed by the majestic frowns of Lovell & Co., waited cheerfully for them to come round.

THE END.

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

**"JIMMY SILVER'S VOTE!"** BY OWEN CONQUEST.

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# DARCY'S DELUSION!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Startling Discovery.

"Gussy!"  
"D'Arcy, you ass!"  
"Where's that chump Gussy?"  
Blake, Herries, and Digby, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, were asking those questions right and left, up and down the School House.

For a quarter of an hour or more they had sought their noble chum, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; but they found him not.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—were just about to enter Study No. 6.

They looked round as they heard the emphatic inquiries of Blake & Co., who shared that study.

"Gussy missing?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.  
"Yes. The frabjous ass has disappeared—vanished—bunked! We're going to scalp and slaughter him when he turns up!"

"What does it matter?"  
"We want him!" said Blake and Herries in chorus. "We haven't had tea! We're stony in Study No. 6! Gussy's had a fiver!"

The mystery was explained.  
In the famous apartment known as Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, funds were to a great extent in common.

At all events, when one fellow there had any money, the others were always sure of tea.

Just at present Study No. 6 was in the state of Egypt of old when passing through the lean years.

The arrival of a fiver for Arthur Augustus had relieved the strain, and promised an end to the famine.

And lo! the swell of St. Jim's had disappeared from human ken, taking the fiver with him.

No wonder Blake and Co. were boiling with indignation.

The Terrible Three fully sympathised with them.

As a matter of fact, funds were low in their study, too, and they would cheerfully have lent their aid in "blowing" that fiver.

In fact, they had come to Study No. 6 in the hope of being able to "raise the wind."

They felt that Arthur Augustus had done them an injury as well as his study-mates.

"But where can he have gone to?" asked Monty Lowther.

Another snort from Blake.  
"Blessed if I know! We've been from end to end of the School House, and he isn't inside it!"

"Might have run over to the New House to see Figgins?" suggested Manners.

"Herries has been over there asking. He hasn't been seen in the New House."

"In the tuckshop, perhaps—"

"I've been there," said Digby. "Mrs. Taggles hasn't seen him."

"In the gym—"

"We've looked in the gym."

"Then he must have— Hallo! Who's this coming along the passage?"

Blake looked out of the doorway.  
"My hat! Here he comes, the idiot!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came rushing into the study, in a breathless state.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, as all the juniors glanced in his direction.  
"You've come back, then!" said Blake.  
"Weally, Blake—"

"Where have you been?"  
"Out!"  
"What have you done with the fiver?"  
"The fivah! I have spent it."  
"Spent it!" roared the juniors all together.  
"Yaas, wathah!"  
"Do you know that we hadn't any tin?" demanded Blake.  
Arthur Augustus' expression changed.

"Bai Jove, haven't you, really?" he exclaimed.

"You knew we were all stony!" said Digby.  
"I forgot, deah boy."

"You forgot!" howled Blake. "You forgot! You walked off with all the study funds in your silly pocket, and forgot that we hadn't anything for tea!"

"Bai Jove, I'm awfully sorry! I weally forgot all about it!" said Arthur Augustus, in distress. "I apologise most sincerely!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Blake. "What are we going to do about tea? We relied upon that fiver—"

"I'm sowwy, Blake, deah boy—"

"Surely you've got a few bobs left we can buy some things with?"

"No, Blake, I haven't."

"You haven't got five bob?"  
"No!"

"Then, what have you done with the money?" asked Blake.  
"Weally, Blake—"

"Explain, you burbling idiot!" yelled Blake. "Have you lost the money, have you given it away, or—"

"I am sowwy," said Arthur Augustus firmly, "but I cannot satisfy your curiosity upon that point! As a mattah of fact, I do not approve of curiosity. I wegard it as bad form! I can only wecommend you not to be inquisitive."

The juniors looked at the swell of the Fourth as if they would eat him.

"It's no good arguing with the silly ass!" said Blake. "This is a case where bumping is the only possible argument. Bump him!"

"Hands off, you duffers! Weally— Yawooooooh!"

Six pairs of hands closed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in various parts of his person, and he descended upon the study carpet with a loud concussion.

Bump!  
"Ow! You wottahs! My twousahs! Ow!"

Bump, bump!  
"Yawooooooh!"

Arthur Augustus struggled wildly in the grasp of his persecutors.

His collar burst, his tie came off, and his jacket curled round his ears.

But suddenly the juniors let go, as if the swell of St. Jim's had become all at once red-hot.

Arthur Augustus sprawled, gasping, on the floor, and round him were scattered several articles that had dropped out of his pockets in the struggle.

The juniors gazed at them blankly.  
One word broke from them at once, in various tones of surprise and consternation:  
"Cigars!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Arthur Augustus Declines to Explain.

"CIGARS!"  
Cigars they were—dozens of them—beautiful Havana cigars, with nice gold labels.

The chums of the School House could not have been more astounded if a snake had curled out of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's pocket.

The swell of St. Jim's sat up, dishevelled and breathless.

He stared at the cigars, and he stared at his chums.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.  
Then he rose to his feet, breathing hard, and smoothing down his rumpled garments.

There was a painful silence in the study. Jack Blake broke it.

"This has got to be explained, Gussy!" he said grimly.

"Sowwy—"

"You've been buying those cigars, of course?"  
"Natuwally!"  
"Got any more about you?"

"I am sowwy that I must decline to answah that question, Blake!"

"Oh, don't trouble!" said Blake. "We'll soon see! Collar the silly mug and turn out his pockets, you fellows!"

"Blake! You wottahs! I considah— Oh, you feahful wottahs!"

The juniors did not heed his expostulations.

The Terrible Three seized him, and held him powerless, whilst Blake and Herries and Digby coolly turned out all his pockets.

And they stared in astonishment at the articles that were brought to light.

There were more cigars—quite a dozen of them, and most of them expensive ones.

There were several packets of cigarettes, a few boxes of matches, a large handsome meerschaum pipe, and several packets of tobacco.

The articles were piled on the table, and they made quite a heap.

Then Arthur Augustus was released. He stood frowning with wrath.

"Now," said Blake, and he was very serious now—"now, Gussy, we want to know what this means!"

