

THE VERY BEST SCHOOL TALES!

The Penny $1\frac{1}{2}$ Popular

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No. 10.
New Series.

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



MAKING BILLY BUNTER APOLOGISE!

(An Amusing Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of Greyfriars in this Issue.)



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Eve of Breaking-Up.

TO-MORROW is the last day of the term!"

"Hear, hear!"
"We're breaking-up—"

"Hurrah!"
"And—"
"Bravo!"

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, paused. The pause was filled in by another shout from the excited juniors in the Remove Form-room.

"Hurrah!"

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your applause," said Wharton, in his best manner, "but—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But—"

"Bravo—"

"But if you would be kind enough to shut up for a bit, and let me get to the point, I should take it as a personal favour."

"And the juniors laughed.

On the eve of breaking-up everybody was excited, and everybody was in a good temper.

Even Bulstrode wore a good-humoured grin.

There were a dozen Removites in the Form-room, and when it was understood that Wharton had something to say, everybody was willing to cheer, if not to listen.

Wharton had mounted on a form.

"Gentlemen of the Lower Fourth—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!" said Bob Cherry, rapping on a desk with a cricket-stump. "Order!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, as we are breaking up, I have a suggestion to make for winding up the term in a really ripping and satisfactory manner. As the most important Form at Greyfriars—"

Quite a roar of cheering interrupted the speaker.

That the Remove was the most important Form at Greyfriars was a fact undoubted by any fellow in the Remove.

The Sixth Form might assume grave and reverend airs, and regard themselves as the giddy Palladium," as Bob Cherry put it, of the school.

The Fifth might "swank" around as half-fledged seniors, and the Shell might think no small beer of themselves. The Upper Fourth might hold their noses high in the air, and affect to look down on the Remove as fags.

All these things might be, without in the least shaking the serene conviction of the Remove that they were the most important Form at Greyfriars—in fact, that they were Greyfriars.

"Hurrah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Wharton!"

Rap, rap! went the cricket-stump.

"Order!"

"The orderfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Pray moderate the esteemed transportfulness, my worthy chums."

"Hear, hear!"

"As the most important Form at Greyfriars," went on Harry Wharton, as soon as there was a lull, "it behoves us—"

"Well, that's a jolly good word!" said Frank Nugent.

"Order!"

"It behoves us," went on Harry calmly—"it behoves us to give the term a good wind-up, and I've got an idea. You are aware, of course, that the Sixth are in the habit of giving a giddy Greek play at the end of the midsummer term."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 10.

HARRY WHARTON & GO'S FEUD!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

There was a groan for the Sixth and their Greek play.

Most of the fellows present had sat out the Sixth Form Greek play, for their memories of it were painful.

"Oh, don't talk of that on an occasion like this," said Ogilvy. "What's the good of calling up horrid memories just before breaking-up? There's no Sixth Form play at the end of Easter term, thank goodness!"

"Exactly!" said Wharton. "And my idea is that the Junior Dramatic Society should give a play to wind up this term, and that the Sixth should come and hear us. We have to listen to the Sixth Form play whether we like it or not."

"Hear, hear!"

"We can send invitations to the Sixth, pointing that fact out," said Bulstrode. "I suppose you fellows will be acting in the play?"

"Certainly!" said Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Singh together. They were the most prominent members of the Amateur Dramatic Society.

"Good!" said Bulstrode. "It will serve the Sixth jolly well right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"It will serve 'em right," repeated Bulstrode. "The Sixth are a nuisance, and this will make even with them for the trouble they've given us all the term."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that hooligan persists in interrupting the meeting, he will be thrown out!" exclaimed Wharton warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter, jumping on a form near Wharton—"I say, I've got a suggestion to make."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't see why I shouldn't get up and talk sense, when you're allowed to get up and talk rot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go, it, Bunter!"

"Well, I think Wharton's right in suggesting a sort of celebration to wind up the term," said Billy Bunter, blinking round upon the grinning juniors through his big spectacles; "but instead of a dramatic entertainment, I suggest that it should take the form of a feed."

"Hear, hear!"

"I think that's a jolly good idea," said Bunter. "You see, it will make the business easier in issuing the invitations. Nobody ever goes to an amateur dramatic entertainment if he can help it, but anybody will come to a feed. In fact, there's sure to be a rush."

"And you'll be the first rusher," grinned Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's a good idea—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I sha'n't shut up, Wharton! The fellows all approve of my suggestion, and I think you ought to stand down!" exclaimed the fat junior.

"Bunter can stand the feed after the entertainment," suggested Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Good egg!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I should be only too glad to stand a feed to the whole Form, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was expecting a postal-order for a considerable amount this morning, but it hasn't come, owing to some delay in the post. It will be here to-morrow morning, and then I shall be pleased to settle for any little loans you fellows make me to-night. On those conditions I'll stand the feed willingly enough."

"I dare say you will," grinned Bob Cherry. "But you won't find anybody else willing, I think. Get down!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up! You are interrupting the meeting."

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Do shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "There's no time to waste, and we want to get to business, if we're to give a show this evening."

"Yes; but—"

"Order!"

"Ow!" roared Billy Bunter.

Someone had hurled an apple from the crowd, and it caught Billy Bunter under his double chin. The fat junior gave a jump, and missed his footing on the form.

The next moment he was rolling on the floor.

There was a yell of laughter.

"Do that again, Bunter!" shouted Bob Cherry, with the tears in his eyes. "Do it again! I didn't know you were such a giddy acrobat."

The fat junior sat up, gasping, on the floor. His sudden downfall had knocked all the wind out of his plump carcass.

"Ow! Oh, really—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"Gentle-meg, is my suggestion adopted?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Is there to be a performance by the Junior Dramatic Society this evening?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo!"

"Rats!" said Bulstrode.

But his voice was lost in the general roar of approval.

Nugent called for a show of hands, and every hand but Bulstrode's went up.

"Passed unanimously!" said Frank Nugent, ignoring Bulstrode. "Gentlemen, we shall now proceed to arrange for the performance, and it will take place this evening in the Form-room here at eight o'clock precisely."

"Hear, hear!"

And the meeting broke up, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. to make their arrangements for the evening's performance—a performance which was to lead to more fun than any member of the Amateur Dramatic Society at present anticipated.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Apologises.

ISAY, you fellows—"

Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Bob Cherry were in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage, when Billy Bunter came in.

Wharton had a pen in his hand, and the three juniors were wrinking their brows over a paper he was drawing up.

They looked up impatiently as the fat junior came in and interrupted them.

"Oh, get out!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We're not going to stand a feed, and we're not going to lend you anything off an imaginary postal-order," said Nugent. "Get out!"

"It's another matter—"

"Shut up!"

"I wasn't going to speak about the feed. I know you're too jolly mean to stand one," said Bunter. "I'm half-starved in this study, and I've given up expecting you chaps to act decently. It's another matter, and it's rather important."

Wharton laid down his pen.

"Oh, buck up, for goodness' sake!" he said resignedly.

"You see, to-morrow's the last of the term—"

"Yes, we know that already."
 "I mean we shall be breaking up—"
 "You'll jolly well get broken up this evening if you don't buzz out of this study soon!" said Nugent.
 "Oh, really, Nugent! What I mean is, I had a jolly good invitation for the Easter holidays, you know—a titled friend of my father's—"
 "Rats!"
 "I was invited to spend the vacation at his splendid mansion—"
 "Rubbish!"
 "Where he has at least thirty liveried servants, and I should eat off gold and silver!" said Billy Bunter, glowering with rage.
 "Well, I hope you've accepted the invitation!" said Bob Cherry.
 "It's fallen through—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Owing to my titled friend having an attack of gout, the invitation's fallen through," said Bunter. "I think I might as well come to your place, Wharton. You haven't told me your plans for the vac, but I suppose you're having a party of friends home?"
 "Not at all!"
 "Oh, really—"
 "I'm spending the vac away," said Harry, laughing; "and as I can't ask you to another chap's house, Bunt, you'll have to look further."
 "Oh, very well! After all, I don't particularly want to come to Wharton Lodge. I'd just as soon spend the vac with you, Nugent—in fact, rather!"
 "I wouldn't, though!" said Nugent.
 "Besides, I'm going away for the holiday."
 "Oh dear! I'll come home with you, if you like, Cherry."
 "You jolly well won't!" said Bob. "I'm not going home, for one thing; I'm spending the vacation away, with Wharton and Nugent and Inky."
 "Oh! You're all going to the same place?"
 "Yes."
 "I suppose you could get an extra invite for a chum?" said Billy Bunter, in a wheedling voice. "Of course, you'd be glad to have me!"
 "Well, you've had us often enough!" remarked Nugent. "You have nearly everybody you meet, don't you, Bunt?"
 "Oh, really—"
 "But we can't invite you to another chap's house," said Wharton; "and we jolly well wouldn't if we could! You're too much trouble, and you're always making your friends feel small by your rotten tricks! That's plain English!"
 Billy Bunter blinked at him.
 The fat junior of the Greyfriars Remove had a pretty thick skin, and it was not easy for his feelings to be hurt.
 Bunter did not intend to go home for the vacation if he could help it.
 His people did not fully understand the necessity of feeding him as well as he liked to be fed.
 And Bunter senior often found him work in the garden during the vacation.
 Billy did not like work.
 His people were not rich, but Bunter had expensive tastes.
 He was fully determined to spend that vacation, as he spent most of them—at another fellow's house.
 The only question was, how was it to be worked?
 "What chap are you staying with, Wharton?" He inquired, after a pause.
 "What do you want to know for?" said Wharton bluntly.
 "Oh— You see— I—"
 "You want to get an invitation out of him?" said Harry. "I shan't tell you! Now, buzz off; we're busy!"
 "You might tell me the chap's name."
 "Rats! Get out!"
 "Is it Ogilvy?"
 "Get out!"
 "It can't be Linley," said Bunter musingly. "Linley's as poor as a church mouse, and his place can't be fit to ask decent chaps home to. I should refuse his invitation. I'm not snobbish, but I believe in a gentleman keeping up his class, and, after all, Linley is only a factory chap! I owe something to myself as a gentleman!"
 "You owe something to jolly nearly every chap in Greyfriars, I believe!" said Nugent brutally.
 "Oh, really, Nugent—"
 Bob Cherry rose, and took the poker, and put the end of it in the fire. Then he stood beside the firegrate, waiting for it to get hot.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in a very doubtful way.
 "I suppose it's not Linley?" he said. "Of course, I should bar Linley! I couldn't consent to forget my dignity sufficiently to pass a vac with a cad— Ow!"
 A handsome, sturdy junior had just entered the study. It was Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire—the scholarship boy of the Remove.
 He could not help hearing Bunter's remarks, and the colour flushed into his face, but he gave no other sign.
 Wharton rose to his feet, and took Bunter's ear between his finger and thumb.
 "That was the cause of Bunter's anguished 'Ow!'"
 "Ow! Leggo! Yow!"
 "You rotten cad!" said Harry angrily. "I've warned you before about it! Ask Linley's pardon at once!"
 "Oh, it's all right!" said Mark Linley.
 "It's not all right! Bunter belongs to this study, and he disgraces it fresh every day by being a cad, a snob, and a rotter!"
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Beg Linley's pardon at once!"
 "Ow! Yow! All right! I—I beg your pardon, Linley! Ow! I really didn't mean

"I'm sorry you're a cad—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "He doesn't seem to understand," said Wharton. "I'll jolly well squeeze his ear till he does! There's nothing like it!"
 "Ow! Yow! I—I think I understand! I—I'm sorry I'm a cad and a snob, Linley!"
 "So am I!" said Mark. "I suppose you can't help it?"
 "Ow! Ow! Leggo!"
 Harry Wharton released Billy Bunter's ear, and the fat junior staggered to his feet, rubbing the damaged auricular appendage ruefully.
 "Ow! Beast! I'm hurt!"
 "Now get out!"
 Bunter rubbed his ear, and blinked savagely.
 "I've got to settle about that holiday yet. Look here—"
 "It's settled! Buzz off!"
 "It's not settled! I'm a businesslike chap, and I want to get things definitely fixed up for the vac!" said Bunter. "Where are you going—"
 Bob Cherry drew the poker from the fire. The end was red-hot.
 "Are you going, Bunter?" he asked politely.



Bob Cherry entered as Horatio. "Good old Bob!" roared the audience. "Shut up and give a fellow a chance," shouted Horatio.

that, you know. What I—I really meant to say was, that I admired you awfully, you know, and— Ow!"
 Mark Linley gave the fat junior a glance of contempt.
 "Ow! Leggo, Wharton, you beast! Ow! I've told the rotter I'm sorry! Ow!"
 "Get on your knees, porpoise!"
 "Ow! I won't!"
 "Down, dog!" said Nugent.
 "To your knees!" grinned Bob Cherry.
 "Ow! Ow! I won't—I mean, all right, I will!" And Billy Bunter flopped down heavily upon his fat knees. "Ow! Yah!"
 "Now apologise properly!"
 "Ow! I won't! Yow!" Wharton's finger and thumb tightened upon the fat junior's ear, and Bunter howled with anguish. "Ow! All right!"
 "You will say 'I'm sorry I'm a snob and a cad—'"
 "Ow! I'm sorry Wharton's a snob and a cad—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.
 Wharton flushed red.
 "What's that?" he roared.
 "That's what you told me to say!" stammered Billy Bunter.
 "Ass! You're to speak in the first person, that's what I meant!"
 "But you were the first person to speak, and—"
 "Ass! Say 'I'm sorry I'm a cad—'"

"Oh! Keep off! Yah! Yaroooh!"
 Billy Bunter backed away from the glowing tip of the poker. Bob Cherry made a pretended lunge at him, and the fat junior fled into the passage. Bob laughed, and slammed the door.
 "I shall be jolly glad to get a rest from that chap this vac," he remarked.
 "Same here!"
 "It's about the vac I've looked in to see you," said Mark Linley. "Hazeldene has spoken to me about it. It seems that he's going to spend part of the holiday at a place in Devonshire, belonging to an uncle of his—a chap who lives in an old house on the coast. He's asked me to come, and says you chaps are coming."
 Wharton nodded.
 "That's so. Hazeldene's sister Marjorie will be there, and one or two of the girls from Cliff House," he said. "We should make up a rather jolly party. The girls are coming a day or two later, but we shall go down with Hazeldene as soon as we break up here. I'm jolly glad you're coming, Linley."
 The Lancashire lad coloured.
 "I thought I'd speak to you chaps before I accepted," he said.
 "Why?"
 Mark's colour deepened.
 "Well, you see, you fellows have always

treated me decently, though I'm what Bunter so elegantly terms a factory cad!"

"Don't take any notice of that worm! However modest you may be, you must know that you are worth whole cartloads of Bunters!"

Mark Linley laughed.

"Well, I might think that without being very conceited," he remarked. "But, look here, if you fellows don't like the idea of my coming, just say so, and I shan't feel offended. I'm poor, and can't afford the same things as you have. I don't dress so well, and I don't have half so much pocket-money. I'd like you to say out in plain English what you think about the matter."

"I think you're an ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Exactly!" said Nugent. "My opinion, too!"

"And mine precisely!" said Wharton. "Of course we shall be glad to have you with us! That's settled!"

"Good! Then I shall accept!"

"I should say so! And now sit down and help us make up this blessed notice! It's got to go up on the board before tea!"

And the four juniors were soon busy over the paper.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Programme.

"MY hat!"
"More Remove cheek!"
"The Lower Fourth want a licking all round!"
"Yes, rather!"

