

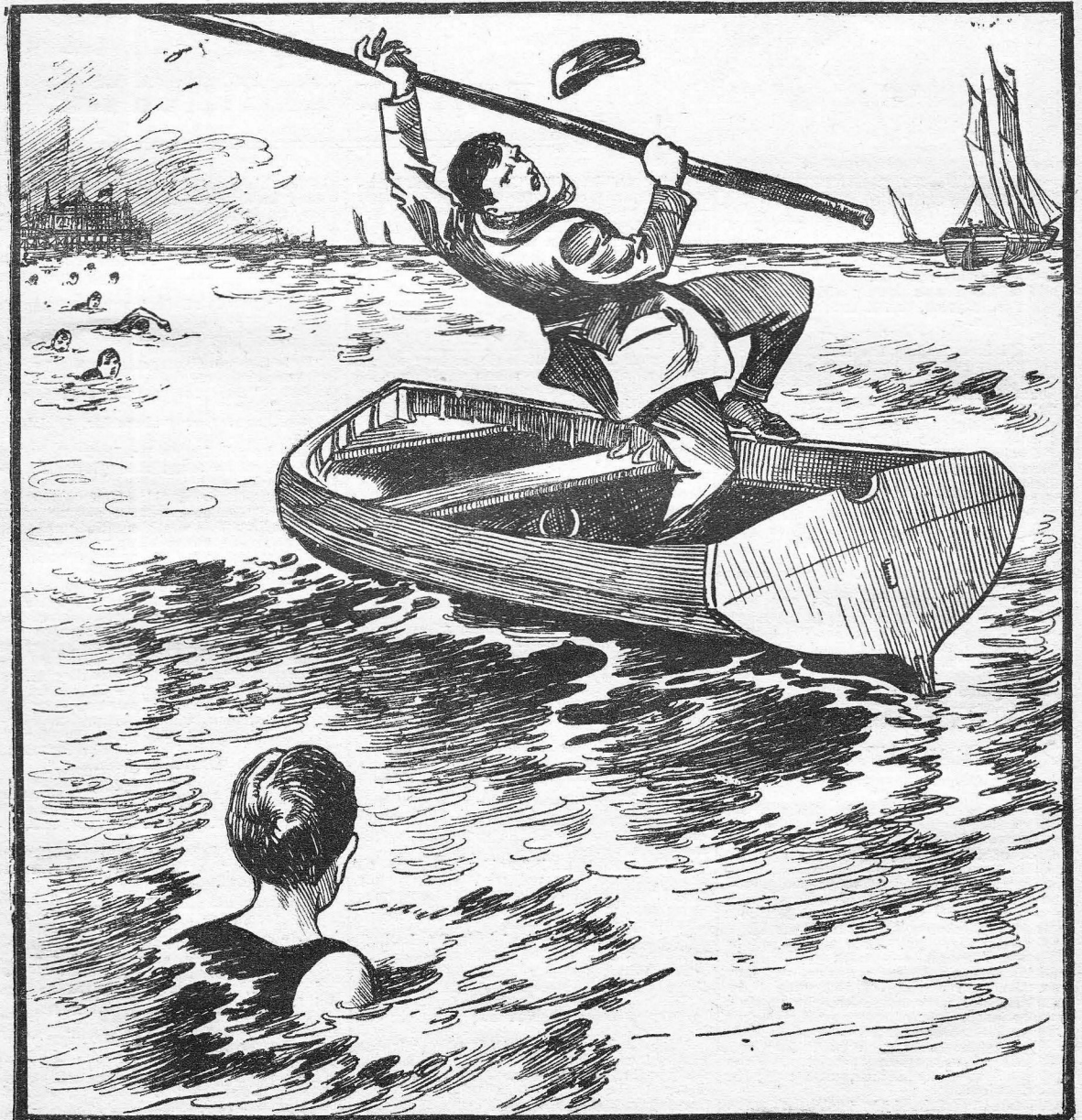
ENTIRELY ORIGINAL SCHOOL TALES!

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May 24th, 1919.

No. 18.
New Series.

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



THE LADS OF LANCASHIRE!

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



The Lads of Lancashire

The First of a Magnificent New Series
of Stories of Harry Wharton & Co.
of Greyfriars.

BY
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Taking Up the Challenge!

BLESS my soul! This is not to be tolerated—not for an instant!"

Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars, was looking—and feeling—considerably annoyed.

The Head was a kindly old gentleman, getting on in years, and it took a great deal to ruffle him.

But he was fairly ruffled now!

He had been reading the newspaper in his dining-room, and had become so absorbed in a certain article that his eggs and bacon lay untouched on his plate.

Dr. Locke had pushed the paper aside; but he picked it up again, and re-read the offending article, as if to make sure his eyes had not deceived him.

Then he sat for a long time in deep reflection.

The maid came in to clear the table, but the Head waved her from the room.

"It is monstrous!" he muttered to himself. "A libellous attack upon the boys of this school, and of every great public school in the country! I shall certainly take action in the matter!"

So saying, the Head rose to his feet, and, picking up the newspaper, went to his study.

He rang the bell, and sent for Mr. Quelch.

"Ah, Mr. Quelch!" he said, when the Remove-master came in a few moments later. "I have sent for you upon a most important matter. There is an article in the 'Chimes' this morning—"

"I have seen it," interposed Mr. Quelch quietly.

"And do you agree with it?"

"No," said Mr. Quelch. "Most certainly I do not! It is an infamous attack upon the boys of the present day!"

"Quite!" agreed the Head. "The writer of the article implies that our public schools are degenerating—that the boys of to-day, instead of being keen, vigorous sportsmen, like the boys of fifty years ago, are mere weaklings! I am astonished that a man—even a journalist—should make such a sweeping statement entirely without qualification!"

"Is it worth bothering about?" he said.

"Emphatically it is! That article will be read by thousands—perhaps millions—of British subjects. It casts a slur, not only upon the boys themselves, but upon those responsible for their education. It suggests that the modern boy of fifteen or thereabouts is an undersized, pale-faced creature, unable to play games and to uphold the high traditions of our public schools. It is a cruel and cowardly attack, and must be refuted at once!"

