

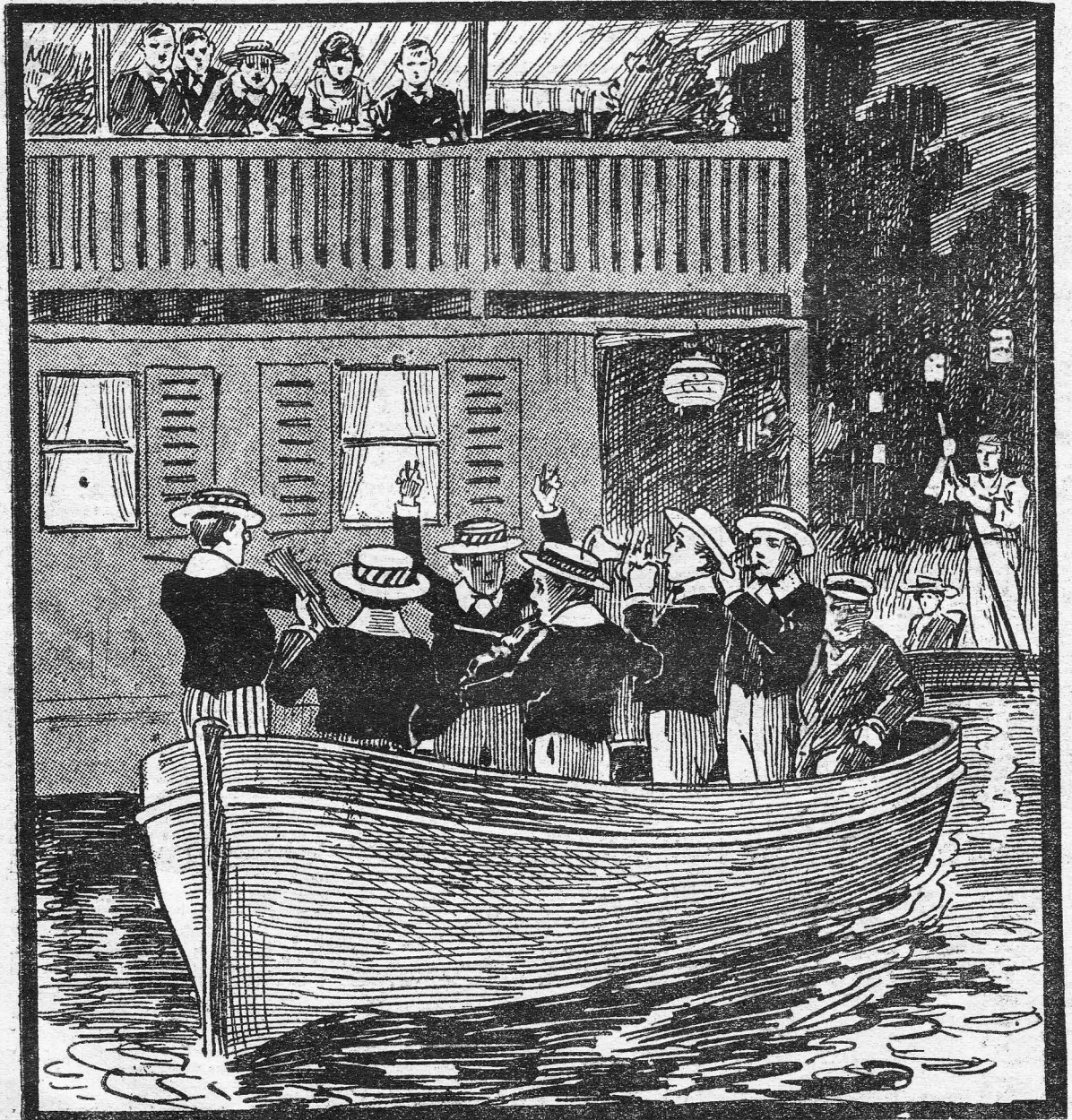
**GREAT NEWS INSIDE!**

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

Week Ending  
May 17th, 1919.

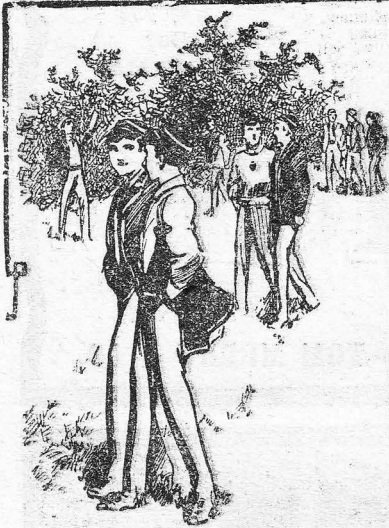
No. 17.  
New Series.

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



**SOMETHING LIKE A SURPRISE!**

(An Exciting Scene in the Splendid Long, Complete School Tale in this Issue.)



THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Marjorie's Brother.

**M**ARJORIE Hazeldene was waiting under the trees, within the precincts of the old priory garden in the heart of the wood near Greyfriars. Near her rose the ruined wall of the priory, heavy masses of old stonework covered with moss. The place was very solitary, and very beautiful.

Picnic-parties sometimes camped in the old priory, and then it was lively enough; but now it was deserted, and the sunshine fell only upon grey stone and dark-green moss, and the shimmering foliage of the trees.

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove at Greyfriars, came at a run through the trees as he caught sight of the graceful figure standing by the old wall.

She turned her head towards him.

Wharton came up quickly, raising his cap. Marjorie smiled, and held out her hand.

"I am so glad to see you, Harry."

"Same here!" said Wharton. "I got your letter all right. Is there anything wrong?"

"Yes."

"And I can help you?"

"I think so."

"Then I'm jolly glad you wrote to me," said Harry.

Marjorie smiled faintly.

"You were surprised to receive my letter?" she asked.

"Well, yes, a little," said Harry honestly.

"I thought something or other must be up."

"You have done as I—as I asked you?"

"About keeping it dark, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Of course."

"I know it must seem strange to you," said Marjorie, colouring a little. "But you will understand when I explain to you. Of course, I know I haven't any right to ask you to bother about the matter at all—"

"You haven't?" said Harry quickly. "We're friends, aren't we? You know I should be jolly glad to do anything I could."

"Yes, I know it," said Marjorie softly. "That is why I wrote to you, Harry."

"Let's sit down, and you can tell me about it." Marjorie sat upon the mossy wall, and Harry seated himself beside her. "I'm sorry I'm a few minutes late, Marjorie. It wasn't my fault; I couldn't get away without—"

"It does not matter, Harry. Have you—have you seen my brother?"

Wharton started, and guessed everything at once.

More than once before he had learned that Marjorie's brother was in trouble, and had helped him out of it.

He understood now; Hazeldene was causing his sister anxiety again.

"He was in the Form-room as usual, Marjorie," answered Harry. "I haven't seen him since. I came straight away almost."

"You have not noticed anything—anything unusual?"

Wharton shook his head.

"No. I—I'm afraid I've been thinking a lot of the cricket lately, though. You know I played in the First Eleven last week, and—"

## THE REMOVE EIGHT.

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

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

and I suppose I've been a bit wrapped up in myself," said Harry, colouring a little. "But Hazel—"

"Has he been keeping to the cricket practice?"

"Well, no; now I come to think of it, he cut it on Wednesday."

"Why?"

"He was out, I believe. I didn't ask him any questions."

"You don't know who he was out with?"

"No; I never thought about it. Ogilvy, or Bulstrode, perhaps. No, I remember Ogilvy was playing. But why—"

"I have heard some of you speak of a new boy you have at Greyfriars," said Marjorie, in a low tone. "The boy you call the Bounder."

"Oh, Vernon-Smith! He's a bad lot, but we're improving him," said Harry, with a smile. "We've ragged him out of smoking in his study, and smuggling champagne into the school, and that sort of thing."

"He may simply have transferred his foolishness outside the school, Harry."

"Yes, that's possible; but in that case I don't see how we're to touch him. But what does Vernon-Smith matter?"

"Nothing to me; but Hazel—"

"Oh, you're afraid Hazel may get under his influence," said Wharton thoughtfully. "That would be rotten for Hazel, certainly. Smith is a rotter to the core, and Hazel is too easy-going. But I don't think it's likely to happen."

"It has happened."

Wharton started.

"Are you sure, Marjorie?"

"Quite sure."

"I've seen nothing of it."

"But it is true, all the same. Harry, you have been a good friend to Hazel, much better than he deserved, and it would be only natural if you grew tired of his folly, and left him to himself. But—but—"

"But I wouldn't do that," said Harry. "Hazel is a decent chap, only he can't say 'No.' He's nobody's enemy but his own. If I thought he was getting into the hands of the Smith beast—excuse me—the Bounder, I'd take any trouble to stop it. I didn't know he was on more than nodding terms with the chap. You are sure?"

"Yes. I met them together in Friarsdale yesterday."

"Oh!"

"They were going into the garden of the Cross Keys, that public-house on the river," said Marjorie. "I spoke to Hazel, and he said he was only going to play a game of bowls. But I know the Cross Keys is out of bounds for Greyfriars boys."

"By Jove, I should think it is! It's the rottenest hole for miles round," said Harry warmly. "They'll get the police there some day."

Marjorie looked deeply distressed.

"Then you understand, Harry, how anxious I feel. I asked Hazel not to go in, and he was—was sulky. He said he meant no harm, and couldn't leave his friend; and he went in with Vernon-Smith. That was why he didn't come to the cricket."

"The young ass!" said Wharton.

"I—I can't do anything, you see, as I'm over at Cliff House," said Marjorie, with a moisture on her eyelashes that Wharton could not help seeing, and that made him murmur various promises to himself about what should happen to the Bounder later on. "Hazel is so—so self-willed, and he thinks he knows so much better than a girl. But—but you remember the trouble he was in before, when he went to the moneylender. You saved him from that, Harry. You are on the spot, and—and you are so good; I felt sure that you would look after Hazel if you could."

"So I jolly well will," said Harry. "I ought

to have kept an eye on him; but I never thought he'd chum up with a chap like the Bounder. I'll look into it, rather!"

"Only don't tell Hazel I've asked you," faltered Marjorie. "He would think— He is proud, you know, and wouldn't like being looked after by a girl."

Wharton's lips set for a moment. He knew Hazeldene, and his sort of pride. He knew perfectly well that as soon as Hazel was in trouble, he would go to his sister to get him out of it. His pride would not prevent that.

But he nodded assent.

"Just as you wish, Marjorie."

"Besides, it must not be known at Greyfriars that Hazel went to the Cross Keys," said the girl. "He would get into trouble with the masters or prefects."

"That's true enough."

"Don't mention to anyone that you met me this afternoon, Harry, and no questions can be asked," said Marjorie. "It is the better way to say nothing. I am so glad that you can and will help me."

"Of course I will," said Harry.

"Thank you so much!" said Marjorie. "And now I think I had better be returning to Cliff House."

They walked on through the summer wood. The nearest way to Cliff House was by following a scarce-marked track through the heart of the wood.

Suddenly Harry Wharton stopped and listened.

Pop!

The sound was that of the drawing of a cork, and it was not a ginger-beer cork, either.

Marjorie stopped, too.

"There is a picnic in the glade," she remarked.

"Yes, I suppose so."

They walked on again. Their path lay through the glade, and there was no way round, save by plunging through dense thickets.

They stepped out into the open.

Wharton's teeth came together with a sharp click.

Four juniors of Greyfriars were seated in the glade—comfortably by the thick grass. A large hamper was open near them, and a white cloth was spread on the grass.

There were bottles of ginger-beer and lemonade, and there were cakes and fruits in abundance—to an extent which showed that a considerable sum of money must have been expended upon the feed.

Wharton did not need telling that the Bounder was one of the party. Only the son of the Cotton King would be able to afford so much money as that feed must have cost.

The Bounder sat on a little hillock, and there was a long-necked bottle in his right hand, and a glass in his left.

He was pouring out a liquid that fizzed and creamed.

"Champagne!" muttered Harry.

A lighted cigarette lay in the grass beside the Bounder, smoking. He had laid it there while he poured out the wine.

Skinner, Stott, and Hazeldene were sitting round him, and each had a glass in his hand, in which the liquor was creaming.

Stott had just tasted his, and was making a wry face. None of the picnickers observed the new arrivals in the glade.

"Ow!" said Stott. "I don't like it!"

"Bosh!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's the real stuff, and worth its weight in gold!"

"I'd rather have some sugar in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Vernon-Smith simply roared. He laughed so much that he upset some of the champagne over his trousers.

Harry Wharton drew back into the shadow of the trees, and drew Marjorie with him.



Skinner and Hazeldene were joining Vernon-Smith in laughing at Stott; though, as a matter of fact, both of them secretly agreed with Stott in his taste.

They would have preferred sugar in the champagne.

Marjorie's face had gone very pale. To find her brother in Vernon-Smith's party was a bitter blow to her. It was a realisation of her worst fears.

Wharton drew her back into the shelter of the trees.

"Better not let them see you," he whispered. "I'll chip in and get Hazel away. But you—"

Marjorie nodded.

"Yes; it would only make him obstinate." Wharton set his teeth for a moment. He would deal with Hazeldene's obstinacy in a drastic way, if necessary.

But his face softened again as he saw the pain and distress in Marjorie's.

"Leave it to me," he whispered.

"Yes. I will go."

"But—"

"It is better for me not to be here. I will go, Harry."

"Yes; you're right."

Marjorie gave him a grateful and tremulous little smile, and stepped away into the wood. Wharton waited a moment or two till her footsteps had died away.

He understood her feelings. Hazeldene, weak and foolish, had the peculiar obstinacy which belongs to a weak nature. The thought of being called to order by a girl would have put his back up at once.

And Wharton was glad, too, that Marjorie would not be present during his interview with these merry picnickers.

There might be hard words and blows, and a scene that was not suitable for the girl to look upon.

"A toast, kids," Vernon-Smith was saying.

"Go ahead!" said Skinner.

"We'll drink to Marjorie Hazeldene," said Vernon-Smith, with a look out of the corner of his eye at Hazel, who started when his sister's name was mentioned. "I met her in Priardale yesterday. I never thought Hazeldene would have such a good-looking sister."

"He doesn't look it, does he?" grinned Stott.

"Hardly," said Skinner.

"Oh, shut up!" said Hazeldene. "And you needn't bring Marjorie's name out here, either, Smithy. Keep your rotten toasts for somebody else!"

"Rats!" said Vernon-Smith. "Here's to Marjorie, the most stunning girl I know—and our better acquaintance!"

Hazeldene flushed angrily.

The juniors raised their glasses, and as they did so Harry Wharton strode into the glade.

"Stop!" he rapped out.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Rascal Well Thrashed.

**H**ARRY WHARTON'S voice rang through the glade, and the merry party stopped before the glasses reached their lips.

They were startled almost out of their wits.

Skinner gave a jump, and the champagne in his tumbler shot out over his shirt and necktie, while Stott spilled nearly all he had on his knees.

Hazeldene lowered his glass. Vernon-Smith jumped up, his liquor splashing in the grass round him.

"Not a drop had been drunk.

"Stop, you cads!"

"Phew!" murmured Skinner. "Wharton!"

"Harry Wharton!"

"My hat!"

Hazeldene rose, looking red and shamefaced. He dared not meet Harry's eyes. Skinner and Stott looked very uncomfortable, too. Vernon-Smith's brow was dark with rage.

"You meddling puppy!" he exclaimed.

"What do you want here?"

Harry looked at him steadily.

"You've been ragged for this in Greyfriars," he said. "I thought you were cured."

"Mind your own business!"

"It seems that you're not; you've simply changed the scene. And you've brought three other fellows into your rotten foolery—three fellows who ought to have known better."

"You—you—"

"How many bottles of that stuff have you got there, Smith?"

"Only one," said the Bounder sullenly. "The one you've opened?"

"Hand it to me!"

"I won't!"

Wharton strode up to him with his eyes blazing.

"Give it to me!"

The Bounder, gritting his teeth, handed him the bottle. Wharton smashed it on the trunk of a tree, and the champagne left in it ran over the bark.

"So much for that!" said Harry grimly.

"Now for the smokes! Give me every one you have, or you'll be sorry for yourself!"

"I won't!"

Wharton grasped the Bounder and jammed him up against a tree. Vernon-Smith struggled wildly in his grasp.

"Let me go!" he panted.

"When I've finished, not before!"

And Wharton turned out the Bounder's pockets. Several packets of cigarettes came to light. Wharton put them in his own pockets.

"I shall burn these as soon as I get back to Greyfriars," he remarked grimly. "Have you anything to say against it?"

"Pah! You're afraid of him!"

"Well, so are you, for that matter!" said Skinner, with a grin. "Why don't you tackle him? It's one to one."

"I will not! I—"

"Are you ready, Smith?"

"Hands off! Help! Rescue!"

