

ROOKWOOD JUNIORS GO ON STRIKE! (SEE INSIDE.)

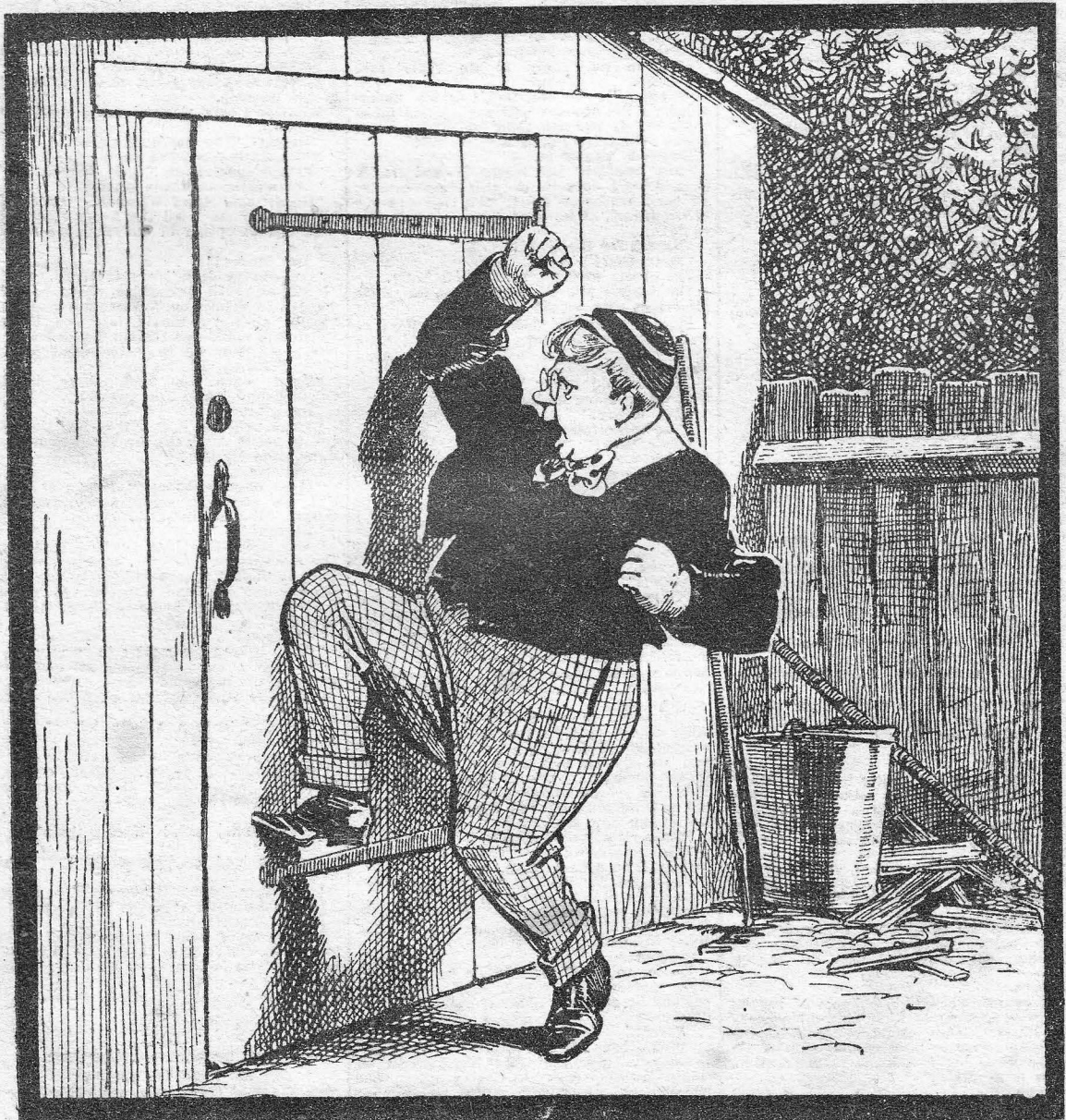
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The Penny **1½**<sup>D</sup>  
Popular

No. 7.  
New Series.

Week Ending  
March 8th, 1919.

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HARRY WHARTON & Co.

# BUNTER, THE SMOKER!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Mass Meeting.

**G**ENTLEMEN of the Remove— began Harry Wharton of the Remove at Greyfriars.

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurrah!"

"Order!"

"The orderfulness is terrific!"

Bob Cherry banged upon the floor of the wood-shed with a hammer.

"Silence for the Chair!" he shouted.

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton, as soon as silence was sufficiently restored for his voice to be heard. "Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"This Form meeting has been called to deal with a situation unexampled and unprecedented in the history of Greyfriars!"

"Bravo!"

"Where on earth did he get those words?" gasped Nugent.

"I saw him looking them out in the dictionary," said Skinner.

Harry Wharton turned scarlet.

"You didn't!" he exclaimed warmly. "I thought of them myself. They—"

"What's the difference between unexampled and unprecedented?" asked Ogily.

"Shut up, Ogily! You know jolly well that this isn't a time for asking conundrums!" exclaimed Bob Cherry severely.

"Ha, ha! I wasn't asking conundrums. I want to know. Wharton would get stanged for tautology if he used that sentence in class—"

"Order!"

"Order yourself, Bob Cherry! You're making more blessed row than any of us!"

"Silence!"

"There's an unprecedented situation—" began Wharton.

"We've had that."

"No more tautology!"

"Talk English!"

"Faith, and it's British, you mean!" exclaimed Micky Desmond warmly.

"Hear, hear! Talk British, Wharton!"

"Things are in a rotten state, then," said Harry. "That's plain English—I mean British. There's a new chap come to Greyfriars—"

The speaker was interrupted by a deep and dismal groan for the new chap.

"We've had all sorts of new chaps here—rotters, some of 'em—"

"Yes; it isn't so long since you were a new chap," remarked Bulstrode, and there was a giggle from Skinner and Snoop.

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"But this new chap fairly takes the cake," went on Harry Wharton, without taking any notice of Bulstrode. "He's the meanest, rankest rotter that ever bounded—the very worst bouncer that ever rotted!"

Groans.

"He drinks, and he smokes, and he spreads himself all over the place, flashing off his money and his blessed jewellery—"

Groans.

"He's the son of a rotten millionaire, who makes millions by cornering cotton and throwing decent chaps out of employment—"

Groans.

"Of course, we wouldn't dream of ragging a chap on account of what his people were," said Harry. "That would be caddish. But this chap seems to be a regular chip of the old block—as big a cad and bouncer as his father is a rotter!"

Groans.

"We've had enough of him!"

Cheers.

"Too much, in fact!"

Renewed cheers.

"He's disgraced the school and the Form

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 7.

he belongs to half a dozen times already," said Harry, his eyes flashing as he warmed up to his subject. "The Remove isn't a good-little-Georgie Form, I know; but we bar drinking and smoking and playing the cad generally. We bar cheeking the Head."

Groans.

"Somehow or other, I can't make out how the Head seems to have made up his mind to let the Bouncer stay at Greyfriars—"

"He can't help himself," said Hazeldene.

"So Vernon-Smith says; and as the Head lets him stay, it looks as if there's something in it," said Wharton, with a nod. "The only explanation I can think of is, that Smith's people have influence on the Governing Board, and the Governors have brought pressure to bear on the Head."

"They're not likely to do that," said Bulstrode.

"I know they're not, and I can't understand it; but it's the only explanation I can think of. If you can think of a better one, you're at liberty to state it."

Bulstrode was silent.

"But whatever the reason is—and really that doesn't concern us—the Head cannot, for some reason or other, kick that cad out of Greyfriars, as we know jolly well he'd like to do!"

"Hurrah for the Head!"

"Hear, hear!"

The cheers were given enthusiastically.

The juniors sometimes had painful little interviews with Dr. Locke.

But there was no doubt that the Head of Greyfriars was popular, and the boys liked and respected him with an unbounded affection and respect.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I take it that we all stand up for the Head."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And for Quelch, too, against that unspeakable rotter!"

"Good old Quelch!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then to come to the object of this meeting—"

"About time you came to it!" muttered Bulstrode.

"Order!"

"To come to the object, this meeting has been called, of the whole Form, to decide what is to be done in the matter. The situation is this—there's a rotten bouncer at Greyfriars, whom the Head can't get rid of, and who takes advantage of it to be caddish and cheeky. He's got to be educated!"

"Hear, hear!"

"He wants to cut footer—and there's an order to the prefects that he's to be let off compulsory practice. He neglects his prep—and Mr. Quelch says never a word to him in the morning. It's as clear as daylight that his people have got some sort of influence somewhere, and the masters don't like it any more than we do."

"Quite right!" said Nugent.

"The rightfulness is terrific!" chimed in Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, as the masters and prefects don't seem to be able to deal with this worm, my suggestion to the meeting is that the Remove should take the matter in hand itself!" cried Harry Wharton.

Loud cheers.

"Is he to be allowed to do as he likes; carry matters with a high hand; crow over us; and be generally as cocky and caddish as he pleases?"

"Never!"

"Well, then; it's a matter for the whole Remove to take up," said Harry, with an emphatic stamp upon the rickety box he was standing on, which very nearly precipitated him and his improvised rostrum upon the floor together.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"There are differences on other matters between some of us here," said Harry

Wharton. "I have disagreements with Bulstrode, for instance. But Bulstrode and I are willing to pull together in this matter."

"What-ho!" said Bulstrode.

"I believe we're all of one mind—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The hear-hearfulness is great."

"Then I put it to the meeting whether the Remove shall or shall not undertake the education of Vernon-Smith!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Hurrah!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Rather!"

"Hands up for the education of Vernon-Smith!"

A forest of hands went up.

Some of the juniors, in their enthusiasm and excitement, elevated both hands.

There wasn't any doubt as to the keenness of the meeting.

Wharton's eyes gleamed as he looked over the crowd.

"Thanks! Now hands up against!"

Not a single hand was shown.

"Passed unanimously!" said Bob Cherry.

"The unanimousfulness is terrific!"

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "I see we're all of one mind. All the Remove are here, with the exception of the Bouncer himself

"And Bunter!"

"Oh, Bunter doesn't count!"

"And we're all determined. Now, as we've decided to stand together in this matter, I suggest that we should interview Vernon-Smith in a body, and explain the situation to him. As it would be inconvenient for the whole Form to visit his study—"

"We'll make him come down to the Common-room," said Tom Brown.

"Hear, hear!"

"There we'll put it to him plainly that he's got to mend his ways, or the Remove will mend them for him!"

Loud cheers.

"If he doesn't choose to turn over a new leaf, his education starts to-morrow," said Harry. "Is that all right?"

"Hurrah!"

"And mind, the thing must be kept dark. The masters don't like the Bouncer any more than we do, but they wouldn't like our taking the law into our hands like this. Or, rather, I mean they'd feel bound to disapprove of it officially!"

"That's so!"

"So we'll keep the matter to ourselves—"

"In that case, we'd better not make too much row," suggested Mark Linley. "I know we're some distance from the school, but—"

"But there's been a jolly lot of row!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Marky's right. Moderate your giddy transports!"

"Quite so," said Harry. "We don't want to hear a master knock at the door in the middle of the meeting, and—"

Knock!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's that?"

Knock!

It was a loud knocking at the door of the wood-shed.

"My only hat!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Your warning's a little too late, Marky!"

Knock, knock! Bang!

Then came a voice the assembled juniors knew well, and it made them gasp with relief.

"I say, you fellows, open the door! I jolly well know you're there!"

And there was a general exclamation.

"Bunter!"

"Only Bunter!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### No Feed for Bunter.

**B**ILLY BUNTER thumped at the door of the wood-shed again.

"I say, you fellows," he called through the keyhole, "open the door! I know you've got a feed on there, and I'm jolly well not going to be left out!"

The juniors chuckled.

Thump, thump! Kick!  
"Oh, go away, Bunter!" called out Bob Cherry.

"I'm jolly well not going away! I want some of the feed—I'm hungry!"

"There isn't any feed!"  
"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's only a Form meeting!" called out Harry Wharton. "Buzz off!"

"Well, I'm a member of the Form, ain't I?" howled Bunter. "You just open this door, you bouncers, and let me in!"

"Better let the silly ass in," said Harry. "He'll make a row there if we don't!"

"Right you are!"  
Bob Cherry unlocked the door of the woodshed, and the Owl of the Remove came in, blinking round through his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "I think you might have told me it was a Form feed, and asked me to come. I've been hunting for you everywhere. Where's the grub?"

"There isn't any grub, ass!"  
"Of course, you're joking!" said Bunter. "If you wanted to hold just a Form meeting, why couldn't you do it in the Form-room?"

"Because it's private and confidential!" said Bob Cherry. "And now that you see that there is no feed you can roll along!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, the meeting's about at an end," remarked Harry Wharton. "We'd settled the plan of campaign, hadn't we? Now—"

"Isn't there anything left?" asked Bunter. "Any what?"

"Grub."  
"Didn't I tell you there wasn't any feed?" shouted Bob Cherry, in exasperation.

"Yes, but—"

"You—you fat worm! Do you mean to say you don't take my word?" exclaimed Bob, pushing back his cuffs.

"Oh, yes—yes, of course!" stammered Bunter. "I—I wouldn't think of doubting your word, Cherry. But—but I think you might let me have just a few tarts."

"I tell you there aren't any."  
"Well, some cake, then."

Bob Cherry burst into a laugh. There was evidently no getting the idea out of Bunter's head that there had been a feed in the woodshed.

"Well, come this way," said Skinner. Bunter went towards him eagerly.

Skinner was the humorist of the Remove, but Billy Bunter was too hungry to think of that for the moment.

"You're an awfully decent chap, Skinner!" he exclaimed. "Where's the grub?"

"Follow me, kid!"  
Skinner mounted a short wooden ladder that led into the loft over the woodshed.

Billy Bunter followed him quickly enough. He had no doubt that the supply of "grub" was in the loft.

The juniors stared at them and chuckled. They could easily guess that Skinner was going to jape the fat junior—Bunter deserved it, for his unbelief—and Harry Wharton & Co., laughing, quitted the shed.

Some of the Removites followed them, and others remained to see what would become of Bunter.

The fat junior clambered into the loft after Skinner, with many a grunt and gasp. He blinked round him in the semi-darkness of the loft.

"There you are," said Skinner, pointing. Billy Bunter stumbled in the direction indicated.

In a moment Skinner whipped down the ladder into the lower room, and Bulstrode lent him a hand to take the ladder away from beneath the trap.

There was a disgusted exclamation from the loft.

"I can't see any grub, Skinner."  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Billy Bunter's fat face glistened over the open trap.

He blinked down at the laughing juniors. "I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"There isn't any grub up here."  
"Go hon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Look here, Skinner—"

"Have another look," said Skinner. "I'm jolly well not going to. I believe you're japing me, you beast. I'm coming down. Oh! Where's the ladder?"

"Here it is."  
"You've taken it away!"  
"Go hon!"

Bunter blinked down at the juniors in alarm. He began to realise that he was a prisoner in the loft. The floor was ten feet below, and it was very hard.

Bunter would as soon have dropped a hundred feet as ten.

"I say, you fellows, shove that ladder back here!" he said.

"Rats! We told you to go, and you wouldn't—now you can stay."  
"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Come on, you chaps," said Skinner. "No good sticking here now. The meeting's over. Good-bye, Bluebell—I mean Bunter!"

"I—I say—"

But no one stayed to hear what Billy Bunter had to say.

The Removites, laughing loudly, streamed out of the woodshed, and Billy Bunter was left alone in his glory.

The fat junior yelled after them despairingly.

"I say, you fellows, bring that ladder here! Come back! Skinner, you beast, shove that ladder back here! I say, Skinner, old fellow, bring me that ladder! Beasts!"

The woodshed was deserted, save for Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was red with rage. He cast a look down into the lower storey, but he knew that he dared not drop.

demand. "Wot I says is this 'ere—you can put it up again!"

"I didn't chuck it down, Gosling," said Bunter pathetically. "I was tricked into getting up here, and Skinner took the ladder away."

Gosling chuckled.

"Please put the ladder there, Mr. Gosling!" said Bunter softly.