Such were some of the remarks passed by a little crowd of Fifth and Sixth-Formers gathered, after tea, before the notice-board in the hall.

There was a new paper pinned up there, and it was in the handwriting of Harry Wharton, the head boy of the Remove, and president of the Junior Dramatic Society.

The seniors grinned or frowned as they read it, according to the way they looked at the matter.

Wingate, the Greyfriars captain, laughed, and so did Courtney, and they walked away still laughing.

Loder and Carne scowled. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, looked extremely indignant.

"The cheek!" said Blundell.
"The nerve!" said Bland.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were standing at the back of the crowd, greatly interested, and trying to get a look at the notice.

But the crowd of seniors was too thick at present, and the Fourth-Formers had to wait.

The seniors read the notice, and their remarks were more emphatic than complimentary to Harry Wharton and his Junior Dramatic Society. The notice ran as follows:

"NOTICE!

"To the Juniors, Seniors, and Masters of Greyfriars.

"This evening, to celebrate the eve of breaking-up for the Easter holidays, a performance will be given by the Junior Dramatic Society.

"The performance will take place punctually at eight o'clock in the Remove Form-room, and all are invited.

"The play given will be 'Hamlet,' and the cast will be as follows:

Hamlet, the Prince of DenmarkH. Wharton.
LaertesF. Nugent.
HoratioR. Cherry.
The GhostP. Hazeldene.
The KingM. Linley.
PoloniusD. Morgan.
The QueenOmitted.
OpheliaOmitted.
Courtiers, Soldiers, Grave-diggers, etc.The Remove.

"Owing to the shortness of the time, it is impossible for lady members of the Dramatic Society to be present, and the parts will, therefore, be omitted, with regret.

"Everybody is welcome, and the Sixth are expected to honour the occasion with their presence if they expect the Remove to turn up for the Greek play at the end of next term.

"Signed, H. WHARTON, Pres. D.S."

"Of all the nerve!" said Loder.

"The cheek!"

"The young sweeps!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 10.

"The Sixth are expected to turn up, are they?" said Carne. "I've a jolly good mind to turn up and bust the show, for their impudence!"

"That's a jolly good idea!" said Blundell of the Fifth. "We'll back you up!"

"What-ho!" said Bland.

The seniors moved on, indignantly discussing the cheek of the latest wheeze of the Remove, the Sixth-Formers seeming to feel especially keenly the remark about the Greek play.

Then the Fourth-Formers had a chance of reading the notice.

They were quite as loud in their condemnation as the seniors—indeed, more so, because Temple, Dabney & Co. had a feeling of rivalry towards the Lower Fourth, and they felt that Harry Wharton had outgeneralled them.

"The cheek of it!" said Temple.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"Seems to me we're a bit in the shade this time," remarked Fry. "Why couldn't we think of giving a play or something at the end of the term?"

"Oh, I wouldn't!" said Temple loftily.

"Rats!"

"Eh?"

"Rats!" repeated Fry coolly. "You would—if you'd thought of it, but you didn't. Wharton is ahead of us again, as he generally is—that's because we've got such a jolly good leader!"

"Look here, Fry—"

"No good jawing," said Scott of the Fourth. "The question is, are we going to allow the Remove to swank about with their rotten dramatic entertainments like this?"

And like a chorus came the answer of Temple, Dabney & Co.:

"No!"

"Then what's to be done?"

Temple grinned.

"We're all invited," he said. "We'll go. We'll take rattles and mouth-organs, and things of that sort, and supply the music for the occasion.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Incidental music rounds off a dramatic entertainment," grinned Temple. "We'll supply the incidental music."

"Oh, father!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Upper Fourth fellows discussed the idea, and the more they discussed it the better they liked it, and they were soon busy making their preparations.

There was a great deal of packing done that evening; but the Junior Dramatic Society found time for a hurried rehearsal of "Hamlet," and at eight o'clock they were all ready in the Form-room.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were ready, too.

On the last night of the term a considerable amount of license was allowed, and, besides that, Temple knew that the Remove wheeze had got the backs of the seniors up.

The Sixth didn't like the allusion to the Greek play, and they felt that the whole affair was a sort of disrespectful imitation of their own doings at the end of the midsummer term.

As for the Fifth, they were averse to the Remove bringing themselves into public notice at all.

Whatever the Upper Fourth did that evening, they were not likely to be interfered with unless they carried it very much too far.

Temple, Dabney and Fry came up to the Form-room together, with a crowd of their Form-fellows, ten minutes early.

They meant to have good places, whence they could boo and rattle and hoot to advantage.

Billy Bunter met them at the door.

The fat junior was blinking discontentedly. "Hallo! Aren't you in the cast, Bunter?" asked Temple, with great apparent astonishment.

"No. I'm left out."

"Why?" asked Fry solemnly.

"Jealousy," explained Bunter. "There's an awful lot of personal and petty jealousy goes on in my study. They want to keep me in the shade, you know. They know that if once I showed what I could do, they wouldn't loom much in the public eye again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I offered to take the part of Hamlet, and Wharton was simply rude about it."

"Rotten!"

"I said I would take the part of Laertes if he liked, and Nugent said he would punch my head if I mentioned it again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The cast's made up, and I'm out of it,"

said Bunter. "Of course, I wouldn't act if they asked me now."

"Of course not. By the way," said Temple seriously, "it seems that one fellow is taking two parts at once."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh?"

"Look at the programme," said Temple, pointing to one that was pinned on the Form-room door for the general benefit of the public. "The Queen—omitted; Ophelia—omitted."

"Omitted, whoever he is, is taking both parts, I suppose," said Fry solemnly.

"Oh, that means that the parts are left out," explained Billy Bunter. "Omitted means left out. Oh, you rotters, you're rotting, are you?" he broke off, as the Upper Fourth-Formers burst into a roar. "Go and eat coke!"

And Bunter marched into the Form-room.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Playing "Hamlet."

HARRY WHARTON looked out from behind the "scenes."

The curtain was down, but there was a gap where it did not meet in the middle, and he could see into the auditorium.

The end of the Form-room had been curtained off, many curtains having been pinned together to make one large enough, and slung on a cord across the room.

Two Removites were in charge of the curtains, with orders to draw them aside—it was impossible to raise them—at a given signal—on pain of death if they blundered.

The scene on the stage represented that of the opening of "Hamlet"—the ramparts of the castle where the ghost appears.

Two Removites were already doing sentry-go in sentinel costume.

The costumes of the Junior Dramatic Society were really good, and in a case like this the juniors eked out their own supply by borrowing from the costumier's in Friar-dale.

Harry Wharton was in Hamlet's garb, and his face was very well made up as that of the sad and doubting Prince of Denmark.

Nugent was ready as Laertes, and Bob Cherry as Horatio.

Hazeldene, behind the scenes, was rigging up a sheet to serve as a ghost with himself inside it.

Bob Cherry viewed his proceedings with a grin, and Morgan, who was acting Polonius, looked on in grim disapproval.

"It won't do," said Morgan.

"What's that?" said Hazeldene.

"It won't do."

"What won't do?"

"The ghost has to be clad in complete steel. Even an amateur audience couldn't take that blessed sheet for a suit of armour."

"Oh, rats!" said Hazeldene. "We haven't any armour except the breastplates on the blessed sentries."

"I don't care. The ghost ought to be in armour."

"Well, he jolly well can't be, and that settles it!"

"The sheet's all right," grinned Bob Cherry. "There are more ghosts in sheets than in armour, and very likely Shakespeare wrote the armour business because they had some medieval props on hand, you know."

"Ass!" said Nugent.

"Anyway, it will have to do," said Hazeldene. "I think it looks convincing myself."

"But the lines," said Morgan.

"Oh, they can be altered!"

"I don't approve of gagging in Shakespeare."

"Can't be helped."

"It's rot!" said Morgan obstinately. "I tell you—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Look you—"

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton turned round.

"Stop that row!" he said. "The room's nearly full. You fellows ready with the curtain?"

"Yes," said Russell and Lacy, a little dubiously, however.

"They're all coming in," said Harry, with a look of satisfaction, as he glanced out into the room again. "There are at least a dozen of the Sixth. Wingate isn't there, or Courtney, but there are a dozen or more. Half the Fifth, too, and nearly all the Upper Fourth."

"The room will be crammed."

"The cramfulness is terrific," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh—who was a gravedigger for the occasion.

"All the better," said Nugent. "We'll show 'em what acting really is."
 "Yes, rather!"
 "Ready, then!"
 "We're ready!"
 "Hurry up with that curtain!" sang out Temple from the front seats. "Peep-bo! I can see you, Mr. Hamlet!"
 There was a roar of laughter. Wharton turned red, and popped back out of sight. Nugent wrinkled his brows.
 "Hang it, that isn't the way to begin a tragedy!" he said. "They ought to take it seriously. That cackling spoils the effect."
 Temple's voice could be heard from the auditorium. The chief of the Upper Fourth was evidently not inclined to take matters seriously.

"Peep-bo!" he called out again. "Where are you, Hamlet?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "What I want to know is, how they're going to play without Ophelia or the Queen," said Blundell, of the Fifth. "That's what I want to know."
 "Oh, that's all right!" said Loder. "The trouble is, that there's not enough parts omitted. That's the real trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "If it were something like this—Hamlet, omitted; Laertes, omitted; Polonius, omitted; Horatio, omitted—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better get the curtain up at once," said Harry, his cheeks very red. "That sort of rot will spoil the show. I almost wish we had chosen a comedy now."

"This will be comic enough before we get through with it," said Morgan. "With a ghost in a sheet—"
 "Oh, shut up!"

"Raise the curtain, there!"
 "We can't raise it," said Lacy. "You know that."

"I mean pull it aside, idiot!"
 "Who are you calling an idiot?"
 "Quick, I say, yank that curtain away!"
 "Oh, all right!"

The curtain was dragged aside. Lacy managed his side very well, but Russell's caught; perhaps the pins had something to do with it. Russell tugged and tugged, and the curtains sagged and swayed, but would not come to him.

"I—I can't do it!" gasped Russell. "It won't come!"

The audience yelled with delight. Their yells were almost frantic when Hamlet was seen to rush from the scenes and help the invisible scene-shifter to drag back the curtain.

It came back at last, and the stage was revealed.

Remove fellows in the audience turned the lights low, to make the proper effect on the stage; an acetylene bicycle-lamp behind the scenes playing the part of the moon, and casting beams of more than lunar brightness across the stage.

"Go it!" called out Temple.
 "Hurrah!"
 "Buck up!"

The two sentinels opened the scene with some diffidence, under the circumstances.

Not a word that they said was heard, but nobody cared for that.

They forgot half their lines, and stammered and muttered.

Then Bob Cherry entered as Horatio, and, in spite of his make-up, the audience greeted him by that name.
 "Here comes Cherry!"
 "Good old Bobby!"
 "On the ball!"

"You asses!" roared Horatio. "Shut up, and give a chap a chance!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the audience, delighted with that original line.

"Don't be an ass, Bob!" came a whisper from behind the scenes. "They're trying to wreck the performance. Sit tight, and go ahead!"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Bob Cherry.
 "Go ahead!" shouted Temple. "On the ball!"

"Kick off, there!"
 "Your innings, Cherry! Get to the wicket!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Cherry, with a very red face, began to speak his lines.

The scene between Horatio and the soldiers was got through in a hum and buzz of voices. Then at the words "Look, there it comes again—" a sheeted figure entered.

"The ghost!" shrieked Temple.
 "Oh!" roared the Upper Fourth. "The g-g-g-ghost! Help! Rescue!"

"The ghost!"
 "Help!"
 The affected terror of the Upper Fourth made the rest of the audience yell.

In the midst of the din someone turned up the lights, and a blaze of illumination descended upon the stage and the ghost. Hazeldene's chalked face blinked at the audience under the folded sheet.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Wharton ran to the front of the stage.
 "You rotters! Order! Fair play!"
 "Go it!" shrieked Temple.

And the Fourth-Formers began to stamp on the floor. Rattles, mouth-organs, and whistles were produced to add to the din; and the noise was terrific.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
 Wrecked.

WHARTON stood with a frowning brow, undecided how to act.

Seniors as well as juniors were joining in the disturbance, and it was pretty plain that all the audience—with the exception of the Remove members—had come there with the special intention of making a row and "mucking up" the performance.

Rattle! Thud!
 Stamp! Bang! Shriek!
 The Fourth-Formers had fairly let themselves go now.

The characters in Hamlet gathered on the stage, and held a muttered consultation, in utter dismay.

"What on earth's to be done?" muttered Nugent. "They won't let us go on!"
 "No; it's a plant!"
 "We can't go on!"

Rattle! Bang! Crash! Thump!
 "Play up!" yelled Temple. "On the ball!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Go it!"

"Where's Hamlet?"
 "To be or not to be, that's the giddy question?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Bump! Crash! Bang!
 "The rotters!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"We'll jolly well turn 'em out, and play to only the Remove!"

"That's a good idea! We oughtn't to have admitted them. Fancy Sixth Form fellows behaving like this, too!"

"Rotten!"
 "The rottenfulness is terrific!"
 Rattle, bang, crash! Bump!

"Turn them out!" shouted Elliott, of the Remove.
 "That's the music!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Turn them out!"
 And the Remove members of the audience rose as one man to turn the disturbers out. Down from the stage came Hamlet & Co. to help.

That was just what Temple wanted. All the Fourth-Formers were ready for ructions, and they only wanted the shadow of an excuse for wrecking the place.

Temple jumped up as Nugent seized him.
 "Rally, Upper Fourth!" he shouted. "Sock it to them!"
 "Hurrah!"

"Give 'em socks!"
 "Yah! Go it!"

"My hat!" gasped Loder, as a flying cushion smote him on the ear and made him reel. "It's time the Sixth got out of this."

And the seniors scrambled towards the door.

But the Fifth did not go. Most of them remained and made common cause with the Upper Fourth—and the odds were against the Remove.

"Turn them out!" roared Bob Cherry.
 But it was not so easy to turn out a party that outnumbered them.

Instead of being turned out, the disturbers gained ground.

They drove the Remove back towards the stage, and invaded that sacred precinct, and the tussle went on among the scenes.

The result was inevitable. The scenes went crashing to right and left, and a number of combatants being rolled up among the curtains, dragged them down with their weight.

The curtains came swooping down, enveloping the stage, and putting out the moon—in other words, the acetylene lamp which served the purpose of the lunar orb.

And the smell that arose from the extinguished moon was terrific.
 In the midst of the wreck the tussle went wildly on.

There was a sudden shout as the Form-room door opened.

"Cave!"
 "The Head!"
 But most of the combatants were too excited to hear or to heed.

The Head stood in the open doorway, looking into the room.

Blank amazement was upon his face.
 "Bless my soul!" he gasped. "Most extraordinary!"

He strode forward with rustling gown.
 "Boys, cease this disturbance instantly!"
 "My hat! The Head!"
 "Phew!"
 "Oh!"

"Cease this at once, boys! You hear me?"
 They heard him now, and they obeyed. Looking very red and sheepish, the combatants separated. Dr. Locke eyed them sternly.

"Boys! Blundell! Temple! Wharton! What does this mean?"
 "You—you see, sir—" gasped Blundell.

"You see—" "You see, sir—" "I see a scene of most disgraceful riot!" said the Head severely. "What does it mean, Wharton?"