"But how?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Do you propose to write a forcible reply to the article?"

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"That would only lead to a long-drawn-out

controversy," he said. "I have a much better scheme for proving to the British public that there is nothing the matter with the modern boy—that he can hold his own in the playing-fields and on the running-track quite as effectively as the boy of fifty years ago."

"I should be interested to hear what the scheme is," said the Remove-master.

"It is rather an ambitious one, Mr. Quelch—so ambitious, in fact, that the governors of the school may refuse to consider it. My idea is that a number of boys from your Form shall make a tour of the country, and hold a sports meeting with representative teams from each county."

Mr. Quelch looked staggered.

"It is certainly a vast undertaking," he said, "and I am afraid it would not be practicable."

"Why not?" demanded the Head.

"For the simple reason that if the boys devoted their time to holding sports tournaments, their Form-work would be completely neglected."

"By no means. Twelve juniors could be sent on tour for a week; then they would return to the school, and another twelve would carry on with the sports programme. That would be feasible enough."

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"And do you really think such a tour would justify itself?" he asked.

"Yes. It will show the world that the writer of that article is all wrong. It will go to prove that the modern boy is very far from being a pale-faced weakling. The general public will, of course, be allowed to witness the various events, and they will see for themselves whether the boy of to-day is, or is not, a thorough sportsman."

Mr. Quelch was impressed by the Head's earnest tone.

"I agree with you entirely," he said. "But I fear you will find it extremely difficult to obtain the sanction of the governors for the tour to take place."

"I shall fight for it," said Dr. Locke. "I shall leave no stone unturned to achieve my object. There will be a meeting of governors to-morrow, and I shall put the matter before them very strongly."

"I wish you the best of luck, Dr. Locke!" said Mr. Quelch, as he turned to go.

The Remove-master was looking very thoughtful as he crossed the Close.

This was certainly a bold step for the Head to take—a venture which was unique in the history of Greyfriars.

There had been sports tournaments in the past, of course. Many a time and oft the Remove juniors had done battle with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and with Frank Courtenay & Co., of Highcliffe. And on one memorable occasion the Remove football team had gone on tour; but the tour had not been on such a gigantic scale as this.

Mr. Quelch grew quite dizzy as he tried to

picture his pupils paying visits to every county in England—to Lancashire and Yorkshire, up in the North; to Staffordshire and Warwickshire, in the Midlands; to the smiling county of Kent, and to Sussex by the sea; to that glorious corner of Old England which embraces Cornwall, Devonshire, and Somerset.

The magnitude of the tour almost appalled Mr. Quelch at first. And then he reflected that two parties would be at work, which would halve the area to be covered.

"It is just possible that such a tour could be successfully carried out," murmured Mr. Quelch. "But the governors will never consent."

That, however, was where Mr. Quelch was wrong.

When he called upon Dr. Locke the following evening, he found that gentleman in a state of triumph.

"I have won the day!" said the Head, with a smile. "The governors could not see eye to eye with me at first; but their objections were gradually swept away, and at length they gave their consent to my proposal."

"Then the tour will take place?"

"Most decidedly! And I have not the slightest doubt but that our boys will do all that is expected of them, and more. They can be relied upon to play the game as it should be played; and, although they are bound to suffer defeat at the hands of some of the county teams, I feel sure they will not yield without a struggle. I have drawn up the programme for the tour, and everything should go without a hitch. A prefect will, of course, accompany each of the touring-parties, to arrange for their sleeping accommodation, and all that sort of thing."

"Excellent!"

"As for the writer of this precious article," said the Head, "he will be made to write! He will have to eat his words, Mr. Quelch!"

"I sincerely hope so," said the Remove-master, with a smile. And there the conversation ended.

"Excellent!"

"As for the writer of this precious article," said the Head, "he will be made to write! He will have to eat his words, Mr. Quelch!"

"I sincerely hope so," said the Remove-master, with a smile. And there the conversation ended.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Glorious News!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

A fat face, adorned with a pair of spectacles, blinked in at the Famous Five, who were having tea in Study No. 1.

"Say on, old barrel!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "But finish your remarks on the other side of the door!"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" Billy Bunter was looking as if he would burst with excitement. "I've got news for you fellows—gorgeous, stunning news!"

"You're coming to tea?" said Nugent.

"Well, I will, since you press me," said Bunter, advancing into the study. "But it isn't that I came to tell you."

"Is your sister Bessie paying us a visit?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Blow Bessie! I say, what an awfully ripping cake! You don't mind if I finish it, do you?"

"We'll finish you afterwards, if you do!" growled Wharton. "Our life's savings had to go to the purchase of that cake. It cost five bob!"

"Oh, I'll make that good," said Bunter, "when—"

"When your postal-order arrives!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Same old postal-order! Has it grown a beard yet?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Billy Bunter did not appear to mind the chaff in the least. He was making a rapid inroad into the cake. Even his important news had to go by the board until that cake had been wiped out of existence.

"Well, what's the news?" said Wharton, when not a crumb remained to tell the tale.

"It's the fit-bit of the term!" said Bunter. "There's been nothing like it for years! I happened to be passing the Head's study—"

"What in thunder were you doing near the Head's study?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! It's a free country, isn't it? I was passing the Head's door, and—"

"Your bootlace happened to come undone, so you stooped to tie it up, with your ear pressed to the keyhole, and you heard the Head telling Quelch that the Remove are to take a whole day's holiday. Is that right?" asked Nugent.

"No, it isn't!" said Bunter wrathfully. "My bootlace did come undone, as a matter of fact, but my ear wasn't within a mile of that beastly keyhole! And the Head was shouting so much that I simply couldn't help hearing what he said."

"Was he asking Quelch if you had washed your neck this morning?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats! He was saying that he had arranged a big sporting tour for the Remove. There's going to be cricket-matches and races, and all that sort of thing, between the Greyfriars Remove and fellows from every county in England."

The Famous Five stared at the fat junior as if they would slay him.

"You expect me to believe a fairy-tale like that?" roared Johnny Bull.