"Mr. Gosling!" grunted the porter. "It's old Gossy, and silly old Gossy at other times, but when you want something done it's Mr. Gosling! Ho! Wot I says is this 'ere—"

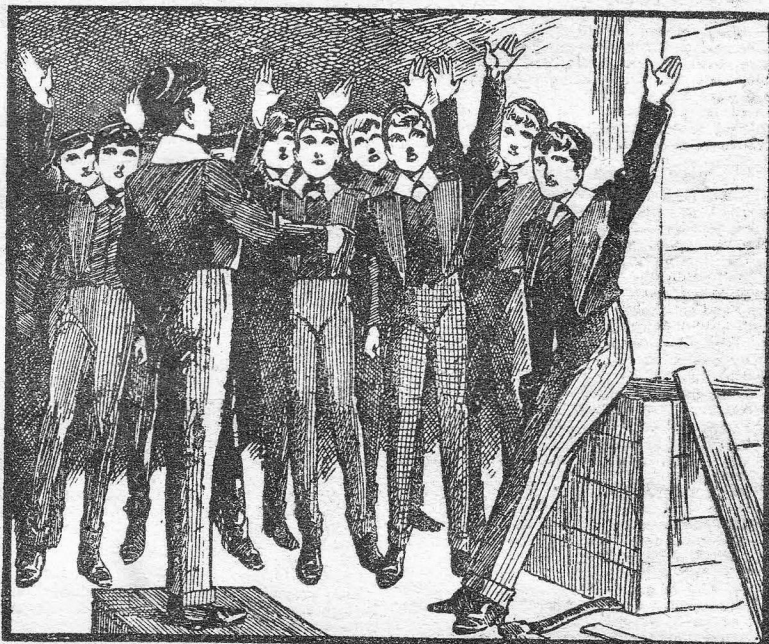
"I am sure I always speak of you respectfully, Mr. Gosling. I think you're a very nice chap, and I don't believe you live on gin-and-water, as the fellows say you do."

"Ho! Do they?"

"Yes, they do; but I never believe it! And I don't think you're half such a beast as the fellows make out!" said Bunter flatteringly.

The porter glared at him.

"Ho! I'm a beast, am I?"  
"Yes—I mean the fellows say so; but I always stand up for you, you know. I always say that a man can't help having a disagreeable temper and a face like a hatchet if he's born like it."



"HANDS UP FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE BOUNDER!"

He was a prisoner in the loft till someone chose to come and give him the ladder.

And it was quite possible that the Removites, after having their laugh out, would forget all about him, and leave him there.

"The rotters!" muttered Billy Bunter. "The beasts! I'm blessed if I know how I stand the Remove! I shall have to yell for help! I suppose Gosling will hear! Hallo, there's somebody coming into the shed!"

It was Gosling.

The school porter had been tipped to leave the Form meeting undisturbed in the woodshed, but as soon as they were gone he came along to see whether any damage had been done.

It was quite probable that there might have been a bear-fight as well as a Form meeting, and in that case the place would want putting to rights.

Billy Bunter blinked at the porter with great relief.

"I say, Gossy!" he called out. The porter gave a jump.

The voice from above his head startled him.

He looked up, and saw the fat, red face of Bunter framed in the square opening.

"Oh!" he grunted. "You startled me."  
"I'm sincerely sorry, Gosling. Put that ladder there, will you?"

Gosling did not move.  
"Wot do you want to get hup into the loft and chuck the ladder down for?" he

"Ho!"  
"Please put the ladder here, Mr. Gosling."

"It hain't my dooty to put ladders back after young himps 'ave moved them," said Gosling obstinately.

"Oh, really, Mr. Gosling—"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Would a shilling be any use to you, Mr. Gosling?"

"Thank you kindly, Master Bunter."  
"Then I will present you with one out of the postal-order I am expecting to-morrow morning. Please put the ladder back."

"It's a 'eavy ladder," said Gosling. "I don't think I could lift it without 'elp."

He moved towards the door of the shed. Bunter gave a yell.

"Gosling! Put that ladder here!" Gosling grunted, and moved on.

Perhaps Bunter had not been quite tactful in the way he had talked to him.

Anyway, Gosling did not seem inclined to help.

Bunter blinked with rage as he saw his only chance going. But suddenly a new thought flashed into his mind, as he remembered that his ventriloquism had served him in time of trouble before.

A deep, sharp voice was suddenly heard in the woodshed.  
"Gosling!" Place that ladder in position immediately!"

Gosling jumped at the well-known tones of the Head.

"Yes, sir!" he gasped. He grasped the ladder, and swung it up to its place under the trap. Then he looked round apologetically.

"I was just going to, sir," he said. "I was just going to put it there. Wot I says is this 'ere, sir—that—"

Gosling broke off. There was no sign of the Head in the shed or in the doorway.

Gosling went to the open door and looked out.

The Head was not in sight, neither was anyone else.

The porter stood astounded. Billy Bunter, with a fat chuckle, clambered down the ladder, and darted out of the shed.

Outside, he paused to grin back at the astonished porter.

"It was the 'Ead's voice," murmured Gosling dazedly, "but where's the 'Ead?"

"You've been drinking again, Gosling," said the deep voice, behind the school porter this time.

Gosling whirled round. "Oh, sir, I—"

Then he stopped. There was no one in the shed.

Gosling stared round him with starting eyes, and suddenly leaving the shed, strode away towards his lodge with jerky steps, every now and then casting a nervous glance back over his shoulder.

And Billy Bunter, with a fat chuckle, scuttled away, leaving the school porter in a state of hopeless perplexity.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Vernon-Smith Threatens the Remove Form.

"SMITH!" Herbert Vernon-Smith was standing at the window, looking out of his study into the sunset, with his hands thrust deep into his trousers-pockets.

He looked round sulkily as his name was spoken, and found Bulstrode, Trevor, Ogilvy, and Micky Desmond at his door.

He looked at the four juniors with a clouded brow.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded. "You!" said Bulstrode.

"Faith, and you're to come down with us!" explained Micky Desmond. "There's been a Form-meeting, and we want you to know the result."

"Don't talk rot to me!" "Faith, and I—"

"The Remove are all waiting for you in the Common-room," said Bulstrode. "Come!"

"I don't care to."

"It's not a question of what you care to do, but of what you've got to do," said Bulstrode unceremoniously. "Are you coming, or shall we take you?"

Vernon-Smith clutched his hands convulsively.

"I won't come."

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders. "Collar him, kids!"

"What-ho!"

And Vernon-Smith was promptly collared. He struggled fiercely in the grasp of the juniors.

Getting his right hand free, he dashed his clenched fist with all his force into Bulstrode's face, and the burly junior reeled back and crashed to the floor.

"Faith, and what a blessed wild-cat!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "Hould him, intirely!"

"I've got his paws," said Ogilvy, grasping Vernon-Smith's wrists and dragging them together in a grip like that of a vice.

"And I've got his toes," said Trevor, swinging Vernon-Smith up from the floor with a sudden grasp upon his ankles.

"Let me go!" howled Smith furiously.

Bulstrode staggered to his feet.

His face was bruised, his nose bleeding, and his features were convulsed with fury.

All the evil in the nature of the Remove bully had been roused by that knock-down blow.

"Hold him!" he panted. "I'll show him—"

Ogilvy pushed him back.

"Here, hold on, Bulstrode! You can't hit a chap while we're holding him."

"Hands off!" roared Bulstrode.

"But—"

"I'm going to smash him!"

Then you can jolly well tackle him without our holding him," said the Scottish junior, and he released Vernon-Smith's wrists.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 7.

The new boy tore himself loose, and sprang up.

Bulstrode rushed upon him.

Vernon-Smith met him savagely.

He was not brave, but he was so furious now that temper took the place of courage.

But he was no match for the burly Bulstrode.

The attack simply swept him away, and he was knocked round the study under a shower of fierce blows, and finally went with a crash into the grate.

There he lay gasping and groaning amid the clanging fire-irons.

Bulstrode stood over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Now, then, do you want any more?" he panted.

Vernon-Smith groaned in response.

"He doesn't," said Trevor, with a short laugh. "Bring him along!"

Vernon-Smith was dragged to his feet.

There was no fight left in him now, for the present, and he only gasped and grunted as the Removites hurried him out of the study.

He was walked down to the junior Common-room, where the whole of the Remove were assembled.

The Remove had the room to themselves for the time, for it was still bright sunlight in the Close, and the Third and the Upper Fourth were all out of doors.

Vernon-Smith shrank a little as he was marched into the room, and found the eyes of the whole Form fastened upon him.

He realised that he was in a most unpleasant position, and the remarks that greeted his entrance were not flattering or gratifying at all.

"Here's the Bounder!"

"Here's the cad!"

"Looks rather rumped, doesn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did he give any trouble?" asked Harry Wharton, with rather an amused glance at Bulstrode's nose, which was "swelling visibly."

"Yes, he did," grunted Bulstrode; "but I think he got as good as he gave!"

"He looks like it," said Nugent.

Vernon-Smith glared at them savagely.

"What does this foolery mean?" he exclaimed. "I won't be bullied, if that's what you're after! You'd better take care!"

"Rats!"

"Shut up!"

"You know jolly well I've got influence with the Head!" said Vernon-Smith. "I'll have some of you sacked for this!"

There was a hiss, and Wharton compressed his lips hard.

"That's what we want to talk to you about," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Close the door, Ogilvy!"

The Scottish junior closed the door, and turned the key in the lock, to prevent any possible interruption.

Vernon-Smith viewed this proceeding with considerable alarm, but his manner was none the less truculent.

It was evident that he believed that he held a trump card in the circumstance of his mysterious influence with the Head of Greyfriars.

"Now, Vernon-Smith, we're going to put it straight to you," said Harry Wharton grimly. "As Form-captain, I'm taking the lead in this matter. But there isn't a fellow here who doesn't feel as I do about it, and who doesn't back me up entirely."

"Hear, hear!"

The shout from the Removites was a sufficient proof that Harry Wharton had stated only the truth.

Vernon-Smith looked round him with a sullen scowl, and fixed his sulky eyes upon the Remove captain.

"Well, what have you got to say to me, confound you?" he demanded.

"Now we're getting to business," said Wharton. "In the first place, you are an unspeakable cad, and we're not going to stand it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You've brought all sorts of blackguardly manners and customs to Greyfriars with you, and we don't like it."

Vernon-Smith sneered.

"I don't ask you to like it," he said. "You can do the other thing, you know."

"That's what we don't choose to do. Instead of that, we're going to educate you."

The Bounder started.

"Educate me! What do you mean?"

"What I say. You've come to Greyfriars for your education, I suppose, and we're going to educate you," explained Wharton, while the Removites chuckled. "You are

going to stop your caddish tricks. You're not going to keep smokes in your box or in your study, and you're not going to drink anything stronger than tea or coffee."

"Who says I'm not?" demanded the Bounder savagely.

"The whole Remove says so."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Remove had better mind its own business," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "I'm not a safe chap to meddle with."

"Listen to the cad!"

"Oh, rag him, and have done with it!" Wharton shook his head.

"That doesn't begin till to-morrow," he explained. "It's been settled that we explain matters to Smith, and give him this evening to think it over and turn over a new leaf if he likes."

"That's only fair," said Nugent.

"The fairness is terrific."

"He's a rank rotter, but I think we ought to give him a chance," said Harry. "He can make the most of it. Now, look here, Smith—"

"I've had enough of this!"

"Stay where you are!"

"I won't!"

And Vernon-Smith strode towards the door.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened. "Put him where he was," he said.

Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped the Bounder, and dragged him back to where he had been standing.

He struggled, but the juniors had had enough of his nonsense.

"Bump him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry angrily.

Bump!

Vernon-Smith yelled as he was bumped. He was considerably shaken up in the process.

"Now, will you stand quiet?"

"Ow! No!"

Bump, bump!

"Let me go, you cads!"

"Will you be quiet?"

"No—yes!"

Vernon-Smith was placed upon his feet again, very rumped, and very furious.

He was gritting his teeth as he stood there, but he made no movement towards the door again.

"Look here, Smith," said Harry quietly, continuing as if there had been no interruption, "there's no reason why you shouldn't behave decently if you choose, and we're going to give you rope enough. Somehow or other you seem to have some sort of pull in the school—I suppose it's influence with the governors—and the masters don't treat you as they treat the other chaps."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"I can do as I like!" he said.

"That's where you make a mistake, old dear," said Bob Cherry. "You can't!"

"You can't!" said Wharton. "You've checked Mr. Quelch, our Form-master, and you've checked even the Head!"

"That's my business!"

"And ours. There's going to be no more of it."

"What?"

"It's going to be stopped."

"Who's going to stop it?" said Vernon-Smith, breathing hard.

"We are!"

"Rats!"

Wharton controlled his temper with difficulty.

It was all he could do to keep his hands off the Bounder of Greyfriars, but he did.

"Mind, Smith, we are in earnest," he said; "we mean every word. You are going to treat the Head and Mr. Quelch with proper respect, whether they make you or not. If they don't, we jolly well will! The first time you're cheeky to a master, and don't get called up for it, we are going to rag you!"

"Mind your own business!"

"And all the rotten habits you've brought to Greyfriars—such as drinking and smoking—are going to be stopped, too. We're going to do it!"

"Hang you!"

"That's a fair warning. We give you this evening to think it over. You can start clear to-morrow morning if you like, and we'll give you every chance. But if you keep on as you've begun, your life won't be worth living at Greyfriars, that's all."

"Rats!"

"Open the door, kids, and let the cad go," said Wharton. "I sha'n't be able to keep my hands off him much longer."

"Just how I feel," said Bob Cherry sympathetically.

Ogilvy threw the door open. Vernon-Smith strode to it. He turned in the door-

way, and cast back a savage look at the Remove.

"I don't care a rap for the lot of you!" he said. "I'll do as I like! I don't care a twopenny rap for the whole Form!"

There was a yell, and a rush was made for the Bounder. But Harry Wharton stopped that at once.

"Hold on, chaps! Remember the agreement. He can say what he likes until to-morrow."

"It's rotten—"  
 "Let him have his chance."  
 And the Remove reluctantly agreed.

Vernon-Smith strode away, with his nose in the air, and the fellows consoled themselves by the thought of how they would rag him on the morrow if he did not mend his manners—a thing that was not likely to happen.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, the Smoker.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were busy with their prep, when Billy Bunter came into the study.

The fat junior was looking very discontented.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked, "I—"  
 "Shut up, Bunter!"

That was generally the reply when the Owl of the Remove made any attempt at conversation.

But Billy Bunter was used to it, and it did not affect him very much.

"I say, Wharton, I'm hungry!"  
 "Go hon!"

"We had such a measly tea—"  
 "Rats!"

"And you chaps wouldn't let me have any of the feed in the wood-shed—"

"There wasn't any feed, ass!"  
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Look here, Bunter," said Harry, glancing sternly up from his work, "if you imply that I'm telling you a crammer I'll jolly well lick you!"

"Of course, I don't mean to say anything of the sort," said Bunter hastily. "I—I know you wouldn't tell a whopper, Wharton. All the same, I—I think you might have let me have just a few of the tarts."

Wharton laughed; he could not help it. It was no use being angry with Billy Bunter.

"You see, I've got a delicate constitution," explained Bunter. "I don't know whether I've ever mentioned it to you before, but I have to keep up my strength by taking constant nourishment. It's fortunate I have a good appetite, I think. As it happens, I am expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning—"

"Oh, ring off!"  
 "And if you fellows like to lend me five bob off it—"

"Shut up!"

"Look here," said Bunter. "I've had enough of the rotten meanness I get in this study. I've stuck to you fellows a long time—"

"Like a leech," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! I've stuck to you because I'm—I'm loyal and—and generous by nature," said Bunter. "But you might as well understand that there are others."

Wharton shook his head.  
 "No others will stand you, Bunter," he said.

"Rather not!"  
 "The rafterfulness is terrific."

"There's that new chap," said Bunter. "I could get any amount of smokes from him, only I've a mind above such things. I've no doubt he would lend me money, though, if I liked."

"Go and ask him."  
 "He's simply rolling in money. I saw him open his sovereign-purse to-day, and he had seven sovereigns and a half-sovereign in it, and a banknote."