"You—you see, sir, we—we were giving a Shakespearian performance, and—"

"Indeed! Is this the way you give a Shakespearian performance?"
 "You see, sir—"

"The audience didn't like the acting, sir," said Temple, who was the first to recover his coolness. "We thought we were within our rights to testify our disapproval of bad acting, sir."

"You ass!" exclaimed Bob Cherry wrathfully. "What do you know about acting?"

"Silence, Cherry—" "Yes, sir, but that duffer—" "Silence! Is it your custom, Temple, to disapprove of acting in this manner—by wrecking the place?"

"I—I think we were a little excited, sir."
 "I think you must have been," said the Head grimly. "If it were not the last day of term, I should cane every boy connected with this disturbance!"

"Oh, sir!"
 "As it is, you will clear up this confusion, and then go to bed at once!"
 "Oh, sir!"

"And if there is any further disturbance you will hear from me. I shall keep an eye on this Form-room till you are gone to bed."

"To—to bed, sir!" gasped Temple. "It's—it's not half-past eight yet, sir!"
 "It is your own fault!"
 "But, sir—"

"Not a word more, Temple!"
 And the Head marched majestically from the room.

The juniors looked at one another in dismay.

To be sent to bed like naughty children was not gratifying.

And they were to lose the rest of the evening, too.

Temple, Dabney & Co. began to wish that they had testified their disapproval in a somewhat less boisterous manner.

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "Never mind; it was funny!" he exclaimed.

"We've got to go to bed!" growled Fry.
 "But we've got out of hearing the rest of the play," grinned Scott.

Fry brightened up.
 "By George, so we have! I'd forgotten that."

The Removites did not speak. Their feelings were too deep for words.

But the members of the Junior Dramatic Society, as they set about collecting up the overturned scenes and props, vowed inwardly that before the last night of the term was over, Temple, Dabney & Co. should repent them of the mischief they had done.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
 Lights Out!

"BED!"
 "It's rotten!"
 "The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"Why, it's hardly half-past eight yet!" said Bob Cherry.
 "Can't be helped!" said Wingate. "You should have thought of that before you kicked up such a dickens of a row. The Head's sent me to see you off to your dormitories—and sharp's the word!"

"It was all the fault of that duffer Wharton!"

Wingate laughed.

"I don't care whose fault it was or wasn't! Off to bed!"

And the juniors obeyed. There was nothing else to be done. And the captain of Greyfriars was not a fellow to be argued with.

They crowded upstairs at the unaccustomed hour and went into their dormitories.

Courtney of the Sixth went to put the lights out for the Upper Fourth, and Wingate paid that attention to the Remove.

"I shall be back in three minutes," he remarked significantly. "I should recommend you youngsters to be in bed then."

Wingate did not add that there would be liberal spanks for those who were not in bed—that was understood. Most of the juniors began to undress.

Harry Wharton & Co. kicked their boots off, but made no further movement to undress.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you know, aren't you going to bed?" asked the fat junior, who was "peeling" at express speed. "You'll be licked, you know!"

"Blessed if I'm going to bed so early, and all on account of a rotten play!" said Bunter.

"You'll be licked—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"We've got to turn in," said Wharton. "No need to go to sleep, though, even if we could. We can get up after lights out, and stay up till the usual time, if we don't make too much row. The Head wouldn't mind if he knew—on the last night of the term."

"Something in that."

"I'm jolly well going to, anyway! We can turn in with our clothes on for Wingate."

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, as he turned in half-dressed, "I don't want to say I told you so, but I must say that this wouldn't have happened if you had played me as Hamlet. You couldn't expect the Upper Fourth to stand a cast with the best actor left out—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I attribute the whole trouble to personal jealousy!" said Bunter, blinking from his bed. "I should say— Yow!"

Bunter did not really intend to say "Yow!" but he did it because a pillow whirled through the air and squashed him flat on his bed.

"Oh! Wow! Beast!"

"Go to sleep!"

The door of the Remove dormitory reopened.

There was a wild scurry of the juniors who were still out of bed to get in.

Wingate looked into the room grimly.

"In bed?"

"Yes, Wingate!" came in obedient chorus.

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars turned out the gas and retired, shutting the door after him.

The next moment three-quarters of the Remove were sitting up in bed and kicking the clothes off.

"I say, you fellows, I don't think I shall get up," said Bunter. "I suppose you're not thinking of standing a dormitory feed, or anything of that sort?"

"No, porpoise!"

"Then I sha'n't get up! I've got a delicate constitution, and sleep is almost as necessary as good nourishment to keep up my strength. I'm going to sleep."

"Who's game for leap-frog?" asked Bob Cherry, lighting a candle-end. "Or shall we have chasing over the beds—every fellow who falls on Bunter pays a forfeit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Good egg!" exclaimed Ogilvy heartily. "Bunter is to call out every time he's fallen upon, so that we shall know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you beasts! I—I say—"

"I'll begin!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, taking a quick run towards Bunter's bed. "Remember, Bunter, if I land on you you're to call out. Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's gone!"

Bunter had rolled out of bed on the opposite in a twinkling.

"Oh!" he roared. "Keep off, you—your dangerous ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter squirmed on the floor in the tangled bedclothes.

He had rolled out of bed in a great hurry, THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 10.

in the belief that Bob Cherry was about to jump on him.

As a matter of fact, of course, Bob had really intended nothing of the kind.

"Let me help you!" said Skinner kindly, coming towards the struggling Owl of the Remove. "Lend a hand, Stott!"

"Certainly!" said Stott.

The two juniors grasped the bedclothes, but instead of helping Bunter out of them they wound them tighter round him, so that Bunter's last state was worse than his first.

"Help!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'm suffocating! Pull them the other way!"

"Here goes!" said Skinner, giving the blankets a yank, which brought Bunter rolling heavily along the floor.

"Ow, ow!"

"Help him, Stott!"

"I'm helping him," said Stott, who was busily engaged in tying knots in the twisted sheet, so that Bunter could not possibly escape from the bedclothes.

"Good!"

"Ow! Help me!" spluttered Bunter.

"We're helping you!"

The sheets were knotted round Bunter and the blankets, and the fat junior rolled on the floor a helpless prisoner.

Skinner and Stott rose to their feet and grinned.

"Blessed if I can help him out!" said Skinner.

"Same here!" remarked Stott.

"You—you beasts! You've tied me up on purpose!" spluttered Bunter.

"Oh, come! Is that what you call gratitude?" demanded Skinner.

"Yah! Lemme out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Inky, come and help me!"

"The helpfulness is great," remarked the good-natured Nabob of Bhanipur, as he came towards the struggling and kicking junior. "Prayfully keep still, my worthy chum, and— Oh!"

Bunter did not keep still. He kicked out fiercely in the attempt to rid himself of the bedclothes, and his foot crashed into Inky's chest as he knelt down.

The Nabob of Bhanipur gasped and rolled over backwards, bumping heavily on the floor. There was a roar of laughter from the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Cave!"

There was a footstep in the passage.

In a twinkling the candle-ends were blown out, and the juniors made wild dives for their beds.

All excepting Billy Bunter, of course, who could not move, except to wriggle and kick. The dormitory was plunged into darkness, and the juniors had got into their beds, when the door swung open.

Someone looked in. Who it was the juniors could not see in the gloom.

But as soon as the new-comer spoke they recognised the voice.

It was that of Mr. Quelch, their Form-master!

"What is this noise here?"

Dead silence!

Even Billy Bunter had ceased to wriggle and gasp in his terror of being discovered by the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch listened for a moment or two.

He knew his Form too well to be deceived by the silence.

With a grim smile he advanced into the room, taking a match-box from his pocket to light the gas.

In the darkness he walked straight upon Billy Bunter.

Bunter gave a gasp, and squirmed as the Form-master's foot trod upon his fat leg, and Mr. Quelch uttered a startled exclamation.

"Bless my soul, what is that?"

"Ow!"

"What—what is it?"

"Yow!"

Scratch went a match, and a light flared out. Mr. Quelch deliberately lighted the gas, and then looked at the fat figure wriggling on the floor.

At the sight of Billy Bunter wriggling in the twisted bedclothes he gave a jump.

"Bunter, what do you mean by this?"

"Do you think I'm doing it for fun?" bawled the fat junior, quite exasperated. "I've had a rotten trick played on me!"

"That is not the way to address your Form-master, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

"Well, sir, I—I've been rottenly treated, sir," said Bunter. "Look here—"

"Dear me, you are fastened up in the bed-

clothes! I suppose this is a joke—what you would call a jape?"

"I don't see any blessed joke in it, sir! Skinner—"

"Well, Bunter—"

"And Stott—"

"You need not tell me anything, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, pretending not to hear. "On the last night of the term I shall not take any notice of this."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"That will do!"

Mr. Quelch stooped and untied the knots. Bunter mumbled, and staggered up.

"Now get into bed, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "Good-night, boys! You must not make any more noise in this dormitory."

"Yes, sir! Good-night, sir!"

And Mr. Quelch turned out the light and retired.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Pillow Fight!

"CAD!"

"Sneak!"

"Worm!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton angrily. "You're not fit to be spoken to! If Mr. Quelch would have listened to you, you would have given Skinner and Stott away."

"The measly worm!" said Skinner. "Quelch is a decent sort. He can allow a jape on the last night of the term. But Bunter—"

"Mean rotter!" said Stott. "Let's rag him!"

"Good egg!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows—"

"Worm!"

"But—but I didn't mean to sneak!" said Bunter, in alarm. "If—it just slipped out, you know. And Mr. Quelch didn't take it up, so it doesn't matter."

"You fat Judas!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"If it wasn't the last night of the term," said Harry, "we'd rag you baldheaded! As it is, go to sleep!"

"Yes; but I say—"

"Another word, and we'll have you out of bed, and frog-march you up and down the dorm!" exclaimed Wharton.

And Bunter did not utter the other word. He snorted, and turned over to go to sleep.

"Mr. Quelch says we're not to make any more noise in this dorm," said Bob Cherry. "We must do as he says, especially as he's been so decent. But he didn't mention any other dorm."

"What are you driving at, Cherry?"

"I was thinking of the Upper Fourth. They're the cause of our being sent to bed early, and, of course, we can't go to sleep at this hour. What do you say to paying the Upper Fourth a visit?"

"Good business!"

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, turning out of bed. "It will fill up the time beautifully, and put Temple, Dabney & Co. up to a wrinkle about wrecking a performance of the Junior Dramatic Society. Come on!"

The Remove were soon ready for the raid. Nearly the whole of the Form took part.

They seized pillows and bolsters, and stuffed socks for weapons, and followed Harry Wharton into the passage.

There was a dim glimmer of light in the dormitory passage, from a burner turned half on.

Wharton stepped along to it quietly, and turned it out.

The passage was plunged into darkness at once.

"Now come on!" he muttered.

"The comeonfulness is terrific!"

Quiet as mice, or almost so, the Remove stole away towards the Upper Fourth dormitory.

There was a light glimmering under the door of the Upper Fourth room. Wharton laughed softly.

"They're up, too!" he muttered.

"Looks like it!"

"Listen!"

A voice could be heard from within the dormitory. It was the voice of Temple, the captain of the Upper Fourth.

"Get your pillows. Pillows are all right. And mind, you're to give the Remove just the biggest licking they've ever had in their lives!"

"Oh, rather!"

"We shall take them by surprise, and they'll simply be knocked into a cocked hat!

Mind, they're to have a licking they'll remember all through the vac!"

"What-ho!"

Harry Wharton chuckled.

"Do you hear that?" he muttered.

"I didn't catch it," said Hazeldene, from behind.

"Temple, Dabney & Co. are just going to raid us."

"Wait till they open the door to come out," said Bob Cherry, in a whisper, "then we'll rush in!"

"Good egg!"

The Removites, with suppressed chuckles, waited in the dark passage.

A couple of minutes later the door of the Upper Fourth dormitory swung open.

Temple, Dabney & Co., half dressed, armed with pillows, came marching out.

There was a general gasp as they marched right into the waiting Remove.

"Go for them!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

The Remove made a rush, and the astonished Fourth-Formers went whirling back into the dormitory, and the Lower Fourth followed them fast, swiping right and left with pillows and bolsters.

Wharton kicked the door shut.

"Go for them!" he shouted.

"Hurrah!"

"Play up, Remove!"

And the Remove played up manfully.

The Upper Fourth, taken wholly by surprise, and wholly disconcerted by the sudden and vigorous attack, gave way in all directions.

Swipe, swipe! went the pillows, and the Upper Fourth fellows sprawled in all directions.

The odds were on the side of the Remove, too.

They were a more numerous Form, and nearly all were there.

They scoured up and down the dormitory, smiting hip and thigh.

"Down with 'em!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

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

"M-m-m-my only hat! Rally up, there!"

"Oh, rather!" stuttered Dabney, sitting up on the floor, where a swipe of Bob Cherry's bolster had laid him. "Oh, rather!"

"Go it, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Temple rushed to his washstand.

He seized the jug of water, and swept it round upon the Removites.

The water came out in a long stream, and there were yells from half a dozen juniors as they were soaked to the skin by it.

"Oh, oh! Grooo!"

Then Bob Cherry's bolster swept Temple's legs away from under him, and he sat down.

The jug went to the floor with a crash, and was smashed to pieces.

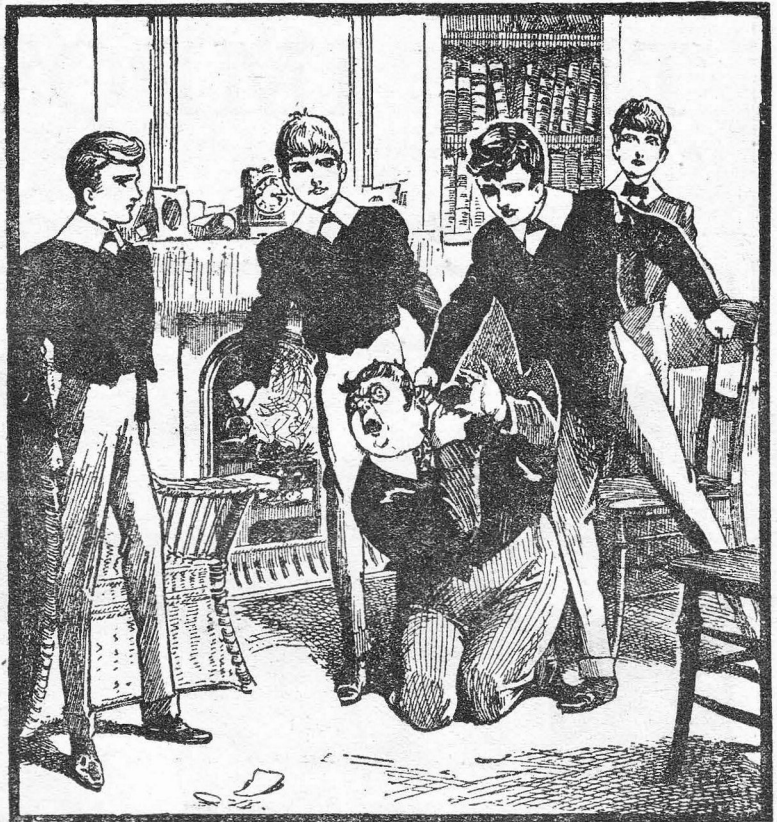
But the Upper Fourth were recovering themselves a little now, and putting up a good fight.

In some places the excited juniors had abandoned pillows, and were resorting to fists, and several struggling couples rolled on the floor.

Still the Remove were getting the best of it.

The Upper Fourth could only desperately resist, and when ever they rallied a charge of the Removites broke them up and scattered them again.