"It ain't a fairy-tale! It's gospel! You can ask old Quelch—"

A sudden hush fell upon the juniors.

Unseen by Billy Bunter, but observed by the Famous Five, Mr. Quelch himself had appeared in the doorway.

Blissfully unaware of the Form-master's presence, Billy Bunter rambled on.

"Old Quelch will tell you it's true!" he said. "It was one in the eye for him, and no mistake! He won't take kindly to the idea of a crowd of Remove fellows going on tour. They won't be under his eagle eye in class. He'll see, he!"

"Shurrup, you ass!" muttered Bob Cherry. But Bunter went merrily ahead.

"I shall be in one of the touring-parties," he said. "Won't it be a treat to trot round the country playing cricket, instead of grinding out mouldy Latin in class? Quelch's face will be worth a guinea a box when he sees that half the Form have sloped off. Quelch always was a beast and a tyrant—What are you making those faces at me for, Bull?"

"Oh!" gasped Johnny Bull.

"Quelch's an old woman! If I had my way with him," went on Bunter, waxing eloquent, "I'd tie him up in a sack and kick him—hard! Wouldn't it be great to hear him yell—"

"Bunter!"

For some moments Mr. Quelch had stood petrified. But he had at last recovered the power to speak, and his voice fell on Bunter's ears like a thunderclap.

"What were you saying about me, Bunter?" "Eh? Oh, crums! I—I didn't know you were there, sir!" stammered Bunter, almost sliding on to the floor as he met the stern gaze of the Remove-master.

"You were speaking in the most disrespectful terms of your Form-master!" said Mr. Quelch angrily. "You referred to me as a— a female of advanced years!"

"I—I didn't, sir!" said Bunter wildly. "When I mentioned an old woman, I was speaking of Mrs. Mumble, sir, at the tuck-shop! Why should I want to call you an old woman, sir? Of course, we all know you are one, but—"

"Bunter!"

"But you're quite a good sort, sir—one of the best! I'm always singing your praises to the other fellows—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "How dare you lie to me, Bunter? You will come to my study in ten minutes!"

"Ow!"

With a groan, Billy Bunter rolled out of the study. He understood, now, why the juniors had been making faces at him. But the understanding came too late!

The thunderclouds vanished from Mr. Quelch's brow when Bunter had gone.

"I came to tell you, Wharton," he said, "that a sporting tour on a very large scale has been arranged by Dr. Locke. You, as captain of the Remove, will select eleven members of the Form, for the purpose of travelling up to Lancashire next week and meeting a team of Lancashire boys in a series of sporting contests."

"Oh!"

The Famous Five wondered if they had heard aright.

This was so sudden, and so altogether unexpected, that had Mr. Quelch dropped a bombshell at their feet they could not have been more staggered.

"Your contest with the boys of Lancashire," Mr. Quelch went on, "will be merely a beginning. The tour will be extended to other counties, and I have every reason to believe it will be a great success. After a week's absence in Lancashire, you will return to Greyfriars; and another party, with Vernon-Smith as the leader, will take up the running. Thus you will have alternate weeks of lessons and sports. I am telling you this now, so that you will have ample time in which to make the necessary arrangements."

The faces of the Famous Five were flushed and radiant.

This was what they had longed for and sighed for—an opportunity of touring England—north, south, east, and west—and proving their worth against boys selected from the various counties.

Hitherto it had been nothing more than a dream; now it was actual reality.

"I need hardly add," said Mr. Quelch, "that I rely upon you not to abuse this privilege. During the weeks you are at the school I shall expect you to work doubly hard in class. There will be a good deal of lost time to make up, as you will realise."

"There will be no slacking, sir," said Harry Wharton. "I give you my word on that."

"No fear, sir!" said Bob Cherry joyously. "We'll work like niggers!"

"Thank you, boys!" said Mr. Quelch.

And he went along to his own study in order to teach Billy Bunter that the way of the transgressor is hard.

When the Form-master had gone Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"My only aunt!" he exclaimed. "Isn't it great? Bunter was right, after all!"

"It's almost too good to be true!" said Bob Cherry. "A week in Lancashire! My hat! Won't we fairly make things hum?"

"The humfuntness will be terrific!" said Hurree Singh.

"Mind you select twelve good men and true, Harry," said Nugent. "We shall be in your twelve, of course?"

"I hope so," said Wharton. "I'll go and have a jaw with Smithy, and we'll get the lists drawn up and put on the notice-board."

"That's the idea!"

"It all seems like a giddy dream," said Bob Cherry. "Here to-day, and in Blackpool or somewhere to-morrow!"

"It won't be all beer and skittles, though," said Johnny Bull. "We shall have to put our beef into it. These county teams will be real hot stuff!"

"All the better!" said Nugent. "We shall be meeting foemen worthy of our steel. By Jove, this is the finest piece of news we've had for ages!"

Everybody else thought so, too.

There was great rejoicing in the Remove camp that evening; and it was a long, long time before the fellows composed themselves to slumber.

They were about to embark upon a campaign the like of which had never been known before; and they were keen—desperately keen—upon giving a good account of themselves, and adding yet more lustre to the fair name of Greyfriars School!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Chosen Twelve.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. lost no time in getting to work.

Athletic training was the order of the day.

The Removites were up with the lark, long before the rising-bell clanged out. A great deal of time was spent at the nets, and sprinting and boxing were also indulged in.

Fellows who had hitherto taken little interest in sport now began to stir themselves, hoping to be given a place either in Wharton's party, or Vernon-Smith's. They realised that it would be no catch to remain at Greyfriars while their schoolfellows were touring the country.

Of course, there was a good deal of grouching, both in the Remove and out of it.

Coker of the Fifth waxed highly indignant.

"Why should the Remove collar all the plums?" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Fancy sending a set of cheeky fags round the country! Why, they'll be licked every time!"

"They are going to Blackpool, I hear," said Potter.

"And a pretty mess they'll make of it! Those Lancashire kids will simply wipe the ground with them!"

"No use asking Prout if we could go instead, I suppose?" said Greene.

"I've asked him!" growled Coker.

"And what did he say?"