"My hat! He oughtn't to be allowed to have money like that."  
 "He'd be a jolly good chap to chum with," said Bunter meditatively. "He'd know how to treat a fellow decently."

"Well, go and chum with him," said Nugent. "I wish you could change into his study—anyway, don't bother now."

"I'll jolly well—"  
 "Why don't you do your prep?"

"I'm hungry."  
 "There'll be a row again with Mr. Quelch in the morning."

"It will be your fault."  
 "Our fault!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring.

"Yes, I can't do my prep unless I have some grub, you know, and you fellows are so jolly mean. I wonder you have the nerve to do it, really."

"Oh, shut up!"  
 "If you could make it a bob—"

"Dry up!"  
 "Or a tanner—"

Harry Wharton picked up a ruler. Bunter blinked at him, and retreated hastily from the study.

He saw that he had reached the limit of Wharton's patience.

The fat junior grunted discontentedly. He turned it over in his mind whether he should tackle the Bounder of Greyfriars.

His last interview he had with him had not been very promising—but Bunter remembered the boundless wealth of the Bounder, and resolved to try.

He tapped at the door of Study No. 9, and opened it, and started back, coughing, as a cloud of tobacco smoke assailed him.

"Ugh!" gasped Bunter. "Gerrooh!"  
 The Bounder grinned at him through the smoke.

"What do you want?" he said.  
 "I—I say, you know—groo—"

"You young ass! Do you want a smoke?"

"N-n-no, thanks, Smith—I—I don't do those caddish things, you know!" said Bunter. "I—I mean, yes, please," said the fat junior hastily, as he saw Vernon-Smith's brows contract.

Vernon-Smith smiled grimly.  
 "Here you are, then!"

He pushed the box across the table.

"Here's a light."  
 Billy Bunter accepted the light promptly enough now.

After all, why couldn't he tackle cheroots if Vernon-Smith did?

"Go it!" said Vernon-Smith encouragingly.  
 "Is—is it alright?" stammered Bunter.

"Yes. Draw."  
 "There—is that right?"

"That's right—go it!"  
 And Billy Bunter smoked.

"Why, it's jolly good," he said, in great relief. "I don't feel in the least rocky, you know. It's all right."

"Of course it is. Look at the brand!"

Bunter smoked about an inch of the cheroot. Then his fat face lost a little of its ruddy colour.

Vernon-Smith watched him with a grin.


The fat junior remembering that the loan depended upon his smoking the whole cheroot, stuck to it manfully, and resisted the desire to take it from his mouth and hurl it into the fire.


Another half-inch.

The cheroot had been about five inches long when Bunter started. He had smoked an inch and a half—but there seemed to him to be about six or seven feet of it left. And the feet were becoming yards, as it were.

By the time he neared the end the cheroot was likely to seem half a mile long.


Out  
Next  
Friday!





KICKED OUT!

Order  
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Billy Bunter hesitated. He had attempted to smoke a cigarette before, and he had unpleasant recollections of it.

The cheroots were evidently stronger than many cigarettes.

Yet Vernon-Smith was smoking them, and several stumps on the table showed that this was not the first.

"Are they—er—mild?" stammered Bunter.  
 "Yes, awfully mild."

"I—I'm not a great smoker, you know!" said Bunter, toying with the cheroot he picked from the box. "I—I looked in to ask you—"

"There's the matchbox!"  
 "Thanks—to—to ask you if you could lend me five bob."

"Light up!"  
 "I'm expecting a postal-order by the first post in the morning," explained Bunter.

"It's only a temporary loan, of course; I can let you have it back before morning lessons."

"I'll lend you five bob when you've smoked that cheroot," said Vernon-Smith, with a disagreeable grin that the fat junior was too short-sighted to see.

"Oh, really, Smith—"

But Bunter was not destined to reach the end.

His fat face was growing green and yellow now, and he had a faint feeling within him, and a general sensation as if the earth no longer rested upon a solid foundation.

"Like it?" grinned Vernon-Smith.  
 "Ye-e-es!" gasped Bunter.

"Good—ch?"  
 "R-r-r-ripping!"

Bunter smoked on.

The strange and mysterious sensations within him were growing in intensity. The cheroot was apparently growing, too—it loomed as large as a torpedo in Bunter's disordered imagination.

But he thought of the coming loan, and stuck to it.

Suddenly he gave a wild gurgle, and the half-cheroot that remained dropped from his mouth, and his face became ghastly.

"Ow—groo—yaroohoop!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Vernon-Smith.

Bunter gave him a wild look, and rushed from the study.

He would not have touched that cheroot again for five shillings, or five pounds.

Disaster overtook him in the passage.

He clung to the wall and moaned. Life was not worth living to the Owl of the Remove at that moment.

Five minutes later he crawled into Study No. 1.

The chums of the Remove did not look up. The fat junior collapsed into the armchair and groaned feebly.

Still they did not look at him.

They were used to Bunter's malingering. The fat junior had pretended to be ill too often for them to take any notice of his groans.

"Ow!" moaned Bunter.

"Shut up!" said Nugent, without looking round.

"Yow! I—I'm dying!"

"Well, die quietly, then!"

"Yow! Groo! Oh!"

Wharton finished his work, and rose.

Then he caught sight of Billy Bunter's ghastly face in the gaslight.

He started a little.

"Great Scott! What's the matter, Bunter?"

"Ow!"

"Are you ill?"

"Groo!"

"Oh, he wants some grub!" said Nugent, unlocking the cupboard. "Here's a jam-tart, Bunter—here you are! Bolt it!"

Billy Bunter feebly waved him back.

"Ow! Geraway! Wow! Oh!"

Nugent stared in blank astonishment.

"My hat! He must be ill, if he doesn't want to eat!" he exclaimed.

"The illfulness must be terrific!"

"What's the matter, Bunty?" asked Harry Wharton, with real concern now. Bunter's refusal of the jam-tart was proof enough that he was really feeling bad. "What have you been doing?"

"N-n-nothing! Ow! I'm dying! Yow! Groo!"

"Poor old Bunter!" said Nugent. "He's sick! It's biliousness, I suppose, from over-eating. I've often wondered he wasn't bilious."

"Ow! It was that cad!" groaned Bunter.

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"That—that worm Smith! The beast! He—he offered me a loan if—I got to the end of a cheroot!" groaned Bunter.

"You young ass!" exclaimed Harry, in disgust. "Have you been smoking?"

"I—I—"

"You frabjous ass!" said Nugent. "Smoking cheroots? Great Scott! No wonder you're looking rocky!"

"Ow! The beast knew it would make me rocky! Ow! He never meant to let me have the five bob! Yow! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Serve you right!"

"The rightfulness of the serve is terrific."

"Ow! He's smoking in his study now. You—you ought to go and rag him."

"Rats!"

"You know jolly well you ought to put down smoking in the Remove, Wharton; it's—it's rotten and blackguardedly! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get down to the Common-room, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Nugent. "I shall weep over him soon; it's so touching!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter was left to groan in solitude.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Bounder's First Lesson.

THE next morning there was a considerable amount of subdued excitement in the Remove.

Vernon-Smith's respite had expired. The Bounder of Greyfriars had been given rope enough, and, as Bob Cherry had put it, he had hanged himself nicely.

He had broken all the written and unwritten laws of Greyfriars.

He had smoked in his study, defied the prefects, checked his Form-master, and evidently taken advantage of the difficult position the Head was placed in.

His insolence had reached the limit.

It was clear that the "powers that be" in Greyfriars could not, for some mysterious reason, deal with the Bounder as he deserved, and as was necessary.

Hence that duty devolved upon the Remove.

And the Remove were far from shrinking from it.

It was not a passive dislike they felt for the Bounder—it was an active hostility; and, indeed, some of them were glad that the

Bounder had showed no signs of turning over a new leaf, because they simply longed to rag him.

And many eyes watched the Bounder that morning.

Had he decided to profit by the chance the Remove, under Wharton's influence, had agreed to give him?

If he had, well and good; if he hadn't, well and better, as Bob Cherry put it.

The Remove would soon make him march to time.

The clang of the rising-bell was the signal for the education of Vernon-Smith to commence.

The juniors turned out—the laziest and slackest of them turning out as promptly as the rest, curious to know how Vernon-Smith would behave.

Was he going to do the sensible thing, or had he to be educated?

Evidently he had not decided to do the sensible thing, for he simply turned his head on his pillow, and drew the blanket over it to shut out the resonant clang of the rising-bell.

Harry Wharton glanced at him, and his lips came together tightly.

It was clear that the Bounder had resolved upon defiance.

The rising-bell ceased to clang.

Harry walked over to the Bounder's bed.

"Smith!" he said quietly.

"Don't disturb me, please," said Vernon-Smith.

"It's time to get up."

"Stuff!"

"The rising-bell has stopped."

"Hang the rising-bell!"

"You're to get up."

"Bosh!"

"If a fellow doesn't get up, the prefects come and lick him," said Wharton. "You know that as well as I do."

Vernon-Smith chuckled softly.

"They won't touch me," he said. "I shall appeal to the Head."

"Will you, you cad? You can appeal to the Head from the prefects, but you can't appeal from the Remove," said Harry, between his teeth. "I warned you yesterday that we'd had enough of your rot. We've stood all we're going to stand. From this time forward you're going to act decently, whether you like it or not. You're not going to disregard the rules, and you're not going to cheek the prefects, or the masters, or appeal to the Head."

"What-ho!" said the Removites, with one voice.

"First of all, you're going to learn to get up at rising-bell. Get out of bed!"

Vernon-Smith drew the clothes more tightly round him.

"Get up!" said Wharton, raising his voice.

"I won't!"

"Then we'll make you."

Wharton dragged the bedclothes off, and threw them on the floor.

Vernon-Smith struck out at him savagely, and caught him on the cheek.

It was the only blow he had time to strike.

Harry Wharton grasped him, and flung him off the bed.

The Bounder plumped on the floor with a thud, and uttered a howl of pain.

He was on his feet again in a moment, black with rage.

Wharton faced him grimly.

"Now, then, if you're not satisfied, I'll have the gloves on with you in the gym, or we'll have it out now," he said.

"You hound!"

"Better language, please."

The Bounder snapped his teeth.

He suddenly caught the jug from his washstand, and swung it through the air.

A grasp from behind wrenched it from his hand before he could hurl it, and it was overturned in the act, and the water swamped out upon Vernon-Smith.

He gave a choking yell as he was drenched from head to foot with the cold fluid.

"You cad!" said Bob Cherry, lowering the jug to the floor. "You cowardly hound! You were going to throw that at Wharton!"

"Oh! Ugh! Groo!"

Wharton set his teeth.

"Get yourself dressed," he said.

"I won't!"

"I give you five minutes." And Wharton turned to his own dressing.

Vernon-Smith mopped himself with a towel, and when he was dry he felt too thoroughly awakened to have any desire to return to bed again, but from sheer obstinacy he would not give in.

Wharton turned to him again when the five minutes had elapsed.

He had not made a movement to dress himself.

"Are you going to dress, Smith?"

"No, hang you!"

"Very well. Collar the cad, some of you!" Bob Cherry, Bulstrode, and Russell collared the junior. He struggled furiously, but they had him face downwards over the bed in a twinkling.

"Now, Vernon-Smith, are you going to act sensibly, or do you want licking first?"

"Let me go!"

Wharton picked up a belt

"You understand me, Smith?"

"Hang you, you hound!"

Swish!

Vernon-Smith gave a terrific yell.

"You coward!" he roared.

Wharton turned red.

"Let him go," he said quietly.

The juniors released the Bounder.

He rose, his face flushed with fury, his eyes glittering.

Wharton stepped close to him.

"I was licking you as Form-captain," he said quietly. "You called me a coward. Very well, I'll lick you in another way. Are you ready?"

"I—"

"Put up your fists!" said Harry, between his teeth.

"I—I won't!"

"You will—or you'll be licked."

"I won't fight you!"

"Coward!" said Harry contemptuously. "Do you think you can escape that way—by refusing to fight, and howling when you're belted? Now, dress yourself at once and come down, or I'll give you the licking of your life!"

"I won't!"

"Then take the licking!"

Wharton's open hands slapped soundly upon the Bounder, who was clad only in pyjamas and felt every slap keenly.

He had to defend himself or be slapped—and he chose to do the former.

He flung himself upon Wharton like a wild-cat.

Wharton set his teeth and squared up to him.

The Bounder had no chance against the best athlete in the Remove—a fellow who was always in good condition, as Smith never was.

The Bounder was knocked right and left, and a drive on the chin sent him sprawling across his bed.

He lay there muttering.

"Now will you dress?"

"No!" yelled the Bounder. And he rushed at Wharton again.

Harry let out his left, and the Bounder crashed on the floor.

There was a sharp voice at the door:

"What is this noise about?"

Mr. Quelch looked in.

Harry turned respectfully enough towards the Form-master.

The Bounder was sprawling at his feet, and it was, of course, easy enough for Mr. Quelch to understand all that had passed.

"I'm keeping order in the dormitory, sir," said Harry quietly.

The Remove-master gave Vernon-Smith one glance.

"Very well, Wharton," he said. And he walked away.

The Removites grinned.

It was pretty clear that the "education" of Vernon-Smith would not be interfered with by the Form-master.

Vernon-Smith staggered to his feet.

After that knock-down blow, he was not inclined to carry the dispute any further. He gave Wharton a glance of poisonous hatred, but he showed no desire to renew hostilities.

"Are you coming down with us?" asked Harry quietly.

"Yes!" snarled the Bounder.

And he dressed without another word, but with a black brow followed the Remove downstairs.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Second Lesson.

MR. QUELCH did not look at the Bounder as he took his place at the breakfast-table with the Remove.

He affected not to notice the sullen face, the glittering eyes under the bent brows.

But he gave Wharton a look, and in that

look Wharton read that the master understood, and that he approved.

The Bounder took his place in the Form-room with the rest of the Remove, and his face was still sullen.

His first lesson had come, as a matter of fact, as a disagreeable shock and surprise to the Bounder.

He began to realise that he would not be able to follow the course he had marked out for himself at Greyfriars.

His father's power over the Head, and his own unscrupulous use of that power, could not help him in a struggle with the juniors.

When the Remove took the matter into their own hands, Vernon-Smith had only his own hands to depend upon for his defence, and he began to see that he would be in an awkward position.

It did not make him any the more inclined to give way—it increased his sullen obstinacy, as a matter of fact.

But if the first lesson was not sufficient there were more to come, and they were likely to increase in severity till the Bounder saw reason.

The Removites were not to be trifled with now.

They had started, and many of them saw fun in the education of Vernon-Smith, and wouldn't have turned back from the self-imposed task for any consideration.

Mr. Quelch had fallen into the way of treating Vernon-Smith very lightly in class.

The Bounder's attainments, as a matter of fact, were more suited to the Third or Second Form than to the Lower Fourth, but he was too old for the Infants Forms.

When he was called upon to construe he stood silent, unable to make a word of it, and the Form-master frowned and told him to sit down.

In all other lessons he blundered, much to the amusement of the Remove, who chuckled audibly over blunders which no Second-Form fag would have made.

Vernon-Smith's face grew more and more sulky.

He did not care to work, but he had no liking for looking ridiculous, and the chuckles of the juniors were exasperating to him.

Finally, when he gave an impertinent answer instead of a correct one, Mr. Quelch lost patience.

"Vernon-Smith, you will take fifty lines!"

Vernon-Smith sniffed.

"I shall expect them at tea-time this evening," said Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder sat down.

His expression showed as plainly as anything could show that he had not the slightest intention of doing those lines.

Mr. Quelch, the next moment, probably regretted having imposed them.

Under the peculiar circumstances of the case the Bounder was not amenable to discipline, and taking him before the Head was worse than useless.

Morning lessons over, the juniors swarmed out into the Close.

Vernon-Smith went straight to his study, with a glitter in his eyes.

Even the Bounder did not want to smoke so early in the day, but he intended to do so, to show the Removites that he did not care a rap for them.

Harry Wharton's brows contracted as he saw him go, but he took no notice of him.

He would not appear to watch the fellow in any way.

But there was no escaping knowledge of the fact that the Bounder was persisting in his bad courses.

Harry Wharton caught sight of Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, staring up at one of the study windows of the Remove.

Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth, was sniffing with great scorn.

