

EXCITING COMPLETE SCHOOL TALES!

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



HOP HI'S DORMITORY FEED!

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



HOP HI'S TRIUMPH!

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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hop Hi's Little Joke!

"HE'S a good sort," said Dicky Nugent of the Second Form at Greyfriars.

"I don't say he isn't," said Gatty irritably.

"Oh, he's all right," remarked Myers. "The feed he stood us was a treat!"

"It was jolly decent."

"All the same," observed Todd, "I don't see why the Second shouldn't have a little fun with a new boy. We don't get a Chinese kid coming here every day."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, let him alone," said Nugent minor. "You can't break bread with a chap, and then rag him. Don't be an outsider."

"Well, I didn't break bread. I broke tarts and buns," said Todd.

"Oh, don't be funny, Toddy!"

Todd rose and whistled, and strolled away towards the object of their remarks. The Second Form of Greyfriars were mostly in the Form-room, and Hop Hi, the younger brother of Wun Lung, was there.

Hop Hi was curled up in a chair before the fire, blinking at it with his almond eyes, and looking very much like Wun Lung.

His cheery little face was very good-humoured and contented.

He had started with the Second Form very well, and things bade fair to go quite smoothly for the new boy.

But there were some of the Second who thought they were being defrauded out of the expected fun, and when the first flush of enthusiasm about the great feed which Hop Hi had stood them had passed off, they wanted the fun to begin.

Nugent minor set his face against the idea.

Dicky had a sense of honour, and after making much of the little Chinese on account of the feed, he felt that it would be "rotten" to rag him all the same.

But other fellows had other opinions.

Dicky looked rather angrily at Todd as the latter walked towards the Chinese boy.

He knew that Todd intended some jape.

But he was not disposed to interfere. He did not consider that he was expected to go so far as that.

Hop Hi seemed to be quite unaware of Todd's approach. Perhaps his bright little eyes twinkled at the fire a little more brightly.

His impassive features gave no sign.

He sat in the chair with his feet curled under him, and his pigtail hanging down over the back of the chair.

Todd stepped behind him with a grin. Gatty joined him, and then Myers, and then two or three other fellows.

Todd had taken an inkpot from the table, and he proceeded to tie a piece of string round the metal lid.

The string was then carefully attached to the end of the Chinese's pigtail.

The inkpot rested on the floor; but when the little Chinese rose, it would be swung up by the open lid, and there would be a shower of ink, of which Hop Hi would receive the chief benefit.

Todd grinned and retreated.

Hop Hi had not moved a muscle; he appeared to be wholly unaware that his pigtail had been tampered with.

The Second-Formers burst into a chuckle.

Even Dicky Nugent grinned.

From his seat on the table he watched the little Celestial, wondering what would be

the outcome of the jape. Hop Hi did not move.

The Second-Formers grew impatient.

"I say, Hop Hi!" called out Todd. "Get up!"

The little Chinese blinked round.

"Me alee lightee."

"Oh, get up!"

"Whattee why?"

The little Chinese slowly rose from the chair.

The Second-Formers stood in a ring round him, waiting with anticipatory grins for the result.

The result happened, and it was an unexpected one.

Hop Hi swung his head, and the pigtail tautened out to its full length, and the inkpot was jerked off the floor and swung round in a circle.

"Ow!" roared Gatty.

"Yow!" gasped Todd.

"Ah! Oh!"

"Grog!"

"Ooeh!"

From the inkpot, as it was swung round in a circle, swept a stream of ink, and it splashed upon face after face of the unprepared Second-Formers.

In a twinkling a dozen faces had been blackened, and then the inkpot was emptied, and the fags were yelling with fury.

The inkpot clinked against the chair, and Hop Hi looked down at it with an expression of childlike wonder.

"Inkee-potee on pigtail!" he exclaimed, unfastening the string. "Velly funnee tlickee."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent minor.

Dicky did not believe for a moment that the little Chinese had been ignorant of the inkpot being there. That sweep of the pigtail was too well done for that.

It was another sample of the "ways that are dark" which are supposed to belong to the smiling children of the Flowery Land.

Todd rubbed the ink out of his eyes furiously.

"You heathen beast!" he roared.

"You yellow rotter!" shrieked Gatty.

"Bump him!"

"Thump him!"

"Squash him!"

"Collar him!"

Hop Hi looked alarmed.

"No collee!" he exclaimed. "No bumpee!"

"Me no savvy! Me no playee tlickee!"

"Let him alone!" shouted Nugent minor.

"He didn't play the trick. Let him alone, and bump Todd, if you want to bump somebody!"

"Here, shut up!" exclaimed Todd.

"Nugent's right!" howled Gatty. "It was Todd played that rotten silly jape—"

"Why, you—"

"Bump him!"

"Hands off! I—"

"Rats! Bump the silly ass!"

And Todd was forcibly bumped.

Hop Hi, who had a suspicion that he might come in for the next attentions of the Second Form, glided quietly from the Form-room.

He was followed down the passages by the yells of the unfortunate Todd.

"There!" exclaimed Gatty. "That's a lesson to you not to play rotten tricks."

"Ow!"

"Now let's bump the Chinese beast!" exclaimed Myers. "He ought to have his turn, too."

"Good egg!"

"Why, where is he?"

"Where's that giddy heathen?"

"He's gone."

"He's bunked,"

"Never mind," said Gatty; "let's bump Todd again."

"Good!"

Todd made a rush for the door—but too late! He was promptly collared, and in spite of his yells, he was bumped again, harder than before.

And he was left sitting on the floor, dazed and dusty, with his collar torn out, and fervently wishing that he had never thought of playing a jape upon Hop Hi, the Chinese.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Hop Hi Does Not Get the Licking.

HOP HI glided down the passage, losing no time in putting a good distance between himself and the Second Form-room.

He did not know the interior of Greyfriars very well so far, naturally.

He wanted to get to the Remove passage, to join his brother in No. 13; but he found himself in the Sixth Form passage ere long, and there he stopped to look about him.

A junior passed the end of the passage, and Hop Hi started towards him.

"Pleasee you tellee me—"

Then he stopped, recognising the junior. For it was Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove.

Bulstrode looked at him and stopped.

He could hardly believe in his good luck. There was the new junior—at his mercy.

There was very little mercy in Bulstrode's breast at that moment.

He had gone through enough that afternoon to make even a good-tempered fellow angry, and Bulstrode was not a good-tempered fellow by any means.

He came towards the little Chinese quickly, and Hop Hi shrank back against the wall of the passage.

He read the bully's intentions only too clearly in his face.

"Yes," said Bulstrode, with an unpleasant grin. "What do you want me to tellee you, you little yellow-skinned imp?"

"You tellee me findee Lemove studee," stammered Hop Hi.

Bulstrode chuckled.

"Not just yet! Come here, you imp!"

Hop Hi dodged away.

"You tellee me lonce!"

"Come here!" roared Bulstrode. "I'll make it warmer for you if you give me the trouble of catching you."

"No comee."

Bulstrode rushed at him, and the little Chinese dashed away. The bully of the Remove, with his great strides, rapidly overtook him.

There was no chance of getting clear; and Hop Hi dashed into an open door, and slammed it behind him.

It happened to be the study belonging to Ionides, of the Sixth; but fortunately for Hop Hi, Ionides was not there.

The Greek was a very unpleasant fellow to disturb, as many a junior had found to his cost before now.

Bulstrode halted at the door of the study. If Ionides was there, he didn't want to enter; and he knew that the senior would make it hot enough for the intruder.

But no sound came from the study save the hurried breathing of Hop Hi; and Bulstrode, looking in, saw that the room was empty save for the little Chinese.

Ionides was absent, but he had probably only just stepped out of the study, for the table was laid for tea, and the kettle was singing on the hob.

Bulstrode strode into the study.
 "Now, you young sweep—"
 Hop Hi dodged round the table.
 "You keep off!" he panted.
 "Come here!"
 "No catchee!"
 "I'll jolly soon catch you, you alien cad!"
 Bulstrode rushed round the table. Hop Hi dodged round it quickly, and they changed sides, but Bulstrode was no nearer.
 The Remove bully panted with rage and exertion.
 "Stop, you young hound!" he shrieked.
 "No stopee!"
 Bulstrode made another rush, but Hop Hi dodged him again.
 The Remove bully made a clutch at him across the table, and there was a crash as two or three articles of crockery went flying to the floor.
 "Bleakee clockely," grinned Hop Hi. "No catchee. What you finkee?"
 "I'll—I'll—"
 "Bulstrode gleat duffel."
 The Remove bully made a furious round of the table, so fast that the little Chinese could not dodge in time.
 His outstretched hand caught the little Celestial by the shoulder, and Hop Hi caught at the table to save himself from being dragged back.
 His grasp closed on the tablecloth, and tore it away, and with it all the preparations for Ionides' tea.
 "Crash! Crash! Clatter!"
 "My—my hat!" gasped Bulstrode, letting go Hop Hi in his dismay.
 The tea-things, the catables, and the tablecloth, were in a heap of ruins on the floor.
 Hop Hi darted away.
 Bulstrode sprang after him, trod on the teapot, and smashed it, and stumbled. Before he could recover himself, Hop Hi was out of the study, and fleeing along the passage.
 The little Chinese went down the passage like lightning, with his pigtail flying behind.
 He almost ran into two fellows who were coming out of Loder's study.
 They were Loder himself, and Ionides. Ionides had called on his chum to bring him in to tea, and they were just confing.
 Loder started back just in time to avoid a collision, and Hop Hi went flying on.
 Ionides scowled after him.
 "Cheeky brat!" he muttered.
 "It's the new Chinese kid," said Loder. "He's been up to some trick here, I suppose. I thought I heard a noise in your study."
 Ionides did not reply, but ran quickly towards his study. He was just in time to meet Bulstrode coming out of the doorway.
 Bulstrode stopped in dismay.
 It was an unlucky meeting for him. Ionides blocked the doorway, and Loder was just behind him, and the Remove's escape was cut off.
 "What are you doing here?" exclaimed Ionides roughly.
 "I—I—"
 Then the Greek caught sight of the wreck upon the floor. His olive face flamed crimson with rage.
 "What! What!" he exclaimed. "You— you dare to play tricks like that on me! You have broken my crockery—"
 "It was that young—"
 "You have spoiled everything—"
 "I didn't. It was—"
 "The young hound!" exclaimed Loder. "This is a Remove jape, and I suggest that we make the japer sorry for it, now we've caught him."
 "I will cut him to pieces!" exclaimed Ionides.
 Bulstrode made a wild spring to escape.
 The Greek grasped him, and swung him back. Powerful as he was, the Remove bully was no match for the senior.
 Ionides swung him back into the study, and Loder closed the door. Then he picked up a cricket-stump.
 "Good!" exclaimed Ionides. "I will hold him upon the table. Loder, while you thrash him. I will teach the brats not to play these tricks upon the Sixth!"
 "Right-ho!"
 "I didn't do it!" yelled Bulstrode. "It was that Chinese imp—"
 "Liar!"
 "You foreign cad!" howled Bulstrode.
 "Leggo! I—"
 Ionides gritted his teeth, and forced Bulstrode across the table, face downwards. The Remove bully struggled desperately, but the sinewy Greek held him fast there.
 Now, Loder, thrash the young scoundrel!"
 "What-ho!" grinned Loder.
 The cricket-stump rose and fell, and the

dust rose in clouds from Bulstrode's garments. The Remove bully squirmed and struggled, and kicked out savagely.
 "Ow!" yelled Loder.
 Bulstrode's heavy boot had caught him on the chest, and he staggered back.
 "Lemme gerrup!" roared Bulstrode. "Cads! Bullies! Yah!"
 "I'll—I'll smash him!" gasped Loder.
 "Go it!"
 Ionides held the Remove fast, and Loder, carefully avoiding the lashing legs, laid on with the cricket-stump.
 Bulstrode yelled and roared and struggled in vain. Loder did not leave off till his arm was tired.
 Then the Remove was allowed to slide to the floor.
 He stood wriggling with pain and rage.
 "You cowards!" he roared. "You cads!"
 "Oh, he wants some more!" said Ionides, with a grin. "Collar him!"
 Bulstrode tore from the study, slamming the door behind him. With an ache in almost every bone, he tore away.
 He caught sight of Hop Hi in the distance, but did not take any notice of him then.
 At this moment Bulstrode was not feeling fit even for vengeance upon Wun Lung minor.
 He only wanted to get into a quiet corner and groan.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Cornered!

HOP HI grinned as he saw Bulstrode limp away.
 The Remove bully had only received what he had intended to bestow upon the little Chinese, and Hop Hi could not be expected to feel much sympathy for him.
 The Celestial was still grinning, when there was a rush of footsteps in the passage, and he caught sight of the heroes of the Second.
 They had sighted him, and were bearing down upon him.
 Hop Hi dodged away.
 "There he is!" exclaimed Gatty.
 "After him!" shouted Myers.
 "Collar him!"
 Hop Hi ran at top speed. He ran up a side passage, and down another.
 The Second-Formers were only half in earnest, but Hop Hi would have been ragged if he had fallen into their hands, without a doubt, and he took care to give them a wide berth.
 He ran and dodged till they were thrown off the track, and then he halted breathless in a wide passage, with study doors on either side of it.
 He was in the Remove passage now, although he was not aware of the fact.
 A fat junior came along from the direction of the staircase, and Hop Hi recognised Billy Bunter, whom he had seen at the tuck-shop.
 He approached him to ask the way to Study No. 13 in the Remove. Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.
 "I say, Wun Lung—"
 "Me Hop Hi!"
 "Oh, you're the new kid, are you?" said Bunter, with a grunt. "The new beast who wouldn't let me take a snack in the feed!"
 "Hop Hi solly," said the little Celestial, in his smoothest tones. "Me likee handsome fat gentleman velly much!"
 "Who's fat?" demanded Bunter, who was a little touchy on his girth—Bob Cherry had remarked that he had enough to be touchy about.
 "Handsome young gentleman," said Hop Hi, leaving out the other adjective this time, "you showee me way to Wun Lung's studee."
 "Well, I don't mind," said Bunter. "This way!"
 Billy Bunter led the way. Wun Lung's study was only a dozen paces distant, as a matter of fact, but Billy Bunter did not lead the little Celestial in that direction.
 He opened the door of Bulstrode's study and looked in.
 The room was empty. Bunter knew that Tom Brown and Hazeldene, who shared the study with the Remove bully, were in the gym.
 Where Bulstrode was he did not know—he had hoped to see him there. But he was certain to return sooner or later.
 "Here you are," he said.
 Hop Hi entered the study unsuspectingly enough.
 "I'll tell your major you're here," said Bunter.
 "Muechee tankee!"
 Bunter closed the door, and grinned, and

trotted away. Hop Hi sat down in the arm-chair before the fire.
 In a Remove study he was safe from the pursuit of the Second-Formers, and he did not for a moment suspect the trick the fat junior had played on him.
 He curled up in the armchair and dozed off to sleep in the quiet of the study. He did not hear the door open a little later. Bulstrode came in, and closed the door, and turned up the gas.
 Bulstrode was looking decidedly savage. He was still aching from the castigation he had received from the Sixth-Form bullies.
 He did not see the Chinese lad, who was hidden by the high back of the chair.
 The window was open at the bottom, and Bulstrode crossed towards it to close it, and then he caught sight of the recumbent figure.
 He gave quite a jump.
 "Hop Hi!" he ejaculated.
 The little Chinese awoke at once. He sat bolt upright in the chair, looking with dilating eyes at Bulstrode.
 The Remove bully grinned. Hop Hi made one bound towards the door, but Bulstrode reached it first.
 "So you've paid me a visit, have you?" he said grimly. "What are you doing in my study, you young hound?"
 Hop Hi's eyes opened.
 "No savvy. Buntsee sayee Wun Lung's studee."
 "Ha, ha! Well, it's my study, you young rotter, and now I'm going to pay you!"
 Hop Hi retreated as the burly Remove came towards him. He retreated as far as the window, and there he stopped, facing the savage junior with dilated eyes.
 "No touchee Hop Hi," he faltered.
 Bulstrode laughed savagely.
 "I'll give you an ache in every bone!" he said. "You won't be able to sit down for a week after I've done with you!" And he reached out for the little Chinese and grasped him.
 Hop Hi struggled, but he was like an infant in the hands of the burly junior. But suddenly Bulstrode gave a fearful yell and released him. Hop Hi's teeth had closed upon his wrist.
 "Ow! Oh! Yaroo!"
 He staggered back, clasping his wrist with the other hand. Hop Hi looked round wildly for an avenue of escape, and scrambled through the window. Bulstrode, who was rushing at him furiously, stopped aghast.
 "Come back, you silly imp! You'll break your neck!"
 "No comee backee."
 "That window's fifty feet from the ground."
 "No mattell!"
 Bulstrode gritted his teeth.
 "You young hound! You think you can frighten me!" he exclaimed. "Come in, I tell you, or I'll jolly well yank you in by your pigtail!"
 Hop Hi blinked in at him from the darkness outside.
 The little Chinese was quite out of the window, hanging upon the sill with both hands, his body invisible in the gloom outside. The fact that he was fifty feet from the ground, and that a fall meant certain death, did not seem to affect him.
 Either he did not realise his peril, or he had a wonderful nerve.
 "Will you get in?" roared Bulstrode.
 "No getee in."
 "I'll yank you in, then!"
 Hop Hi let go with one hand and lowered it beyond the sill. He was hanging on with only one arm now.
 Bulstrode turned pale.
 "You mad young idiot! Get in!"
 "No getee."
 Bulstrode reached forward, intending to seize the junior and drag him in—rather to save him from his peril than anything else, though he would certainly have licked him when he was once in the study.
 Hop Hi's hand slid from the window-sill, and the pigtailed head disappeared in the darkness.
 Bulstrode uttered a cry of horror.
 "Good heavens!"
 Hop Hi was gone!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Bad for Bulstrode.