"It's your funeral, Smithy," said Skinner. "We can't interfere in a fair fight, can we, Stott?"

"Of course not!" said Stott. "Smith's such a rotten outsider, he doesn't understand these things. On the whole, it was a bit thick to bring champagne and smokes to a picnic."

Wharton advanced towards the Bounder.

"Will you put up your hands?" he said, between his teeth.

"No!" yelled the Bounder.

"You'll get the licking, anyway!"

"Hands off! Oh!"

Wharton's open palm came across his cheek with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Vernon-Smith staggered back against a tree.

His face was deadly white, save where the



Marjorie sat upon the mossy wall. "Have you—have you seen my brother?" she said softly. Wharton started. He guessed Hazeldene was causing his sister anxiety again. (See Chapter 1.)

"I will make you suffer for this, some day!"

"Look here, you're carrying matters with a jolly high hand, Wharton!" said Hazeldene.

"Hold your tongue!"

"But I—"

"That's enough!"

Wharton released Vernon-Smith and stepped back. He stripped off his jacket, and threw it on the ground, and rolled up his sleeves.

"Now, then, Smith, are you ready?"

The Bounder started.

"Ready? What do you mean?"

"I'm going to lick you!"

The Bounder retreated a pace.

"As captain of the Remove, and as a decent chap, I'm going to put down this sort of thing," said Wharton quietly. "You've been ragged by the Form, and it's done you no good. You are going to fight me now."

The Bounder turned white.

"I won't!"

"You will! You've deliberately led these three fools into your own rascally ways, and you'll do worse if you're not stopped. You're going to have a lesson now."

"Help me, you fellows!" cried Vernon-Smith desperately. "We're more than enough for him. Collar him and rag him!"

"He's Form-captain, you know," muttered Stott. Skinner and Stott would as soon have tackled a wild boar as Harry Wharton in his present mood.

red mark of the blow showed up vividly and lividly on the cheek.

"Is that enough for you?" said Harry.

Without a word Vernon-Smith sprang at him. His blood was at fever-heat now, and he was reckless.

In a moment more they were fighting.

Hazeldene, Stott, and Skinner stood looking on, with quiet and very subdued looks. They feared Wharton when he was in that temper.

It was more than the orgy in the glade that was exasperating Wharton—it was the fact that Marjorie had seen it, and seen how far her brother had fallen.

For that, too, the Bounder was to pay.

The weedy, overfed Bounder, who never took exercise, and spoiled his wind by smoking, was nothing like a match for Wharton.

He was knocked right and left.

Wharton's fists rained upon his face, and he reeled to and fro, striking out blindly, hardly touching his assailant, but receiving punishment all the time.

He collapsed at last, rolling in the grass at Wharton's feet. Harry stood looking down at him with merciless eyes.

"Get up!" he said.

"Oh!"

"Get up, you coward!"

"I—I can't!"

"You'll get up and take your gruel, or it'll

be the worse for you!" said Harry. "I'll lick you with a switch if you won't face my fists."

The Bounder staggered to his feet. "Go it, Smithy!" said Skinner encouragingly.

"Cowards!" yelled the Bounder. "Why don't you help me?"

"It's one to one, you know."

"Coward!"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

The fight recommenced, and Vernon-Smith gave ground all the time, but he could not avoid the punishment Wharton gave him. After two or three minutes of hard hitting he fell again.

This time Wharton let him lie.

The Bounder lay and gasped and gasped, as if his breath would never come, and all the while his eyes glittered at Wharton's like a snake's.

Harry turned from him contemptuously.

"That's enough for Smith," he said. "It would serve you fellows right if I gave you the same."

"Oh, draw it mild, Wharton!"

"I would, only——" Wharton paused. He was angry enough to "go for" the whole party there and then, and the wasters of the Remove would not have made much of a stand against the young athlete.

Why did he not? It was because Marjorie's brother was one of them. He did not wish to lay hands on Hazel.

Hazelene was standing biting his lips. His face was dark and angry—anger and shame were struggling in his breast, but anger was predominant.

Wharton looked at him.

"Are you coming back to Greyfriars?" he asked.

"Not with you!" said Hazelene.

"Better come."

"I won't!"

Wharton nodded curtly. He had destroyed the champagne and taken possession of the cigarettes.

There was no harm in the rest of the picnic, and the juniors were welcome to it—with what appetite they had left.

The captain of the Remove strode away through the wood. Marjorie was long gone. Harry turned his steps in the direction of Greyfriars, and his brow was very moody as he went.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. Hazelene Throws it Up.

**H**AZELDENE carefully avoided Harry Wharton that evening, and Harry did not seek his society. The next day it was the same.

Harry understood that the scene in the wood, when the picnic had been interrupted, and Vernon-Smith thrashed, must have been humiliating enough to Marjorie's brother.

He wished to spare Hazelene's feelings, though on one point he would concede nothing—Vernon-Smith's blackguardism would be put down with a firm hand.

If Hazelene chose to kick up rough about it, Wharton did not quite know what to do. For Marjorie's sake he wanted to help the weak, reckless fellow; but how he was to help him against his own will was not clear.

He could not prevent Hazelene from associating with the Bounder if he chose to do so, and he could not always have his eye on the Bounder to see if he was playing the "giddy goat" again.

After the lesson he had received Harry believed that the Bounder would be very careful for some time, and that probably was the case.

But Hazelene avoided Wharton in a way that showed he strongly resented the interference of the Form-captain.

For Hazelene's opinion of him Wharton would have cared little. But through the dissatisfied Hazelene there might come a breach in his friendship with Marjorie. Wharton had plenty of trouble on his mind just now.

Temple & Co. had challenged the Remove to a rowing-match, and Wharton had to get his men together for regular practice, and to keep them up to the mark. With most of them it was not difficult to get them up to time.

There were plenty of fellows in the Form able and willing to work, and Bulstrode was showing a great keenness, which left Wharton nothing to complain about.

With Hazelene Harry had some difficulty. Evidently under the Bounder's influence Hazelene showed a slackness that was irri-

tating enough in a fellow selected to row for his Form.

There were fellows in the Remove who would have given almost anything for a chance to get into Hazelene's place, and he showed a carelessness about the matter, as if he prized it very little, and could hardly be driven out in the mornings to practise.

Wharton hardly knew what to do about it.

There were plenty of fellows in the Form able and willing to take Hazelene's place, and there was no doubt that Ogilvy, Micky Desmond, Morgan, or Truluce could have been trained to take their place in the eight with as much credit as Hazelene.

Wharton considered whether he ought to drop him.

But he was loth to put such a slight upon him—loth, too, to play into the Bounder's hands by coming to an open quarrel with the foolish lad.

For if Hazelene did not row in the eight he would drop out of Wharton's circle, and be thrown quite under the Bounder's influence.

He could hardly be dropped without coming to bad terms over it.

Yet Wharton reflected that his first duty was to the Form and the crew, and that he ought to allow no consideration, even for Marjorie, to interfere with that.

On Saturday afternoon there was to be a pull over the course, and Ogilvy was to time them; and after school Wharton looked for Hazelene.

He had a feeling that the junior might have some intention of going out.

He found Hazelene talking with the Bounder in the Remove passage.

Vernon-Smith gave Wharton an evil look and went into his study. Hazelene made a motion to walk away. Harry clapped him on the shoulder.

"You haven't forgotten the practice this afternoon, old chap?" he remarked.

Hazelene coloured.

"When is it?" he asked.

"At half-past two, same time as the race with the Upper Fourth next Wednesday."

"I was going out with Vernon-Smith."

"Sorry; but the time of the practice was fixed, and you knew it yesterday," said Harry quietly.

"I'd forgotten."

"It's hardly a thing to be forgotten," said Wharton. "There are plenty of fellows in the Remove who would jump at your place."

"Let 'em jump."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't care so much about rowing," said Hazelene sullenly. "After all, it's a blessed fag, and you don't get anything for it."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I can see that the Bounder has been talking to you," he remarked. "That's the brute's idea of sport. He ought to be kicked out of Greyfriars."

"He's my friend."

"And a rotten bad friend for you or anybody else," said Wharton hotly. "He's trying to make you slide out of the crew, of course. He'd be glad to see you cut the cricket, too, so that he could get you into his hands. Though I'm blessed if I know why he should cultivate you so much more than any other fool in the Form. Snoop and Skinner are ready to suck up to him to any extent. Unless——"

Wharton paused.

He had believed that the Bounder enticed Hazelene chiefly as a blow at Study No. 1; but it occurred to him as he spoke that there might be another reason.

He remembered the toast the Bounder had given at the picnic in the glade.

Wharton's eyes burned with anger at the idea that a fellow like the Bounder might have dared to think of Marjorie.

Hazelene looked at him with a sneer.

"Well," he said, "unless——"

"Never mind. But that cad will do you no good."

"If you choose to call my friends names, Wharton, you needn't trouble to talk to me."

"I thought that I was your friend, too," said Harry, controlling his temper as well as he could.

"Well, let Smith alone, then."

"Hang Smith! Are you coming out to practice?"

"Look here, I'd like to miss it this afternoon. I've promised Vernon-Smith."

"You can't miss it! Don't be an ass!"

Hazelene shook himself impatiently.

"Put somebody else in my place, then."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

"You want to be left out of the eight?"

"Yes, rather than make a worry of the thing."

"I won't say what I think of you," said Harry quietly. "But think of Marjorie. She knows you've been selected to row in the eight. She'll be proud if you help us to win. What will she think of you if you slide out like this?"

Hazelene hesitated.

He had forgotten Marjorie for the moment.

If there was one person in the world who had a permanent and thoroughly good influence over the weak and wayward lad, it was his sister Marjorie.

Harry saw his advantage, and pushed it. "Hang it all, Hazel, don't go back on the Form in this way! You can go out afterwards, and if you cut the rowing, what are you going to say to Marjorie?"

Hazelene's hesitation continued. The thought of his sister had more power than anything else to bring him back to the right path. But at that moment Vernon-Smith opened his study door, and glanced out.

"I'll be ready in five minutes, Hazel," he said.

Hazelene started.

"All right, Smithy."

"You are not going with him, old chap?" said Harry, as the Bounder closed his door.

"I've promised him."

"And you throw over your old friends for that fellow?"

"If you don't choose to see reason——"

"That's enough," said Wharton; and he turned on his heel and walked down the passage.

Hazelene glanced after him dubiously, and then went into the Bounder's study.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### The Eight at Practice.

**H**ARRY WHARTON strode down the passage with a clouded brow.

He did not join his chums, but made his way to the senior Common-room, where he expected to find Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars.

The big, good-natured Sixth-Former was there. He was chatting with Courtney of the Sixth when Harry came in.

He glanced kindly enough at the Remove captain.

"Can I speak to you a moment, Wingate?" said Harry abruptly.

"Certainly; go ahead!"

"I want to ask you something," said Harry, somewhat embarrassed. "It's a rather peculiar favour to ask, but——"

"Cut it short!"

"We're having a practice of the Lower Fourth eight this afternoon on the Sark. Don't you think it would be a good idea for all the Remove to turn up and watch the practice? It would do them good, in a way."

"I've no doubt they will."

"Yes; but some of them won't—I mean they mightn't," said Harry slowly. "Could you—you don't mind my asking——"

"What the dickens do you want?" asked Wingate bluntly, while Courtney looked curiously at the Remove-captain.

"I want you to order all the Remove to turn up for the practice," said Harry.

"Oh! Why?"

"Well, I—I should like you to. I've got my reasons, but I'd rather not explain them, if you don't mind. But you always take some trouble over our sports, Wingate, and if you'd do that, you'd help us a lot."

Wingate looked at him hard.

"I'll do it," he said. "Here, pin this notice on the board."

He wrote on a leaf of his pocket-book, tore it out, and handed it to Wharton. The junior took it with a lightened brow.

"Thanks, Wingate," he said gratefully.

"Not at all, kid."

Harry left the senior room with the paper. The two seniors exchanged glances.

"What the dickens can that mean?" said Courtney.

"Some slacker wants to cut the practice, I suppose," said Wingate reflectively. "Perhaps Wharton wants to keep him up to the mark. It may be some fellow he can't afford to kick out of the eight."

"Oh, I see!"

"Anyway, I've got faith in Wharton."

Harry Wharton hurried to the school notice-board, and pinned up the paper.

Five minutes later, a crowd of juniors were reading the notice, with various ejaculations of surprise.

It ran as follows:

"Every member of the Remove is to turn up at the river for the whole time of the crew's



practice this afternoon.—Signed, G. Wingate, Capt.

"My only hat?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "That's odd!"

"The oddity is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Blessed if I can make Wingate out!" said Nugent. "Look here, Wharton, here's an order for the whole Form to turn up and watch us at practice."

Harry Wharton laughed. "It will do them good," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Going out?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Bounder and Hazeldene came down into the hall.

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith. "Haven't you seen the notice?"

"What notice?"

"Here it is; look at it."

Vernon-Smith and Hazeldene read the notice through. The latter's face fell, but only a sneer came to the Bounder's lips.

"I suppose that won't make any difference to you, Hazel," he said.

"Eh? It's Wingate's order."

"Take no notice of it."

"Wingate's captain of the school, and head prefect. What do you mean, Smithy? We must take notice of it."

The Bounder curled his lip. "I shall not!" he exclaimed.

"You won't go out?"

"I shall!"

"Hang it, look here, Smithy!"

"Come, let's get out," said the Bounder, slipping his arm through Hazeldene's.

The latter shook himself free.

"I can't," he said. "We have got to stick it out for the practice. Wingate means what he says. I tell you a junior can't buck up against Wingate."

An unpleasant look came over the Bounder's face.

"You will not come?" he exclaimed.

"I can't."

"You are a fool!"

"You are a bigger one, if you go out against Wingate's order," said Hazeldene. "I don't know what it's done for, but we've got to toe the line."

"I shall not toe the line."

"It will be the worse for you, then."

"Pah! I am going!"

The Bounder made a stride towards the door. A good many of the fellows had overheard what was said. Several of them placed themselves in Vernon-Smith's path.

"Where are you going?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Out."

"You've seen the notice?"

"Yes."

"And you're going to disregard it?"

"Yes."

"We'll see about that," said Bob grimly. "We won't report you to Wingate, because that would be speaking, but we'll jolly well see that you obey the order!"

"I will not! I—"

"Your mistake, my boy; you will. Collar him, chaps!"

The Bounder made a spring for the open doorway, but five or six pairs of hands closed upon him. He struggled, but he was whisked out of the house in a second or two, and under Bob Cherry's directions he was marched down to the river.

"Let me go!" he gasped. "Your rotten racing is nothing to me. Let me go!"

"Rats!" said Ogilvy. "You're going to do as Wingate orders!"

"I won't!"

"Bosh!"

Vernon-Smith might say that he wouldn't, but he had no choice in the matter with the grasp of half a dozen sturdy juniors upon him.

He was rushed down to the bank of the Sark in record time, and arrived there breathless and gasping, with his cap gone, his collar torn out, and most of the buttons off his waistcoat.

"Keep him there, kids!" said Bob Cherry. "Hold him if he tries to bolt. He's to stay here for the whole time of the practice, according to Wingate's order."

"Faith, and we'll see that he does!" said Micky Desmond, slipping an arm through the Bounder's.

"Now, ye spalpeen, if ye struggle I shall very likely land ye one on ye're boko—so!—there. I said I would!"

And he did.

The Bounder gasped and ceased to resist. With Micky holding one arm and Ogilvy holding the other, he stood between the two juniors, a picture of impotent rage.

"Better take it calmly," advised Micky. "Hang you!"

"Shut up, you rotten bounder!" said Ogilvy. "You may look on, but you're not allowed to talk. You're too polite. Next

time you open your mouth we'll duck you in the river!"

"Faith, and it's a good idea entirely!"

And the Bounder kept his mouth closed.

Harry Wharton & Co. were closing the eight-oar down to the water. Hazeldene came to the boathouse with a somewhat shamefaced expression.

"Do you want me to row, Wharton?" he asked. "It seems that I can't go out, anyway, and—and I'm willing to row if you like."

Such a way of putting it from any other fellow would have met with a short and sharp response from the captain of the Remove. But Wharton wanted to be easy with Hazeldene. More than the race depended upon how he dealt with him.

"All right," he said shortly.

And Hazeldene took his place with the crew.

The boat slid into the water.

Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Tom Brown, Mark Linley, Bulstrode, and Hazeldene stepped into the boat, and Morgan, the coxswain, dropped into the stern.

# GREAT NEWS!

NEXT FRIDAY

IN

# THE PENNY POPULAR

3

# ENTIRELY ORIGINAL STORIES

GREAT DEMAND. ORDER EARLY.

A crowd of fellows had assembled on the bank to watch the practice, among them Temple, Dabney & Co.

The Upper Fourth-Formers were smiling loftily. But they did not smile so much when Harry Wharton's eight got to work.