"That's the way the Remove kids amuse themselves these days," he remarked to Fry, pretending not to see Wharton at hand. "What do you think of it?"

"Disgraceful!" said Fry

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Dabney.

"Not cigarettes, either—blessed cigars, you know!"

"Rotten!"

"Caddish!"

"And at midday, too! That's the richest part of it!"

"Beastly!"

"Oh, rather!"

"I don't know what Greyfriars is coming to!" said Temple loftily. "I think monitors ought to be appointed from the Upper Fourth to look after the Remove."

"Jolly good idea!"

Harry Wharton smiled. He could take the badinage of the Fourth-Formers in good part.

But when he glanced in the direction the Fourth-Formers were looking his smile vanished, and his handsome face darkened.

For the window of No. 9 was open, and at the window, in full view of everybody in the Close, sat Vernon-Smith, smoking.

It was reckless even of the Bounder, for a master might have passed at any moment and seen him, and trouble would have followed. Doubtless the Bounder depended upon his "appeal to the Head" to save him in that case.

His object was to defy the Remove, and especially Harry Wharton.

Harry gazed up at the study window and caught the Bounder's eye, and Vernon-Smith smiled evilly.

The captain of the Remove strode away.

"Bob! Frank! Some of you others, come with me!" he called out to a crowd of Removites who were playing leapfrog in the Close.

"Certainly, old son!" said Bob Cherry, glancing in surprise at Harry's grim face.

"What's the trouble?"

"Anything up, Wharton?"

"Yes—the Bounder!"

"Oh! We'll come!"

Half a dozen Removites followed Harry Wharton into the House and up to the Remove passage.

Harry strode into No. 9, with a frowning brow.

The Bounder half-rose from his seat at the window.

Harry raised his hand imperatively.

"Put that thing down!" he said.

"Mind your own business!"

"I've no time to waste with you. That's your last smoke. Put it down!"

"I won't!"

Wharton waited for no more.

He grasped the Bounder and swung him round, and the cheroot dropped from his lips to the floor.

Wharton sent the fellow whirling, and he crashed into a corner, and sat there gasping, looking dazed.

"Bravo!" chirruped Bob Cherry.

"Make a fire in the grate," said Harry. "We're going to get rid of these things!"

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry soon had a fire going.

There was a box of cheroots on the table, and Wharton thrust them, box and all, into the fire as Bob lighted it.

The Bounder scrambled to his feet.

"Let them alone!" he said huskily. "They're mine!"

"You won't have anything of that sort inside Greyfriars again!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Have you any more smokes in this study?"

"Find out!"

"I intend to. Open his things, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

"Right you are!"

The Removites were not slow to obey.

They dragged out the drawer of the table and turned open all the receptacles belonging to Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder raged, but in vain.

He dragged Bob Cherry away from a box, and Bob turned round and smote him, and the Bounder rolled on the carpet.

After that he attempted no more interference.

Cheroots, cigars, and cigarettes were turned out in considerable quantities, representing an amount of money which might have been much better spent by a fellow of fifteen.

They were piled on the fire as fast as they were brought to light, and a dense odour of burning tobacco filled the study, and spread into the passage.

Courtney came along and looked into the study, and coughed and snorted as he put his head into the cloud.

"What on earth are you kids up to?" he exclaimed.

"Only making a bonfire, Courtney," said Nugent, looking round. "Getting rid of some rubbish that's not wanted at Greyfriars."

Courtney sniffed again, and laughed, and went down the passage.

Vernon-Smith looked on at the scene of destruction, his face pale with rage, his finger-nails digging into the palms of his hands.

When a charred mass in the grate was all that remained of his precious property, the Removites grinned and walked out of the study.

They said nothing to Vernon-Smith.

There was nothing to say.

They had come there to do their work, and they had done it.

It was the second lesson.

They walked away, leaving the Bounder gritting his teeth. But there was nothing more than that he could do, except to mutter impotent vows of vengeance.

The Remove had started to take the outsider in hand, but the task was to prove a big one—far bigger than they had imagined.

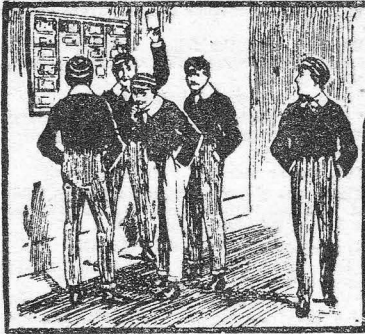
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### THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Barring-Out.

"MY only bat! What the dickens!" Bulkeley of the Sixth gave a whistle of astonishment. The captain of Rookwood could scarcely believe his eyes. The rising-bell had clanged out, and had long ceased to clang, but not one of the occupants of the Classical Fourth-Form dormitory had come down. The Shell and the fags had come down. On the Modern side everybody was down. But the Classical Fourth had failed to put in an appearance, and towards breakfast-time Bulkeley paid a visit to their dormitory, thoughtfully taking a cane with him. Then he simply jumped as he saw the dormitory was empty. The beds were not only unoccupied, but were stripped of all their covering. "Well, I'm jiggered!" murmured the prefect. He stared round the dormitory, and even looked under the beds; but there was nobody there.

In a state of great amazement the captain of Rookwood went downstairs again. Where were Jimmy Silver & Co.? The heroes of the Fourth had evidently absented themselves for some reason. But what? Downstairs Bulkeley looked into the dining-room. All the other Forms had assembled for breakfast, but the Fourth were missing. "Anything the matter?" asked Neville of the Sixth. "Yes. Have you seen any of the Fourth?" "No; they're not down yet." "They're not in their dorm." Neville whistled. "Where have the young duffers got to, then? Hiding away, perhaps, from the flogging Manders has promised them. Between you and me, Bulkeley, Manders is going a bit too thick!" Bulkeley nodded.

"Yes; but we can't do anything. Better look for the young scamps, and save them from further trouble." And the two Sixth-Formers went, good-naturedly enough, to look for the missing Fourth.

The Head, and most of the masters of the Classical side, had suffered from an epidemic of influenza, and were either away or in the sanatorium.

Mr. Manders, being the senior remaining master, was appointed to act as headmaster during Dr. Chisholm's absence.

That was all very well and above-board, but Mr. Manders was a tyrant, and his authority fitted him "like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief."

He placed the Fourth in the charge of a Modern prefect, and that was crime in the Classics' eyes.

That prefect—Knowles—was, moreover, a bully, and vented his spite on the Classical Fourth.

Knowles bullied, and the Fourth, led by Jimmy Silver, ragged him.

And for ragging him the whole of the Classical Fourth were to be sentenced to a public flogging. After the flogging they were still to continue in his charge.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were determined not to be flogged.

How they were to carry out their determination they did not know, until Jimmy Silver suggested a barring-out.

And so in the dead of night the whole of the Classical Fourth, not to mention the bedclothes and pillows, fortified in the School

# BARRED OUT!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

tuckshop, with one prisoner—Sergeant Kettle, who kept the tuckshop—under guard. And now Bulkeley and Neville were searching for them.

"Where in thunder can they be?" said Bulkeley at last. "None of the other kids seem to know. They can't have cleared off. The gates haven't been opened yet."

"Hallo!" said Neville suddenly. "What's that?"

From the upper window of the old tower, the lower part of which constituted the tuckshop, a fishing-rod, opened to its full length, had been pushed.

From the end of it, instead of a line, floated a small Union Jack.

The flag waved nobly in the morning breeze.

"Old Kettle off his rocker?" said Bulkeley in astonishment.

"It's those kids!" shouted Neville. "Look, there's Silver!"

Jimmy Silver had appeared at the window, fastening the improvised flagstaff.

The two prefects hurried towards the building.

"Silver!" exclaimed Bulkeley. At the sound of Bulkeley's voice the window was crammed with junior faces.

It was no longer necessary to ask where the missing Fourth were.

They had been found. "Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver politely.

"Top of the morning, Bulkeley!" called out Flynn.

"What are you young rascals doing there?" demanded the Rookwood captain.

"Hoisting the flag!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Come in at once to breakfast!"

"We've had breakfast!"

"What! Where have you had breakfast?"

"In the fortress!"

"In the—the fortress?"

"Yes. This is the fortress. Does old Manders want us? You can tell him, with our kind regards, to go and eat coke!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Tell him he's a Modern worm!" said Lovell. "We've done with him!"

"You young idiots!" gasped Bulkeley. "Come out of that at once! Do you hear me?"

"Sorry, Bulkeley! This isn't up against you," said Jimmy Silver. "But we can't come. It's a barring-out!"

"A b-b-b-barring out?" babbled the captain of Rookwood.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurrah for us!" roared the rebels together. "Down with the Modern cads! Down with Manders! Yah!"

"Well, my hat!" murmured Neville. "This beats the band!"

"What have you young villains done with the sergeant?" yelled Bulkeley.

"You can go and pick him up," said Jimmy Silver. "We've shoved him out of the back-door. Better put some cotton-wool in your ears. I believe he's swearing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley and Neville went round the tower, astounded.

They found Sergeant Kettle sitting on a bench, still bound.

But the bandkerchief had been taken from his mouth, and the worthy sergeant was talking to space.

"Lemme loose, young gents!" he spluttered. "Which I never did! Tied me up! 'You sit there, sergeant!' said that young villain Silver. My heye! Which of you've got a knife about you? My heye!"

Bulkeley opened his penknife and cut the old soldier loose.

Sergeant Kettle was in a towering rage.

The first use he made of his freedom was to bestow a thundering kick on the back-

door.

"Come out o' there, you young varmin'ts!" he roared.

"Rats!"

"You—you—you—" he spluttered.

"Take that man away, and keep him somewhere till he's sober, Bulkeley!" cried Jimmy Silver from the window above.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sober! You young villain!" spluttered the sergeant, banging away furiously on the door.

"Will you let me in, or will you not? I asks you."

"No jolly fear!"

Bang, bang, bang!

But the door was too stout for the sergeant to make any impression on it, and he toddled away at last, murmuring to himself.

"Now, look here, you kids," called out Bulkeley, "there's been too much of this! Come out at once, and I'll try to make it all right for you with the sergeant."

"Can't be did!"

"I order you as prefect!" shouted Bulkeley, beginning to lose his temper.

"Sorry, old chap. Can you guarantee that we sha'n't be flogged, and that we sha'n't be put under a Modern prefect any more?"

"Of course I can't!"

"Then we can't come to terms."

"Look here—"

Slam!

The window closed.

"I shall have to report this at once to Mr. Manders!" shouted Bulkeley.

No reply.

"My word!" muttered Neville. "The young rascals mean business. Manders has woke up a hornet's nest, and no mistake!"

"There will be trouble," said Bulkeley.

And he walked away to the Modern wing to make his report to Mr. Manders, as in duty bound.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### Holding the Fort.

MR. MANDERS had just finished his breakfast in the dining-room on the Modern side.

The Modern boys had left their tables, and were streaming out into the quadrangle.

Mr. Manders gave Bulkeley a cold nod as he came up.

He did not like the captain of Rookwood, whom he suspected of disapproving of his high-handed method of dealing with the Classical side since the Head had left him in charge.

"Ah, Bulkeley," said Mr. Manders, "kindly see that the School is assembled in Hall to witness a flogging!"

"That's what I've come to speak to you about, sir," said Bulkeley.

Mr. Manders waved his hand.

"I trust you have no intention of interfering for the culprits, Bulkeley. It would be impossible for me to listen to you."

"Bulkeley would hardly venture to do so, sir," said Knowles of the Sixth, with an unpleasant look at the Rookwood captain. "He knows that the young rascals assaulted me in the Form-room, where you had placed me in charge—a direct attack upon your authority, sir."

"Quite so, Knowles," said Mr. Manders.

Mr. Manders got on exceedingly well with Knowles, who was head prefect on the Modern side, and who knew all Mr. Manders' little weaknesses and how to pander to them.

"I did not come here for that, sir," said Bulkeley, taking no notice of Knowles. "I have to report that the Fourth Form—the Classics—have taken possession of the old tower, and have barred themselves in."

Mr. Manders jumped up, and Knowles uttered an exclamation.



"A barring-out, do you mean?" he exclaimed.  
 "Yes."  
 "The cheeky young scoundrels!"  
 "A-a-a-a barring-out!" ejaculated Mr. Manders. "Impossible! They would never dare to defy my authority—delegated to me by Dr. Chisholm. Bless my soul! You say, Bulkeley, that they are now in the tower, and have fastened themselves in?"  
 "Yes, sir!"

"Knowles, go and order them at once to proceed into Hall!"  
 "Certainly, sir!" said Knowles.

The Modern prefect cut away to the tuckshop. The windows were crammed with faces, and a chorus of yells greeted him.

"Modern cad!"  
 "Looking for another ragging, Knowles?"  
 "Yah! Go home."

Knowles gritted his teeth.  
 "Mr. Manders orders you to go into Big Hall at once," he called out, staring angrily up at the window.

"Tell Mr. Manders to go and chop chips!"  
 "What!"  
 "Pass me a tart—quick!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Are you coming?" roared Knowles.  
 "No jolly fear!"  
 "We don't recognise the authority of Modern cads, masters or prefects," said Jimmy Silver coolly.

"You cheeky young hound!"  
 "Oh! Groooch!"  
 Squash!

A fat and juicy jam-tart, hurled with unerring aim, squashed on Knowles' features. The prefect staggered back, spluttering.

A regular fusillade of peas from a dozen shooters followed, and Knowles hurried back out of range, dabbing furiously at his jammy face.

He returned to make his report to Mr. Manders.  
 "That's a beginning," chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Hurrah!"  
 "I—I say, Manders will come next," mumbled Townsend.

"Let him come!"  
 "Let 'em all come!" chuckled Lovell.

They were all coming, as a matter of fact.

News of the barring-out seemed to spread like wildfire, and the astounding information that the rebel Fourth were barred in the tuckshop attracted all Rookwood to the spot.

Classicals and Moderns gathered on the scene in a buzzing crowd.  
 Even old Mack, the porter, came along.

Tommy Dodd & Co., the great chiefs of the Modern juniors, stared at the faces in the window as if they could scarcely believe their eyes.

There was a buzz as Mr. Manders was seen striding towards the scene, his gown rustling behind him, and his thin face inflamed with rage.

The Modern master halted in front of the tuckshop.  
 "Boys!" he shrieked.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver.  
 It was a decidedly disrespectful way of replying to a master, and Mr. Manders' face became almost purple.

"Silver! Lovell! Raby! All of you! Come out at once!"  
 "Eh?"

"Come out at once!"  
 "What?"  
 "Come out at once, I tell you!"  
 "Which?"  
 "Come out!"  
 "Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 Mr. Manders choked.

He could scarcely believe his ears and his eyes.

But he had to!  
 His orders were disobeyed.  
 "Go home!" roared the Classicals.

"Yah! Go into the lab! Go and teach those Modern worms stinks!"  
 "Hurrah!"

"If you do not come out at once, I shall use force!" shrieked Mr. Manders.  
 "Go it, then!"

Mr. Manders tried the door. It was fast. He rushed round furiously to the back door. That also was fast.

He came round to the front again, spluttering with wrath.  
 "For the last time, will you come out?" he shrieked.

"On conditions," said Jimmy Silver.

"Conditions! You insolent young rascal! You shall be flogged—flogged—"  
 "Bow-wow!"  
 "What!"

"I said bow-wow! I repeat, bow-wow! And we all say the same!"  
 "Bow-wow!" roared the Classical juniors derisively.

Mr. Manders, purple with rage, almost staggered away.

His words had no more effect on the rebels than the idle wind.

He had to think of some other means of overcoming this extraordinary rebellion.

The Classicals sent a yell after him as he retreated.  
 They were feeling excited and decidedly "chirpy."  
 They had won the first round.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Luck for Mr. Manders.

ROOKWOOD was in a buzz of excitement and astonishment.

The daring "cheek" of the rebels in the tuckshop almost took away the breath of the Rookwood fellows, from the Sixth to the fags.

Needless to say, the sympathy of the Classical side was entirely with them.

He found the windows manned, ready to repulse an attack.

"I offer you," said Mr. Manders, "one more opportunity of returning to your duty."  
 "On conditions, sir."  
 "Silence! Will you come out of that place at once?"

"To be flogged?" asked Jimmy Silver.  
 "Yes!" shouted Mr. Manders.