The din was growing terrific.



"Oh! Leggo, Wharton!" "To your knees!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Oh!—I mean I will!" And Bunter flopped heavily on his fat knees. (See page 3.)

All recollection of masters and prefects had faded from the minds of the juniors as they rushed and ran and swiped and smote.

The noise they were making ran through the House, and reached even as far as the Head's study; but they gave it not a thought.

It was suddenly called to their minds when the door was thrown open, and Wingate and Courtney, and two or three other prefects, with red and angry faces, rushed in.

They had canes in their hands, and they did not stop to speak a word.

They waded into the crowd, lashing right and left at backs and legs.

The din had been great before, but it was fearful now.

Wild yells arose, and the juniors dashed frantically to and fro to escape the lashing canes.

"Here, buzz off!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Yah! Let's get out of this!"

The Remove made a break for the door. Two or three of the prefects were upset in the rush, and left gasping on the floor.

The Removites swarmed out into the passage, and ran.

Wingate gasped for breath. "Now get to bed, you young sweeps!" he exclaimed, addressing Temple, Dabney & Co. And the Upper Fourth, sore and sad, turned in.

Wingate looked into the Remove dormitory a few minutes later.

His face was very grim.

"If there's any more row to-night, there will be real trouble!" he said. And went out and shut the door without waiting for a reply.

Bob Cherry chuckled softly.

"What ripping fun! Anybody hurt?"

"Ow!" groaned Nugent. "I'm smarting all over!"

"So am I!"

"Same here!"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Never mind! We've celebrated the last night of the term, after all!" said Bob Cherry.

And there was no doubt that they had!

THE END.

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Four dusty juniors were rushing up the drive. They came across the lawn at the charge, and the Modern juniors leaped to their feet in dismay as they recognised the Fistical Four.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Desperate Measures.

OW! The awful rotters!" "The beasts!" Thus the Fistical Four—otherwise Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Evidently something had happened to disturb their lofty serenity.

The four were lying in the loft of an old, disused barn, with their arms tied, and they were having anything but the time of their lives.

Tommy Dodd and six other Modern juniors had tied them up, and left them in the barn, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had been exhausting their vocabularies on behalf of Tommy Dodd and his Modern confederates.

The worst of it all was that Jimmy Silver and his three chums were due at Oakwood, the home of an old friend of his father's. They were to have had a feed of surpassing luxuriance.

Tommy Dodd had got wind of Jimmy's intended visit, and had decided to go in Jimmy's place. The old gentleman—Mr. Benyon—never having seen Jimmy, it would be quite easy for Tommy Dodd to pass himself off as Jimmy Silver, and he could take his friends.

That was how Tommy Dodd looked at it. And so Jimmy Silver & Co. had been captured on their way to Oakwood, and now Tommy Dodd & Co. were continuing in their steads.

Jimmy Silver & Co.'s feelings were too deep for words.

For about half an hour after the Moderns had left them in the loft of the old barn they had shouted, in the faint hope that someone might hear them, and come to the rescue.

That hope had died away at last.

They were feeling somewhat husky after their vocal efforts, and they were in a state of temper that approached the homicidal.

The thought that while they were cooling their heels in the lonely loft the Modern raiders were scoffing their welcome and their

refreshments at Oakwood made them simply writhe with rage.

They, the Fistical Four, the great leaders and chiefs in all the alarms and excursions of the junior Classical side at Rookwood—they had been hopelessly, completely, and absolutely "done."

It was enraging. It was not to be borne. But it had to be, and that was the rub.

"The cads! The beasts! The Modern rats!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. exhausted their vocabularies as well as their voices. They sat on the bare plank floor, and glared at one another.

"And we've got to sit here like moulting hens till they come home!" groaned Raby. "We shall never hear the end of this! It will be a standing joke at Rookwood!"

"The cheeky beasts, using my name!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"And our feed!" grunted Lovell.

"And planting us here like this!" mumbled Newcome. "It's too bad! Look here, we've got to get out of it somehow!"

They dragged and dragged at the rope tied round their wrists; but they could make no impression on it.

Tommy Dodd had bound all their hands together with one piece of rope. With their hands tied they could not even open the trapdoor, let alone descend the ladder below. But they could not even approach the trapdoor to try, for the end of the rope, tied to a beam, kept them prisoners at the end of the loft.

"Well, if this is the kind of afternoon out you give us, Jimmy, you can leave me at home next time!" groaned Newcome.

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"Tain't my fault, is it, ass?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here, you fathead—"

"Look here, you chump—"

Tempers seemed to be rising. The Fistical Four were dangerously near to ragging one another as there were no Moderns near to rag.

Perhaps it was as well just then that their hands were tied.

"Look here, we've got to get out of this!" said Jimmy Silver, at last, desperately. "It's

those Modern cads we want to get at. If we wait here till they come back, why, we shall never bear the end of it! We shall be chortled to death. I've got a penknife in my pocket, Lovell. Get it out somehow."

"How can I get it out when my beastly hands are tied to your silly paws?"

"Can't you get it out with your teeth?"

"Can I get my head into your fat-headed pocket?"

"If you weren't a silly ass—"

"If you weren't a howling dummy—"

"Look here—"

"There's a pocket-knife in my pocket,"

snorted Lovell. "Get it out with your silly teeth, if you can, and open it with your ears, if you like, and then hold it with your nose, and cut the blessed cord! You're such a dashed clever, silly idiot!"

"I'll get it out somehow!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "Which rotten pocket is it in?"

"Breast-pocket inside my jacket."

"Stand firm, then, while I get it out!"

Jimmy Silver started. For some time he looked as if he were worrying his chum with his teeth like a specially savage bulldog.

He got the jacket open, and got his teeth on the edge of the pocket inside. To get at the knife in the pocket inside was impossible; but there was another resource. Jimmy Silver fastened his teeth firmly on the cloth, and dragged. He had good teeth, and he needed them!

"Hold on!" roared Lovell, as there was a sound of rending cloth. "You're tearing my jacket to pieces, you ass!"

Jimmy Silver paused, crimson with exertion, and glared at him.

"Blow your jacket! What does your dotty jacket matter! Shut up! I'm going to get that knife, if I gnaw you to bits as well as your dashed jacket!"

And Jimmy Silver set to work again. By sheer force he dragged the pocket into shreds, and the knife, naturally, tumbled out, and fell on the floor. Jimmy Silver gave a breathless whoop of triumph.

Lovell regarded his jacket rather morosely. That pocket looked as if it would require some mending.

"Well, there's the knife!" said Raby.

"Look at my jacket!" hooted Lovell.
"Blow your jacket! Bless your jacket! Bust your jacket!"

"You have busted it, you ass!"
"Now get the knife open, you clever ass!" said Raby. "Go on! Open it with your ears while you hold it with your nose."

Jimmy Silver did not follow that extremely sarcastic advice. The feat would certainly be exceedingly difficult to perform.

"Well, what have you to show for busting my jacket?" demanded Lovell. "Shall we sit down and look at the knife till those Modern cads come back?"

"Oh, cheese it! Look here, there's a big blade to that knife, and if I can get it in my teeth—"

"But you can't, fathead!"

"That's all you know! I can smash it with—"

"What?"

"If I stamp on it hard enough, I'll have it in pieces, and then I can pick up the blade in my teeth."

"That's my knife!" yelled Lovell, as Jimmy Silver started carrying out that excellent plan.

Stamp, stamp, stamp!
"Look here, my knife—"

Jimmy Silver did not heed. He stamped his heel on the knife with terrific force. He succeeded more quickly than he had expected; the knife was not made to stand usage like that. The bone handle went into pieces, and the two blades clinked loose on the floor. Lovell's face was a study. He had given four-and-six for that knife.

"There you are!" panted Jimmy Silver triumphantly. "Now, all bend down together, and I'll soon have hold of that blade."

The juniors squirmed on the floor of the loft. Jimmy Silver groped for the loose blade with his head, and succeeded in getting it into his mouth. He held it tightly with his teeth.

Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were interested by this time, as well as tired and exasperated. Jimmy Silver, with the blade held sideways in his teeth, began to saw at the cords. It was not an easy task. It was, in fact, a very difficult task.

The blade was not very sharp, and Jimmy Silver was about to tell Lovell what he thought of him for carrying a blunt knife about with him when he remembered himself. He did not want to grope on the floor again for the blade.

"My hat, it's going!" said Lovell at last, in a tone of surprise that had an irritating effect on Jimmy Silver.

It was just as if Lovell hadn't expected the cord to "go."

Jimmy Silver had almost cut through the cord. Several strands had parted, and the juniors felt a loosening of their bonds.

"Nwtbrkthm!" said Jimmy Silver.

He was trying to say, "Now try to break them!" without dropping the blade from his mouth, and the result could hardly be called lucid.

Fortunately, the chums guessed this meaning. They strained their wrists as hard as they could, and the almost-severed cord parted with a snap. The coiling cord whisked off their wrists like a snake.

They were free!

"Done it!" panted Raby. "Jimmy, old man, you're a genius—a giddy genius!"

"Ought to have a putty medal, by Jove!" said Newcome heartily.

"Lot of good that knife will be now!" remarked Lovell. "Still, it was worth it, I'll say that! Let's get out of this!"

The Classical juniors lost no time. Jimmy Silver was already raising the trapdoor.

They slithered down the ladder. Silver dragged out his bike, and the others followed him.

They rushed their bikes across the field to the road.

"Now ride like thunder!" said Jimmy Silver. "We shall catch the beasts all right! They won't expect us! And as soon as you see 'em, go for 'em! Never mind who's there! Just go for them, and give them boiled beans!"

"What-ho!" chorused the Co.

They did not need telling that.

And four flushed and revengeful cyclists were spinning down the road at a speed which certainly exceeded the legal limit.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Impostors.

TOMMY DODD & CO. rode cheerfully away from the barn.

They hadn't the least fear that the Classical prisoners would get away. The old barn was deserted, and never used now, and stood in a lonely spot. The prisoners might have shouted for twenty-four hours without being heard.

It was, as Tommy Dodd freely admitted, hard cheese on the Classics. But what could the fellows expect when they had the nerve to back up against the Modern side at Rookwood? And, even if it was rough, it wasn't rougher than being anointed with ink and soot and treacle, as Tommy Dodd himself had been anointed by Classical hands.

Tommy Dodd & Co. felt their consciences quite easy. Besides, their consciences were pretty tough, and could stand a good deal.

They pedaled off in the highest spirits. "Worked like a charm!" said Tommy Dodd. "This will be a lesson to Jimmy Silver about reading out his letters when there's a giddy Polonius behind the curtain."

And the Moderns laughed loudly as they pedaled on. The scheme had worked like a charm, and everything in the garden, so to speak, was lovely.

They soon drew near to Oakwood. The big house, standing in extensive grounds by the shining river, was visible a good distance from the road.

The bunch of cyclists were not long in arriving at the big gates. They dismounted, and Tommy Dodd gave a tremendous peal on the bell. The lodge-keeper came down to open the gates. He touched his cap respectfully. Evidently a party of juniors was expected at Oakwood that afternoon.

"Master Silver?" asked the lodge-keeper.
"Expecting me—what?" asked Tommy Dodd coolly.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Benyon's in the garden, sir. And tea's laid under the trees on the lawn."

"Oh, good! Take the bikes!"
"Yes, sir!"

Tommy Dodd led the way cheerfully without a tremor, and the others followed him, not feeling quite so assured as their leader. The lodge-keeper took charge of their bicycles, and wheeled them away. Tommy Dodd's unshaken assurance encouraged his comrades. If he had shown a sign of doubt, it is extremely probable that the whole party would have turned tail.

A kindly-looking old gentleman with a white moustache was seated in a big armchair on the lawn, and he rose with a welcoming smile as the juniors came up.

There was a large table on the lawn, and it was already laid. Mr. Benyon smiled kindly as the juniors approached, though he looked a little surprised for a moment. He had expected four guests, and he beheld seven.

"I'm glad to see you, my boys!" he said genially. "Which of you is my old friend's son James?"

That was rather an awkward question to answer. Tommy Dodd had a conscientious objection to whoppers, even in jest.

"I've brought all these chaps, sir," he said diplomatically. "You didn't mention the number in your letter, sir."

The old gentleman smiled.

"All your friends are welcome, my dear James. You said in your letter three; but the more the merrier. Pray introduce them to me!"

"Towle, Webb, Lacy, Hunt, Cook, Doyle, and me," said Tommy Dodd, performing the introductions; and the juniors all raised their caps a second time, and blushed and grinned.

"Then you have changed your mind," said Mr. Benyon.

"Eh?" stammered Tommy Dodd, taken aback.

"You mentioned in your letter that you would bring your three special chums—Lovell, Raby, and Newcome."

"They—they can't come, sir!"

"You must bring them another time, James."

"Certainly, sir!" said Tommy Dodd. "They'd come straight on now if they could. Won't you call me Jimmy, sir? Nobody ever calls me James. Ahem!" Which was perfectly true.

"Certainly, my boy!" said Mr. Benyon, shaking hands with him again. "How like your father you are!"

This was almost too much for Tommy Dodd, and Doyle nearly exploded, and the rest of the party began to cough violently.

Fortunately at that moment Mr. Benyon turned away to give orders to a footman respecting the tea. There were three more guests than he had expected. But Mr. Benyon evidently knew schoolboys, and had not

forgotten his old schooldays, for the supplies that were carried out from the house were large enough for seventeen, if not for seventy.

And what supplies they were, too! The most gorgeous feeds at Rookwood, even on first night, when the fellows had hampers from home, paled into insignificance beside this.

Eggs and muffins, ham and tongue, cakes and tarts, scones and buns, and doughnuts, jams, and jellies, and preserves!

The Modern young rascals were not feeling the slightest doubt or hesitation now. They blessed their good luck, and blessed Tommy Dodd for having thought of that scheme. It was a feat that they would remember for whole terms.

Mr. Benyon made the juniors sit round the table, and he put them at their ease at once. Not that they required much putting at their ease. The three Tommies were not much troubled by shyness. And any schoolboy who had not been put at his ease by the sight of that whacking feed would have been a very peculiar schoolboy indeed.

They had had a long ride, and they were hungry. It was nearly tea-time at Rookwood. They had good appetites, and wished they were better. And they could see that it delighted the kind old gentleman's heart to see them tucking in and doing full justice to the good cheer. They were willing to afford him that delight.

Every face round the big table beamed. The Modern heroes of Rookwood were having the time of their lives. What time their rivals, Jimmy Silver & Co., were having anything but the time of their lives.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Sudden Interruption.

PASS the cake, old chap!"
"Jolly this way!"
"Where's the jam?"

The impostors were enjoying themselves immensely. Indeed, they had forgotten they were impostors by this time. They felt as if they had known Mr. Benyon all their lives. They felt exceedingly friendly towards him. Not a fellow there but would have been glad to have adopted the old gentleman as an uncle.

Mr. Benyon was evidently enjoying himself, too. He was one of those kindly old gentlemen who retain a pleasant recollection of their own boyhood. He liked boys, and he understood boys. He had dismissed the footman from the scene, letting the juniors wait upon themselves and one another. They did not slack. But they were good. They looked after Mr. Benyon as well as they looked after themselves.

It was a feast of the gods.

When the juniors had been more than an hour at the table they showed little sign of slacking. It was their idea to make hay while the sun shone. It was a happy scene on the wide green lawn in the westerling sunshine, with the cheery talk and the happy laughter of the schoolboys ringing out.