Blundell of the Fifth gave the signal to start, and the eight got away in fine style, and went down the river with a steady pull.

It quickened, and they shot past the island at a spanking rate.

Round the island and back to the landing-stage was the course, and the Remove eight covered it in a time that made the Fourth-Formers open their eyes.

"My word!" said Dabney, looking at his watch. With all his loftiness he had condescended to time the race. "They've done it in a minute under our time of the other day!"

"By George!"

"Of course, we weren't putting our beef into it," said Fry.

"Perhaps not, but—"

"But we were pulling hard," said Scott, "and we shall have to pull harder to beat the Remove on Wednesday."

"Oh, rather!"

Temple nodded.

"We've got to beat them," he said. "It means hard training between now and Wednesday, that's all. We can't afford to be beaten by the Lower Fourth."

Loud cheers from the Remove greeted the boat as it dashed up.

All knew that the crew had covered the course in less time than the winners of the last race, and that was a good augury for the success of the Remove.

Wharton's eyes were sparkling as he jumped ashore.

His crew had pulled together well, and he was quite satisfied with them.

Ogilvy and Desmond released the Bounder, who strode away with a black brow. He was the only fellow in the Remove who was not gleeful.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Straight from the Shoulder.

ON Monday morning, at half-past six, the Remove eight rowed over the course, and timed the row.

They knew the Upper Fourth time, and they beat it by twenty seconds, which was a matter of jubilation to the Remove.

Temple, Dabney & Co. sniffed when they heard it, and after school they rowed over the course themselves, and tied the Remove time to a second.

They rowed over the course again in the dusk, without being watched by the Remove, but the result was kept to themselves. But Temple, Dabney & Co. no longer pretended to believe that the race would be a walk-over.

It would be a very close thing, and they knew it; and Temple, taking a new line, said he was jolly glad of it, and a good race was what he really wanted, and had been looking forward to.

Harry Wharton was feeling very cheerful about the Remove prospects. Hazeldene was the only fellow Wharton was at all doubtful about.

Hazeldene was a good oar, there was no doubt about that, and he was trained to good condition. Cricket had kept him fit, and a few days of constant rowing practice had worked wonders.

His form would be all right if he chose to row.

But Harry had a lurking fear that at the last moment the foolish fellow might fail them. Under the Bounder's influence there was no telling what he might do.

And the Bounder's spite against the juniors who kept him in order was so great that there was no doubt he would do his worst, and if his influence could make a vacancy in the crew it would be made.

The later the defection came the more awkward it would be for Wharton, of course, and the worse for the crew. It was a worry to the stroke of the Remove boat.

Hazeldene was turning up for practice regularly, and had said nothing more about quitting the crew.

Wharton had no excuse for dropping him now, even if he wanted to do so.

But what was to happen at the last moment?

The trial on Tuesday was to be rowed after school, and Harry was on the alert as soon as the Form came out of the classroom.

He had seen Vernon-Smith whispering to Hazeldene, and he suspected the Bounder, but Hazeldene's manner was quite frank.

"Ready?" asked Harry.

"Quite."

"Come on, then!"

And Wharton's suspicions melted away.

The Remove eight and their cox went down to the river, accompanied by the scratch crew they were to row against, and followed by most of the Form to watch the trial.

The scratch crew was composed of Ogilvy, Desmond, Treluce, Russell, Trevor, Elliott, Lacy, and Smith minor, with Wan Lung to cox.

They were a good crew, though, of course, not anything like the form of the eight.

The trial was watched by an eager crowd on the bank.

Wharton's doubts with regard to Hazeldene were soon set at rest.

He pulled as well as the rest, and, in fact, showed unusually good form.

The scratch crew put the best they had into the contest, but they were easily beaten by two lengths, the eight rowing in splendid time.

Loud cheers from the Remove greeted the result.

Not a fellow there but firmly believed that the Remove eight were destined to lower the colours of the Upper Fourth on the following afternoon.

When the Remove boats had pulled off the course the Upper Fourth rowed a trial, and Temple professed himself completely satisfied with the result.

Both parties, in fact, were quite pleased, and both were quite assured of success on the morrow.

"We shall lick them!" said Bob Cherry, as the rowing-men walked up to the school in the Remove! "It will be another one up for the Remove!"

"The upfulness will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh.

"What do you think, Hazel?"

Bob Cherry glanced round.

Hazelene had left them.

"Where's that chap Hazelene?"

"Faith, and he went along the towing-path with Smithy!" said Micky Desmond.

Harry Wharton gave a start.

"Sure of that, Micky?" he asked.

"Faith, and I saw him!"

Wharton left the crowd of fellows and strolled back to the river. He assumed a careless manner, but there was deep anxiety in his breast.

Hazelene was gone with the Bounder along the towing-path. It might mean nothing, but it might mean that they were taking the short cut to the Cross Keys, which had a garden backing on the river.

It flashed into Wharton's mind all of a sudden what the Bounder's game might be. Hazelene, if asked to throw up his place in the boat at the last moment, would be very likely to shrink from such treachery.

But if he were induced to make a fool of himself now—if he smoked and drank at the Cross Keys—he would be in no state on the morrow for a hard race. It would suit the Bounder's game quite as well if he were unfit as if he resigned.

Wharton gritted his teeth at the thought.

He strode along the towing-path, with the river gleaming in the sunset on his right hand and the deep-scented wood on his left.

As soon as he was out of sight of the other fellows he broke into a run.

"Ah! There they are!"

He uttered the exclamation suddenly as he caught sight of the two schoolcaps ahead of him on the towing-path bobbing above the bushes.

He quickened his pace.

On the turf of the towing-path his footsteps made no sound, and he was very close to the two juniors before they knew he was at hand.

The Bounder gave a little start as he glanced over his shoulder and caught sight of Wharton. Harry came up, a little flushed, and breathing hard.

Hazelene's face assumed a sulky look.

"Anything the matter, Wharton?" he asked.

"No. Only, aren't you going a long way, Hazel? It's getting near locking-up, you know."

"Oh! A prefect's pass?"

"Yes."

"Which prefect?" asked Wharton.

"What does it matter to you?" said the Bounder insolently.

But Wharton did not even look at him, keeping his eyes fixed upon Hazelene.

"Loder," said Hazelene sullenly.

Wharton compressed his lips.

Loder was a prefect who would always give a pass to a fellow who would perform commissions for him in the village—such as smuggling cigarettes into the school or taking messages to the Cross Keys.

"Where are you going, Hazel?" he asked.

"For a stroll."

"Haden't you better come in?"

"I suppose Hazelene is the best judge of that himself!" remarked Vernon-Smith.

Harry turned upon him in a flash.

"I wasn't speaking to you!" he exclaimed angrily. "If you give me any cheek you'll get some of what you got the other day!"

The Bounder retreated a pace.

"Look here, you jolly well let us alone!" exclaimed Hazelene irritably. "You're not my blessed guardian, I suppose, and—and I don't want to have anything to say to you, anyway!"

"Now, look here, old chap!" said Wharton more gently. "The race is to-morrow, and a lot depends on it. Is it asking too much to ask you to come in now, and not go out with Vernon-Smith again till after the race? It's only one day more."

Vernon-Smith burst into a mocking laugh.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 17.

"Come on, Hazel! Don't be a booby!" he exclaimed. "This chap will be taken for your dry-nurse next!"

It was exactly the appeal to make to Hazelene, who, like most fellows who are weak and easily led, hated to be thought under anybody's influence.

"I jolly well won't go in!" he exclaimed.

"I'm coming, Smithy! You can mind your own business, Wharton!"

"Look here, Hazel—"

"That's enough! I'm going with Smithy! Do you think I'm a baby to be looked after? I'm my own master, Harry Wharton! I'll go where I choose! I've had enough of your dictation, too! I'm hanged if I'll row in the eight to-morrow, either!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"You must, Hazel!"

"I won't, then!"

"Look here—"

"It's your own fault. I'm not going to be domineered over. Find somebody else to take my place, and be hanged to you! And you needn't speak to me again! I don't want to know you!"

Wharton looked hard at him. He had not suspected that the malign influence of the Bounder had gone as deep as this.

"Do you mean that, Hazel?"

"Every word!"

"You're willing to play this dirty, cowardly trick on the Form—"

"That's enough!" Hazelene clenched his hands. "You'd better not go too far, Wharton! You can't talk to me as you do to Vernon-Smith!"

Wharton's lip curled.

"I'll talk to you in plain English," he replied. "If you play such a trick as this on the Remove, you deserve to be cut by every decent fellow at Greyfriars—and you will be. But let that pass. Look here! Have you thought about Marjorie? What will she say—what will she think—when she knows that you've thrown up the place at the last moment, and left us in the lurch?"

Hazelene clenched his hands convulsively, and next moment he struck full at Wharton's face.

"Hazel!"

It was a sharp cry from the trees. A graceful form ran out, and Hazelene's arm was caught as he struck. He dropped his hand to his side, turning scarlet. Vernon-Smith turned on his heel, and walked along the towing-path.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Marjorie Speaks Plainly.

MARJORIE panted for breath.

"Hazel! What is the matter with you? How dare you!" she exclaimed.

Hazelene looked sullen.

"You don't know what the row is," he said. "I'm not going to explain to you. You'd better leave us alone, Marjorie."

Marjorie's eyes flashed.

"I shan't do anything of the sort, Hazel! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"You don't know what he's done."

"I know what you imagine. I heard what you said as I came along the footpath," said Marjorie, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks burning with indignation. "That is why I ran forward to stop you. I am ashamed of you! Harry is your friend—your best friend—and mine, too."

"What right has he to interfere with me?" said Hazelene savagely.

"Because I asked him to."

Harry stood silent.

"You!" ejaculated Hazelene. "What do you mean?"

"I wrote to Harry, and asked him to meet me, because I wanted to speak to him about you."

"About me?" stammered Hazelene.

"Yes," said Marjorie, "about you. Because you were getting into your old foolish ways again. Because you were associating with a boy I knew to be bad and wicked. Because I was afraid you would be expelled from Greyfriars, as you would have been once before if Harry Wharton had not saved you."

"Marjorie!"

"Harry came to meet me because I asked him, and I asked him, too, to keep it a secret, because I wanted to spare your feelings, and because I knew you were so foolish and obstinate that you would resent anybody taking an interest in your welfare."

Hazelene coloured.

Marjorie was speaking very plainly; hitting straight from the shoulder, so to speak.

Hazelene had never seen Marjorie lose her

temper before, but she was dangerously near losing it now. Her tongue lashed the junior like a whip.

"Marjorie!" he stammered.

"Yes, foolish and obstinate," said Marjorie. "That wicked boy Vernon-Smith is leading you into bad ways, and you know it. You ought to know better. You ought to do better. You ought not to speak to him. And to quarrel with Harry, because he did what I asked him to—"

"I—I didn't know you had asked him. I thought I—"

"I am ashamed of you, Hazel. I wish I could think you were ashamed of yourself, too, as you ought to be."

"That's all very well," said Hazelene sullenly. "I'm jolly well not going to be looked after by a girl, anyway, and as for Wharton—"

"Perhaps you will prefer father to look after you, then," said Marjorie, "for I will write to him and tell him everything, if you keep on with that wretched boy Vernon-Smith."

Hazelene turned pale.

"Marjorie! You wouldn't give me away to the pater!"

"I would—to save you from being expelled from Greyfriars, and disgracing us all," said Marjorie. "You have no right to assume to be your own master after you have asked others to get you out of difficulties, as you have always done. Wharton saved you from being expelled the last time."

"I—I—"

"Yes, you had forgotten that, of course."

"I hadn't forgotten it, but—"

"Harry interfered now because I asked him to. I don't know why I should care what happens to you!" exclaimed Marjorie, bursting into tears.

Marjorie!

Hazelene was all contrition at once.

Marjorie seldom cried, and it frightened Hazelene to see her. Wharton turned his head away.

He felt that if the scene lasted much longer he would give Hazelene the thrashing of his life.

His fingers fairly itched to be upon the foolish lad.

But Hazelene was repentant enough now.

He approached Marjorie, but she repulsed him.

"Marjorie, I'm sorry! I— Look here, don't cry, old girl! I'm awfully sorry! I—I've been an ass! It was what Smith said that made me wild, and—and—I say, don't cry, you know! I'm sorry! I'll apologise to Wharton, if you like. I'll row to-morrow, if they'll let me, too."

Harry Wharton went quietly along the towing-path towards the school.

He felt that it would be better to leave the brother and sister alone.

He walked moodily towards Greyfriars.

He had never seen Marjorie show so much emotion, and was bitterly angry with Hazelene, who was so far from being worth the affection his sister gave him.

Harry Wharton, walking slowly and moodily, was nearly at Greyfriars, when he heard a pattering of footsteps on the towing-path behind him.

He turned his head. It was Hazelene!

Hazelene looked very pale and shame-faced.

"Well!" said Wharton grimly.

"It's—it's all right."

"You call it all right, when you have worried and upset the best girl in the world," said Wharton savagely. "If she wasn't your sister I'd lick you till you couldn't stand for a week, you fool!"

Hazelene winced.

"And I should deserve it, I expect," he said, in a low voice. "I'm sorry, Wharton! Look here, I'm going to chuck the Smith chap, and—and if you'll have me, I'll row in the eight to-morrow, and do my best."

"Very well," said Wharton shortly.

And they walked to the school without another word.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Rival Eights.

WEDNESDAY dawned bright and fair.

At half-past six in the morning the Remove eight were on the river for a final spin.

They fully satisfied Harry Wharton.

The last anxiety of the Remove captain was gone now.

During the morning Vernon-Smith spoke to Hazelene several times, but the manner of his former friend was short and dry.



The juniors turned out for the race in the highest spirits. Some of the girls of Cliff House were expected over to see it, and soon after dinner Marjorie and Clara arrived.

Harry Wharton ran to meet them as soon as he caught sight of the bright hats and frocks in the distance.

Marjorie coloured a little as she saw him. But Harry made no reference to the scene of the towing-path, and she was soon at her ease.

"So glad you've come," said Harry cheerfully. "It will be a jolly good race, whichever side wins. Hazel is doing well, too, Marjorie. He was pulling splendidly this morning."

"I'm so glad," murmured Marjorie.

"Yes, rather," said Miss Clara. "I didn't think Hazel had it in him."

"Oh, Clara!"

"Well, I didn't, dear, and I'm agreeably surprised," said Miss Clara. "I hope the Remove will win."

There was a big crowd on the bank when the time of the race drew near.

All the Remove and the Upper Fourth were there, and Nugent minor and a band of Second Form fags had turned up to yell.

Many of the seniors, too, joined the crowd on the sunny banks of the Sark.

Marjorie and Clara and several other Cliff House girls were near the starting-post, amid the crowd of juniors.

There was a rousing cheer as the crews came down to the water.

Both crews looked very fit and well, and cheers followed them as they pulled out to the middle of the stream.

Wingate had the starting pistol in his hand, ready to give the signal.

Every eye was on the crews.

Confidence and nervousness and grim determination blended in the looks of the rival eights.

Crack!

It was the signal.

The Upper Fourth boat got away with a good start, and shot ahead. The Remove had not started so well. They were half a length to the bad in the first minute. But Harry Wharton's face did not change.

He was stroking the boat with a quiet, steady stroke, not in the least flustered. The oars behind him dipped in splendid time.

There was a roar from the bank.

"Go it, Temple!"

"Pull away, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Temple & Co. had the start, and they improved upon it.

The lead of the Fourth Form eight slowly increased till she was nearly a length ahead of the Remove boat.

The enthusiasm of the Upper Fourth was unbounded.

A wild crowd poured along the banks, keeping up with the boats, yelling and waving caps. The Removites were yelling, too, loud exhortations to Wharton's crew to buck up.

But Wharton knew what he was doing.

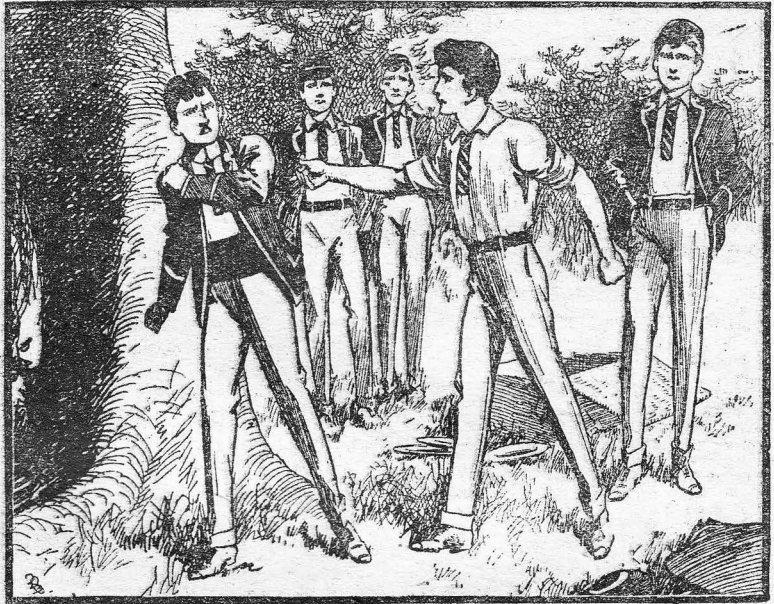
He increased the rapidity of his stroke, and the oars behind him followed perfectly, and the speed of the Remove boat increased.