"I wefuse to say a word!"

"You've been buying all this stuff in Rylcombe?"

"Yaas."

"What for?"

"That's my biznay!"

"You've taken to smoking?"

"Certainly not! I should wegard it as wotten bad form for a fellah of my age to smoke!"

"Then why have you bought all this muck?" said Blake.

"I am sowwy I cannot explain!"

"You mean you won't?" said Blake sharply.

"Yaas. You can put it like that if you like."

"Then something's got to be done. Do you know you'd get into a fearful row if a prefect discovered you with all that rubbish?"

"Yaas; I wegard that as very pwob."

"But—but what ever did you want to buy the stuff for?"

"I have told you once befoah, Blake, that is my biznay!"

"And you say you haven't taken up smoking?"

"Yaas, wathah! If you doubt my word, Blake—"

"But you must have been to the tobacconist's to get that stuff?"

"I should hardly go to the grocer's for it!"

"The tobacconist's is out of bounds!"

"I am awah of that!"

"Then you've broken bounds, you ass!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

Blake clenched his hands.

He was greatly inclined to wade in, and give his aristocratic chum the licking of his life, then and there.

But he restrained himself.

He was very angry indeed, but he realised that that was not a really effective method of dealing with Arthur Augustus.

"If you don't explain," said Blake at last, "we can only think one thing—that is, you've taken to rotten, blackguardly ways, like Levi-son and Cutts!"

"If you hold such an opinioa of me, Blake, I shall wefuse to wegard you as a fwiend!"

"I don't especially want to be regarded as a friend by a fellow of Cutts' stamp, and that's what you seem to be now!" said Blake unpleasantly.

"I have assuahed you—"

"Tell us what you bought the stuff for."

"I cannot!"

"Then you know what we think!"

Arthur Augustus stood very erect.

"Am I to undahstand that you doubt my word, Blake?"

"Yes!" rapped out Blake savagely.

"Then I shall drop your acquaintance!"  
 "Drop it, and be hanged!"  
 "That is sullish!" said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.  
 And he turned upon his heel, and walked out of the study.  
 "Come back, you silly idiot!" growled Blake, relenting.  
 But D'Arcy did not come back.  
 The juniors looked at one another in dismay.  
 "My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This beats the giddy band!"  
 "What ever can that silly duffer have bought all this stuff for?" remarked Manners.  
 "Goodness knows!" said Blake, with a shake of the head. "I'm pretty sure, though, that he hasn't taken to smoking."  
 "Then what's the use of them to him?"  
 "Oh, don't ask me!" said Blake. "I'm going to shove them away in case a prefect comes along. We don't want to get this study a bad name."  
 "No fear!"

The cigars, tobacco, cigarettes, and other articles were all put in a place of hiding.  
 "Now," said Blake, when the last cigar had disappeared from view, "I suppose we'd better think about tea."  
 "We've got nothing to eat," said Herries.  
 "Well, we shall have to grub in Hall," said Blake. "After all, it'll make a change!"  
 The others sniffed; apparently they were not eager to have tea in Hall.  
 However, there was no help for it, as D'Arcy had failed to turn up trumps with his liver.  
 They trooped into Hall, pondering over Arthur Augustus' mysterious behaviour.  
 The swell of St. Jim's had bought the cigars and other articles for some purpose—certainly not to smoke himself—but what that purpose was they could not think.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Truth Comes Out!

"GET your skates, Gussy!"  
 Jack Blake spoke as the juniors came out of the dining-room after dinner the next afternoon.  
 Although Blake had failed to discover a solution to D'Arcy's mysterious behaviour, his anger had subsided considerably.  
 Arthur Augustus gave a start, and looked quickly at Blake.  
 "Skates!" he repeated. "I don't want my skates yet. I—I—I mean, I weally don't know why you should suppose that I am goin' skatin', Blake."  
 "Ass!" said Blake politely. "We're all going skating, and I suppose you're coming, too. The ice is first-rate."  
 "I am sowwy. I cannot come."  
 "Fathead—"  
 "And I should be vewy much obliged, Blake, if you would remembah that I am not on speakin' terms with you!"  
 D'Arcy walked away with his nose in the air.  
 Jack Blake breathed hard through his nose.  
 "What the dickens is the matter with the silly chump?" he exclaimed.  
 "Oh, leave him alone!" said Digby. "He's going off his rocker, that's all!"  
 The School House chums went downstairs, and joined a large crowd of juniors who were making their way to the frozen river.  
 The Ryll was frozen for miles, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were the first to reach the river.  
 They started off upon a long skating run together.  
 They dashed along at a good speed on the gleaming ice, the keen wind bringing the colour to their cheeks.  
 St. Jim's and the crowd of skaters disappeared behind them.  
 They passed under the old stone bridge and over the frozen pool, and down to the wider reaches of the river.  
 Here and there, as they sped on, they passed skaters and sliders—fellows from the Grammar School and villagers and country fellows galore.  
 But past Rylcombe the river was more solitary.  
 "My hat! This is ripping!" Tom Merry exclaimed. "We can put on speed here. We've got the ice all to ourselves!"  
 "Yes, rather!"  
 They rushed on.  
 For fully half an hour they skated on, and then started on the return run.  
 At length they came round a bend of the river, between the great, leafless trees that overhung the banks at this point.  
 There they caught sight of two skaters—a

