

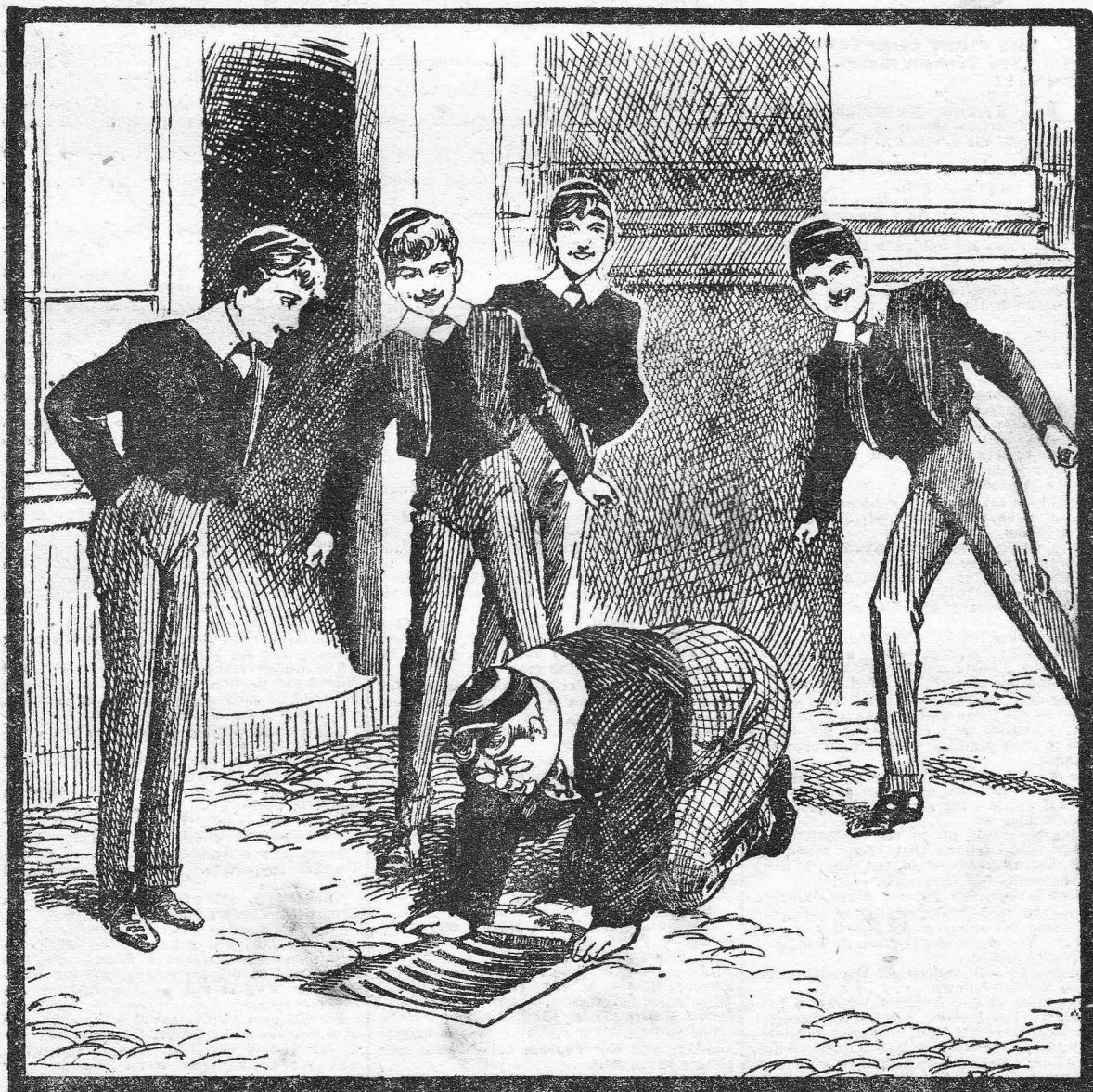
3 LONG SCHOOL TALES!

The
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Popular

Week Ending
March 22nd, 1919.

No. 9.
New Series.

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



HARD LUCK FOR BILLY BUNTER!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



BUNTER, THE LINE MERCHANT!

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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Topham Match.

GOAL!"
"Bravo!"
Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, stopped as he heard the shouting from the direction of the junior football-ground.

A junior match was in progress, and as the Greyfriars captain glanced towards the football-field he saw that it was surrounded by a crowd unusually large for a junior match.

Seniors as well as juniors were standing round the ropes and joining in the shouting:

"Hurrah!"

"Well played, Wharton!"

Wingate called to a Sixth-Former who was strolling from the direction of the football-ground:

"What's going on, Carne?"

"Nothing much," answered Carne brusquely. "I mean on the junior ground," said Wingate.

"Oh, a Remove match. I believe!"

"Wharton doing anything big?"

"Just scored a goal, I think."

"They seem to be making a fuss of him," Wingate remarked. "I know he plays jolly well for a junior."

Carne yawned.

He did not take much interest in junior football, or in anything else appertaining to the Lower School.

"Yes, I haven't noticed," he said.

Wingate frowned a little.

Without replying, he walked away quickly towards the footballers.

Carne looked after him with a sneer on his face.

Carne played football chiefly because he was a good back, and liked to cut a good figure on the football-field, and because other fellows envied him his place in the First Eleven.

Wingate's keen interest in all that appertained to the great winter game, the pains he took to help on even the fags of the Second Form in their practice, were incomprehensible to Carne.

He did not care in the least for anybody's football but his own, and never cared to play unless it was in a big match with a good-sized crowd looking on.

Wingate strode up to the football-field. There were fellows there deep round the ropes, and all were excited, but way was made for the captain of Greyfriars.

"How's the score going?" asked Wingate.

"One to nil," answered Ogilvy promptly.

"Wharton has just scored. It was a regular beauty. You ought to have seen it, Wingate."

Wingate smiled.

He could easily understand the enthusiasm of the Remove fellows.

They were playing Topham Juniors—a hard match for the Remove, for the Topham fellows were recruited from all Forms under the Fifth, while the Remove had only themselves—the Lower Fourth—to pick their men from.

Wingate stood with his hands in his pockets, looking on.

The game was being played at a fast pace. The Topham fellows were weighty and strong, and they were putting a tremendous amount of dash into their play.

But the Remove Eleven were sticking manfully to their guns.

They threw themselves into the game with great zest, and time after time a determined attack on the part of the Topham forwards was broken up, and the play transferred to the other end.

"Wharton's got it again!"

There came a shout from the Greyfriars supporters.

One of the Remove backs had cleared with a hefty kick.

The ball sailed to Harry Wharton, who was standing in mid-field.

He fastened on to the ball, and made a dash for the Topham goal.

The Topham centre-half came rushing up to tackle the Remove captain.

Harry Wharton dodged in the nick of time, and passed smartly to Bob Cherry.

Bob Cherry, in his turn, made tracks for goal.

"Go it, Bob!" shouted the Removeites.

Bob did not require any urging on that point. He rushed on and on, keeping the ball well under control.

The Topham right-back, a big, burly fellow, loomed up in front of Bob.

Bob saw him preparing to charge, and at the critical moment he slung the ball across to Harry Wharton, who had been keeping pace with him.

"Well passed, Bob!" shouted the Removeites.

"Go it, Wharton!"

Harry had the ball well in hand; he was getting very near the goal now.

The Topham halves were racing at his heels in the hope of robbing him of the ball.

But Wharton was running at a splendid speed.

The other back was waiting to tackle him.

The Remove captain dodged quickly to the left, fainted, and then rushed on with the ball.

The Topham back was deceived, and before he could recover himself Wharton was streaking on in front of him.

"Shoot!" yelled the Greyfriars supporters.

And Harry Wharton shot—a loy, swift shot.

The ball flew swiftly along the ground towards the corner of the goal.

The Topham goalkeeper flung himself full length on the ground in an earnest endeavour to save his charge.

But the ball was travelling too quickly for him.

Next instant there was a tremendous shout from the Removeites lining the ropes:

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Wharton!"

"Bravo!"

The Removeites were in high spirits.

"Two to nil!" said Ogilvy.

"Jolly good!" remarked Trevor. "Wharton's in ripping form to-day. What do you think of him, Wingate?"

Wingate smiled.

"I must say Wharton is playing very well," he agreed.

"I should just think he is!" said Trevor. "He's the sort of chap you want in the First Eleven. He—Hullo! They're off again!"

The game had restarted, and the Greyfriars forwards were passing the ball amongst them.

The ball travelled rapidly from one man to another, and the Topham halves were completely bewildered.

"There's another goal coming!" said Russell cheerfully. "Wharton's got it again! He's going to—"

Russell broke off abruptly as Wharton was floored by a clever shoulder-to-shoulder charge.

The Topham back collared the ball, and

with a tremendous kick sent it sailing well up the field.

Now it was the Topham forwards' turn.

And they showed that they did not lack skill.

The centre-forward swung the ball out to the wing, and the outside-right, gathering it in his stride, tore along the line.

He eluded the Greyfriars back, and at the right moment he sent the ball into the centre.

The Topham inside-right was on the spot.

He trapped the ball, and—

Thud!

It was a splendid shot—a shot that gave Hazeldene, the Remove goalkeeper, no chance whatever.

The ball sailed into the top corner of the net.

"Well done, Wilkinson!" shouted the Topham supporters.

"Hurrah!"

But the Remove supporters were not down-hearted.

"That only makes the score two to one," remarked Ogilvy. "Wharton will soon get another! Give 'em a shout!"

And the Removeites yelled at the top of their voices:

"Go it, Greyfriars!"

"Let's have another one!"

"Stick it!"

But the Topham goal was the last scored during the first half, for a moment later the whistle went.

The Remove team came trooping off the field, to partake of the lemons that were waiting for them.

"Well done, Wharton!" said Russell.

"Don't forget we want another two next half."

Harry Wharton smiled cheerfully, as he munching away at a lemon.

"I'll do my best," he said; and that intention was firmly fixed in his mind when at length the two teams lined up again.

But a surprise awaited the Greyfriars team, and also their supporters.

The Topham centre-forward kicked off.

The inside-right took his pass, and, turning quickly, sent the ball to the wing.

The winger trapped the ball smartly, and darted swiftly down the field. Then, before he could be successfully tackled, he had sent the ball into the centre.

Ngent was playing at back for the Greyfriars team.

He dashed up, but, to the amazement of the Removeites, he miskicked.

It was a fatal mistake, for the Topham centre-forward was on the ball in a twinkling, and had sent it into the net before the Greyfriars fellows knew what was happening.

There was a tremendous cheer from the Topham supporters. The score was level now.

"Buck up, Greyfriars!" shouted the Removeites. "Don't let them beat you!"

"Give us another goal, Wharton!"

Harry's face was grim and set when the two teams lined up once more. He was determined to win the match, and his determination was shared by the rest of the Remove team.

For the next twenty minutes the game was of a ding-dong character. First the ball was at one end of the field, then at the other. And yet neither side could add to their score.

The time wore on, and it seemed that the game must end in a draw.

"Only another five minutes," remarked Russell, somewhat dimly.

"Time yet for two more goals!" said

Ogilvy optimistically. "Look! Cherry's got it!"

Bob Cherry had captured the ball, and was making for goal.

He dodged the centre-half, and then passed to Wharton, who was standing near the centre-line.

Harry did not hesitate. He dashed for goal as fast as he could go. There were only two Topham defenders in front of him—the goalkeeper and the burly back.

The back, determined to stop Wharton's progress, came rushing up. But the Remove captain was ready, and just at the right moment, he kicked the ball round one side of the Topham back, whilst he himself peited along on the other side.

Before the Topham defender could turn and tackle him again, Wharton was several yards in front, with the ball once more at his feet.

On, on, on he went, with the Topham fellows rushing at his heels.

"Shoot, Wharton!" shouted the Removites. Another ten yards the Remove captain travelled. Then—

Thud!
It was a magnificent shot, one of the best that had ever been seen on the Greyfriars ground.

The goalkeeper was completely bewildered by the speed of the shot. The ball shot past him like a streak of lightning, and into the net.

The Removites yelled excitedly.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

"Well done!"

"Let's have another!"

But there was no time for another goal. Next moment the referee blew his whistle.

The game was over, and Greyfriars had won by three goals to two.

Highly elated at their victory, the Greyfriars team walked off the field.

"You've done well, Wharton!" said Wingate, as Harry came up to him. "I've been watching you. It was splendid!"

Harry flushed with pleasure. Words of praise from the captain of Greyfriars were to be valued.

"Thank you, Wingate!" he said quietly. And then he was lifted off his feet, and pushed up to the pavilion by a crowd of exultant Removites.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter in Funds.

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The Topham brake had rolled away, and the crowd of Removites were turning in at the gates of Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the cheerful mood that follows a good game well-played—somewhat tired, but agreeably so, and very good-humoured.

"I say—"

"Well, Billy," said Wharton, glancing at the fat junior, "what do you want?"

"I was thinking," said Bunter, with emphasis, "that it would be a good idea to celebrate the licking we've given Topham by a bit of a feed in the study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "If we had been licked, Bunter would have been willing to celebrate it by a feed in the study!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But we've just had tea with the Topham fellows, Billy. You don't want another, I suppose?"

"Well, you see, I've got a delicate constitution—"

"Oh! We've heard all about that," said Bob.

"That requires to be kept up—"

"Ring off!"

"By constant nourishment—"

"Cheese it!"

"And so I think it would be a good idea to—"

"Rats!"

"I'm not asking you chaps to stand a feed!" exclaimed Billy Bunter wrathfully. "I'm going to stand it myself."

"Phew! Has your postal-order come at last, Billy?" asked Bob, with an air of interest.

"No; there's been some delay in the post—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle about in it. There's nothing funny in a delay in the post, which prevents a chap getting a postal-order when he's expecting one," said Bunter peevishly. "I've been thinking of writing to the Postmaster-General

about it. It ought to be looked into. But I'm in funds all the same."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Cherry—"

"Seeing's believing," said Bob Cherry sceptically.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think you might take a fellow's word," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "Look here!"

He groped in his pocket, and produced a five-shilling piece.

The chums of the Remove gazed at it in astonishment.

For Bunter, the most impetuous and the most careless junior in the Lower Fourth, to be possessed of five shillings at once was a wonder.

Harry Wharton's brow darkened, and he dropped his hand upon the fat junior's shoulder.

"Where did you get that, Bunter?" he asked.

"It—it was given to me."

"By whom?"

"That's a—secret."

"Stuff! Who was it?"

"A—chap I know. It's—it's all right, you know. I sold him something for it."

Nugent gave a shout.

Bunter's habit of selling things in the study was an old one, and punishment had visited him for it often and heavily.

"You young rotter!" exclaimed Nugent excitedly. "Have you been selling my fret-work tools again?"

"No; I haven't—"

"Or my cricket-bat?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No."

"Well, what was it, then?"

"I don't see that that matters," said Bunter, with dignity. "I—ow!—I wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Wharton. You might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them!"

"Where did you get that money?"

"I— Oh, really, look here; come and have a feed!"

"Rats!"

"If you chaps make up five between you, that will be ten altogether, and we can get a really ripping feed for ten bob," said Bunter persuasively.

"Not unless you tell us where the money came from," said Harry, distrustfully.

"Well, you see—"

"Are you going to tell us?"

"Under the circumstances—"

Wharton released the fat junior.

He could have forced an answer from him, but it would certainly have been an untrue one.

The chums of the Remove walked on, leaving the fat junior standing alone.

Billy Bunter blinked after them discontentedly.

"Rotters!" he muttered. "Fancy suspecting a chap like me—a perfect gentleman—of coming by money dishonestly! Rotters!"

Wharton's brow was wrinkled as he walked into the School House with his chums.

"That stupid young ass is getting into trouble again, I suppose," Harry remarked. "He will get himself expelled from Greyfriars in the long run."

"Jolly good thing for Greyfriars!" growled Bob Cherry.

"He can't have borrowed the money," remarked Mark Linley. "No one who knows him would lend him anything. He can never borrow except of new fellows, and—"

Wharton started.

"There's Vernon-Smith. Perhaps—"

"Not much!" said Cherry emphatically. "Vernon-Smith is rolling in money, but he wouldn't be likely to give Bunter any."

"No; I suppose not."

"Talking of the Bounder, there he is!"

Vernon-Smith had just come downstairs, and tapped at the door of Mr. Quelch's study.

He had papers in his hand, and was evidently taking in an imposition to the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch opened the door himself; he was just coming out of the study. He glanced at Vernon-Smith.

"Ah, it is you, Smith! Is that your imposition?"

"Yes, sir."

"Place it on my table."

And Mr. Quelch walked away. The chums of the Remove went upstairs.

"Reminds me," Nugent remarked. "I've got my imposition to give in to Mr. Quelch before seven. It's all done, thank goodness!"

Wharton glanced at his watch.