But half-way over the course the Upper Fourth boat was still a length ahead.

The Remove were creeping up, however.

And as Wharton quickened, and his crew quickened in perfect time, it was seen that the Lower Fourth boat was creeping steadily up.

The length was reduced to three-quarters of a length.



"Will you put up your hands!" said Wharton between his teeth. His open palm came across Vernon-Smith's cheek like a pistol-shot. "Is that enough for you?" he said. (See Chapter 2.)

Then to half!

But the boats were over two-thirds of the distance now, and the Upper Fourth and most of the spectators felt that, with common luck, Temple & Co. ought to keep their lead to the finish and win.

Wharton's face was hard as iron now.

He knew what was in his men, and he meant to have it out; and they had unbounded confidence in their stroke.

Wharton was speeding up now.

Now was the time for a tussle—now the time for a spurt. The Remove boat speeded up, and in a twinkling, as it seemed, the distance between them was reduced to a quarter of a length, and then to an eighth or less.

There was a roar from the bank.

"Hurrah, Remove!"

"Go it, Temple!"

"Pull! Pull! They're passing you!"

"Buck up!"

The Remove boat was level.

The Upper Fourth were rowing their hardest now; but they had shot their bolt too soon. Now, when a spurt was needed, they hadn't an ounce more in them.

They were doing their best, but—

A wild roar from the bank announced that the Remove boat had shot ahead. An inch—two inches—a quarter of a length!

They were close on the finish now.

Wharton and his men were rowing steadily now, right up to the top speed, and the Upper Fourth laboured after them in vain.

Another roar.

"Go it, Remove!"

"Remove wins!"

"Hurrah!"

Right ahead shot the Remove boat!

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "We've done it!"

And they had!

The Remove eight had won by three-quarters of a length!

There was joy in the Remove that day.

The oarsmen jubilated as they rubbed themselves down and changed after the race. The whole Form jubilated, too.

Temple, Dabney & Co. took their defeat in good part. It was a blow for the Upper Fourth, but they stood it well. Temple said they'd row it over again another time, a proposal to which Wharton instantly acceded. For the present, all was joy in the Remove camp.

The chums of the Remove stood a tea under the trees by the river after the race, to which their rivals were invited, and came cheerfully. Marjorie pressed Hazeldene's arm as he dropped upon the bench beside her under the elms.

"You did well, Hazel," she whispered. "I'm proud of you."

It was a merry tea-party; and a toast proposed by Wun Lung was drunk with great enthusiasm in ginger-pop—"The Junior Eights!"

Billy Bunter joined the feast, with rather a dubious air; but he was allowed to remain, and he drank that toast—and would have drunk any number of others, so long as the ginger-pop lasted. And so ended the great triumph of the Remove Eight.

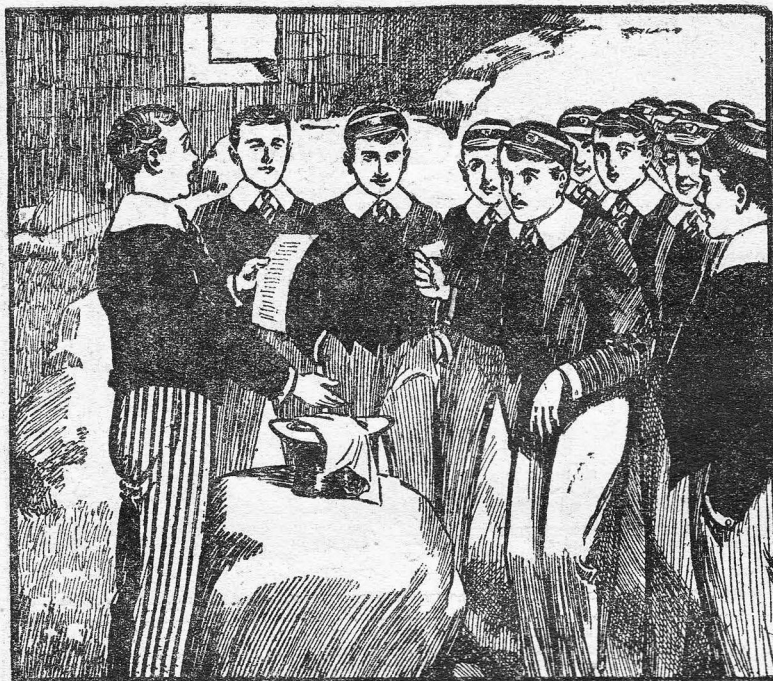
THE END.

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**A BLANK FOR HIGGS!** "Fags first!" said Smythe. "Young Higgs, you can begin!" Higgs inserted a grubby hand into the hat and drew out a slip of paper. He snorted as he saw it was a blank!

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### A Suggestion from Leggett.

**A**DOLPHUS SMYTHE, of the Shell Form at Rookwood, was looking disgusted. He had conceived the brilliant idea of getting up a sweepstake for the forthcoming Derby—tickets a shilling a head; but the juniors of Rookwood had not received his precious scheme with enthusiasm. With exception of the Giddy Goats, Smythe's own particular pals, and one or two others of the "black sheep," Smythe's sweepstake had met with no support.

The fact was, the Junior School at Rookwood had a healthy contempt for any form of gambling, and Smythe did not venture to bring his precious scheme to the knowledge of any of the seniors, for obvious reasons.

So Smythe was feeling very blue, and his study-mates, Tracy and Howard, were feeling much the same.

Leggett of the Fourth looked into Smythe's study. Smythe and Tracy and Howard were doing their preparation. The three nuts were in extremely bad tempers.

Smythe was feeling disappointed. He was very set on bringing off that sweep, doubtless for excellent reasons of his own.

"Can I come in?" asked Leggett. The Classical Shell fellows scowled at him. Leggett belonged to the Modern side, and he was not a pleasant character. He was more than suspected of sneaking to the prefects, and he was always hard up, and sometimes guilty of sharp practice in dealing with fellows not quite so keen as himself.

Smythe pointed to the door with his pen.

"Outside!" he said briefly.

"I want to speak to you chaps," explained Leggett. "It's about your sweep."

"Oh!" said Smythe, changing his manner at once. "You can come in, Leggett!"

Leggett closed the door behind him as he came in. Smythe was quite civil immediately.

"How many do you want?" asked Smythe.

"Eh? How many what?"

"Are you putting up a single bob, or more, I mean?"

"Oh, I'm not putting up anything!" said Leggett.

"You're not!" Smythe's civility dropped from him like a cloak. "Then get out, you Modern worm!"

"Better listen to me," said Leggett. "I can tell you how to make it go."

"I can make it go all right without your help!" said Smythe contemptuously.

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Leggett grinned.

"From what I hear, you can't," he said. "I've been asking questions, you see. Only a dozen fellows have come in!"

"Fifteen!" snapped Smythe.

"Well, you're losing a good thing," urged Leggett. "I tell you, my dodge will make the whole crowd keen after the sweep. If it doesn't you needn't use it, and you don't give me anything. I take the risk of your not winning, too. If you win, you hand me half a quid; and the sweep will come to five or ten pounds, if you work it my way!"

"Give him a hearing, Smythe," said Howard. "He's a cunning beast, always up to some dodge. We want the sweep to be a success if we can work it. It's up to us now! Our giddy prestige is at stake now we've started the thing."

"Yes, give him a chance," said Tracy. "A half-quid won't hurt you, Smythe, if you win—and very likely you won't."

"Well, go on, Leggett," said Smythe. "It's a go. If your dodge is any good, and if I win the prize, and it's over five quid, I'll stand you half-a-sovereign."

"Good enough!" said Leggett, at once. "Honour bright! These fellows are witnesses."

"Honour bright!" said Smythe. "Now, what's the wheeze? Blessed if I can see it!"

"If you could see it, you wouldn't need me to tell you. The idea is to appeal to their patriotism."

"Their what?" asked the perplexed Smythe. "Patriotism."

"What the dickens has patriotism got to do with my sweepstake?"

"Lots!" said Leggett, with a chuckle. "You announce that the winner of the sweep undertakes to send twenty-five per cent. to the Red Cross Fund for the wounded."

"My hat!"

"It won't hurt the winner to stand a quarter of his winnings," said Leggett.

"And, for the losers, they'll have the satisfaction of knowing that a part of their losses has gone to the Red Cross Fund."

"By gad!" said Smythe.

"And with a wheeze like that you might get a hundred and fifty fellows into it," said Leggett; "or the fellows with plenty of tin might take a dozen chances each. The idea of raising money for a patriotic fund, and at the same time standing a chance of winning the prize, will bring them round. And the fellows who call it gambling, and turn up their noses at it, will have to come in, or we'll call 'em mean and unpatriotic. With twenty-five per cent. going to the fund, you can make out that you've got up the whole

# SMYTHE'S SCHEME!

A Grand Long, Complete Story, dealing with the Early Adventures of JIMMY SILVER & Co.

... By ...

## OWEN CONQUEST.

thing simply as a scheme for raising money for the wounded in the war.

"By gad, you are a deep beast!" said Smythe.

"The fact is," said Leggett, "I only thought of this because I was turning it over in my mind how to help the fund a bit, and I can't afford a subscription."

And Leggett nodded, and quitted the study.

"Seems a good idea," said Smythe, looking at his study-mates.

"Jolly good idea!" said Tracy. "But—but—"

"Well, what?"

"I don't like the way Leggett put it. He seems certain that you're going to win, Smythe. He intends to bag that half-quid, and he can't unless you win. It's as good as saying that he thinks you're going to work it somehow."

"What does it matter what a cad like that thinks?" said Smythe. "The names will be written on slips, and put into a hat, and drawn by chance."

"Well, if it should turn out like last time, that the winner was written down twice, and you had one of them—"

"That was a mistake. This time you can write down the names in your own fist, and Howard can put them into the hat."

"Well, that's all right," said Tracy, and Howard nodded. "Don't mind my speaking out plain, Smythe—I know you're straight—but some of the fellows were mighty suspicious last time, and if anything of the kind happened again—"

"Well, it won't happen again!" growled Smythe. "Every fellow who draws a blank will grumble, of course. That can't be helped. I won't have a hand in the draw at all, excepting to look over the slips and see that you've got all the names down. I draw with the rest—all square and above board."

"Right-ho! Don't be ratty!" said Tracy pacifically.

Smythe grunted, and went on with his preparation.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### All In!

**Y**OU in it!" Jimmy Silver stared at the speaker, who was Flynn of the Fourth. It was the day after Leggett's visit to Smythe's study.

"In what?" asked Silver.

"The sweep."

"Oh, Smythe's little sweep! No fear!"

"Well, I am," said Flynn. "I'm taking three bobs' worth. And I think it's pretty mean of anybody to keep out, considering."

"Rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's gambling, and there would be an awful row if it got to the prefects. If Bulkeley or Knowles got wind of it, you'd hear something drop."

"If you're afraid of a row—"

"I'm not afraid of a row, you ass!" said Jimmy Silver wrathfully. "It isn't that. But it's a rotten thing to do."

"Rats!"

"And I'm surprised at you," went on Jimmy Silver indignantly. "You ought to know better. It's all very well for Smythe and his set—they're rotters, anyway. I thought you were keeping out of it."



"So I was," said Flynn. "But Smythe hadn't explained then. It's only decent to take a whack when the whole thing is being got up for the wounded."

"That's the idea entirely. A quarter of the prize goes to the Red Cross Fund, and every fellow who enters the sweep has to agree to that, and to send the cash off in the presence of the other fellows. Smythe says that a couple of quid may be raised for the fund if it's a big sweep. So I look three."

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows.

"Well, that's put a different complexion on the matter," he agreed. "If Smythe's doing it for that, it's not so rotten. Still, I don't like it!"

"Oh, don't be a baste!" said Flynn. "You ought to take a share."

"Well, I'm not going to."

"Br-r-r-r!" said Flynn.

Jimmy Silver walked away with his brows wrinkled, and joined his chums in the tuck-shop.

"Look here!" said Jimmy Silver. "I want to talk to you chaps. Come on!"

"What's the row?" asked Lovell.

"It's about that rotten sweep of Smythe's. It turns out that he's doing it to raise money for a fund—at least, that's what he says now. A quarter of the prize is to go to the Red Cross, and the fellows seem to be taking it up."

Lovell chuckled.

"Seconds thoughts are best," he remarked. "Smythe never said anything of that to us. He's thought of that since, as a dodge to make the chaps come in."

"That's what I thought," said Silver. "But—but under the circumstances, it looks a bit mean to stay out. We shall be chipped about it."

"Might take a bob's worth," said Newcome.

"Rot! Let's stay out of it, all the same," said Jimmy Silver. "That's what I wanted to speak to you about. It's just a trick to get fellows into the gamble, and I don't like it. It's simply disgraceful to mix up gambling with a thing like a fund for the soldiers. I think Smythe's a blackguard!"

"And he isn't square," said Raby, with a shake of the head. "He had a sweep last term, and there was a lot of talk about it."

"Then we're sticking out?" said Silver.

"That's agreed?"

"Done!" said the Co. together.

Jimmy Silver felt relieved in his mind. He did not want the Co. to be mixed up with the Giddy Goats and their precious gamble. But it was not so easy to "stick out," and that the Fistical Four soon discovered.

For Smythe's little sweep had caught on.

Fellows who would have had nothing to do with it gave it their cordial support when it was explained that the whole thing was a dodge to raise money for the wounded soldiers.

And the doubtful Thomases who remembered the little mistake in Smythe's last sweep were reassured by being told that Howard and Tracy were managing the whole affair. Howard and Tracy were decided "Goats," but they were straight enough, and the juniors trusted them.

Even Tommy Dodd & Co. had "come in." They had resisted at first, because it was a Classical sweep, and therefore they were up against it; and secondly because they were up against gambling in any shape or form. But they gave in, finding opinion on the Modern side against them. They did not like to be considered either mean or unpatriotic.

Jimmy Silver & Co. went into the House. In the junior passage they met Smythe and Tracy of the Shell.

"Getting late to take your share, Silver," said Smythe. "You'll get left out if you don't hurry up."

"I'm not taking my share, hang you!"

"Oh, don't talk to the blessed Shylock!" said Tracy. "Let he care about the wounded, so long as he keeps his rotten money in his pocket."

Jimmy Silver turned crimson with wrath. He did not argue with Tracy. He hit out, and Tracy sat down with a roar. As he seemed in no hurry to get up again, Jimmy Silver went on to the end study. There he caught sight of a chalked inscription on the looking-glass that made him almost gnash his teeth.

"Mean cads! Why don't you go and join the Prussians?"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed him in, and they looked a little sickly as they saw the inscription on the glass. Lovell took a cap and rubbed it out.

"This is getting rather thick," said Lovell uneasily. "The fellows all think we're standing out because we're mean. After all, you know, it's for the wounded. And—and I hate to look like a prig."

"Do as you like," said Jimmy Silver. "Don't let me stop you."

"Well, we three might take a bob's worth. It's our risk if there's a row."

"Hang the row!" said Silver. "I'll go into it if you do, in case there's a row. If there's any trouble we'll stand it together. Come on, then, and let's see Smythe, blow him!"

And a few minutes later the Fistical Four had parted with a shilling each and were subscribers to Smythe's little sweep. Leggett of the Fourth had calculated well. There was no doubt now that the sweep would be a tremendous success, and the lucky winner would find himself the possessor of a very substantial sum. And as nobody doubted that the favourite would win, it all depended upon who should draw that celebrated gee-gee, Billiard Ball.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Draw.

**A**DOLPHUS SMYTHE was in a state of great satisfaction after tea that evening. He was very busy with Howard and Tracy in his study as the time drew near for the draw for the sweepstake.

Tracy had consulted the latest racing news obtainable in a certain pink paper with which the "Goats" were very well acquainted. He sedately marked off the names of the horses who had been "scratched" up to date. There would doubtless be more scratchings before the race was run on Wednesday, but the chance had to be taken of that.

Scratched horses would be the same as blanks, and there would be an enormous number of blanks, for fully a hundred fellows had entered. There were only twenty names to write on the slips. The rest of the slips were blank, to the full number of the entrants. Every fellow would draw a slip, but it was unanimously recognised that only one slip would be of value—that bearing the name of Billiard Ball, the favourite.

Tracy finished writing the twenty slips. Smythe was keeping his word and leaving it in the hands of his study-mates. That was to place the sweep entirely above suspicion of being manipulated.

"That's done!" said Tracy. "How many blanks, Smythe?"