It came out that Mr. Benyon was an old Rookwood boy himself, though it was well over forty years since he had been in Tommy Dodd's Form there. In those days, he told them, it had been all Classical.

"Must have been a drowsy sort of hole then!" murmured Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd stamped on his foot under the table. Mr. Benyon was under the impression that his guests belonged to the Classical side at Rookwood.

"You find it livelier with the new side?" asked Mr. Benyon, with a smile. "Yes, I have heard that there is keen rivalry. Quite enjoyable, I suppose?"

"Lively sometimes," said Tommy Dodd. "Of course, we always down the bouncers! They haven't an earthly against us!"

"What sort of boys are the Modern fellows?" asked the old gentleman.

"Oh, first-rate!"

"Best of the bunch, sir!" said Tommy Cook.

"Faith, an' the Modern side is top side at Rookwood, sorr!" said Tommy Doyle. "The Classical side can't keep their end up against us!"

"You ass!" whispered Tommy Dodd furiously.

Mr. Benyon was looking surprised. "So all your friends are not on the same side?" he observed to Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Dodd coughed. Doyle had given himself away with a vengeance.

"Ahem! Yes—no, sir!" stammered Tommy Dodd. "Not exactly. I have some—some friends on both sides. This—this chap Doyle is a Modern. We let him come with us

because—because"—Tommy Dodd cudgelled his brains, and was struck by a sudden inspiration—"because he's an Irishman, sir, and the Dublin Fusiliers have played up so rippingly in the war."

Mr. Benyon smiled.
"I am glad to see you on such good terms with one another," he remarked, "and I am glad to see that it is a healthy feeling of rivalry between you, and that you can appreciate one another's good qualities."

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Tommy Dodd vaguely. "Some of the Classical cads aren't so bad—I mean, the Modern cads, of course—that is to say, the Modern chaps!"

Tommy Dodd buried his face and his confusion in his ginger-beer.

Doyle promptly stamped on his foot under the table. It was his turn. But he chose an unfortunate moment. Tommy Dodd gurgled wildly, and there was almost an explosion. He glared at Doyle, with his face gleaming with ginger-beer.

"You silly—groo—ass! You silly chump—gerroooooo—"

"Sure, where are ye manners, me boy?" said Tommy Doyle chidingly. "I'm surprised at ye, ye Classical bouncer!"

"What! Why, you—you—"
Tommy Dodd choked back his wrath along with the ginger-beer. He was not in a position to resent being called a Classical.

"These Classical chaps are loike that," said Tommy Doyle, pushing his advantage. "Anyone could tell that chap was a Classical—Yaowp!"

"What ever is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Benyon, in astonishment.

"Yow! He hacked me fut!"

"My dear Jimmy—"

"Ahem! Only one of our little jokes, sir," said Tommy Dodd, smiling at Mr. Benyon with one side of his face, and glaring at Tommy Doyle with the other side—a difficult performance which gave him a most extraordinary expression for a moment. "C-can I pass you something, sir?"

"Thank you, no; but—"

"Try the jelly, Doyle, old chap," said Tommy Dodd affectionately.

Doyle was nursing his foot.
There was a loud ringing from the direction of the gates. But the trees that bordered the lawn shut out the gate from view, and none of the merry party saw who it was that entered.

"Now, shall we have a walk about the grounds, my young friends?" said Mr. Benyon, as the Modern juniors, good trenchermen as they were, showed signs of having had enough. "You shall tell me some stories of your school. I want to know how old Rookwood is going on after all these years—"

"Tell him about the barring-out," said Tommy Cook. "It was the time the Classical cads— Ahem! Ahem!"

"The what?"

"That chap's a Modern, too," said Tommy Dodd, coming to the rescue, but bestowing a glare upon Cook. "Shut up, Cook! It's a ripping story about the barring-out, sir! There was Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, and Jimmy Silver—"

"Yourself, you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Benyon, in surprise.

"Oh, my hat! Myself, of course, I mean, sir! They—I mean, we—that is to say us—we—they—had a barring-out in the tuck-shop, and—"

Tommy Dodd's lucid narration was interrupted by a sudden yell, which rang across the sunny lawn:

"There they are!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Merry Meal After All.

"GO for the cads!"
"Give the Modern cads socks! Pile in!"
Tommy Dodd jumped with a gasp of alarm. Four flushed and dusty juniors were rushing up the drive. They came across the lawn at the charge.

The Modern juniors all leaped to their feet in dismay as they recognised the Fistical Four.

"Oh, tare an' 'ounds, they've got away!" yelled Doyle.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Go for 'em!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

In an instant the four enraged Classics were upon their foes. They did not even look at Mr. Benyon.

The old gentleman had started up in a state of the greatest astonishment. His astonishment changed to alarm as the four newcomers hurled themselves upon his guests.

The Moderns, taken by surprise, were hurled right and left, the table went reeling, and there was a terrific crash of crockery.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd rolled on the lawn in a wild embrace. Lovell had Lacy and Webb by the collars, and was knocking their heads together with resounding bangs. The others were all piling in.

"Go it, Moderns! Yah, Classic cads!"

"Give the rotters socks!"

"Oh, my eye! Yaaogh!"

Tramp, tramp! Bump, bump! Crash!

Mr. Benyon simply gasped. In the distance astonished footmen gazed on the scene with horror. Trampling among fallen crockery and over upturned chairs, Classics and Moderns waged a terrific battle. The odds were against the Classics, but they had such great wrongs to avenge that they each of them seemed to possess the might of at least two fellows at that moment, and they more than held their own.

"What does this mean?" shrieked Mr. Benyon. "You young rascals, how dare you come and assault my guests? Bless my soul! Thomas! William! Peter!"

The astonished footmen rushed up, and the juniors were dragged apart by sheer force.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Benyon.

"You—you young hooligans! How dare you!"

"Yow!"

"I hope you are not hurt, my dear Jimmy!" said Mrs. Benyon.

"No; right as rain, thanks!" said Jimmy Silver, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

"I am not addressing you, I was addressing Master Silver!"

"I am Master Silver!"

"What?"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "It's all up now! How ever did the beasts get away? Oh, my hat!"

"Well, we've had the feed!" murmured Tommy Doyle.

"And now there'll be the thunder to pay!" murmured Tommy Cook.

"Will you tell me what this means?" demanded Mr. Benyon, not quite sure whether he was on his head or his heels.

"That Modern cad—"

"That Classical rotter—"

"I'm Jimmy Silver!" roared the owner of that name. "That Modern worm has been borrowing my name—"

"And scoffing our feed!" roared Lovell.

"We're the genuine article!" said Jimmy Silver. "Those fellows aren't respectable—they're Moderns!"

"What—what?" gasped Mr. Benyon.

"Boy, why do you not speak?" He stared sternly at the dismayed Tommy Dodd. "Are you, or are you not James Silver, the son of my friend?"

"Nunno!"

"You are not!" thundered Mr. Benyon.

"Then, what does this mean?"

"It—it's a j-jape!"

"A what?"

"Please, I'm Tommy Dodd," said the Modern junior deprecatingly. "You—you see, we're up against those Classical cads, and we spoiled them! Didn't mean any harm. We—we felt sure you'd rather have decent Modern chaps here instead of those Classical worms, so we—we—"

"So we came, sorr!" said Tommy Doyle, helping his chum out. "No offence, sorr! Sure, an' we wouldn't offend ye for worlds!"

Mr. Benyon's frown died away. A smile lurked round the corners of his mouth.

"So—so you are not Jimmy Silver at all?"

"Nunno! I'm Tommy Dodd!"

"You told me—"

"Oh, no, sir, I didn't! I never tell whoppers!" said Tommy Dodd emphatically.

"You took it for granted, sir, as you were expecting that Classical outsider. It's a dangerous thing to take things for granted; I've heard our headmaster say so, sir."

Mr. Benyon smiled.

"So it was a joke on your schoolfellows?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Tommy Dodd, encouraged by the smile. "Only a joke on the Classical bouncers, sir. They're simply born to have their legs pulled!"

"You Modern polecat—"

"You Classical cad—"

"I'll jolly well—"

"You come and try—"

"Peace! Peace!" exclaimed Mr. Benyon heartily. "You must not quarrel here."

"Sorry, sir, but that Modern worm—"

"Sorry, sir, but that Classical horror—"

"Come, come! You must be friendly here," said Mr. Benyon. "You four boys must be hungry. Come, sit down, and tell me all about it!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. Then they grinned. After all, it had been just such a jape that they might have played on the Moderns, and their wrath never lasted long. They burst into a laugh.

"Right-ho! I'll tell you off this time, Tommy Dodd!" said Jimmy Silver, with a grin at his old rival.

"Jolly good for you, Jimmy Silver!"

The Fistical Four discovered that they were hungry—very hungry. The table was replenished, and they sat down to tea.

The seven Moderns discovered, too, that they could manage a little more. All hostility had vanished now; it was the case of the lion and the lamb lying in peace together.

It was, after all, a merry meal.

Mr. Benyon heard a full account of the jape from both sides, and Tommy Dodd & Co. were relieved to find that he regarded the matter from its humorous side. In fact, the old gentleman laughed till he almost cried.

By the time the Fistical Four had finished a tremendous tea it was time to start home again for Rookwood. All the guests—Classical and Modern—assured Mr. Benyon that they had never spent so ripping an afternoon; and the old gentleman laughingly assured them that he, too, had never spent so ripping an afternoon.

Classicals and Moderns—on the best of terms now—took their leave, Mr. Benyon insisting that the whole party should pay him another visit shortly. Apparently he had a kind regard for both Classical and Moderns—a fact which surprised both parties.

In the best of tempers, eleven juniors petalled down the road in the sunset, and the truce lasted till they reached Rookwood—just in time to rush in before locking-up.

They went in to calling-over together. Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd, with their arms linked quite affectionately; but when they separated to go to their own quarters their remarks were:

"Cut off, you Modern wasters!"

"Clear out, you Classical worms!"

"For goodness' sake go and bury that face, Duddy!"

"Bow-wow! Who was tied in a barn, and had his feed scooped?" hooted Tommy Dodd triumphantly.

A minute later Bulkeley of the Sixth had to come along with his asphalt and restore order. Evidently the truce was at an end.

THE END.

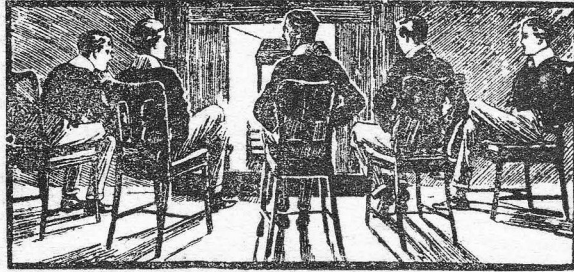
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By
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CLIFFORD.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Mysterious Letter.

TOM!"

"What on earth's the matter, Tom?"

Monty Lowther and Manners both spoke at once. Their voices expressed surprise, not unmixed with alarm.

Tom Merry did not reply.

He was standing near the doorway, in the School House at St. Jim's, with a letter in his hand. The letter was open, and Tom Merry's eyes were fixed upon it. He did not seem to hear his chums speak, and he did not look up from the letter.

"Tom!"

Monty Lowther clapped him on the shoulder. Then Tom Merry raised his eyes from the letter, and met the startled and inquiring gaze of his chums.

"What's the matter?" demanded Manners. "What on earth are you glued on the letter like that for? Is it bad news from home?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Then what is it?" demanded Monty Lowther. "Has Miss Fawcett written to you, and forgotten to enclose a postal-order?"

Tom Merry did not smile. He simply shook his head again. It was evident that the letter in his hand had exercised a strange effect upon him.

"Is that the letter from India?" asked Manners. "I heard there was one for you with the Indian postmark."

"This is it," said Tom.

"Is it from your uncle over there?"

"I thought it would be, but it isn't."

"Well, what is it?" asked Manners, puzzled.

"What are you looking like an Egyptian mummy for? Is there anything wrong?"

"Blessed if I know," said Tom Merry, with a deep breath. "If I were in India, I should think there was something jolly wrong with this; but—but I suppose it must be a lark. But the letter came from India, right enough—the postmark and the stamps prove that. I don't see how anybody so far off as that could be larking with me."

"Give us a squint at the giddy epistle," said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry handed him the letter. Lowther took it, and Manners looked at it over his shoulder. Then both the chums of the Shell uttered exclamations of amazement.

There was nothing written on the letter. It was of thin India paper, and upon it three red spots were inscribed in the form of a triangle.

That was all.

Manners looked at Lowther, and Lowther looked at Manners, and then they both looked at Tom Merry. Tom Merry's face was full of blank astonishment. Manners and Lowther were as astonished as the captain of the Shell.

"Is that all there was in the letter?" asked Lowther at last.

"That's all," said Tom Merry.

"Just this strip of rice-paper with three dotty dots on it?"

"Just that."

"Somebody got out of a lunatic asylum, and started as a funny letter-writer, I should think," said Lowther. "Have you got any lunatics in the family, Tommy?"

"No, ass!"

"Is your Indian uncle the kind of chap to play practical jokes on a simple and innocent kidlet like you?"

"Of course he isn't, fathead! That rot can't be from my uncle—though, as I know

nobody else in India, I'm blessed if I know whom it is from!" said Tom Merry. "It's a giddy mystery. If it hadn't come from India I should think it was some idiotic jape of the New House fellows. But Figgins & Co. couldn't have cycled over to Bombay to send a letter to me, I suppose?"

"Well, no; that would be rather a big order," admitted Monty Lowther. "But it must be a joke, and I don't quite see where the humour comes in, myself. A letter containing three dots and nothing else—unless it means that the writer is dotty, I don't see what it possibly can mean."

Tom Merry laughed, but not very heartily. The letter, meaningless as it apparently was, troubled the junior. Why should anyone in the far-off land of India take the trouble to send him a letter with no meaning in it? How had anyone there known his name, or that he was at St. Jim's? The letter must be from someone who had come into connection with his uncle, the general, and learned something of his affairs. Was it some veiled threat from an enemy? Tom Merry, from having relations in India, had read a good deal about that country, and he knew something of the strange Oriental customs—of crime and vengeance curiously mixed up with a childish theatricality.

Was that strange letter a threat? But, if so, from whom—for what? The thought of it was enough to bring a cloud to the sunny brow of Tom Merry. But he drove the thought from his mind. If that letter spelled danger for him, he was no coward, and it could not frighten him.

"The Johnny hasn't even put his address," said Monty Lowther, who evidently looked upon the letter as a freak of some "potty" individual unknown. "You can't address a reply to 'Three Dots, India.' Three Stars is a well-known address in England, but 'Three Dots, India,' would puzzle the post-office."

Tom smiled.

"Well, it's no good taking any notice of it," he said. "I certainly can't make anything of it, head or tail. I'll keep it, though."

He put the queer letter into his pocket-book.

"Hallo! Here comes Toby!" said Monty Lowther, as the School House page approached with a telegram in his hand. "Is that for me, Toby?"

"Master Merry, sir," said Toby.

"Sure it isn't for me?" said Lowther anxiously. "My uncle might be wiring me a remittance, perhaps."

Toby grinned, and handed the telegram to Tom Merry.

Tom opened it, and uttered an exclamation. "Hallo! Not more from the dotty individual, I hope?" exclaimed Lowther.

Tom laughed.

"No; this is from Southampton, from my uncle."

"I thought your uncle was in India."