"Not good enough, sir," said Jimmy Silver, with a shake of the head.

"Then I shall use force, and you shall all be flogged in the severest manner, and your half-holidays stopped for the rest of the term. I shall report the ringleaders to Dr. Chisholm, to be expelled from the school."

"Go and eat coke!"  
 "What?"  
 "Coke! C-O-K-E—coke!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You—you shall suffer for this!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "I will make an example of you! I—I will— Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

A volley of peas swooped down on Mr. Manders, and cut short the flow of his eloquence.

He scrambled away out of range.  
 "Fairly in for it now!" gasped Lovell. "Oh, my hat!"

"No surrender!" said Jimmy Silver. "If he got hold of us now, I verily believe he would flay us!"



A COLD  
 RECEPTION  
 FOR  
 SERGEANT  
 KETTLE!

Even the Sixth-Formers felt a sort of sneaking admiration for the rebellious fags, who were standing up for the rights of the Classics.

Of course, they could not say so, but they felt it all the same.

As for the juniors, they were enthusiastic. Even Smythe of the Shell, a noted slacker, and on the worst of terms with the Fistical Four, wished them good luck.

Tommy Dodd & Co. would willingly have undertaken the task of taking the tuckshop by assault—very willingly.

But Mr. Manders did not seem to think of availing himself of the services of the Modern Fourth-Formers.

He was debating in his mind what he should do, and consulting with the prefects who could not help him.

Knowles and Catesby, the Modern prefects, counselled an attack on the fortress.

But the Classical prefects demurred. They had no inclination to scramble through windows and face torrents of jam-tarts and ginger-beer in a cause they did not feel to be just.

Mr. Manders hoped that when the school-bell rang the rebels would think better of it, and come out of their own accord.

But that hope was vain.  
 Morning lessons progressed, and the rebels were still in the old clock-tower.  
 Mr. Manders bore down on them at last.

"No surrender! Hurrah!"  
 The rebels were all quite reckless by this time.

The eyes of all Rookwood, so to speak, were upon them, and it excited them.

Surrender would be to expose themselves to the scorn and derision of the Moderns for ever and ever.

And whatever punishment might await them, it would not be worse for keeping, as Jimmy Silver remarked.

"The rotter will have to give in and come to terms!" said Jimmy Silver confidently.

"Why, if this goes on it'll get into the papers! The Head would never forgive him—might sack him! He'll have to give in, if we don't!"

"And we jolly well won't!" chorused the rebels.

"Not till the grub's gone, anyway!" said Jones minor. "These tarts are simply ripping!"

Jam-tarts were beginning to run short already. The garrison had been fortifying themselves with pastry all the morning.

But the solid portion of the stock was ample to last the defenders almost any length of time.

And Jimmy Silver declared that they would still hold out if they were reduced to biscuits and water.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Famous Victory.

"BOYS!"

"Hullo!"  
Later on that afternoon Mr. Manders bore down on the tuck-shop.  
"Will you cease this foolery?" he called out.

"On conditions, sir! No floggings, no punishment for barring-out, and a Classical prefect to take charge of the Fourth till the Head comes back!" said Jimmy Silver.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Manders would have accepted those conditions to make an end of the revolt if his personal dignity had not been involved in the matter.

As it was, he shook his fist at Jimmy Silver. "Very well," he said—"oh, very well! You shall suffer for this!"

"Do you agree, sir?"  
"No!" thundered Mr. Manders. "I will flog every boy there most severely!"

There was a volley of peas in reply to that. Mr. Manders hurriedly retreated. Even his person was not sacred to these unruly young rascals.

Jimmy Silver & Co. kept a keen look-out. They knew that an attack must come soon. "Mandy's up to something," said Jimmy Silver. "Keep your peepers open. Look out for the giddy Huns!"

"Here they come!" announced Flynn at last. "Faith, Mandy means business this time!"

"Let 'em all come!"

The enemy was advancing in force. Sergeant Kettle, and Mack the porter, and Knowles and Catesby, the Modern prefects, came along with Mr. Manders, and the sergeant and Mack were both carrying ladders.

Mr. Manders directed operations from a safe distance.

"Phew! That looks like bizney!" said Lovell.

"We're ready for 'em! Buckets of cold water ready! Every chap get hold of something—pillows will do," said Jimmy Silver. "I've got the sergeant's broom, and the chap who gets it on the chivvy will know it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sergeant and Mack rushed the ladders forward, and they were planted under the two windows.

The tops did not quite reach to the window-sills, so they could not be seized from above.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood waiting. Silver at one window, and Lovell at the other, had buckets ready brimful of icy water.

The aspect of those buckets did not look inviting.

"I'll 'old the ladder for you, Master Knowles!" said the sergeant.

"And I'll 'old this one for you, Master Catesby!" said Mack.

"Rot!" said Knowles decidedly. "You go up first, and we'll back you up."

"Back you up like anything!" said Catesby.

"Look 'ere—"

"Of course if you're afraid, sergeant," sneered Knowles.

The old soldier snorted.

"I ain't afraid!" he growled. "You 'old the ladder."

The sergeant mounted to the assault, keeping a nervous eye on Jimmy Silver, who held the bucket all ready to tilt.

"Which I say, Master Silver, you keep that water there," said the sergeant persuasively. "I've got my dooty to do—"

"And I've got mine!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Which you'd better give in—"

"Suppose you were besieged by the Prussians, Kettle—would you give in?"

"No blooming fear!" said the sergeant promptly.

"Well, we won't, either! Keep back, sergeant! You're going to get wet!"

Sergeant Kettle grunted, and came on. Mack desperately swarmed up the other ladder.

"Give 'em beans!" yelled Raby.

Swoosh, swoosh!

The two buckets tilted over.

Mack, with a throttled howl, slid down the ladder and bumped into Catesby and sent him flying.

The sergeant gave a roar.

But the old warrior who had fought Afghans and Boers was not to be beaten.

Swimming in water, he came clambering on. Newcome handed Silver a second brimming bucket, and Jimmy promptly swarmed it over the sergeant, whose head was now level with the window.

The sergeant sputtered and gasped and choked. But he came on, and his head was thrust in at the window.

Jimmy Silver caught up the big stable broom he had ready.

With an utter recklessness of results, he charged at the sergeant.

If Sergeant Kettle had stopped to receive that charge he would have had cause to remember it.

He dived in time below the window-sill.

Jimmy Silver leaned out and jammed the broom on the top of his head.

"Yow!" roared the sergeant.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!"

Flesh and blood could not stand it. The ladder swayed as the sergeant wildly dodged the smites of the broom.

He went bundling down the ladder, and Jimmy Silver, skilfully hooking the head of the broom into the rungs, jerked the ladder away from the wall and sent it trundling down.

"Hurrah!" gasped Jimmy.

"Back up!" yelled Lovell from the other window.

At that spot the defence was not so fortunate.

Knowles and Catesby had come rushing up the ladder so swiftly that Lovell's second bucket of water was caught by Knowles and twisted over upon himself.

Lovell backed away, drenched, and Knowles clambered in at the window.

Raby and Newcome and Jones minor seized him instantly, but he rolled right in, still struggling with the juniors.

"Back up, Catesby!" yelled Knowles.

Catesby was half in at the window when Jimmy Silver rushed up with his broom.

The rough head of the broom caught Catesby full on the chest. He went out of the window again like a shot, clinging to the sill.

"Yow-ow! Stoppit!" he shrieked, as Jimmy Silver's broom hammered on his fingers. "Yow! I shall fall! Oh, my hat! Help!"

Whack! came the broom on Catesby's head. The Modern prefect gave a wild howl, and slid down the ladder.

He had had enough.

In the room a terrific struggle was going on between Knowles and the juniors.

Jimmy Silver did not heed it for the moment.

He leaned from the window and hooked the second ladder away with the broom, and sent it whirling, and Catesby and Mack and the sergeant dodged it as it fell.

The attack was repulsed—unless Knowles could overcome fifteen Classical juniors in single combat.

It looked as if he couldn't.

The Modern prefect was fighting hard, hitting out with all his strength, and some of the juniors had been knocked right and left, with grievous damages.

But six or seven of them were clinging to Knowles like cats, and they had got him down on the floor, and were scrambling and sprawling over him.

"You young hounds!" screamed Knowles. "Gerroff! I'll get out! Let me go! I'll go! Yow-wow-ow! Oh, dear! Get off! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Got the cad!" panted Lovell. "I'll teach him to drench me, the Modern beast! Gimme a pail of water for the rotter!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"He's drenched me!" roared Lovell. "I'm going to drench him!"

"Yes; but—"

"Rats! Gimme a pail of water!"

"Fathead! Put some soot in it first!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, good!" said Lovell. "Hold that cad tight!"

Knowles was helpless now.

On each arm and leg there were two pairs of hands grasping hard.

Raby rushed up a bucket of water. Jimmy Silver seized a shovel and scraped soot out of the chimney.

The soot was shovelled into the water, and mixed up till it was nearly as thick as glue.

"Ready?" sang out Jimmy Silver. "Stand clear!"

The juniors crowded back as Jimmy Silver swung up the pail of sooty water.

Knowles sat up breathlessly just as the torrent came drenching down.

A dismal howl came from the Modern prefect. He was smothered.

Two-thirds of the bucket of sooty water had swamped upon him, and he had changed with amazing suddenness into a negro, to judge by appearances at least.

His features disappeared under the blackness, and his clothes reeked with wet soot.

"Ooooooooooooooh!" mumbled Knowles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now pitch him out!"

"Blessed if I like to touch him!"

"Kick him till he climbs out!" said Lovell.

"Good egg!"

Jimmy Silver started with the broom, Lovell with the tongs, and Raby with the shovel, and the rest with their boots.

The blackened prefect staggered up, and was driven to the window under a volley of kicks, shoves, and smites.

"Stoppit!" he shrieked. "The ladder's gone!"

"You can drop out!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't! Oh! Yah! Oh!"

"Go!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Ow-w-w-w!" moaned Knowles.

He dropped, and rolled over on the ground. Mr. Manders came dashing forward.

"Knowles, what is the matter? You—you are all black! What—what—"

"That sooty pail—quick!" breathed Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell leaned out of the window, with the bucket still a third full of the thick soot and water.

Swoosh!

Mr. Manders jumped clear of the ground as the sooty torrent swamped down on him.

In a second he was as black as Knowles.

"Gerrooooooh!" spluttered Mr. Manders.

"Oh, bless my soul! What—what— Oh, I choke! I suffocate! Oh, oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Manders staggered away, gasping and spluttering.

His unhappy and defeated helpers followed him. They had had enough—more than enough—especially Knowles.

From the Classical fortress came a yell of triumph.

Mr. Manders hurried back to the House.

Sooty water drenched him from head to foot; his face was barely recognisable.

Lessons were ended, and the Rookwood fellows came out in a swarm from their classrooms in time to meet Mr. Manders.

They stared at him aghast for a moment, and then there was a peal of merriment:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Spluttering with rage and soot, Mr. Manders rushed into the House, and disappeared from sight, leaving all Rookwood on the verge of hysterics.

In the old clock-tower the voices of the triumphant Classics were raised in a pean of victory:

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah! Who's top side at Rookwood?"

"Classics! Classics!"

"Hurrah!"

THE END.

# NO SURRENDER!

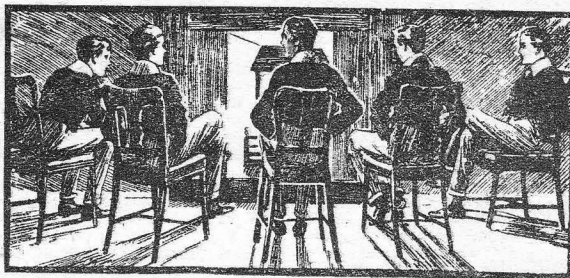
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# MISUNDERSTOOD!

A Grand Long,  
Complete Story of  
Tom Merry & Co.,  
the Chums of  
St. Jim's.



By  
**MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Kerr's Brilliant Idea.

"I'M blessed if I like it!" Thus Frank Kerr of the New House, Figgins & Co. were lounging about their study, waiting for the dinner-bell to ring.

There was at least a quarter of an hour before its welcome clang would ring out, and Fatty Wynn, finding it utterly impossible to wait such an interminable space of time, was busy with a bag of tarts he had just purchased from Dame Taggles' little shop.

Much to Fatty's satisfaction, his chums had refused to share them, as they wanted to enjoy their dinners.

"I'm blessed if I like it, you chaps!" repeated Kerr absentmindedly.

"Like what?" asked Fatty Wynn, with his mouth full. "You can't be talking about one of these tarts, because you haven't tasted one. Perhaps you're talking about dinner? I know it's roast mutton day, with plum duff to follow, but I thought you liked—"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Figgins. "You're always thinking of your tummy!"

"Well, if Kerr wasn't talking about grub, what was he talking about?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "Kerr, you ass—"

"Talking to me?" asked Kerr, with a start.

"Yes, you chump!"

"What's up?"

"What the dickens were you jawing about just now?" asked Fatty Wynn. "You said you were blessed if you liked it, and when I suggested that you were talking about today's dinner Figgy called me an ass!"

"I didn't!" said Figgins.

"Well, you told me to dry up!"

Kerr grinned.

"No; I wasn't talking about dinner at all," he chuckled. "Something struck me, and I must have spoken my thoughts aloud."

Fatty Wynn snuffed.

"Going dotty on the crumpet, ain't you?" he asked sarcastically.

"Not quite," replied Kerr cheerfully; "not dotty enough, anyhow, to spoil my appetite for a jolly good dinner by gorging myself with pastry."

Fatty Wynn merely glared.

As a matter of fact, he could not reply, as his mouth was at that moment too full to utter a syllable.

Figgins looked on, grinning, then turned to the Scots junior.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "What have you been thinking about?"

"Well, it's about Manners," replied Kerr thoughtfully.

Figgins frowned.

"Oh, hang Manners!" he said. "The rotter showed the white feather! He ran away when that beastly old bull chased cousin Ethel, and, for all Manners cared, she might have been gored to death. I'm blessed if I want to talk about him! For cousin Ethel's sake, we've released him from Coventry; but she can't make us alter our giddy opinions!"

"My opinion's been the same right from the very first," replied Kerr. "I think that Manners in all probability turned funky when the bull came tearing towards cousin Ethel, but I've still got it fixed in my mind that the facts might be as he has stated. We've condemned him unanimously, and I'm blessed if I like it! I think we ought to have had some conclusive and positive proof—"

"But, you frajvous ass," interrupted Fig-

gins, "we have got proof! Didn't Tom Merry inquire at the cottage—"

"Of course," agreed Kerr calmly. "He found out that there had been no children there, and was sent away by a crusty old man. Well, it strikes me that this old chap could have given some information if he chose. Don't forget that Manners said the child was in one of the two gardens, and Tom Merry only inquired at one cottage."

"The other was empty, you fathead!" roared Figgins.

"How do you know?" asked Kerr. "Well, the blessed 'To Let' label was up, and there were no curtains, and—"

"That doesn't prove anything," said Kerr shrewdly. "Of course, it was impossible for somebody to have just moved in, wasn't it? For all we know, the woman might have come from some other part of the village to look over the cottage, and brought her child with her. If this really was the case, then it's quite on the cards that Manners told the truth. It's improbable, I'll admit; but there's nothing to prove it wasn't so. The old chap next door might have known nothing about what was going on outside. Possibly he was asleep, and when Tom Merry bashed at the door he was naturally crusty at being awakened."

Figgins stared at Kerr thoughtfully, and Fatty Wynn actually ceased eating.

"My only topper!" ejaculated Figgins. "I never thought of that before!"

"Just what I said," decided Kerr. "You take things too much for granted!"

"Of course," went on Figgins, "it's just possible that you're right, but it's jolly improbable."

"Exactly!" agreed Kerr. "Now, an idea struck me a minute ago which will practically settle things. If we can prove Manners to be brave under circumstances that are just as dangerous as the bull affair, it'll prove conclusively that he told the truth, won't it? He wouldn't funk one thing, and then act like a hero the following day."