Smythe consulted a list of names with numbers attached.

"Hundred and seventy altogether," he said. "Hundred and five fellows in the sweep, and some of them have taken two or three. I've taken four, but quite a lot have three. That means a hundred and fifty blanks."

"Oh, crums!" said Tracy.

"And you've got a hundred and seventy bobs here?" said Howard.

"Yaas," said Smythe. "Eight-pound-ten."

"Eight-pound-ten, by gum! That means two pound two-and-six for the fund and six quid seven-and-six for the winner," said Howard. "What a wacking prize! That chap Leggett has his head screwed on the right way."

"What about the draw?" asked Howard. "Everybody will want to be present. We can't pack a hundred fellows into this study."

"We'll get into the abbey ruins," said Smythe. "No chance of being spotted there, and room for everybody. We'll pass the word round just before dusk."

"Right-ho!"

As dusk was beginning to fall upon Rookwood, fellows might have been seen, as a novelist would say, making their way to the abbey ruins. Though within the school walls, the dismantled abbey was a secluded spot, a considerable distance from the School House and the other buildings, and separated from them by a thick clump of beeches. There was little danger of the "sweepers" being spotted there.

They did not go all together, but in ones and twos and threes, sauntering away carelessly until they were out of view of the School House, and then dodging into the abbey.

Smythe & Co. were first in the field, and after them the participants came dropping in till a crowd was gathered.

Owing to the unfortunate incident remembered in connection with Smythe's little sweep of the previous term, a good many of the fellows wanted to see all the proceedings with their own eyes before the draw was made, and to see that Howard and Tracy

managed it all. Smythe raised no objection whatever. The twenty slips upon which were written the names of the horses entered for the handicap were spread on a flat stone, open to the general view. The exact number of blanks were counted out beside them. Any fellow who wished was at liberty to examine and count them.

"All ready," said Smythe of the Shell. "Your topper this way, Howard."

"Here you are!"

Smythe collected up the slips of paper from the stone, one by one, and then took up the blanks in a heap. He shuffled them together, and dropped them into the hat. The hat was well shaken up, all the crowd looking on with great interest. Leggett of the Fourth was looking on, though he was not in the sweep. He was grinning, for some reason known only to himself.

"That's enough," said Smythe. "Now cover it with a handkerchief. Leave just room for a paw to go in."

"Right you are!"

"Now, then, take your turns," said Smythe, consulting his list. "Fags first, Young Higgs, you can begin."

Higgs inserted a grubby hand into the hat, and drew out a slip of paper. He held it up, and snorted as he saw that it was blank.

"Oh, rotten!" growled Higgs. "Just my luck. I ought to have had it last time, though!"

"Clear off and make room for somebody else!" snapped Smythe. "We shall have a prefect down on us soon. Look here, you fellows, don't stop here to look at your slips—take 'em away and look at 'em. We've got to buck up!"

"All serene—keep your wool on!"

The fags drew one after another. Most of them, of course, drew blanks, but some had gee-gees, but the coveted Billiard Ball did not come to light. The fellows cleared off as fast as they obtained their slips, getting quietly out of the ruins and strolling away to the School House.

The Fistical Four took their turns one after another. Lovell drew a blank, and then Raby, and then Newcome, but there was a name on the slip that Jimmy Silver drew out.

"Twin-Screw!" he read out.

There was a loud laugh.

"The rankest outsider in the whole bunch," grinned Smythe. "I wish you joy of him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver shoved the slip into his pocket and walked away with his chums. The crowd was dwindling down now, and only the Shell fellows remained. So far as had been noticed, Billiard Ball had not come to light. Only Leggett of the Fourth stayed to see the finishing of the draw, though not directly concerned in it. He seemed curious.

"Buck up!" said Smythe. "It's getting dark. Go for it!"

The Shell fellows drew one after another. Smythe of the Shell was the last to draw, and the other fellows cast envious looks at him. It was pretty certain that Billiard Ball was still in the hat. Unless it had been drawn by one of the fellows who had hurried off without looking at his paper or announcing what was on it, it was certain that the favourite remained still to be drawn.

As Smythe had four chances for his four "bobs," he had to draw the final four slips from the hat. He drew them out quite methodically, however, one after another. One—two—three blanks came to light, his companions looking on eagerly. Was it possible that the favourite had been already drawn, after all?

Smythe drew out the last slip. He looked at it, and gave a whoop.

"My hat!"

"What is it?" exclaimed Howard.

"Look!"

"Billiard Ball!" roared Howard. "What luck! You'll have to stand a feed out of it, Smythe, anyway!"

"I'll stand the biggest feed that ever was stood in the Shell at Rookwood," said Smythe jubilantly.

"Bravo!"

"The draw was over, and Howard put on his hat, and they left the abbey ruins. Leggett of the Fourth strolled after them. He was still smiling.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### Shell Out.

**L**ATER that evening Smythe of the Shell was indulging in a cigarette in his study, when Leggett came in.

Howard and Tracy were downstairs in the Common-room. The great Adolphus did not seem pleased to see the cad of the

Fourth, for he frowned through the haze of cigarette-smoke.

"What the dickens do you want?" he demanded. "Do you think I'm going to have you wedging into my study like this, because you gave me a tip about the sweep."

"I'd like my half-quad," said Leggett.

"You can wait."

"I think I'll have it now," said Leggett, with quiet persistence. "Do you know, quite a queer idea came into my head while I was watching the draw."

Smythe started violently.

"What do you mean, you cad? What are you trying to insinuate?"

"Oh, don't get ratty!" said Leggett coolly. "I've waited till your study-mates weren't here—I specially came to see you alone."

"There's nothing you can say that my study-mates mayn't hear."

"I'll tell you the queer idea that came into my head—"

"I don't want to hear it."

"I'll tell you all the same. Suppose a chap wanted to make sure of bagging the sweep, and suppose he had already used the dodge of a slip being twice written, and couldn't use that again—keep your temper, Smythe, I'm only putting a case, you know—well, suppose the chap I'm speaking of made another fellow write out the slips, and had 'em counted in public to prove that all was fair and above-board—"

"Well, it would prove it," said Smythe.

"But suppose the chap, when he collected up the slips to put them in the hat, slipped one of them into his sleeve while he was shuffling them together—"

"You lying cad!"

"And suppose he left himself to draw last, and that when he put his hand into the hat he had a slip in it already—"

"I—I—"

"And suppose he left it there while he drew three blanks one after another, and then fished out the slip he'd dropped in after all the other fellows had drawn—"

"You hound—"

"And suppose that special slip was the one that had the favourite's name written on it," pursued Leggett imperturbably.

Smythe's face was deadly pale.

"Do you mean to say that anybody thinks—anybody has mentioned—" he stammered.

"Nobody so far," said Leggett smoothly. "Nobody was thinking of anything of the sort, you see."

"But you were?" hissed Smythe.

Leggett nodded.

"Yes, I was. You see, I knew that you got up this sweep, the same as last time, with the intention of winning it. That's why I gave you my wheeze for making it a success, on condition that you shelled out if you won—you see, I knew you would win. As you couldn't do it quite so openly as you did it last time, I was curious to see how you would work it, and I watched you close. But you did it so well that I hardly spotted you—shouldn't have spotted you at all, if I hadn't known exactly what you were doing. You see, I guessed how you meant to work it."

"It's a rotten lie," said Smythe furiously, "and if you say a word about it outside this study, I'll—I'll smash you!"

"But I don't mean to say a word about it outside this study," said Leggett. "It's not my business. I've only come here for my half-quad. As you've bagged the favourite, it's all the same to you whether you hand it out now or next Wednesday. And I'm hard up."

Smythe looked at him long and hard.

"Billiard Ball may not win," he said at last.

"Well, he's favourite."

"I'll have nothing to do with you, Leggett."

"Just as you like," said Leggett, moving towards the door.

Smythe breathed hard.

"As a personal favour, I don't mind letting you have the half-quad now," he said. "But it's understood that it's purely a personal favour, and not on account of that rot you've been talking."

"Certainly!" said Leggett, with a nod. "And it's very kind of you to do me a little favour like that, Smythe, as I'm hard up."

Smythe paused, and then extracted a ten-shilling note from his pocket and laid it on the table.

Leggett picked it up.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 17.

"Thanks!" he said. "That's really good of you, Smythe!" Soft words cost the cad of the Fourth nothing, and he did not want to quarrel with the Classical dandy so long as he gained his point—and the ten shillings. "Much obliged, really! This will come in very useful."

"You needn't mention that I've handed it out before the race," said Smythe.

"Certainly not; it's quite between you and me. Nobody's business but ours," said Leggett. "If Billiard Ball should not happen to win, it needn't be mentioned that you've handed it to me at all. I sha'n't say anything. No need to start fellows talking and suspecting. You may be getting up another little sweep one of these days, and I may be able to help you again. Good-night, Smythe!"

"Good-night!" growled Smythe.

Leggett left the study, and walked away with his quiet, almost stealthy tread, with a smile on his face.

Leggett was a wise youth in some things.

## GREAT NEWS!

NEXT FRIDAY

IN

# THE PENNY POPULAR

3

## ENTIRELY ORIGINAL STORIES

GREAT DEMAND.  
ORDER EARLY.

and he knew that the warmest favourites do not always win as expected, and he had intended to make sure of his ten shillings. Leggett was satisfied, and he had no intention of saying anything about what he had seen—or, rather, what he had suspected—at the draw. As a matter of fact, it was a trick quite after his own heart, and the peculiar youth quite admired Smythe of the Shell for his astuteness.

### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

#### The Winner.

THERE were twenty fellows in the Lower School at Rookwood who looked forward with keen interest to Wednesday evening.

The sweepers who had drawn blanks weren't interested at all. They were fed up with sweeps, though they had the consolation of knowing that they had helped on the fund. That was a considerable consolation for the losers. They had stood their chance of drawing the favourite—or they thought they had—and a quarter of their losses went to the Red Cross Fund, so it was not so bad, after all.

The fellows who possessed the twenty slips

bearing the names of horses, however, had something to look forward to. As the holder of the favourite, Smythe was the object of great envy. But the other fellows declared sagaciously that it was not at all unknown for outsiders to "romp home" quite unexpectedly; so everybody who "had a horse" still hoped.

Some of the hopes were extinguished by degrees as the day of the race drew nearer. For gee-gee after gee-gee was scratched, as became known by means of that valuable pink paper surreptitiously imported into Smythe's study. On Wednesday there were only twelve runners left, and so there were only a dozen fellows who looked forward to the news of the evening.

Smythe had arranged for an evening paper to be brought to him that evening. And he had generously invited the holders of the gee-gee slips to turn up in his study to see the winners at eight o'clock, when he would receive the paper.

The Fistical Four were doing their preparation in the end study when Lovell drew Jimmy Silver's attention to the clock.

"Just on eight," he remarked.

"Well?" said Silver.

"Smythe's got his evening paper by this time."

"Blow Smythe and his evening paper!"

"Aren't you going?"

"No."

"But there's a chance," said Raby. "Outsiders get home sometimes—romp home, as Smythe calls it. Twin-Screw hasn't been scratched, anyway. He's in the running."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver.

There was a sudden rush of feet in the passage, and the study door flew open.

It was Flynn, in a state of considerable excitement.

"Have ye heard?" he exclaimed. "Bedad, and it's a lucky gosssoon ye are, Jimmy Silver!"

"Where's the luck?" asked Silver.

"Hasn't Smythe told you? Sure, Twin-Screw has won, and ye're the winner of eight pounds ten shillings on the sweep, barring a quarter for the fund!"

"Then this way for Smythe's study!" exclaimed Lovell promptly.

A dozen congratulatory juniors joined the Fistical Four on the way, and crowded into Smythe's study with them to see the sweep paid over. Smythe was looking utterly sick. His wretched trick had failed him, and he had no choice about handing over the money. There were plenty of fellows to see fair play. And the miserable young rascal had the additional bitter reflection that, if he had played the game, he might have drawn the winner, after all. His wretched swindle had, as it turned out, simply deprived him of his chance of drawing Twin-Screw—the outsider that had "romped home."

Smythe unlocked his drawer, and the money was counted out. Eight pounds ten shillings, in all sorts of coins, were handed over to Jimmy Silver.

"There's luck, if you like!" growled Howard enviously.

"Luck for the Red Cross," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm not keeping this. We'll call it a subscription for the Red Cross. All the fellows who had a hand in the sweep can consider that they subscribed a shilling each—and I'm the treasurer. And I'm going to change this into paper money, and post it to the Red Cross Fund this evening, and you fellows can come and see me do it, if you like. Come on!"

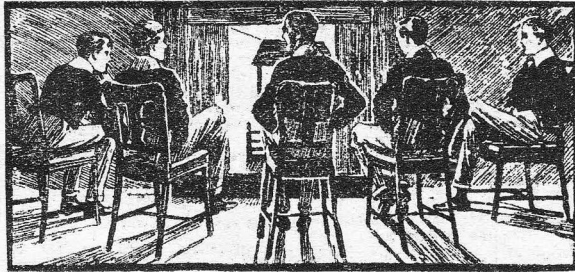
In Smythe's study there was deep gloom. Smythe's half-sovereign paid to Leggett he was never likely to see again, and he was that much out of pocket, as well as his losses in the sweep.

But in the end study there was complete satisfaction. The Fistical Four were well out of an affair that they justly regarded as "rotten," and they had helped the Red Cross Fund to the tune of eight pounds ten shillings. And so they had no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of Smythe's Scheme!



# SOMETHING LIKE A SURPRISE!

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



By  
**MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### All Scratched!

**A**RTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood before the glass in Study No. 6, tying a necktie. Nine or ten neckties lay on the table, six or seven hung over the backs of chairs, and there were a few on the floor. The swell of St. Jim's was clad in white ducks, and looked a perfect and spotless picture. Monty Lowther looked in at the study door, and pretended to faint, as if overcome by the spectacle. Arthur Augustus saw his reflection in the glass, and looked round.

"Pway don't play the giddy ox, Lowthah," he said. "What do you think of this tie? Do you pwefer it to this wed one?"

"Gorgeous," said Lowther. "A thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Are you putting on your best clobber for the rehearsal?"

"The what?"

"I suppose you know it's Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday, and a rehearsal of the Jazz band?" said Lowther.

"Bai Jove! I'd forgotten all about the Jazz band, deah boy!"

"Then it's lucky I dropped in to jog your memory," said Lowther. "Come on; we're meeting in the woodshed. Any old tie will do for a rehearsal."

"I'm afraid I can't come."

"Rats!"

"I'm goin' up the wivah," explained Arthur Augustus, finishing his necktie at last. "My patah has his houseboat at Abbotsford now, you know, and I'm takin' advantage of the half-holiday to pay him a visit."

"Bandsmen can't take holidays without the permission of the conductor," said Lowther.

"Wats!"

"All members of the orchestra who don't turn up at rehearsals get the order of the boot."

"I should wufuse to have the ordah of the boot, Lowthah; but I am bound to go up the wivah to-day. My cousin Ethel will be expectin' me."

"Now, look here—"

Blake and Herries and Digby came into the study, looking for Arthur Augustus. Monty Lowther turned to them with an exasperated air.

"Lend me a hand to carry that image to the woodshed!" he exclaimed. "He says he's not coming to the rehearsal. We've got to rehearse three new pieces to-day—the Boston Bunny-Hug, the Lobster Glide, and the Crabs' Crawl."

"Come on, Gussy," said Blake. "We don't want to have to carry you on a warm afternoon."

"I should wufuse to be cawwied. I'm goin' up the wivah—"

"Your mistake; you're coming to the woodshed."

"I've ordahed a launch from Wayland—"

"Then you can disorder it," said Lowther.

"I'll telephone for you to say that you won't want it," Herries offered.

"Wats! I'm going up the wivah in the petwol launch."

"You're not!" roared Blake.

"I'm goin' to have tea on my patah's houseboat with cousin Ethel."

"Look here—"

"And I'm goin' to take you fellows with me—"

"Oh!"

"So the sooner you get weady the bettah, as the launch will be weady at the wait in half an hour," said D'Arcy, consulting his watch.

Blake and Herries and Digby exchanged glances.

"Well, now you're talking," said Blake cautiously. "When I come to think of it, I don't believe in overdoing this rehearsal business. Orchestras that are always rehearsing are liable to get stale, I should think, like footballers who overdo practice."

"Just what I was thinking," said Herries heartily. "It's possible to have too much of a good thing."

Lowther exploded.

"You rabious chumps! You silly asses! You can't even play in tune yet. You keep time like a rhinoceros dancing. You'd need ten years' rehearsing before you could play 'Home, Sweet Home' so that people would recognise it. Come on!"

"I don't believe in overdoing these things," said Blake obstinately. "Nuff's as good as a giddy feast!"

Monty Lowther almost danced with rage. He was beginning to experience some of the worries of a professional conductor, with unreliable members in his band.