"So he was, but this wire is to say that he's landed at Southampton. He's home on leave," said Tom Merry, his eyes shining, "and he's coming here to see me, on his way to London. Isn't that ripping?"

"That's according," said Monty Lowther cautiously. "There are uncles and uncles. What kind of a Johnny is he—liverish, I suppose, after being in India—with a malacca cane to lay round his dutiful nephew—eh?"

"No, ass! I haven't seen him for years, but he's a ripping chap—sends me tips from India. He's stood a good many of our study feeds."

"Good egg! We'll welcome him like a long-

lost son, and perhaps he'll stand another," said Lowther. "Wire back, 'Welcome home and don't forget your cheque-book.'"

"Ass!" said Tom.

He wired back, though not on the lines that Lowther suggested.

"Lucky it's a half-holiday to-morrow," Monty Lowther remarked, after the telegram had been despatched. "We shall be able to entertain the respected Johnny. Any of you chaps know how to make curry?"

"What are you scowling about, Tom?" asked Manners.

Tom Merry's brows were knitted. "I wasn't scowling," he said mildly. "I was thinking. It's jolly odd!"

"What's odd?"

"That that queer letter should reach me from India the same day that my uncle gets home. I wonder—"

Tom Merry did not finish. He was wondering whether there was any connection between that mysterious letter from India, and the strange sign of three, and his uncle's return. He decided at once that he would show General Merry that strange letter, and hear what he thought about it. If it meant danger—

But, after all, how could it mean danger?

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Checks—and a Cheque.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY of the Fourth Form came into Study No. 6, where Blake and Herries and Digby were getting tea.

"Heard the news, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"No," yawned Blake. "Had a fiver from your governor? If you have, it's just come in the nick of time; there are only three sardines left."

"I have not had a remittance from my governor, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Tom Mewwy has had a wiah from his uncle."

Blake grunted.

"Well, we can't eat his wires," he said. "Blow his wires, and blow his uncles! How are we going to make three sardines into a tea for four?"

"His uncle has come home from India, aafh servin' there for a gweat many yeahs," said Arthur Augustus. "He is home on leave, and he is comin' here to-morrow to see Tom Mewwy."

"Oh, good!" said Blake, showing some slight interest. "He's a general or something, isn't he? Must be rolling in rupees and things. Some fellows have all the luck. I never get any uncles from India."

"The old chap is a regular old sport," continued Arthur Augustus. "He's seen service, you know—choppin' down twibesmen on the fwontiah, and waggin' the Thugs and things. He was engaged in puttin' down a revolutionawry society somewah out there—awful wottahs, you know, who wanted to waise anoath Mutiny, and turn us out of India." And Arthur Augustus shook his head indignantly.

"Awful rotters!" yawned Blake. "Why, if that came off, what would all the fellows do for jobs who can't get jobs in England? Why, they'd have to work!"

"Yaas, it would be awful," agreed D'Arcy unspiciouly. "I wegard General Mewwy as havin' deserved well of his countwy. He is a regular hewo, and he's got the Victowiah Cwoss."

"Has he, by Jove?"
 "Yas. Now, we don't have a V.C. come to the school evwy day, do we?" said D'Arcy. "I was thinkin', deah boys, that this is a time for us to wally woud."

"Hear, hear!"
 "I think that St. Jim's ought to wise to the occasion," continued Arthur Augustus. "We'll give General Mewwy a weception that will impress him. There ought to be fireworks and things, and I was thinkin' of a twiumpfal arch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I fail to see any cause for laughah in the suggestion, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and surveying his chums severely. "On a great occasion like this, with a gweat and celebweated general offiah visitin' the school, I weally considah that St. Jim's ought to spread itself a bit."

"I don't know whether it would run to triumphal arches," grinned Blake, "but we might have the fireworks—some crackers, at any rate, say sixpennyworth—"

"Weally, Blake—"
 "And a squib or two," said Digby. "We could let them off under the general's chair, and give him a pleasant surprise."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wegard you as asses," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I stik to my ideah of a twiumpfal arch. We could wig it up just inside the gates, you know, and it would look simply wipping! Of course, it would wequire money, and, as it happens, I am wathah short of tin. Howevah, we can make a subscription. How much can you fellows give?"

"I'll give you my best wishes," said Blake generously.
 "I'll give you some good advice," said Herries.

"I'll give you my kind regards," yawned Digby.

"Wats! If you fellows do not wally woud, I shall go ovah and see Figgins & Co., and then the New House will get the cweedit of ewectin' a twiumpfal arch to the general," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, don't!" implored Blake, looking dreadfully alarmed.

Arthur Augustus was firm.
 "I shall have no othah wewource," he said. "I'm keepin' the ideah fwom Tom Mewwy. It is to be a pleasant surpris to him, as well as to his uncle. If you fellows don't back me up, I shall have no wewource but to bring Figgins & Co. into the ideah."

"Then you'd better buzz off," said Blake, more cheerfully. "Now I come to think of it, there isn't a sardine for you, and Figgy may give you some tea."

"Weally Blake—"
 "Good-bye!" said Blake. "You don't mind if I have the sardine, do you? But if I get a remittance in time, I'll put sixpence towards the crackers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Arthur Augustus walked out of the study, closing the door with unnecessary force. The chums of Study No. 6 chuckled. They could guess how very likely Figgins & Co. were to lend their aid in carrying out D'Arcy's idea of a triumphal arch.

"Hallo, whither bound?" asked Monty Lowther, as D'Arcy ran into the Terrible Three in the passage. "Wherefore that dreadful frown?"

D'Arcy unbent his brows.
 "Pway excuse me, you fellows," he said. "I'm in wathah a huddy to see Figgins. The chaps in my study have wefused to wally woud me, and I'm goin' to see Figgins about the twiumpfal arch."

"The what?" demanded Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther together.

"The twiumpfal arch, deah boy, to welcome the general to St. Jim's. I wasn't weally goin' to tell you, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. Arthur Augustus stared at them.

"What are you cacklin' at?" he demanded. The chums of the Shell did not reply. They staggered away, still laughing, and Arthur Augustus sniffled with great scorn. Then, with his noble nose very high in the air, he quitted the School House, and walked across the quadrangle. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the Fourth were outside their House. The swell of St. Jim's nodded to them affably.

"I've just come ovah to see you fellows," he said.

"Well, here we are!" said Figgins genially.

"No charge!"
 "You have heard that Tom Mewwy's uncle is comin' here to-morrow?" said Arthur Augustus.

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The three New House fellows exchanged a quick glance. Figgins nodded.

"Yes; the whole school knows," he said. "We were just talking about it, in fact."

"Quite a stranger to St. Jim's, isn't he?" said Kerr. "Tom Merry hasn't seen him for a thousand years or so."

"He hasn't seen him since he was quite a kid," said Arthur Augustus.

"Then he hardly knows him by sight?"

"Hardly, deah boy."
 "I wonder what he's like?" said Kerr thoughtfully.

"I have heard Tom Mewwy say that he is a little man, vewy sunbrunt—little but good, like General Bobs," said Arthur Augustus. "But we shall all see what he is like to-morrow aftahnoon, when he awwives. He is a wvave man, and has won the Victowia Cwoss, and I have thought of a wippin' ideah for doin' him honah. I was thinkin' of a whip-wound to waise the cash, and ewectin' a twiumpfal arch."

"Oh, my hat!"

"With an inscription on it, you know: 'This arch is ewected to a man whom St. Jim's delights to honah,' or somethin' like that."

"Ripping!" exclaimed Figgins.
 "The chaps in my own studdy won't back me up," said D'Arcy. "I wegard it as wotten."

"Horrible!"
 "Even Tom Mewwy cackles at the ideah, though the old sport is his own uncle, you know."

"Rotten!"

"I'm glad to see you chaps have more sense, though one wouldn't weally expect that of New House chaps, eithah," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Howevah, I'm glad to see it. You're goin' to back me up, deah boys? I don't know how much it will cost, but I dare say it can be done on ten pounds."

"Ten pounds! Oh, crumbs!"

"Is that enough?" asked Fatty Wynn anxiously. "Don't stint yourself for a pound or two in a matter of this sort. Better do the thing well."

Arthur Augustus beamed upon the fat Fourth-Former.

"Quite wight, Wynn, deah boy! Suppose we say fifteen pounds?"

"Better make it twenty," said Figgins solemnly.

"Yaas, that will be bettah still, if you chaps have plenty of tin."

"Twenty quid," said Kerr, with a nod.

"Twenty soveweigns, deah boy—"

"Quids—"

"Soveweigns—"

"Quids!" said Figgins firmly.

"Vewy well, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus amicably. "Have it as you like. I will wiah to my patah for a fivah, and if you thwee chaps could stand a fivah each, there are the twenty soveweigns—"

"Quids!"

"Yaas, quids, if you like. What do you say?"

The New House trio smiled at one another. Five pounds represented a whole term's pocket-money or more to most of the juniors of St. Jim's. They did not all have noble paters like D'Arcy. And the idea of devoting so much money to the erection of a triumphal arch to Tom Merry's uncle from India struck Figgins & Co. as funny.

"Take the money now?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I suppose a cheque will do?"

"Certainly, deah boy! I didn't know you had a bankin' account," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat surprised. "A cheque would be all wight. I can get Mr. Waitton to cash it for me. Can you draw me a cheque?"

"My dear chap, nothing's easier. I don't happen to have a cheque-book in my pocket; but a cheque on the leaf of a pocket-book is all right, so long as you've got the money to meet it," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! You will have to put a stamp on it, then, to make it legal."

"Got a stamp?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas."

"Stick it here, then."

Figgins held out his pocket-book, open. Arthur Augustus took his nobby russia-leather letter-case from his pocket, and selected a stamp from a little compartment. He wetted it with his lips, and placed it on the leaf of Figgy's pocket-book. Figgins gnawed the end of a pencil.

"Must be in ink, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'll lend you my fountain-pen, if you like."

"Thanks awfully!"

Figgins took the fountain-pen, and rested the pocket-book on Kerr's shoulder, and wrote. He waved the cheque in the air to dry it, and

folded it carefully in four, and handed it to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That's the contribution from the lot of us," he said. "Good-bye!"

Figgins & Co. walked rather quickly into the New House, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with the folded cheque in his hand. Arthur Augustus was not a suspicious fellow. But it was rather surprising that a New House junior should be able to draw a cheque so easily for such a sum as fifteen pounds, and D'Arcy unfolded the cheque to make sure that all was right. He read it, and gasped:

"Bai Jove!"

For Figgins' cheque was worded: "Bank of Allan Water. Pay Arthur Augustus D'Arcy the sum of fifteen thick ears. —G. FIGGINS."

The swell of St. Jim's gazed at the cheque, and wrath came into his aristocratic face.

He realised that the humorous Figgins had been gently pulling his noble leg. He crumpled the cheque in his hand, and rushed towards the New House. He rushed up the steps of the House with the intention of taking summary vengeance upon Figgins & Co. He rushed right into a thin, sour-faced gentleman in cap and gown, and there was a gasp:

"Ow! D'Arcy, how dare you!"

"Bai Jove, I'm sowwy, Mr. Watcliff! I—"

How dare you rush into this House in that manner!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "Take fifty lines, D'Arcy, and return to your own House at once! Do you hear?"

"But, sir—"

"Go!" thundered the New House master. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Raiders.

"SHUSH!"
 Tom Merry uttered that warning word. The Shell fellows had gone up to bed in the dormitory in the School House, and there was a buzz of voices in the dormitory when Kildare of the Sixth came in to see lights-out. The voices died away at once, and the Sixth-Former glanced at the juniors somewhat suspiciously.

Cheerful and innocent faces met him on all sides, however, and the captain of St. Jim's was disarmed.

"Tumble in!" he said.

The Shell tumbled in. Kildare, after another glance round the dormitory, turned out the light and retired.

Then there was a buzz of voices again. There was evidently something "on" among the Shell fellows in the School House, which was being carefully kept from the knowledge of the head prefect of the House.

"You can go to sleep if you like, you chaps," said Tom Merry. "I'll wake you up at eleven o'clock."

"And who'll wake you up?" asked Kangaroo, the Australian junior.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not too much row," said Monty Lowther. "Kildare looked as if he smelt a mouse. The way the prefects suspect us innocent kids is something shocking. How many of us are going?"

"Say a dozen chaps," said Tom Merry. "We won't let the Fourth into it. Those kids would be bound to make a muck of it, and there are enough of us to rag Figgins & Co. baldheaded."

"Hear, hear!"

"We three," said Tom Merry, "and Kanga and Dane and Glyn and Vavasour and Gore and Murphy and three more. Skimpole wouldn't be any good, and I suppose Crooke doesn't want to come."

"No fear!" growled Crooke. "Ratty will be bound to catch you, and you'll get it in the neck, and serve you right for playing the giddy ox!"

"Thank you!" said Tom Merry. "Then that's settled."

The dormitory was buzzing with suppressed excitement. A raid on the rival House had been planned for that night. Raids and rows between the juniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's were of common enough occurrence; but it was a little out of the common for the parties to be raided in their own quarters. At night the Houses were locked and barred securely, and entrance was not easy.

There was a long passage leading from the School House to the New House by way of the other buildings at one side of the quadrangle, but this passage was closed by a great door that was always locked. Tom Merry had made the discovery that the lock could be opened. It was old and rusty, and Monty Lowther, who was an amateur carpenter of

great prowess, had operated on the lock with success.

The way into the quarters of their rivals was open—for once—and the School House juniors intended to take advantage of it.

The raiders intended to invade the rival House by way of the passage, and, once in the New House, the rest was easy.

Figgins & Co. would be taken by surprise in their dormitory, and smitten hip and thigh before they knew what was happening to them. It was a gorgeous prospect. As Lowther remarked, Figgins & Co. had been putting on altogether too much "side" lately, and it was time that they were taken down a peg. Indeed, there had been so much whispering and chuckling that evening among the New House juniors that Tom Merry & Co. suspected that some "jape" was being planned over the way. It was high time that Figgins & Co. were instructed who was who, and what was what.

All the raiders were fully determined to keep awake until eleven o'clock sounded from the clock-tower.

And by half-past ten they were all fast asleep.

Tom Merry was the last to nod off. He awoke as the clock was chiming out, and lay half-asleep, counting the strokes. Twelve!

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, sitting up in bed. "Twelve o'clock! I say, are you awake, you chaps?"

There was no reply, save the sound of deep and steady breathing. Tom Merry jumped out of bed, and dipped a sponge into his water-jug, and proceeded to wake up the Shell fellows. There was a muffled roar from Monty Lowther, and a yell from Manners. Then there was a yelp from Glyn and Dane and the rest; but they were all soon ready. They had provided felt slippers for use instead of their boots, in order to make less noise.

The raiders left the dormitory cautiously. The house was buried in silence and slumber. At midnight the last light was out, and all the masters were in bed. Tom Merry led the way along the passage, and down the stairs, and into the broad-flagged passage that led from the House. This was one of the oldest parts of St. Jim's, and was never used, and was not provided with lights. The darkness was intense.

"Got your glim, Glyn?"

"What-ho!" said Bernard Glyn. A sudden light gleamed out. It was an electric lamp in the hand of Glyn of the Shell. Glyn led the way with the electric light, and the raiders followed him. Most of them had brought weapons with them—stuffed socks, and twisted handkerchiefs, and pillows. They reached the huge oaken door that barred the passage.

Monty Lowther handled the lock. The great door swung open as he pulled at it. Beyond was deep darkness. After the juniors had passed through Lowther carefully closed the door, leaving it unfastened.