girl with a flowing scarf, and an elegant youth who could not possibly be anybody but—  
 "Gussy!" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.  
 It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.  
 The chums of the Shell knew that Arthur Augustus had declined to go down to the skating with the rest of the fellows.  
 They understood the reason now.  
 They slid in towards the bank, and slacked down.  
 Arthur Augustus and his companion were in the middle of the ice, and neither of them observed the three Shell fellows.  
 The Terrible Three exchanged looks of helpless astonishment.  
 "So that's Gussy's engagement!" murmured Monty Lowther.  
 "But—but who is she?" said Manners.  
 Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in an effort to remember.  
 "I've seen her before somewhere," he said. "I can't remember; but I'm sure she belongs to this neighbourhood."  
 The chums of the Shell looked on blankly.  
 Arthur Augustus remained quite unconscious of them.  
 His companion was a girl of about twenty-three, with a very large hat and very small boots.  
 It was Monty Lowther who suddenly remembered where he had seen the girl before, and he signified the same by bursting into a suffocated chuckle.  
 "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "What's the matter with you?" demanded Tom Merry.  
 "Oh, hold me up!" spluttered Lowther.  
 "Oh, crumbs! Those cigars!"  
 "Cigars?"  
 "Those giddy smokes!"  
 "Smokes?" yelled Tom Merry and Manners.  
 "What do you mean, fathead?"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Lowther, you silly ass—"  
 "I've solved the giddy mystery!" chuckled Lowther. "I know where I've seen that young lady before!"  
 "Where?"  
 "In Rylcombe High Street."  
 "Eh?"  
 "In a shop—"  
 "A—a shop?" repeated Tom Merry.  
 "Yes—a tobacconist's."  
 "What?"  
 "She's Miss Chunn!" hooted Lowther.  
 "Miss Chunn, the tobacconist's girl."  
 Tom Merry and Manners gasped.  
 "By Jove, I know her now!" ejaculated Manners. "Of course, it's Miss Chunn—Ada Jane Chunn, I believe her name is."  
 Monty Lowther gurgled.  
 "Now do you know why Gussy bought the cigars?"  
 "Oh, crumbs! He bought them at Chunn's!"  
 "Exactly!" said Lowther. "He goes in and buys a cigar, and comes out again, and goes in to buy another cigar. Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "But—but why?"  
 "Don't you see?" yelled Lowther. "Gussy's in love again. And he's been buying all those smokes as an excuse for going into the shop to make her acquaintance and talk to her."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Let's skate up and be introduced," suggested Manners.  
 "No; let's get back and tell the other fellows," said Lowther. "We've all got to take this in hand. I'm glad it's nothing more. I was really beginning to believe that Gussy was following in Cutts' footsteps. But he's only in love."  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "We'll hold a meeting—all Gussy's friends—and consider what's to be done," said Lowther. "He's got to be stopped before he gets flogged for going to the tobacconist's."  
 "What-ho!"  
 The Terrible Three skated back at top speed to St. Jim's.  
 They had no doubt that they had penetrated the mystery.  
 Arthur Augustus was in love!  
 Once more the susceptible heart of the swell of St. Jim's had been touched.  
 Once more he was a victim of the arrows of the little blind god.  
 The chums of the Shell quaked with laughter as they skated.  
 It was too funny, and they chuckled and chuckled as they glided on, till they were quite out of breath.  
 And when they reached home, and Blake and Herries and Digby were taken aside and enlightened, then there were three more hysterical chucklers.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Hearts Bowed Down.

TOM MERRY met Arthur Augustus when that elegant youth came back to St. Jim's.  
 Tom Merry was standing on the steps of the School House, in the gloom, watching for him.  
 When Arthur Augustus came up Tom Merry touched his arm lightly.  
 "I want to speak to you, Gussy," he said in a mysterious whisper.  
 D'Arcy regarded him coldly.  
 "I am afraid that I cannot reciprocate the desiah Tom Mewwy," he replied. "Undah the present circs. it is imposs. to wegard you as a fwend."  
 "I must confide in somebody," said Tom Merry, with a break in his voice. "Gussy, don't refuse! You're the only fellow I could possibly tell."  
 "Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, forgetting at once that he was on bad terms with the captain of the Shell.  
 "Come out into the quad., where the other fellows can't hear us," said Tom Merry.  
 "Wight-ho, deah boy!"  
 Tom Merry led the swell of St. Jim's into the deep dusk under the elm-trees.  
 "It's wathah cold heah, Tom Mewwy," Arthur Augustus ventured to suggest.  
 "Is it?" said Tom vaguely.  
 "Yaas. And there's wathah a wind blowin'."  
 "A chap doesn't notice little things like that when he's in love," said Tom Merry in a deep and thrilling voice.  
 Arthur Augustus started violently.  
 "In—in—in what?" he stammered.  
 "Love," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, what would you think if I told you that I were in love—deeply, wildly, tragically, passionately, awfully, frightfully?"  
 "Bai Jove!"  
 "You're the only chap at St. Jim's who can sympathise with me," murmured Tom Merry. "You have been in love yourself several times, haven't you?"  
 "Ahem! I—I—I—"  
 "I must confide in somebody!" said Tom, taking D'Arcy by the arm. "Swear never to reveal the secret, Gussy!"  
 "Yaas, certainly! But—"  
 "She is older than I am," sobbed Tom Merry. "But that doesn't make any difference, does it, Gussy?"  
 "Certainly not, deah boy! In fact, I think that when a chap's about our age, the wight age for the lady is about twenty-thwee," said D'Arcy at once.  
 A peculiar sound came from Tom Merry.  
 "How curious!" he said solemnly. "That is exactly her age, Gussy! And what do you think her name is—her sweet and poetical name?"  
 "I'm sure I can't guess, deah boy."  
 "Ann Jane!" murmured Tom Merry.  
 D'Arcy jumped.  
 "Ann—Ann—Ann what?" he ejaculated.  
 "No, not Ann What. Ann Jane!" said Tom in a whisper. "She serves in a tobacconist's shop in Rylcombe. You know Chunn's shop?"  
 "Bai Jove, I should jolly well say so! Look heah, Tom Mewwy—"  
 "But she loves another," said Tom, with a sob.  
 "Yaas, I twust so."  
 "What? You trust so? You want her to throw herself away on young Chipps, the auctioneer, instead of waiting fifteen years for me?" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.  
 "Chipps! Who's talking about Chipps?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus sharply.  
 "I am. She loves Chipps," said Tom Merry. "They walk out together on Sundays. Boo-hoo!"  
 "Bai Jove! Pway don't cw, deah boy!"  
 "How c-c-can I help it? I want your advice, Gussy. Chipps is my rival. Would you advise me to kill him?"  
 "You uttah ass—"  
 "What?"  
 "I mean, you are talkin' wot, you know. As a mattah of fact—it's wather awkward to say so, after your confession—but—but that young lady is already pwivate pwoperty, in a mannah of speakin'. To tell you the twuth, Tom Mewwy, I am in love with Miss Chunn!"  
 "Traitor!"  
 "I wefuse to be chwacterised as a twaitah!"  
 "Beware!" hissed Tom Merry. "Beware! Ere you shall be my successful rival I will strew the hungry churchyard with your bones! Beware!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
More of Them.