BULSTRODE stood transfixed for some moments.
 He listened with straining ears for the sound of a thud in the quad below.
 But the distance was doubtless too great—
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there was no sound, only the soft sound of the night breeze stirring the branches of the old elms of Greyfriars.

Bulstrode was white as death.

If the little Chinese had fallen, he was dead on the ground fifty feet below; no one could have survived so terrible a fall.

The Remove bully sprang to the window at last and leaned out, and sought in the darkness with a wild and anxious gaze.

He could see nothing.

There was hardly a star in the sky, and the Close below was wrapped in deepest gloom.

"Hop Hi!" he murmured.

Silence.

"Hop Hi! I—I didn't mean to—to—"

His voice died away.

The little Chinese must be dead, and the very thought of it froze Bulstrode's soul with horror.

True, he thought less of Hop Hi than of himself.

What were the consequences likely to be to him? He stepped back into the study, pressing his hands upon his throbbing brows.

What was he to do?

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked a cheery voice, as Tom Brown came into the study with Hazeldene. "Got an ache in your napper?"

"I hear you have been having a high old time with Ionides, Bulstrode!" said Hazeldene, with a grin. "Hurt?"

Bulstrode stared at them wildly. For a moment he could not find his voice.

"Yes—no," he muttered thickly.

"Well, that's jolly lucid, anyway!" said Tom Brown, laughing. "But I say," he went on more seriously, "what's the matter? You look ghastly!"

"N-n-nothing."

"What were you staring out of the window for? Anything going on?"

"N-n-no."

The two juniors looked at Bulstrode very curiously. They saw plainly enough that something unusual had happened, though they did not know what it was. Bulstrode was utterly shaken up, and he strove to recover his self-possession in vain.

Billy Bunter blinked in at the door, with his fat chuckle.

"Have you licked him, Bulstrode? Oh, I say, you fellows, I—I didn't see you!"

"Licked who?" asked Tom Brown suspiciously.

"Oh, nobody! I—I didn't tell Hop Hi this was Wun Lung's study, you know. It would have been a good jape, but I didn't do it!"

Tom Brown grasped the fat junior by the shoulder, and dragged him into the study and shook him.

"Now, then," he said grimly, "what's this about Hop Hi? Quick!"

"Ow! Oh, really, Brown—"

"Answer me, you fat young sweep!"

"I—I really wish you wouldn't shake me like that, Brown. It—it disturbs my digestive system, and—and you might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

Shake, shake!

"Ow, ow!"

"Now, then, explain!"

"There's nothing to explain," said Bulstrode thickly. "Bunter seems to think that Hop Hi has been here—"

"Exactly. You see, you fellows—"

Tom Brown glanced at the open window and at Bulstrode's ghastly face. A terrible thought crossed his mind.

"Good heavens, Bulstrode—"

"What—what are you babbling about?" exclaimed Bulstrode fiercely. "Do you think I—?" He broke off, realising that he was betraying himself.

Tom Brown's grasp tightened upon Billy Bunter.

"Was Hop Hi here, Bunter?" he exclaimed sharply. "Tell me the truth!"

"Yes," stammered Bunter, scared by Brown's tone. "I—I made him think this was his major's study, for—for a joke, you know."

"To get him a licking from Bulstrode, you mean, you young cad!"

"Oh, really, Brown, of course, I never meant anything of the sort! It was horribly mean of him not to lend me a few bob, but—"

Tom Brown slung Bunter to the door, and he recoiled into the passage, and fell there to a heap. Then the New Zealand junior turned fiercely upon Bulstrode.

"Where is Hop Hi?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know."

"He has been here?"

"I don't know."

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"What have you done with him?"

"Find out!"

Tom Brown gritted his teeth.

"I will find out," he exclaimed, "and I think it will be a bad thing for you, Bulstrode! Do you think I have forgotten the time when you were bullying Wun Lung, and he jumped into the river to get away from you? If you have played the same game over again with his minor—"

"I—I haven't. I—"

"Come on, Hazel! Let's look in the Close."

Hazeldene nodded, and they left the study without another word to the Remove bully. Bulstrode remained alone, with white face and throbbing brow.

He staggered rather than walked from the room at last, leaving the gas at full flare in his agitation.

When his footsteps died away the study was silent, and for some minutes it remained quite silent and unoccupied.

Then a head rose over the window-sill and looked slyly in.

It was the little pigtailed head of Hop Hi.

The little Chinese grinned as he looked into the empty study and climbed in actively over the window-sill from the rain-pipe he had been clinging to.

The Celestial had played a cunning trick upon the Remove bully.

As a matter of fact, Hop Hi had no desire to break his neck, and he would have taken any number of lickings from Bulstrode rather than a fall from the window into the Close.

As he hung from the sill he had felt the rain-pipe that ran level beneath, and he had grasped it with the hand he lowered from the sill, and when he appeared to fall he was simply hanging to the pipe instead of the window-sill, though in the thick darkness outside Bulstrode could not see the diminutive figure.

As soon as he was sure the room was empty the little Chinese climbed in again.

Down below in the Close there was a glimmer of lantern-light. Tom Brown and Hazeldene were looking for Hop Hi below the study-window.

There was no trace of the little Chinese there, of course, and the juniors were considerably puzzled. They had certainly judged from Bulstrode's manner that a tragedy had occurred.

"He can't have fallen here, after all," said Hazeldene.

"Doesn't look like it."

"Then what was Bulstrode so ghastly about?"

"He must have thought— Ah, look!"

Tom Brown and Hazeldene looked at one another, and burst into a simultaneous chuckle.

Against the square of light was visible the form of the little Chinese as he clambered in. The dark shadow disappeared in a few seconds.

"The young rascal!" said Tom. "He has been playing a game with Bulstrode. I forgot about the rain-pipe under the window."

"So did I. But how came he out of the window at all?"

Tom Brown's brow darkened.

"Bulstrode must have been bullying him, I suppose?"

"And he's giving Bulstrode a fright in return!" chuckled Hazeldene.

"That's it, and serve him right!"

"What-ho!" agreed Hazeldene. "We won't say a word!"

"Not a whisper!"

And the two juniors, greatly relieved to find that Hop Hi was safe after all, extinguished the lantern and returned to the house.

If Hop Hi intended to give the bully of the Remove a scare by way of punishment, they were not at all inclined to interfere.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Truthful Bunter.

"O H, cheese it, Bunter!"

"Draw it mild!"

"I say, you fellows, it's the solid truth! I went into Bulstrode's study to repay him a little loan, and found him standing by the open window, with a grim, ghastly, ghostly, horrible, uncanny look upon his face—"

"My only hat! How did he manage it?"

"He must have looked fascinating!" said Harry, laughing.

"It was a fearful, awful, terrific look—"

"Good!"

"I said to him, 'Bulstrode, what hast thou done?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean, I said, 'Bulstrode, what have

you done?'" corrected Bunter hastily, realising that he was getting a little too dramatic, "and he fixed me with his eyes and—"

"Pshaw!"

"And gave me a ghastly, grim, uncarthy, fearful look—"

"Did it hurt?"

"And said, 'He is dead!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His blood is upon my hands!"

"Let's look!"

"Ass! I mean, Bulstrode's hands."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Brown and Hazeldene rushed forth and looked for the body—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They will be bringing it in now."

"Oh, good."

"And I think Bulstrode ought to be arrested before he can escape."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, he has killed Hop Hi."

"Too bad!"

"We must ask Hop Hi if it hurts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, here come Brown and Hazeldene!" exclaimed Billy Bunter triumphantly. "Ask them!"

Hazeldene and the New Zealand junior entered the Common-room. The group of juniors turned towards them at once.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter, "have you found the body?"

"The body!"

"Yes; Hop Hi's body, you know."

"Oh, Hop Hi's body!" said Tom Brown.

"Yes. You know Bulstrode hurried him from the window—"

"Did he?"

"You know he did!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "You went out into the Close to find the body. Have you found it?"

"Alas!" said Tom Brown, with a wink at the other juniors which the short-sighted Owl of the Remove did not see. "Alas!"

"Boo-hoo!" said Hazeldene, taking his cue from Tom Brown.

"Poor Hop Hi!"

"Boo-hoo!"

"Alas!"

"Boo-hoo!"

"There you are!" exclaimed Billy Bunter triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you that Brown and Hazeldene would bear me out."

"Somebody ought to bear you out and chuck you into the nearest rubbish-heap, you fribulous romancer!" growled Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see Brown and Hazeldene weeping over—?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!"

Brown and Hazeldene walked away, overcome with dramatic emotion. They had their handkerchiefs out, and everyone but Billy Bunter could see them grinning behind their handkerchiefs.

"There!" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you can't have any doubt now, I suppose. Poor old Hop Hi is done in, and Bulstrode will be hanged, of course. I think I had better go and inform the Head at once, so that he can be arrested."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. This is a tragedy."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Don't you understand? I think you're awfully heartless!" said Bunter indignantly.

"There's poor old Hop Hi wallowing in his gore under Bulstrode's window, and— Oh!"

A diminutive figure walked into the room as Bunter was speaking, and the fat junior was interrupted.

It was Hop Hi!

"M-m-m-m-my word!" stammered Bunter.

Hop Hi blinked at the almost hysterical juniors in his sleepy way.

"You young set-up!" roared Bob Cherry. "What do you mean by walking in here when you ought to be wallowing in your gore in the Close? You've come to life just in time to spoil Bunter's story."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's Hop Hi!" gasped Bunter. "I saw him hurled forth from the window—at least, I—I thought he had been hurled forth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps it's a ghost," suggested Tom Brown. "A chap can't wallow in his gore, and walk around the school, at the same time. It may be a giddy spook."

"Oh, really, Brown—"

"Pinch him and see!" suggested Skinner.

"No pinchee!" said Hop Hi hastily.

"It can speak," said Nugent. "What may this mean, that thou, dead corpse, revisitest thus the glimpses of the moon?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There are more things in the heavenly

earth, as the esteemed Shakespeare remarks, than are dreamt of in your geometry," observed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's alive," said Wharton. "It's really Hop Hi. It's rather inconsiderate of him to come to life in this way, but there you are, Bunter. Now, confess that it was all lies from beginning to end."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Me alive!" said Hop Hi, grinning. "Me pretendee faller fom windee, flighten beastly Bulstrode. What you tinkee?"

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Harry, laughing. "Rotten heathen outsider!" growled Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I think he ought to be ragged—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yes, but I say—"

"Cheese it! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Bulstrode!" said Bob Cherry, in a quick whisper. "Get out of sight, Hop Hi."

The little Chinese caught on to the idea at once. He dodged behind the sturdy forms of the Famous Four, and the grinning juniors formed a ring round him to conceal him from the view of the bully of the Remove. Bulstrode entered the room the next minute.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Surprise for Bulstrode.

BULSTRODE was looking white and worn.

He had been tramping about by himself for some time, trying to think what to do; but his thoughts were in a whirl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up with several other fellows. "You're looking seedy, Bulstrode."

The Remove bully did not reply.

"Anything wrong?" asked Snoop.

"No."

"Have you seen Hop Hi?" asked Skinner. Bulstrode started.

"No."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—" began Billy Bunter.

The Remove bully gave him a fierce look. Wharton glanced curiously at Bulstrode.

He wondered what maze of falsehoods the Remove bully would entangle himself in to cover up his imaginary guilt.

Some of the fellows could not help grinning as they saw little Hop Hi hidden behind the group of juniors, within six paces of Bulstrode, who had not the faintest idea, of course, that he was there.

But Bulstrode was too confused and scared to see their grins. He was thinking only of his supposed danger.

"Yes, tell us what you know, Bunter!" chorused half a dozen voices.

"He knows nothing!" said Bulstrode fiercely. "If he begins his lies about me, I'll knock them down his throat again!"

"Oh! I say, you fellows—"

"We'll look after you, Bunter," said Tom Brown, getting in front of the Owl of the Remove. "Bulstrode sha'n't touch you."

"Go ahead, Bunter!"

"Pile it on!"

"Unfold the ghastly tale!"

"Well, all I know of it, I played an awfully clever trick on Hop Hi," said Billy Bunter. "I told him Bulstrode's study was Wun Lung's you see—"

"You young Ananias!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! It was a joke, you know."

"Only a cad would tell a lie for a joke."

"Well, Bunter is a cad," said Ogilvy. "No need to go into that now. Get on with the washing, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Ogilvy—"

"Buck up!"

"Well, you see, Hop Hi stayed in the study, and then Bulstrode came in—"

"It's a lie!" said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Hop Hi never was in my study, as far as I know," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really—"

"I—I had gone in," said Bulstrode haltingly. "I saw the window open, and was going to close it, when Brown and Hazeldene came in."

"Brown and Hazeldene, give your evidence."

"I say, you fellows, I haven't finished yet."

"Yes, you have," said Bob Cherry, pushing the fat junior away. "You ring off; you're dead in this scene. Now, then, Brown—"

"We came into the study," said Tom Brown. "We found Bulstrode staring at the open window, as if—as if—"

"As if he'd dropped a sovereign out," said Hazeldene.

"As if he'd seen a ghost," said Brown.

"Did you see Hop Hi?"

"No; he wasn't there."

"Had you reason to suppose that he had been?"

"Yes; Bunter said so."

"Stuff! If Bunter said so, that was a reason to suppose that he hadn't been there."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Any other evidence?" asked Bob Cherry.

"No; only Bulstrode seemed to be frightened out of his wits about something."

"It's not true!" said Bulstrode fiercely.

"Why should I be frightened? I was a little bit startled at your rushing in on me like that, that's all—"

"Then Hop Hi is all right, as far as you know?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Ye-es, of course," said Bulstrode. "I don't see any—any reason to suppose that—that he's not all right."

His trembling lips as he said it betrayed him. The juniors looked at one another. A

towards the little Chinese. "So you were fooling me?"

"What you tinkee?"

"I'll—I'll—"

"You keep your paws off the kid!" said Harry Wharton coolly. "I should think you'd had a lesson which would stop your bullying for a bit!"

"Yes, rather!"