"Said we were too old to go on a tour of this sort. As if we were a lot of blessed Methuselahs!" snorted Coker.

"It's certainly a bit thick!" said Potter. Potter was not the only person who thought so.

Cecil Reginald Temple, the leader of the Upper Fourth, was considerably annoyed to think that the Remove had been selected in preference to his own Form. So "wrathy" was Temple that he approached Mr. Capper on the subject, and asked if the programme could be changed.

"We're the very fellows to tackle a job of this sort, sir," he said. "Wharton & Co. are much too young and inexperienced. Couldn't you possibly persuade the Head—"

"I am not going to interfere with the arrangements, Temple," said Mr. Capper. "It is Dr. Locke's wish that the Remove shall undertake the tour, and I see no reason to suggest otherwise. You will be much better employed in the Form-room, Temple. There has been a good deal of slackness lately."

"Oh!"

"You may not expect any privileges of this sort until you work a great deal harder," said Mr. Capper.

And Temple, looking very crestfallen, left the Form-master's study. His efforts to usurp the Remove of their rights failed miserably.

In the Sixth, too, it was felt that the Remove were indeed lucky. Surely a senior touring-party would give a much better account of itself than a junior?

But the high-and-mighty men of the Sixth, whatever they felt, said nothing. They were too dignified to squabble on the subject.

In the Remove itself there was a certain measure of discontent.

Skinner had something to say, and he said it in his usual spiteful manner.

"Why is Wharton always selected for these stunts?" he exclaimed.

"Echo answers 'Why?'" said Bolsover major.

"It's been Wharton this, and Wharton that, ever since he came to Greyfriars," said Skinner. "The place reeks with Wharton! Why don't they let somebody else boss the show, for a change?"

"Of course, he'll pick all his old pals for the touring-party," sneered Stott. "Whether they happen to be good sportsmen or not will make no difference. So long as they are in with Wharton, they'll be given a show. And it's not fair!"

"Something ought to be done about it," said Skinner. "At present it looks as if we shall be left out in the cold. I've spoken to Smithy, and he says he's got no use for me in his party. That's just like Smithy! And he used to pretend he was my pal!"

"Shame!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, coming on the scene with the Famous Five. "What's the merry rumpus about?"

Skinner ignored Bob, and turned to Harry Wharton.

"Am I taking a hand or not?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Wharton. "No; it's a straight question, and I want a straight answer. Are you choosing your own pet pals for this tour, or is merit going to count?"

"Merit will certainly count!" said Wharton. "That's why I sha'n't include you, Skinner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's downright disgusting!" declared Skinner.

"If you mean your face, Skinner, old chap, I agree with you," said Johnny Bull.

"Look here—"

"Can't stand the strain!" said Johnny. "Ask me to look at something more picturesque!"

"All right, you rotters!" said Skinner viciously. "You think you're going to leave me out—"

"We don't think—we know!" said Nugent. "Dash it all, Wharton, let's have fair dealing!" said Bolsover major.

Harry flushed.

"Of course you will have fair dealing!" he said. "Smithy and I have put our heads together, and gone carefully into the question of selecting the teams. There's going to be no favouritism. Everything will be straight and above-board."

"Perhaps!" sneered Stott.

Bob Cherry planted his fist an inch away from Stott's nose.

"You see that?" he exclaimed. Stott saw it, and jumped back.

"Pax!" he said hastily.

"Well, don't be a worm," said Bob Cherry, "or there will be a dead Stott found lying about! Carry on, Harry!"

"I shall make it my business to select the fellows who show up best at practice," said Wharton. "There's a chance for you, Bolsover, if you run straight. But, as for Skinner, I wouldn't have him at any price!"

"Thanks!" said Skinner.

"Of course," said Bob Cherry, "if you stopped smoking fags, Skinner, and backing gee-gee, and behaving like a rank outsider generally, there would be just a faint chance for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner moved away with a scowl.

He saw that neither Wharton nor Vernon-Smith had any use for him, and that he would have no part in the tour.

But he had had only himself to blame. Even Bolsover major, who was almost, if not quite, his chum, had little sympathy with him.

A day or two later the following announcement appeared on the school notice-board:

THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE ON TOUR!

The tour of English counties will commence on Monday next, when Harry Wharton's party will travel to Blackpool to meet the boys of Lancashire.

The following members of the Remove will form the party:

H. WHARTON (captain),
R. CHERRY,
F. NUGENT,
J. BULL,
H. J. R. SINGH,
M. LINLEY,
S. Q. I. FIELD,
T. BROWN,
M. DESMOND,
M. NEWLAND,
P. BOLSOVER,
P. DELAREY.

"Train leaves Friar-dale at 9.15 a.m. Wingate will accompany the party.

"Greyfriars expects that every man will do his duty!"

(Signed) HARRY WHARTON,
"Captain of the Remove."

There was quite a flutter when the notice was read.

"I guess that's all wrong," said Fisher T. Fish. "Where do I come in?"

"You don't; you stay out!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess you'll be nowhere without me!" said Fish scornfully. "Those galoots will make you see stars!"

"Something like this, I suppose?" said Johnny Bull.

And he sent the Yankee junior to the floor with such a bump that Fishy saw not only stars, but whole comets.

"I say!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "You've made a mistake, Wharton. I see you've got 'P. Bolsover' on the list. Surely that should read 'P. Todd'?"

Wharton smiled.

"You're to be Smithy's right-hand man, Todd," he said.

"Oh, good!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 18.

Bolsover major stamped up to the notice-board with a scowling brow.

He fully expected his own name to be conspicuous by its absence.

But a surprise awaited the bully of the Remove. He fairly hugged himself when he caught sight of his name.

"Well, I must say that's the most sensible thing you've done for whole terms, Wharton!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I counted you in," said Harry, "because you showed up well at practice. I only hope you'll keep it up!"

Bolsover's jaw set squarely.

"I mean to," he said. "I admit I've played fast and loose in the past, but you won't find me wanting when we get to Blackpool."

He put out his hand, and Harry Wharton gripped it hard.

There was no doubt that Bolsover would justify his inclusion in the chosen twelve.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Tour Commences.