"It's a quarter to, now," he remarked. "Good! I'll trot in with it," said Nugent.

"Quelch went into the masters'-room. He doesn't like being bothered there with lines; but that's his own look-out. I'm sure I didn't want him to give me an imposition."

He glanced round the study.

"Any of you chaps seen my impot?"

"No. Where did you leave it?"

"On the table, under the paper-weight."

"It isn't on the table now."

"Someone's shoved it somewhere, I suppose. Help me look for it."

The juniors looked round the study.

The imposition was not to be found.

They looked everywhere—on the table and under it, in the bookcase and the cupboard, in the drawer and the coal-locker even, but no imposition came to light.

Seven sounded from the clock-tower, and Nugent stopped in the hurried search, with an exclamation:

"My hat! There goes seven!"

Wharton looked perplexed.

"You're sure you wrote it out?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I had just finished it when the Topham brake got here."

"It's very curious!"

"The curiousness is terrific!"

"Well, it isn't here," said Harry. "Somebody's moved it for a lark, I should say. You'd better explain to Quelch, or you'll get it doubled for not showing it up in time."

"I—I suppose so."

Frank hurried out of the study.

He hastened to the masters' room, where Mr. Quelch was sitting by the window, chatting with Mr. Capper, the master of the Upper Fourth.

The Remove-master glanced round at him.

"What is it, Nugent?"

"If you please, sir, my imposition."

"Take it into my study and leave it on my table."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"You may go, Nugent."

"Yes, sir; but—I haven't the impot!" gasped Nugent.

"You have not done it!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, with a portentous frown.

"Yes, sir, I—I've done it, but it's disappeared!" exclaimed Nugent breathlessly.

"I—I think someone has hidden it for a lark, sir—a joke, I mean."

"A very foolish joke, in my opinion," said Mr. Quelch. "Very well, Nugent; I believe your explanation, of course. Take the imposition to my study when you find it."

"Yes, sir," said Nugent, in great relief. "Thank you, sir!"

And he left the masters' room.

He returned to Study No. 1 to look again for the missing manuscript, but in vain; the imposition had disappeared, and left no trace behind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

How Bunter Stood Treat.

BILLY BUNTER stood looking at the five-shillingpiece in his hand, and blinking in a thoughtful way.

He was calculating exactly how much of Mrs. Mible's stock he could obtain for it, and wishing that it were a half-sovereign, when he received a slap on the back that made him stagger, and the coin went with a clink to the ground.

"Oh, really, Cherry!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, is that you, Snoop?" said Bunter, picking up the five-shillingpiece. "I—I wish you wouldn't be such a rough beast!"

"You're in funds," remarked Snoop, with a covetous glance at the crown-piece.

"Yes. What do you say to a feed, Snoop?"

"Good idea!" said the sneak of the Remove. "Come on!"

"Hold on! I was thinking that if you had five bob, you could treat me, and then I'd treat you," said Bunter. "This isn't enough for a really good feed."

"I haven't," said Snoop regretfully. "I've got only a bob."

"Well, that will do; come on!"

"Right you are!" said Snoop, who imagined that on these lines he would have the better part of the bargain.

And the two juniors entered the tuckshop kept by Mrs. Mible within the precincts of Greyfriars.

Wun Lung, the Chinese, was there, slowly and meditatively consuming a jam tart.

He grinned in his affable way at the Removites.

"Nicee day," he remarked. "Nicee tarts."

"Yes; we're in funds," said Bunter. "Would you care to join us in a feed, kid?"

The little Celestial nodded.

"Me jonee handsome fat Buntree, one time."

"Good! Snoop's got a bob, and I've got five. How much have you got?"

Wun Lung turned three shillings out of his pockets.

"Good!" said Bunter. "Snoop can begin, and you next, and I'll finish, as I have the most money."

"Allee light!"

"Ginger pop for me," said Snoop, "and cake."

Mrs. Mimble, at the sight of silver, was all smiles.

The sight of the five-shilling piece in Bunter's fat fingers made even the Owl of the Remove welcome.

Snoop's shilling was soon expended, and then Wun Lung's three passed over the counter, and were duly "blown" in ginger-beer, cake, and tarts.

"This is jolly good ginger-beer!" said Billy Bunter, slipping his five-shilling piece back into his pocket, and blinking at his foaming glass.

"Ripping!" said Snoop.

"Me likee muchee," said Wun Lung, draining his glass. "Me likee mole."

"Same here!"

"Yes, it's good," said Bunter. "Order some more, Wun Lung."

"No havee more money."

"All gone?"

"All gonee."

"Oh, really, how the money goes!" said Bunter, sipping his ginger-beer.

"Never mind; you've got some," said Snoop. "We've blued ours, but there's more left. I'll have some tarts."

"Me havee ginger-beelee and cakes."

"Go it, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter did not seem in a hurry.

He sipped his ginger-beer till it was gone, watched impatiently by the other two juniors, and then he took up his last tart in his fat hand.

"Tarts here, Mrs. Mimble," said Snoop, who was hungry.

"Who is paying?" asked Mrs. Mimble, who knew Snoop.

"Bunter."

"H'm!" said Mrs. Mimble, who knew Bunter, too. "Ahem! Master Bunter?"

"Pay up, Bunter!"

"Payee, Buntree."

The fat junior coughed.

He had been edging towards the door while he was eating the last tart, and now the tart was all gone.

He blinked dubiously at the others.

"You—you see," he remarked, "I—I forgot I—I have a debt of honour to pay with this—this five bob. I'll stand treat to you fellows another time. I—"

"What!"

"See you later!" exclaimed Bunter hurriedly, and he dodged out of the tuckshop.

Snoop and Wun Lung stared at one another blankly for a moment.

"Spooofed!" gasped Snoop.

"Buntree tiefee!"

"After him!" yelled Snoop. "He's jolly well going to fork out!"

"Allee lightee!"

They ran out of the tuckshop.

Billy Bunter had disappeared.

He had felt that it was not prudent to remain near the two juniors he had despoiled while the five shillings was in his possession, at any rate, and he had fled at top speed.

Snoop and Wun Lung searched the Close for him, and finally they heard his voice in the gymnasium.

Bunter was not alone.

He was talking to a crowd of Second Form fags as the searchers came in with wrathful looks.

"You see, I'm in funds," Bunter was explaining. "My idea is for some other fellows to make up as much as I have and have a decent feed. The Remove chaps won't do it, but if you kids like—"

"Good idea!" said Nugent minor. "You've got five bob, I've got one."

"I've got two," said Gatty.

"Ninencee here," said Tubb.

"You young burglar!" roared Snoop, rushing in. "Come and stand—"

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"You worm—you toad—"

"You lotten lascal—"

"I say, you fellows, kick those rotters out!" said Bunter. "I—"

The Second Form fags wanted no more.

They promptly kicked Snoop and Wun Lung out.

They might have hesitated to tackle any of

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the athletes of the Remove, but Snoop and the little Chinese were not formidable.

The fags swarmed upon them, and they were hurled out of the gym without being even able to make their wrongs known.

"Now, come along to the tuckshop," said Bunter.

"Right you are, Tubby!"

The fags crowded over to the school shop.

Billy Bunter went in with them, the five-shilling piece in his hand.

Nugent minor and Tubb and Gatty laid their cash on the counter and gave their orders, and Mrs. Mimble served them, and Bunter ate and drank faster than any of the others.

But the fags lost little time.

Like most healthy youngsters, they could always eat.

The cash faded away in next to no time.

Then there was a call on Bunter.

The fat junior was already edging to the door.

If Bunter had been allowed to carry out his schemes he would have roped in feed after feed, and still kept his five-shilling piece intact.

"Now, then, Bunter—"

"Your turn, Fatty!"

"Go it, Owl!"

"Excuse me, you fellows!" said Bunter.

"I—I forgot I—I've got an appointment with a chap, and—"

He scuttled out of the shop.

"Come back!" roared Nugent minor.

"The cad! He's sloping!" ejaculated Tubb.

"Hallo! What's that?"

There was the sound of a struggle outside the door.

"Got him!" roared Snoop.

The fags rushed out. Billy Bunter was struggling wildly in the grasp of Snoop and Wun Lung.

"Gottee the lottel!" gasped Wun Lung.

"Hullay!"

"Here he is!" grinned Snoop. "Here's the swindler!"

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"He's bilked us, and was going to bilk you!" said Snoop, with a chuckle. "So we waited for him. Collar him!"

"Ow! Leggo! I've dropped my five-shilling piece! Yow! If you make my glasses fall off—"

"Hallo! Look out!"

The coin that had dropped from Bunter had rolled upon a drain grating near the little shop.

As Tubb uttered the exclamation of warning it rolled over one of the bars, and slipped down.

The fat junior gave a roar.

"Ow! You chumps! Yow! My money! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop.

"You—you beast—Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's gone!"

"Selvee the lottel lightee! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the fags roared.

Billy Bunter hung over the grating with feelings too deep for words.

The five-shilling piece was gone—for good. From all his victims he had certainly not had as much as three or four shillingsworth of plunder.

Too late it dawned upon the fat junior that honesty was the best policy.

Bunter's face was a study. The fags roared with laughter.

"Look here, Snoop, you owe me five bob—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You owe me five bob, Wun Lung—"

"He, he, he!"

"Beasts!" growled Bunter. "Catch me standing treat again to any of you! This is what I get for being generous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter went his way disconsolately.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Missing Impots.

"BUNTER!"

"Y-ees!" said the fat junior, as he came into Study No. 1, and he blinked rather nervously at Frank Nugent, who was looking warm and dusty and irritable.

"Have you seen my impot?"

"Your—your what?"

"I left my lines on the table, and some ass has shoved them out of sight somewhere," exclaimed Nugent. "Have you hidden them for a lark, you fat duffer?"

"Oh, really, Nugent, as if I should do such a thing!"

"Well, they're jolly well gone," said

Nugent. "I suppose you haven't eaten them? You eat everything that's left about in the study."

"Oh, really—"

"It's a very odd thing," said Wharton.

"Some other fellow must have been in and taken them. Some chap who had lines to do, perhaps—he may have passed off yours on the beaks."

Billy Bunter started.

Wharton's hand dropped upon his shoulder, and the fat junior blinked at him in alarm.

Harry looked steadily at Bunter.

"Do you know anything about it, Billy?"

"About w-w-what, Wharton?"

"Whether anybody has taken Nugent's lines to give in as his own."

"Oh, really—"

"Come to the point, you fat young bounder! Have you had an impot to do to-day?"

"No," said Bunter. "Really—"

"Have you taken in Nugent's lines to Mr. Quelch?"

"Certainly not! I hope you don't suspect that I would do such a thing?" said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"There are precious few mean things you wouldn't do!" said Nugent bluntly. "I can't understand what's become of the lines."

"It's very curious."

"I say, you fellows, perhaps—perhaps the rats have eaten them," said Bunter, making a brilliant suggestion. "You know we were overrun by rats here once—"

"Ass!"

"Oh, really—"

"Cheese it!"

The chums of the Remove left the study to make a further inquiry about the missing lines.

But they could get no news of them.

It was pretty certain to Nugent's mind that someone had seen them on the study table and taken possession of them, having lines to do.

It was not uncommon for one fellow to write another fellow's impots, for they were seldom read, and one sprawling hand was very like another, anyway.

But to have one's imposition raided in this way was too bad; and Nugent was very "wrathy."

But his wrath found no object to wreak itself upon.

Nobody appeared to have seen anything of the lines.

Shortly before bedtime Mr. Quelch spoke to Nugent on the subject.

"I have not seen your lines, Nugent," he remarked.

"I—I'm sorry, sir; they're gone."

"Gone!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir. I wrote them out, honour bright—I—I mean on my word, sir—and left them on my study table when I buzzed down to the football, and when I came in they were gone. I think they must have been hidden for a lark—a—a joke, sir."

"Ahem! I hope they will be found," said Mr. Quelch. "However, I take your word, Nugent, and the matter can rest there."

"Thank you, sir!" said Frank gratefully.

"Quelch is a brick," he said, when they went up to the dormitory. "Some masters would have suspected that it was a yarn to get out of doing the lines. Quelch knows a chap who wouldn't lie."

"You've got off jolly cheap, though," said Skinner. "You won't have to do the lines again. I've got an impot from little Charpentier doubled because I didn't do it. Have you sent in your lines, Smyth?"

Vernon-Smith did not seem to hear the question.

Skinner glanced at the Bounder, who was undressing.

"Did you take your lines in to Quelch?" he asked.

"Yes," said the Bounder, no longer able to avoid a reply.

"Blessed if I know when you did them, then," said Stott. "You were out of doors all the afternoon, and—"

"Well, I've taken them in."

Nugent glanced quickly at the Bounder. The thought occurred to him that Vernon-Smith might have "lifted" his lines.

But he did not care to ask the direct question, without a shadow of evidence to go upon, and the matter was suffered to drop.

The next morning Nugent had another look for his lines, but they were not to be found, and he gave the search up as hopeless.

During morning school Bulstrode was careless, and earned an imposition of fifty lines of Virgil; and Vernon-Smith, for a fit of sulkiness, was awarded the same.

Bulstrode did not seem much concerned as he came out of the class-room after they

were dismissed, though he had been ordered to take in the lines before afternoon school.

"Coming down to the river, Skinner?" he asked.

"Yes; but what about your lines?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, that's all right; I've got some in hand," said Bulstrode, with a grin. "I did fifty of the 'Æneid' for Capper, a week or more ago, when he was taking us, and he forgot to ask for them. They'll do for Quelch."

"Ha, ha! How good!"

"Jolly good!" murmured Billy Bunter, blinking after the two juniors as they went out into the Close. "Jolly good! He, he, he!"

And Bulstrode went down to the river, careless of the impot.

It was after dinner, and near time for afternoon school, when he went into his study for the lines.

Five minutes later he was raging down the Remove passage.

"Who's got my lines?"

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

"My lines!"

"What's the matter with your lines? Haven't they fallen in pleasant places?"

"Don't be funny! Somebody's collared my impot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode glared.

"I had fifty lines all ready for Quelch!" he howled. "Now they're gone. Some blessed thief has taken them!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, that's a rotten thing to say!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Well, they're gone."

"Perhaps the rats have eaten them."

Bulstrode gave Bunter a shove that sent him staggering against the wall, and interrupted his brilliant suggestion.

He glared into study after study in search of his lines; but very few fellows were indoors, and certainly the impot was not to be seen.

Before he could carry his inquiries very far the bell went for afternoon classes, and he had to fall in with the Remove for the Form-room.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him as he passed the desk without stopping.

"Bulstrode!"

"Yes, sir?" said Bulstrode, his heart sinking.

"I gave you an imposition, I think."

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"If you please, sir, it's—it's gone."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"What! Gone!"

"Yes, sir."

"This is very singular," said the Remove-master, who did not trust Bulstrode as he trusted Frank Nugent. "Very singular indeed, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir, isn't it?" said Bulstrode innocently.

"You had written out the task, Bulstrode?"

"Yes, sir."

"And left it—"

"In my desk, sir."

"And it has been taken?"

"Taken clean away, sir."

"I hope your statement is correct, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch dubiously. "The same thing happened to Nugent yesterday."

"You did not doubt his word, sir," said Bulstrode, with a touch of insolence in his manner.

"No, Bulstrode; Nugent is a boy whose word I can rely upon," said the Form-master, with a little emphasis. "However, I accept your assurance. But I must say here that this explanation will not be accepted on another occasion. A boy who has an imposition to do must take care of it, and bring it to me at the appointed time, or he will be punished in the usual way. And as there seems to be a boy in the Remove with a fancy for playing jokes of this description, I should recommend you to make some effort to find him out."

"Yes, sir."

And Bulstrode went to his place, very much relieved at not being questioned as to whether he had written out the imposition that day; for Bulstrode would not have told a lie direct.

But Mr. Quelch had not thought of asking that, and he was safe.

But during afternoon lessons the minds of the Remove were very much exercised on that matter—who had taken the lines?

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The First Eleven.

"**W**HERE are you fellows off to?" asked Billy Bunter, as Harry Wharton & Co. came out after lessons were over that afternoon.

"Footer-ground," said Wharton briefly.

"I say, ain't you dry?" asked Bunter.

"What do you say to some ginger-pop?"

"Try the fountain," said Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly.

"I'm not asking you to stand treat!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to pay for the ginger-pop."

"Rats!"

"I'm in funds."

"Ha, ha, ha! So the postal-order's come?"

"Well, no, but—"

"New fellow in the Remove?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Eh? Not that I know of."

"Then you haven't been able to borrow any money."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm a chap with resources," said Bunter.

And the juniors strode on at a pace the fat Removeite found it impossible to equal and Bunter stopped, gasping for breath, and blinking indignantly.

He stood blinking after them for a few moments, and then bore down upon the tuckshop, and the half-crown was soon going at express speed in ginger-beer and tarts and buns.