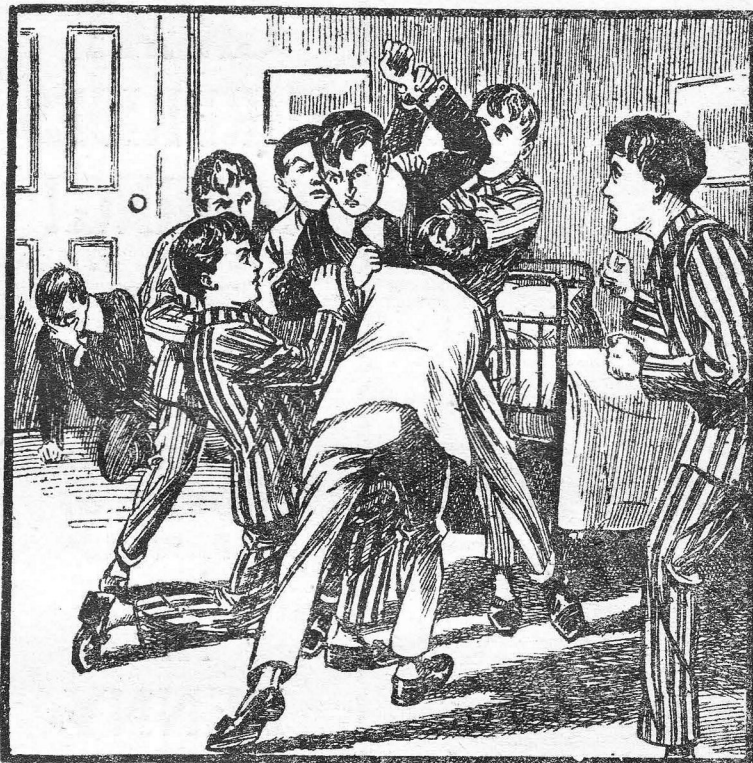
"Mind your own business!" said Bulstrode savagely. "Do you think I'm going to have a trick like that played on me? I—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry contemptuously. "The less you have to say now the better, Bulstrode! You've stood up before us all and lied—"

"I—I—"

"You've rolled out lie after lie, and shown yourself in your true colours!" said Nugent. "You'd better shut up now!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Brown. "Least said the soonest mended; but I really think that



Bulstrode was a match for any three of the fags, but against such numbers even the powerful bully of the Remove had little chance. (See page 7.)

punishment was coming for Bulstrode, quite adequate to the case.

"Then you wouldn't be surprised to see him walk into the room here?" said Bob Cherry.

Bulstrode cast an involuntary glance towards the door; a look full of such fear that Bob Cherry, in spite of himself, relented.

"You ass!" he said. "You've lied before us all, and I hope the Remove will keep the sort of chap you are in mind when you begin swanking again. Hop Hi is all right, as a matter of fact. Show yourself, young 'un!"

The juniors parted, and Hop Hi stood revealed to view.

Bulstrode reeled back.

The little Chinese grinned at him.

"Allee lightee!" he remarked. "No faller fom windee, you savvy. Playee little jokee on Bulstrode."

The Remove bully gasped. For some moments he could not get his breath; the relief was so great.

He found his voice at last.

"Hop Hi!"

The little Celestial nodded cheerfully. He was not afraid of Bulstrode with the Famous Four round him.

"Me allee lightee!"

"You young hound!" shouted Bulstrode, quite himself again now, and making a step

the palm for lying ought to be taken away from Bunter and presented to Bulstrode! When it comes to real, solid lies, Bulstrode is an easy first!"

"Oh, really, Brown—"

Bulstrode gave the Removites a savage look, and then thrust his hands deep into his pockets and strode away.

"Where's the grub?" asked Gatty, in the Second Form dormitory after "Lights out" that night.

"Allee light!"

Hop Hi pulled a big bag out from under the bed. It was a huge travelling-bag, and looked large enough to carry the personal property of a family in it.

The fags gathered round eagerly.

Hop Hi opened the bag, and began to hand out the contents.

The fags received them, and they were arranged on the floor, there being no table in the dormitory for the feast to be arranged upon.

But the fags were not particular.

So long as there was plenty to eat, they were quite willing to picnic on the floor of the dormitory.

And there was certainly plenty to eat.

"My hat!" said Gatty, forgetting his black eye, as he surveyed the provisions with the other. "This is ripping!"

"Gorgeous!" said Tatton.
 "Spiffing!"
 "First chop!"
 "The Remove don't often have a feed like this," Nugent minor remarked; "and the third never!"
 "Good!"
 "The Fifth jolly well don't!" said Myers.
 "It's first chop; and I propose, second, and pass a vote of thanks to Hop Hi."
 "Hear, hear!"
 "That comes after the feed, and Hop Hi will have to make a speech," said Nugent minor. "The feed first."
 "Oh, yes, rather!" said a dozen voices very heartily.
 "Better fasten the door," said Tatton.
 "They don't give us a key in the lock!" growled Gatty.

"Shove a chair under the handle, then."
 "That's a good wheeze."
 Gatty took a chair; there were only two in the dormitory, and they were of the cane variety, with round-topped backs.
 He shoved the back of one of them under the handle of the door, and jammed it tightly. The door would not open from without now unless the chair slipped from its place.
 In case of a master or a prefect demanding admission, of course, the door would have to be opened. The idea was to keep out Bulstrode or any other raiding junior.

The door secured, the Second Form settled down to the feed.
 Seated on the floor, on pillows or on the beds, they handed round the good things, and the supply seemed to be almost endless.
 Hop Hi beamed upon his Form-fellows.
 The little Chinese spent most of the time in hospitably handing out the provisions and looking after the wants of his numerous guests.

But he was evidently enjoying the feed as much as anybody.

Suddenly Gatty stopped a spoon on its way to his mouth laden with jelly.

"Hark!"
 The fags listened.
 There was a creak in the passage outside, and that creak was a sufficient indication of a stealthy footstep. They did not hear the footstep.

"Creak again!"
 "Some blessed sneak creeping along there!" said Myers.

"It can't be a prefect. He wouldn't be tiptoeing," said Todd.
 "Bulstrode very likely."
 "Never mind him; get on with the feed."
 "Rather! Pass the jam!"
 "And the cake!"

The fags fed. But they started a little again as the door was tried from the outside. It did not open, of course.

Dicky Nugent chuckled softly.
 "It's only a giddy raider," he said. "A senior wouldn't be sneaking about like that. He can't get in, so it's all right."

The fags ate on unconcernedly. Some of them looked at the door. There was a steady pressure from without, and the chair jammed under the lock began to creak.

But the door did not open.
 The pressure increased, and the chair creaked again and again. But it did not budge. Then the pressure ceased, and there was silence for a few minutes.

"He's done!" grinned Gatty.
 But Gatty was mistaken. A sharp tap came at the door. The fags grinned, and took no other notice of it.

"Tap, tap!"
 "Yes, I can see us opening the door—I don't think!" murmured Dicky Nugent, helping himself to seed-cake.

"Tap away!" grinned Gatty. "You can tap till you're tired, but that blessed door won't come open!"

And the fags chuckled.
 "Open this door!"

It was a voice from outside—the voice of someone speaking thickly through his nose. Some of the fags started anxiously.

Mr. Filmer, the master of the Second, had a way of speaking through his nose.
 "Hallo!" called out Nugent minor coolly.
 "Hallo! Who's there?"

"Your Form-master!"
 "Rats!"
 "I am Mr. Filmer!"

"More rats!"
 "Open this door immediately!"
 "I—I say, it sounds like Filmer's voice!" said Tatton nervously.

"Stuff! It's somebody imitating him!" said Nugent minor. "Filmer wouldn't creep about like a blessed burglar!"

"Of course he wouldn't!" said Gatty.
 "Shove the jam over here, young Myers."

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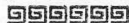
"Open this door!"
 "Go and eat cake!"
 "Nugent minor, I shall cane you severely!"
 "More rats!"
 "Will you open this door?"
 "And many of them!" said Nugent minor.

The fags chuckled gleefully. There was a heavy shake at the door, and Bulstrode's voice, undisguised now, roared through the keyhole:

"Open this door, you young cads, or I'll lick the lot of you when I get in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent minor.
 And the fags took up the yell. And that yell of laughter was all the reply Bulstrode received as he rattled and shook at the door.

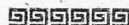
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LOOK OUT FOR FULL PARTICULARS

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Hop Hi's Triumph.

"PASS the jam-tarts!" said Nugent minor cheerfully. "Bulstrode can rattle and bang till he's tired, or until a prefect comes and shifts him. He can't hurt us!"

"The rotter!" said Gatty. "He's sneaked out of the Remove dormitory to pay us this visit. Wharton wouldn't have let him come if he'd known."

"Well, he can't hurt us."
 "No getee in," said Hop Hi, with a grin.
 "Bulstrode donee blown this timee."

"Quite brown!"
 Bulstrode shook the door savagely.

But he was afraid of attracting the attention of a prefect or a master, who would certainly have wanted to know why he was out of the Remove dormitory at that hour, so he could not venture to make much noise.

He desisted at last, and the fags heard a sound of whispering outside the door, which showed that the Remove bully was not alone.

Then there was another tap, and Bulstrode's voice, subdued, through the keyhole:

"You young cubs—"
 "Oh, get out!"
 "Will you open this door?"
 "Yes—to-morrow morning."

"Look here, I don't want to touch any of you. I'm going to lick that Chinese rat. I shall let the rest of you alone."

"Go hon!"
 "It doesn't matter to you cubs if I lick him."

"My dear chap," said Nugent minor, "he's our best friend at the present moment. He's the founder of a jolly good feed, and worth ninety of you."

"Yes, rather!" chorused the fags.
 "You can't come in, Bulstrode. You'd better go back to bed like a good little boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Bulstrode made no reply, but the chair creaked again as the door was pushed forcibly from outside. Gatty jumped up suddenly.

"Hallo, it's slipping! My hat!"
 He ran towards the door too late. The round top of the chair-back had slipped from under the lock as the door was savagely jerked.

Gatty reached the door, and had only time to jump back again to avoid a nasty knock as it flew open.

Bulstrode and Skinner rushed in. The fags jumped to their feet in alarm, and tarts and cakes and ginger-pop were dropped to the floor in confusion.

"Shut the door, Skinny!" said Bulstrode savagely.
 "What-ho!"

Skinner slammed the door, and put his back against it. Bulstrode glared at the startled fags, his eyes ablaze.

"Well, I've got in, you see!" he said sneeringly.

"Yes; and now you'd jolly well better get out again!" exclaimed Nugent minor undauntedly. "You're not wanted here, you bully!"

The burly Removite scowled at him.
 "Not so much of your cheek!" he exclaimed. "It wouldn't be much trouble to give you a licking as well as Wan Lung minor."

"Look here—"
 "Hold your tongue, you cub! Where's that Chinese cad?"

Hop Hi had promptly placed a bed between himself and Bulstrode. His little bright eyes were gleaming as he fastened them on the Remove bully.

Bulstrode caught sight of him, and strode towards him with knitted brows. Hop Hi dodged round the beds and over them.

"Come here, you Chinese cub!" shouted Bulstrode angrily.

"No comee!"
 "I'll break every bone in your body!"
 "No catchee!"

"Won't I? I'll jolly soon show you, you alien rotter!"

And Bulstrode rushed in pursuit of the little Celestial.

"Hop it, Hop Hi!" shouted Gatty. "Don't let him catch you!"

Hop Hi did not mean to if he could help it. He ran and dodged desperately, eluded Bulstrode at the end of the dormitory, and came peeing back.

The Remove bully rushed after him at top speed, knocking out of the way several fags who purposely got into his path.

Nugent minor frowned darkly.
 It was no light matter for fags to tackle the burly Removite, who was as big and strong as many a fellow in the Upper Fourth and Fifth.

But the Second-Formers were by no means disposed to have their dormitory invaded in this way, and least of all Nugent minor. Hop Hi was under his protection.

"Look here, we're not going to stand this!" he exclaimed.

"Not much!" growled Gatty.

"He can chase Hop Hi as much as he likes, but if he touches him we'll pile on him!" said Nugent minor resolutely.

"That's the ticket!"

"He's a big beast, but there's enough of us, I should think," said Tatton.

"Yes, rather!"

"Stop him, Skinner!" shouted Bulstrode.

Skinner ran out from his post at the door, and intercepted Hop Hi as he came racing up the dormitory.

The little Chinese lowered his head desperately and charged at Skinner.

"Ow!" gasped Skinner.

He reeled backwards and rolled on the floor in anguish. Hop Hi's hard round head had knocked every ounce of wind out of him.

"Stop him!" yelled Bulstrode.

"Ow-w-w!"

"You ass—"

"Gro-o-o!"

Skinner lay on the floor and gasped, and Bulstrode rushed on after the elusive Chinese.

Hop Hi dodged him once more and came tearing back the length of the dormitory.

The Remove bully was flaming with rage by this time.

Most of the fags were laughing at him.

He made a supreme effort, and caught up with the little Chinese, near enough to grasp his streaming pigtail.

He grasped the pigtail, and jerked, and Hop Hi came to a sudden halt with a howl of pain.

"Now, you young cub!" gasped Bulstrode, as his strong grasp closed upon the diminutive form of the Chinese boy.

"Helpee Hop Hi!" gasped the new fag.

"Keep off, you young cads—"

"Come on!" said Nugent minor, between his teeth.

"Down with the Remove!"

"Sock it to him!"

A flood of fags swarmed upon Bulstrode.

They were upon him, and round him, and over him, like flies, in the twinkling of an eye.

He was a match for any three of them, but against such numbers even the powerful bully of the Remove had little chance.

He was forced to release Hop Hi to defend himself, and his defence availed him little.

He was borne to the floor, and pinned there under an overwhelming weight of fags.

"Rescue, Skinner!" he yelled.

But Skinner was in no condition to rescue anybody. He was gasping on the floor of the dormitory, painfully trying to get his wind back.

"Got him!" said Gatty.

"Got the beast!" chuckled Nugent minor triumphantly.

"Let me go—"

"No fear!"

"Kick him out!"

"Chuck him out!"

"No goodee!" interposed Hop Hi. "He comee backee again. Tie Bulstrode up, and lettee him lookee while we feedee. What you tinkee?"

The fags yelled with laughter at the idea.

"Jolly good idea!"

"Got a rope?" demanded Nugent minor.

"Twist up a sheet; that will do."

"Good!"

"Let me go!" roared Bulstrode.

"Yes—when we've done with you," said Nugent minor cheerfully. "Yank the beast to the nearest bed, and tie him up!"

And the Remove bully was rolled over towards the bed by many hands, and a twisted sheet speedily bound him to the leg of the bedstead.

He struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain.

He was soon secured; and then the victorious fags turned their attention to Skinner.

Skinner was trying to crawl away towards the door; but the fags pounced upon him before he could reach it.

"Collar the cad!"

And they collared him—not gently.

"Lemme go!" gasped Skinner. "I'll—I'll go quietly! I—I only came here with Bulstrode. I'll get out!"

"Yes, and send a prefect to stop the feed, perhaps," sniffed Gatty. "You'll stay here with Bulstrode. Yank him over!"

Skinner was "yanked" to a bed, and his wrists were tied to the leg of it, behind him, so that he could sit up and watch the feed.

Bulstrode was writhing with rage.

"Untie me!" he said hoarsely. "I'll yell, and bring the prefects here if you don't."

"Will you?" said Nugent minor coolly. "I'll see that you don't! Hand me a cake of soap, Myers."

Bulstrode opened his mouth furiously to yell; and Nugent minor jammed the cake of soap into it. Bulstrode sputtered and spluttered wildly.

Nugent minor coolly proceeded to tie a handkerchief over his mouth to keep the soap in place.

The Removité glared at him speechlessly.

He gasped and gurgled, but he could not get rid of that unsavoury gag.

"I hope you can breathe through your nose," said Dicky Nugent. "I should be sorry to have the trouble of disposing of your body."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fags.

Bulstrode could breathe through his nose.

He sat and gasped and gurgled, while the fags resumed their interrupted feed. Skinner made no attempt to yell.

He didn't want to be gagged with a cake of soap.

Under the eyes of the captured raiders, the Second-Formers resumed the feed, and it proceeded merrily.

Unmindful of the glares of rage bestowed upon them, they ate and drank and made merry.

Hop Hi's health was drunk dozens of times in ginger-beer and lemonade, and the corks popped merrily till the last bottle had been opened and emptied.

There was very little left of the feed by this time; and the fags finished up the fragments in a conscientious manner.

There was nothing wasted by the Second Form when they were having a feed.

Dicky Nugent gave a long sigh of satisfaction as he finished the last tart.

"Well, you chaps, I must say this has been a ripping feed!" he exclaimed.

"Magnificent!" said Gatty.

"I propose a vote of confidence—I mean a vote of thanks to the founder of the giddy feast!"

"I second it!" said Gatty, finishing the last of the currant jelly.

"And I third it," said Myers, with his mouth full.

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously," said Nugent minor, with a look round. "Hop Hi's a jolly good fellow, and we're going to stand by him, especially against Remove cads. Kick these rotters out, and let's get to bed!"

"Hear, hear!"

Bulstrode and Skinner were untied, and promptly kicked out.

They offered no resistance.

They were aching all over, and in nowise inclined to renew the combat.

They disappeared into the passage, and the Second Form put away the traces of the feed, extinguishing the lights, and went to bed, very well satisfied with Hop Hi and with one another.

The next morning Wun Lung grinned with satisfaction as he beheld Hop Hi parading the Close, arm-in-arm with Nugent minor and Gatty.

Hop Hi had started well; and henceforth there was to be no trouble—at least, as far as the Second Form was concerned—for Wun Lung minor.