Then the raiders, chuckling gleefully, pressed on their way.

There were several doors on the passage, but they were never used, and they were bolted or barred, and covered with cobwebs. The juniors reached the end of the passage, after several windings, till they were stopped by another door.

"We're there!" said Lowther.

"Not fastened?" asked Kangaroo.

"No fear. This door is only fastened with bolts on the inside, and I slipped down and drew them when I was in the New House to-day."

"If they've been fastened since—"

"They haven't, ass! Nobody ever comes near this door; it isn't used."

And Lowther proved his words by pushing open the door. On the other side there was a flight of four stone steps, and the juniors mounted them, and found themselves in a passage near the kitchen and cellars. They knew the way well enough, and Glyn turned off the light.

With cautious footsteps the raiders ascended from the lower regions into the upper part of the New House.

They paused in the dormitory passage, and Tom Merry cautiously opened the door of the dormitory which accommodated the New House portion of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

There was a glimmer of starlight from the windows of the dormitory, and it glimmered upon a row of white beds, where Figgins & Co. lay in sound slumber. There was no sound in the dormitory save the steady breathing of the New House juniors and the deeper snore of Fatty Wynn.

"Caught napping!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And there was a chuckle.

The Shell fellows marched in, and the door was closed. Gore bumped against a bed, and there was a startled exclamation in the gloom.

"Hallo! What's that?" demanded Figgins.

"Only us," said Tom Merry calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins jumped up in bed.

"My hat! School House cads! Wake up, you chaps!"

"Harrah!"

And the raiders piled in with gusto.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Rough on Figgins & Co.

"O H!"

"Ow!"

Biff, biff, biff! Bump, bump, bump!

"Yaroooh!"

"Great Scott! Yah!"

"Line up!" yelled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sock it to them!"

The raiders were smiting right and left, choking with laughter as they smote. The sleepy and astounded New House fellows had

fighting they put up was as much among themselves as against the raiders.

In a few minutes the dormitory looked as if a whirlwind had struck it—bedclothes were sprawling on the floor, and gasping juniors sprawled among them. One or two of the beds had been pitched over, and several washstands upset.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "I think that will do. We don't want to get latty and the prefects here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Retreat!" ordered Tom Merry.

"Stop 'em!" roared Figgins.

But the scattered and bewildered and smitten New House fellows were in no condition to stop the retreat of the raiders.

Tom Merry & Co. retreated in good order into the passage.

Figgins jumped up and rushed after them, and was collared and hurled back. He rushed on again, and caught somebody round the neck in the darkness, and held on him fiercely, pummeling hard.

The fellow he collared pommelled with equal energy. There was a chuckle in the passage, and the door closed.

"They're gone!" howled Redfern.



"It won't do," grunted Morgan. "The ghost ought to be clad in complete armour—" "Well, he jolly well can't be, and that settles it," growled the ghost. "A sheet's all right," grinned Bob Cherry. (See page 4, chapter 4).

no chance. The odds were on their side if they had been on the alert, but they weren't.

They were rolled out of bed, bumped on the floor, smitten with pillows and socks, amid gasps and howls and yells.

Figgins, who was first to recover his presence of mind, grasped a bolster, and rushed at the foe, smiting manfully; but he smote Kerr and Wynn in the dark, and rolled them over, and then smote Redfern, then Lawrence. And then the great Figgins was seized by the raiders and rolled over, and Kangaroo sat on his chest and pinned him down.

"Line up!" gasped Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

"Who's cock-House at St. Jim's?" yelled Monty Lowther. "This is where the New House gets it in the neck! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear us smile!" gasped Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smite, smite, smite!

The combat was terrific, but it was all on one side. The New House fellows were simply overwhelmed. They hadn't a chance. And in the confusion and the darkness, what

"I've got one of them!" gasped Figgins, who had his enemy's head in chancery now.

"Get a light, some of you, and stick at the door. This rotter isn't going to get away!"

"Good egg!"

"Groogh!" came in muffled tones from the fellow wriggling in Figgins' strong grasp. His face was pressed to Figg's chest, and he could not speak.

Figgins chuckled.

"I've got you, you rotter!" he panted. "Hold the door, in case they come back to rescue him, you fellows!"

"What-ho!"

Redfern and Lawrence jammed their feet against the door. Owen fumbled in the pockets of his jacket—when he found it—for matches.

Scratch!

A light glimmered out. It glimmered upon a scene of wreck and confusion, and the New House juniors snorted with rage as they saw it.

"My hat!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "They've done us in the eye this time! The rotters must have snacked in through the locked passage somehow."

"I've got one of 'em!" gasped Figgins.

"We'll make an example of him. Bring the light here, and lend me a hand. I dare say it's Tom Merry!"

Owen rushed forward with another match. The light glimmered on Figgy's prisoner. Figgy gave a gasp of dismay as he recognised Kerr.

"Oh, my hat! Kerr!"

"Groooh!" groaned Kerr, rubbing his nose, which was streaming red. "Oh, you ass!"

"I—I thought—" gasped Figgy.

"Ow! My nose! Oh!"

"Oh, crumbs!" said Figgy. "I'm sorry, Kerr, old man! I thought it was one of those rotters. Why didn't you say?"

"Say, you ass! How could I say anything when you were suffocating me, you fathead? Ow, ow! My nose! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Redfern.

"What are you cackling at, you dummy?" demanded Figgy.

"Ha, ha, ha! You!" grinned Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha! Was it Kerr you were punching all the time? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Figgy. "I hope you didn't get hurt, Kerr?"

"Fathead!" groaned Kerr. "Do you think you can punch a fellow's nose like that without hurting him? Ow!"

"Better get this cleared up," groaned Lawrence. "Some silly ass stuck an elbow into my ribs!"

"Some silly clump jammed his silly ribs on my funny-bone!" groaned Pratt.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Oh, you fathead!"

"Oh, shurrup!" said Figgy. "It's no good ragging one another. It can't be helped now; we've been fairly done! Never mind, we're taking a rise out of them to-morrow."

"Oh, rats!" said the New House juniors, all together.

The thought of taking a rise out of the School House fellows on the morrow was not very comforting to them just then.

"Let's go after the beasts!" said Pratt.

"No good. They'll have fastened the door in the passage by this time. We'll make 'em sit up to-morrow!" growled Figgy.

The dormitory was opened.

"Hallo, they're coming back! Collar the cads!"

"Hold on!" said the voice of Thompson of the Shell. "Don't pile on me, you asses! Have the School House bounders been here?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You look a pretty sight!" gasped Thompson. "You've been making a pretty row, too! I heard it in the Shell dorm. I came to tell you that I can hear somebody moving downstairs. You've woke Ratty up!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Fourth-Formers set to work with desperate haste to get the dormitory into its normal state before the arrival of Ratty on the scene.

Thompson of the Shell, having given his warning, vanished with a chuckle. Figgy and Co. worked like Trojans to get the beds in order, and they turned in and covered themselves with the bedclothes just as a step was heard in the passage.

"Quiet!" murmured Figgy.

Fatty Wynn began to snore. The juniors all closed their eyes as the door opened, and Mr. Ratcliff appeared, with a lamp in his hand.

The Housemaster looked suspiciously into the dormitory. He was certain that he had heard a disturbance, but he was not quite sure from which dormitory it had proceeded.

"Are you asleep, boys?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, in his thin, sour voice.

No reply; only steady breathing, and a deeper and more emphatic snore from Fatty Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff glanced at the juniors frowningly, and then reluctantly retired and closed the door. He would have been more pleased if he had found a pillow-fight in progress; and he had thoughtfully brought a cane with him. But there was no excuse for using the cane, and the Housemaster retired disappointed—much to the relief of the juniors.

"Narrow squeak!" murmured Figgy. "And he won't catch the School House chaps, either. They're in bed by this time."

But Figgy was mistaken in that. Mr. Ratcliff went back to his own room; but if he had suspected the raid and looked for the raiders he would have been successful, for Tom Merry & Co. were not back in their own House. The raid had been a great success; but the retreat had not worked according to programme, for the School House juniors, retreating chuckling along

the disused passage, had reached the big oaken door that gave admittance to their own House—and they stopped there. The door did not open to their touch.

And then the chuckles died away, and the raiders looked at one another in great dismay. Bernard Glyn flashed his light upon the big door, and the juniors tried it one after another. Lowther had left it unlocked, and it was unlocked still. There was no visible reason why the door should not open. They pressed upon it, they lined up against it all together and jammed themselves at it, and it did not budge.

It was fast!

"My only hat," said Tom Merry at last, "it won't open!"

Lowther shoved desperately at the door.

"What the dickens is the matter with it?" he grunted. "It's not locked; you can see that!"

"It's got jammed somehow," said Manners.

"Couldn't get jammed."

"There are bars on the other side," said Kangaroo.

Lowther snorted.

"I know there are. But a door can't bar itself, can it, fathead?"

"But it can be barred," said the Cornstalk junior, "and that's what's happened. Somebody must have followed us and barred the door."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Crooke!" muttered Tom Merry.

"He's cad enough," said Kangaroo. "Might be Levison of the Fourth, if he knew we were out, or Mellish, for that matter. Not that it matters much who did it. It's done. And how the deuce are we going to get back into the School House?"

It was a problem that had to be solved. And Tom Merry had to confess that he gave it up.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night.

TOM MERRY & Co. stood in the shadowy passage and looked at one another. Glyn's electric-lamp glimmered upon their dismayed faces, and upon the cold stone walls, and the cobwebs in the corners.

They were trapped!

Before them was the huge and heavy oaken door—immovable. Behind them was the long, winding passage, and the New House. They could not pass the door, and there was nothing for it but retreat. And the only line of retreat lay through the New House. Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"We've been here half an hour," he said.

"Figgy & Co. will be in bed again now. They can't guess that we're shut out of our House."

"I suppose we can get through the New House?" said Manners doubtfully.

"We shall have to. We've got to get out of a window into the quad, and then cross over, and get into the School House somehow," said Tom. "It's the only way. I can climb into the dormitory window, and come down and open a window on the ground floor for you chaps. The dormitory windows aren't fastened. All the lower ones are."

"It's the only thing to be done," said Kangaroo.

It was, evidently. With uneasy looks, and murmured threats of vengeance upon the unknown trickster who had fastened them out of their House, the School House turned back.

They traversed the passage again, and re-entered the New House, finding all dark and quiet there. This time they did not go upstairs. They stole silently to a kitchen window at the back and opened it, and one by one dropped out. Tom Merry went last, and closed the window behind him; but he could not refasten it.

They breathed more freely when they were in the open air. They were safely out of the New House now, at all events, and in no danger of being caught by the irascible Mr. Ratcliff.

The difficulty before them was getting back into their own House by way of a window. They stole round the buildings, and gathered under the wall of the School House.

In the faint glimmer of starlight they made out the dormitory window high above, with the clinging masses of ivy underneath.

"It's jolly risky, Tom," said Manners uneasily.

"There's a rain-pipe under the ivy here," said Tom. "It passes within a foot of the window. I've done it before."

"Yes; but then the window was open at the bottom. You've got to get on the sill,

and push it up somehow. It's only open at the top."

"My hat!" ejaculated Lowther suddenly.

He was standing back from the wall, and staring up at the window. There was blank amazement in his face.

"What's the matter?" asked several of the juniors uneasily.

"They were getting into a state of 'nerves' by this time, and some of them wished that that successful raid had never been thought of."

"The window's open at the bottom!" said Lowther.

"What!"

Monty Lowther pointed.

"Look!" he said.

The juniors stared upward in amazement. Gloomy as it was, they could see the glimmer of the stars on the panes, and they saw that the sash had been raised. The windows in the dormitory were left open at the top for ventilation. But they were never left open at the bottom. And the juniors knew, too, that when they had quitted the dormitory to start on the raid the window had been closed down.

The bottom sash of the window had been pushed up since they had left.

"That's jolly queer!" said Kangaroo.

"Crooke must have opened it for us," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "Might have been a master who found the door open in the passage and closed it, and then Crooke might have spotted him, and opened this window for us."

"Yes; I can see Crooke serving us a good turn like that—I don't think!" said Monty Lowther, with a sniff.

"Well, Skimpole's there, too. He might have—"

"Skimpole's an ass; he wouldn't have sense enough. Looks to me jolly queer," said Monty. "Looks as if—as if—" He paused.

The juniors looked at one another with rather scared faces.

"Looks like a giddy burglar!" said Clifton Dane.

"Don't see why a burglar should get into a dormitory," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "Burglars would make for the place where the valuables are. They needn't climb up dangerous walls. They have things to open windows with."

"If it was one of our chaps opened it he must be awake now," said Manners. "Give him a whistle. He's bound to hear it, with the window open."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry put his fingers to his lips and whistled the signal-whistle well known to all the School House juniors. The sound rose in the still silence of the night. The juniors watched the mysteriously-opened window with tense gaze.

"Look!" muttered Lowther, catching Tom Merry's arm.

A head had emerged from the window. But it was not a boy's head.

It was the head of a man; and the face was dark. The head was curiously wrapped in a linen headgear of some sort, and two eyes that seemed to glitter like diamonds looked down at the startled juniors.

"My only hat!" Lowther's teeth chattered. "It's a black man!"

"A nigger!" muttered Gore.

"A Hindu!" said Tom Merry. "That thing on his head is a turban."

Tom's face had gone suddenly white. Back into his mind rushed the mysterious missive he had received only that day—the sign of the Red Triangle. That had come to him from the far-off land of India, and now—

But for the raid on the New House he would have been in the dormitory at that moment. And the Hindu was there—for what?

The dark face was looking steadily down. The deep shadows of the house hid the juniors from the view of the man at the window; but the window was in the starlight, and they could see him. And the fierce black eyes seemed to possess strangely penetrating power. A sudden movement of the head showed that the man had discerned the crowd of fellows in the shadows below.

The head disappeared.

"It's a burglar, after all!" muttered Gore.

"Or— or worse!" said Tom Merry between his teeth. "The villain! And Crooke and Skimpy are in there with him!"

"We've got to get in!"

Tom Merry made a movement towards the ivy. Lowther caught him by the arm and dragged him back.

"You can't climb now, Tom! That fellow would only have to give you a shove from the window, and— Don't be an ass!"

"He's got to be nailed!" said Kangaroo. "Wake the House!"

"We shall get an awful ragging for this!" muttered Gore.

"Not if we nail the burglar," said Kangaroo. "That's bound to please the Head. We can lay the rotter by the heels now."

"Good egg!"
The discovery of the dark-skinned intruder left only one thing for the juniors to do—to give the alarm. And there was no time to be lost. If Crooke or Skimpole awoke with the midnight thief in the room there was no telling what might happen.

Tom Merry ran round to the door of the School House, and dragged at the bell. The peal of the bell rang with startling loudness through the silent House. Manners and Lowther threw up pebbles to the windows of Mr. Railton's and Kildare's bed-rooms. Three or four of the fellows pounded on the door with their fists.

The sudden din rang through the silent House. Tom Merry rang the bell incessantly. In less than a minute a light gleamed out in Mr. Railton's room, and the Housemaster threw up his window. He gave a jump at the sight of the Shell fellows in the quadrangle.

"Manners! Lowther! Noble! What—"

"Burglars, sir!" shouted Lowther.

"What!"

"There's a burglar in the Shell dorm, sir! We've just seen him!"

"Are you serious, Lowther? If this is a foolish practical joke—"

"Honour bright, sir!"