**J**ACK BLAKE was in the Fourth Form passage, leaning against the wall, and evidently waiting for Arthur Augustus. He started eagerly towards the elegant junior as he came up. "Thank goodness you've come, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "Bal Jove! What's the mattah?" "I've something to tell you. Come into the study!" "Has somethin' happened to Hewwies or Dig?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in alarm. "Worse than that!" "Bal Jove! But weally, Blake, as we are not on speakin' terms—" "Come!" "I considah—" "Yes, that's all very well, but—" "Come!" Blake dragged Arthur Augustus into Study No. 6. He closed the door, and Arthur Augustus waited uneasily.

"Ah, the pain is here!" said Digby, laying his hand upon his heart. "Here is the agony, also the anguish—" "Then I should advise you to consult a doctah," said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps you are sufferin' fwom heart disease, though it is more likely to be indigestion." "It is love—the all-pervading, all-devouring—" "Wats! You are too young to think of anythin' of the sort! I wegard you as a widiculous ass! Pewwaps you will tell me that it is Miss Chunn you are in love with!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, utterly exasperated. "How did you know?" cried Digby. "Ah! You have seen her? You have beheld the rosy light of her divine countenance? You have noticed the magic roll of her optics?" "Oh, wats!" "Hear me—" "I wefuse to heah you!" shouted D'Arcy. And he stalked away. But Herries was waiting for him farther along the passage.

And the captain of the Shell rushed away. "Well, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "This is vewy we remarkable! I nevah suspected Tom Mewwy of bein' such a silly ass! Bai Jove!" And the swell of St. Jim's went thoughtfully towards the School House. Before he reached the House, however, the figure of Monty Lowther loomed up in the gloom. "Is that you, Gussy?" "Yaas. But—" "Come with me!" Lowther caught D'Arcy by the arm. "Not a word! I've got something to tell you—something I must tell you! Come into the silence and gloom of the whispering trees, and I will a tale unfold!" Arthur Augustus, very much surprised, allowed Lowther to march him under the trees again. Lowther tried to speak, but his voice broke into sobs. "Gweat Scott!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, very much distressed. "What is the mattah, Lowthah?" "Look at me, D'Arcy!" said Monty Lowther mournfully. "Regard me! In me you behold a victim of an all-devouring passion! I love, but I am not loved! Advise me! What shall I do? Shall I seek rest and forgetfulness 'neath the icy waters of the river, or shall I imbrue these hands deep in the heart's best blood of my rival?" "Look here, Lowthah—" "Her name is Ann Jane!" groaned Lowther. "Perhaps you have seen her. She sells cigars at the tobacco-shop in Rylcombe. Have you seen the dainty way she lights a cigarette for a chap? Have you marked her graceful manner of handing you the change? Have you—" "If you mean that you are in love with Miss Chunn—" "Exactly!" "Then I wegard you as an ass! As a mattah of fact, I am goin' to pwapose to that young lady myself, and ask her to wait ten years for me—" "Traitor!" hissed Monty Lowther. And he vanished into the darkness. Arthur Augustus walked into the School House in a very disturbed frame of mind. He was not surprised that the other fellows had also been smitten with the manifold charms of Miss Chunn. Indeed, the surprising thing, in D'Arcy's opinion, would have been if they had not been so smitten. But it was extremely awkward for the despairing lovers to choose him as a confidant. Under the circumstances, he felt that he could hardly be expected to sympathise with them and wish them luck. Manners was lounging on the staircase, and the moment he saw D'Arcy his face became long and serious. He hurried towards the swell of St. Jim's. "I've been waiting for you, Gussy!" he exclaimed. "I could not have waited much longer." "Why not, Mannahs?" "My heart is bursting!" Manners said tragically. "Can you hear it beat?" "Certainly not!" "It is like a hammer. It has beaten like that," said Manners, sinking his voice to a tragic whisper, "ever since I first saw her." "Gweat Scott! Who?" "Ann Jane. She—" "Mannahs, do you mean to say that you are in love with Miss Chunn?" "Hear me!" said Manners, dramatically raising his hand. "Hear me! By yon eternal stars, by the misty regions of space where unknown worlds roll and whirl, I swear—" "Pway lowah your voice, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. "You are makin' the fellows stare this way!" "Let them stare," said Manners brokenly. "Let them stare! Soon, perhaps, they will be staring at my emaciated corpse. I love—" "Weally, Mannahs—" "I love—madly, insanely, pottily and dottily, I love—" "I wish you would confide in somebody else, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus, a little festily. "I am weally the last fellow in the world you should confide in. Undah the cires, I have no wesource but to decline your confidences." "But you can advise me. You are an old hand at this sort of thing." "Nothin' of the sort. I scorn the suggestion. I wegard you as an ass. Pway let go my arm!" And Arthur Augustus jerked his arm away, and fairly ran upstairs to escape any further confidences from the love-lorn Manners.



CIGARS FROM GUSSY'S POCKET!

Blake's face was tragic. "Have you ever been in love, Gussy?" he said, with a sob. "Oh, cwumbs!" "If you have, you can sympathise with me. Yet how can you guess the all-consuming, volcanic love that I feel for adorable Ann Jane?" "Ann Jane!" "Yes, the incomparable Ann Jane—the divine Miss Chunn—" "I wefuse to listen to anothat word!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as your awful nerve to fall in love with Miss Chunn! You are welcome to admire her fwom a distance, but I distinctly wefuse to allow you to fall in love with her!" And Arthur Augustus tore open the study door, and marched out, and slammed the door behind him. Blake collapsed into the armchair, choking. Digby was in the passage. He took D'Arcy's arm, as the swell of St. Jim's was marching past him without seeing him. "Gussy, old man, I've been waiting for you! I want you to advise me." D'Arcy stopped dead. "I twust you are not in love, too, Dig?" he exclaimed, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and regarding Digby wrathfully. "How did you guess?" said Digby solemnly. "Did my face betray it? Has the canker of a secret passion emaciated my features and written lines upon my brow?" "You are lookin' just the same as usual; and, in fact, in a state of disgustin' health!" snapped Arthur Augustus.