THE END.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

GOOD-NIGHT, Knowles!

"Good-night, sir!" Knowles, the unpopular prefect of the Sixth Form at Rookwood,

left the Head's study with mixed feelings struggling for mastery within his breast.

He had that evening suffered an unprecedented outrage to his dignity and a great deal of personal discomfort. On the other hand, he looked like getting even with Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth Form at last—and that was something that he had wanted to achieve for a long time past.

On the whole, perhaps, Knowles was pretty well satisfied. It was worth a good deal of discomfort, in his opinion, to get Jimmy Silver & Co. a flogging from the Head. And that was what was in store for the heroes of the Fourth on the morrow. The Head himself had passed the sentence.

It had come about in this wise. When crossing the quad in the dark, earlier in the evening, Knowles had suddenly been collared. Unseen hands had seized him, a sack had been unceremoniously jammed over his head, and in a twinkling he was at the mercy of his assailants.

Knowles had raved and struggled and tried to shout, naturally, but the sack had smothered his voice, and a rope wound round and round him, outside the sack, had soon restrained his struggles.

Knowles was not long in realising that he was the victim of a rag. His assailants numbered at least three or four, and were evidently juniors. Knowles's suspicions had at once flown to Jimmy Silver & Co. They were always "up against" the bullying prefect, and only that day Knowles had given them a severe licking.

Knowles was carried to the old abbey ruins in the school grounds, and left there. It was several hours before he could manage to loosen his bonds sufficiently to enable him to get rid of the stifling sack.

Then he had shouted and shouted, and Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth had ultimately rescued him, but they were piloted to the spot by Jimmy Silver & Co.! The Fourth-Formers had declared that they had heard Knowles's shouts from their dormitory, but Knowles was too furious to listen to that explanation. He took them before the Head then and there, and accused them of the outrage. Things looked black for Jimmy Silver & Co., but they stoutly maintained their innocence—for innocent they were.

Reluctant to condemn them on circumstantial evidence alone, the Head had asked Knowles if he had any sort of direct proof.

It was then that the revengeful prefect made up his mind to stick at nothing to procure the punishment of the juniors he hated. He told a deliberate lie. He declared that he had recognised Jimmy Silver's voice when his unseen assailants collared him in the darkness of the quad!

Dr. Chisholm's brow had become like thunder as Knowles uttered this damning statement in cool, deliberate tones. Jimmy Silver & Co. had been almost too staggered to protest, and the Head soon cut short their stammered denials. Dr. Chisholm's last doubts had been removed, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had been adjudged guilty, and dismissed to their dormitory to spend the night in miserable anticipation of the public flogging that awaited them in the morning.

As Knowles reached this point in his train of thought, his thin lips parted in an evil smile. The events of the night, unpleasant as they had been, had at least been disastrous for Jimmy Silver & Co. As Knowles strode across the dark quad towards the Modern wing, he rubbed his hands together with satisfaction. It looked as though nothing

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could save the juniors he detested from a severe flogging—and the thought was very pleasant to the Modern prefect.

A moving shadow under the old beeches caught his eye, and he stopped. It was not likely that a second attack on him was planned, but he was on his guard. It was most likely some junior who had been out of his dormitory at forbidden hours, and Knowles was in the mood to punish somebody—anybody—just then. He made a spring towards the shadow, and he heard a footstep and hurried breathing.

The footsteps pattered away swiftly in the dark. Knowles set his teeth and dashed in pursuit.

He caught a glimpse of a running figure for a moment, and then it vanished round the new wing. Knowles dashed after it, guessing that it was a Modern junior out of bounds, and that he was seeking to re-enter at the back of the house.

He was right.

As he came running round the house, he saw a little window at the back half open, and a dark figure clambering in. Knowles came up, panting, and grasped the legs of the vanishing junior. There was a startled cry.

"Oh!"

"You can come out, you sweep!" said Knowles, holding on tight to the legs. "I've got you!"

The junior made a terrific effort to drag himself in through the window, but Knowles held on like a vice. The effort slackened, and the junior gasped. Knowles dragged him bodily from the window, and he plumped on the ground, panting.

"Get up!" growled the prefect.

The junior rose. Knowles peered at him, and recognised Tommy Dodd of the Fourth. Dodd was looking very pale, and breathing hard.

"So it's you!" said Knowles.

Tommy Dodd looked sullen.

"Yes," he said defiantly.

"What are you doing out of your dormitory?"

Tommy Dodd did not answer, but his eyes were fixed on Knowles with a peculiar expression, which the prefect could not fail to notice, dark as it was.

"Why don't you answer me?" exclaimed Knowles roughly. "Have you been playing larks on the Classical side?"

"No."

"Then what have you been up to?"

"I've been out in the quad."

"Nowhere else?"

"No."

"You were going out when I came on you," said Knowles. "You turned and ran when you met me. Where were you going?"

Silence.

"Why don't you answer?" said Knowles, as surprised as angry. "Do you want me to take you to the Head?"

"I don't care."

Knowles stared at him. It was not like the cheery Tommy Dodd: he was silent and sullen. Perhaps he had not forgotten that tremendous licking of the afternoon, from which his hands were still aching. Tommy Dodd was certainly sullen and savage and reckless now.

"You were up to something," said Knowles, mystified and curious. "You may as well own up what it was. My hat!" he ejaculated, as a sudden thought struck him. "You were going to see Silver!"

"I wasn't."

"Perhaps you were with him in what he did this evening," said Knowles, his eyes glittering, and his grasp tightening on the junior's shoulder. "You young rascal! I might have guessed that!"

"I wasn't going to see Silver, and I don't know what he's done, and I don't care," said Tommy Dodd sulkily.

"Then what were you doing out of doors?" No reply.

"I think I know well enough," said Knowles savagely. "Those Classical cads were not alone in it. Perhaps you helped them to collar me. Own up, you young cad!"

Tommy Dodd started violently.

"So that touches you, does it?" sneered Knowles. "Were you in the gang? There were four of them at least—there might have been more."

"I—I—"

"Good! You can take the flogging along with the rest," said Knowles. "Come with me; you're going straight to the Head."

"I—I say—"

stammered Tommy Dodd. "You needn't say anything," said Knowles grimly. "I'm pretty certain that you were one of them, and, anyway, you can explain to the Head what you're doing out of the dormitory at half-past ten. You young hound, that's because I licked you to-day. You've helped those Classical cads to assault your own prefect—"

"They're going to be flogged?" asked Tommy Dodd, in a husky voice.

"Yes; and you with them, if you had a hand in it."

"Jimmy Silver and his friends, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"For—for collaring you in the quad?"

"I see you know all about it," sneered Knowles. "They're going to be flogged to-morrow. I wish they could be sacked."

Tommy Dodd drew a deep, deep breath.

"Then I'll come to the Head," he said.

"I—I'm glad you dropped on me, Knowles. I—I hadn't the faintest idea they might be suspected. I never thought of it. But I'd have owned up as soon as I heard they were going to be flogged, anyway."

"So you admit it?"

"Yes, you brute! Yes, you bully! I collared you, and serve you right! And I sha'n't tell you who helped me, either!"

"I know who helped you—Jimmy Silver and the rest—"

"They had nothing to do with it," said Tommy Dodd.

Knowles started. It began to dawn upon him that he had discovered a little too much. "Don't tell lies!" he said savagely.

"I'm not telling lies, you cad! Modern chaps helped me. I shouldn't be likely to go to the Classical rotters for help!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "Now, take me to the Head. I'm ready to own up, and I'll show him my hands, too, and let him see how you licked me this afternoon, you bully!"

Knowles released Tommy Dodd. He stared at the Modern junior blankly in the gloom. He understood now. It was not the Classics at all. The juniors of his own side, whom he had savagely punished, had planned that vengeance and carried it out. There were four of them—Dodd and Doyle and Cook, undoubtedly, and another. It was utterly unlikely that the Modern chums would have called on Classical juniors for aid in such an enterprise. Knowles knew that. His case against Jimmy Silver & Co. crumbled away. He had discovered too much.

For, oddly enough, though Tommy Dodd had collared him and tied him up, Knowles would have preferred Jimmy Silver to be flogged. And the lie he had told in the Head's study came back to his mind with staggering force. He had declared that he had recognised Jimmy Silver's voice. And Tommy Dodd was the guilty party, and ready to own up that Jimmy Silver had had nothing to do with it, and had not been on the spot at all.

"It—it was you?" stammered Knowles. "You and Doyle and Cook—"

"Find out!"

"Oh, you young hound!" Knowles was almost dazed by his discovery. His lie had

come home to roost now, with a vengeance.

"You—you young scoundrel!"

"File it on," said Tommy Dodd recklessly. "I made up my mind you'd go through it, and you have. I don't care if you take me to the Head! I was a fool to care what happened to you at all, that's all. I don't care if you know the rest. I meant to leave you tied up in the old abbey for a few hours, and then come and untie your legs so that you could walk, if you hadn't got help sooner. I was going to the abbey to see if you were still there, when I ran into you just now. Still, I don't care. I'd have owned up to-morrow morning, anyway, rather than see Jimmy Silver flogged."

Knowles panted.

He knew the truth now, and it was easy enough to take Tommy Dodd to the Head, and get the right party sentenced to condign punishment. But how was he to explain the lie he had told? He had told it, in the conviction that Jimmy Silver was guilty, and the lie could not be explained away.

If only he had had sense enough to keep to the truth! He gritted his teeth with rage as he thought of it. Even now he would rather that Jimmy Silver had the flogging than Tommy Dodd.

"Well, why don't you take me to the Head?" growled Tommy Dodd. "I'm ready."

Knowles drew a deep breath.

"Because I don't believe you," he said deliberately.

Tommy Dodd jumped.

"You—you don't believe me, Knowles?"

"No!"

"But—but I've owned up!" stammered Tommy Dodd, in utter amazement. He had not the faintest idea of what was working in Knowles' mind, and he was astounded.

"I believe you've been trying to pull my leg," said Knowles calmly. "I don't believe you know anything about the matter, excepting what I've told you. Go back to your dormitory."

"But—but—"

"Get in at that window, and go back to your dormitory," said Knowles harshly. "If you have the sense to hold your tongue, I will say nothing about this. Get in!"

He pushed the amazed junior towards the window. Tommy Dodd, with his brain in a whirl, clambered in, and disappeared in the darkness within. Knowles went round the building and hurried to his own study.

The prefect's face was pale with rage and chagrin. What was to happen now? If Tommy Dodd had sense enough to hold his tongue he could escape punishment, and Knowles would say nothing. The real perpetrator of the outrage could escape scot-free, with Knowles' blessing for that matter, so long as Jimmy Silver was flogged, and Knowles' falsehood was not brought to light.

Would Tommy Dodd hold his tongue?

After some reflection Knowles decided that he would. A flogging was not a light matter, and he was pretty certain that the junior would keep silence, so long as the prefect held his peace. If nothing was said Jimmy Silver would be flogged, and Knowles' falsehood, which had come home so uncomfortably to roost, would never be brought home to him.

Knowles went to bed feeling more comforted.

Tommy Dodd was sure to have enough sense to hold his tongue. Unfortunately for Knowles, Tommy Dodd, though quite a sensible youth, was not blessed with the kind of sense that Knowles gave him credit for.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coming to Terms.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. turned out in the morning at the clang of the rising-bell in the lowest spirits.

As a rule, they greeted the rising sun with faces as sunny as his own. But on this particular morning they were decidedly downhearted.

The flat had gone forth, and there was no arguing with the Head. After prayers, before morning classes were assembled, the Fiscal Four were to be hauled up before the whole school and flogged.

The disgrace of that punishment, as well as the pain of it, troubled their minds. The consciousness of innocence made it all the more bitter.

They came down in glum spirits. Long before breakfast all the Classics were in possession of the story. Smythe of the Shell and his friends, who were very much up against the Fiscal Four, declared that it served them right. Smythe of the Shell, in fact, seemed to look forward to the occasion with some pleasurable anticipation. But the

chums of the Fourth were too dispirited even to knock Smythe's hat off.

"It's rotten!" groaned Lovell dolorously. "It wouldn't be so bad if we'd had the satisfaction of ragging the cad. But to be flogged for ragging the beast when we didn't do it—that fairly puts the lid on!"

"Our luck's out!" grumbled Raby. "The cads who did it ought to own up! Might be Smythe and his set, for all we know. Oh, it's rotten!"

"They may own up, whoever they are," said Jimmy Silver hopefully. "We're not flogged yet."

"We soon shall be!" grunted Lovell.

It was exasperating, too, that most of the Classical fellows seemed to believe that the Fiscal Four had "done it." Most of them highly approved of doing it, too, and commiserated the quartette on being found out. But they only smiled at the Fiscal Four's almost frenzied assertions that they hadn't done it. It was a good deed, and they wished they had done it; but they hadn't.

The order had gone forth for the whole

study. Knowles had been watching his face during breakfast. He was sure—almost sure—that Tommy Dodd would do the sensible thing. But he wanted to be quite, quite sure.

"You remember that rot you were telling me last night, Dodd?" said Knowles, when the door was closed.

"Yes," said Tommy.

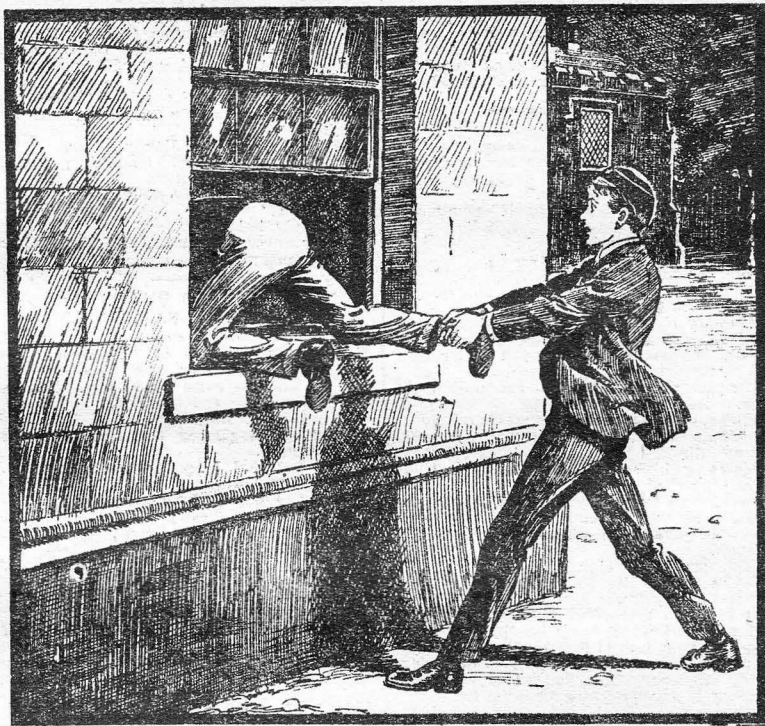
"I told you I didn't believe it. I don't believe it now. And I sha'n't say anything about the matter," said Knowles.

Tommy Dodd's lip curled.

"I know!" he said. "You've got your knife into Jimmy Silver, Knowles, and you'd rather he was flogged than me, though you know I did it."

Knowles breathed hard through his nose. He had hoped that Tommy Dodd would have sense enough to avoid plain speaking, Tommy Dodd seemed to be singularly lacking in sense upon some subjects.

"You do not mean to say that you intend to repeat this preposterous story, Dodd?" said Knowles, after a pause.



Knowles grasped the legs of the vanishing junior, and there was a startled cry. "You can come out, you sweep!" said Knowles, holding on tight to the legs. "I've got you!" (see page 8)

school to assemble in Big Hall after prayers to witness the flogging. The order caused much heart-searching among certain juniors on the Modern side.

For the three Tommies, and Towle, who had helped them on that great occasion, did not like the idea of being flogged themselves. But they agreed, dolefully enough, that there was nothing for it but to face the music.

"We couldn't keep quiet and let it go on," said Tommy Dodd. "It's all my fault. I got you chaps into this scrape—"

"Sure you didn't intirely!" said Tommy Doyle loyally. "We can stand it, anyway."

"I'm going to own up, and I sha'n't name you chaps," said Tommy Dodd. "No need four getting licked if one will do. And I persuaded you, anyway."

"Rot!" said Tommy Cook. "If you own up, we're going to."

"Well," said Tommy Dodd, "let's go out and look for those Classic worms, and ease their minds a bit."

"Right-ho!"

"Dodd!" It was Knowles' voice; he was looking for the cheerful youth.

"Hallo, Knowles!" said Tommy Dodd, with the respect due to a prefect conspicuously absent from his manner.