Wharton frowned thoughtfully as he went on with his chums to the football ground.

He could not help feeling a little worried about Bunter.

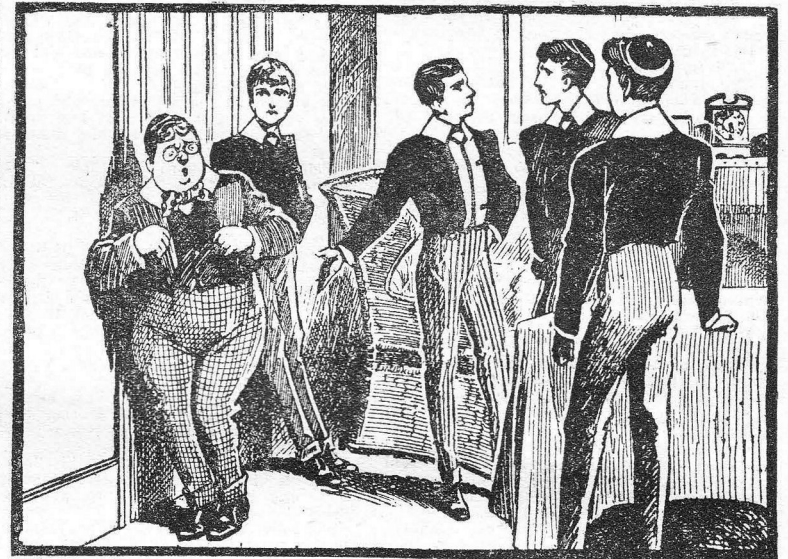
But it was certain that the Owl of the Remove would not give him his confidence, and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

The juniors stopped on the senior ground. There was a practice of the First Eleven on, and they wanted to watch it.

Afterwards they intended to put in a little while at practice themselves, but, after the hard match of the preceding day, they were not inclined to push it too hard.

Besides, there were valuable points to be picked up by watching the play of the Fifth and Sixth.

The First Eleven were playing Topham



BILLY BUNTER BROUGHT TO BOOK!

"A fellow of my brains need never be without money. Look here!"

He held up a half-crown between his fat finger and thumb.

The chums of the Remove stopped in sheer amazement.

Bunter was in funds again.

Yesterday he had five shillings, and to-day there was half-a-crown.

They knew he had only a shilling a week pocket-money, and that he always spent it the moment he received it.

"Where did you get that, Billy?" asked Wharton sharply.

Bunter blinked mysteriously.

"Oh, I've got resources," he said. "A fellow of my brains—"

"Oh, cheese it! Have you been looting?"

"Oh, really—"

"Look here, Billy, I can't help thinking you're getting yourself into trouble," said Harry quietly. "Where did you get that money? Tell me."

"A fellow—of my brains—"

"Oh, rats!"

Wharton bit his lip and walked away. His comrades went with him, and Bunter hurried after them.

"I say, you fellows, don't you want any ginger-pop?"

"No."

"Oh, really—"

"You're so generous in standing feeds, Billy, too," said Nugent. "We've heard how you treated Snoop and Wun Lung yesterday, and how you tried to treat the Third-Formers, you fat young fraud!"

"Well, you see—"

"Oh, go and take that half-crown back to the fellow it belongs to, and shut up," said Bob Cherry.

Seniors on Saturday afternoon, at Greyfriars, and the match was one of the most important of the season.

Now that their own match with Topham Juniors was over, the Removeites thought more of the senior match, and took a deep interest in it.

"They're a good team," Bob Cherry remarked, in a rather patronising tone. "Wingate's a splendid forward."

Wharton laughed.

"Well, he's jolly good," he remarked. "Courtney's a good man, too. North is jolly good."

"What price Carne?"

"Carne is all right when he chooses," said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "If he keeps off smoking for a day or two before the match—"

"Which he won't do."

"Very likely not. Then he'll get pumped, and his showy play won't be of much use if he can't run."

"Quite true."

"I wonder Wingate plays him," Tom Brown remarked.

"Well, he's a fine back when he likes," Harry Wharton remarked. "If he chooses to keep himself fit, he'll make a good show in the Topham match. And I think he'll have some sense to do it. If he lets the side down, Wingate would never forgive him."

"And he'd lose his cap for the First Eleven."

"Yes—and for good."

The object of these remarks was passing the juniors while they were speaking.

Carne certainly made a good figure in his footballing clothes.

Bully as he undoubtedly was, reckless as

the juniors knew him to be in his ways, blackguardly as some of his amusements were, as they knew only too well, still, it was certain that he could play well, and that he could give a good account of himself in the senior match if he chose.

And he had incentive enough to try. The cap for the First Eleven was the most coveted of distinctions at Greyfriars, and Carne had plenty of conceit, and there had been a new swagger about him ever since Wingate had put him into the First Eleven.

He glanced at the juniors, and his face clouded for a moment.

He knew instinctively that he was the object of their remarks, and he guessed that the remarks were not flattering.

Carne was on the worst of terms with the chums of the Remove.

"What are you young sweeps doing here?" he exclaimed.

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"We've come to see the practice," he said. "Well, you're not wanted. Get out!"

"Hang it all, Carne," broke in Wingate, who overheard the words—"hang it all, let the youngsters alone!"

"Confound the youngsters!" growled Carne.

"Stay where you are, kids," said the Greyfriars captain, with a glance at the juniors.

"Don't move!"

"All right, Wingate."

The juniors had not intended to move unless Wingate told them to.

Carne had no right to order them off the ground.

Carne bit his lip savagely, and did not look in the direction of the juniors again, but he remembered.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked on with interest when the practice commenced.

"Jolly good team," said Bob Cherry presently. "Only one thing wanted to improve it."

"And what's that?" asked Wingate, who was passing at the moment, and happened to hear Bob's remark. "What's wanted, Cherry?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Only a few juniors in the team, Wingate," he replied.

Wingate laughed.

"Cheeky young beggar!" he said, and passed on.

"All the same, I could name a junior or two who could play in the First Eleven," said Bob Cherry, looking round at his grinning companions. "Modesty compels me not to mention one name, but there's Harry—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Wharton, laughing.

"You play as well as Carne does, though, Harry," said Bob Cherry, becoming serious.

"Of course, you're not his size or strength, but you're in better condition, if he happens to have been smoking with Loder and Ionides, and—"

"Cheese it!" murmured Mark Linley, as he saw Carne coming by, with a brow like thunder.

Bob Cherry promptly cheated it; but Carne, who had certainly heard his words, made no remark.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lines Wanted.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were sitting in their study that evening when Ogilvy looked in.

"Any of you chaps been in my study?" he asked.

"No," said Bob, looking round. "What's the trouble?"

"Seen my lines?"

"Your what?"

"Lines!" howled Ogilvy. "L-i-n-e-s—lines!"

"What's the matter with your lines?"

"They're gone!"

"Oh! What sort of lines were they—clothes-lines?" asked Bob humorously.

"Ass!"

"Or ancestral lines?"

"Chump!"

"Or military lines?"

"Don't be an idiot!" roared Ogilvy. "They're my lines I'd done for Quelch, and I've got to take 'em in before bed!"

"Well, take 'em in!"

"They're gone, I tell you!" roared the Scottish junior. "I had written them out, and left them on my study table, and now they're gone!"

"Riches take unto themselves wings and fly away," Nugent remarked. "I suppose it's the same with lines. You remember what Quelch said: 'Keep an eye on your

lines; no excuses accepted at the bar in future; only lines are legal tender."

"Oh, cheese it, you ass!"

"But, I say, this is very curious," said Mark Linley. "Everybody seems to have been missing lines. What's the good of them to the chap who takes them?"

"It must be a lark," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent!" said Bunter. "More likely it's a rat."

"Ass!"

"I think very likely it's a rat. You know how voracious they are, and perhaps they— they like the taste of the ink."

"Bosh!"

"Oh, really—"

Ogilvy came over to the Owl of the Remove and grasped him by the shoulder, and gave him a powerful shake.

"Do you know where those lines are?" he demanded.

"Owl! Yow! Don't shake me, you ass; it disturbs my digestive system, and you may make my glasses fall off, and—"

"Do you know where those lines are?"

"—and if they break you'll have to pay for them!"

"You fat waster!"

"Owl! Yowl! Oh, really—"

"It's all right, Og!" said Tom Brown, laughing. "Bunter hasn't taken them. He's not had any impositions to do, and even Bunter wouldn't take them to eat!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Ogilvy released the fat junior, who put his glasses straight and blinked at him angrily.

The Scottish lad still eyed him dubiously, however.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "What does he mean with his rot about the rats eating them, then? Looks to me as if Bunter knows something about it."

"Oh, really—"

"I can't understand it," said Nugent. "My lines have been taken, too. It looks to me as if someone has been taking our lines to palm off as his own. It would be easy enough, as Quelch never looks at them."

"Then the question is: Who's had any imposts to do lately?" said Tom Brown. "Anybody had one to do to-day, besides Ogilvy?"

"Yes; the Bounder!"

"My hat! Vernon-Smith! Why, he's just the sort of worm to collar another chap's impost!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I know he's been showing up his lines as regular as clockwork lately, too," remarked Bob; "and he never seems to write any, either."

"I'll jolly well speak to the Bounder!" said Ogilvy wrathfully. "If he's got my lines I'll make him disgorge, and put his nose out of shape into the bargain!"

And Ogilvy left the study with a wrathful countenance. Billy Bunter squirmed uneasily in his chair.

"I—I say, Hazeldene, it was rotten to tell Ogilvy that Smithy had his lines!" he said.

Hazeldene stared.

"What do you mean? I don't know whether Smithy has Og's lines or not."

"Well, you've put the idea into his head, and now—"

"By George, I believe Bunter does know something about those missing lines!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Oh, really Brown—"

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

"My hat!"

"Hark!"

There was a sudden uproar in the passage.

There was a yell, a trampling and scuffling of feet, and then Vernon-Smith, the Bounder, came hurtling into the study, gasping and panting.

The cause of the hurrying was Ogilvy, who had a powerful grip upon the Bounder's collar and upon the back of his jacket.

"There he is!" roared Ogilvy.

The juniors sprang to their feet.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Look at him!"

"What—"

"He's got my lines!"

"What!"

"I just caught him taking them in to Quelch!" gasped Ogilvy. "He's got them in his fist still, and I ran him in here to show him up before everybody! The rotter has been collaring our lines all the time, and palming them off as his own!"

"Shut the door!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Hold on!" gasped Bunter, trying to push past Bob Cherry, who was closing the door.

"I—I want to see a chap—"

Bob pushed him back into the study, and closed the door, and put his back against it.

"The chap can wait!" he remarked.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Sit down!"

And Bob Cherry backed up his order with a shove that sent Bunter staggering into the armchair he had just quitted, and Bunter sat down with considerable violence.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, the Line Merchant.

VERNON-SMITH was gasping for breath, and could not find his voice some minutes.

The Scottish junior had not handled him gently.

The sheets of foolscap fluttered from his hand, and Nugent picked them up and placed them on the table.

All the juniors knew Ogilvy's writing, and they had no doubt of the guilt of the Bounder.

Grim looks were cast upon him from all sides.

"You see it's my impost?" said Ogilvy.

"Yes, rather!"

"He was just coming down the passage with it in his hand," said the Scottish junior.

"I asked him where he was going, and he said he was taking his impost to Quelch. I asked him to let me see it, and he did, and there was my own fist staring me in the face!"

"That's curious!" said Wharton.

"How so?"

"I mean, it's curious he should be willing to show you the impost. I suppose he knew you'd know your own writing?"

"Well, I should have made him if he hadn't been willing!" said Ogilvy, with a grin.

"Then I collared him and rushed him in here."

"Let's be fair," said Wharton. "We all know that Smith has been a bounder ever since he came to Greyfriars. But I must say I didn't think he was the kind of chap to steal another fellow's lines. Bunter might do it—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"But I didn't think it of Smith. Let's give him a chance to explain."

"If he can explain having my lines in his hand, and going to take them into Quelch's study as his own, I'm willing to listen," said Ogilvy, with a sniff.

"Go ahead, Smith!" said Harry. "Can you explain?"

"I—I—I—"

"I—I—I!" mimicked Ogilvy. "Of course he can't!"

"Give him a chance!"

"Oh, go ahead with your lies, Smithy, and get 'em over!"

Vernon-Smith glared round.

"I didn't know the lines were Ogilvy's," he said.

"You didn't write them yourself?"

"Of course I didn't!" said Vernon-Smith, with a curl of the lip. "I never do! I don't see the sense of writing out lines when you can get another chap to write them out for you!"

"You don't mean to say that Ogilvy—"

"I tell you I didn't know they were Ogilvy's. I bought them off Bunter, and I supposed that he had written them himself."

"What!"

"Bunter!"

It was a general roar.

"Yes," said the Bounder, with a vicious glance at the Owl of the Remove: "Bunter! I've bought a lot off him lately, and I understood that he had written them, or that they were given to him. He told me so!"

The fat junior rose to his feet.

The looks that were bent upon him from all sides made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered, "you—you know what an awful fibber Smithy is!"

"Did you sell Smith those lines?" asked Wharton sternly.

"Certainly not!"

"You deny it?"

"Of course! I hope you don't think I'd be capable of such a thing?"

"I jolly well do!" said Harry. "Did you sell him Nugent's and Bulstrode's lines?"

"Certainly not, Wharton!"

"He's sold me a lot!" said Vernon-Smith viciously.

"You ought to have known better," said Wharton. "It was a cad's trick, anyway!"

"The seniors do it!"

"Some of them—yes. But—"

"I'd rather pay money than fag over imposts, and I don't see any harm in it!" said Vernon-Smith sullenly.

"You have too much blessed money!" growled Bob Cherry. "You might be a decent chap if you weren't such a blessed newrich!"

"Still, that's not the point now," Mark Linley observed. "The question is, whether Bunter sold the Bunder those lines? I believe he did!"

"Oh, really, Linley—"
"Bunter has been in funds lately," said the Lancashire lad quietly. "He's never explained where the funds came from, either."
"I—I—I—"

"Where have you been getting money from lately, Bunter?"

"You—you see, I—"
"I gave it to him for the lines," said Vernon-Smith. "He told me he wrote them, and that other fellows helped him sometimes."

"Oh, really, Smith—"
"Well, I must say it looks like the truth, though the Bunder says it," Ogilvy remarked. "It was odd his showing me the lines so readily, now I think of it, if he had taken them from my study himself."

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter, alarmed by the looks of the juniors round him. "I—I say, I hope you won't take any notice of a chap like Smith. You know what a rank outsider he is."

"I believe he's speaking the truth," said Wharton. "Now, come to the point, Billy. Did you sell him those lines?"

"No, I didn't."
"Did you take them from Ogilvy's study?"

"Well, you see," stammered Bunter, who generally shirked the lie direct till it was too late, "I—I—"

"You did, then?"
"I—I might have moved them," said Bunter. "I didn't exactly take them. As for selling a fellow's lines, I'd scorn the action."

"You gave them to Vernon-Smith?"
"Well, perhaps—you see—I—"

"You said just now that you didn't?"
"I said I didn't sell them, Wharton. Don't put your own words into my mouth," said Bunter reproachfully. "Play the game, you know."

Wharton glared.
It was rather too much to be told to "play the game" by a fellow like Billy Bunter.

"You fat worm! So you gave them to Vernon-Smith."
"It's a lie!"

"Why, you fat young rotter, you know I did! You've got it about you now, I believe. Look in his pockets!"

"You—you needn't trouble," said Billy Bunter hastily. "I—I've got half-a-crown. Vernon-Smith lent it to me. I should scorn the idea of selling lines for money. It wouldn't be honest, and you chaps know how honest I am."

"We do," said Bob Cherry, with a grin—"we does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I—I gave Smithy the lines as—as a favour, and he lent me the half-crown as—as another favour," said Bunter stammeringly. "I told him plainly that I should put it down to the account. Didn't I tell you so, Smith?"

"I don't know what rot you said," replied Smith. "I know I've paid you for the lines each time you've done any for me, and pretty high, too."
"I put it down to the account, and I shall certainly square up when my postal-order comes. I was sorry to put Ogilvy to any inconvenience—"

"You'll be sorrier shortly," said Ogilvy grimly.

"Oh—oh, really! I—you see, Ogilvy writes such a beautiful hand, I—I thought he ought to—to write some more, you know, and he's such a nice chap that—"

"Can't he turn on the soft sawder a treat?" said Ogilvy. "He's going to get a first-class licking, all the same."
"Oh, really, Ogilvy, I'm sincerely sorry—"

"You can get out, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, opening the door. "I should recommend you to write your own lines in future, and not flash your filthy lucre about so much!" He closed the door behind the scowling Bunder, and pushed back Billy Bunter, who had made an ineffectual attempt to follow Vernon-Smith out. "Now for Bunter!"