Herries was leaning against the wall, his face in the shadow, and he did not seem to see D'Arcy. But he groaned deeply as the swell of St. Jim's came by. D'Arcy involuntarily halted. "What's the mattah, Hewwies?" he asked, with concern. Herries started, and looked up. His face was dreadfully white, and as it was in the shadow, D'Arcy could not see that the whiteness was produced by a liberal application of chalk. As it was, the pallor startled him. Herries was, as a rule, a particularly robust and healthy young person. "Gweat Scott! Are you ill, Hewwies?" exclaimed D'Arcy, in alarm. Herries shook his head mournfully. "Have you been smokin'?" Herries groaned. "No!" "You've been eatin' somethin' that doesn't agree with you, I suppose?" said Arthur Augustus. "You'd bettah see the House-dame, Hewwies. Mrs. Mimms will give you some wemedey." "There is no remedy for what I suffer from!" said Herries faintly. "What is it, for goodness' sake?" "Love!" groaned Herries. Arthur Augustus gave a kind of war-whoop. "What?" "Love! I am in love. My heart is torn, my breast is rent, my life is broken and busted and bent," said Herries, breaking into poetry.

"Hewwies, this is widiculous! A fellah of your age has no wight to think of such things!" said D'Arcy, with great severity.

"Ah, you know not love!" said Herries sadly.

"Yaas, I do, though. But that—that's diffeent, you know. I think you must be ill, Hewwies. You ought to see a doctor."

"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" said Herries wildly. "Yah! Throw physic to the dogs! I'll none of it! I love! Gussy, I must tell someone. I will tell you. You shall hear the wild outpourings of a broken heart!"

"Nothin' of the sort, Hewwies! I wefuse to heah anythin' of the kind. I advise you to have a little more sense."

"Listen!" said Herries darkly. "I have a rival!"

"Weally——"

"There is a fellow in this school who is after Ann Jane——"

"Ann Jane?" shrieked D'Arcy.

"That is her name—oh, name sweeter than Desdemona or Juliet!" said Herries. "And her other name is sweeter still—the melodious name of Chunn!"

"Oh, gweat Scott! This is weally too thick!"

"I want you to help me, D'Arcy. You know what it's like. You have been in love with Cousin Ethel, and the Head's niece, and Glyn's sister, and the girl at the drapers."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"You must help me! Listen! I have a rival. I know him not; but he has lurked into the cigar-shop and bought cigars—cigarettes—tobacco—just as an excuse for speaking to my Ann Jane!"

"You have no wight to call her your Ann Jane!"

"I must find him! You must help me find him! When I have found him," said Herries, in a thrilling whisper, "I shall take him quietly into a dark corner and slay him!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Keep the dark secret," said Herries, "and help me to find the chap. Can you guess who it is? He is a St. Jim's chap—I know that—and has bought a lot of cigars and a meer-schaum pipe and things. Look here! I have the deadly blade that shall drink his heart's best blood!" Herries opened his jacket a little, and D'Arcy's horrified eyes discerned a huge carving-knife. "I am desperate! He is my rival! He dies!"

"Hewwies, you must be off your wockah!"

"Love is madness," said Herries. "Did not Romeo rave and ramp? Did not Othello jump and stamp? Did not Antony——"

"Nevah mind those chaps, Hewwies. Take that howwible knife away! You are a feahful ass! Undah the cires——"

"Ah, I have a suspicion!" exclaimed Herries, glaring at him. "You are my rival! Those cigars—those cigarettes—that meer-schaum pipe! Traitor!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Die! With these hands—with this trenchant blade—Flee not! I will slay you!"

Herries made a ferocious jump towards Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's gave a terrified look, and bolted into the nearest study and slammed the door.

Herries hammered at the door furiously.

The key turned in the lock.

"Go away, you awful wottah!" came D'Arcy's voice from within. "Go away!"

"Come forth!"

"I wefuse to come forth!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Go away, you murdahwous lunatic! Oh, help! Somebody take that knife away fwom him! Wescue!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Herries was gone.

But it was fully ten minutes before Arthur Augustus ventured to open the door of the study and look out.

It happened to be Tom Merry's study; but the Terrible Three were elsewhere.

There was no one in the passage; and D'Arcy stepped out of the room and breathed hard.

"I must tell the fellahs! We must get hold of him and get that knife away! Oh, bai Jove! What a feahful state of affairs!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "If he goes on like that he will have to be shut up in a lunatic asylum, bai Jove!"

D'Arcy hurried down the passage to search for Jack Blake & Co.

There was a light under the door of Study No. 6, and a clink of teacups and saucers and a sound of cheery voices within.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 1.

Arthur Augustus opened the study door and gazed in.

Quite a merry tea-party had assembled there.

Blake and Herries and Digby, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

Herries' face was still very pale. He had not quite rubbed off all the chalk.

He still had the carving-knife, but he was cutting bread with it.

The tea-party all looked round at D'Arcy's astounded face.

They did not look at all love-lorn now, not at all despairing or tormented.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Come in!" said Blake cheerily. "We've got poached eggs on toast, and jam—strawberry jam. What's the matter, Gussy?"

"That ass Hewwies——"

"Come in!" yelled Monty Lowther. "We've all recovered now. It's time you recovered, too. Come and have tea, and we'll drink the health of the divine Ann Jane in strong tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Arthur Augustus gazed at them, and the truth slowly dawned upon his mind.

Somehow or other they had discovered his secret while he was away from the school that afternoon, and they had waited for his return with a jape ready planned, and they had been pulling his noble leg in concert all the time.

Arthur Augustus gazed from one face to another, and met only cheerful smiles and chuckles.

"Oh, you awful wottahs!" he gasped at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful outsiders!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Why shouldn't we be in love as well as you? You haven't taken out a patent, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I love, thou lovest, he loves!" grinned Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam!

"Come and have tea!" yelled Blake.

But Arthur Augustus did not come and have tea.