"Come into my study," said Knowles.

"Wait for me, you chaps!"

Tommy Dodd followed Knowles into his

study. Tommy Dodd looked him straight in the eyes.

"Do you want me to keep quiet about it?" he asked.

"It would be better, for your own sake."

"And what price Jimmy Silver?"

"What does it matter about Silver? You don't like the fellow, anyway. I caught you fighting him yesterday."

"Yes, fighting him!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "I've fought him a round dozen times since he's been at Rookwood. But playing him a dirty trick—that's another matter."

"Do you want to be flogged, you young idiot?"

"No fear!"

"Then hold your tongue!"

"I can't! And I won't! What do you want me to hold my tongue for?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "So that Silver may be flogged, when he hasn't done anything. You've still got it in for him over that baring-out, I suppose. Well, as soon as we're in Big Hall, if Silver is to be flogged, I'm going to own up."

"You—you mean that?"

"Yes, I do mean it! You ought, as a prefect, to have reported my confession to the Head already!" said Tommy Dodd.

Knowles ground his teeth. It had come to that through his crooked ways. A junior

of the Fourth Form was coolly lecturing him, a prefect of the Sixth, on what he ought to have done!

"And it wouldn't do you any good if I told how you've tried to persuade me to keep quiet and let Silver be flogged!" said Tommy Dodd, with flashing eyes. "Blessed if I haven't a good mind to let it out, too! I'm going to be flogged for nailing you! I'll give you a show-up, too! I'll bet the Head wouldn't let you be a prefect after what I could tell him if I chose!"

"He wouldn't believe a word of it!" stammered Knowles, pale with uneasiness.

"Very well, I'll tell him, and see." Knowles bit his lip till the blood came. Tommy Dodd swung towards the door, and the Modern captain called him back in a husky voice.

"Dodd! Stop a minute!"

"Well?" said Tommy Dodd.

"You—you really mean that—that you're going to take the flogging instead of Silver?" muttered Knowles.

"Don't you believe I mean it? You'll see soon; it's nearly time for prayers."

"Wait—wait a minute! Look here, Dodd, I want you to keep your mouth shut! I—I'm willing to look over what you did last night. Perhaps I was a bit too rough on you," said Knowles unsteadily. "I—I don't want you flogged."

"Fat lot you care!" said Tommy Dodd. "You want old Silver flogged for nothing! And you think I'm mean cad enough to stand by and see it done to save my own skin! Well, you'll see. As soon as Jimmy Silver is called out I shall trot up."

"You know you'll be flogged!" stammered Knowles.

"Of course I know it."

"If you hold your tongue—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tommy Dodd disrespectfully. "What sort of a cad do you think you're talking to?"

Knowles clenched his hands almost convulsively, and made a movement towards the junior. He looked dangerous at that moment, but Tommy Dodd did not flinch.

The junior looked the prefect steadily in the face. He was very nearly as angry as Knowles. And a suspicion was working in his mind. It could not simply be the desire to see Jimmy Silver flogged that moved Knowles to this extent. There was something more than that in it. Knowles evidently had something to fear if Tommy Dodd owned up; and Tommy was not long in guessing what it was. He gave a low whistle, and burst into a laugh.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd. "You're in for it, Knowles! You've told the Head that it was Silver! You told lies—told him you recognised him, or something, and you're afraid of being bowled out! You have put your foot in it this time, Knowles!" Tommy Dodd laughed again with enjoyment. He seemed to find something quite amusing in the prefect's predicament.

"You are in a fix, Knowles," he said cheerfully. "Fairly bunkered, by gum! It'll be worse for you than for me. You've told the Head crams. My hat! What a nerve! I might have guessed it! He wouldn't flog old Silver unless he thought it was pretty clear against him! Now you'll have to own up you fibbed! No more pre-fecting after that! I'd rather be flogged myself than own up as a liar!"

"Shut up, you young cad!"

"Hallo! There's the bell for prayers!" said Tommy Dodd. "Come on, Knowles. Mustn't be late, you know. I'm going to be flogged, and you're going to get it in the neck! The Head will be pleased to hear how you tried to get me to keep it dark, because you'd been telling him whoppers! Oh, my aunt!"

"You—you will not tell him that—" stammered Knowles. "He wouldn't believe you—"

"Bow-wow! I'll give him the chance!"

grinned Tommy Dodd, thoroughly enjoying the discomfiture of the bully of the Sixth.

"G, crums, you have put your foot in it!" Knowles panted with rage.

"You will hold your tongue, Dodd—"

"No jolly fear!"

"I—I will get Silver off the flogging somehow," said Knowles at last, his voice quite husky. "Then—then if you don't say anything you'll get off, too."

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"Now you're talking!" he exclaimed heartily. "Put it like that, and it's a go! We'll keep the little secret between us—what?"

"Yes," said Knowles, grinding his teeth. "After the way we bagged you! I say, you are a forgiving chap, Knowles! You ain't really the sort of fellow a chap would expect to turn the other cheek like this!" chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, you young—"

"I'm willing to have it all out if you are!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Oh, what a lark! I say, the bell's stopping! Ta-ta, Knowles!"

Tommy strolled out of the study with his hands in his pockets, whistling, and left the door wide open. Any other fag who had done that would have been dragged back by the scruff of his neck and licked till he roared. But Tommy Dodd was a privileged person just now, and Knowles did not say a word.

The three Tommies joined Jimmy Silver & Co. as they scooted across the quad for chapel. Tommy Dodd gave Silver a thump on the back.

"It's all serene!" he said. "Keep your pecker up! There's not going to be any flogging!"

"What!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"It's right as rain! You've got off!"

chuckled Tommy Dodd.

"Eh? Who's got me off?"

"Knowles!"

"My only hat!"

Jimmy Silver went into chapel in a state of great astonishment.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Scot Free.

DR. CHISHOLM was on his way to Big Hall, where all Rookwood was assembled for the flogging, when Knowles came up to him. Knowles was looking pale and troubled.

"What is it, Knowles?" asked the Head, pausing and regarding the Modern prefect very curiously.

"I—I feel that I must speak to you, sir," said Knowles, with an effort. He had thought it out, and decided upon the only possible course of action, but he was very doubtful how the Head would take it. "It's about Silver, sir."

"His punishment is about to be administered, Knowles."

"It's—it's about that, sir. I—I've been thinking it over. You see, sir, last night I was very excited when I found myself attacked in the dark, and—a bag was over my head, and—after thinking it out very carefully, sir, I've come to the conclusion that perhaps I was mistaken."

"Mistaken, Knowles?"

"Yes, sir. I think perhaps I was mistaken in thinking that I recognised Silver's voice."

Dr. Chisholm's face became very grim.

"Indeed! Last night, Knowles, you declared to me in the most positive manner possible that you recognised Silver's voice."

"I know, sir. But since then I've reflected very carefully—"

You see, sir, I—I thought it was Silver, and—I thought I knew his voice. But now I don't feel at all sure about it—in fact, I really think I was mistaken!"

"That is very strange indeed, Knowles. Upon your positive assertion, I have sentenced four juniors to be flogged. Now you tell me that you have made a mistake."

"I felt that I ought to speak to you in time, sir, before the punishment was administered," mumbled the wretched Knowles.

"Quite so. That was undoubtedly your duty. It would have been infamous if you had allowed those boys to be punished, if there is the slightest doubt in the matter. But you have placed me in an absurd position, Knowles," said the Head severely. "The

whole school has been assembled to witness the flogging."

"I—I am so sorry, sir!"

"I trust so," said the Head tartly. "I am glad you have spoken to me in time. But I must tell you, Knowles, that you have acted very foolishly and rashly. You had no right to make that positive statement unless you were absolutely sure. You have narrowly escaped causing me to commit a great injustice."

"I'm very sorry, sir! I felt sure then, but, on thinking it over—"

"Very well. I am glad to have made this discovery in time, at all events. Have you any fresh supposition as to the authors of the outrage?"

Tommy Dodd's name trembled on the prefect's lips.

But he dared not utter it.

It was maddening to let the junior escape punishment. But he dared not bring Tommy Dodd in contact with the Head.

For, after hearing Tommy Dodd's story, Dr. Chisholm could hardly be left with any doubt that Knowles had not made a "mistake" the previous night, but had told him a deliberate falsehood.

There was no help for it—the Head must never know that he had attempted to induce the real culprit to keep silent while Jimmy Silver was punished.

His crooked policy had led him to that unpleasant position; for by his attempt to punish the innocent he was compelled to let the guilty party escape!

"Well, Knowles?"

"I have no idea, sir," faltered Knowles. "I—I think Lovell and the rest were telling the truth last night, sir. I am sure they had nothing to do with it."

The Head frowned with intense annoyance. He felt that he had been placed in a ridiculous position. Still, he was glad that this discovery had come before the flogging had been inflicted.

"Very well, Knowles! I cannot say I am pleased with you. There will be an inquiry, and I hope the real culprits will be discovered!"

Dr. Chisholm swept on, frowning, leaving Knowles breathing more freely. The chief worry on the prefect's mind now was that the inquiry might possibly be successful. Knowles, the victim of that unexampled outrage, was in the curious position of praying that the culprits might not be discovered. It was really a valuable lesson on the advantage of sticking to the truth on all occasions!

There was no flogging that morning. The surprised school was dismissed from Big Hall, and the fellows went to their Form-rooms in a state of wonder.

That day there was an inquiry, but, as it was naturally confined to the Classical side, the facts had not much chance of coming to light. Nobody suspected that Knowles' assailants came from his own side—except the young rascals themselves.

And, to the general surprise, Knowles did not show himself at all keen to get on the track of the culprits. He seemed only anxious for the whole unpleasant matter to be dropped and done with.

And dropped it was. For some days Rookwood surmised and wondered about the mysterious affair. But it remained a mystery.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were greatly puzzled. But when Tommy Dodd and his chums came to tea one evening in the end study, the mystery was cleared up so far as the Fistical Four were concerned.

Jimmy Silver & Co. almost wept with laughter over Knowles' peculiar predicament. The mere idea of Knowles scheming and worrying to save from discovery the fellows who had bagged him and tied him up made them shriek. But outside that select circle in the Fourth the mysterious happenings of that night remained a mystery.

THE END.

A Magnificent Long,
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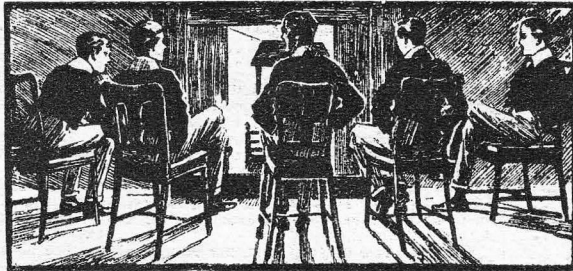
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Fatty Wynn's Hunger Strike.

TOM MERRY & Co., the famous chums of St. Jim's, were looking for Fatty Wynn, the fat junior. They had just come down from the dormitory, and there was still half an hour before the breakfast-bell would sound.

Tom Merry & Co. were feeling very worried about Fatty Wynn. The previous day the Falstaff of St. Jim's had received a whole "fiver" from an uncle, and in the kindness of his heart had generously blown the present at the tuckshop. Unfortunately, though, Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster—at all times very sour and bitter—had spoiled the jollification by forbidding such lavish expenditure of the "fiver," and although most of the money had "gone west," Ratty marched off with a really beautiful steak and kidney pie. Fatty Wynn thought this procedure was Bolshevism gone mad, and he had expressed his outraged feelings so strongly that Mr. Ratcliff at once had made up his mind to deal very severely with his outraged pupil.

Tom Merry & Co. could find no trace of Fatty Wynn, but Figgins and Kerr were in the quadrangle, looking extremely disconsolate.

"Fatty got it in the neck?" asked Tom Merry.

Figgins nodded.

"Twenty-four hours on bread and water in the punishment-room!" he said.

The Terrible Three whistled.

"That's jolly thick," said Monty Lowther.

"Better than a flogging, though."

"Not for Fatty!" said Figgins loudly.

"Fatty told me through the keyhole that he would declare a hunger-strike."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins grinned, too. A hunger-strike and Fatty Wynn certainly seemed a queer association of ideas.

"But poor old Fatty is in a bad way," said Kerr. "He slanged Ratty right and left, and Ratty never forgives. Joskins, the page, is taking in bread and water for his breakfast. He says Fatty has finished what he left last night, so I suppose the poor kid hasn't started the hunger-strike yet."

"I fancy he won't!" grinned Monty Lowther. "It wouldn't be safe for Joskins to go into the room if Fatty hadn't had anything to eat for twenty-four hours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going round to see him," said Figgins. "I arranged a signal with him last night. You fellows can come if you like, only don't let anybody see you."

The juniors skirted the New House, and entered the bricked passage between that house and a portion of the wall of the school museum. It was a "blind alley," and several windows opened on it, but not of inhabited rooms, so there was little danger of being observed, once they were in the entry. High above them was the little barred window of the punishment-room in the New House.

Figgins, after a cautious look round, began to whistle. The juniors kept their eyes fixed upon the little window high above. It was impossible for Fatty Wynn to look out, the bars being too close together. But a string was seen fluttering over the little sill, with a pencil tied to the end of it. The pencil came fluttering down towards the juniors.

"Good old Fatty!" said Figgins. "He's made a string out of his handkerchief, as I told him, and he's tied that pencil on it to weight it."

The pencil came within Figgins' reach.

He caught it, and gave the string a shake to show Fatty Wynn that he had it. Then he drew a ball of cord from his pocket, and attached the end of it to the string.

"Jolly cute idea!" said Tom Merry.

"I thought of it!" remarked Figgins modestly.

Fatty Wynn, invisible behind the bars of the window above, drew up the flimsy string again, and Figgins unwound the ball for the cord to follow. It was a thin, but very strong cord, capable of sustaining a good weight. The ball unwound slowly, and the end followed the string into the barred window.

"He's got it!" said Manners.

Fatty Wynn shook the cord as a signal. Figgins cut off the remainder of the ball.

"Communications are open now!" grinned Monty Lowther. "That's always the most important point in warfare."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Kerr took out of his pocket a small package of sandwiches, and tied it to the end of the cord. Fatty Wynn drew up the cord, and the packet of sandwiches disappeared through the bars of the window.

Then a hand was thrust out into view, and Fatty Wynn's plump forefinger pointed in the direction of the quad. Then the hand disappeared again.

"What does that mean, I wonder?" said Figgins.

"It means that we're clear!" said Tom Merry. "Somebody's come."

"Cut!" said Kerr.

And the juniors hurried away.

Figgins and Kerr were satisfied. They had succeeded in conveying an instalment of provisions to the confined junior, and they knew how welcome the sandwiches would be to Mr. Ratcliff's victim.

And the chums of St. Jim's went in to breakfast cheered up by the thought that they had not failed Fatty Wynn in the hour of need.

Fatty Wynn, in the punishment-room, was equally cheerful. Upon his table lay a tray, with bread and water, as on the preceding night. He had not touched it yet, depending on Figgins and Kerr to come to the rescue, and his heart had jumped at the sound of Figgins' whistle below. He had received the packet of sandwiches safely, and was about to open it, when he heard a step outside the door. In a moment he made the signal to the juniors below, and squeezed the sandwiches and the cord under the mattress of the bed. He was sitting on the bed looking quite undisturbed when the door was unlocked, and Mr. Ratcliff came in.

Mr. Ratcliff glanced at the untouched bread and water on the table, and then glanced at the Falstaff of the Fourth.

"You have not eaten your breakfast, Wynn," he said.

"No, sir," said Fatty.

"Indeed! Does that mean that you are already learning to control your voracious appetite, Wynn?"

No answer.

"Are you not hungry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why do you not eat your breakfast, then?"

"I'm not going to eat bread and water, sir."

"Ah! I think you will probably change your mind about that," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a hard smile. "I think you made the same declaration last night, Wynn."

Fatty Wynn flushed.

"I am going to have a hunger-strike, sir, as a protest against a bread and water diet!" he said firmly.

"Don't be absurd, Wynn!"

"I mean it, sir."

"You will get nothing else," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Indeed, I think a fast of twenty-four hours would probably do you good, considering the state of overcasten grossness you are in now, Wynn."

"I'm not!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I never really get enough to eat."

"Your books and some paper will be brought to you," said Mr. Ratcliff unheeding. "You will miss your lessons to-day, Wynn, but I do not intend that you shall be idle. This morning I shall expect you to write out a dozen deponent verbs in full."

"Oh!"