"The—the matter's closed now, isn't it?" said Bunter. "I—I've explained, haven't I? Ogilvy has his lines back, and he's got nothing to complain about."

"What about my lines?" said Nugent.
"Well, Mr. Quelch excused you, so that's all right."

"You fat rotter!" said Harry Wharton. "You've disgraced the study enough, I think. Now, you can either go to Mr. Quelch, and confess to him what you've been doing, or you can take a licking here."

"I won't do either, thanks. I—"
"Yes, you jolly well will!"
"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Lay him face downwards on the hearth-rug, and kneel on his shoulders," said Bob Cherry. "I'll handle the ruler."

We draw a veil over the scene of anguish that followed.

Bob Cherry explained all the time that it was for Bunter's good, and that a sharp lesson then might save him from going to prison some day.

But Bunter didn't appear to be able to see it in that light.

However, Bob did his duty nobly; and for the rest of the evening Billy Bunter showed a marked disinclination to sitting down.

Also, he decided that he would have to raise the wind in future by some safer method than setting up as a merchant in lines.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Double Victory.

"HARD lines, Wingate!" Saturday had dawned fine and clear for the match between Greyfriars seniors and Topham.

The Remove were without a match, and they turned out in force to watch the senior match. The ropes were lined with fellows from the Sixth Form down to the Second.

A loud burst of cheering had filled the air as Wingate missed scoring by a matter of inches.

The Greyfriars seniors were at the top of their form.

Wingate led the attack splendidly, feeding his wings judiciously.

But the Topham team did not lack skill. From the goal-kick they surged down the field, and it looked every bit as though they would score, when Came nipped in and cleared with a hefty kick.

"Buck up, Greyfriars!" yelled Bob Cherry. "We're waiting for a goal!"

"A dozen if you like!" added Nugent.
"The more the merrier!" said Harry Wharton.

But the seniors took little notice of the Removites' remarks.

All their attention was devoted to the game.

The Topham fellows were pressing hard once more, and Wingate was compelled to fall back to assist the defence.

The ball was sent into goal, was fisted out again, only to be collared by the Topham forwards once more.

Nearer and nearer to the goal the ball was forced.

A terrific meleec took place almost on the goal-line.

The Removites could barely see what was happening, but a moment later there came a burst of cheering from the Topham supporters behind the goal:

"Goal!"
"Bravo, Johnson!"
"Well done, sir!"

Topham had opened the score.

But as soon as the ball had been kicked off

again the Greyfriars seniors showed that they were determined to equalise.

They carried the ball towards their opponents' goal.

Half-backs were tricked or charged off. The backs put up a tremendous effort to stop the attack, but still the Greyfriars forwards surged ahead.

Courtney was shaping to shoot when he was charged off the ball.

Wingate nipped in, however, and drove the ball true and hard into the goal.

It was an unstoppable shot.
"Goal!"
"Good shot, Wingate!"

The scores were equal now, and remained so until half-time.

The second half commenced at a tremendous pace.

The Topham fellows seemed to be trying to run the Greyfriars seniors off their legs.

Again and again they sent the ball goalwards, without succeeding in adding to their score.

Thirty-five minutes of the second half had gone, and still the score was equal.

"I say, you fellows—"
Harry Wharton looked round, to find Billy Bunter standing at his side.

"Hallo! What the dickens—"
"I say, Wharton," said Bunter. "I think we ought to celebrate this victory, don't you?"

"We haven't won yet, porpoise," said Wharton. "The score's equal, and—"

"But we're bound to win, you know!"
"Plenty of time to lose," said Wharton. "Football's a curious game, and— Hallo! Wingate's got it! Go it, Wingate!"

Wingate had gained possession of the ball, and was streaking for goal for all he was worth.

Yard after yard he covered at top speed, cleverly dodging the Topham defenders.

One half-back he sent to the ground from a resolute charge, another he tricked in a magnificent manner.

And then came the backs.
Wingate did not hesitate a moment.

The right-back attempted to charge him, but with a turn to the right he darted on towards the goal.

The other back was preparing to attack now.

But Wingate did not wait for him. He kicked hard at the ball, and sent it hurtling towards the far corner of the net.

The goalkeeper tried hard to save his charge, but without success.

"Goal!" shouted the Removites.
"Jolly well done, Wingate!"
"Give him a cheer, you fellows!"
"Hurrah!"

Excitement was at fever-pitch, and when a moment later, the final whistle went, the Removites shouted until their voices were hoarse.

"I say, Wharton," said Billy Bunter. "about that feed—"
"Oh, rats!"

"But I say, we ought to have a feed to celebrate the double victory, you know," said Bunter.

"So we ought," said Wharton. "But you needn't worry your head about it."
"Look here—"

"If you want any grub you'd better start in business as a line merchant again," said Wharton. "But all the same, you'll get a jolly good hiding if you do!"

Needless to say, Bunter didn't. He knew what the consequences would be if he did.

A little while later a topping feed took place in Study No. 1 to celebrate the double victory over the Topham fellows. Bunter was not present, which, as Bob Cherry remarked, made the celebration all the more pleasant.

But Bunter had only himself to blame. If he had not started in business as a line merchant all might have been well. But he had, and therefore it was his own fault that he was excluded from the feed in Study No. 1.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Cornered!

TOMMY DODD jumped. Tommy Dodd, the great chief and leader of the Modern juniors at Rookwood, was dismayed.

Tommy Dodd was standing in the end study of the junior passage on the Classical side—that is to say, in the home and headquarters of Jimmy Silver & Co., the deadly Classical rivals of Tommy Dodd.

He had a large camel-hair brush in his hand, loaded with ink, and he was adorning the walls of the study with inscriptions that were quite modern, and not in the least classical.

Upon the looking-glass stood out in bold letters the telling phrase:

"THIS STUDY IS A HOME FOR IDIOTS!"

Upon the wallpaper were daubed such graceful sentences as "Classical chumps!" "Go and eat coke!" "Go and grind Greek!"

Tommy Dodd was surveying his handiwork with great satisfaction.

As the wallpaper had already suffered considerably from fencing-foils, Indian clubs, and ink, the owners of the study were not likely to be equally satisfied with the further mural decorations.

Tommy Dodd had even ventured upon a Greek inscription.

As a Modern fellow, Greek was not included in his studies.

But he knew the alphabet, and he felt that a Greek inscription was exactly the thing for a Classical study.

He executed the following effort with considerable pride:

P A T M

which, being interpreted, meant "Rats!"

Tommy Dodd had not finished yet by any means. Jimmy Silver & Co. were down at the football practice, and Tommy Dodd had found the coast clear.

So long as the ink lasted he meant his artistic efforts to continue.

But suddenly, as we have said, he jumped. There were footsteps in the passage, and the sound of voices.

Tommy Dodd lowered his inky brush and grunted discontentedly. It was the worst of ill-luck.

He had watched those Classical fellows go down to football, and had considered that they were safe for an hour at least.

And now he could hear their voices in the passage.

The Fistical Four were coming to their study, and there was no escape for the raider.

And if they found him there—with those inscriptions on the walls, too—the result was certain to be extremely painful for Tommy Dodd.

He could guess in advance how the rest of the ink would be used.

Tommy Dodd looked round the study wildly. There was a screen in the corner, a present from Lovell's affectionate aunt.

The screen was somewhat damaged—it was curious how things got damaged in the junior studies at Rookwood.

And there was a sprawling inscription on the screen in wet ink:

"J. Silver, A.S.S."

The screen was a little crazy, but by being propped across the corner of the room it could be induced to stand.

At this thrilling moment it was a haven of refuge to Tommy Dodd.

The footsteps had almost reached the study door when the Modern junior made up his mind.

He whipped behind the screen, and drew it as close to him across the corner as he could, holding it by one of the numerous rags and tatters.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 2.

THE KIDNAPPED GUESTS!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Barely was he concealed from sight when the study door was thrown open and the Fistical Four came in.

Jimmy Silver had a letter in his hand which had evidently arrived by the afternoon's post, as it had not yet been opened.

Silver, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby were chatting pleasantly as they came in, but as they crossed the threshold the chat suddenly ceased, and there were four separate and distinct howls of wrath:

"Look at that!"

"My hat!"

"Some Modern cad!"

"Wish we'd caught him!"

Tommy Dodd, behind the screen in the corner, chuckled silently.

It did not seem to occur to the Classics that the raider was still in the study.

They stared and glared at the inky inscriptions on all sides with exclamations of wrath that tickled Tommy Dodd immensely.

"Why the ink's still wet!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The rotter can't have been gone long. If I hadn't stopped to take this beastly letter from the postman we'd have nailed him!"

"The cheeky cad!" howled Raby. "Look at the glass!"

"Look at my screen!" exclaimed Lovell.

Tommy Dodd held his breath.

The Classics were looking at the screen, and there were holes in the screen—many holes.

But the corner was dark, and they did not see the crouching Modern through the tears and rents.

"Must have spotted us coming in and cleared off," said Jimmy Silver. "Lucky we didn't stay longer, or he'd have inked the whole blessed study! We should be still there if that ass Smythe hadn't shifted us. I tell you what, you chaps, I'm fed up with Smythe of the Shell. We want a new junior captain."

"We want to scrag the Modern beast who's done this!" growled Lovell. "If I had him here I'd make him swallow the rest of the ink!"

Tommy Dodd grinned behind the screen.

"Never mind; we'll repaper the study some time," said Jimmy Silver.

"Can't repaper my screen!"

"Well, that screen had seen its best days, anyway. It's never been the same since we trod on it that time we had a four-handed mill. I wonder what's in this letter? How are you fellows off for cash?"

"Very much off—stony!"

"May be something in this for tea," said Jimmy Silver comfortingly. Jimmy Silver always looked on the cheerful side of things.

"Blessed if I know the fist! 'Tain't from home!"

"Well, see if there's a remittance in it," said Raby, as Jimmy Silver regarded the unfamiliar handwriting on the envelope with some surprise. "It's getting near tea-time, and there's nothing in the locker."

Jimmy Silver opened the letter. His chums watched him rather anxiously, even forgetting the damage done to their quarters by the Modern raider.

Money was "tight" in the end study, and tea was a grave question.

There was a general exclamation of delight as a currency note for one pound came into view.

"My hat!" said Lovell. "A quid—a whole quid! Hurrah!"

Jimmy Silver read the letter, and gave a whistle.

"Well, my hat!"

"What's up?" asked Raby.

"Listen, my young friends," said Jimmy Silver—"listen, and I will a tale unfold, as they say in the amateur theatricals. You fellows ever heard of a place called Oakwood, somewhere near Coombe?"

"Yes. It's a big house near the river, about ten miles from here," said Lovell. "I've passed it biking. What about it?"

"Listen, my infants!" Jimmy Silver read out the letter in tones of great satisfaction:

"My dear James,—I have heard from your father that you are now a pupil at Rookwood School. As your school is no great distance from my house, I should be glad if you would call upon me. Come one half-holiday, and bring your friends with you if you wish. I shall be very glad to make your acquaintance. You must have heard your father speak of his old friend,

HENRY BENYON.

"P.S.—Pray accept the enclosed little gift, which you will find useful, unless schoolboys have changed very much since my time. Let me know when to expect you, and I will make some little preparations."

"What a giddy sport!" said Lovell heartily. "Who is he?"

"An odd chap my father knows. I've heard him mention the name," said Jimmy Silver. "He's as rich as Croesus, I believe. Patc likes him, so I dare say he's all right."

"Make some little preparations." That means a feed."

"Hurrah!"

"To-morrow afternoon's a half-holiday," remarked Raby casually. "I've always believed in striking the iron when it's hot."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"There's time to catch the post, and let him know by the morning that we're coming," said Lovell.

"It's a go," said Jimmy Silver, drawing a chair to the table. "I'll write and tell him I'm coming with three friends to-morrow afternoon, and then he'll have time to make his giddy preparations. This comes like corn in Egypt. We'll get off immediately after dinner to-morrow, and bike it."

"Done!"

"I'll get this screen clean while you're doing that," said Lovell. "When you've finished we'll go out and post the letter, and change that note in the tuckshop."

Tommy Dodd suppressed a gasp.

Before he had time to think Lovell had taken hold of the screen, and pulled it out of the corner.

Then he gave a yell.

"My hat!"

Tommy Dodd made a desperate spring across the study for the door.

"Hold him!" shrieked Lovell, as he reeled back from a vigorous shove. "Modern cad! Collar him!"

Tommy Dodd reached the door.

But Newcome's arm curled round his neck, and Raby "tackled low," in the approved Rugger style, and Tommy Dodd came to the floor with a crash, with the two Classical juniors sprawling over him.

"Nailed!" yelled Jimmy Silver, jumping up from the table. "Shut the door! Hold him! Now, you Modern worm, you're going to be executed!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Making the Punishment Fit the Crime.

JIMMY SILVER & Co. gathered round the Modern junior as he sprawled on the ground. Four heavy boots were planted on him to keep him there.

Tommy Dodd blinked up at them with a feeble grin.

The Fistical Four had not had the slightest idea that the raider was still in the study till Lovell moved the screen.

But they were very pleased.

Tommy Dodd was the person at Rookwood they most desired to see just then.

"Caught in the act," said Lovell—"or just after the giddy act!"

"What did you come in for, you thumping duffers?" growled Tommy Dodd. "I'd have had the whole place done in another ten minutes!"

"It won't take us ten minutes to do you," said Jimmy Silver, with a grin. "You

Modern cads have got to learn that you're not allowed in Classical quarters. You seem very fond of mopping ink about. Now you can mop some up yourself."

Jimmy Silver took the inkpot from the table, and the Modern hero eyed him very uneasily.

"I—I say, it—it was only a lark, you know," he murmured.

Silver nodded cheerfully. "And now we're going to have a lark," he said. "We're awfully larkly chaps, aren't we?"

"Awfully!" grinned Lovell. Tommy Dodd made a wriggle towards the door.

The heavy boots grew heavier; he was pinned down to the carpet.

Jimmy Silver emptied the inkpot into a large, shallow basin.

Dodd, who had expected it on his head, watched him curiously.

Jimmy Silver added a quantity of treacle to the ink, and Tommy Dodd's expression grew very serious.

To the mixture Jimmy Silver poured half a bottle of gum.

Tommy Dodd's expression was a study by that time.

But Jimmy Silver was not finished yet. He raked a shovelful of soot from the chimney, and stirred it in the basin with a ruler. Tommy Dodd turned quite pale.

"I—I say, what—what are you going to do with that muck?" he asked feebly.

"You'll see in a minute."

"If you put it over me, I'll—"

"Don't be in a hurry!"

"You horrid Classical worm, if you dare—"

"Get your bats, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, still stirring away industriously at the mixture.

"Bats!" said Raby. "What do you want cricket-bats for? You're jolly well not going to stir that muck with my bat!"

"Tain't for stirring this, you ass! It's for stirring that Modern worm when he's got this over him. He won't be fit to stay in a respectable study. He will have to be persuaded to depart suddenly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classical juniors reached for their bats.

Tommy Dodd made another desperate wriggle. He was jammed down again.

Jimmy Silver, having finished his stirring, laid the ruler down, and took the basin in both hands.

Tommy Dodd's eyes grew wide with apprehension.

But Jimmy Silver paused.

"Can't muck up our carpet with this," he said thoughtfully. "Hold your head over the grate, Doddy."

"I won't!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Now, don't be inconsiderate. You don't want us to muck up our carpet, I suppose? It was a present from Raby's mater."

"Blow your study carpet! Leggo!"

"Move on!" grinned Lovell.

Three pairs of hands yanked the horrified Modern junior to the grate, and his head was held firmly over the fender.

Jimmy Silver grinned, and placed the basin in the grate. Tommy Dodd's head was thrust suddenly into it.

"Yarooooop! Groooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classics released Tommy Dodd, and jumped back.

There had been a terrific splash from the basin as Tommy Dodd's head was shoved in it.

Tommy Dodd sat up as he was released. Only the top of his head had gone in the mixture.

But as he sat up it streamed down his face in inky streams, giving him a zebra-like look that made the Classics howl with laughter.

"Groooooop!" gasped Tommy Dodd, as a streak of the famous mixture found its way into the corner of his mouth. "Yow! You horrid beasts! Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Rotten beastly trick—"

"Any worse than inking a fellow's study all over?" asked Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle. "You can wash that off in time, but we can't wash our walls. I think we're letting you off lightly."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, get out! You're not nice at close quarters."

Tommy Dodd scrambled furiously to his feet.

"You rotters!" he roared. "You—groogh—beasts! I'll jolly well give you some of it!"

He rushed at the Fistical Four. They

were four to one, but they did not wish to come to close quarters with Tommy Dodd in that state.

"Fix bayonets!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

Four cricket-bats were levelled at Tommy Dodd, and he stopped as the nearest one clumped him on the chest.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Lovell threw open the door.

"Travel!" he shouted.

"Get out, you Modern hooligan! Nice state for a fellow to be in a decent study!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver indignantly.