He strode away down the passage in a white-heat of indignation, with yells of laughter ringing in his ears.

But all the suddenly-recovered admirers of Ann Jane finished the toast and poached eggs and jam with complete satisfaction.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Observed of All Observers.

THE secret was out now.

Tom Merry & Co. had not meant to tell, but the secret could not be kept.

Fellows had heard whispers and chuckling remarks from one another, and the first mention of Ann Jane was enough for Levison and Mellish.

Levison overheard a word passed between Tom Merry and Manners, and that was sufficient.

A quarter of an hour later half the School House knew that Arthur Augustus was in love with Miss Chunn.

It was so utterly absurd that the juniors simply yelled over it.

It was the richest item Levison had ever been able to impart to eager hearers.

The story ran through the House like wildfire.

The next day it was all over the New House, too.

Arthur Augustus was the cynosure of all eyes.

That was as it should be, in a way; but he did not like his present conspicuousness. He was furious.

And he had a secret idea that, since all the fellows seemed to regard his infatuation as ridiculous, there was perhaps something really ridiculous in it.

When he appeared in the quadrangle grinning young rascals asked him after Ann Jane.

They asked him if Ann Jane had consented to wait twenty-five years for him, and whether she had agreed to stop growing older while he grew up.

They wanted to know when the bans were to be published, and who was to give the bride away, and whether all the Fourth Form would be asked to the wedding.

Reilly demanded to be best-man—an honour that was disputed by a crowd of other fellows.

Arthur Augustus fled wildly from his questioners; but he could not get away from them, and that day he had several and separate fights on his hands.

As Arthur Augustus sometimes related, in confidential moments, his ancestors had often fought in shining armour for fair ladies in the great days of chivalry.

But his fights on account of Miss Chunn were less romantic.

The D'Arcys of old could trounce a scurvy knave, and come up smiling afterwards.

But Arthur Augustus, after trouncing a scurvy knave, came up with a swollen nose, or a thick ear, or a darkened eye.

During the next day or two he accumulated signs of battle, till Mr. Lathom, his Form-master, dropped on him at last, and gave him a severe lecture on the subject of quarrelsomeness, and a hundred lines to drive it home.

That day the current number of "Tom Merry's Weekly" came out, and there was a new column in it that had never been there before.

It was headed "Births, Marriages, and Deaths," and at the top of it appeared the notice:

"D'ARCY—CHUNN——"

Then followed a glowing account of the wedding, written in Monty Lowther's best style.

The fellows roared over the announcement, and when it was brought to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's notice he went to look for Monty Lowther, and there was another fight.

And when Arthur Augustus started on his next walk to Rylcombe quite a little army marched after him.

Arthur Augustus saw them swarming out of the school gates, and he stopped in the lane, his face going crimson.

The juniors stopped, too, waiting for D'Arcy to lead the way.

He came striding back towards them, his face furious.

"What do you wottahs want?" he demanded.

"Want!" said Gore of the Shell. "We're going for a little walk."

"To Rylcombe," added Levison.

"Just going to drop in to see Ann Jane," explained Kerraish.

"Faith, and it's buying some cigars I'm after!" said Reilly.

"I wefuse to allow you to go theah, you feahful wottahs! I wegard you as beasts! I think this is in wotten bad taste!"

"You haven't bought Chunn's shop, by any chance?" asked Smith minor, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or taken out a monopoly of Rylcombe High Street?" chuckled Bates.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus glared at them, and clenched his fists.

But evidently he could not "whop" fifteen or sixteen fellows.

"If he started it, the whopping was likely to be on the other side.

So he walked off again furiously.

And the army marched on his track.

It was only too evident that they meant to follow him to the tobacconist's and enjoy the fun there, and Arthur Augustus gave it up.

He turned and walked back to St. Jim's, much to the disappointment of the juniors.

They encouraged him loudly to go on; they asked him whether Ann Jane wouldn't be ratty. But Arthur Augustus heeded not.

He marched back to the school, and retired to Study No. 6, where he locked himself in.

His visits to the tobacconist's ceased.

He could never get out without at least a dozen watchful fellows getting after him, and he shrank from a ridiculous scene occurring at Chunn's.

He consoled himself by pouring out his heart in rhymes, but, unfortunately, his pathetic poem fell into Levison's hands.

Whether he had carelessly dropped it, or whether Levison had obtained it from his pocket, was never known; but certainly one afternoon there was Levison in the quadrangle, reading out the poem to a group of delighted juniors:

"Oh, why are you far away?

Oh, why is it ever thus?

Beloved and beautiful, stay, oh, stay!

I dream of you nightly, and think by day,  
Love surely was made for us!"

The juniors roared as they listened.

There was a great deal more of the poem, but Arthur Augustus came up before any more could be read.

As soon as he discovered what Levison was reading he rushed straight at him, hitting out, and there was a struggle for the possession of the poem.

It was torn into fragments, and the fragments were carried off by many hands, and both D'Arcy and Levison emerged from the combat with black eyes.

And that poem was never delivered into the fairy hands of Ann Jane.

"The silly ass is just obstinate!" Jack Blake remarked to Tom Merry, after a few days. "I believe he's getting fed-up with the rot himself, but he won't say so. I suppose what he really wants is a good licking!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've got an idea," he replied. "If Gussy wants to see the divine Ann Jane, why shouldn't he? He can't go to Chunn's any more, because the fellows crowd after him. But suppose Ann Jane came here!"

Blake started.

"She wouldn't," he said. "She's a nice girl enough, and Gussy ought to be ashamed of himself for getting her name joked about in this way."

"I know she wouldn't. But suppose she did?"

"Well, it would make Gussy wish he'd never been born, I should think," chuckled Blake, "if a young lady came here and claimed him before all the chaps—ha, ha, ha! Well, it would bring the matter home to him, and he would understand that he's been playing the giddy goat. Don't you think so?"

"Yes; but she won't. It would be an awful fix for Gussy!"

"She will! Or, if she won't, her double will!"

"Her double?" ejaculated Blake.

Tom Merry chuckled gleefully.

"You know how well Kerr plays girl parts in the theatricals. His Lady Teazle was a regular corker! With a blonde wig, and a high colour, and a picture-hat, he could play Miss Chunn down to the ground!"