MONDAY dawned—a glorious summer day, with sport in the very atmosphere.

The tourists turned out early. They had packed their flannels and blazers into a couple of cricket-bags, and were ready to start.

Wingate of the Sixth bore down upon them in the Close.

The captain of Greyfriars was looking merry and bright. He, too, was glad to break away for a spell from the everyday routine.

"Fit, you kids?"

"Fit as fiddles, Wingate!" said Squiff heartily.

"Off we go, then!"

Quite a crowd had gathered in the old gateway to wish the tourists good luck.

The success of the tour depended very largely upon the opening tussle with Lancashire.

Harry Wharton & Co. knew this, and every man was determined to give a good account of himself.

"An revoir, you fellows!"

"Mind you put it across Lancashire!"

"I—I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter scamped up at the last moment. "I—I missed my name isn't down on the list. It must have been an oversight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm coming along, anyway," said Bunter. "You've got thirteen now, including Wingate, and thirteen's an unlucky number."

And Bunter accompanied the tourists into the roadway.

The bell rang for morning lessons.

"Clear off, you fat duffer!" said Harry Wharton. "You'll be late for lessons!"

"Blow lessons! I'm coming to Blackpool!"

"Rats!"

"You'll be licked hollow if I don't come!"

"And you'll be licked hollow if you don't go!" growled Johnny Bull. "Quelchy will slaughter you, you ass!"

Wingate, who was in front, happened to turn his head at that moment.

"What are you doing here, Bunter?" he exclaimed. "Go in at once!"

"Oh, really, Wingate! I'm coming with you!"

"Not if I know it! Are you going back, or do you want to be rolled back?"

Billy Bunter blinked reproachfully at the party through his big glasses.

"I think it's a shame!" he said. "Personal jealousies at the bottom of it—as usual!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old porpoise!"

Very reluctantly, Bunter turned back, and the juniors thought they had seen the last of him.

But they hadn't!

Twenty minutes later, when the train was about to start, a fat figure came floundering on to the platform.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Bunter again! He's like the poor—always with us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter made a frantic effort to board the train as it started moving.

A couple of porters came forward, and swung him back.

"Get back to Greyfriars, you fat idiot!" roared Wingate, from the carriage-window.

The look of dismay on Bunter's fat face as the train gathered speed was so pathetic that Harry Wharton sniped a half-crown at Bunter.

"That's for a feed!" he shouted. "It will

fortify you for the licking Quelchy will give you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter caught the half-crown—with his nose. He gave a roar, and the juniors roared too—with laughter. They were still chuckling over the misfortunes of Bunter when the train reached Courtfield, where they had to change.

A long journey confronted them. Another change was made at London, and another in the Midlands; and several hours had elapsed before they eventually stepped out of the Central Railway Station at Blackpool.

"Jove, I'm famished!" said Bob Cherry, as the party emerged into the street. "Marky, you're a native of this place. Take me by the hand, and lead me to some delightful retreat where I can get a square meal for fourpence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mark Linley's eyes were sparkling.

He was back again in Blackpool—back to the home of his previous sorrows and joys—back to the cheery hustle and bustle of Lancashire.

Mark Linley loved his native county. Here, as a small lad, he had worked and played—chiefly the former, for there had been precious little time for play in those days. He had been a breadwinner, slaving in a cotton-mill from early morn until late at night—fighting to keep the home going. It had been a hard and bitter struggle; but Mark did not love Lancashire the less because of it.

"We'll go along to the hotel first," said Wingate, "and leave our things there. The rooms have already been booked."

"Good!"

"Lead on, Wingate!"

The juniors swung through the crowded streets—strangers in a strange land, but greeted with cheery smiles on all sides; for the Blackpool crowd is always a good-humoured one.

The hotel was one of the many prosperous ones overlooking the sea. The luggage was deposited with the hall-porter, and then Mark Linley led the way to a fashionable restaurant on the front.

Here the juniors tucked in to their hearts' content. The sports were not actually starting till the next morning, so there was no danger of overfeeding.

"That's tons better!" said Bob Cherry, sitting back with a sigh of contentment after his jam omelette. "What's the next move?"

"Are there any sights to be seen in this little fishing village?" asked Squiff.

"Fishing village! Why, I like your cheek!" said Mark Linley indignantly. "Blackpool's the finest seaside resort in the country, bar none! As for the sights, there are enough to keep us occupied for a week, if we had nothing else to do."

"Is there a village pump?" asked Tom Brown.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's the promenade," said Mark Linley—"Upper Walk, Middle Walk, and Lower Walk. Then there's the Tower—"

"The leaning tower of Pisa?" inquired Bolsover.

"No, you ass! There's only one tower, and it licks your Tower of Pisa and the Tower of London into a cocked hat! You can see the Isle of Man from the top of it on a clear day; and if you look to the south you can see the mountains of Wales."

"My hat!"

"Then there's the Big Wheel," said Mark Linley, "to say nothing of the Palace."

"There isn't a pier, by any chance?" asked Monty Newland.

"Use your eyes, you duffer! There are three!"

"Three piers! By Jove, Blackpool's certainly an eye-opener!"

The Famous Five had been to the celebrated Lancashire town before, and the sights were not new to them. But they enjoyed their second visit even better than the first.