And Tommy Dodd very wisely got out.

Jimmy Silver & Co. roared with laughter until their sides fairly ached.

Tommy Dodd made a rush, anxious to impart some of the mixture to the Fistical Four.

But the cricket-bats drove him back roaring.

And he bolted down the passage.

The outrage upon their quarters was avenged, and they were convinced that Tommy Dodd would stop to think twice, if not three times, before he paid another visit to the end study.

"You howling fatheads!"

"Ha, ha! I mean, it's hard loines, in-toirely, Tommy darlint; it's hard chayze!" said Tommy Doyle. "Come up to the dorm and get a wash. You need it. We'll help you. Faith, you need it, too! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd snorted and started for the Modern dormitory.

The other two Tommies followed him, chuckling.

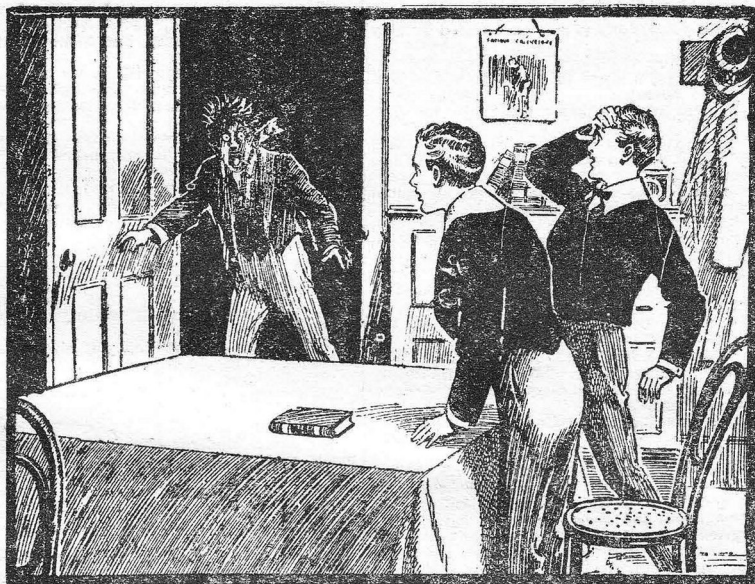
Tommy Dodd had left them behind when he made his raid, because a fellow by himself was more easily able to dodge in and out of the Classical quarters undetected.

Evidently he had not succeeded in dodging out undetected.

Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook began to feel glad that their leader had left them behind.

The humour of the situation had apparently not dawned upon Tommy Dodd yet.

The chuckles of his chums exasperated him. He peeled off his jacket and collar, and plunged his head into a basin of water, and rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed.



CAN IT BE TOMMY DODD?

In great good-humour Jimmy Silver sat down to write that letter to Mr. Benyon, and the four chums sallied out to post it, and to change the currency note at the tuck-shop.

The Fistical Four were in high feather.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Regular Scream.

"WHAT the dickens—"
"What the thunder—"
"Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook of the Fourth, Modern side, uttered those ejaculations simultaneously.

The two Modern juniors were waiting for the return of their leader from the inky expedition into the Modern quarters.

A blackened and fearsome-looking figure came streaking along the passage from the Classical side, and they jumped.

Was this Tommy Dodd?

"Groo!" gasped the fearsome object.

"Ow!"

"My hat!"

"Sure, ye look a sight!" howled Tommy Doyle. "What's the matter?"

"Yoop! I'm smothered! I'm nearly chook-chook-choked!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"The beasts caught me—yoop!—and inked me—yowp!—and sooted me—yah!—and treaded me—groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you chumps?" roared Tommy Dodd, with an inky and sooty glare. "Is there anything funny in it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No; of course not! Ho, ho, ho! You look queer, that's all! Ha, ha, ha!"

The water was turned into almost ink, and it had to be changed at least half a dozen times at least before Tommy Dodd made the last impression upon his anointed head.

His face grew crimson with his efforts. Doyle and Cook regarded him with grinning faces, though they tried to look sympathetic, but they could not help thinking that it was funny.

Tommy Dodd grasped a towel at last, and began to towel his head, which was aching with the energy he had expended upon it.

He glared at his chums through the whisking of the towel, and they tried to look grave.

But Tommy Dodd's crimson face and up-standing hair, and a patch of inky gum still adhering to his nose, proved too much for their gravity, and they roared.

"You chortling chumps—" roared Tommy Dodd indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd's patience was exhausted—the little he had left.

He seized a bolster and drove his hilarious chums yelling from the dormitory.

It was nearly half an hour later when he came down to the study to tea.

He was still red with exertion, and looking very ruffled.

Doyle and Cook had tea ready, and there was an enticing smell of rashers and toast in the study.

They tried to look gravely sympathetic, but Tommy Dodd detected the smiles lurking round the corners of their mouths.

"Ripping joke, ain't it?" he said sarcastically. "Awfully amusing to be done brown by those Classical rotters—what!"

"Well, you did look funny, you know!" murmured Cook, his face breaking into a grin again at the recollection.

"Oh, rats!"
The chums of the Fourth proceeded with their tea in grim silence.

Tommy Dodd was evidently not coming round yet.

It was an undoubted fact that since Jimmy Silver's arrival at Rookwood the Classical juniors had more than held their own in the incessant warfare between the two sides of the school, much to Tommy Dodd's annoyance.

So Tommy Dodd frowned darkly and thoughtfully.

His chums went on with their tea, waiting for him to come round. As a rule, Tommy Dodd was never out of humour long.

Suddenly Tommy Dodd's extremely serious face melted. The clouds departed, and he grinned—and the grin was followed by a chuckle, and the chuckle developed into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the row?" asked Tommy Cook, somewhat perplexed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd in ecstasy. "What a thumping wheeze!"

"Eh? What's the wheeze?"

"Are you fellows game?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Eh? For what?"

"He doesn't know Silver—"

"Who doesn't?"

"So he wouldn't know us."

"Eh?"

"It might be a bit risky, but there would be a feed, and to pull the legs of those Classical bouncers, what a thumping jape!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Of course, we should have to shove them somewhere."

"What the dickens—"

"We could get Towle and Lacy and Webb to help—that's all right—and collar their bikes—see?"

"Blessed if I see!" said Tommy Cook, staring open-mouthed at his study-leader. "If you're not right off your silly rocker, tell us what you're talking about."

"Haven't I told you? Are you game?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Why, it's the wheeze of the season—the old chap would never know the difference—"

"What old chap?" yelled Cook.

"You see—ha, ha!—to-morrow's a half-holiday—"

"Is that what you're chuckling about?"

"No, ass! You see, when those Classic cads came in I dodged behind their ragged screen, and hid there for a bit before they howled me out. That ass Silver read out a letter he'd just had. Of course, I couldn't help hearing it as I was only six feet away from the blessed burler. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "You see, a friend of his father has written to him—old chap named Benyon, who lives at Oakwood—you know that big place about ten miles off. Well, now that James has come to Rookwood, the dear old gent wants to make his acquaintance."

"Well," demanded Tommy Dodd's mystified chums together, "what the dickens does it matter to us?"

"Don't you see? He's never seen dear James—ha, ha!—and dear James is to go and take a few friends. He's writing to him to say that he's coming to-morrow afternoon with a few friends. Don't you see?"

"Blessed if I do!"

"Oh, you owl! You bat! Don't you catch on? The dear old gent has never seen dear little James—he said plainly he wanted to make his acquaintance. There's going to be a stunning feed for dear James. They're going on their bikes after dinner—they said so. Well, suppose a party of chaps from the Modern side met them on the road—"

"Well?"

"And bundled them into somewhere and fastened them up—"

"Eh?"

"And borrowed their bikes—"

"What!"

"And went on to Oakwood, and introduced themselves as James & Co."

"My only hat!"

"And scoffed the feed, and had a high old time, while James & Co, were cooling their heels in Snooks' barn—"

Doyle and Cook stared blankly at Tommy Dodd. Then, as the fulness of that howling joke burst upon their minds, they uttered a yell of delight. They rushed at Tommy Dodd and hugged him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, gorgeous! Ha, ha, ha!"

Study No. 5 rang with laughter.

It was quite a little time before the three Tommies could recover sufficient gravity to discuss their plans soberly, and arrange the details of that stunning scheme which was to cover the Classical enemy with confusion, and cause the Fistical Four to hide their diminished heads.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fairly Dished!

"HALT!"

The Fistical Four jammed on their brakes and jumped off, as they were challenged.

They were on their way to Oakwood, with no time to lose, and, having turned into a quiet, shady lane, they had commenced to scorch.

It was a long lane, with many turns and tall trees on either side. The only building in sight was an old barn—but there was something else in sight.

As the Classical cyclists came level with the old barn seven figures rushed out into the road ahead of them.

The Fistical Four recognised the Modern juniors, and they saw, too, that Tommy Dodd & Co. were holding a rope across the road.

They jammed on their brakes.

"Halt!" sang out Tommy Dodd again.

The Classical juniors had to jump off. There was no passing that obstruction. They bestowed wrathful glares upon the Moderns.

"What are you up to, you silly asses?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Collar them!"

"Why—what—"

"Hands off!"

"Yow-ow!"

The seven Moderns closed in on the Classics with a rush. The four had not been expecting that. But they were not called the Fistical Four for nothing.

The bikes went whirling away, and the chums of the Fourth put up a tremendous fight.

For several minutes the road seemed to be filled with whirling and crashing bikes, flying arms and legs, and clouds of dust.

But the odds were too great.

Great fighting-men as the Fistical Four undoubtedly were, they had to deal with seven of the best men on the Modern side.

And it was too large an order.

Gasping and panting, and still resisting, they were dragged through the hedge into the field.

The rope was knotted round their wrists in turn, till they were tied together in a bunch.

The Fistical Four were rushed into the barn, and then their bikes were rushed in after them by Towle and Lacy.

Tommy Dodd ascended the ladder that led to the loft over the barn, and pushed up the heavy trapdoor.

The prisoners were as astonished as they were wrathful. Why the Moderns had collared them in this way was a mystery.

"Look here," roared Jimmy Silver, "this has gone far enough!"

"You've gone far enough, you mean!" chuckled Tommy Cook. "This is where you take a five-bar rest."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bundle 'em up here!" called out Tommy Dodd from the ladder.

"Chuck it, you silly asses!" shouted Silver.

"We're going on a visit. The old gent will be expecting us."

Jimmy Silver could not say why that statement should make the Modern juniors scream with laughter. But it did! They simply yelled.

"They're off their silly rockers!" said Lovell, in wonder. "What is there funny about us going on a visit?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Mr. Benyon will be disappointed if we don't get there," said Jimmy Silver; "so chuck it, Dodd, and don't be a cad!"

"That's all right," said Tommy Dodd. "We'll see that Mr. Benyon isn't disappointed. Won't we, chaps?"

"You bet!" chuckled the Moderns.

"I tell you he's expecting us!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"And I tell you it's all right. Look here, you're going to Oakwood for a stunning feed and a high old time—what!"

"Yes, you worm!"

"And Mr. Benyon don't know you by sight?"

"Of course he doesn't, as I've never met him, ass!"

"Then it's as right as rain. Mr. Benyon won't be disappointed. You were going to take three friends. I suppose you could take six?"

"Eh? I'm not going to take you Modern cads, if that's what you mean."

"Then you can't blame us if we don't take you?"

"What?"

"You see, we're going."

"Why, you—"

"I shall introduce myself as James—dear James—and these chaps as my little pals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—"

utterly taken aback. "You spooning villain! You—you burglar! You wouldn't dare!"

"We'll call for you coming back," said Tommy Dodd, unheeding. "I'll see if I can bring you a bit of cake in my pocket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotter!" howled Raby. "Let us go! My hat! I'll slaughter you! I'll—"

"This way with those Classical worms!" said Tommy Dodd. "My hat! How they wriggle! Up the ladder with them!"

The four Classics struggled furiously. But with their hands tied together in a bunch, they had no chance at all.

Tommy Dodd ascended the ladder first, taking the loose end of the rope, and pulled.

Underneath, six Moderns bunked them up.

It was not an easy task getting the struggling, kicking Classics up the ladder into the loft.

But the Modern heroes accomplished it after all. They all arrived in the loft in a somewhat flushed and breathless condition.

Tommy Dodd fastened the loose end of the rope to a beam across the loft.

The four Classics were totally helpless. They could do nothing but glare and make remarks to the Moderns, as the latter descended from the loft.

But to glares and remarks the Moderns were quite impervious.

Tommy Dodd was the last to descend. He kissed his hand to the Fistical Four, and closed the heavy trap, and disappeared.

Jimmy Silver & Co. heard the chuckling juniors clearing out of the barn. Then there was silence.

The captured Classics looked at one another with deep feelings.

They were shut up in the loft for the afternoon, and Tommy Dodd & Co. were speeding off to Oakwood in their places, and in their names, to enjoy their entertainment and to devour their feed, and afterwards to tell the story to all Rookwood amid howls of laughter.

"Well, my hat!" said Lovell, at last. "Dished and diddled!" groaned Newcome. Jimmy Silver did not speak; his feelings were too deep for words.

But Jimmy Silver was not beaten yet, as Tommy Dodd & Co. were to learn in the very near future.

THE END.

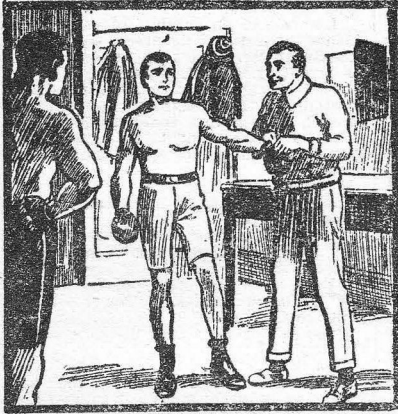
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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Levison Has an Idea.

TOM MERRY was wearing a rather thoughtful look. He was thinking of two visitors who were to arrive at St. Jim's that afternoon.

These two visitors were Mr. Curll, the actor, and Tiny Tim, the bantam boxer.

Both these gentlemen were performing at the Wayland Empire, where Tom Merry & Co. had met them.

The Bantam had been of great service to Tom Merry, and the juniors had asked him to visit St. Jim's.

The invitation had been extended to Mr. Curll.

Unfortunately, Mr. Curll had one great weakness—a liking for strong drink.

And Tom Merry was now thinking about that particular weakness.

If Mr. Curll should indulge in any of "the same," as he called his little stimulants, on the way to St. Jim's, it might lead to trouble.

At St. Jim's, of course, there would be no intoxicants of any sort, and Mr. Curll would have nothing stronger to drink than tea or ginger-beer.

But Tom Merry could not help feeling anxious as to the state Mr. Curll might be in when he arrived.

After morning lessons Tom Merry & Co. prepared for the reception of their visitors.

Funds, fortunately, being in a healthy state, considerable preparations were made for a really stunning "brew" in the study, and Figgins & Co. of the New House were asked to the feast—an invitation they accepted with alacrity, especially Fatty Wynn.

"I twust poor old Curll will be sobah when he awvives," said Arthur Augustus, who had been thinking over that matter as well as Tom Merry. "Of course, it's wotten bad form to find fault with a guest, but it would attract attention if he started doin' a song and dance in the quad, for instance."

"I should say so!" grinned Blake. "If he's squiffy we'll duck his head in the fountain and bring him round."

"He might object to such a pwoceedin', deah boy. I twust, howevah, he will have too much good sense to be squiffy. And, of course, there will be nothin' in the nature of stwong dwink heah, though, undah othah cires, pewwaps it would be up to us to provide him with the kind of wofweshment he pwefers. But it would be imposh heah."

"Go hon!" said Digby. "We could borrow a bottle of gin from Taggles, if you really want to do the right thing by Curll."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Shurrup!" said Blake. "There's Levison listening with all his ears!"

"Levison, I wogard it as wotten to pay attention to conversations not intended for your eahs!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"So you're expecting a squiffy visitor, are you?" he said. "Good! Is that Curll your speaking of the Curll from the Wayland Empire?"

"Yaas, wathah! A chap who has been a great tenah," said D'Arcy. "Now he is only—"

"A fiver," said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I've seen the chap in Wayland," said Levison. "He drinks like a fish. I've seen him recling home tipsy in broad daylight. Ripping kind of a friend for a St. Jim's chap, especially such whitewashed angels as you chaps! Not that I was ever taken in. I know you are only spoofing—"

SCHOOLBOY AND GENTLEMAN BOXER!

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

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Jack Blake introduced his boot into the discussion at this point, and Levison gave a howl and departed.

"It would have been wisah not to let Levison know anythin' about it, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head.

"Well, you did it, you ass!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let's go down to the gates and wait for them," said Tom Merry. "Then, if Curll has been looking on the wine when it is red, we can take him for a little walk before he comes in."