Blake roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What do you think of the idea?"

Blake hugged the captain of the Shell.

"Ripping! Gorgeous! First chop! Spiffing!"

Then we'll go over and see Figgins & Co. about it."

Five minutes later they crossed the quadrangle, and there was a consultation in Figgins' study, punctuated with yelps of laughter.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Arthur Augustus.

Taggles, the porter at St. Jim's, was surprised.

It was a half-holiday, and there was a footer match in progress between the Fourth and the Shell.

There were a good many fellows in the quadrangle when the visitor arrived for Master D'Arcy.

Taggles stared at her blankly when she asked for Master D'Arcy.

It was the first time in his experience that a young lady in a picture-hat, a thick

"Yes, rather!" gasped Gore. "He's on the footer-ground. He's playing. But he'll come off like a shot when he knows you're here, miss!"

"Will you show me the way, little boy?"

Gore snorted.

He did not like being called a little boy.

But he was only too glad to show the way. Indeed, twenty fellows had already grouped themselves round the red feather, eager to show the way.

It was like a little army marching upon the football-ground, with the red feather floating high above, like the white plume of Navarre in the olden time.

Arthur Augustus was playing that afternoon for the Fourth against the Shell.

It was close upon half-time, and the game was going strong.

Figgins was taking the ball down the field, and Clifton Dane, in goal, was watching him, when the red feather came in sight.

A yell from the spectators announced the arrival of Miss Chunn, and there was a loud call for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy was following Figgy's run, ready to take a pass, but he stopped and glared round.

The sight of the red feather seemed to paralyse him.



GUSSY AND THE GIRL!

veil, and golden hair in ringlets, had ever presented herself at the school and asked for a boy in the Fourth Form.

"I—I dunno about this," said Taggles in surprise. "Are you a relation of Master D'Arcy, miss?"

"No."

"May I ask wot your business is?"

"I wish to see him."

"But—but I dunno—"

Taggles did not know, but apparently the visitor knew, for she walked past the porter and went on into the quadrangle, leaving Taggles staring after her blankly and rubbing his chin.

The picture-hat was spotted at once in the quad.

Miss Chunn was somewhat striking in her attire, and that hat was well known in Rylcombe—or, at all events, a hat exactly like it.

The feather that stuck up from it was two feet high, at least, and was bright crimson in colour.

That feather was celebrated in Rylcombe.

The sight of it in the distance was sufficient to announce that Miss Chunn was coming, without a sight of her face.

That feather had, indeed, caused some misgivings to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had a secret horror of conspicuousness.

"My hat!" roared Gore. "It's Ann Jane!"

"The Chunn-bird!" yelled Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can any of you dear boys tell me where Master D'Arcy is?" asked the lady with the red feather, sweetly.

"Play up!" roared Blake.

"Bai Jove! It's—it's—it's Miss Chunn!"

"Never mind who it is. You're playing footer now."

"Come off, Gussy!" bellowed Gore. "Here's a visitor for you!"

"Gussy, you're wanted!"

"Don't be rude, Gussy, and keep a lady waiting!"

"Gussy—Gussy! This way, Gussy!"

"Oh, cwumbs, this is weally most awkward!"

The ball shot past D'Arcy, and was captured by Tom Merry, and rushed off.

Jack Blake caught Arthur Augustus by the shoulder, and shook him.

"Can't you play?" he roared.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Keep your silly eyes open—"

"It's Miss Chunn—"

"I don't care if it's Miss Chunn, or Miss Bunn, or Miss Gunn!" howled Blake. "You'd better get off the ground! Buzz off!"

"Yaas, wathah! I agreee with you."

And Arthur Augustus ran off.

Manners dropped out of the Shell team, and walked off the field.

It had been agreed between the two skippers.

Arthur Augustus hastily donned his coat muffer, and ran up to the crowd surrounding Miss Chunn.

"Oh, Arthur!" exclaimed the young lady. D'Arcy crimsoned.

Miss Chunn had never called him Arthur before; indeed, during his visits to the tobacconist's, that young lady had seemed to regard him with a good-humoured and amused toleration.

He did not even know that she was aware that he was in love.

He had dreamed of the day when she should call him Arthur.

The day had come, but rather unfortunately.

It was not exactly what he desired, to be hailed as Arthur before a crowd of grinning juniors.

"G-g-g-good aftahnoon!" stammered Arthur Augustus, in great confusion.

"Call me Ann Jane!" murmured the young lady, in a low voice.

"Oh, weally—"

"You are glad to see me here, Arthur?"

"Oh, yaas—yaas, wathah; b-but—"

"We're all glad to see you, miss!" said Levison. "It's a great honour to see you here! The Head would be pleased, if he knew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you are going to show me your dear little study, Arthur dear?" asked the young lady.

"Oh, cwumbs! Yaas, wathah! Pway come this way!"

Arthur Augustus' face was like unto a freshly-boiled beetroot as he walked across the quadrangle with the red feather.

Fellows of all Forms stared at him.

He saw Kildare of the Sixth fasten a very peculiar glance upon him; Cutts & Co. of the Fifth stood and yelled with laughter; fags of the Third and Second came round in dozens.

Arthur Augustus led his guest into the School House, and up to Study No. 6.

That famous apartment had often been visited by D'Arcy's feminine relations, especially Cousin Ethel; but it was the first time that he had received there a guest unrelated to him of the feminine persuasion.

"Oh, dear, what a pretty little room!" murmured the young lady, as Arthur Augustus showed her into the study. "Dear me! Do you always keep your boots on the table, and the frying-pan on the mantel-piece?"

Arthur Augustus groaned inwardly.

The study certainly wasn't in a state for receiving lady visitors.

But then Miss Chunn's visit was so entirely unexpected—on D'Arcy's part, at least.

"I must weally apologise for the state of my quartahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "The other fellahs are untidy boundahs, you know!"

He tried to shut the door, but Gore had his foot in the way.

Arthur Augustus gave Gore an expressive glare; but Gore did not mind.

The swell of St. Jim's shrank from a personal encounter in the presence of Miss Chunn.

He was only too painfully conscious of the black eye he already possessed.