"Joskins"—the New House page came in—"you may place Master Wynn's books and papers here, also pen and ink."

"Yes, sir."

"You will find your morning fully occupied, Wynn. If you neglect your work, I need not say that you will be severely punished."

"Can I have some tea, sir?"

"You may not."

Fatty Wynn's lips set obstinately.

"Very well, it's a hunger-strike," he said. "Don't be impertinent, Wynn. However, I think you will be brought to your senses." Wynn's books and papers and pen and ink being placed on the table, Mr. Ratcliff retired, locking the door and putting the key in his pocket.

Fatty Wynn grinned as he was left alone.

He extracted the packet of sandwiches from under the mattress and opened it, and gave quite a gasp of delight. The sandwiches were packed tight and close—there were a dozen of them—ham and beef, with a little packet of salt and mustard. Figgins had forgotten nothing. Hungry as Fatty Wynn was, there was ample for him there. He could afford to turn up his nose at the dry bread on the tray. Hunger-striking on these terms was not really such a difficult feat, after all.

Fatty Wynn piled into the sandwiches. He ate six of them without a pause, and then slackened down a little. The next three followed more slowly, and he washed them down with draughts of water.

With heroic self-denial he put the remaining three sandwiches away, to be eaten later. He started on the deponent verbs.

He had made, as a matter of fact, a heartier breakfast than usual. He worked quite cheerfully at those troublesome verbs, which are passive in form and active in meaning. He was not in the least tempted to touch the dry bread on the tray.

Later in the morning he demolished another sandwich; later on, another. And finally the third disappeared just before dinner-time. He felt certain that Figgins and Kerr would contrive somehow to come to the rescue for dinner.

He was industriously grinding away at deponent verbs when Mr. Ratcliff came in, having finished his morning's duties in the Fifth Form-room. The Housemaster started a little at the sight of the bread untouched on the table. Fatty Wynn rose respectfully to his feet.

"You have not eaten your breakfast, Wynn."

"I told you I should not, sir."

"You must be hungry!"

"I should like my dinner, sir."

"You will have bread and water for your dinner. As you have not chosen to eat this for your breakfast, it will be left for your dinner. If you find it somewhat spare

you will have only your own obstinacy to thank, Wynn."

"I shall not touch it, sir."

"No shall see."

Mr. Ratcliff departed, frowning. Fatty Wynn chuckled softly, and, leaving his verbs, went to the window and waited for another signal from Figgins.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Arthur Augustus Does His Best.

I THINK I had bettah step in, deah boys."

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Fourth-Formers, of course, had missed Fatty Wynn from the Form-room that morning. Mr. Ratcliff had been seen speaking to Mr. Lathom, and it was observed that Mr. Lathom was looking very concerned. Figgins and Kerr soon explained to the rest of the Fourth what had happened to the missing junior. The sympathy of the Fourth was unbounded. Fatty Wynn confined on bread and water, and all the trouble arising out of the fact that he had received an unexpected fiver and wanted to "blow" it in a general treat to all the fellows he knew. It was too bad; the Fourth Form agreed as one man that it was too bad. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy felt that it was up to him to step in, and he explained the same to his chums after morning classes were dismissed.

"You see, somethin' will have to be done!" said Arthur Augustus seriously.

"Fatty Wynn's being done at present," Blake remarked.

"It is not weally a laughin' mattah, Blake. Figgy has taken the poor kid some sandwiches, but you know what Fatty is like. What is a stalled ox to us is only a dish of herbs to him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, I think I have put that vevy well," said Arthur Augustus, with a satisfied nod. "I know those New House chaps are goin' to try to get some dinnah to him, but Watty is vevy sharp—vevy sharp indeed! I shouldn't wondah if he keeps an eye on Figgins and Kerr, knowin' what they'd be likely to do."

"Just like him!" said Digby.

"Yaas. Therefore, I considah that it is up to me to step in. Those New House boundahs are not weally up to Watty. I considah that a School House fellow had bettah take the mattah in hand, and as it requires a fellow of tact and judgment, I'm goin' to do it."

"Don't you go scouting round the New House," grunted Blake. "Ratty will be sure to spot you, and you'll give Figgy's little game away."

"Wats! But I wasn't thinkin' of that! I am goin' to get Mr. Lathom to chip in."

"Well, it's not a bad idea," said Blake thoughtfully. "How on earth did you come by it?"

"Oh, I think of these things, you know," said D'Arcy modestly. "I suppose it's due to my beh' a bwainy chap."

"Yes, it must be," agreed Blake solemnly. "You'd be the bwainst chap going if you didn't suffer from water on the bwa'in."

"It's a good idea," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's go and see Lathom," said Blake. "He's in his study now, and we can catch him. He's a good little ass, and I know he doesn't like Ratty's rotten ways. He may chip in and get poor old Fatty out of chokcy, perhaps."

And the chums of the Fourth made their way to the Form-master's study. They found Mr. Lathom looking worried. He was thinking, as a matter of fact, about Fatty Wynn. Mr. Lathom was a sensitive little gentleman, and had a great delicacy about interfering in the affairs of Mr. Ratcliff in his own House. But Wynn was in Mr. Lathom's Form, and he could not help feeling that he should have been consulted before the boy was kept away from classes. It was a juncture when the authority of the Form-master clashed with that of the Housemaster—and little Mr. Lathom was not able to "keep his end up" against the pushing and obstinate Ratty. He was thinking about it when the chums of No. 6 came in.

"Well, my boys, what can I do for you?" asked Mr. Lathom, with the gentle benevolence which was repaid with derision and mockery by fellows like Levison and Mellish, and with affectionate regard by all the rest of the Fourth.

"If you please, sir—" began Jack Blake. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nudged his chum.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 15.

"Bettah leave the talkin' to me, Blake, old man," he whispered.

"Shurrup!" murmured Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We've come about Fatty, sir—I mean Wynn," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

"We weekoned that you might speak to Watty, sir—"

"What!"

"To Mr. Watchliff, sir, and get poor old Wynn off, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Lathom, after a pause. "As Wynn is in my Form, I will speak to Mr. Ratcliff. Of course, I cannot interfere with a Housemaster in his own jurisdiction. But I will see what can be done."

"Thank you, sir! You are very kind." "Very kind indeed, sir. Didn't I tell you fellows that our Form-mastah could be weli-ed on to do the wight thing?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

"Ahem! You may go now, my boys," said Mr. Lathom hastily. "I will see what can be done."

And the chums of the Fourth went, with their hopes high. A few minutes later Mr. Lathom was seen crossing over to the New House.

"He's gone to see Ratty," said Blake. "I wish Lathom was a bit stiffer; it needs a regular prizefighter to deal with Ratty. Railton would shut him up fast enough, if a fellow in Railton's Form was concerned. But let's hope for the best."

Mr. Lathom went directly to Mr. Ratcliff's study, where he found the master of the New House. The latter received him cordially enough. He thought that the Fourth Form master had come with a complaint—and perhaps the wish was father to the thought.

"I have come to speak about Wynn," said Mr. Lathom, plunging into the subject at once.

Mr. Ratcliff's manner became extremely dry at once.

"Indeed?" he said coldly.

"Yes; and I thought I would put it to you, Mr. Ratcliff, that he might be released from detention, and allowed to return to his Form."

"There is a slight misapprehension here," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I am not punishing Wynn for his conduct towards you, Mr. Lathom. He is being punished for his conduct towards me, in this House, last night."

"It is unfortunate that Wynn should be kept away from his lessons," said the master of the Fourth.

"I have seen to that. He is occupied in studying his Latin grammar."

"Ahem! He has now been confined for a whole morning, and, I understand, upon a very spare diet."

"Bread and water!" assented Mr. Ratcliff.

"A severe punishment for a boy like Wynn, don't you think?"

"My object is to teach him to keep his inordinate appetite within bounds. I think it will have a markedly beneficial effect upon him."

"Then you do not think that, under the circumstances, Wynn might be released?" "I hardly think so, Mr. Lathom."

"Then I need trouble you no longer, sir," said Mr. Lathom, with a great deal of dignity, and he took his leave at once.

The chums of the Fourth did not venture to ask their Form-master the result of his visit to the New House. But when the Fourth Form assembled for afternoon classes they knew that he had failed. Fatty Wynn was not in his place.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tom Merry Takes a Hand.

FATTY WYNN had been looking at his watch anxiously for a long time. He knew that dinner-time had passed, and, in spite of the sandwiches, he was feeling hungry. He was sure that Figgins and Kerr would not fail him if they could help it—but there was a danger that the obnoxious Ratty might be keeping a careful eye upon them. Mr. Ratcliff would naturally guess that Figgins and Kerr would get into communication with their chum if they could, and he might be too clever for them. In that case, Fatty Wynn would be reduced to terrible straits. The bread was still on the table—and Fatty Wynn was determined not to touch it. But if no dinner arrived—Fatty Wynn had read of the Suffragette hunger-strikes, and he had wondered greatly how those extremely determined ladies had been able to "stick it out." He was not quite sure that his own fortitude would be equal to the strain.

And so he watched the minute-hand upon his watch, and waited and hoped. But the signal whistle did not come from below, and his hopes sank down to zero. It would be time for afternoon lessons soon, and then Figgins and Kerr had to go into class. And then—The whole afternoon minus dinner!

Where was Figgins? Fatty Wynn was a Welsh boy, and therefore, needless to be said, he was fond of music. But he had never listened to the sweetest or grandest strains with as much pleasure as he would now have listened to "Bill Bailey," if only he could have heard Figgins whistling it under his window.

He was sure that Figgins had not forgotten him, and was not neglecting him; and he was right in that. As a matter of fact, Figgins and Kerr were thinking of him at that moment—and worrying. Ratty, as Fatty Wynn feared, had been one too many for them.

The New House master had suspected, not what Figgins had done in the morning, but what he might attempt to do. And, after dinner, he had taken his newspaper, and seated himself on one of the old benches under the elms in the quadrangle, where he could keep an eye on the New House. Figgins and Kerr could not approach Fatty Wynn's window now without being seen as they went into the entry; and that, of course, would give the whole game away at once.

Figgins and Kerr consulted in a state of desperation. Figgins had expended quite a little sum at the tuckshop on provisions for Fatty Wynn, and he had them fastened up in a set of little packets small enough to pass through the bars of the window. But there seemed no means of conveying them to the prisoner.

"The awful rotter smells a mouse," said Figgins, in despair. "He knows we should think of the window. What's to be done, Kerr, old man? He won't take his beastly eyes away till we have to go into class. Can't you think of something? What's the good of being a blessed Scotsman if you can't think of things?"

Kerr was thinking his hardest.

"We shall have to get out of class," he said. "Jolly lucky we're not in the Fifth. We shall have to make some excuse to get out of the Fourth Form room, Figgy, and get to Fatty when Ratty is taking the Fifth this afternoon."

"Well, we might—Lathom's a good chap, and—and we might work it—Hallo! There is the beast beckoning to us!"

Figgins and Kerr reluctantly obeyed Mr. Ratcliff's beckoning finger. The Housemaster's eye had been upon them for some time, and probably the expressions upon their faces had told their own tale. Mr. Ratcliff laid his newspaper upon his knees, and looked at the two juniors with his keen, greenish eyes.

"May I ask what is causing your pockets to bulge, Figgins?" he asked. "It looks extremely slovenly."

"I—I've got something in them, sir," said Figgins, turning red.

"And you, Kerr?"

"I've got something in them, sir."

"Indeed! Kindly show me what you have in your pockets that causes them to bulge in that slovenly manner," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I do not like the boys of my House to look the most ill-dressed and careless in the school."

"I—I'll go and take the things out, sir!" stammered Figgins.

"I'll go at once, sir!" said Kerr.

"You will take the things out now and here," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly, "and at once."

Figgins and Kerr exchanged a hopeless, furious look, and turned out their pockets. All those neat little packets prepared for Fatty Wynn came to light. Mr. Ratcliff regarded them with an acid smile.

"I need not ask what those packets contain," he remarked. "I have no doubt that they contain food of some kind. Is it not so?"

"Yes," grunted Figgins.

"Since when, may I ask, have you taken to carrying about food in packets in your pockets?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.

No reply.

"Perhaps I should not be wrong in assuming that you intended to attempt to convey these packets to Wynn?"

Silence! The Housemaster's smile grew sourer.

"I suspected something of the sort," he said. "As a matter of fact, Figgins, I saw you go into the tuckshop before dinner. These packets will be confiscated, and you will take fifty lines each. I shall also speak to your Form-master, and request him to take care that you do not leave the Form-room

during the afternoon in order to carry out your lawless and nefarious intentions."

Figgins and Kerr were silent. They had a wild desire to collar Mr. Ratcliff and bump him on the ground.

"You will take this rubbish and place it on the table in my study," said Mr. Ratcliff, counting the packets, "and if there is any further attempt at anything of the kind, I shall consider whether to order you to share the punishment of Wynn. You may go!"

And they went.

The packets were duly deposited upon Mr. Ratcliff's study table, and Figgins and Kerr wandered away disconsolately. Ratty had been one too many for them; and it looked as though Fatty Wynn would have his hunger-strike put to a severe test.

The two worried juniors went down to the cricket-ground. The Shell fellows were at practice there. Figgins and Kerr ran Tom Merry down outside the pavilion. The captain of the Shell was just going in to bat when Figgins collared him.

"Sheer off!" said Tom Merry.

"Hold on; it's important!" said Figgins. "We want you to help us. This isn't a time for House rags, ass!"

Tom Merry was cordial at once.

"Right-ho! What is it? Something for Fatty?"

Figgins explained the disaster that had befallen the consignment of provisions destined for the prisoner of the punishment-room. Tom Merry listened sympathetically.

"Just like Ratty!" he said.

"Will you help us?" asked Kerr.

"Yes, rather—anything you like," said Tom Merry, at once.

"We can't get out of the Form-room this afternoon; Ratty's going to speak to Lathom about it. Same thing would apply to Reddy and the rest. But one of you Shell chaps might manage it. Will you do it—get out as soon as you can, and get some grub to Fatty? You know the signal? The grub will have to be done up in packets to pass through the bars. The worst of it is that we've blued all our cash on that little lot," said Figgins ruefully, "and we're stony now."

"That's all right; I've got some tin," said Tom Merry. "We all stand in together in time of trouble like this. That's all right."

"You're a good chap. You'll do it?"

"Yes, rather! I'll be late for class," said Tom Merry. "Linton will give me lines, but I can stand that."

"We'll help you to do the lines," said Kerr.

And when the bell rang for classes that afternoon, Tom Merry did not go in with the rest of the Shell. He had confided to Manners and Lowther, so they did not look for him. Just before the bell rang, Tom had gone out on his bicycle.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, noticed his absence immediately. He made a note of it, keeping the vials of his wrath ready for Tom Merry's devoted head when he came in.

But Tom Merry was not in a hurry to come in. First lesson was half through when Mr. Linton asked Lowther if he knew where Tom Merry was.

"He went out on his bike, sir," said Lowther demurely.

"Indeed?" said Mr. Linton, compressing his lips.

"It was a quarter of an hour later when Tom Merry came in, looking ruddy and dusty. The master of the Shell gave him a severe glance.

"Merry!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Tom Merry meekly.

"You are half an hour late!"

"I am very sorry, sir."

"You will be detained an hour after class, and will write out two hundred lines!"

"Yes, sir."

And Tom Merry went to his place.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Going Strong.

TOM MERRY suffered cheerfully in the good cause.

But Fatty Wynn was not suffering just then; so that was all right.

The prisoner of the New House had been almost in despair when the signal whistle had fallen upon his ears at last. Fatty knew that it was past time for afternoon lessons, and he had almost given up hope. He sat with his eyes fixed on the bread on the table. The dry bread did not look very appetising, certainly. But Fatty Wynn was quite prepared to bolt it as if it had been the most delicate of morsels.

But he was on hunger-strike. In his mind's eye he could see the satirical smile that would curl Mr. Ratcliff's lip when he came in and

saw that the bread had been eaten. Fatty Wynn swore inwardly that he would not give his obnoxious persecutor that gratification.

But the temptation was growing stronger and stronger. Figgins and Kerr would not be released from class until four o'clock. Flesh and blood could not hold out that length of time. Fatty was hovering round the table now—when in the nick of time, as it were, he heard a soft whistle from below.

It was not Figgins' whistle, he knew, but it was the signal. Fatty fairly jumped to the window, and let the cord run out between the bars.

In a minute or less came a shake on the cord as a signal to haul, and Fatty Wynn pulled it up. His eyes danced as he saw the series of packages tied on it, one below another, of a handy size to pass through the bars of the window.