Tom Merry & Co. strolled down to the gates, gathering up Figgins & Co. on the way. The New House juniors were equally interested in the Bantam, if not in Mr. Curll.

Several other fellows, too, who learned that Tiny Tim was coming, were greatly interested.

They had all heard of his boxing turn at Wayland Empire, and there were few of the St. Jim's fellows who were not interested in the manly art of self-defence.

Levison of the Fourth stared after the chums with a peculiar gleam in his eyes.

He burst into a sudden chuckle, and walked away, looking for Mellish of the Shell. He found Mellish in the quadrangle.

"Well, what are you grinning at?" was Mellish's query.

"I've got a little joke on," said Levison, with a chuckle. "Tom Merry and that lot are expecting a visitor. Whom do you think?"

"Blessed if I know or care!" said Mellish.

"It's Curll, the chap who sings at the Wayland Empire."

"Oh!"

"I've got a ripping scheme on. That chap Curll is a tipsy soaker, and the chaps are in a worried frame of mind lest he should get squiffy here and make a scene."

Mellish laughed.

"My hat! That would be funny!"

"Chip in and help me, then, and we'll manage it," said Levison. "They're going to give him ginger-beer to drink. You can guess how an old toper will like that. You know Taggles keeps a bottle of whisky in his lodge?"

"More than one, I believe," said Mellish.

"Well, if we could raid it—"

Percy Mellish chuckled gleefully.

"It's a jolly good wheeze!" he said.

"You'll help?" said Levison eagerly. "I'll get Taggles away from his lodge, and you can cut in and—"

"No jolly fear!" said Mellish promptly. "Suppose Taggles caught me there?"

"Oh, he wouldn't! I'd keep him away. There's no risk."

"Then I'll tell you what," said Mellish. "I'll get Taggles away, and you can cut in and get the stuff."

"Ahen! You see—"

"I see that you want me to pull the chest-nuts out of the fire, and I can see that I'm jolly well not going to!" grinned Mellish. "I'll do what I've said."

"Oh, all right, then!" said Levison ungraciously. "Go to Taggles with some yarn—tell him Herries' bulldog is loose in the Head's garden—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the two cads of the Fourth were elaborating their scheme to take advantage of Mr. Curll's unfortunate weakness Tom Merry & Co. were waiting at the gates for their visitors, in blissful ignorance of Levison's scheme.

They had not very long to wait.

Two figures came in sight in the lane, and they recognised the extremely loud check of the Bantam's attire, and the gorgeous waist-

coat and somewhat battered silk hat of Mr. Curll.

Much to their relief, Mr. Curll was walking quite straight, and was evidently not under the influence of liquor. Probably the Bantam had seen to that.

And the juniors greeted their visitors most heartily, and marched them in at the gates of St. Jim's.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. With the Gloves On.

QUITE a crowd of fellows gathered in the little tuckshop kept by Dame Taggles, where Tom Merry & Co. had taken their guests for liquid refreshment in the shape of ginger-beer and lemonade after their walk.

Mr. Curll was decidedly affable, and he told stories cheerfully of his early triumphs in the great days of the famous Karl Tullip Company.

But the Bantam was a hero, and it was about the Bantam that most of the fellows gathered.

Tiny Tim was a good-natured fellow, and so brimming with health and fitness that he could not be anything else but good-tempered.

He rose at once to the suggestion that he should put the gloves on in the gym and give the fellows a little exhibition of what boxing was really like.

And they adjourned to the gymnasium in great spirits.

"Who's goin' to 'ave the mittens on with me?" the Bantam asked, with a grin. "I'll promise not to 'it 'im 'ard."

"Pewwaps I had bettah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It will wequiah a weally good boxer to stand up against Mr. Tim at all."

"Yes, Gussy's the man," grinned Figgins.

"I should like to try the gloves on with you, Bantam," said Tom Merry, laughing; "but we'll give Gussy first show."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a D'Arcy's place to lead," explained Blake. "Gussy can show us the quickest way to the floor."

"Weally, Blake—"

The "mittens" were produced, and Tiny Tim stripped off his coat and pushed back his sleeves.

The splendid development of his arms called forth glances of admiration from the juniors.

Arthur Augustus handed his elegant jacket into Blake's care, and confided his eyeglass to Digby. Then he donned the gloves and stepped up to face Tiny Tim.

The boxer handed him very gently.

Arthur Augustus, elegant youth as he was, was a very good boxer, but he found that he could not touch the professional at all.

Tiny Tim treated him to a succession of gentle raps on the chest, the nose, the chin, and the forehead, and Arthur Augustus' counters were always in vain.

In five minutes the swell of St. Jim's was in a breathless state, and he had not succeeded in touching the smiling face of the boxer.

The juniors were laughing.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy at last. "I'm awfraid you're wathah too much for me, Mr. Bantam!"

"Extraordinary!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus peeled off the gloves with a shake of the head.

"I should like to see old Kildare twy, if he

weren't playin' footah," he remarked. "I'm afraid it's no good any chap here twyin'. I can't do anythin' myself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're not fed up, I'd like to try you for a round or two, Mr. Bantam," said Tom Merry.

"I could keep this on for bowlers, Master Merry," said the boxer. "It's only a gentle exercise to me, you know."

"Good!"

Tom Merry stripped off his jacket and waistcoat and tied his braces round his waist, and faced the boxer with the gloves on.

Tiny Tim gave him an approving look. "You shape werry well, Master Merry," he said. "I bet you're going to give me more trouble than Master D'Arcy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll try," he said.

The juniors gathered round with more eagerness now.

They knew how fit the captain of the Shell was, and what skill he had attained in the boxer's art.

And as Tom Merry led off it was clear that the boxer's judgment was correct, and that he was going to give the Bantam more trouble than the others.

Tap, tap!

It was a postman's knock on the Bantam's nose, and there was a yell from the crowd: "Well hit, Tommy!"

Tiny Tim's look became more earnest.

He put forth more strength and more skill, and Tom Merry had all his work cut out to hold his own.

But he held it!

The surprise in the Bantam's face intensified, and he exerted himself more and more.

But he did not succeed in penetrating the junior's guard; and when at last he did hit harder than he had intended, Tom Merry went down with a bump.

"Oh!" gasped the Bantam. "I didn't mean that, kid! 'Ope you're not 'urt!"

Tom Merry was on his feet in a twinkling. "Right as rain!" he said cheerily.

"You're a good plucked 'un, anyway," said the Bantam admiringly. "Kid, you was born to go into the ring. When you're my age you'll be able to knock me out of the ring, I tell you. Blessed if I don't half think you could do it now!" He paused.

"You're good stuff, kid, and you can box. We'll 'ave this thing reg'lar. Will one of you young gents keep time? Two-minute rounds and one-minute rests—that's the same as my turn with the Limehouse Slogger."

"Hear, hear!"

Cutts of the Fifth took out his watch to keep time. The boxing match was growing to be of more interest now. It was plain that in Tom Merry of the Shell the Bantam recognised a foeman worthy of his steel.

"You don't mind a 'ard knock or two?" asked Tiny Tim, rather doubtfully.

"No—'ad you don't?"

"I've 'ad enough to get used to 'em," said the Bantam, with a chuckle. "But I'm bound to knock you out, you know, 'being professional."

"Time!" said Cutts.

Tom Merry stood out the round splendidly. He received several somewhat severe taps, now that the Bantam was boxing in real earnest.

But he gave as much as he received. The Bantam did not mind the knocks, and at the end of the round he expressed his admiration forcibly.

"You was born a boxer," he said. "Sure you don't mind if I 'urt you?"

"Quite sure!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Time!"

The Bantam was fighting hard now. He was hitting out as he was accustomed to hit out in his contests with the Slogger on the stage at the Wayland Empire.

Tom Merry received a good deal of punishment, which would have been terrible if the gloves had not been worn.

As it was, it was severe; but Tom Merry had told the truth when he said that he did not mind getting hurt.

He stood up gamely to the Bantam. Round followed round, and the professional boxer had not been able to wear down his youthful antagonist.

In the fifth round came the surprise of the Bantam's life.

Bump!

There was a roar:

"Bantam's down! Hurrah!"

There was no doubt about it: the Bantam was down. He sat and blinked at Tom Merry, who smiled breathlessly.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 9.

"Well, my 'at!" said the Bantam in amazement. "My honly 'at!"

He jumped up nimbly enough.

"You're a young scorcher," he said. "Do you know, you could beat the Slogger, you could! He couldn't stand agin you!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I means what I says!" persisted the Bantam. "You would be a match for the Slogger, and you could take my place in the show to-night quite easy. But I don't think you're quite a match for me; by gum, I 'ope not!"

And so it proved.

Tom Merry lived through two more rounds, and then he had to confess that he was "done."

The Bantam was breathing hard as he peeled off the gloves.

"My heye!" he said. "You've stood up for seven rounds agin me, young gentleman—seven rounds agin Tiny Tim the Bantam. You're good stuff!"

"Yaas, wathah! I couldn't have done that myself, Tom Mewwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fact that the schoolboy had stood up to him for seven rounds did not seem to upset the Bantam in the least; he evidently admired the Shell fellow's prowess, and his manner was more friendly than ever.

Tom Merry bathed his heated face, and donned waistcoat and jacket, and the juniors cheered him as he left the gym with his friends.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly. "Where's Mr. Curll?"

"I say, Curll!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Curll, my boy!" said the Bantam.

But Mr. Curll was not within hearing.

He had been at first among the crowd watching the boxing, and then he had disappeared, and the juniors realised rather guiltily that in the keen interest of the boxing they had forgotten their other guest's existence.

"Look for him, you chaps!" said Tom Merry. "It's nearly time for tea. Like to have a look round the school, Tiny Tim, and then we'll go up to the study for tea."

"Wotto!" said the Bantam.

And the Bantam was shown round St. Jim's, and then he accompanied the Terrible Three to Tom Merry's study, where they found the other juniors and Mr. Curll.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Curll Causes Trouble.

MR. CURLL nodded to Tom Merry with a glassy smile.

Blake exchanged a hopeless look with the captain of the Shell.

There was a strong whiff of spirits about Mr. Curll, and his glassy and fishy eyes told their own tale.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

The Bantam uttered an angry exclamation. "Curll, you fat-head, this ain't playin' the game!" said Tiny Tim. "You promised me, you know you did, or I wouldn't 'ave let you come. Did you 'ave a flask, you himage?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Curll, with dignity. "I scorn the insinuation, sir! I fling it back in your teeth, sir! In your tee-heeth!" said Mr. Curll, with a gesture worthy of his best days with the defunct Karl Tulip Company:

"Then where did you get it?"

"While you were boxing with our young friend, a kind and liberal young gentleman, sir, treated me to liquid refreshment, sir, of a somewhat exhilarating nature!" said Mr. Curll. "Was it to decline that graceful stimulation, sir? Perish the thought! Not that I have imbibed to any great extent. I scorn the insinuation! See me walk round the room, Bantam, my boy, and you will see that I am perfectly sober—sober as a judge, sir."

Mr. Curll jumped up in a very great hurry to prove that he was as sober as a judge, and started to walk round the study.

But if the straightness of Mr. Curll's walk was to prove his sobriety, he left very much "not proven."

For he zigzagged round the study in a way that made the juniors grin in spite of themselves, and finished by catching hold of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for support.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy.

"Oh, dry those tears!" said Mr. Curll, with both arms round D'Arcy's neck, clinging to him. "Shed not those pearly drops, I thee entreat; behold me kneeling lowly at thy feet!"

"Pway, Mr. Curll—"

"Friend of my early years!" murmured

Mr. Curll. "Come to these arms! Weep upon my breast!"

"I wufese to do anythin' of the sort," said Arthur Augustus indignantly, striving to rid himself of Mr. Curll's affectionate embrace.

"Pway dwag him off, deah boys!"

"Ha! Thou spurnest me!" said Mr. Curll tearfully. "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!"

The Bantam caught Mr. Curll by the shoulders, and plumped him into the arm-chair.

"You sit there!" he said.

"Shober as judge!" murmured Mr. Curll, closing his eyes.

"What utter beast could have been giving him drink?" muttered Tom Merry. "It was a rotten trick to play!"

"They gave him plenty of it, whoever it was!" grinned Piggins. "Never mind; he's going to sleep now!"

"You lie!" came a very distinct voice from the armchair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After that explicit statement that he was not going to sleep, Mr. Curll began to snore.

His voice might be tenor, but his snore was a deep bass; it was not musical, but it was a relief to the juniors to hear it.

If Mr. Curll had taken a fancy to wander forth from the study in his present state it would have been very awkward for Tom Merry & Co.

"If he was sober," said the Bantam, "I'd 'ammer 'im!"

"Thank goodness he's asleep," said Blake. "Now, tea's ready. I'm afraid our friend Curll will miss his tea. Do you like prawns, Mr. Bantam?"

"Wotto!" said Mr. Bantam.

And in spite of Mr. Curll's persistent snore the juniors and their guest made an excellent tea.

The study was crowded, but the fellows did not mind standing up.

Tiny Tim was quite at his ease.

He talked cheerfully and incessantly, and told stories of many fights, more in earnest than the "twice-nightly" contest on the stage of the Wayland Empire.

Though that, as he said, was serious enough in its way.

The Limehouse Slogger's ambition was to lick him, but, as the Bantam said, with a chuckle, he couldn't do it.

But the Slogger's earnest attempts to do it gave the twice-nightly boxing contest at the Wayland Empire its keen interest, which made it the great draw of the evening there.

The boxers, who had booked only for a week, had extended their stay to a second week, so great was the draw.

In fact the Bantam, who had all the good opinion of his own "turn" which a musical artist generally has, attributed the presence of an audience in the Empire at all to the boxing turn between himself and the Slogger.

"You lie!" said Mr. Curll, waking up suddenly, and turning upon the Bantam a lacklustre eye.

The Bantam grinned.

"Oh, you go to sleep!" he said. "I ain't ready to carry you 'ome yet."

"I refuse to be carried home! I call all present to witness that the people in front come simply to hear me render 'Flanagan's Sunday Trousers!'" said Mr. Curll. "Yesterday I heard a gentleman in the stalls say, 'What a voice—what a voice!'"

"Quite right!" said the Bantam. "You could saw wood with it!"

"In my day," said Mr. Curll dreamily, "there wasn't a tenor in England to equal me. People who had heard Tamagno said he wasn't in it with me. As for Sims Reeves, he was nowhere. Caruso—pooh!"

Mr. Curll rose unsteadily to his feet. "Did you ever hear me render 'Let Me Like a Sus-sus-soldier F-I-fall'?"

Bump!

Mr. Curll's unsteady legs curled up under him, and he sat down on the rug.

"Well, you've fell now," said the Bantam.

Mr. Curll sat up. He caught at the teatable to assist himself in rising, and got a good grip on the table-cloth.

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry.

Mr. Curll was unfortunately holding on only too well.

He dragged himself up, and the table-cloth was dragged off the table, and the tea-things and eatables shot over Mr. Curll in a terrific shower.

Crash, crash! Spatter! Splash, crash!

"Ow!" gasped Mr. Curll. "Avant! Stand back! Who lifts a weapon dies! Slay not the knight who sorely wounded lies!"

"Ow, you hawful hass!" gasped the Bantam.

"Bai Jove!"
Mr. Curll staggered to his feet. He looked very queer, with tea and milk flowing over him, jam and butter sticking to his hair, and jelly quivering round his neck.

The juniors, dismayed as they were, could not help laughing.

Mr. Curll placed one hand on his breast and bowed to them.

"Encore!" shrieked Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, with pleasure!" said Mr. Curll. "Yes, let me like a soldier fa-hall, upon some open plain; this breast expanding for the ha-all, to—"

"Shut up!" cried the Bantam. "You'll 'ave a crowd round!"

The study door opened.

"Any charge for admission?" asked Levison, looking in, with Mellish behind him. "I suppose we can come to the show."

Tom Merry glared at him. "I suppose it was you who gave Curll the spirits, you cad!" he exclaimed.

Levison chuckled. "He said he was thirsty," he remarked, "so I— Yah—yaroo!"

A pat of butter caught Levison in the eye, and then another in the ear. He slammed the door and retreated.

By this time quite a number of juniors had been attracted to the study, some by the upraised voice of Mr. Curll, and others by Levison's report of what was going on there.

The door was opened again.

The Bantam and the juniors were trying to keep Mr. Curll quiet, but Mr. Curll refused to be quiet.

He persisted in giving an example of the way he had sung "On with the Motley" in the grand old days of the Karl Tulip Company.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, in great distress. "I twust this will be a warnin' to you youngstaws, nevah to take to dwink."

"Ass!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Laugh, Punchinello," said Mr. Curll, "for the love that is ended!"

"I'll give you larf, Punch-and-Judy!" growled the Bantam. "Young gents, I'm sorry this 'as 'appened. I'll get 'im away as quiet as I can."

"Well, tea's finished!" grinned Figgins, with a glance at the heap of wreckage on the floor of the study.