"All players who don't turn up for orchestral practice are scratched!" he shouted. "I shall take your names off."

"Take your own off, and come in the launch with us!" said D'Arcy.

"Yah!"

With that monosyllabic but emphatic reply, Lowther dramatically drew a pencil through three names on his orchestra list, and stamped out of the study.

"Seems wathah waxy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wats! Bwitons nevah shall be slaves! Blow the Jazz band!"

And Blake and Herries and Digby were quite willing to "blow" it.

Monty Lowther tramped off to the woodshed, where the other members of the orchestra were already assembled. Tom Merry and Manners and Kangaroo had turned up at the call of duty.

"Where are the other duffers?" asked the Cornstalk, as Lowther came in.

Lowther snorted.

"They're scratched. Refuse to attend rehearsal."

"Oh, the rotters!"

"This band is reduced to a quartette," said Lowther. "After all, we shall work it better without those Fourth Form kids. Now let's get on. We're practising the Crabs' Crawl first."

And sounds of music, more or less in time and tune, proceeded from the woodshed. But the crabs had not finished crawling, so to speak, when the door of the woodshed opened, and the four Fourth-Formers looked in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy surveyed the labouring orchestra through his eyeglass with great benignity.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

Lowther brandished his baton—originally a cricket-stump—at the elegant swell of St. Jim's.

"Buzz off!" he roared. "Outsiders are not allowed to interrupt rehearsals."

"I wufuse to be regarded as an outsider. Pway stop that wov a minute while I speak."

"Shurrup!"

"I decline to shut up. Tom Mewwy, we're goin' to visit my patah's houseboat, and we've got a petwol launch and a man. We want you fellows to come."

"The more the merrier," said Blake.

"Can't be did—we're busy!" said Tom Merry, hesitating. "Unless our conductor wishes to put the practice off."

"Might save it up for a rainy day," suggested Manners.

"Look here!" roared Lowther.

"We shall have a wippin' tea on the house-

boat," said Arthur Augustus, "and cousin Ethel will be delighted to see you."

Tom Merry put his violin into its case.

"What are you up to?" roared Lowther.

"Place aux dames," said Tom Merry. "Must think of politeness, Monty. If there's a ripping feed on the houseboat—I mean, if cousin Ethel would like us to come—"

"If you leave the orchestra without permission, I scratch your name off the list," said Lowther ferociously.

"Then trot out the permission."

"Sha'n't!"

"Then I'll chance it," said Tom Merry.

"Come on, Manners. We'll chance it together. Considering the splendid progress we've made, we're entitled to a holiday. This is where the orchestra goes on strike."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners; and he locked up his violin in its case.

"Oh, you wasters!" said Lowther. "Never mind; we shall have a duo left—Kangy and I. You're sticking to the old flag, Kangy?"

"Certainly!" said Noble. "I've not been asked to the houseboat."

"Weally, Kangawooh, of course you undahstand that the invitation applies to you," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you do not think I could be guilty of the wotten bad form of issuin' an invitation in the pwesence of a person whom I did not intend to invite as well. It would be impos—"

"Wait a tick while I put away my banjo," said Kangaroo.

"So you're going!" yelled Lowther.

"Considering the splendid progress I've made—"

"You come, too, Lowthah, deah boy."

"I shall scratch you off the list, Kangaroo."

"Go it!" said the Cornstalk. "There won't be any list left if you scratch us all off. I suppose you're not thinking of appearing solo as a Jazz band, with a cricket-stump to play on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, Lowthah, deah boy," urged Arthur Augustus. "We shall all weeharse much bettah aftah a little outin', you know. We shall return to our labahs like giants wufeshed with wine."

"Well, I've got an idea," said Lowther, after a pause. "We'll take the Jazz band in the launch, and give your pater and cousin Ethel a treat."

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"What do you fellows say?" asked Lowther, looking round.

And the fellows all replied at once, and they all said the same thing:

"Rats!"

There was evidently no doubt as to the opinion of the Jazz band on the subject.

"Come on," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you will come, too, Lowthah. But pway don't spwing any more wotten ideahs on us!"

And the band marched off for the river. Monty Lowther snorted, and followed them.

It was certain that he could not conduct a rehearsal minus an orchestra, and so he made the best of a bad job. But, as occurred to him upon reflection, a run up the river in a launch on a bright summer's day, and tea on a houseboat, was not a very bad job, after all.

The launch, with a man in charge, was rocking by the raft when the School House juniors came down to the bank of the Ryl. Wally, Arthur Augustus' young brother, was already in the launch, with a straw hat on the back of his head, and a straw in his mouth. He greeted the juniors with a shrill yell.

"Buck up, lazybones! We're all ready!"

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"Pway wun in and get a clean collar, Wally," said his major.

"Go in and get one for me," said Wally. "We'll start while you're gone, and you can run along the towing-path."

"You young duffah—"  
"Tumble in!" said Tom Merry.  
"Put your hat on straight, at all events," said the distressed swell of St. Jim's. "I wearily wish you would try to look respectable while you are out with me, Wally."  
"Oh, don't you begin, Gussy!" implored the minor. "Jump in!"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### A Rag on the River.

**F**IGGINS & Co. were going for a trial spin.

Not a trial spin in the ordinary sense. Figgins had heard that D'Arcy's pater and mater had arrived at Abbotsford, and that D'Arcy's cousin Ethel was with them. And so it occurred to Figgins that it would be a ripping idea to take a spin with his eight as far as Abbotsford. By rail Abbotsford was a good distance from St. Jim's, but by river it was still more distant; but as Figgins said, an eight that was worth its salt ought to be up to a good long row. It would be the most splendid kind of practice, Figgins declared, and they wouldn't need to pump themselves; they could take it quite easy, and have a rest at Abbotsford before returning in the cool of the evening. In short, Figgins was full of reasons for going.

As a matter of fact, he had made up his mind to go, and as he could not possibly cut practice with the eight that afternoon, the only resource was to take the eight with him.

Fatty Wynn expended a small fortune at the tuckshop in case of accidents—Fatty Wynn counting it as an accident if he was without anything to eat for an hour and a half, and a very serious accident if it ran to two hours. The New House eight, looking very fit and business-like in their rowing-shorts, ran their skill down to the water as the motor-launch began to snort.

Immediately the eyes of the School House party on the launch were fixed on them. Busy with their new Jazz wheeze, Tom Merry & Co. had paid no attention recently to the New House fellows.

The Abbotsford Regatta was due to take place in a few days' time, and, anxious to score over their rivals, Tom Merry & Co. had decided to introduce a new feature into the regatta. It was to be nothing less than a brand-new, up-to-date Jazz band.

However, Figgins & Co. were not altogether lacking in enterprise, and they had secretly decided to enter for the great Regatta Cup for the best rowing eight.

Both factions were keeping their "wheezes" a dead secret, and up to now Tom Merry & Co. were as far as ever from knowing the true inwardness of Figgins & Co.'s intentions.

"Hallo! Going out in the puff-puff?" called out Figgins, glancing up at the row of School House faces along the little launch.

"Yaas, wathah, Figgins. I'm takin' these fellows to see my people at Abbotsford," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Why, that's our way!" said Figgins.

"Bal Jove, is it?" said D'Arcy suspiciously. He turned his eyeglass upon Figgins, and Figgins turned red. D'Arcy had complained more than once that Figgins seemed to look upon cousin Ethel as his cousin, and not D'Arcy's at all.

"Shouldn't wonder if you run across us," said Figgins affably.

"Rough on you if we do—in this snorter!" said Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is the second time we've seen you at practice, Figgy," said Tom Merry. "What's the little game?"

Figgins chuckled. It was the second time the Shell fellow had seen the eight at practice, but it was the sixth time the eight had been out.

"Oh, we're going for a little run!" he said. "Want to see the arrangements at Abbotsford, you know. We're going to give the regatta a look in—on Saturday, if all goes well."

"Not with a Jazz band?" said Lowther quickly.

"No—that's agreed."

"Honour bright!" said Kerr solemnly.

And for some reason or other all the New House fellows laughed.

"We'll race you to Abbotsford, Figgy," said Blake, cheerily; "we'll just keep behind you and cheer you with friendly words."

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You keep your distance, you School House bouders!" growled Figgins, a little alarmed. The motor-launch could, of course, make rings round the eight, and Figgins was a little uneasy at the prospect.

There was a chuckling and whispering among the School House fellows as Figgins & Co. pulled out into the river. The eight kept time very well, and the boat went fast against the current of the Ryll. Arthur Augustus spoke in a low voice to the man in charge of the launch, and the man grinned. He was sure of a magnificent tip from the Honourable Arthur Augustus, and he was quite willing to oblige.

The launch throbbed away from the raft, out upon the shining expanse of the river.

Figgins glared back at the launch as he tugged at his oar. It was gliding exactly in his track, sending a warning snort-snort-snort as it came.

"Pull a bit, kids," said Figgins. "Those School House boats are on our track."  
The New House crew laboured at the oars.

But the launch came up like an arrow, and there was a gasp of alarm from some of the boat's crew as it swooped down. But it did not run into the boat. It circled round, and kept alongside, throbbing. The School House fellows lined the side and looked at the labouring New House juniors.

"Row, brothers, row!" sang Manners sweetly.

"Pull devil, pull baker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can I have that crab when you've caught it, Thompson?"

"Reddy, old man, you're looking quite pink. Are you tired, Reddy? Or are you getting bad-tempered? Do you think Reddy is getting bad-tempered, you chaps?"

"Let us cheer him up! Let us ask him riddles. Where did you get that face, Reddy? You call it a face?"

"Are you hungry, Wynn?"

"Would you like a biscuit, Fatty?"

"Give Fatty a biscuit!"

Three or four biscuits whizzed from the launch, and they peppered Fatty Wynn all over his red, plump face.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty.

Figgins glared furiously at the grinning faces along the launch.

"Keep off, you School House rotters!" he roared.

"Shut up, you demmies!" howled Kerr.

"Do you want all the river?" demanded Tom Merry. "I suppose you do, the way you row. But we're safe on the launch. Is that the fifth or the sixth crab you've caught, Thompson?"

"The seventh, I think," said Digby thoughtfully.

"Lawrence thinks there's a buried treasure at the bottom of the river," said Manners.

"He's dredging for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins made his men a sign to back water. It was hopeless to think of outdistancing the motor-launch, and the only thing was to fall behind. The oarsmen felt that they could not endure that fire of chaff all the way to Abbotsford. And Blake had taken out a pea-shooter now.

"Whiz! Pink!"

"Ow!" roared Fatty Wynn, as the missile caught him on the side of the nose. "Gerrah! Oh, you rotter! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The boat dropped behind, but the launch swung round in pursuit, and circled round the eight mockingly. The School House fellows were enjoying themselves. The remarks they passed on the New House rowing exasperated Figgins & Co. beyond measure.

"Look 'ere, are you going to clear off?" roared Figgins, in a fury.

"No fear! We want to see you row!"

"We've never been at a crab-catching competition before."

"It's funny, Figgy, you know!"

Figgins & Co. pulled away back towards St. Jim's in despair. But the victorious enemy were not done with them yet. The launch pursued them. As Blake remarked, it was worth while being a little bit late at Abbotsford to give Figgins & Co. the ragging of their lives.

But Figgins was whispering to his men now; a desperate and brilliant idea had come into his head.

"Listen to me, you chaps! Would you rather go to Abbotsford in a motor launch than row up there in this boat?"

"What-ho!" said the crew.

Our practice spin is spoiled, anyway. Those rotters will stick to us till we get off the river."

"Looks like it!" growled Kerr.

"They are out for fun," muttered Figgins. "We'll give them all the fun they want, and a bit over! There are eight of them, and nine of us, counting Jameson."

"I suppose you can count me!" growled Jameson indignantly. "I'm as good as in a scrap as any other idiot here—I mean, as any idiot here."

"Good!" said Figgins. "Now, you follow my lead, you chaps. We're going to take the launch by storm. All those rotters can swim, so it doesn't matter if we chuck 'em into the river, and we're pretty near the raft now, and there are a good many boats out that can pick 'em up."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My hat!"

"Let 'em run alongside, and then let the oars go, and follow me, and rush 'em out of their own blessed boat!" whispered Figgins.

The New House juniors suppressed their chuckles. They slacked down, and nerved themselves for the attack, as the launch swooped down on them. The grinning faces of the School House Co. looked over the side.

"You fags fired yet?"

"Why don't you give it up, Figgins? You can't row, you know!"

"Why don't you play marbles instead, Figgy?"

"Bump!"

"Hallo! Look out!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

But it was a little too late to look out. The boat had bumped into the launch, and with a spring like a tiger Figgins was on board, and his comrades followed him fast. Figgins threw his arms round Tom Merry and Blake as he leaped in, and all three of them went rolling in the bottom of the launch.

"Yaroo!"

"Oh!"

"Bal Jove!"

"Piracy, by Jove! Line up!" roared Lowther.

The eight-oar rocked abandoned on the river. In the launch there was a wild and whirling combat, and the launch rocked till the gunwale almost touched the water.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Rank Piracy!

**S**OCK in to 'em!" roared Figgins. The boarding-party had the advantage.

The surprise had been almost complete, and the invaders were all aboard before they could be resisted, and in the rush two of the School House fellows were knocked over the side. This left the odds on Figgins' side. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in the bottom of the launch, with three fellows sitting on them. Blake and Herries were swimming a dozen feet from the side as the launch glided on. The other fellows were putting up a fierce fight, but the odds were against them. Kangaroo splashed into the river, where he swam like a duck, but he had no chance of getting aboard again.

Digby followed him in, and hung on to the gunwale. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his hat on the back of his head, and his eyeglass fluttering at the end of its cord, was fighting like a Trojan. But Kerr collared him, and brought him down, and Fatty Wynn sat on him, and that finished Arthur Augustus. He gasped and collapsed.

Four fellows were in the water, and four were down in the bottom of the launch, with victorious foes sitting on them—the Terrible Three and D'Arcy major and minor.

Figgins & Co. had captured the launch.

The motor-man was blinking in astonishment at the scene. He did not feel called upon to take part in a schoolboy row, of course, and he had the motor to attend to. So he looked on calmly.

Figgins ran to him.

"Get alongside that boat again," he said.

"We want to take it in tow."

"But, I say—"

"Don't say anything!" said Figgins cheerfully. "You do as you're told! I'm captain of this launch now—see?"

"But Master D'Arcy—"

"We shall be sorry to chuck you into the river," said Figgins politely; "but Kerr could manage the launch quite easily, so we don't really need you. Are you going to get alongside that boat?"

And the man grinned, and said he would.

The river pirates were evidently not to be trifled with.

The launch ran back to the rocking eight-oar. That left the four swimmers far behind,



Digby having been pushed off the gunwale. They had to strike out for the landing-raft, where they pulled themselves out of the water, drenched.

Figgins glanced at his prisoners. They were struggling violently, but they had no chance of getting up. Only Wally was taking that sudden reverse of fortune cheerfully.

Figy jumped into the eight-oar. He handed up the belongings of his comrades—their coats and mufflers, and Fatty Wynn's bag of provisions. Then he stepped on the launch again.

"Will you take that boat back, Tom Merry?" he asked.

"No!" roared Tom Merry.

"Would you rather go into the river?"

"You—you rotter!"

"Chuck him into the boat!" said Figgins. "He can please himself about staying there or dropping overboard!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the New House juniors.

Tom Merry was tossed into the boat; Manners and Lowther, struggling furiously, were tossed in after him.

The Terrible Three seized the oars, with a desperate intention of rushing back to the attack. But the launch glided away from the boat, and they had no chance.

They stood in the rocking boat, and yelled after the launch direful threats, to which their foes responded with mocking laughter.

Of the School House party, only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remained in the launch, with Fatty Wynn seated on his chest, and Wally held fast by Thompson of the Shell.

Figgins came along, and looked down at him with a smile. D'Arcy's face was very red, and his manners had completely lost the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"You uttah wottahs!" he said sulphurously. "Lemme get up at once!"

"In a hurry?" asked Figgins kindly.

"Yaas, you boundah! You are spoilin' my clobber!"

"Chuck him overboard!" said Figgins.

There was a yell from Arthur Augustus.

"You awful wuffians! Pway don't do anythin' of the sort!"

"Can't you swim?"

"I can swim bettah than any wottah in the New House!"

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid, you beast!" shrieked D'Arcy. "But it would wuin my clothes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you will dwag this fat wottah off me, I will wise and give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Not good enough," said Figgins, with a shake of the head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Figgins generously. "We're going to spend the afternoon on the river in this launch, and I'll invite you to make one of the party."

D'Arcy's face was a study. To be invited to make one of a party on his own launch by the fellows who had seized it forcibly was a little too much. The New House juniors yelled at the expression upon his aristocratic face.

"We should like you to come along, especially as we may meet your cousin," went on Figgins blandly.