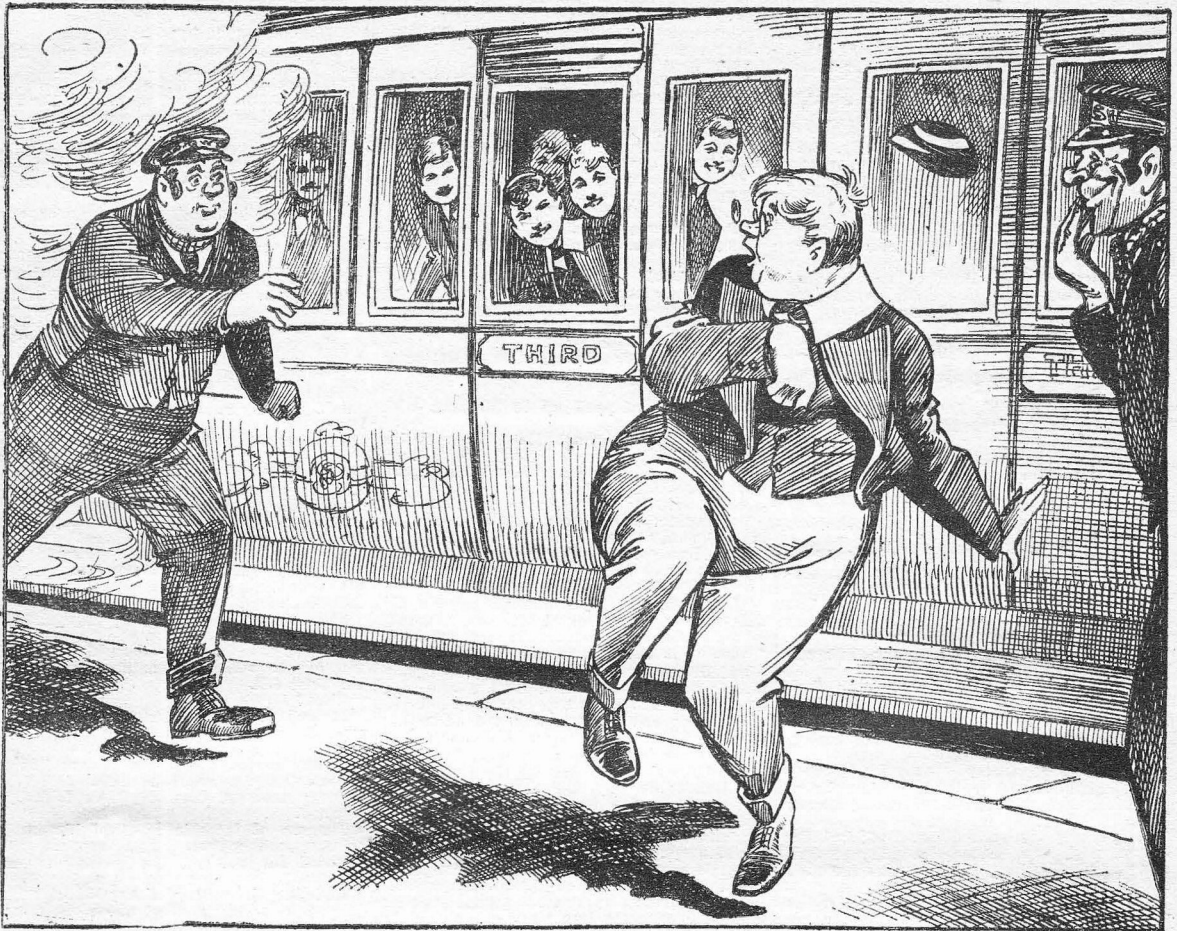
The afternoon was spent in patrolling the "prom" and in visiting the places Mark Linley had referred to.

Then came tea, followed in due course by a brisk swim in the sea—for swimming was to be one of the events.

"You kids had better turn in early," said Wingate. "You'll need all the sleep you can get. Some of you can hardly keep your eyes open as it is. And mind you tumble out sharp in the morning. I've ordered breakfast for seven."

"For seven!" said Bob Cherry, in dismay. "Why, there are thirteen of us!"

"Seven o'clock I mean, you silly chump!" said Wingate, smiling. "Good-night!"



Bunter was swung back from the moving train. His face was so pathetic that Wharton shied half-a-crown at him. "That's for a feed!" he shouted. Billy Bunter caught the half-crown—with his nose! (See page 4.)

"Yaw-aw-aw! Goo-ah! Wingate!" Very weary, but happy in the prospect of the golden days which stretched before them, the Greyfriars tourists trooped up to bed.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
The Great Cricket-Match.**

BLACKPOOL lay in a blaze of glory. The sun streamed down upon the recreation-ground, where the lads of Lancashire—selected from schools all over the county—were practising at the wickets.

Jack Hardy was their captain. He was a fellow not unlike Bob Cherry in appearance and disposition; though, unlike Bob, he had not enjoyed the advantages of a Greyfriars education. As a sportsman, however, he had no equal in Lancashire. Game to the last—always at his best when there was an uphill battle to be fought—Jack Hardy was a fine specimen of British boyhood.

Presently the Greyfriars fellows, no longer tired and stale, but fresh as the morning, came on the scene, and there was a cheer from the crowd, which, though not large as yet, was swelling rapidly.

Harry Wharton and Jack Hardy shook hands.

"We've been longing to meet you fellows," said Hardy. "We've heard all about Greyfriars, and it's the burning ambition of our lives to lick you at cricket."

"The ambition will have to go on burning, then!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" A marquee had been erected to serve as a pavilion.

As the juniors moved towards it, a murmur arose from a group of boys seated on the grass.

"There's Mark Linley!" said one.

"By gum, yes! Linley! This way, Linley!"

"Aren't you goin' to recognise your old pals?"

A slight flush mounted to Mark Linley's cheek as he stepped forward.

"Jolly pleased to see you, you fellows!" he said, shaking hands all round.

"You don't look it!" said the boy who had first spoken—a youth named Evans. "I suppose you're done with us for good now? Since you've been at that swell school, you've come to despise the likes of us."

"Yes, that he has!" chorused the others.

"That's all rot!" said Mark Linley. "Of course, I haven't been able to keep in touch with you all. Things have changed a good deal since I worked with you in the mill. But I haven't changed—not in the sense you mean, anyway."

"Glad to hear it!" said one of the boys. "We thought you had become a snob, Marky."

"And he has, too!" said Evans. "Just look at him! That flash blazer didn't come from a pawnshop, I'll bet! Linley's one of the nuts, now. He ain't got no use for his old pals."

"Oh, come off, Evans! Marky's all right!"

But Evans, who was jealous of Mark's rise in the world, looked sullen.

"Better run away and play with your uppish pals!" he sneered.

"Don't be a cad, Evans!" said Mark hotly.

"I ain't such a cad as to turn my back on my old pals, anyway!" said Evans.