Mr. Railton disappeared from the window. Tom Merry was still ringing the door-bell, and the other fellows hammered there with their fists. The alarm was spreading quickly in the House. Lights flashed to and fro, doors were heard opening, and voices calling. The great door of the School House swung open, and Kildare appeared with a poker in his hand, half dressed, his face flushed with excitement. He had turned on the electric light, and the House was lighted from end to end.

"We'll see that he doesn't get away, Kildare!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes; he's in the Shell dorm. We'll watch the window here in case he gets out."

"Good! Don't go into danger. Call if you see him."

Kildare dashed up the stairs. Mr. Railton was dashing up, too, and Mr. Latham had come out of his room, and Herr Schneider, the German master. Half the Sixth were out, with pokers or cricket-bats in their hands, and the juniors were swarming out of their dormitories. There was a babel of voices in the School House—the old building rang from end to end.

"He's had time to get out of the dorm," said Lowther. "He'll try to get away from one of the other windows, and we'll nab him."

"Scatter and watch for him!" called Tom Merry.

Other fellows were swarming out into the quadrangle now, half dressed, and armed with all sorts of weapons. If the burglar fell into their hands, he was not likely to have much chance against such odds. Mr. Railton looked out of the window of the Shell dormitory, and called to the juniors below.

"Have you seen him again?"

"No, sir," called back Tom Merry. "Isn't he there?"

"No."

Tom Merry ran into the House. He was very anxious that the Indian should be caught. He could not help suspecting that the dark-skinned intruder had visited the school on his account, and his alone. But there was no sign of the Hindu in the House. High and low masters and boys hunted, and every room and passage was searched and scanned, the whole House joining in the hunt. In the quadrangle and the gardens, even in cricket pavilion and on the playing-fields, the search went on, Taggles, the porter, bringing out his mastiff, and Herries his bulldog Towser, to help. But no sign was found of the midnight visitor. Short as the time had been, it was clear that he had taken advantage of it, and had escaped from a back window before the searchers could find him. Kildare had found a back window open, and if the man had escaped it was doubtless by that window that he had gone.

The Shell fellows, disappointed and fatigued, came back to their dormitory. They questioned Crooke and Skimpole, but Crooke and Skimpole could tell them nothing. They had both been asleep till the alarm awakened them; and when they awakened

they had seen nothing of any stranger in the room.

"The beast didn't lose any time!" growled Monty Lowther.

Mr. Railton came into the dormitory. The Housemaster's brows were knitted. He was evidently in an uncertain state of mind, and did not know whether to be angry or not.

If the man had been there, he was gone. But had he been there? In the absence of any sign of an intruder, it was only natural that the Housemaster should have his doubts. And Tom Merry & Co., as they saw Mr. Railton's frowning face, realised that there was trouble in store for themselves.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

MR. RAILTON fixed a stern glance upon the chums of the Shell.

There was a crowd of fellows of all Forms around him, most of them half dressed, with their night-shirts or pyjamas tucked into their trousers, and their braces tied round their waists; some with bare feet, others in slippers or unlaced boots. All of them were in a state of great excitement. Tom Merry & Co. were fully dressed, in contrast to the odd attire of the rest.

"I shall require an explanation of this, Merry," said the School House master. "You gave an alarm of a burglar, but no trace whatever of a burglar has been discovered."

"He had time to get away, sir," said Tom Merry. "It was some minutes before he was looked for, and he had time to get out of a window and bolt."

"There was a window found open at the back, sir," said Kildare.

"Probably opened by these juniors in leaving the House," said Mr. Railton. "They were out in the quadrangle, fully dressed, when the alarm was given."

"That's very queer, sir."

"It will be inquired into. There certainly is no trace of a burglar. I fear that it is some trick, which I shall discover," said the Housemaster sternly. "Tom Merry, kindly explain how you and your companions came to be out in the quadrangle at such an hour."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was there with a cricket-stump in his hand. "Bai Jove! The young wascals, to be bweakin' bounds at such a time! If it was a waid, Tom Mewwy, you should have called me."

"Pray be silent, D'Arcy. I am waiting for your reply, Merry."

Tom Merry exchanged a grim look with his chums. There was nothing for it but a clean breast now. The unfortunate incident of the burglar had spoiled everything. If the man had been captured, things would have been all right. Such a success would have condoned the breaking of bounds. But he had not been captured, and Mr. Railton evidently suspected that the juniors had invented him. The whole story had to come out now.

"We've been raiding the New House chaps, sir," said Tom Merry reluctantly.

"Indeed! The New House! You have been there?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you enter that House?"

"By—the passages, sir."

Mr. Railton raised his eyebrows.

"The door in the passage is kept locked," he said.

"The—the lock got unfastened, sir," murmured Monty Lowther.

"How did it get unfastened, Lowther?"

"I—I helped it, sir."

Some of the fellows grinned, and Kildare turned away his head. But Mr. Railton's frown did not relax.

"This is very curious," he said. "If you went to the New House by the locked passage, you could have returned the same way, and need not have gone into the quadrangle at all. Why were you out of doors, then?"

"Because we couldn't get back through the passage, sir. Somebody sneaked after us and fastened the door, and we couldn't open it from the New House side."

"Bai Jove! What a wottah!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Railton. "Who could have done that, Merry?"

Tom Merry's eyes rested on Crooke for a moment. The cad of the Shell curled his lip. He might be suspected, but there was no proof.

"I don't know, sir," said Tom. "It was some rotten cad, who wanted to get us into a row. We had to go back again into the New House and get out of a kitchen window, and come over here across the quad. I was

going to climb into the dorm window, and come down and let the fellows in. Then we spotted the burglar."

And Tom Merry explained how they had detected the lower sash of the window open, and he had given the signal whistle, and the dark-skinned man had looked out.

"This seems simply extraordinary!" said the Housemaster. "You say it was not a white man?"

"It was a nigger," said Gore.

"Not a negro," said Tom Merry. "A Hindu, sir—or somebody from India, anyway."

"He was wearing a turban," said Manners.

Mr. Railton scanned the faces of the juniors searchingly. They bore his scrutiny well. They understood what was in his mind. That, finding themselves shut out in the quad, they had raised an alarm of a burglar, in the hope of getting into the House in the confusion without questions being asked as to how they came to be out of doors. That was the not unnatural suspicion in Mr. Railton's mind, and but for his knowledge of the honourable character of Tom Merry & Co., he would have come to that conclusion without hesitation.

"It is a strange story," said Mr. Railton. "The man can hardly have been a burglar; a burglar would not be foolish enough to get into a dormitory. There was nothing to tempt him here. And what business would a Hindu possibly have in this school? How many of you saw him?"

"All of us, sir!"

"And you are sure it was a black man?"

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry wondered whether he could tell the House-master of the strange letter from India, and the queer suspicion that was in his mind. Had that letter been a warning of the intended visit? Had the black man come there for him, with some hidden purpose—perhaps intending violence? How had he known which was Tom Merry's dormitory? How could a native of India know anything about St. Jim's? Had the school been watched already? Strange and vague suspicions were stirring in Tom Merry's mind, but he felt that the whole matter would appear absurd to the practical mind of the Housemaster.

What had the black man wanted there? What was his purpose?

Tom Merry's eyes wandered inquiringly round the dormitory as he wondered whether the man had left any sign of his visit. But he could see none. If he had found Tom Merry there, what would have happened?

"I cannot understand this," said Mr. Railton. "I must accept your word, Merry, but it is all very strange. You will take two hundred lines each for breaking bounds at night. But for what has happened, your punishment would be more severe. And now you may all return to bed."

Mr. Railton left the dormitory.

The fellows dispersed to their sleeping quarters, excitedly discussing the strange happening. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder, and looked at him reproachfully.

"You should have called me, deah boy!" he said. "I would have led the waid into the New House with pleasure, and then this wouldn't have happened."

Tom Merry undressed in a very thoughtful mood. The black man had been there, and he was not likely to return—that night, at least—after the alarm. If there had been danger, the danger was over for the time. Had that strange visit any connection with the mysterious letter from India and the Red Triangle?

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kangaroo suddenly. "What on earth's this?"

The Cornstalk junior was holding up a card in his hand. It was a small slip of cardboard, and the Cornstalk had picked it off the washstand. He held it up in the light, and Tom Merry uttered a sharp cry as he looked at it.

The card was black, save for three dots in red ink in a triangular form.

It was the sign of the Red Triangle again.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Mysterious Message.

TOM MERRY sprang forward and caught the card from the Cornstalk's hand.

He stared at it, his heart beating wildly.

The card was of the same material and texture as the rice-paper upon which the mysterious letter had been inscribed, but

thicker. The three dots were exactly the same. It was evidently the work of the same hand.

That much was certain now; his suspicion had become a certainty. The visit of the Indian to the School House had been followed up by the letter from India.

Had the black man's intention simply been to leave this warning where it was bound to come to Tom Merry's knowledge? Or had he left it because, finding Tom absent, he had been baffled in his original purpose?

Monty Lowther and Manners stared at the card in blank astonishment. They had almost forgotten the letter Tom Merry had received. The Red Triangle upon the card recalled it abruptly to their minds.

"My only hat!" said Lowther.

"My word!" murmured Manners. "That again!"

"Hallo! You know it, then?" said Kangaroo in astonishment. "You know what it means?"

"No, we don't know that."

"Somebody must have put it here," said Kangaroo. "What is it—a lark? Blessed if I see where the joke comes in, if it is a joke!"

"I don't think it is a joke," said Tom Merry quietly. "But I can't quite understand what it is. But this card is intended for me."

"How do you know?"

"I've had one like it before, by post. It's either an idiotic joke, or somebody is trying to scare me," said Tom. "I can't make it out."

The Shell fellows had gathered round in eager inquiry. Tom Merry took the letter from his pocket. He had to explain the matter now. The letter passed from hand to hand.

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Clifton Dane. "If it wasn't for the postmark on the envelope, I should think it was a New House jape."

"The letter came from India."

"Yes, it's a twister, isn't it? Then the nigger came here to-night on your account?" Kangaroo exclaimed.

Tom Merry nodded.

"I believe so," he said.

"How the dickens did he know which dorm to get into, though?" said Bernard Glyn.

"I don't know—he certainly did know."

"Oh, he might have had a plan of the school," said Kangaroo. "There's a history of St. Jim's published, you know, and there's a plan of the school printed in it. If the man knew that Tommy was in the Shell, he could find out his dormitory easily enough."

"Yes, that's so."

"But what can the little game be? You didn't make any enemies when you were in India, Tommy, did you?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"I was born in India," he said, "but I was brought home by Miss Fawcett when I was only a year old. I could hardly have made any enemies at that age. I simply can't understand the matter at all, but I shall ask my uncle's advice about it to-morrow. And I'm going to bed now, black men or no black men."

The Shell fellows turned in.

Tom Merry had taken the card, and placed it in the envelope with the letter. He in-

tended to show them both to General Merry on the morrow. His uncle, at all events, would be able to advise him what he should do about the matter.

The Shell fellows slept soundly enough for the remainder of that night, and there were sleepy looks in the dormitory when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

Monty Lowther rubbed his eyes as he sat up in bed and blinked at the morning sunshine that streamed in at the high windows. Clang, clang, clang!

"Groooh!" yawned Lowther. "I believe Taggles gets up earlier and earlier every morning to buzz that rotten bell at us! Groooh!"

"Yaw-aw!" echoed Manners. "I'm sleepy."

"Tain't all lavender raiding the New House of a night!" yawned Kangaroo. "I've lost my beauty sleep. I shall be nodding over Latin this morning!"

"Never mind; we made Figgins & Co. sit up," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "And they won't be able to get back at us. That blessed door will be fastened up safe enough after this. Figgins & Co. will have to take it lying down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was satisfaction in that thought to the Shell fellows. When they went downstairs they found the Fourth-Form fellows less satisfied. Jack Blake & Co. were sore at not having been included in the raid, and it was useless for the Shell fellows to explain that fags would have "mucked up" the whole affair. Tom Merry pointed out that only a dozen fellows were wanted, and he had a dozen of the best in his own dormitory, so what was the use of coming along to the Fourth for an inferior article? That mode of reasoning did not convince the Fourth at all.

"You made a jolly muck of it, anyway!" said Blake scornfully. "You wouldn't have found me getting shut out of my House!"

"I don't see how you'd have helped it," said Tom Merry.

Blake reflected.

"I'd have left a scout on the watch at the door," he said finally.

"Ha, ha! Yes, now; but you wouldn't have then. Anybody can be wise after the event," grinned Tom Merry. "You'd have got shut out just the same, and you'd have been licked by the New House chaps, which would have made matters worse."

"Why, you silly ass—" began Blake warmly.

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" said Tom Merry affably.

"I considah that you have acted the giddy ox, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You ought to have called us in."

"Well, if it was a question of playing the giddy ox, I suppose, we ought to have called you in," admitted Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

The bell for classes stopped the discussion, which was growing warm.

After morning lessons Figgins & Co. met the Terrible Three as they came out of the Form-room. Figgins & Co. had heard all about the happenings of the previous night, of course, and Figgins felt that he would

never be able to forgive himself for not having followed the School House raiders.

"We should have found you bottled up in the passage, you bounders!" said Figgins, wagging a lean forefinger at the Terrible Three. "We should simply have slaughtered you!"

"And you had the cheek to come back through our House," said Kerr. "If we'd only known—"

The Terrible Three chuckled in chorus. "You were caught napping a second time," Monty Lowther remarked. "The best thing you chaps can do is to go out of business, and admit that the School House is cock-house of St. Jim's."

"I don't think," said Figgins. "By the way, I hear that you are expecting an uncle or a grandfather or something to-day, Tommy? Gussy was talking about erecting a triumphal arch in honour of him."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's my uncle from India!" Tom Merry explained.

"I'd like to see him, if he comes before we go out," said Figgins. "Expecting him early?"

"I don't know his train," said Tom. "I shouldn't wonder if he gets here about five. There's an express from Southampton stops at Wayland about that time."

"Too late," said Figgins. "We're going out earlier. Well, if we don't see him, you can give him my kind regards, and tell him I'm sorry he hasn't much to boast of in the way of nephews."

"And Figgins & Co. walked away grinning. As they crossed over the quadrangle to their own House, Kerr chuckled softly.

"Expecting him about five," he murmured.

"Lots of time," said Figgins.

"Hasn't seen him for years and years. A little chap, burnt up with the sun. Ahem!" said Kerr. "Easier thing than I have ever taken up before since I was an amateur actor. It will be simply like rolling off a form."

"You could do it on your head," said Figgins admiringly. "They are chipping us no end about their blessed raid. What's a raid, anyway? They did have the best of it last night, in a manner of speaking. But to-day—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

After dinner Figgins & Co. strolled out of the school-gates, not turning up to footer as usual, though it was a half-holiday. Tom Merry was thinking of the expected visit of his Indian uncle, and of the strange news he had for him, and he did not give much thought to Figgins & Co. Had he known the destination of the New House trio he might have given them more thought; for Figgins & Co. had walked down to Rycombe, and they had strolled into the establishment of Mr. Wiggs, the outfitter, ready-made clothes dealer and costumier, who supplied most of the accessories for the New House Junior Dramatic Society. And the three young rascals were very busy for an hour or more in Mr. Wiggs' private room, with the assistance of Mr. Wiggs himself. And their business was interrupted by many chuckles.

But Tom Merry had other matters than Figgins & Co. and their little devices to think of, chief among which was the expected arrival of General Merry and the mysterious message of the night—the Red Triangle.

THE END.

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