"No," said Figgins thoughtfully. "But how are we going to prove—"

"That's too long to talk about now," interrupted Kerr. "It's just upon dinner-time, and, besides, Tom Merry and Lowther will have to be in the plot. So I vote we get hold of the bouders, and arrange to meet in the wood-shed immediately after dinner. We shall be quiet there."

"Good egg!" said Figgins.

And the New House trio hurried from their study, and emerged into the sunlit quad.

They espied the Terrible Three on the School House steps.

Five minutes later, to their satisfaction, Manners went indoors, and Figgins & Co. hurried across.

The arrangement was made quickly, for the dinner-bell rang at that moment.

The very instant grace was over, at the conclusion of the meal, Figgins & Co. took themselves into the quadrangle, and waited for Lowther and Tom Merry.

It was a few minutes before they appeared, for they had experienced a little difficulty in dodging Manners, who, of course, must have no suspicion of what was going on.

"Couldn't get here before," said Tom Merry. "Manners kept us talking for a bit. He's tinkering about with his camera now, so he's safe until the bell goes for lessons."

"Safe as eggs," added Monty Lowther.

"Now, what's this wonderful wheeze of yours, Kerr? Some dud idea, I'll bet—like most New House wheezes!"

"Look here, you ass—" began Figgins wrathfully.

"Peace, children!" interrupted Tom Merry severely. "Monty, if you start again we'll bump you, and exclude you from the giddy meeting!"

"That wouldn't be much loss!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I expect I shall be bored to death, anyhow."

The five juniors, without further delay, hurried off in the direction of the wood-shed.

They did not notice that Percy Mellish, of the Fourth, had been eyeing them somewhat curiously from the shadow of one of the elms.

The sneak of the Fourth was possessed of an insatiable desire to know everybody's business in addition to his own, and this meeting of the House rivals, with the subsequent adjournment to the wood-shed, aroused his curiosity to a high pitch.

"What are the beggars up to?" he murmured. "Some giddy jape, I expect. My hat! I'd give anything to know what they've gone to the wood-shed for. I— By jingo, I wonder if they've taken to smoking on the quiet? It would be ripping to catch 'em on the hop!"

Mellish moved away from the elm, but at that moment Taggles, the school porter, emerged from the trees close to the wood-shed, wheeling a barrow.

To Mellish's infinite disgust, Taggles set the barrow down, and sat on the edge of it to take a rest.

Mellish muttered an exclamation beneath his breath, for he knew that Taggles' rests very often lengthened into quite respectable periods.

Meanwhile, the juniors in the wood-shed had got to business.

Kerr explained fully why he was not absolutely convinced of Manners' guilt, and Tom Merry and Lowther—who already believed in their chum—were quite enthusiastic.

"My hat, Kerr, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Of course, you've hit upon the truth; it explains everything. It explains why the old chap wouldn't tell us anything, and it explains where the child disappeared to. What a fatheaded chump I was not to knock at the door of the empty cottage!"

"You were," agreed Monty Lowther heartily. "A burbling idiot, in fact!"

"But this idea of mine," said Kerr, "will settle matters, I think. When you've heard it, I'm pretty sure you'll agree that it's not a bad wheeze," he added modestly.

"Spout it out!" said Lowther briskly. "Cough it up, old chap!"

"Right," said Kerr. "This is my plan. If Manners is afraid of a bull he'll be mortally terrified at being sprung upon and threatened by a hooligan at night. If he stands up to the hooligan, and attempts to fight him—in spite of the fact that the fellow's got a bludgeon—it'll prove that he's not a coward. He wouldn't be a coward, even if he scooted, but there's three or four ways to scoot!"

The juniors looked bewildered.

"What the dickens are you jawing about?" demanded Tom Merry. "Do you suppose we're going to wait until a hooligan comes

along, and happens to find Manners in the lane?"

"Not a bit of it," said Kerr easily. "Figgins is the hooligan."

"Look here, Kerr," he exclaimed wrathfully, "if you call me a hooligan—"

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Kerr. "Why can't you wait until I've done? Somebody's got to act the hooligan, and you're the most suited to the part!"

"Oh, am I?" exclaimed Figgins. "I should like to know why I'm more like a hooligan than Tom Merry. If you're trying to be funny, Kerr, you've only got to say so, and I'll give you a prize thick ear!"

Kerr sighed patiently.

"We came here to talk over a weeze," he said, "not to wrangle. Ain't you the tallest chap here, you ass? When you're dressed up, won't you look more like a man?"

Figgins calmed down.

"You're quite right," he agreed. "Get on with the bizney!"

"Well, to-night, after locking-up, Tom Merry and Lowther have got to get Manners to go down to Rylcombe. He'll go right enough, because he's doing everything he can to make up for yesterday. It'll be nearly dark, and as he's going down Rylcombe Lane, Figgins, dressed up as a hooligan, will suddenly spring out, and threaten him with a bludgeon. In the twilight Manners won't be able to see through the disguise, and we shall be able to tell by his actions whether he's really a coward."

"How can you tell if you're not there?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Figgins can tell, anyway," replied Kerr. "Besides, we can take Blake & Co. into it, and five or six of us can be crouching behind the hedge. We shall have a free view of everything. Manners will be taken absolutely by surprise, and his actions will prove to us what he's made of."

"By Jove, it's a ripping idea!" said Figgins enthusiastically. "I can act the hooligan to the life. I'm a good actor, as you all know, and I'll bet Manners won't see through my disguise. We shall have to keep it jolly dark, though. If Manners gets a breath of it he'll be prepared, and the whole thing'll fizzle out."

The meeting continued to discuss the great weeze.

There was a notable absence of chuckles and grins, however.

This was no ordinary House jape; it was a plan whereby to test the pluck of one of their best chums.

And the juniors, having thoroughly understood the scheme, settled down to discuss the details in serious earnest.

Presently Figgins started, and looked towards the door.

"What's that?" he asked quickly. "Didn't you hear a noise?"

"I heard something," agreed Tom Merry.

He stepped over to the door quickly, unlatched it, and peeped out.

Then he closed the door again, and smiled.

"It's all serene," he said. "Only old Taggles wheeling a barrow."

So the meeting settled down again.

But, unknown to them, the exit of Taggles from the scene was the signal for Mellish to hurry across the quad to the wood-shed.

The sneak of the Fourth had been consuming himself with impatience, and heaping all manner of maledictions upon the unconscious head of Taggles.

"The old idiot!" muttered Mellish crossly, as he approached the wood-shed. "I don't suppose I shall be able to hear anything now."

A minute later he was round at the back of the shed, with his ear pressed against a slit in the woodwork.

Evidently, to Mellish's chagrin, the meeting was almost at an end, for the words he overheard gave him no satisfaction whatever, but only tended to increase his already excited curiosity.

"All right, then," he heard Tom Merry say, "it's all arranged. We'll do our part of the bizney, and you'll do the rest."

"That's it," said Kerr. "We'll be at the old stile at half-past eight. It'll be twilight then, and the overhanging trees will make it darker still. I don't possibly see how the plan can miscarry."

"No, it's a top-holer!" said Monty Lowther. "Now, as I'm rather flush, I suggest we pop over to the tuckshop and drink to the success of the enterprise in ginger-beer."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Fatty Wynn heartily. And the meeting broke up.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 7.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Not According to Programme.

TOM MERRY glanced at his watch. "It's all serene!" he exclaimed, with satisfaction. "Manners has started off just at the right moment. It's a quarter-past eight, so by the time he arrives at the old stile it'll be just upon half-past."

"Couldn't have worked better!" said Monty Lowther.

The plot had worked splendidly. Ten minutes previously Tom Merry had asked Manners to run down to Rylcombe.

The amateur photographer of St. Jim's had agreed without hesitation, partly because he was anxious to please his chums as much as possible.

For the old relations had not been renewed; there was still that restraint in his chums' manner which caused him to feel bitter against fortune.

Manners wondered why Tom Merry had waited until after locking-up to ask him to go to Rylcombe, but he made no comment.

He simply slipped on his cap and departed. But Kerr's scheme was not destined to be carried out exactly as arranged.

When Manners arrived in the quad he found it apparently deserted.

He slipped across to the tree which was usually used to gain the top of the wall.

But as he was about to clamber up he received a shock.

A dark form loomed out from the back of the gymnasium, and Manners stood stock still.

The form was that of Mr. Ratcliff, the ill-tempered Housemaster of the New House.

By a stroke of luck Mr. Ratcliff had not seen the junior, and Manners had an opportunity to slip behind the tree-trunk.

"My hat!" he murmured. "If he'd spotted me it would have meant a giddy row!"

He waited there impatiently, but Mr. Ratcliff seemed in no hurry to depart.

And all the while the precious minutes were passing, making it impossible for Manners to arrive at the stile at the approximate time arranged.

To have clambered over the wall with Mr. Ratcliff within sight—even though it was dusk—would have been courting disaster. The Housemaster's eyes were exceptionally sharp, and Manners had sense enough to remain hidden.

Until Mr. Ratcliff disappeared into the New House the junior could not move.

And Mr. Ratcliff was apparently enjoying his walk, and would not go indoors for some minutes.

Meanwhile, out in Rylcombe Lane, a form was cautiously proceeding down the long slope. It was Percy Mellish, all agog with curiosity and excitement.

The sneak of the Fourth was more than a little scared, for, so far, he had seen nobody, and had not an inkling of the truth.

This had the effect of making him nervous; but his curiosity had taken hold of him, and he went on.

Luckily, he managed to scramble out of the quad just before Mr. Ratcliff emerged from the New House.

Not a soul knew that Mellish was out of the school gates, for he had not even told Levison of his project.

"I wonder what the dickens the game is?" he murmured to himself. "I'm blessed if I can see a soul! And yet Tom Merry said something about half-past eight at the stile. It's just struck half-past eight, but I can't see a sign of anybody!"

At first Mellish had walked cautiously, close to the hedge, but now, as he had seen nothing suspicious, he walked in the centre of the road.

Mellish liked the centre of the road as it was clear and open.

As he walked he cast furtive glances into the woods.

They were thick and dense, and the trees overhanging the road, practically converting it into an avenue.

Being cloudy already, the leafy trees made the road extremely dusky.

By peering forward, Mellish could just distinguish the stile a little distance ahead.

The woods echoed strangely as the wind passed through the leaves, and Mellish felt himself grow more nervous than ever.

The total absence of Tom Merry & Co. was rather disconcerting, for he had expected to find a whole crowd of juniors.

The lane was deserted, however. Not a soul was in sight.

Mellish walked on mechanically, but he had just decided in his own mind that for some reason the juniors' plan had been abandoned.

For this reason Mellish paused, intending to make his way back with all possible haste.

His nervousness had now got the better of his curiosity.

Then, at the same second as he paused, a form suddenly broke from the hedge with a crashing of brambles.

Mellish stared at him blankly, too startled to even cry out. Then, before the new-comer could utter a word, Mellish caught sight of the upraised bludgeon and the black mask which concealed the upper portion of the "hooligan's" face.

A terrified gasp escaped Mellish's lips—a sort of strangled shout, quite impossible to recognise as a voice.

For a second he stood rooted to the spot. Then, before Figgins could approach an inch farther, Mellish turned on his heel and fled—fled as though a thousand fiends were after him.

He flew up the road, and as he disappeared into the gloom a chorus of startled ejaculations arose, and the road became filled with forms.

"My only Aunt Mary Ann!" gasped Figgins, tearing off his mask.

"My hat!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"He's 'bunked!' exclaimed Jack Blaks breathlessly.

"He's hooked it—hooked it like a little Second Form kid!" ejaculated Figgins.

"There's no doubt now about the matter. Manners hasn't got any more pluck than Mellish's little finger!"

"Bai Jove, you're quite wight, Figgay!" said D'Arcy regretfully. "I am feahfully out up, you know! This is absolutely wotten! Mannahs has uttably disgwaced himself!"

The juniors were all standing in the road staring up towards St. Jim's as though they could not believe their eyes.

In their hearts they had expected Manners would stand up to the supposed hooligan; and they had only looked upon it as possible that he would run away.

To have taken to his heels in such obvious and abject terror had caused the juniors to stand rooted to the spot, filled with amazement.

Never for a second did it enter their heads that the junior had not been Manners.

They had utterly no reason for supposing that it was anyone else.

Manners was the same height as Mellish, was attired in Etons, and wore the school cap.

In the thick gloom it had been impossible to distinguish Mellish's face, and as he had not uttered an intelligible remark, there was nothing to prove his identity.

Nobody else but Manners was expected to come down Rylcombe Lane at that moment. The juniors had not the faintest suspicion that Mellish had previously got on the track of the plot.

In addition, Manners himself was not there.

So the juniors were not to be blamed in the least for coming to the conclusion that Manners had acted the part of an abject coward.

His cowardice was proved beyond dispute.

He had been seen by seven pairs of eyes to run for his life without even offering a moment's resistance.

Seven eye-witnesses were ready to swear that it was he who had come down the lane; and unless Manners could prove conclusively that he was at St. Jim's the whole time his position was infinitely worse than it had been formerly.

The test which had been prepared to prove his pluck had ended in further disgrace.

Had Manners been able to really face the disguised Figgins, the New House chief would probably have been the recipient of several nasty bruises.

Owing, however, to Mellish's curiosity, and to Mr. Ratcliff's unfortunate possession of the quad, the whole plan had failed.

But the trouble was the plan had failed unknown to its perpetrators. To them it seemed eminently successful.

Figgins was the first to recover himself—which he did as Mellish's form disappeared into the dusk.

"After him!" shouted Figgins hotly. "We'll collar the boulder, and show him up in the quad! My hat! He deserves to be kicked out of the school!"

"Come on!" said Blake tensely.

And the seven juniors raced to St. Jim's at top speed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
Just Like Mellish!

"THERE he is!"  
"After him!"  
"Collar the rotter!"  
"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in a panting gasp. "Gwab hold of the uttuh wuffian! I have made up my mind to give Mannahs a severe talkin' to! Pewpaws a few home twuths will make him realise— Bai Jove! Come back heah, you boundahs!"

But D'Arcy was talking to thin air. His companions had dashed up to the gates.

Mellish's form had been seen scrambling up the wall, and for a moment Figgins, who was leading, had attempted to follow.

But at that moment Blake had espied Taggles at the gates, and, reckless of lines, the whole seven juniors burst through into the quad.

Taggles had been standing at the gates for a moment, and had heard the juniors shout.

"My heye!" he ejaculated, as they streamed past. "Come 'ere, you young rips! I want all yer names— My heye, if they hain't slipped past!"

Taggles closed the gates disgustedly. Blake & Co. and the New House trio had hurried straight to the tree which stood close to the high wall.

This tree was not at the spot where Mellish had clambered over, and consequently Manners, who was standing there, had not seen Mellish enter.

Mr. Ratcliff had stopped to smoke his cigar out, as was only natural, and Manners had not dared to climb the wall during the House-master's close proximity.

It was, indeed, barely two minutes since Mr. Ratcliff had disappeared, and Manners had waited a moment longer, because, to increase his impatience, Taggles had just emerged from his lodge—which, also, was quite a matter-of-fact proceeding.

But it was the finishing touch to the string of ill-luck which was to end in Manners' disgrace.

The waiting junior's attention was attracted to the gates, and he did not notice Mellish's form drop behind a tree barely thirty feet distant.

The next moment the plotters dashed into the quad, and instantly commenced searching for their quarry.

Thus Manners hadn't a ghost of a chance. Nobody had known of his presence; he himself was unaware of Mellish's proximity. And Mellish crouched down against the wall, breathless, and too frightened to move.

Manners was considerably surprised to see the juniors stream in at the gates, and he could tell immediately that they were all in a very excited condition.

He walked forward curiously. "What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed. "What—"

"Here he is!"  
"Pile on him!"  
"Bowl him over!"

And Manners was indeed bowled over. The wrathful juniors simply crowded on to him, and he fell in the dusty quad, with a pile of gasping forms on top of him.

Every one of the juniors believed that they had captured the boy who had run from them.

As Mellish remained silent they could believe nothing else.

They had been looking for Manners, and Manners was here.

Therefore the proof was conclusive. The final link in the chain of misfortune was complete.

"What's up?" gasped Manners, painfully struggling to rise. "Wassermarrer? Ow! Stop it, you bounders! Gerroff my chest!"

Two forms broke through the excited juniors.

They were Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, and their faces were grave.