"Will you go away, Goah?" he murmured.

"No fear!" said Gore calmly.

And twenty or thirty voices in the passage echoed that reply.

The juniors had no intention whatever of going away.

"Please don't shut the door, Arthur!" said the lady coyly. "Let all your friends come in! Please don't close the door! I am very shy!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

It occurred to Arthur Augustus that certainly it was not a good idea to shut the door.

So the door remained wide open, and some of the juniors came in, smiling.

They were enjoying themselves, though Arthur Augustus was not.

"We want to help you to look after Miss

Chunn. By the way, I saw Knox go into Mr. Railton's study just now."

D'Arcy shuddered.

"P-p-pewwaps you would like me to show you woud the school, Miss Chunn—"

"Call me Ann Jane!" came a soft voice from behind the veil.

"Ya-a-a-as! Will you let me show you woud the school, Ann Jane?" stammered Arthur Augustus. "This studay is weally wathah uncomfy."

"I think I should like to rest a little first," said the lady, sinking into the armchair, with her back to the light. "You do not want to get rid of me, Arthur?"

"Certainly not, deah gal! But I—I—"

"Come and sit beside me, Arthur!"

"B-b-b-but—"

"Won't you sit beside me, dear Arthur?"

"Ya-as-as, w-w-with pleasure, you know!"

Arthur Augustus—not looking at all as if it were a pleasure—sat beside the young lady. A gloved hand stole into his.

An hour ago Arthur Augustus would have considered himself in the seventh heaven to sit and hold Ann Jane's hand.

Now he would almost have soon have sat and held a red-hot poker.

The lady appeared to be quite unconscious of the hysterical joy of the juniors who were crowding the study and the passage.

She seemed to have eyes only for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"How nice to sit with you and hold your dear hand, Arthur!" she murmured.

"Oh, bai Jovel!"

"Are you happy now, Arthur dear?"

"Ya-a-a-as—fwightfully! B-b-but—"

"Doesn't he look happy?" grinned Gore.

"You must not mind his blushes, Miss Chunn. Gussy is rather shy—ain't you, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus gave Gore a homicidal look.

He had never felt so utterly and supremely ridiculous in his life.

The crowd in the study was growing thicker and thicker; fellows were swarming from all quarters, and struggling to get a sight of the swell of St. Jim's sitting hand-in-hand with Miss Chunn.

Manners was seen in the crowd with his camera.

"Keep still!" called out Manners, as he focussed his camera. "Smile, Gussy! Don't look as if you were going to execution! Smile!"

D'Arcy jumped up frantically.

"Mannahs, you villain, if you dare—"

Click!

"Got you!" said Manners. "I'm afraid you've spoiled the picture by moving, though. Why couldn't you sit still and smile—"

"You—you uttah wottah—"

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and a surging of the crowd.

"Cave!"

The stalwart form of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, appeared in the study doorway.

The juniors crowded back.

Arthur Augustus stood as if turned to stone.

The young lady in the armchair seemed quite self-possessed.

Mr. Railton gazed at her, and gazed at D'Arcy. His brow was terrific.

"D'Arcy!"

"Ya-a-a-as, sir!"

"Who is this young lady?"

"M;m-m-miss Chunn, sir!" stammered D'Arcy.

"You know perfectly well that junior boys are not allowed to have lady visitors, above all without asking permission!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "Miss Chunn, I am sorry, but—"

"It's all right, sir," said Miss Chunn, with a startling change of voice. "This is only a little joke on Gussy, sir!"

"Wha-at?"

That voice seemed to electrify Arthur Augustus.

He could not believe his ears at first.

He turned an infuriated look upon the veiled young lady.

"You—you wottah—you—you—" Words failed him.

The red feather rose from the armchair.

Miss Chunn removed her veil and her hat, and with the hat came the golden hair.

A face highly coloured was revealed; but, in spite of the high colour, the features of Kerr of the Fourth were quite easily recognisable now that the veil was gone.

Mr. Railton looked at him blankly.

"Kerr!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Kerr demurely. "It's only amateur theatricals, sir—I'm practising!"

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Railton, his face breaking into a smile. "I thought— However, no matter. There is no harm in amateur theatricals, but you should not appear out of doors in feminine attire, Kerr."

"Very well, sir."

And Mr. Railton left the study.

Arthur Augustus gazed at Kerr.

Kerr proceeded calmly to take off his skirt—he had his Etons underneath.

Arthur Augustus seemed almost petrified.

"Kerr, you wottah! You spoofah! You boundah! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a thunderous roar from the passage. "Go it, Arthur! Go it, Arthur dear! Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr fled.

He dashed down the passage with his disguise under his arm, chuckling; and Arthur Augustus dashed ferociously on his track.

The swell of St. Jim's overtook him as he reached the stairs, and collared him, and they closed.

There was a howl of laughter from the crowd as they rolled down the stairs together.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Arthur dear!"

"Go it, Ann Jane!"

The two juniors stopped on the first landing, rolling over.

Arthur Augustus was pommelling away frantically, and Kerr was pommelling, too.

Half the school seemed to be collected on the stairs and in the passage, cheering on the combatants.

Kerr tore himself away at last, with his skirt in shreds, and his wig in fragments, and his hat in tatters.

He dashed out of the School House.

Arthur Augustus sat up on the stairs, gasping.

He, too, was almost in rags, and his other eye was black now.

The combat had been terrific while it lasted.

Arthur Augustus staggered up, amid yells of laughter.

"You uttah wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wotten boundahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy stalked away furiously to Study No. 6, and locked himself in.

But for a long time outside the study there sounded the yells of the School House fellows, laughing like hyenas.

Whether that ridiculous scene in the study had made Arthur Augustus realise that he was playing the "giddy ox," as Blake expressed it, or not, certainly that was the end of D'Arcy's love-affair.

From that day forth there were no more visits to the tobacconist's in Rylcombe.

Arthur Augustus had been cured, and after a day or two—during which time his dignity slowly recovered from the wounds it had received—matters were restored to their old footing in Study No. 6.

But it was a long time ere the juniors of St. Jim's ceased to talk about D'Arcy's Delusion.

THE END.

Next Friday's Splendid, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's is entitled  
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