"You young gents will get into a row if anybody 'ears 'im," said the Bantam unasily: "It was a beastly trick to give 'im spirits. Kim on, Curly!"

"Go it!" called out the crowd of fellows in the passage. "Pile it on! Give us another verse! Encore—encore!"

"Young gentlemen," said Mr. Curll, "you do me proud. You behold me now on the halls; but time was when I was the star tenor of the Karl Tulip Company, and duchesses wept to hear me sing!"

"Enough to make 'em!" said Kangaroo from the passage.

"Once he was a real turtle!" said Mellish sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do be quiet, Curly!" urged the Bantam.

"Sir, I refuse to be quiet! I insist upon giving an encore—I insist, sir!"

"Give us 'Rolling Round the Town!' said Mellish.

"Cave!" shouted Kerruish of the Fourth. "Here comes Knox!"

"Oh, cwumbs," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, "now there's goin' to be a wow!"

Knox the prefect, with a frowning brow, stopped in the doorway and stared into the study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Knox is Disappointed.

KNOX stared at Mr. Curll, and Mr. Curll bestowed a fishy, glazed look upon Knox the prefect.

"What—what— Who on earth's this?" demanded Knox.

"Friend o' mine," said the Bantam.

"Merry, you—you have an intoxicated man in your study!"

"You see, Knox—"

"I see that you are disgracing the school, as usual," said Knox. "Hallo! Keep off! What do you mean?" roared the prefect, as Mr. Curll suddenly fell upon his neck, and embraced him, with tears in his eyes.

"'Tis he—'tis he," said Mr. Curll—" 'tis he—'tis he! I know him now! I know him by his sable brow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Leggo!" yelled Knox. "Aha, what delight! Aha, what joy! My long-lost son—my noble boy!" wept Mr. Curll, still clinging to Knox.

"You—you—you drunken beast!" spluttered Knox. "Gerroff! Merry, I'll report this to the Head! This man shall be locked up! Take him away!"

Tom Merry & Co. surveyed each other in dismay. The fat was in the fire now with a vengeance.

Knox hammered furiously at Mr. Curll, and that was sufficient to change Mr. Curll's affectionate humour to anger. He released the prefect, and squared up to him, getting between Knox and the door.

"Ah, wouldst thou, knave!" said Mr. Curll. "Draw, dastard—draw! Have at thee!"

"Biff! Biff! Biff! Mr. Curll 'had at" Knox with terrific effect. The prefect was driven sprawling in the heap of broken crockery-ware.

"Crash! Crash! 'Ow! Oh! Help! Oh!" shrieked Knox.

"Gweat Scott! We must get him away!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Line up, you chaps, and march him out!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

The juniors closed round Mr. Curll, and rushed him out of the study. Knox was left struggling out of the broken crockery.

The Bantam took an iron grasp upon Mr. Curll, and, with the juniors crowding round him to conceal him as much as possible from the general view, he was hurried out into the quadrangle.

In the quad Mr. Curll announced his intention of going to sleep in the shade of the old apple-tree; but he was rushed on to the gates.

"Sorry this 'as 'appened," said the Bantam, supporting his unfortunate friend in the road. "I wouldn't 'a' let 'im come if I'd knowed."

"It's not your fault or his," said Tom Merry. "It was one of our chaps played this trick, and we'll make him sit up for it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Kim on!" said Tiny Tim, dragging his exuberant friend down the road. "You'll be gettin' the young gents into trouble."

Mr. Curll persisted in turning round to kiss his hand to the juniors; but the Bantam succeeded at last in getting him away.

Tom Merry turned back into the quadrangle with his chums, all of them looking dismayed.

"There'll be a row over this," said Figgins. "Yaas, wathah!"

And there was.

Kildare met Tom Merry as he came back to the School House, with the announcement that the Head wanted his presence very particularly in his study.

Tom Merry repaired thither, and found Knox of the Sixth in the presence of the Head. Dr. Holmes was looking very severe.

"I have heard a most extraordinary statement from Knox, Merry!" he said sternly. "You have been entertaining someone in your study?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

"With intoxicants?" said the Head, frowning.

"No, sir."

"Knox declares that the man was intoxicated, and assaulted him."

"Look at my face, sir!" howled Knox.

"The man was tipsy, sir," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "But it wasn't our fault. He was quite sober, and he's a good fellow; but some cad gave him spirits, and it's a weakness of his. That's all, sir. It was a rotten trick played on him by a fellow who ought to have known better."

"Ah!" said the Head, his brow clearing, "you did not tell me that, Knox!"

"I don't believe it, sir!" said Knox viciously.

"Dr. Holmes frowned.

"I believe it, Knox, and you have no reason to doubt Merry's statement," he said. "I am sure that Merry would not have intoxicated in his study."

"Certainly not, sir!" said Tom Merry. "It was a trick, and it was played to get us into trouble."

"You should not be acquainted with a man who has such a weakness, Merry," said the Head mildly. "But it was very wicked of anyone to give him strong drink, knowing his weakness. Who was it?"

"I—I didn't see him do it, sir," stammered Tom.

"But you know who it was?"

"Well, I can guess, sir."

The doctor laughed.

"I will not compel you to give me the name, Merry. The wicked boy should be punished. However, I presume that this—this man has now left the school?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You must never have him here again." "Very well, sir."

"And you must be more careful another time," said the Head kindly. "Knox, I am afraid you did not wait to make an accurate investigation of the circumstances before acquainting me with the matter. It is now closed. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom gratefully.

And he left the Head's study and hurried away to rejoin his friends, who were waiting anxiously for his reappearance.

They greeted him with a chorus of inquiries.

"It's all right," said Tom. "The Head's a brick. It was a rotten thing to happen; but it was all Levison's fault. The Head says that whoever played that trick ought to be punished. I agree with him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

All the juniors agreed with the Head on that point, as a matter of fact. And they looked for Levison.

They found the cad of the Fourth in his study with Mellish. Levison and Mellish were chuckling; but they left off chuckling as the juniors crowded in.

"Get out of my study!" exclaimed Levison fiercely.

"You rotter!" said Tom Merry. "Which of you was it gave the whisky to poor old Curll?"

"Find out!"

"We're going to! Collar them!"

"Hold on!" yelled Mellish, in alarm. "I didn't do it! I only got Taggles out of his lodge while Levison—"

"Shut up!" hissed Levison.

"While Levison got poor old Taggy's whisky," grinned Blake, "and gave it to Curll. Collar the cad! Are you sorry, Levison?"

"No!" yelled Levison.

"Then we'll make you sorry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison struggled furiously in the grasp of the avengers. But his struggling was of no use. He was whirled off his feet, and bumped on the floor—hard.

He roared.

"You've mucked up our little tea-party!" said Tom Merry. "Give him one for that!"

Bump!

"Yaroo! Ow!"

"You've acted like a rotten cad! Give him another for that!"

Bump!

Levison gave a fiendish yell.

"And I believe you fetched Knox on the scene! Give him one for that!"

Bump!

Levison rolled on the floor, yelling. And the juniors, satisfied with the punishment, left him there and departed. Levison sat up, white with rage.

Mellish was grinning.

"Never mind, the joke was worth it," he said consolingly.

"Ow!"

"Doesn't it seem so funny now?" asked Mellish sympathetically.

Levison gritted his teeth, and hit out straight from the shoulder. Mellish gave a roar, and rolled under the table.

"Got any more funny things to say?" demanded Levison.

Mellish hadn't.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"One Good Turn Deserves Another."

"IT'S all wight, deah boys!"

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The School House fellows were coming out after dinner on Saturday.

Saturday was a half-holiday, and the junior eleven was booked for a match at Wayland with the local team.

Tom Merry & Co. were talking and thinking football, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's was evidently exercising his mighty brain upon some more important matter.

"What's biting you now?" asked Blake kindly.

"Nothin's bitin' me, deah boy. And I wegard the question as ridiculous," said Arthur Augustus. "You wemembah we were in a state of doubt last Wednesday about goin' to the Wayland Empire?"

"I wasn't, so far as I can remember," remarked Monty Lowther.

"You wemembah I wasn't quite sure that it would be good form. Howevah, it is all wight now," said D'Arcy. "I have spoken to Kildare about it, and we have the Head's

permish to attend the last performance there."

"It's the last night of the boxers," said Tom Merry. "They change the programme on Monday."

"Yaas, that's what I was thinkin' of. And we have permish to go. And as I hapon to be in funds just now, I was thinkin' of telephouin' and bookin' seats for the second house to-night. And we shall be able to finish up there aftah the match at Wayland. What do you fellows say?"

"Bravo!"

"Jolly way to wind up the evening after the match, if we have permission to stay out after calling-over," said Manners.

"I've awranged that with Kildare."

"Ripping!"

It was really a pleasant prospect—especially for the juniors who had not been to the local Empire already.

And quite a large party of enthusiastic friends accompanied Arthur Augustus to the telephone in the prefect's room to book the seats. Eighteen in all. It was going to be a large party.

"It's all wright, they've got the seats," said Arthur Augustus, as he laid down the receiver. "Part of the pwogwamme is new; but Tiny Tim and Mr. Curll are both there for the last time in the second house to-night. We'll give them a send-off."

"Hear, hear!"

Then the juniors made their preparations for the match at Wayland.

The game proved to be a hard and well-contested one, St. Jim's winning by the odd goal in three.

After the match there was a spread for the visitors, at which Fatty Wynn distinguished himself.

When tea was over it had been dark a good time, and, as the swell of St. Jim's had foreseen, it would have been too late for the first house at the Empire.

But there was a good time to wait before the second house started, and the juniors occupied it in various ways.

Fatty Wynn made for the nearest bunshop to continue the spread ad lib., and some of the juniors accompanied him, feeling that it was up to them to fill Fatty with as many tarts as he could hold, after the noble way he had pulled the match out of the fire.

The Terrible Three strolled through the old High Street, and found a little harmless and necessary amusement in knocking the caps off several Grammar School fellows whom they met, and then strolled down the road.

A chime from Wayland Church warned them that it was time to get back.

"Second house starts in half an hour," said Manners. "And we've got to yank Fatty away from the grub. Come on!"

They sauntered down the shadowy road towards Wayland town.

A figure loomed up in the dusk before them, going in the same direction, and Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"The Bantam, by Jove!"

It was a custom of Tiny Tim, as he had told Tom Merry, to take a walk in the fresh country air between the "two houses" at the Empire.

The chums of the Shell hastened their steps to overtake their old acquaintance. A sudden cry left Lowther's lips.

"Look!"

Three dark figures had suddenly leaped from the blackness of the hedge, only a dozen yards in advance of the Terrible Three, and were rushing upon Tiny Tim from behind. Even in the gloom Tom Merry recognised Ginger & Co.

"Look out, Bantam!" he yelled.

The Bantam swung round.

Crack!

There was a yell of anguish from the Bantam. A savage blow of a cudgel had been aimed at his head, and he had caught it on his arm.

"Out 'im!" yelled Ginger.

The three ruffians had evidently lain in wait for the boxer, to avenge the thrashing he had given them when he rescued Tom Merry from their clutches. And but for the presence of the Terrible Three the Bantam would have been very roughly used.

The cudgels were in the air ready to descend when the juniors dashed up.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther did not stop to think. They rushed right on, and flung themselves upon the ruffians without a second's hesitation.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

"Back up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Pile in!" yelled the Bantam; and his left

fist caught Ginger under the chin, and hurled him bodily into the ditch.

The Bantam's right arm hung useless at his side. In a moment the footpads were flying. Two of them fled into the wood, and Ginger, dragging himself out of the ditch on the other side, ran into the darkness of the fields.

"The hounds!" gasped Tom Merry. "Bantam, old man, are you hurt?"

Then he sprang forward, with outstretched arms, just in time to catch the boxer as he fell.

"He's hurt!" exclaimed Lowther.

The boxer groaned slightly, as he leaned upon Tom Merry's sturdy shoulder.

"Orlright," he murmured. "I got that stick across the arm, that's all. 'Tain't broke—no bones broke. But, crumbs, it 'urts!"

The young man's face was pale with the pain; but he clenched his teeth hard, and kept back any audible expression of it. It had been a cruel blow; but the Bantam was as hard as nails. He straightened up, and tried to grin.

The Terrible Three regarded him anxiously. "Thank you for wot you did, young gents!" said the Bantam. "They was going to lay me out, I reckon. And they'd 'a' done it, too! Let's git along to the light!"

They moved along to a road lamp, and there the Bantam stripped off his coat, and rolled up the sleeve of his right arm.

There was a big black bruise there, and the arm was so stiff that he could not move it. The Bantam felt over it carefully with the fingers of his left hand.

"No bones broke," he said again, in great relief.

"But you won't be able to use your arm again yet, Bantam," said Tom Merry.

The Bantam nodded.

"Looks like it," he said. "Wouldn't be so bad if it 'ad 'appened a few hours later. I'm resting next week; but now there's the second 'ouse at the Empire, and an extra big crowd on Saturday night. This is rotten! It means trouble."

"It's a beastly shame!" said Manners.

"I suppose I oughtn't to grumble," said the Bantam. "I should have got it on my 'ead if you young gents 'adn't come by. But it mucks up my show for this evening. And goodness knows wot I'm going to do!"

"You can't box with your arm like that," said Manners.

"No fear! But—"

"You ought to have it seen to," said Lowther.

"I dunno wot to do. You see, the boxing turn is the draw of the evenin', and there is a big crowd to see the last turn," said the Bantam, in great distress. "Bowkoe will 'ave 'is 'air fair orf."

The Bantam looked very worried.

"You see, the Empire ain't doin' so well as they make out, and old Bowkoe don't care to disappoint 'is patrons," he explained. "And there would be a fair row if 'e was to put on Curll, say, with an extra song instead of the boxing turn."

"I should say so."

"The wust of it is that I'm bound to put in a substitute if anythin' should 'appen to me," said Tiny Tim. "But 'ow am I goin' to find a man at the last minute like this—in a country town? It ain't possible. If it was in London or Manchester it would be orlright. But 'ere—my word! 'Course, I ought to have somethin' fixed up in case of accidents—only I don't never 'ave no accidents—and I ain't done it. Too expensive, you see. They don't pay me a small fortune for my turn. And—and if I don't show up I lose all the week's screw. That's in the contract!"

"It's jolly close on time, too!" said Tom Merry. "Second house opens in ten minutes now, and you're the third turn, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"And if you don't show up—"

"The turn will have to be cut!" said the boxer despondently. "Old Bowkoe will 'ave to make a speech explainin', and then he'll take it outer me."

"Unless you can put in a substitute to box the Slogger."

"He'd 'ave to be a good man—and I couldn't find one in Wayland—not in the time, anyway!"

"Then you'll lose your week's money?"

"Twenty quid!" said the Bantam, with a sigh. "Likewise the Slogger. And old Bowkoe will be wild, and he's bound to let the word go round that I ain't reliable to turn up. No good talkin' to 'im about accident. He only thinks of the people in front, and the takin' at the box-office!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Could I help you, Tiny Tim?" he asked.

The Bantam stared.

"You, Master Merry?"

"I would if I could!" said the Shell fellow. "I stood up to you at the school in the gym for seven rounds, didn't I? You said you thought I could stand up to the Slogger."

"So you could, Master Merry," said the Bantam, a new gleam coming into his eyes. "But you don't mean to say that—that you'd—"

"Yes, I do, if it would help you," said Tom Merry steadily. "One good turn deserves another. You've got this through helping me, and I should be a rotter if I wouldn't do anything I could to back you up. Do you think I'm good enough to stand up against the Slogger in your place?"

The Bantam gasped.

"Good enough! I reckon you are, Master Merry! You stood up agin me for seven rounds, and you could stand up agin the Slogger for ten, cert! But you can't do it! You'd get into a row at your school, sir!"

"I'd risk that. Besides, nobody will know. I sha'n't go on in Etons," said Tom, laughing. "I shall borrow your things. I'm nearly your size."

"You're a good sort, kid," said the Bantam, with emotion in his voice. "It will save the whole bizney for me!"

"You think Mr. Bowkoe won't object?"

The Bantam chuckled.

"Old Bowkoe will welcome you with open arms, if you save 'im from cuttin' the turn. Besides, he ain't no right to object to my man, so long as he gives a good show."

"I'll do my best to do that," said Tom modestly.

"You can do it orlright. You've thought it over, young gent—you really mean it?" the boxer asked eagerly.

It was evident that the Bantam was jumping at the idea, very much like a drowning man catching at a straw.

"I mean it, rather!"

"Then it's a go! Come with me to the Empire now, and I'll put you through."

"Good egg!"

And they walked at a quick pace into Wayland.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Schoolboy Boxer.

TOM MERRY was very much in earnest. He knew what he was undertaking.

He had observed the Slogger, and he had observed that he was by no means a good-natured fellow like the Bantam.