"What's up?" asked the captain of the Shell eagerly. "Who's that you've colared?"

"Manners, of course," answered Blake. "Manners, the coward!"

"What! Do you mean that—"  
Tom Merry broke off.

"I mean that Manners has acted about ten times as bad as he did down in the village," replied Blake grimly. "He's shown himself to be an absolute coward—an arrant funk, and I can tell you I don't want to have any more to do with him!"

"Good heavens!" said Tom Merry, aghast. Manners struggled violently. He was on his feet now, and he gazed wildly into the circle of angry faces round him.

"I don't know what you mean!" he shouted. "I've been in the quad, ever since

tea-time! I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Don't know what we're talking about!" roared Figgins furiously. "You weren't in Rylcombe Lane five minutes ago, were you? You didn't climb over the wall and drop into the quad, just before we came into the gates, did you?"

"No," roared Manners, "I didn't!"  
"You—you didn't?"

Figgins fell back into the arms of Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

"Do—do you mean to say you deny it?" he gasped. "Do you mean to tell me you're going to stick out that you weren't there? We saw you with our own eyes—we all saw you, and when I jumped out of the hedge you ran like a frightened kid!"

"I haven't been out of the quad, since tea-time!" howled Manners, gazing round him with wild excitement. "What do you mean? What's all this rubbish about somebody jumping out of the hedge? You're all dotty! You've all gone off your rockers!"

The juniors simply gasped.

"He—he denies it!" ejaculated Herries.

"Great Scott! I wonder he has the cheek!"

To the juniors Manners' denial sounded simply astounding.

Manners' denial sounded awful to their ears.

They had never believed him capable of such terrible falsehoods.

Tom Merry found it hard to believe such facts about his chum.

"Are you sure of this, Figgy?" he asked anxiously. "Are you sure it was him?"

"Sure?" repeated Figgins in desperation. "You ass, of course I'm sure! Didn't we all see him? And who else would go down the lane at half-past eight? If it really was somebody else, where was he? I tell you it was Manners!"

"Of course!"

"We all saw him!"  
"Saw him as plainly as we see you!"  
"There's no doubt at all!"

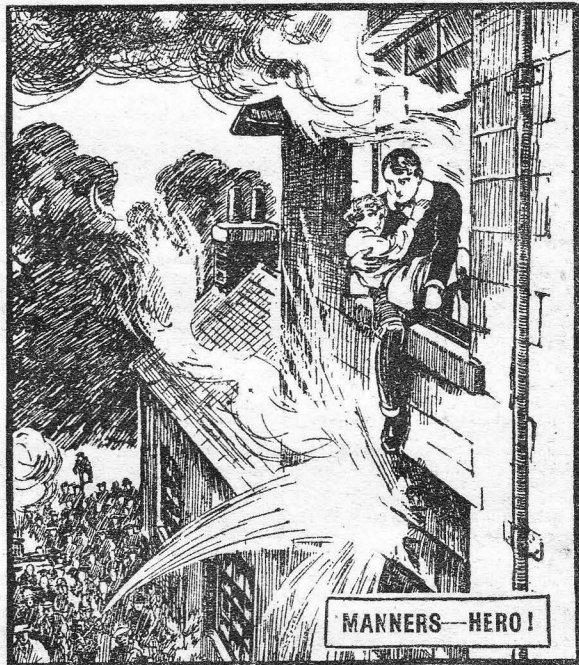
"Wathah not, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am vewy reluctant to have to say it, but Mannahs has uttably disgusted me. I shall nevah wegard him as a friend again!"

"He's a coward to the core!" said Blake.

"And a liar to his backbone!" added Figgins warmly.

Manners stood in the middle of the group, panting with emotion.

His mind was in a whirl of uncertainty; he could not grasp the fact that he was sus-



174

They were positive in their own minds about the matter; not a single boy had a shred of doubt.

Yet Manners denied having been in Rylcombe Lane at all!

It was amazing. "What happened?" asked Monty Lowther impatiently. "Tell me what happened, Blake!"

"Why, we all waited behind the hedge for him, as arranged," replied Blake wrathfully. "We saw him coming some little distance before he reached us, and I must say he seemed jolly nervous. Then Figgie jumped out and faced him. My only hat, you should have seen him!"

"What happened?" asked Tom Merry eagerly.

"He let out a strangled yell—he was too frightened to yell properly—and ran for his life!" said Blake. "We chased him up, and collared him just as he was in the quad. And now he says he wasn't there! He has the terrible nerve to tell us that he's been within bounds since tea-time!"

"It's the truth!" roared Manners wildly. "I was going down to the village, but I couldn't get out of the quad, because old Ratty was here. I was just going when you all rushed up! I tell you I don't understand; I tell you on my honour that it wasn't me you saw in the lane!"

"The awful fibber!"

"The howling fraud!"

"The lying coward!"

The juniors were indignant to a degree.

pected of being guilty of such baseness. He did not realise that every word he uttered sounded like a lie in the ears of his listeners.

"I can't imagine what has happened," Manners said at length. "But you're all mistaken. I swear to you that I have not been outside the gates of St. Jim's since tea-time! I don't know what you saw in the lane, but it was not me—"

"Liar!" exclaimed Blake furiously. "Dry up, you cad!"

"He's getting worse and worse! He can't speak without fibbing!"

Manners' words, quiet as they were, had aroused the juniors to fever-hat again, and they swayed round him excitedly.

Then, to relieve their feelings, they seized Manners with hands that were by no means gentle, and bumped him again and again on the hard ground.

Then, feeling somewhat relieved, they trooped into the Common-room, leaving their unfortunate victim to pick himself up and follow at his leisure.

Half an hour later, after an exciting meeting in the Common-room—during which Manners had been universally condemned to Coventry for an indefinite period—Tom Merry and Monty Lowther entered their study in the Shell passage.

At first they had both been rather sceptical, but, after hearing the whole story, all their doubts were dispelled. And they were so disappointed, so grieved, that they entered their study with gloomy faces and silent tongues.

Manners was there, and he looked up eagerly.

"I say, Tommy, you don't believe that yarn, do you?" he asked breathlessly. "You don't think that—"

Tom Merry gazed at Manners scornfully, and then, without a word, he motioned to Lowther, and the pair left the room again.

For a moment Manners gazed at the closed door in consternation. Then he realised the full extent of the calamity which had befallen him.

He sank back into his chair and buried his face in his hands.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Manners—Hero!

THE next day was a half-holiday, and after dinner most of the juniors sallied out to the playing-fields.

At first Manners contented himself with standing by the ropes watching a senior match.

On the junior pitch a game was in progress between the Fourth and Shell, and when Manners looked in their direction he remembered, with a pang of regret, that he himself should have been taking part in it.

Once when Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, scored a splendid goal, he turned to Lumley-Lumley, who stood by his side.

"By jingo," he said, "that was a ripping shot!"

Lumley-Lumley looked the other way, and slowly walked off.

Manners was shunned by everybody. Miserable at heart, having lost all interest in the game, he moved away from the field.

For five minutes he remained in the deserted and sunlit quad., undecided as to how to spend the afternoon.

Then an idea struck him.

Why not go to the picture-palace at Wayland? There was a matinee every Wednesday, and it was a lovely day for a spin.

Manners did not hesitate long.

Left to himself, scorned by all, he looked upon the idea as splendid.

The spin itself would do him good, and he always enjoyed moving pictures.

The jaunt would fill the afternoon perfectly.

Five minutes later he had wheeled his bicycle from the shed and was off.

He rode leisurely, and although he tried to dismiss unpleasant thoughts from his mind he was by no means successful.

Even when he entered Wayland, with its quiet, sleepy bustle, he still thought of the disgrace which rested on his shoulders.

At the picture-palace he stored his machine, then went into a confectioner's shop to drink a glass of ginger-beer. Refreshed, he left the place, and walked across to the pay-box of the picture-theatre.

He was feeling in his pockets for some coppers, when a commotion down the street caused him to turn.

The sight he witnessed caused him to slip his money back into his pocket and rush to the edge of the pavement.

For down the street, coming at full pelt, was a fire-engine. It was a modern one, and its chimney was belching forth a cloud of smoke and sparks.

On it rode, past the picture-palace, with a rush and a clatter from its gong.

Behind, excited and breathless, a crowd of people were rushing along, bent upon following the engine to the scene of the fire.

Instantly Manners' miserable thoughts were banished.

His object in coming to Wayland was forgotten, and, dashing to the place where he had left his machine, he hauled it out, mounted it, and peddled off at top speed after the fire-engine.

At length he reached the scene of the conflagration, and jumped off his bicycle.

"By gum, young master," said a yokel, who was standing at Manners' side, "that's a big blaze, an' no mistake!"

"My hat! Yes!" panted Manners. "It's awful!"

"I'm-a-fear'd there won't be much o' that 'ouse left, spite o' the old fire-engine!"

The pair were almost at the front of the crowd, and Manners' bicycle was lying somewhere against the hedge further down the road.

The crowd was of considerable proportions, but it was kept in check by the firemen and police.

The engine was already pumping water on to the burning building steadily; but the water supply was bad, and the pressure was not sufficient to meet the requirements.

For the house, a ~~large~~ one on the out-

skirts of the town, was fairly ablaze. It was a three-storeyed house, and it was the second storey which seemed to be suffering most. Nearly every window belched forth smoke and flames.

"Is there anybody in the house?" Manners asked eagerly, turning to the rustic.

"I couldn't tell ye that, sir," replied the other. "I'd pity anyone as was in the 'ouse—at the top, at all events. They say that the escape's broken down somewhere, an' won't be 'ere for some little time."

"Well, if the house is empty it doesn't matter much," said Manners.

"That's quite right," agreed the yokel sagely.

Manners watched with eager eyes, scanning the building from roof to ground.

Suddenly his gaze became fixed, and he lifted a quivering finger and pointed.

"Look!" he shouted hoarsely. "Look!"

His shout was heard by many, and, following the direction of his pointing finger, the crowd was able to distinguish through the haze of smoke a small face at the topmost window of all.

"Good heavens!" shouted somebody. "It's a child!"

"He'll be killed!"

"Where's the escape?"

"Oh, why don't they bring it?"

Numberless shouts rang out, and as they watched the people saw the window raised, and then the small head of a little boy appeared.

"Help!" he screamed. "Save me! All the stairs is blazin' up, and I can't get down. O-oh, I don't know what to do!"

The crowd became restless, and dozens of people shouted encouragement to the little fellow at the top of the burning house.

But this was of no material help.

The firemen, with set faces, plied their hoses round about the window, but more than that it was impossible to do. The escape had not yet arrived, and there was no prospect of it coming up for many minutes.

For a moment Manners turned his eyes from the upper window, and looked at the clear space below.

A gentleman of about forty was standing there, wringing his hands with grief and fury.

"Can't you do anything?" Manners heard him say to the head fireman. "Can't you save him? Good heavens! To think that I should stand here and see my own child burn to death!"

"The escape will be here presently, sir," replied the fireman.

"Presently," shouted the father distractedly. "What is the good of that? The fire will reach that room in less than five minutes, and if the escape came at this moment it could hardly be erected in time!"

"It's not so bad as that, sir!" protested the fireman. "I should say the little one's safe for ten minutes at least—"

A form dashed through the crowd, and stopped, panting, before the head fireman.

"They can't get the escape here in less than fifteen minutes!" he shouted breathlessly. "It's broken down, and—"

"Broken down!" echoed the father miserably. "Good heavens! Then there is no hope! Have you no ladders of any description?" he added fiercely. "Have you nothing—nothing?"

The fireman's answer was unheard by Manners, but the father's agitated pacing up and down told his own story.

Meanwhile, far above, the child was leaning out of the window, crying piteously.

The crowd was in an uproar, but nothing could be done until the escape arrived.

There were no ladders long enough, and it was utterly impossible to reach the top floors from the interior of the building.

And all the time the flames were creeping nearer and nearer, in spite of all the efforts of the furiously-working firemen.

Manners stood looking on with his heart in his mouth. He shifted impatiently.

"Can't anything be done?" he asked himself again and again. "Great Scott! To think of all these people standing here, unable to do anything, while that little boy is burnt to death!"

Eagerly he scanned the building again, and a gleam of hope entered his eyes as he saw, running quite close to the topmost window, a large, firmly-fixed gutter-pipe.

The flames had not reached it yet, but it could easily be seen that the fire would soon make headway in its direction.

A wild thought had entered Manners' head—a thought which caused him to turn hot with emotion.

"They call me a coward, do they?" murmured the junior. "By jingo, I'll prove to myself, at any rate, that they're wrong!"

There's a chance that I can reach the window by that pipe, and I'll try to do it—even if I'm killed in the attempt."

He seemed to go mad for a moment.

Everything left his mind except the fact that the little boy was in imminent danger of being burnt to death.

There was a chance open to save him—and Manners meant to take that chance, insane as it seemed.

With a cry he pushed through the people in front of him, and dashed across the open space towards the building.

A shout went up—a cry of warning. But Manners never heard it.

Two policemen rushed after him, and he was not even aware of their presence.

Straight for the gutter-pipe he ran, and, reaching it, leapt at it like a monkey.

Desperation lent him extra agility, and he swarmed up the pipe with amazing speed, being quite out of reach by the time that the two policemen arrived at the spot.

All eyes were turned upwards, and many a head was shaken.

But still Manners continued.

A hot gust of smoke was flung into his face by the breeze, and for a second he was forced to cling to the pipe with knees, toes, and fingers, and gasp for breath.

Then the gust had passed.

"I shall do it!" he thought triumphantly. Yes, he was now nearing the top. Inch by inch he went up, until at last he arrived opposite the window.

The pipe ran quite close, and he was able to step on to the sill with practically no trouble. But the effort was terribly dangerous. A slip, and he would have been cast below on to the hard ground.

"Hurrah!"

"He's in! Hurrah!"

"Bravo, laddie!"

"He's real grit!"

The crowd yelled with joy and enthusiasm. Manners was indeed within the room.

For a moment he leaned against the wall, breathless.

But he knew that it would be fatal to waste time, for the fire below was steadily creeping, little by little, towards the piping.

In a very short time it would be too hot to grasp.

When he had ascended it was warm beneath his hands.

The little boy was crying copiously, but instantly did as Manners told him.

Clambering on his rescuer's back, he wound his arms round his neck, and clung there for dear life.

"Now keep your eyes closed," said Manners quietly, "and don't move. Hang on tight, and trust to me!"

The youngster nodded vigorously, but was too choked with sobs and fright to reply.

For a second, as Manners stood looking from the window, his heart almost failed him.

How could he descend to the ground in safety?

It seemed an impossible task.

But Manners set his teeth, and climbed out upon the sill, telling himself that it had to be done.

He had another life to save now as well as his own, and he simply had to reach the ground in safety.

The most difficult part of all was gaining a hold upon the pipe again. But at last he succeeded—after being within an ace of disaster.

Slowly—ever so slowly—he descended. Then, as he gained confidence, he allowed himself to slither down more quickly.

Opposite the second floor the pipe was almost unbearably hot in his hands, and only a moment after he had slid past the danger zone a long flame roared up from a lower window and licked the pipe hungrily.

A gasp of relief swept over the watching crowd. Had that flame come a minute earlier both Manners and his charge would have been dashed to the ground, many feet beneath.

"He'll do it—by Heaven, he'll do it!" shouted the father joyously.

Somebody started a cheer, but it was instantly silenced.

Manners was not down yet. But it was easy to see that he had accomplished his object.

Through sheer, indomitable pluck he had won through—and he was none the worse for his adventure.

He was hot, dishevelled, and dirty, but he had performed his act without being burned by the ever-increasing fire.

But he had only been in the very nick of time.

At last he set foot on the ground, and again the crowd roared with excitement and enthusiasm.

The child's father was at the foot of the pipe, and he dragged his child joyously from Manners' back.

The hero of the hour stood wiping the perspiration from his brow and smiling quietly to himself.

But he was nervous, and looked round him almost in fright.

The last thing in the world he wished for was an ovation. But he knew quite well that unless he made his escape at once he would be seized and congratulated.

And Manners, like most true heroes, was extremely modest.

Personally, he could not see anything great in what he had done, and his one wish was to get away.

By a stroke of luck his opportunity was at hand.