There was a note pinned to the first of the packages, in Tom Merry's handwriting:

"Sorry late—Figgy couldn't come! Cheerio!—TOM MERRY."

Fatty dragged in the string of packages. Tom Merry had done the thing in style evidently. There were nine packages, and all pretty heavy. Fatty Wynn felt so relieved and joyful and grateful that he did not open them at once, but scribbled a note on a sheet of impot paper, and dropped it from the window.

"Thanks! Much obliged. You're a real sport. Still hunger-striking!—WYNN."

"P.S.—Next time see if you can send me a bit of chalk."

There was a whistle from below to tell that the note had been received. Fatty Wynn proceeded to open the packages. The first one contained a half-dozen hard-boiled eggs, and Fatty Wynn bolted them one after another to go on with. He felt better immediately, and turned an eye of scorn upon the bread on the table.

Then the whistle floated up from below. Fatty Wynn whipped out the cord, and when he drew it up he found a large stick of chalk tied on the end.

Whether Tom Merry guessed or not what the chalk was for, he had lost no time in supplying the want.

"What a ripping chap he is!" murmured Fatty Wynn, as he concealed the cord under the mattress, and placed the chalk in his pocket.

Then he set to work on the packages again. His eyes almost bulged from his head in delight. There was a little beefsteak-pie, quite enough for dinner for anybody but Fatty Wynn. There was a cake. There were tarts. There were doughnuts. There were oranges and apples and nuts and a bunch of bananas. There was ginger-beer. There was more, in fact, than Fatty Wynn even could negotiate at a single sitting.

He did his best.

When he had finished there was a beatific smile of rapture upon his plump face, and there still remained a supply of provisions on the table.

Fatty Wynn washed down the repast with ginger-beer. He could now despise the water as well as the bread that Mr. Ratcliff had supplied him with.

With a cheerful grin Fatty set to work clearing away all traces of the feed. Paper and string from the packages and the empty ginger-beer bottle he concealed carefully in the chimney. In the chimney, too, he carefully concealed what remained of the provisions, carefully wrapped up. Then he cleared away every crumb that could have betrayed him. He was prepared to face Ratty now; and he went to work quite cheerfully on deponent verbs.

When four o'clock sounded from the clock-tower of St. Jim's, Fatty Wynn took the stick of chalk from his pocket. He knew that he would receive a visit from the Housemaster soon.

Standing before the little glass over the washstand, Fatty Wynn dabbed his ruddy cheeks with the chalk, and rubbed it carefully in with his fingers. When he had finished his face had assumed a pallid look, and it would have required a very intent examination to discover that the pallor was not natural.

Fatty Wynn chuckled at his pale and sickly reflection, and sat down to his verbs again. A quarter of an hour later the passage outside creaked under the steps of Mr. Ratcliff, and the door of the punishment-room opened. Mr. Ratcliff came in.

The Housemaster's glance went at once to the tray on the table. He expected to find that every crumb had vanished. His brow darkened as he saw that the bread had not been touched.

"Wynn!" he exclaimed sternly.

Fatty Wynn rose languidly to his feet.

He was not feeling at all languid—in fact, he had never felt better in his life. But he was aware that a fellow who had been hunger-striking all day ought to look pale and languid. So he assumed languor, and he was certainly pale enough, thanks to the aid of the chalk.

"Yes, sir?" he said, in a weak, faint voice.

"You have not touched your food, Wynn!"

"I told you I should not touch it, sir."

"This is direct disobedience, Wynn!"

"I am sorry, sir. But I was not sent to St. Jim's to be fed on bread and water," said the junior. "It would be against my principles to touch it, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned darkly.

"You doubtless hope that your friends will be able to convey food to you?" he exclaimed angrily.

"I may tell you that Figgins and Kerr have been discovered attempting to do so. The food has been confiscated, and they have been punished."

"I am sorry for that, sir."

"Are you hungry now, Wynn?"

"I should like to have my tea, sir, if I may."

"Your tea is there," said Mr. Ratcliff, pointing to the bread and water on the table.

"You will have nothing else?"

"Very well, sir."

"You will eat that, Wynn?"

"I cannot, sir."

"Do you dare to disobey me, Wynn?"

"I cannot touch that, sir."

"Ah! You are persisting in the absurd and foolish freak which you are pleased to term a hunger-strike, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff set his teeth. The paleness of Wynn's face made him uneasy. If the boy should become ill the consequences would not be wholly pleasant for Horace Ratcliff. And certainly the Fourth-Former looked far from well.

"Are you aware, Wynn, that your health will suffer if you persist in this wretched obstinacy?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff harshly.

"I can stand it, sir."

"You will have only yourself to blame, Wynn, if the consequences should turn out serious for you."

"Yes, sir."

"You are attempting to influence me, hey, by risking your health!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"You will do as you think best, sir."

"Wynn, I order you to eat that bread at once!"

"I cannot, sir. It would choke me," said Fatty Wynn. And, indeed, there was some truth in that—in fact, it was quite true. Fatty Wynn was so full up with good things that it would have been very difficult for him to cram dry bread down on top of them.

"I will send you nothing else!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Very well, sir."

"You will be sorry for this obstinacy, Wynn!"

"Do you mind if I sit down, sir?" asked Fatty Wynn, staggering a little. "Starvation makes me rather weak, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff strode out of the room and slammed the door. Fatty Wynn chuckled silently. He knew that his Housemaster was alarmed and uneasy, and he began to feel that he was getting a little of his own back on the tyrant of the New House.

Mr. Ratcliff, indeed, was in a most unpleasant frame of mind, and his brow was knitted as he went down to his study. He knew that his harshness was disapproved of in the House. The House-dame was very cold and formal to him. The boys looked upon him as a harsh tyrant—the prefects hardly took the trouble to conceal their disapproval. The very maids looked at him with horror, as if he were a kind of monster. Joskins, the page, had spread the story of the hunger-strike through the kitchen regions. The whole House knew that Fatty Wynn was refusing the spare diet accorded to him, and regarded Mr. Ratcliff with disgust and scorn for allowing the unfortunate junior to starve in the punishment-room.

But Mr. Ratcliff's position was difficult indeed. To release Fatty Wynn because of his hunger-strike was to allow his authority to be condemned and defied.

He had been too harsh. He had gone too far; but he had left himself no retreat without bringing his authority and himself into contempt.

Forcible feeding, which has been found impracticable even in dealing with prisoners in the prisons, could hardly be resorted to in the case of Fatty Wynn.

Mr. Ratcliff had the alternative of rescinding his own sentence, or of allowing the matter to go on as it was. And if Wynn became ill—as was likely enough—and the Head made a strict inquiry into the matter—as he certainly would—Mr. Ratcliff foresaw very unpleasant consequences to himself. Mr. Ratcliff was punishing Wynn of the Fourth; but, as a matter of fact, Mr. Ratcliff, in his study, was in a far more uncomfortable state than Fatty Wynn in the punishment-room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. No Go!

THE next morning, after breakfast, Figgins of the Fourth ventured to approach Mr. Ratcliff, as the master was about to start for the School House. Mr. Ratcliff's expression was not inviting, but Figgins risked it. His manner was very meek.

"If you please, sir, is Wynn to come to class this morning?" he asked.

"No, Figgins; he is not!"

"But the twenty-four hours, sir—"

"Wynn will be detained in the punishment-room for an additional twenty-four hours," said Mr. Ratcliff, enjoying the dismay in Figgins' expressive face. "I may add that any junior attempting to convey food to him will be most severely punished!"

"But, sir, it's a half-holiday to-day, and Wynn was to play in a match this afternoon, sir!" said the dismayed Figgins.

"I have nothing to do with that, Figgins."

"But, sir, I—"

"That will do," said Mr. Ratcliff.

And with a frown at the junior he walked away. He had visited Fatty Wynn in the punishment-room and found the bread still untouched. The fortitude of the fat junior amazed him. Mr. Ratcliff was determined to see how long Fatty Wynn's obstinacy would hold out.

Figgins gritted his teeth as the Housemaster strode away. Sefton, the bully of the Sixth, who had old grudges against Figgins, was keeping an eye on him; but Figgins was determined to get a word to Wynn before morning classes. He had recourse to Redfern. Redfern was only too willing to help. Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, the New Firm, might have had their little rows with Figgins & Co., but just now they were all in line. A few whispered words were enough for Redfern.

Figgins went upstairs and into the passage where the punishment-room was situated, and Sefton of the Sixth was promptly on his track. The prefect bore down on him.

"Where are you going, Figgins?" he demanded.

"I'm going to lessons," said Figgins innocently.

"By way of the punishment-room?" asked the prefect sarcastically.

"How did you guess that, Sefty?" asked Figgins cheerfully. "Blessed if I think you are such an idiot as the fellows make out, Sefty!"

The prefect stared at him blankly for a moment, too enraged to speak. Then he rushed at Figgins, grasped him by the shoulder, and marched him off to his study to be caned.

Little as Sefton would have guessed it, that was exactly what Figgins wanted.

While Figgins was being caned in the prefect's study the coast was left clear for Redfern, and the latter, who was on the watch, scudded up to the punishment-room in next to no time. He tapped at the door softly, and whispered through the keyhole:

"Fatty, old son!"

"Hallo!" said Fatty. "That you, Reddy?"

"Yes; I've got a message from Figgins. Old Ratty is watching like a dozen cats, and he's got Sefton on the job, too. It will be difficult to get you any more grub, so you'd better be careful with Tom Merry's lot, and make it last—see?"

"There's some left," said Fatty Wynn; "enough for my brekker."

Redfern chuckled.

"Enough for the whole day for any other chap!" he said. "Make it last, Fatty. We're all putting our heads together, and we'll get some more to you somehow, if we can. It will be jolly hard, but we'll try. Only don't think we've forgotten you; we haven't."

"Right-ho! Get in some grub if you can, Reddy, for goodness' sake!" said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "I want to keep up the hunger-strike, you know."

"Ha, ha! Right-ho! So-long!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 15.

And Redfern scudded off. Figgins came out of Sefton's study with a red face, and rubbing his palms together. Redfern joined him in the quadrangle.

"All serene. I've jawed to Fatty," said Redfern. "Did Sefton lay it on?"

Figgins grunted painfully.

"Two on each hand, and regular nippers!" he said. "Never mind; we've done him in the eye, so it's all right."

And they went into the Fourth Form-room.

Fatty Wynn was not with them, so it was evident to the rest of the juniors that he was still under detention in the punishment-room.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. A Startling Discovery!

DINNER-TIME had come. Fatty Wynn heard the bell. But there was no dinner for the prisoner of the punishment-room.

The last of the provisions had been consumed—and nothing remained to be eaten but the dry bread upon the table, which the hunger-striker was determined not to touch.

Fatty Wynn knew that his friends had done their best for him. But they had not succeeded in conveying any further supplies into the punishment-room. They were at the end of their resources, and the hunger-striker was at an end of his tether.

Fatty Wynn walked round the punishment-room, revolving round the loaf upon the table, so to speak, like the earth round the sun, with a strong attraction towards the centre. Confinement had not told upon his appetite. His appetite was as keen as ever; in fact, it seemed growing keener.

The loaf upon the table was decidedly stale by this time. But it was eatable, and Fatty Wynn was in a humour to eat anything. But he would not touch it. He would show Mr. Ratcliff that he meant business in declaring a hunger-strike.

Mr. Ratcliff came into the punishment-room soon after dinner. He found the prisoner in a truculent mood, and the loaf untouched. But Fatty Wynn was not looking pale now that the chalk was washed off; his fat, rosy face was the picture of health. That little dodge had failed. But another scheme was working in Fatty Wynn's mind. His faculties were sharpened by privation.

"I see that you are keeping up your foolish obstinacy, Wynn!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a glance at the uncut loaf.

"I shall not touch that loaf, sir!"

"If you prefer to remain hungry, you may please yourself, Wynn. I have no doubt that a little abstinence will be beneficial to you, considering the state you have put yourself in by greediness and over-eating."

"I'm perfectly fit, sir," said Fatty indignantly. "I'm due to play in the match this afternoon, too. If you don't think I'm fit, you can come and see me bowl."

"I am glad to hear that your confinement is not telling upon your health, Wynn," said Mr. Ratcliff, with a sarcastic smile.

"I didn't mean that, sir!" said Wynn.

"Probably not. Well, as it would not be good for you to be unoccupied this afternoon, you may write out and construe a hundred lines from Virgil."

"It's a half-holiday, sir!"

"I am aware of that."

Mr. Ratcliff turned to the door. Fatty Wynn's eyes burned.

"I want to be let out," he said. "It's a half-holiday, and you've no right to keep me here, Mr. Ratcliff."

"No impertinence, Wynn!"

"If I should do anything desperate, sir, you'll be to blame," said Fatty morosely. "It would give you a shock if you found I had hung myself next time you came in!"

"Fortunately I have brought my cane with me," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Hold out your hand, Wynn. You must not make absurd speeches like that."

"Very well, sir!" said Fatty, between his teeth. "You'll see."

"Hold your foolish tongue!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly.

And the Housemaster went out and locked the door, leaving Fatty Wynn with smarting palms.

The afternoon was long and weary to the imprisoned junior. He was hungry—really hungry now. But he would not touch the loaf. After all, a loaf would not have made much difference to a first-class appetite like Fatty Wynn's, when he had missed his dinner.

He had some hope that one of the Shell fellows might get into communication with him again. He dragged the table to the

window, and stood upon it, and looked out. He had a view of a blank wall and a strip of sky between the bars of the window. No one came in sight.

As it was a half-holiday, the juniors would all be on the playing-fields or the river. But Fatty Wynn knew that they would leave no stone unturned to help him if they could. The fact that they did not come proved that Ratty was on the watch.

Fatty Wynn could picture the sour-faced man, sitting on the bench under the elms with his newspaper or a book. Later in the afternoon there came a tap at the door of the punishment-room. Fatty Wynn hurried over towards it.

"Hallo!" he whispered.

"How are you getting on, Fatty?" It was Figgins' voice.

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"Rotten!" he replied. "I'm famished!"

"We can't get anything to you—Ratty is watching. Sefton's on my track, too—I can't stay a minute!" said Figgins hurriedly, through the keyhole. "I'm sorry, Fatty! We're holding a council of war about it—we'll do what we can."

"Thanks, Figg, old man; I know you will!"

"We're trying to get Lathom to interfere. You've got the bread there, I suppose?"

"I'll die first. I'll show old Ratty that I mean business, hang him!"

"Poor old Fatty!"

"I say," whispered Wynn, through the keyhole, "I'm going to take it out of Ratty; Don't be alarmed when you hear. I—"

Fatty Wynn broke off, as a sharp voice was heard in the passage outside—the voice of Sefton, the bully of the Sixth.

"Figgins! You young rascal! Follow me to my study at once!"

"Good-bye, Fatty!"

"Good-bye, Figg—sorry!"

Fatty Wynn was left alone again. He was in a furious temper by this time. It meant the cane for Figgins, he knew that. And Figg had not been able to help him, either—only to whisper a few words of encouragement.

Mr. Ratcliff had set Fatty Wynn a task of Virgil. Fatty Wynn picked up the volume of the esteemed Latin poet, and kicked it round the room, and dribbled it to and fro till the covers came off. That relieved his feelings a little, but his hunger was sharper than ever.

But he did not touch the loaf. The fat Fourth-Former was in deadly earnest; he was of the stuff of which heroes are made.

He knew that Mr. Ratcliff would come in again, or send Joskins in, about tea-time; and towards that hour he began to make preparations.

His first step was to strip off his clothes. The afternoon was warm, very warm indeed, in the confined space of the punishment-room, and it was rather a relief than otherwise to get rid of his Etons. He twisted up the bolster, pillows, and sheets from his bed, and stuffed out the clothes with them, buttoning the jacket over the bolster, and pinning it to the stuffed trousers.

To the ends of the trousers he attached his boots, jabbing holes with his penknife, and using the laces to fasten them in place.

By that time he made up a dummy in very good imitation of himself, but minus the head. That important part he manufactured of a pillow, stuffing the end of it into the neck of the jacket, and fastening the collar round it.

With his penknife he cut fragments from the hearthrug, which was of a coarse matting. These he fastened up in the dummy head to represent hair.

In the light from the window the dummy could very easily be seen to be a dummy. But Wynn did not intend it to be seen in the light.

In the corner of the room were a couple of pegs for hanging clothes. Fatty Wynn put his braces round the neck of the figure, and hung it to the peg nearest the corner, where it was in the shadow. The effect was so life-like—or, rather, so deathlike—that it startled Fatty Wynn himself.