"You feahful wottah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I think I'm making you a good offer. However, if you prefer to go overboard—"

"I refuse—"

"Take his legs, Kerr. You take his head, Reddy! Chuck him sight out!"

"What-ho!"

"I refuse to be chucked into the wvah!" roared D'Arcy. "I am willin' to make it pax, and I will not thwash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you make it pax you can get up," said Figgins, grinning. "Roll off, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn rolled off.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose to his feet. He smoothed down his rumpled clothes, and knocked into shape his rumpled and very crumpled hat. Then he jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded the hilarious New House fellows with a withering glare.

"I have given my pawole, so I cannot thwash you," he began.

"Might find it rather hard, anyway!" murmured Kerr.

"I wegard you as wottahs!"

"Go hon!"

"I considah you a set of pivatical beasts!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And I ordah you to leave my launch at once!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly!" said Figgins, with crushing sarcasm. "Of course, we shall go immediately. Would you like us to jump into the river, or fly off into the air?"

"Gaskins, kindly head this launch for the waft," said Arthur Augustus, taking no notice of the juniors, addressing himself to the motorman.

"Yes, sir," said Gaskins, with a doubtful glance at the pirates.

Figgins made a sign to Redfern, who picked up a boathook, and stepped towards Gaskins.

"Where will you have it, Gassy?" asked Redfern.

"Oh, sir—"

"If you don't obey orders, Gaskins, you will be harpooned," Redfern explained. "We are in possession of this craft at present."

"Master D'Arcy—"

"Now, be a good chap!" said Figgins. "We've asked you to join the party, Gussy, and a fellow can't do more than that."

"We shall be honoured if you accept our kind invitation," said Kerr.

"And you shall have some of the jam-tarts," said Fatty Wynn, as a clincher.

"Will you take the othah fellahs aboard again?" asked Arthur Augustus, wavering a little.

"No jolly fear!" said Figgins promptly. "There isn't room for such a crowd on the launch, for one thing. And this is a New House party. No School House wasters admitted. We make an exception in your favour because—ahem!—because—"

"Because we love you so," said Redfern.

"And it will give the party a tone to have you along," said Kerr solemnly.

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"To say nothing of your respected minor's company," said Lawrence.

"Oh, come off!" said Wally. "I'm willing to join the party. Anything for a quiet life. Get it down, Gussy, and say yes."

"Or yaas," said Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Wally—" began his major.

"We shall be sorry to chuck you into the river and spoil your clothes," said Figgins softly as the cooing dove.

"If you are going to be such a feahful wuffian, Figgins—"

"I am afraid I am," confessed Figgins.

"Then I shall have no wesource but to join the partay."

"Hear, hear!"

"Same here," said Wally. "Now, will you tell this silly ass to take his beastly knuckles out of my neck?"

"Pax for the whole afternoon," said Figgins warningly.

"Good enough!" said Wally.

"Yaas, it's all wight."

And so D'Arcy major and minor joined Figgins' little party. Jameson and Wally were pally on the spot. They were chums in the school, though they belonged to rival Houses. Indeed, it is to be feared that Wally preferred the present state of affairs, with Jameson to pal with for the afternoon, and did not regret the disaster that had befallen his House.

The launch glided away swiftly up the river, and Figgins & Co. chortled. Meanwhile, the Terrible Three had pulled the boat back to the landing-raft. The other fellows had already gone up to the school to change their wet clothes. The Terrible Three jumped ashore amid the chuckles of a crowd of fellows who had witnessed the scene of piracy on the high seas. They looked at one another dolefully.

"Done!" said Tom Merry.

"Dished!" said Manners.

"Diddled!" groaned Lowther.

And they went their way disconsolately through the grinning crowd on the raft and the towing-path.

"Never mind," said Monty Lowther brightly. "We'll have the Jazz rehearsal, after all."

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Cousin Ethel Does Not Mind.

F IGGINS & CO. smiled broadly as the petrol-launch ran swiftly up the shining Ryll. They had turned the tables most completely upon the School House juniors, and they were contented.

The smiles returned to the noble features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Figgins was very polite to him, perhaps with ulterior motives. Arthur Augustus was allowed to assume command of the launch, and he gave Figgins & Co. valuable tips about the management of the same, to which Figgins, at least, listened with great respect. As for Wally, he was in the best of spirits.

But as the launch drew near to Abbotsford Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Figgins & Co. in a rather doubtful way.

"I suppose you chaps haven't any othah clothes with you?" he asked.

"Forgot to bring our wardrobes," said Kerr regretfully.

"You see, it won't be en wegat to take chaps to tea in a houseboat in wovin' shorts," said D'Arcy.

"I think it would be all right," said Figgins. "We can explain that we were out rowing, when you asked us to come with you, and you were so pressing that we couldn't refuse."

"I am afraid it would not be all wight, Figgay."

"Then what's to be done?" asked Figgins.

"Pewwaps it would be bettah for you chaps to go ashore," suggested D'Arcy. "You can wait on the shore, and I will pick you up in the launch again as I go back."

The New House juniors looked at Arthur Augustus as if they could eat him.

"Don't suggest such a thing, Gussy," said Kerr.

"Why not, deah boy?"

"Because it would pain us to have to chuck you into the river, after all," Kerr explained.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Perhaps we'd better not take the launch up to Abbotsford at all," said Figgins, with a sidelong wink at the Co. "We'd better go for a spin on the river instead."

"But my people are expectin' me, Figgins!"

"Sorry!" said Figgins. "It can't be helped."

"Ahem! Pewwaps, after all, I could take you chaps as you are," said D'Arcy, after a pause. "After all, they won't expect New House chaps to look vevy respectable."

Arthur Augustus came near being bumped in the bottom of the launch for that remark. But Figgins waved back his indignant comrades.

"Only what wowwies me is that if people observe us they may judge me by the company I keep," added D'Arcy, with a worried look.

"I know I shall biff him," murmured Redfern. "It's no good making faces at me, Figgins. I shall biff him sooner or later, and I may as well do it now."

"Shurrup!" said Figgins. "Gussy is our guest, and he is allowed to run on and talk any rot he likes."

"Weally, Figgay—"

"Yes, shut up, Gussy, old man," said Wally. "You're making me tired, too."

"You diswepcted young wascal—"

"Now he's started he'll go on till he's run down," said Wally, in despair. "Better drop him over the side. It's the only way."

Arthur Augustus sniffed indignantly.

"Well, put on your coats, you chaps, and look as respectable as you can," he said at last, as the launch ran into the last reach.

There were several houseboats moored along the bank, and some tents on the shore, gay with bunting. Abbotsford was making the most of its regatta; indeed, some Abbotsford folk were persuaded that it was better than Henley, any day. There were boats and punts and dinghies galore to be seen upon the sunny river; a good many of them with crews of fellows from Abbotsford School. Some of the latter hailed the launch with opprobrious epithets, for there was rivalry between the two schools, which had regular fixtures for football and cricket.

The St. Jim's fellows replied with cheery chaff, and Redfern, who was a good shot, caught Parsons of Abbotsford under the chin with a sandwich. Parsons was stroked of the Abbotsford eight that was rowing in the race on Saturday. Parsons stood up in his boat, and shook his fists after the launch and yelled.

"Cheeky boundah!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon the exasperated Parsons.

"Yah! You crawl along in a stink-boat because you can't row!" roared the Abbotsford juniors.

"Can't row, eh?" grinned Figgins. "You'll see some day!"

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "It wouldn't have been a bad idea to entah an eight for Saturday."

"No," said Figgins, "it wouldn't, would it?"

"Bai Jove, if I'd thought of it sooonah I'd have done it!" said Arthur Augustus. "I could have waised a ewew in the School House. Of course, you New House chaps wouldn't have been any good."

"I suppose not," agreed Figgins, winking at his comrades.

"In fact, I might do it now, only I'm engaged to play in the Jazz band."

"And an eight wouldn't be much use without you rowing stroke," remarked Kerr.

D'Arcy nodded unsuspectingly.

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"That's just it, deah boy."

Figgins was very near at that moment to telling the swell of the School House the great secret. But he restrained himself. Saturday afternoon would be time enough for the School House fellows to learn that the New House at St. Jim's had, in point of fact, entered an eight at the Abbotsford Regatta.

Figgins & Co. could imagine their looks when they learned that fact, and realised that while they were making day hideous with a Jazz band the New House fellows were winning rowing honours for St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove! There's the houseboat!"

"And there's cousin Ethel!" exclaimed Figgins, as he caught sight of a pretty hat and a bright parasol.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The launch ran alongside the houseboat and ceased to snort. Arthur Augustus swept off his hat, and the New House fellows raised their caps. Cousin Ethel looked down from the houseboat with a bright smile.

There was a slight expression of surprise on the girl's face as she noted her cousin Arthur's companions. Arthur Augustus had said that he was bringing a party of friends with him to tea. Naturally, Ethel Cleveland had expected to see School House fellows. But the kind smile she gave Figgins showed that she was not displeased, at all events, by the change.

"You are late, Arthur," said Ethel, as the swell of St. Jim's came on board.

"Yaas; it was owin' to circs ovah which I had no contwol," stammered Arthur Augustus. "I've brough't Figgins & Co. along to tea, Ethel, deah gal. I hope you don't mind."

"I'm vey pleased to see Figgins & Co.," said Ethel cheerfully.

"And pwey excuse their lookin' like a lot of twamps," said Arthur Augustus, again unconsciously narrowly escaping massacre. "I picked them up wovwin' in a boat, you know."

"Gussy was so pressing we simply couldn't decline," said Kerr.

"You know what Gussy is—there's no refusing him!" said Redfern.

"Bai Jove! I—"

"And tea is ready," said cousin Ethel. "Your father is ashore, but Lady Eastwood is here. I hope you had a nice run on the river."

"Wippin', deah gal!"

"And Tom Merry and the rest couldn't come?"

"No; they were prevented by these—"

"Those circumstances," suggested Redfern.

"Yaas, they were vey sorry they couldn't come."

"They looked vey sorry indeed!" said Kerr.

Perhaps cousin Ethel suspected something; but, if so, she made no inquiries further. Under the awning on the houseboat the St. Jim's fellows sat down to tea, and D'Arcy's "mater" and cousin Ethel did the honours.

Never had Figgins & Co. enjoyed a feed so heartily as they did that one. Fatty Wynn's face was beaming like a full moon. As he often explained, he wasn't greedy; but he liked a lot, he liked it often, and he liked it good. There was a lot, and it was good, on this occasion; and Fatty Wynn did justice to the feed.

And after tea, when Figgins was having a little talk with cousin Ethel, he confided to her the great secret of the New House eight—which was to carry off the cup and all the honours on Saturday; and cousin Ethel undertook that nothing whatever should prevent her from seeing that race. She undertook further to keep it a dead secret; and she did so. And Arthur Augustus wondered why his fair cousin smiled when he told her later that, if he had had time, he would have brought an eight to the regatta to hick all comers and win rowing honours for St. Jim's.

The time passed all too quickly; and in the sunset the visitors took their leave, and the launch snorted away down the river again—the juniors waving their caps back to cousin Ethel on the houseboat.

Figgins gave a sigh of contentment as they glided down the river in the dusk.

"What a ripping afternoon!" he said.

And the other fellows agreed.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Something Like a Surprise.

THE Lowther Jazz Band rehearsed their last rehearsal on Friday evening. They rehearsed in the woodshed, at least fifty fellows having promised to stay them without mercy if they attempted

any more rehearsals in the House. Monty Lowther declared himself satisfied with the progress of the orchestra. There might be little deficiencies, but, as Lowther sagely observed, if they played out of tune it would only be supposed to be something new in Jazz music. He cited the case of the musician who played "Bill Bailey" backwards, and passed it off as a classical composition.

"You'll do!" was Monty Lowther's final verdict. "My opinion is that we shall simply knock 'em at the regatta. If anybody happens to be rolling in money to-morrow, we'll have the launch instead of a boat. It will be easier to escape in if the crowd cuts up rusty."

"That's a wathah good idea," said Arthur Augustus. "I've seen the concert parties in the boats at Henley, and people throw things at them sometimes. It is a wippin' ideah to have the launch. I'll stand the launch, deah boys."

"Good! That's fair," said Lowther. "If we stand you, you stand the launch."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Perhaps we had better get up vey early in the morning, and have a final finisher before brekker," Lowther suggested.

"Perhaps!" said Jack Blake. "But that's a big perhaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! I think we're all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgins & Co. will be pink with wage and gween with envy when they see us to-morrow."

"Good! Their complexions will be quite interesting to watch, if they are. About that early morning rehearsal—"

"Oh, don't bother about that!" said Blake kindly. "There isn't going to be any early morning rehearsal. Gussy, cut off and telephone for the launch to-morrow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the musicians departed from the scene of their labours. They were in great spirits at the prospect of the morrow. It would be a tremendous score over the rival House, especially if their musical efforts were crowned with great rewards. Lowther told entrancing stories of the sums of money he had heard the singers made at Henley—sometimes. He had heard it from somebody who had met a chap who knew a man who had done it—than which, of course, nothing could be better proof.

Arthur Augustus was a little doubtful as to whether it would be beneath the dignity of the School House Band to accept monetary emoluments. Lowther kindly offered to settle that difficulty for him by taking his share of the plunder.

On Saturday morning there were a good many fellows at St. Jim's who found it difficult to give their attention to lessons. It was very hard to be worried by trifles at such a time, as Blake feelingly remarked. Quite a harvest of lines was gathered in in the Fourth Form and the Shell. But the juniors were thinking of other things, and they did not care for lines. Figgins & Co. were thinking of boat-races, and the Jazz band of Jazz music and musical honours.

After lessons the Jazz band made preparations for starting. Lowther's suggestion that they should black their faces in order to be more in keeping with their part was negated immediately.

After dinner the petrol launch arrived, and the musical instruments and the masks were placed on board. There was no hurry to start, as a concert-party would not be wanted till the races were over. But Tom Merry & Co. wanted to see the races. Crowds of St. Jim's fellows were already starting off by the towing-path, and a good number of boats were going.

"Don't see anything of Figgins & Co.," said Tom Merry, when the party were on the launch. "They must be going, surely?"

"Might give them a wun on the launch," said D'Arcy, in the kindness of his heart. "House wows are off to-day."

"Good for evil!" agreed Tom Merry. "I'll cut over to the New House, and tell the bounders we'll give them a passage."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry jumped off the launch, and ran back to the school. He came into the New House, but did not see Figgins or any member of the Co. He found Pratt of the Fourth just about to start, and asked him for news of Figgins.

"Seen 'iggy?"

Pratt chuckled, somewhat to Tom Merry's surprise.

"Figgins? Gone, long ago!" said Pratt.

"And the others?"

"All gone!"

"They started jolly early," said Tom in surprise.

"Well, they had to get the boat there," Pratt explained.

"Oh, they've rowed up?"

Pratt chuckled again—that inexplicable chuckle.

"No; they haven't rowed," he said.

"Are you looking for a thick ear, my son?" said Tom Merry warningly. "Don't be funny. How could they take a boat if they haven't rowed?"

"Might have taken it over in a brake," suggested Pratt.

Tom Merry sniffed and turned away. Pratt laughed loudly. To Tom Merry it seemed a very feeble joke, and he could not understand at all why Pratt of the Fourth roared with laughter.

He returned to the launch alone. "Figgins not comin'?" asked Arthur Augustus, as the captain of the Shell jumped into the launch.

"They've gone," said Tom Merry. "I suppose we shall see them there."

"Oh!" said Lowther. "They can't be up to any tricks, I suppose—eh?"

"Not a Jazz band, anyway."

"Yes, I suppose it's all right," agreed Lowther. "I shouldn't wonder if the wasters have got something up their sleeves, though."

Which afterwards proved to be quite correct.

The launch throbbed out upon the sunny river. It was a glorious day, and the juniors enjoyed greatly the swift run up the Ryll to Abbotsford. The river by the old town was crowded with craft when they arrived there, but the course was being cleared for the first heat.

The launch drew up under the lee of the Eastwood houseboat. Cousin Ethel, looking very charming in white, with a lovely hat, smiled and nodded to the juniors.

"Seen anything of Figgins & Co.?" Tom Merry called out.

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"Yes; they are here."

"On the houseboat?" asked D'Arcy.

"Oh, no! But Figgins came to speak to me for a moment. They are coming back afterwards," explained Ethel.

"After what, deah gal?"

"After the race."

"Bai Jove! They ought to have stopped on the houseboat to see the wace," said D'Arcy. "The patah's got the best view of the whole wivah."

Ethel laughed again.

"They couldn't vey well stop here," she said.

And she turned away to speak to Lady Eastwood, without explaining that mysterious remark.

"Suppose we give 'em a tune before they start," Monty Lowther suggested. The conductor of the Jazz band was anxious to get to work.

"They'll shift us off the river if we make a row now," said Kangaroo.