It was very probable that the St. Jim's junior would receive some severe punishment in those ten rounds with the Slogger; but he was prepared to face it.

In the dressing-room the Bantam provided him with the boxer's scanty attire to change into before he presented him to Mr. Bowkoe. It was better for the manager to see him thus than in Etons.

And Tom Merry stripped so well that the Bantam looked at his sturdy limbs and firm muscles and clear, white skin with great admiration.

"You'll do, by gum!" he said.

"Do!" growled the Slogger, who was watching them with a far from pleasant countenance. "How long do you think that kid will stand agin me, Tim?"

"Ten rounds!" said the Bantam calmly.

The Slogger snorted.

"Ten seconds, more likely!" he said. "Look you 'ere, Tim, this ain't going to be a put-up job. Boxing is boxing!"

"You pile in your 'ardest!" said the Bantam. "You won't knock my young pal out in such a 'urry, I tell you!"

"I ain't goin' to be soft with him," said the Slogger.

"I don't want you to be," said Tom Merry, with spirit. "If I were afraid of a rap or two I shouldn't have offered."

"It may be more'n a rap or two!" said the Slogger, with a grin.

"Well, I don't mind."

"That's understood, then!"

"'Ere's Mr. Bowkoe," said the Bantam, and he began explaining to the manager.

Mr. Bowkoe was inclined to be exasperated. But a sight of the Bantam's stiff, bruised arm showed even the annoyed manager that he could not possibly box that evening.

"Who's the kid?" asked Mr. Bowkoe.

"Gentleman boxer, sir," said the Bantam. "He's stood up to me for seven rounds, and he'll stand up to the Slogger for ten."

"No spoo, you know!" said Mr. Bowkoe suspiciously. "The public won't 'ave it. If there's any gammon, there will be trouble in front."

"There won't be any spoo, sir!"

"Well, I leave it to you, Tim, so long as

the turn goes well," was Mr. Bowkoe's verdict.

"I'll answer for that," said the Bantam. The second house was started now, and the first turn was on. The Bantam hung about Tom Merry, helping him prepare, and giving him whispered counsels.

To suggestions that he should have his injured arm attended to the Bantam turned a deaf ear.

"My fin will do arterwards!" he said. "Then send for a doctor, so that he can attend to it as soon as I go on!" urged Tom Merry.

And the boxer agreed to that. Mr. Bowkoe appeared before the footlights, and explained in a little speech that owing to an accident the celebrated Bantam was unable to appear, but that his place was taken by a celebrated gentleman boxer, who would give an exhibition of the noble art as striking as that of the famous Bantam.

The information was received good-humouredly by the people "in front," though it was quite plain that their good humour would not last unless the "furn" was really up to Mr. Bowkoe's description of it.

Especially was Mr. Bowkoe's announcement received with enthusiasm by fourteen young gentlemen in a body in the stalls.

Manners had informed the juniors of Tom Merry's intentions, and the St. Jim's juniors were very keen about it.

"It's simply wippin' of Tom Mewwy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declared. "Pew-waps; it would have been bettah to send for me; but I twust Tom Mewwy will give a good show."

"And we'll give him a jolly good reception!" said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!" Manners looked round the crowded house rather anxiously.

"Good many St. Jim's fellows here," he remarked.

"All the better!" said Kangaroo. "They'll give Tommy plenty of hands!"

"Yes; but I don't know what the Head would think about it," said Manners. "And there's Knox yonder, in the box with Cutts of the Fifth!"

"Bai Jove! He's sure to spot Tom Mewwy at once, and he'll weport him to the Head!" said Arthur Augustus.

"That means a row!" remarked Blake.

"But the Head can't object to Tommy standin' by a pal in distress," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "If Knox weports him, I will undahtake to explain to the Head, and put it to him as an old sport!"

"Good; and then he may lick you instead of Tommy!" agreed Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Here they come!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Hurrah!"

"Bwavo!"

The boxers had appeared upon the stage. The Bantam, with his right arm in a sling, came on with them, and Monty Lowther could be seen lurking in the wings.

Tom Merry looked very fit and handsome, and he smiled to his chums in the stalls as they cheered him.

An extremely ugly look came over his face, and he rushed in, hitting out with all his force.

But Tom Merry countered neatly, and the boxer wasted his strength and his breath in slogging at an adversary who was never there.

"Time!" said Mr. Bowkoe.

And there was a minute rest.

The Bantam clapped Tom Merry on the shoulder. His rugged, honest face was full of delight, and he seemed quite to have forgotten the pain in his arm.

"You'll do," he said. "You'll do. The ten rounds are safe."

In the second round the Slogger was more cautious, putting in more science and less bull-rushing, and Tom Merry received some punishment, but not more than he gave.

There was a cheer now from the crowded house.

All the people in front realised that there was something more than a mere exhibition of boxing before them, and the match had something of the excitement of a prize-fight.

And, as was natural, sympathy was on the

Tiny Tim fanned him, and whispered encouragement.

"You'll do!" he said. "You're all right! Look at the people in front! You're simply knockin' 'em! Blessed if they don't take to this more than a reg'lar show! You're doin' me the best turn that ever was done for me, kid!"

And that was quite sufficient to encourage Tom Merry, if he had thought of slacking. But he had not. He had taken the Slogger's measure, and he felt that he could stand up to him so long as he kept cool and collected.

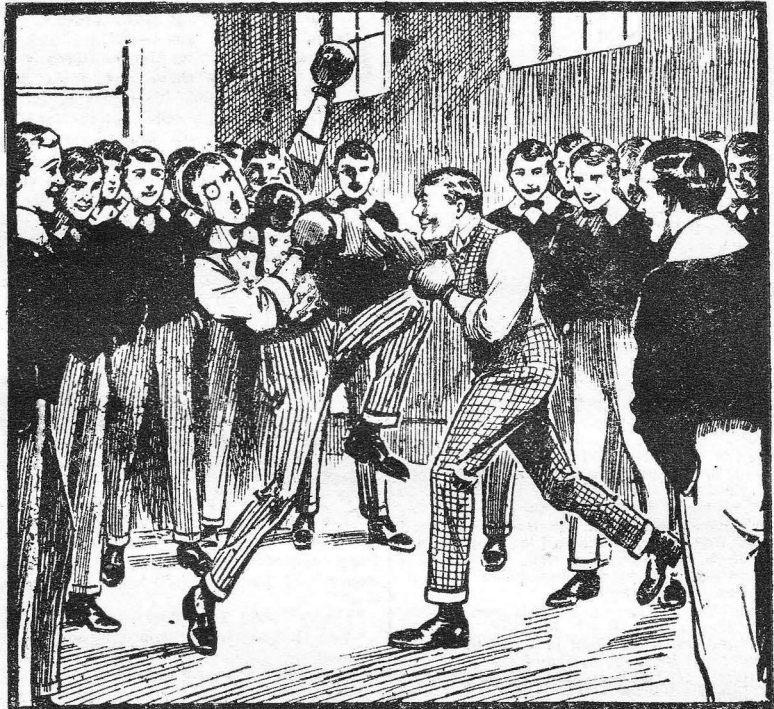
There was no doubt about the enthusiasm of the audience.

Many of them were on their feet in their excitement, and in the gallery there was an almost continual roar.

"Time!" said Mr. Bowkoe, smiling, in great good-humour. Anything that pleased the "house" was certain to please Mr. Bowkoe.

Tom Merry stepped up cheerfully for the eighth round.

The Slogger attacked him fiercely. Tom Merry had to give ground before the weight of his assailant, and he had no choice but to hit hard.



GUSSY, THE "WEALLY COOD" BOXER!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Tom Merry's Turn.

"TIME!"

The first round started.

There was a call from the stalls.

"Go it, Tommy!"

"Play up for St. Jim's, deah boy!"

"That blessed Slogger means business!" murmured Blake uneasily. "Look at the way he's got his teeth jammed together! Tommy's in for it!"

There was little doubt about that. Although it would have been wiser on the Slogger's part to give his youthful adversary a run, in order to make the fight last the stipulated ten rounds, he evidently meant to finish it if he could.

No consideration would induce him to allow a junior schoolboy to stand up against him for ten rounds, if he could help it.

And the Slogger started as if it were a prize-fight rather than a boxing-match.

His age and weight and size, of course, gave him a great advantage, and Tom Merry was driven round the ring to begin with.

But Tom was taking his opponent's measure, and he did not falter in the least. And the Slogger was suddenly stopped by a straight drive which showed that Tom Merry, though younger, slighter, and less muscular, had quite as much science as the professional boxer, if not a little more.

The Slogger started back, and almost staggered, as the hard glove came with a buff upon his chin.

side of the boy who was bravely facing the man.

"Go it, youngster!"

"Bravo!"

"Yaas, bwavo, wathah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Play up, deah boy!"

The rounds succeeded one another. It was so evident that the Slogger was striving to knock his adversary out that interest was at the keenest pitch.

In the professional ring the Slogger could hardly have put more "beef" into his attack. But Tom Merry stood it well.

His eye was steady, and he was never caught napping, and not for an instant did he falter before the heavy drives of the Slogger.

Six rounds were fought through, and the junior of St. Jim's came up smiling and cool for the seventh.

The Slogger was neither smiling nor cool now.

He attacked the junior boxer with a force that made Mr. Bowkoe whisper, in alarm, "Go easy—go easy!"

But the Slogger declined to go easy. He was thinking only of proving that a schoolboy could not stand against him for ten rounds.

Tom Merry was panting as he dropped on to the Bantam's knee to rest after time was called.

A sweeping upper-cut caught the Slogger on the point of the chin, and but for the "mittens" the Slogger would have been hors de combat there and then.

As it was he went down heavily, and lay gasping.

There was a roar of cheering.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Mr. Bowkoe counted. But the Slogger was up before he had counted half ten, and springing at the schoolboy boxer.

Then they were at it, hammer and tongs.

The Slogger was wild with rage, and he was hitting furiously, but Tom Merry was cool and keen, and hardly one of the fierce drives got home upon the cool, handsome face.

"Time!"

Eight rounds had been fought out, with far more vigour than was customary in the Bantam's boxing turn.

The Slogger was showing signs of "bellows to mend" to a far greater extent than his youthful foe.

The ninth round started, and it was wild and whirling. The Slogger succeeded in getting home this time, and Tom Merry received more punishment than he had experienced so far.

All eyes were anxiously upon him. He acted wholly upon the defensive now, but THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 9.

many heavy blows came home, the Slogger keeping at close quarters and hitting hard. But Tom Merry was not beaten.

The Slogger, growing reckless, had drawn back his right for a finishing drive, and Tom Merry had a chance of getting in a crashing body blow—and he did not let the chance escape him.

Bump!

The Slogger was down again.

"Bravo!"

"Huwwah!"

Tom Merry staggered to the Bantam's knee.

"Well done, kid!" muttered the Bantam. "Only one more round!"

Tom Merry's eyes were gleaming. The savageness of the Slogger had put his back up, and he meant business, too.

"I'm going to make it a finish if I can!" he muttered.

"Good luck to you!" said Tiny Tim.

It was the last round, and Tom Merry kept his word. He avoided in-fighting, keeping his adversary at arm's length for some time, and then, when the Slogger was far from looking for it, he made a sudden attack.

The Slogger's guard seemed to be nowhere, and a right-hander came crashing on his chin, and he staggered, and then came left and right in quick succession upon the red, angry face, and the Slogger crashed down.

Mr. Bowkoe began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—"

The Slogger made a desperate effort to rise. But his head was swimming, and he sank back again with a gasp.

"Nine—OUT!"

There was a roar.

"Bravo, youngster!"

"Tom Merry wins! Huwah!"

"Hip-pip!"

And there was a storm of hand-clapping.

"Licked to the wide!" chuckled the Bantam. "Slogger, old man, you've got it in the neck."

The Slogger growled painfully. The junior had not only stood up to him for the agreed ten rounds, but he had knocked him out in the tenth.

The house rang with applause.

Tom Merry went off, leaning a little upon the Bantam's uninjured arm, but he had to return four or five times to take his call.

In the dressing-room the Bantam sponged his blazing face and fanned him. Tom Merry was feeling the reaction now. It had been a hard fight, and he was limp enough after it. The Slogger was grunting.

Tom Merry changed into his own clothes, with the assistance of Lowther and the delighted Bantam. Then he came up to the Slogger and held out his hand.

"It was a jolly good fight," he said. "Give me your fist!"

And the Slogger, in spite of himself, grinned a rather crooked grin, and shook hands with the schoolboy boxer.

At the stage door Tom Merry's friends were waiting for him. They cheered him as he came out with Lowther, and clapped him on the back.

"It was simply wipping', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I assuah you that I could not have stood up to him like that!"

"You don't say so!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah; it's a fact, deah boy!"

"Now for home, and trouble!" said Manners. "Knox was watching you with all

his eyes, Tommy, and he'll have things ready for you when you get in, worse luck!"

"The uttah wottah!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I don't care. I owed it to the Bantam, and I've done right. And I'm ready to face the music."

"It's all wight, deah boy. Leave me to explain to the Head, and I'll put it to him, as an old sport—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors walked home to St. Jim's.

Knox had arrived there before him, and he had made his report. As soon as the juniors arrived, Tom Merry was informed that the Head wished to see him in his study.

And declining D'Arcy's kind offer to accompany him and do all the talking, the hero of the Shell made his way to the presence of the Head.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

"All's Well That Ends Well."

R. HOLMES was looking decidedly stern when Tom Merry entered.

Knox was there, and Knox had evidently made his report in an unfavourable way as possible for the junior.

Tom Merry faced his headmaster calmly but respectfully. He had done what he thought it was right to do, and if there was punishment to follow he was ready to face it.

"Knox informs me that, while witnessing the performance at the Wayland Empire, Merry, he recognised you in a prize-fight on the stage," said the Head sternly.

"That isn't true, sir!" said Tom Merry directly.

"What?"

"It wasn't a prize-fight, sir; it was a boxing-match, with gloves on."

"You admit that you have appeared upon the stage in a music-hall, giving a performance in a glove-fight!" exclaimed the scandalised Head.

"If you will let me explain, sir—"

"The fact speaks for itself," said the Head severely. "You know that this kind of thing cannot be permitted, Merry. The money you have received will be returned—"

"Money!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes. I understand that you were paid for—"

"Nothing of the sort, sir!"

"Indeed! Then you acted in this way for nothing?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"You cannot expect Dr. Holmes to believe that," said Knox, with a sneer.

"I do expect him to believe it," said Tom Merry; "and all my friends who were with me know it is the case. Will you allow me to explain, sir?"

"Go on," said the Head.

"I was set on by a gang of footpads, sir, the other day, and I should have been robbed and roughly handled if Tiny Tim hadn't come and helped me. Tiny Tim is the boxer.

Well, this evening the same ruffians set on him because he had helped me, and they injured him so that he couldn't do his boxing turn on the stage. I went on in his place. I felt that it was up to me, as he had been injured because he helped me."

"Ah!" said the Head. "You did not tell me this, Knox."

"Knox didn't know, sir," said Tom Merry. "He only saw me from his box."

"You should have ascertained all the facts before making your report to me, Knox!" said the Head somewhat sharply. "This lets in an altogether new light upon the matter."

Knox bit his lip.

"Do you believe his statement, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly I do!" said the Head sharply. "Merry, I understand now your motives for acting as you did. It was very—ahem!—irregular, and I cannot approve of it; but considering the circumstances, I fully understand that you felt bound to help the man who had so generously helped you."

"I felt I couldn't do anything else, sir," said Tom.

"Quite so; quite so. You must not do anything of the kind again, but under the circumstances I shall excuse you."

Tom Merry's face lighted up. Knox gritted his teeth, but he did not speak. If he had said the things he would have liked to say, the cad of the Sixth would have drawn the doctor's wrath upon his own head.

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry gratefully.

Dr. Holmes waved his hand.

"You may go, Merry."

And Tom gladly departed.

He joined the chums in the study, and his sunny face at once relieved their uneasiness.

"All wight?" asked D'Arcy.

"Wight as wain!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head is an old sport!" said Arthur Augustus. "Didn't I tell you fellows that it would be all wight?"

"No, you didn't, as a matter of fact!" said Monty Lowther. "Poor old Knox! He's always putting his hoof in it!"

"He's done me a good turn!" grinned Tom Merry. "It's all out and over now, and it might have come out afterwards by accident, and caused trouble. I suggest a vote of thanks to Knox."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All's well that ends well," said Fatty Wynn. "I've got a suggestion to make, too. We ought to have a feed to celebrate this."

"One for 'this' and two for Fatty!" chuckled Figgins. "Still, it's a good idea. Who says tuckshop?"

And with one voice the Co. replied:

"Tuckshop!"

And thus happily ended the Gentleman Boxer's first and last appearance upon "the halls."

THE END.

Next Friday's Splendid Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's is entitled

THE RED TRIANGLE!

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: : By : :
MARTIN CLIFFORD.