"Look here—"

"Oh, clear off! I don't want no truck with you!"

Mark Linley turned on his heels, and rejoined his schoolfellows. He knew that he had made an enemy of Evans, and the knowledge made him rather uncomfortable.

But it did not put Mark off his game. Bob Cherry saw to that.

"We've won the toss, Marky," he said, "and you're going in at second wicket."

Mark nodded.

"And pull yourself together, for goodness' sake!" said Bob. "This is a cricket-match—not a funeral! Were those fellows insulting you?"

"Not exactly," said Mark. "Some of them

feel rather ruffled because my fortunes have changed, that's all."

"They ought to be proud of you!" said Bob Cherry. "I know I should be. Besides, they had just as much chance of going in for a scholarship as you did. What have they got to grouse about?"

"Oh, they're all right!" said Mark. "There's only Evans—"

"Blow Evans! If he worries you again, I'll scalp him!"

Mark Linley smiled, and watched Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent as they stepped out to open the innings.

The Lancashire boys took the field. Very fit and laddy they looked in their well-fitting flannels.

Jack Hardy went to the bowler's end; and when he sent down his first ball, the Greyfriars fellows knew that they were up against a tough proposition. Wharton was very lucky not to be clean bowled. The ball missed the off-stump by a hair's-breadth.

"We shall have all our work cut out," murmured Johnny Bull, as he watched Hardy's swift run and his lightning delivery. "Harry seems all at sea."

But Wharton pulled himself together, and the remaining balls of the over were dealt with in masterly fashion.

Then came Nugent's turn.

Frank Nugent was one of the Remove's best batsmen, and he always seemed to be at his best when the bowling was deadliest.

He now had to face a youth named Lennox, who was a young demon in the bowling line.

But Nugent played very carefully, and the first-wicket partnership yielded 40 runs for Greyfriars.

Then Wharton was clean bowled.

After that came a collapse.

Bob Cherry was smartly stumped before he could break his "duck." Mark Linley followed on, and after hitting Jack Hardy to the boundary twice in succession, he was caught at mid-wicket.

Squiff and Johnny Bull were bowled in the

same over; and then Nugent, who had put up a very fine innings, played the ball on to his wicket.

"Groo!" muttered Bob Cherry. "I don't like this at all. It's more like cocoanuts than anything else."

"Thank goodness it's a two-innings match!" said Squiff. "We've a chance to make up for it next time."

Micky Desmond, grinning cheerfully, went in to bat. He hit out briskly but rather recklessly, and he and Hurree Singh caused the score to put on flesh.

That was the only partnership of note, and the Remove were finally dismissed for 98—a score which was neither very good nor very bad.

The crowd—it was quite a respectable crowd by this time—cheered lustily when the Lancastrians opened their innings.

"Play up, Hardy!"

"Let's have a century, old man!" Jack Hardy smiled over his shoulder. He was evidently very popular in junior cricket circles.

Within two hours the Lancashire team were all out. But in those two hours they had fairly made the fur fly. Jack Hardy had rattled up 50, and the total score was 140, leaving Greyfriars 42 runs behind on the first innings.

Then came the lunch interval. "We've a long way to go," said Wharton, "but we're not whacked yet."

"Rather not!" said Squiff. "That fellow Lennox caught me napping in the first innings, but he won't do it again!"

"Pass me a strawberry-ice," said Bob Cherry. "I can always get more ginger into my batting after one of those."

Whether this was a fact or not, Bob certainly made a much better show in his second venture. He played with great dash and vigour, and his score of 70 helped to place Greyfriars in a very good position.

Lancashire started their second innings requiring 150 runs to win.

Would they get them? The crowd seemed to think so, in spite of the failing light and the deadliness of Hurree Singh's bowling.

Jack Hardy was soon disposed of; but the others, with true Lancashire grit, plugged away at the bowling, and the score mounted slowly, but surely.

The Greyfriars fieldsmen were active as squirrels.

Defeat loomed before them; and they struggled to stave off the inevitable.

But all their efforts proved unavailing; for, with two wickets still in hand, the boys of Lancashire passed their total.

Amidst a tempest of applause, the players trooped into the pavilion. The applause was meant for victors and vanquished, too, for both sides had played a great game.

Wingate, who had been acting as umpire, clapped Harry Wharton on the shoulder.

"Buck up, kid!" he said. "You're licked, but you gave them a good run for their money. And there are more events to come yet. Better luck to-morrow!"

Nothing daunted by their reverse, the Greyfriars party strolled back, under the early stars, to their hotel.

Lancashire had proved too good for them at cricket, but there were other events to follow; and the Greyfriars juniors looked forward with great eagerness to the prospect of turning the tables.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Man to Man.

EARLY next morning the boxing contest was due to take place. Bob Cherry was the chosen representative of Greyfriars.

No fighting-man in the Remove—not even Dick Russell—was up to the weight of Bob Cherry. His victories in the boxing-ring were legion; his defeats could be reckoned on the fingers of one hand.

But in meeting Jack Hardy, Bob was up against an unknown quantity. Unknown to the Greyfriars fellows, at any rate. Hardy's own chums knew him for a fellow who had no equal, locally, of his own size and weight.

When the spectators surged into the hall in which the contest was to take place, it was noticed that the Lancashire boys wore cheerful grins. They had great faith in their champion.

Harry Wharton accompanied Bob Cherry to the dressing-room.

"Feeling fit, Bob?" he asked anxiously.

"Fit enough to lick anything on two legs!" grinned Bob.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 18.

"Good! It will be too awful if Lancashire win all along the line!"

"Set your little mind at rest," said Bob.

"They won't!"

"But Jack Hardy—"

"Bless Jack Hardy! I know he's hot stuff. He's got the build of a boxer, and I hear that he won all sorts of local competitions. But you trust your uncle!"

A few moments later the two boxers stepped into the ring.

There was a murmur from the crowd, swelling into a roar.

"Good old Lancashire!"

"Put it across him, Jack!"

And then came another shout, not less loyal.

"Greyfriars!"

"Let's hear from you, Bob!"

The referee—a jovial Lancashire gentleman named Marsh—raised his hand for silence.