To anyone entering the room, the figure looked exactly like a junior in Etons hanging by the neck from the peg.

The head, naturally, dropped over the breast, so the face would not be seen; and in the shadow the matting looked sufficiently like hair.

Fatty Wynn surveyed his handiwork with considerable satisfaction.

"I told him he'd be startled if he came in and found that I'd hung myself," murmured Fatty Wynn. "If that doesn't startle the old bird, I'll eat my hat!"

And Fatty Wynn sat down in his underclothes to wait patiently for the advent of Mr. Ratcliff.

There was a step in the passage at last; and quick as a flash Fatty Wynn slipped under the bed.

He lay there, completely concealed from sight, as the door opened.

Joskins, the page, came in, carrying a tray upon which were a new loaf and a jug of water.

Joskins paused, looking round in surprise for the junior.

Then he caught sight of the figure hanging in the corner.

Joskins stared at it blankly for a moment, his eyes nearly starting from his head, and then he let out a terrible yell.

The tray slipped from his nerveless fingers, and crashed upon the floor at his feet.

Joskins, pale of face, and frightened out of his wits, tore towards the door again.

"Help! Murder! /Ow, he's hanged hisself!" shrieked Joskins. "Help! Master Wynn 'ave 'ung hisself! He's dead! Help!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not Felo-de-Se!

THE yell of the terrified page rang through the New House.

Mr. Ratcliff, who was about to follow Joskins into the room, was bumped into by the page as he rushed out, and very nearly floored.

He grasped Joskins fiercely by the collar.

"What do you mean?" he shouted.

"Silence, you fool!"

But Joskins was not disposed to silence just then.

"'Elp!" he shrieked. "'Elp! Master Wynn 'ave 'ung hisself!"

There was a crowding to the spot immediately. Mr. Ratcliff, pale as death, released Joskins and rushed into the punishment-room.

Monteith and Sefton were only a second after him. Other fellows crowded in. Voices were buzzing through the House.

Like wildfire the news ran through the New House—Fatty Wynn had hanged himself in the punishment-room, and Joskins had discovered his dead body.

A thrill of horror ran through the House at the news.

It was buzzed forth from the New House to the quadrangle; it reached the School House, and sent a thrill of horror there.

Fellows came flocking over to the New House.

It was marvellous how quickly the dread news spread over the whole of St. Jim's, from end to end.

Fatty Wynn had committed suicide.

His body had been discovered hanging in the punishment-room. He had been driven to the desperate act by the cruelty of Mr. Ratcliff! The fellows, as they crowded into the New House, were in a mood to lynch the Housemaster.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ratcliff was in the punishment-room. He had doubted Joskins' news—or he had tried to doubt. But the sight of the still form hanging in the corner of the room convinced even Mr. Ratcliff.

His jaw dropped.

He gazed at the form hanging by the braces from the peg in the dusty corner, his eyes bulging with horror and fear.

For a moment compassion for the reckless boy made itself felt in his heart.

But if so, it was only for a moment. Mr. Ratcliff was thinking of the consequences to himself. What would the school say? What would the Head say? What would the newspapers say? In the dreadful moment Mr. Ratcliff realised that there must be an inquest; the story would be all over the kingdom.

Mr. Ratcliff and his drastic methods of governing his House at St. Jim's would be discussed in every newspaper in the United Kingdom. He would be held up to execration from Land's End to John o' Groats. He could see it all in his mind's eye—pictures of the hanging boy in the cheaper papers; photographs of St. Jim's and the New House; articles headed, "Public School Methods of To-day"; or, "Mr. Wackford Squeers is Still With Us!"; "Home Office Inquiry!"; "Inquest on a Schoolboy—Housemaster and Coroner!" Mr. Ratcliff's brain swam with the horror of it.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Monteith, so taken aback that he had not the presence of mind to do the obvious thing—cut down the hanging body. "The young ass!"

"He's hanged hisself!" stuttered Sefton.

Figgins dashed into the room, with Kerr at his heels.

Figgins remembered what Fatty Wynn had whispered through the keyhole—that he was not to be alarmed whatever he might hear; but he was alarmed, all the same.

He dashed in so hurriedly that he bumped into Mr. Ratcliff, and sent him staggering.

"Get out of the way, can't you?" yelled Figgins.

"Figgins!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Oh, shut up!"

That was how Figgins addressed the Housemaster, and Mr. Ratcliff was not even angry. He had not nerve enough left to be angry.

Figgins sprang towards the hanging body to cut it down. His hands were upon it when his expression changed. He turned to Kerr, who was close behind him, and closed his left eye. Kerr understood.

"No good cutting him down," said Figgins.

"There's not a breath—not a sign of it! He must be left for the police!"

"The police!" groaned Mr. Ratcliff.

"Will you telephone for the police, sir?" said Figgins.

"Good heavens! I—"

"Nonsense!" said Monteith, recovering himself. "The body must be cut down at once. Better telephone for a doctor, sir; there may be a chance yet!"

Monteith caught hold of the hanging form to jerk the braces off the peg. Then a look of wonder came over his face.

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

Figgins and Kerr groaned, Monteith gasped, and then burst into a yell of laughter. He could not help it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Monteith!" yelled Mr. Ratcliff. "Are you mad? This is not a laughing matter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take the body down at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Excuse me, sir—it isn't a body!"

"What!"

"It's a dummy, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

Then Monteith's laugh was echoed by a yell from the fellows in the room and the passage outside.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For a moment Mr. Ratcliff was almost giddy with the relief. That dreadful mental picture of a coroner's inquest, of articles, paragraphs in the Press, faded from his mind like a nightmare at dawn.

"Thank Heaven!" he panted. "Then—then—"

"It's all right, sir. The young rascal has stuffed his clothes and hung them up here, that's all," said the prefect.

Monteith lifted down the dummy, and brought it out into the light from the little window. Then it was patent to all that it was a dummy. The laughter redoubled.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in the doorway. "Ha, ha! I wogard that as a wippin' joke on Watty! It threw me into quite a fuffah for a minute, though!"

"My hat! So it did me!" gasped Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff's face was like a thundercloud now. For a few moments relief had been his predominant feeling; but now he realised that his errors had all been for nothing—that he had been the victim of an astounding "jape." He was almost stuttering with rage as he thought of it. His feelings now justified that eloquent expression of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy concerning the rabid rage of Ratty.

"Where is Wynn?" he thundered. "He must be here! Figgins, fetch the cane from my study instantly!"

Figgins did not move.

"Do you hear me, Figgins?"

"I hear you, sir."

"Then obey me!"

Figgins stood quite still. Mr. Ratcliff was almost foaming. From under the bed Fatty Wynn crawled out, his plump form encased in his underclothes, which fitted his fat limbs exceedingly tightly. There was a broad grin upon Fatty Wynn's ruddy face.

"Hallo!" he said calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wynn!" stuttered Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you! How dare you, I say! You shall be punished for this! You shall be flogged—flogged!"

Fatty Wynn looked surprised.

"Flogged, sir! What have I done?"

"What!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "You dare to ask what you have done?"

"Yes, sir. I suppose there's no harm in taking off my clobber on a warm afternoon, is there, sir?" asked Fatty Wynn innocently.

"There are no ladies present, sir. And I wasn't expecting company."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you hung up that—that effigy, Wynn, in order to make me suppose that you had committed suicide!" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

"No harm in a fellow stuffing his clothes to preserve their shape, is there, sir?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't dare to bandy words with me, Wynn!" spluttered the Housemaster. "Get out of this room, all of you! Wynn, resume your clothes instantly! I shall cane you now, and then you shall be flogged—flogged as you deserve, you young scoundrel! I—"

Mr. Ratcliff broke off as Mr. Latham, the master of the Fourth, hurried into the room, the fellows making respectful way for him. The Fourth Form master was looking very much alarmed.

"What is this I hear?" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that Wynn— Why, here is Wynn, safe and sound! Thank goodness! Wynn, my dear boy, I was sure you would not be so wicked and foolish as to do such a thing! I was sure there must be some mistake! Thank Heaven, I find you alive! Dear me—dear me!"

"It was a trick," thundered Mr. Ratcliff—"an infamous trick! Wynn hung up a dummy, sir, to give me the impression that he had committed suicide! What is your opinion of that, sir?"

Mr. Latham blinked at him over his spectacles.

"My opinion is that we should all be very glad that the matter is no worse, Mr. Ratcliff!" he said tartly.

"Hear, hear!" sang out the juniors.

Mr. Ratcliff glared at them.

"Clear away immediately, all of you!" he shouted. "Mr. Latham, I shall be obliged if you will retire also. I am going to punish Wynn so severely that he will never wish to play such a trick again!"

Mr. Latham's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"Indeed! I do not say that I approve of such a joke, Mr. Ratcliff, but I think that Wynn has been sufficiently punished."

"I don't agree with you, and I am about to make an example of him! Pray leave me to regulate affairs in my own House, sir!"

"Wynn belongs to your House, certainly, Mr. Ratcliff. He also belongs to my Form; and it is the duty of a Form-master to protect his boys from cruelty!" said Mr. Latham.

"What!"

"If you wish to inflict further punishment upon Wynn, I do not agree."

"I do not care twopence, sir, whether you agree or not!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff, who was too furious to care what he said.

"Very well. If you wish the matter to go further, we will take it before the Head, and leave it to his decision."

"I decline to be meddled with in my own House! I request you to retire immediately, Mr. Latham!"

"I will do so; and I will take Wynn with me!"

"You will do nothing of the kind!"

"Wynn, dress yourself," said Mr. Latham, paying no heed to the infuriated Housemaster.

"You will accompany me immediately to the School House!"

"Yes, sir!" said Fatty Wynn with alacrity. He was already dressing, Figgins and Kerr helping him.

"Wynn, I forbid you to quit this room!" said Mr. Ratcliff, almost choking with rage.

"I am bound to obey my Form-master, sir," said Fatty Wynn.

"You will obey me, Wynn!"

"Mr. Latham comes first, sir," said Fatty cheerfully. "I could not possibly disobey a master whom I respect, sir!"

There was a chuckle from the juniors at this plain intimation from Fatty Wynn that he did not respect Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster made a furious stride towards him. Mr. Latham calmly stepped in between.

The little Form-master looked at Mr. Ratcliff calmly over his spectacles. It was, as Tom Merry remarked afterwards, something like David defying Goliath, and Lumley-Lumley added that the odds were on David.

Mr. Ratcliff paused. He could not proceed further without committing assault and battery upon Mr. Latham, and even the infuriated Ratty stopped short of that. The

juniors hoped that he would do it; they only wanted him to lay a finger on the master of the Fourth, and they would have rushed upon him and dragged him off, and bumped him and ragged him, Housemaster as he was. But fortunately Mr. Ratcliff had sense enough not to go too far.

"Very well, Mr. Lathom," he said, in a suffocated voice, "you have ventured to interfere with me in my own House; you will answer for it before the Head!"

"I am perfectly willing to do so!" said Mr. Lathom. "In fact, I shall proceed directly to Dr. Holmes, and take Wynn with me. Are you ready, Wynn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then come!"

Fatty Wynn walked out of the room under the wing of his Form-master. The juniors burst into a roar of cheering.

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Mr. Ratcliff's voice was drowned in the roar.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. All's Well That Ends Well.

DR. HOLMES' brow was very stern as he listened to what the Fourth Form master had to tell him.

Fatty Wynn stood silent while Mr. Lathom was speaking.

Mr. Ratcliff entered the Head's study a few minutes later. He realised that it would not do to have the opposite version told first without interruption. Mr. Ratcliff had done his best to calm himself. It would be worse than useless to present himself before Dr. Holmes in a towering rage. But, try as he would to calm his nerves, he was trembling with anger and excitement as he came in.

Dr. Holmes met him with a cold glance.

"I am sorry to see that a dispute has arisen between two masters," said the Head. "Such a dispute is calculated to bring authority into contempt in the school. Wynn, you may go!"

"Am I to go back to the punishment-room, sir?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"No. You are excused."

"Thank you, sir!"

And Fatty Wynn quitted the study without a glance at his Housemaster.

"I am sorry to see this!" Dr. Holmes repeated with emphasis. "On certain points the authority of a Form-master and Housemaster must overlap, but it should be the special care of each that there should be no

friction. Such friction can only have a bad effect upon the discipline of the school."

"I am aware of that, sir," said Mr. Lathom. "I hesitated very long before bringing the matter to your notice. I felt, however, that I could do nothing else."

"Quite so, Mr. Lathom; my remarks were addressed more especially to Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head.

"To me, sir!" said Mr. Ratcliff, trying to calm his voice, but not succeeding very well.

"I fail to understand you, sir. Mr. Lathom deliberately entered the House that is under my charge, and interfered with me in the execution of my duty!"

"I interfered to protect a boy in my Form from cruelty and tyranny!" said Mr. Lathom drily.

"Tyranny, sir! You dare—"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head icily. "I trust I am not to witness a quarrel in my study."

"Mr. Lathom accuses me—"

"There is no doubt whatever in my mind, Mr. Ratcliff, that you have gone too far. I do not approve of the old-fashioned method of punishing a junior by detention in the punishment-room, upon a diet of bread and water, unless under the most extraordinary circumstances, which have certainly not arisen in this case."

"But—but—"

"Pray allow me! If this matter had come to my knowledge, I should certainly not have punished Wynn with this great severity. I think you left Mr. Lathom no course open to him but to interfere."

"Thank you, sir!" said Mr. Lathom.

"The matter is now ended, Mr. Lathom," said the Head kindly. "I may add that I thank you for bringing it to my notice, and I cannot find any blame whatever attaching to you. You have performed a most disagreeable task in a manner, sir, that I should have expected of you, and I can say no more than that."

Mr. Lathom was blushing with pleasure as he quitted the study. The kind little gentleman had never been known to go upon the warpath before, and it had made him feel very nervous and uncomfortable, and the Head's words were balm to his troubled mind.

But the Head's words to Mr. Ratcliff, after the Fourth Form master had gone, were by no means balmy or comforting.

"I don't think we need discuss this matter, Mr. Ratcliff. You have erred upon the side of severity. Wynn has played a very alarming prank; but we must thank our good fortune that it was only a prank, and not a serious matter. It is quite possible that a

boy might have been excited to the pitch of doing something very foolish, Mr. Ratcliff, by such a system of punishment as you have followed. I must request you never, in future, to inflict this punishment without in the first place laying the facts before me."

Mr. Ratcliff found it difficult to speak.

"Very well!" he gasped, at last. "Your wishes shall be obeyed, sir. I will do my best, and if I find it impossible to meet your views, Dr. Holmes, I shall have no recourse but to resign my position in this school!"

Mr. Ratcliff intended this as a thunderbolt; but the Head received the thunderbolt with great equanimity.

"I should be sorry, of course, if you felt obliged to take such a step, Mr. Ratcliff," he said. "However, if you considered it advisable to do so, I should be the last to place any obstacle in your way. Good afternoon, Mr. Ratcliff!"

Mr. Ratcliff almost staggered from the study. He was not likely to resign his extremely comfortable and well-paid position at St. Jim's; but it came into his mind that the Head might request him to resign, and he realised that it would be best for him to be extremely careful. For once Mr. Ratcliff was cowed, and to the surprise and delight of the fellows in his House he showed unmistakable signs of a disposition to "lie down."

Fatty Wynn, needless to say, was the hero of the Lower School.

He had taken a rise out of Fatty; he had put the obnoxious Housemaster into his place and taken him down several pegs.

He had carried out his hunger-strike, even after the supplies had been cut off, and fellows who knew Fatty Wynn best knew what a terrific strain that must have been upon his constancy and courage.

But he made up for the hunger-strike now.

His friends—and their name was legion—marched him off to the tuckshop, and they planked down their cash with royal liberality, standing Fatty Wynn such a feed as had seldom been stood him before.

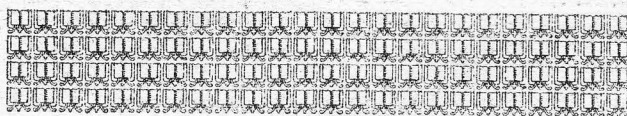
Fatty Wynn did tremendous justice to that feed—his hunger-strike had prepared him for greater feats in the gastronomic line—and as Tom Merry remarked, it was a treat in itself to stand and see him eat.

The smiles had returned to Fatty Wynn's plump face, and when he had finished that tremendous feed, and had no room left even for another jam-tart, his expression was simply beatific. Which was a very happy ending to Fatty Wynn's Hunger-Strike!

THE END.

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