The father was holding his child in joy, and had sent off a messenger to his wife to say that everything was all right.

And just then the belated fire-escape arrived, and everybody's attention was drawn to it.

"Now's my chance!" thought Manners breathlessly.

He dragged his tell-tale St. Jim's cap from his head, and slipped away towards the back of the burning building.

Then, making a detour over the garden, he came out in the roadway farther down.

Near by, as he had calculated, his bicycle was leaning against the hedge.

In a moment he had grasped it, swung himself into the saddle, and was pedalling at full speed for St. Jim's.

As he left Wayland behind he gasped with relief, and stopped presently to straighten his clothing.

At St. Jim's he tidied himself up, and when tea-time came he had the satisfaction of knowing that not a soul was aware of the identity of the boy who had saved the child from the burning house.

He could have boasted of his achievement, and so regained his chums' esteem, but that was not Manners' way.

He had performed a noble action, and he did not wish to profit by it.

For Manners was made of the right stuff—grit to the backbone.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Newspaper Report.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY screwed his famous monocle into his eyes, and surveyed his chums through it.

"I have weally no swictic information to go upon, deah boys," he said, "but, ffrom what I can gathah, the blaze at Wayland was of tewwific pproportions. At any wate, the house was one of the biggest in the town, and it was ppractically wuined."

"Rotten!" said Blake. "I say, I wonder if any of our chaps saw it?"

"I've not heard of anybody," said Digby thoughtfully. "I should have liked to have seen it, at any rate. We never have sights like that round here, worse luck!"

"Weally, Digbaw, one might imagine you are quite fond of seeing howwible fiahs!"

The chums of Study No. 6 were collected in a little group in a corner of the quad. It was the day following Manners' adventure in Wayland—another fine and sunny day. Morning lessons were over, and rumours of the fire at Wayland had reached the school through various sources. Juniors in all parts of St. Jim's were discussing the affair.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther hurried up to Blake & Co., and the former was carrying in his hand a folded newspaper.

"I say," exclaimed Tom Merry, "have you seen the latest news? There's been a whacking great fire at Wayland, and—"

Blake sniffed. "Do you call that the latest news?" he asked. "It's absolutely stale!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The fire itself may be," replied Tom Merry. "But there's a full report in this paper, and it says that a St. Jim's boy—a junior, too—risked his life to save a little child which was imprisoned at the top of the house."

Blake & Co. were all attention at once. "My aunt!" exclaimed Blake. "That's news, anyhow!"

"Who was it?" demanded Herries. "They don't know."

"Don't know who it was?" asked Digby curiously.

"No. Nobody recognised him, and he was off the very instant he'd performed that rescue. They say in this report that it was one of the pluckiest things that have ever been done, and—"

Blake paused, for suddenly a most distinct

yell of fright came from the back of the gym.

The first yell, however, was merely a preliminary, for it was succeeded by a perfect series of howls.

Blake & Co. and the two Shell fellows gazed at one another in astonishment.

"What on earth is that, deah boys?"

"Sounds like somebody in pain," grinned Lowther. "It's Mellish's voice, too, I'll bet a fiver!"

By Jove, he's evidently receiving a terrific hiding from somebody! Suppose we go and investigate?"

The others, however, had already moved off, and they hurried round the gym. They all paused in a group as they came within sight of the little scene which was being enacted there.

Manners had a firm grasp of Mellish, and was treating him to a tremendous hiding.

The sneak of the Fourth was too frightened to defend himself, and lay squirming when Manners at last flung him down.

"Now, you confounded cad!" panted Manners. "Perhaps that'll teach you a lesson!"

"Ow!" roared Mellish. "Yaroh! Ow!"

Suddenly he struggled to his feet, and, in a fit of bitter rage, he flung himself at Manners, clawing and kicking for all he was worth.

"My hat!" ejaculated Manners. "Do you want some more?"

He lunged out with his fist. It landed full upon Mellish's nose, and the Fourth-Former went to the earth with a thud and a howl.

Blake & Co. pressed forward, forgetting, for the moment, that Manners was in Coventry.

"What the dickens are you knocking Mellish about for?" demanded Blake angrily.

"I've given him a punishment that he jolly well deserves," replied Manners quietly.

"If you touch him again we'll chuck you out of the quad," declared Blake. "We're not going to have cads like you—"

Manners smiled grimly. "Don't get excited!" he said. "Mellish has got something to explain which will cause you a bit of surprise, perhaps. And when you've heard him you'll very likely be sorry that you sent me to Coventry for telling nothing but the truth."

"What do you mean?" demanded Blake roughly. "If you think we're going to believe you—"

"I'm not asking you to believe me," interrupted Manners quietly. "You can believe what you like, but I'm going to make Mellish confess something that'll perhaps be a surprise to you."

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther pressed forward eagerly.

"What is it?" they asked.

"Simply that Mellish is the coward who ran away from you in Rylcombe Lane the night before last," replied Manners. "It was he whom you saw—he who climbed over the wall. As I told you at the time, I'd been in the quad ever since tea, because Ratty was there!"

"It's a lie!" shouted Mellish shrilly.

"Don't believe him!"

"I don't," said Blake grimly. "If you think you're going to swank us, Manners, that—"

"I'm going to make Mellish tell the truth," replied Manners angrily. "He confessed it to me just now, and I'll make him confess it again. If you don't tell the truth within two minutes, Mellish, I'll give you a hiding worse than the one you've already had."

"You'd better not!" said Blake darkly.

"I'll do what I like," declared Manners. "This is my affair, Blake, and I'm not going to stand any interference from you! You can think what you like about me, but I'm going to make Mellish tell the truth."

"Yes, give Manners a chance," said Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Monty Lowther.

Manners bent down, jerked Mellish to his feet, and held him, cowering, before the juniors.

Mellish was in a state of considerable terror, and one glance at Manners' grim face told him that the Shell fellow was in deadly earnest.

"Now tell the truth," said Manners, between his teeth. "Tell the chaps what you did. I'm not a fellow to threaten as a rule, but if you don't speak within one minute I'll—"

"All right!" gasped Mellish, in terror. "I'll tell 'em if you'll let me off, Manners."

"Go on, then!" said Manners contemptuously.

"It was me who was in the Rylcombe Lane," said Mellish quickly. "It wasn't Manners at all. You were all mistaken, and I was afraid to say anything because I knew

you'd bump me. I climbed over the wall, dropped down into the quad, and lay still. Then I saw you collar Manners, and accuse him, so I knew I was safe."

Tom Merry stepped forward excitedly.

"Do you mean to say that Manners was telling the truth all the time?" he asked. "Were you hiding close by, listening to everything, and letting us call him every rotten name under the sun?"

"Yes," admitted Mellish sullenly.

"You rotter!" gasped Tom Merry angrily. "You—you worm!"

"But why were you in the lane?" asked Blake, who now began to realise the truth.

"I went there because I wanted to know what you were up to," admitted Mellish, thinking that he had better make a clean breast of everything. "I saw you all go in the wood-shed, and listened to what you were saying. But I only heard that there was going to be something on at the old stile at half-past eight. So I went down to find out. Manners wasn't there at all; I didn't see a sign of him until I got back to the quad. And then I let you collar him, thinking that you'd never find out the truth."

"Then—then Manners didn't tell a lie at all!" ejaculated Blake.

"Not that I know of," said Mellish. "He said that it wasn't him that was in the lane, and that was the truth, anyway!"

Manners released Mellish, and pushed him away.

"Now you can buzz off," he said quietly.

Mellish slunk off, followed by the gaze of the amazed and indignant juniors.

"I suspected it was Mellish since yesterday," said Manners. "It suddenly struck me that I'd seen him come from behind a tree that night in the quad. Then I got thinking, and realised that Mellish was about the only chap who'd be capable of such a caddish trick. If I hadn't happened to have seen him, the truth might never have come out."

Tom Merry laid his hand on Manners' shoulder.

"And you were telling the truth, and we thought that every word was a lie! My hat! It seems too good to be true!"

"If it hadn't been for Mellish's confession I should never have been convinced," said Blake. "Everything happened so precisely that it seemed positive that you were the chap in the lane, Manners. I'm more glad than I can say to know the truth—thundering glad!"

"Can you ever forgive us, old man?" asked Tom Merry gently.

Manners smiled glady.

"Don't be an ass!" he said. "Of course I can forgive you, Tommy. In the first place, there's nothing to forgive, because the proof was so conclusive that you couldn't think anything else. And in the second place—"

"Oh, blow the second place!" said Lowther lightheartedly. "It's good enough to know that all this beastly unpleasantness is over. I've been utterly miserable for the last day or two, and if anybody tries to call Manners a liar again I'll punch his nose!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed his chums with a very serious look.

"Theah is one thing I should like to say!" he exclaimed. "Mannahs has made Mellish confess and pprove his innocence. Now I want you to all agree, deah boys, that we all ought to be thoroughly ashamed of ourselves for evah having doubted him at all!"

"We are," agreed Blake. "Thoroughly ashamed of ourselves!"

"If we had only thought of the mattah," went on D'Arcy, "we should have realised that it was just the thing that Mellish would do, and a thing that Mannahs is absolutely incapable of doing!"

"Of course!" said Tom Merry. "We're a set of prize asses! But I notice it is always easy to say these sort of things when the real truth comes out. I think the least said about the matter, the better, for the more we say the more caddish we become. For it was caddish—utterly caddish, to suspect a chum we've known for years to be truthful and honourable!"

Manners laughed awkwardly.

"Don't talk rot!" he said. "It's over now, chaps, and I'm jolly glad. I think you'll admit that I'm not really a coward—"

"Admit it!" interrupted Blake. "Why, we'll go and below it from the houseposts! He looked round him eagerly, and beckoned to fellows all over the quad. "Hi, Figgy! Kerr! Wynn! Kangaroo! Come here! You're wanted urgently!"

Juniors from all parts of the quad came over, and they were told the truth about the Rylcombe Lane affair.

The excitement was intense, and Manners

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 7.

found the tide turning in his favour with wonderful rapidity.

And while the excitement was at its height Manners happened to look over towards the gates.

Then he started, and turned quite pale.

For a stranger had just entered, and was even at that moment approaching.

It was the owner of the burnt house in Wayland—the father of the child Manners had saved from certain death!

"My hat!" murmured Manners to himself. "What the dickens has he come here for? If he sees me—" But Manners didn't finish. He pushed his way through the juniors, and hastened across the quad. They were about to rush after him, when the stranger came up.

"Good-morning, boys!" he said politely.

"Good-morning, sir!" they chorused.

"I'm the owner of the house that was burned in Wayland yesterday—Mr. Overton," he went on. "A boy belonging to this school performed one of the most heroic acts I have ever witnessed. He saved my little son from death, and then, while I was not looking, slipped off without even giving me his name. Perhaps you know who the hero is—perhaps he has told you of his adventure?"

"No, sir," replied Tom Merry. "We've no idea who it could have been. We were talking about the matter only a little while ago. The chap must have come in and said nothing about it."

"Then he is a more noble boy still," said Mr. Overton. "He's too modest to mention his heroism. But I mean to find out who it is—"

"My hat!" roared Monty Lowther suddenly. "Could it have been Manners, after all? He wasn't on the playing-fields yesterday afternoon."

The juniors looked at one another excitedly. "Where is Manners, anyhow?" demanded Tom Merry. "I'm blessed if he hasn't hooked it!"

"Then you may be sure he is the boy I'm looking for," said Mr. Overton. "He must have seen me coming, and escaped while he had the chance. This Manners is a modest boy indeed."

"Here he is!" roared Blake.

He pointed towards the gates, and then rushed forward, followed by all the others.

Manners had just entered, firm between the grasp of two stalwart firemen.

He was looking rather sheepish, and exceedingly uncomfortable.

He had endeavoured to escape the exposure by going to the village, but, to his chagrin, he had met outside the gates two of the firemen who had been present.

They had recognised him instantly, and had prevented him going further.

Mr. Overton took his hand in a warm grasp. "My boy," he said fervently, "I shall never be able to thank you for the service you have rendered me. My words are inadequate, and I can only say that I am grateful from the bottom of my heart!"

Manners murmured some words confusedly.

And when Mr. Overton had released him he endeavoured to break through the enthusiastic ring of juniors.

"No, you don't!" shouted Figgins, grabbing him. "My hat! I don't think we've ever done a greater injustice to anybody than we

have to Manners! We're all a set of cads, and we must show him that we're all jolly sorry!"

The stupendous nature of the injustice had indeed dawned upon all the juniors.

It was astounding to realise that they had shunned Manners as a coward and a liar when he was really exactly the opposite.

And, to do the juniors justice, they did not excuse themselves in the least.

They condemned one another wholeheartedly, and Manners received such an ovation that when the bell rang for dinner he was hot, dishevelled, and breathless.

Three times he had been carried round the quad, and his chums had shown him how tremendously sorry they were.

And what a difference from yesterday!

Then everyone had shunned him. Now he could do nothing wrong.

He was the hero of the day, and, by all appearances, he was to be the hero for many days to come.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### All Serene.

THAT evening, in the presence of the whole school, Dr. Holmes shook Manners by the hand and told him that he was proud to have such a pupil at St. Jim's.

The story of the fire was retold, and the old Hall rang with cheers from juniors and seniors alike.

The juniors were too enthusiastic about Manners' bravery, and too penitent over the Rylcombe Lane affair, to dream of wanting proof that Manners' story of the bull had been correct.

And yet the truth of Manners' statement was to be proved to the juniors before so very long.

The following day the Terrible Three and Blake & Co. took a jaunt down to the village to fetch a hamper from the station.

And as they proceeded on their way, animatedly conjecturing what the contents of the hamper would be, they passed the cottages which had been the scene of the adventure early in the week.

They were all talking and laughing cheerfully, and had almost passed the spot, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came to a sudden halt.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter, Gussy?"

"Gweat Scott!" murmured the swell of the School House.

"Oh, crumbs! It's 'Great Scott' now!" exclaimed Blake. "Have you suddenly remembered that you've put your waistcoat on inside-out, or—"

"Pway don't be so widic, Blake!" said D'Arcy. "I uttached the exclamations because I had observed somethin' which had escaped everybody's notice. Pway look at those two cottages, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus turned to the cottages which they knew so well.

For a moment the juniors could see nothing remarkable.

Then Tom Merry drew his breath in quickly and glanced at Manners.

One cottage was precisely the same as before.

But the other—the one which had been empty—was now very evidently occupied. The front door stood open, and, playing on the front path, was a little baby girl.

"Is—is that the child, Manners?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, that's the one," replied Manners. "But come on; we shall never get to the station if we stop here."

The proof was complete.

Manners had told the truth from the very first.

The following morning a parcel arrived for Manners, and he untied it with some curiosity, for he could see by the postmark that it had been despatched from Wayland.

To his delight and joy, it contained a magnificent camera, one of the most expensive variety, and with it were all requisites for immediate business.

A card inside told Manners that it was a "little token from a grateful father."

"By Jove, Mr. Overton's a brick!" declared Manners, gazing at his new possession excitedly. "This is a ripping camera, chaps, and I'll bet it'll take magnificent photos! But how the dickens did he know I'm interested in photography?"

"I told him," said Tom Merry. "He asked me what your pet hobby was, and I couldn't tell a fib, could I?"

"You boulder!" exclaimed Manners. "So I've got you to thank for this?"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to let cousin Ethel be the first to have her photograph taken," said Manners thoughtfully.

"Good idea!" agreed Tom Merry heartily.

"Rather!" said Monty Lowther. "She's coming to St. Jim's next week, so you won't have to wait long, Manners."

But before cousin Ethel arrived Manners was pelted with applications by numberless juniors to have their photographs taken with the new prize.

Manners had the same answer for them all, and they all went away unsatisfied.

He declared that he would take nobody's photo until cousin Ethel arrived, and he was as good as his word.

The girl was the first to pose before the new camera, and when the plate was developed, Manners produced quite a number of prints from the negative.

And in practically every junior study a photo of cousin Ethel adorned the mantelpiece—and everybody admitted that it was the best photograph of their girl chum that had ever been taken, a compliment which Manners did not fail to appreciate.

That camera was in continual use, and it never failed to remind the juniors of the time when its owner had been universally condemned, and, as they now realised, grievously misunderstood.

THE END.

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