"Why, you ass—"

"There goes the signal for the start!" said Tom Merry.

And all eyes were turned upon the river.

From the launch, close up to the moored houseboat, the juniors had a splendid view. They looked at the starters in the first heat, and then they rubbed their eyes and looked again. One crew they knew was the Wayland crew; but the other?

They stared. They stared again. They gasped.

There was no doubt about it.

They knew the blue-and-white of St. Jim's—they knew the faces of their old rivals of the New House!

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

"The awful bounders!"

"Figgins & Co.!"

Words failed them.

#### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

##### The Winning Eight.

FIGGINS & CO. were in great form.

They had been drawn against Wayland for the first heat, and they knew that they had nothing to fear. Their real rivals were Abbotsford School—Parsons and his men, who would be rowing in the second heat against Rylcombe.

The New House fellows did not even look towards the launch.

But they knew that School House eyes were upon them, and the knowledge bucked them up. They did not go "all out" for that heat.

They had it all their own way, and they took it easy, finishing with three lengths to the good, amid loud cheers.



The second heat was being rowed before Tom Merry & Co. had quite recovered from their astonishment. As was expected, Abbotsford School beat Rylcombe Rowing Club hollow, and were left to row the final with St. Jim's.

"Well, my only hat!" said Tom Merry. "Of all the cheek—"

"The awful boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "They must have entahed an eight for the wace without tellin' us!"

"We weren't exactly the chaps they'd tell, come to think of it," remarked Blake, with a grin.

"I wemembah tellin' Figgins that if I had time I should entah an eight for the wace, and stwoke it myself. I wondahed what he was waddin' at."

"The deceitful dodger!"

"How awfully dark they've kept it!" said Kangaroo. "If we'd got on to the idea, we could have put in an eight that would have wiped up the river with them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What puzzles me is where they got in their practice without our spotting them," said Manners, puzzled. "They must have slogged at it, I should think. See the form the bounders are in!"

Tom Merry smote his brow.

"Oh, what asses we've been!" he yelled.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I am quite willin' to admit that you were an ass, but—"

"They've been at practice in the mornings before brekker!" roared Tom Merry. "That's what they were up to when we caught them on the island last Monday morning."

"Bai Jove!"

"And they've been practising secretly. And now they've got a winning eight for the regatta races, and we—we're playing a Jazz band!" said Tom Merry tragically.

"Oh, rotten!"

"Sold!"

"Dished!"

"We'll scalp them!"

"Well," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "as they've stolen a march on us, deah boys, and have entahed an eight without our entahing anothah eight to lick them—"

"We'll slaughter them!"

"I was goin' to say—"

"We'll hang, draw, and quarter 'em!"

"I wish to wemark—"

"We'll massacre 'em!"

"Pway allow me to finish. I was goin' to say that I twust it will pprove to be a waddin' cwew. It will be one up for St. Jim's, anyway."

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Well, there's something in that," he agreed. "Of course, if we'd put in an eight we should have beaten them hollow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Dead cert!" said Lowther.

"But as it is, as we're out of it, I hope they'll win. After all, the New House belongs to St. Jim's, and it would be ripping to see St. Jim's beat Abbotsford!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the School House juniors, nobly stifling their wrath against their old rivals in the keen hope of seeing the St. Jim's colours triumph, watched the river with all their eyes.

"They're starting!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, St. Jim's!" roared the juniors.

Figgins & Co. heard the thunderous shout of their old rivals. Figgins looked towards the launch and the houseboat as the eights took up their position, and he waved his hand.

Cousin Ethel's handkerchief fluttered in the air in response, and the School House fellows brandished their caps.

"Off!" said Tom Merry.

Abbotsford got away better at the start. They had the lead of the St. Jim's boat, and the School House juniors watched them with an anxiety that was too deep for words.

All thought of House rivalry was banished now.

It was a St. Jim's boat that was rowing for victory or defeat, and the hearts of Tom Merry & Co. went out to the New House crew.

Crowds of spectators watched from the bank. New House juniors were there to a man, yelling themselves hoarse.

Abbotsford were keeping their lead; but Figgins & Co. were going strong, going like clockwork—in beautiful time.

"Buck up, Figgins!" roared Blake, careless of the fact that Figgins was out of the range of his voice by that time.

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

"Abbotsford are going all out!" said Blake,

with the eye of a connoisseur. "They're bursting too early—too fast to last!"

"Figgys' men are in top-notch form," said Kangaroo. "Figgys will crawl after them when he wants to!"

"Two lengths to Abbotsford, if it's an inch!"

"You watch Figgys! My hat! He strokes like an angel!"

"And look at Fatty! You wouldn't think he weighed a ton now, would you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pull, you beggars—pull!"

"What did I tell you?" roared Kangaroo.

"They're crawling up!"

"Only a length now!"

"Hurrah!"

"Figgys will go all out on the home stretch," said Tom Merry. "You watch!"

"Good old Figgins!"

The anxiety was intense. Abbotsford had lost something of their lead—and they were losing more. But Parsons and his men were rowing stoutly and splendidly. They were game, and if they could stick the terrific pace to the finish it looked like their race. Abbotsford fellows were waving their caps along the

But the pace, as Blake had so sapiently remarked, was too fast to last. Abbotsford cracked under their strain.

Right ahead shot the New House boat!

Half a length—a length—Hurrah! The roar from the St. Jim's fellows rang like thunder over the shining river.

"St. Jim's wins! Hurrah! Hip-hip-hurrah!"

Figgins & Co. had won by a length and a quarter!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Music Hath Charms!"

F IGGINS, glowing with exertion and pride, wrapped up in his milliner, was on the Eastwood houseboat, receiving cousin Ethel's congratulations, when Tom Merry & Co. came aboard. They rushed upon Figgins and surrounded him.

"Figgins, you bounder—"

"Figgins, you Machiavelli—"

"Figgins, you schemer—"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Figgins, in alarm. "No rags here, you know!"

"Rags!" said Tom Merry, seizing Figgins' hand and shaking it as if he wanted to shake it off. "Rags! When you've just won for St. Jim's!"

"Rags!" said Blake, smacking Figgins on the back so heartily that Figgins roared. "Why, you old ass, we've come to congratulate you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Figgins grinned.

"It was a good race!" he remarked.

"And you were keeping your scheme dark all the time!"

Figgins chuckled.

"This is where the New House glasts!" he said. "We've left you the Jazz band! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have," said Tom Merry ruefully. "It we'd known—"

"But you didn't know!" chuckled Figgins. "We score this time. Of course, it would have been all the same if you had had an eight here."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Never mind that," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You've scored over the School House, but it was a win for St. Jim's, and that's all we really care about!"

"Yaas, that's all, Figgay, deah boy. We congratulate you. But it was fighwfully wisky to wace Abbotsford without a School House chap in the crew. I should have been willin' to stwoke for you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at in that wemark, deah boys!"

"Time!" said Monty Lowther. "Members of the Lowther Jazz band back to the launch. Time!"

"Bai Jove! I'd forgotten the Jazz band!" Lowther gave the swell of St. Jim's a withering look.

"Forgotten it, you fathead—"

"I decline to be called a fathead—"

"My mistake—I meant chump!" said Monty Lowther gracefully. "Now, then, get a move on you! This is where the Jazz band scores!"

"Tea first!" said cousin Ethel, with a smile.

"You do not want to begin till after dusk, I suppose?"

"Wathah not!"

"Lowther wants to begin in early morning, and keep on till dewy eve," said Blake. "Goodness knows how many casualties there will be when he starts!"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Pway wing off, Lowthab, and let's have tea. I am sure Figgys must be hungry atah his wov; and I'll answah for Fatty Wynn."

Figgins hurried away to change, and returned soon with the rest of the eight, clothed and in their right minds, as Lowther described it. The New House oarsmen were elated, and they were very merry over tea on the boathouse. Dusk was falling now, and innumerable lights were gleaming on the river. The houseboats and the launches and the other small skiffs carried Chinese lanterns, slung up, and Chinese lanterns glimmered through the trees on the shore. From the bank floated the sound of a cornet, with a concertina in rivalry further along. He succeeded in dragging the bandsmen away from tea on the houseboat at last.

D'Arcy's father—Lord Eastwood—knew nothing of the Jazz band. D'Arcy meant the discovery to come as a surprise to his pater and his mater. The bandsmen went on the launch, and throbbled away into the mids of the river. There, somewhat to their

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bank now, as they tore along the towing-path in pursuit. There was a roar:

"Abbotsford wins!"

"Rats!" roared Tom Merry. "Wait and see! Pull, you beggars—pull!"

"Half a length!" yelled Kangaroo. "What did I tell you?"

"Half-length! Half-length! Half-length onward!" chirruped Monty Lowther, but no one listened to Monty's funny remarks now.

"There goes Figgins!"

"Look!"

"Hurrah!"

Figgins had quickened his stroke. The New House boat shot up level with the rival—level—level—and passed! St. Jim's fellows in boats and on the towing-path were growing delirious.

"Oh, well pulled!"

"Stick it out, Figgys!"

"Put your beef into it, Fatty!"

"Hurrah!"

Figgins & Co. were going "all out" now with a vengeance. They had won a lead, and they were keeping it. They were nearly home now; and the Abbotsford crew made a final terrific spurt. For a second their bow was ahead of the New House—and a hundred hearts trembled.

exasperation, they found that a concert-party was just starting operations.

As the launch glided through the water a boat, lighted with fairy-lamps, glided from the opposite bank and stopped. A couple of fiddles and a clarinet started in business, and a tenor followed.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is watah wotten. I did not expect wotten rivals on the scene."

"Let's run the boat down!" suggested Blake.

"Good! That tenor ought to be killed!" said Tom Merry. "It's the only thing to do with a man who's got a voice like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
The voice was singing, more or less in tune, "I Loved and Lost Her."

Monty Lowther hailed the boat.  
"Why didn't you apply at the Lost Property Office?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Here, you clear off!" exclaimed one of the fiddlers indignantly. "This here is our pitch!"

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther. "You clear off! We're a Jazz band!"

"Look here——"

"No time! Gentlemen, on the ball!"

And, with Lowther conducting, the Jazz band struck up. The lively strains of the Crabs' Crawl floated over the river, and the unfortunate tenor in the rowing-boat was completely beaten. He made a great effort to make known the fact that he had "Loved and Lost Her" audible above the blare of the Jazz band. But it was in vain. His voice was drowned, and he left off singing, and danced with rage in the boat, shaking his fist at the launch.

There were calls of applause from the craft on the river, and from the crowd on shore, as the Jazz band blared away, and the "Crabs' Crawl" was followed by the still livelier strains of the "Bully Bunny-Hug," one of the latest importations from the great country where waves the Star-Spangled Banner.

Sulphurous remarks from the boat rocking beside the launch did not worry the Jazz hands. They received renewed applause, especially from the Eastwood houseboat, where Figgins & Co. were drinking lemonade and listening.

"Going strong," said Monty Lowther, at the end of the piece. "Not quite so fast with the fute, Blake. The races are over for today."

"Why, you ass——"

"Now we'll give them the 'Giddy Glide.'"

"Pewwaps, now that squeakin' chap down there has shut up, it would be a good idee for me to wendah a tenah solo——"

"Shut up! Ready!"

"I should be quite willin' to give an Italian awia——"

But the Jazz band started again, and Arthur Augustus' kind offer was not heard. The swell of St. Jim's sniffer, and scraped away on his violin.

"Bravo!" came from the houseboats. "Go it!"

"Encore!"

"Play up!"

"Ain't it going rippingly?" said Monty Lowther gleefully. "After the next tune we'll go round and collect up the tin. We'll put on the masks then."

"Yaas, watahah!"

"We've driven that blessed boat away," added Lowther, with a glance over the side.

"They're gone!"

"I hope we haven't sunk it!" murmured Manners.

"Ass! Pile in!"  
The "Lobsters' Wriggle" followed on the Jazz band. The handsmen were in great spirits; the applause from the regatta crowd seemed to promise a goodly shower of coin when they went round to collect their reward.

The boat containing the rival concert party was indeed gone; but it was not gone far. It was gliding among the moored craft, and the tenor was now holding out his hat as the accompanists rowed—collecting money for the Jazz band! That idea had come into his head, and it seemed a good one. While the Jazz band blared away on the launch, the boat made the collection—and they were making a good one.

"Thank you, gentlemen! Thank you, ladies! Thanks! Spare a tanner for the Jazz band!" said the defeated tenor cheerfully.

"Chuck out a copper for the Jazz band! Thank you, sir! This way, sir. Pay up for the Jazz band!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins, as the skiff glided by the Eastwood houseboat. "Hallo! Are you collecting for the band?"

"Yes, sir! A shilling, thank you, sir——"

The New House juniors tossed coppers and small silver into the hat, and cousin Ethel followed suit. But Kerr kept his cash in his pocket. Kerr was a canny Scotsman, and he never parted with money without seeing good reason. Figgins logged his arm.

"Shell out for the Jazz band, old man. They cheered us when we beat Abbotsford, you know. Let's help make it a success."

Kerr grinned.

"I don't mind doing that," he replied.

"Then shell out!"

"But before I shell out, I'd rather be sure that Tom Merry & Co. have authorised those fellows to collect the money for them!"

Figgins jumped.

"Oh, my hat! Do you think——"

"Yes, I do—a little bit. That's a rival party that's been blared off the river by the Jazz band, and I fancy they're gathering in Tom Merry's harvest for him."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Figgins ran to his side as the boat glided away.

"Here, you fellows!"

But the boat was gone, and the tenor was still collecting. Meanwhile, the Jazz band roared out the "Lobsters' Wriggle" amid applause. Money was showering into the collecting boat as it glided to and fro, and, as the Lobsters ceased to wriggle and the weary were at rest, the triumphant tenor and his party pulled away into the darkness of the river and disappeared.

"Now we'll make the collection, and then give another tune to wind up with!" said Monty Lowther.

And, masking their faces, the Jazz band ran the launch along to collect the money. But there was no more to be collected.

"Here, we've paid once!"

"You can't collect twice!"

"We paid the men in the boat, and that's enough!"

"Don't you be greedy!"

Such were the remarks that greeted the unfortunate Jazz handsmen as they endeavoured to collect the rewards of their labours.

A few generous individuals threw coppers, but that was all.  
The Jazz band schoolboys looked at one another in dismay.  
"My only hat!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Some frightful bilker has been round making the collection, passing himself off as our man"

"Oh, crumbs!"  
"That's where that giddy tenor disappeared to!" groaned Tom Merry. "We drove him off the pitch, and he's gone with our collection."

"Oh, crikey!"

It was a sad case. But there was nothing to be done. The spool collector was gone, and the collection was gone with him. The Jazz handsmen slowly and sadly put their instruments away and removed their masks. They had scored a success; but the harvest of cash had been reaped by another!

"Nevah mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus consolingly. "After all, I was watah doubtful as to whethah it would be infwah dis to collect money. We have the honah!"

To which his comrades replied all at once: "Rats!"

"Let's get back to the houseboat, and have some suppah before we go home," said Arthur Augustus.

Figgins & Co. grinned as they met the Jazz handsmen coming aboard.

"Did you collect much?" asked Kerr.

"Some beastly spoofer made the collection for us——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was too bad!" said cousin Ethel sympathetically.

"Yaas, watah! Still, we have scored a success. I say, patah, did you hear the music on the wivah?" asked Arthur Augustus, as his noble pater came along the deck.

Lord Eastwood nodded. He was in blissful ignorance of the fact that the Jazz handsmen stood before him. Arthur Augustus was about to enlighten him; but before doing so he wanted to get an unprejudiced opinion on the music. He got it!

"Yes, I could hardly help hearing it, Arthur," said his lordship; "one must not complain. To most of the people who come to the regatta there is probably something amusing, and even pleasant, in such terrible noises. And others must be willing to submit cheerfully for the pleasure of the majority."

The Jazz handsman looked at one another with sickly smiles. Arthur Augustus, having received the unprejudiced opinion he was seeking, did not enlighten his noble pater as to the identity of the handsmen.

But the Jazz handsmen enjoyed their supper on the houseboat; and it was quite late in the evening when they took leave of cousin Ethel and D'Arcy's pater and mater, and embarked on the launch to return to St. Jim's. Figgins & Co. went with them on the launch, their boat being towed behind. School House and New House fraternised cheerily, and all were in the greatest of spirits as the launch glided away down the dusky river. Figgins stood looking back at the houseboat, ablaze with light, till a bend of the river hid it from sight. Figgins was a little pensive. Monty Lowther bestowed a wink upon his comrades.

"Let's have a tune going home!" he said.

The Jazz handsmen were nothing loth. They struck up the "Love-Sick Coon"—and Figgins turned quite red. They followed it up with the "Picaninny's Wedding-March"; and Figgins glared. But as they drew nearer to St. Jim's the band burst into "See, the Conquering Hero Comes"; and Figgins smiled again.

THE END.

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