"Seconds out!" he said.

And then, after an impressive pause, came the command:

"Time!"

Jack Hardy stepped up to his man with cool assurance.

He did not underrate the ability of his man. But he had knocked out heftier fellows than Bob Cherry, and he did not anticipate any great difficulty on this occasion.

But a surprise was in store for him.

Dashing in, Bob Cherry beat a tattoo on his opponent's ribs.

Jack Hardy fell back gasping.

Before he could pull himself together, Bob Cherry was coming at him again.

"Bob's the man!" murmured Frank Nugent delightedly. "Just look at him, you fellows!"

"He's winning!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Winning in the first round, by Jove!"

But Johnny was too sanguine, too optimistic. Jack Hardy reeled from a smashing right to the temple; but he recovered himself, and with a great rally, succeeded in getting to grips with the Greyfriars fellow.

It was give and take after that.

Bob Cherry did his share of the giving; but the Lancashire boy did not let him have matters all his own way.

When the bell rang at the end of the round, Bob's lip was bleeding, and one of his eyes was about to put up the shutters.

But it was Bob's round. The Greyfriars fellow had done most of the attacking; and Harry Wharton's eyes were sparkling as he brought the sponge into play.

"Keep it up, Bob, old man!" he said.

"Give him another of those smashing rights. He won't stop many more like that!"

Bob Cherry grinned breathlessly.

"Jove, but that fellow's as hard as nails!"

he muttered. "I thought I had beaten him when the fight was a minute old; but I can see that I shall have to go all out now!"

"Good luck!" said Harry.

And he sent his chum up for the second round.

The hammer-and-tongs element seemed to go out of the fight after this.

Both boxers settled down into a steady groove.

There was a good deal of smart footwork, Jack Hardy being particularly agile in this respect; but very few telling blows were delivered on either side.

The spectators began to shift restlessly in their seats.

"Wake up, Hardy!" came the cry.

Jack Hardy grinned.

The advice of the crowd was well-meaning, but he ignored it. He wished to hold some of his energy in reserve. Something told him he would have need of it later.

The third and fourth rounds were repetitions of the second.

Honours were fairly easy now; and it was anybody's bout.

But when the fifth round started, Jack Hardy became animated with new life.

Right and left, left and right, his fists shot out.

Bob Cherry stood his ground, but he bore heavy punishment.

The Greyfriars juniors, as they watched their champion facing a hail of blows, felt their hearts sink.

One question was in the minds of each.

Would Bob Cherry be able to hold out?

Bob was certainly going through the mill now. Would he be able to rally? Or would Jack Hardy's furious onslaught knock all the fight out of him?

"Budd!"

The Lancashire boy's left got home on Bob Cherry's chest, just above the heart.

It was a tremendous blow, and Bob staggered. But he kept his feet, and, towards the end of the round, succeeded in getting

home a return blow—a blow which made Jack Hardy reel.

"Well played, Bob!"

"That is the esteemed stuff to presentfully give 'em!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Both combatants were very much the worse for wear when they came up for the sixth round.

Bob Cherry, especially, presented so pitiful a figure that Mr. Marsh began seriously to debate in his mind whether he ought to stop the fight.

But he realised that such an action would anger the crowd, and, besides, there were bound to be hard knocks in an affair of this sort.

So Mr. Marsh held his peace.

The sixth round was what Bob Cherry afterwards described to his chums as a "scorcher."

Jack Hardy came at him with fixed determination on his face.

Everyone could see that the Lancastrian hoped to end the fight in this round. He smote seldom; but when he did so, he smote hard.

However, Bob Cherry was more like his old self now. His mind wandered for a brief second to the old gym at Greyfriars, where he had fought and won so many keen contests.

Surely he would not fall now!

Surely he could keep his end up against this persistent son of Lancashire!

Bob realised what a shock it would be to the fellows at Greyfriars to know that he had failed—that he, the champion of the Remove, had been licked.

Squaring his shoulders, he plunged into the fray with renewed vigour.

There was to be no question of failure. He was out to win—and win he would, though the skies fell.

"Budd!"

It was Jack Hardy again, with another smashing right to the temple.

Bob Cherry fell back gasping.

It was a blow which would have "outed" a less sturdy fellow than Bob.

For a moment the Greyfriars fellow was stunned.

The sea of faces in front of him seemed strange and unreal. The hum of voices sounded far off, like the distant drone of the sea.

And then the voice of Harry Wharton came to him, clear and distinct above the rest:

"Buck up, Bob!"

And Bob did.

His head was swimming, his legs were like leaden weights. He was conquered in everything but spirit.

But he came on again, grimly resolute.

As in a mist, he saw his opponent's face. He swung out his right at it, and missed. Then he forced his left into action, and the blow got home.

"Follow it up!"

It was Frank Nugent's voice this time.

Again Bob Cherry went at his man.

Jack Hardy kept him at bay with a hit to the jaw, but only for a moment.

Sailing in, Bob Cherry put all the remaining strength into one powerful blow. He knew that, should this blow fail, he was beaten.

But the blow did not fail.

Jack Hardy made a futile attempt to ward it off; and then, to the utter consternation of the majority of the crowd, the Lancashire fellow reeled, and measured his length on the boards.

In a dispassionate tone, the referee started to count.

"One—two—three—"

"Come on, Jack!"

"Four—five—six—seven—"

There was a groan from the Lancastrians.

"Eight—nine—"

Jack Hardy made a desperate effort to rise. He partially succeeded, but fell back again upon the boards. He had shot his bolt.

"Ten! Bob Cherry wins!"

The next instant a number of juniors seated in the front of the hall seemed suddenly to take leave of their senses.

Springing to their feet, they rushed to the ringside, and Bob Cherry was overwhelmed with congratulations.

But the next moment a sudden hush fell upon the crowd. For the victor, spent and exhausted, fell back against the ropes in a dead faint.

Hurree Singh promptly procured some water, and in a short space of time Bob Cherry came round.

He had fought a great fight—perhaps the greatest in his youthful career. And one of the first to approach him when he recovered was Jack Hardy.

"Give me your fist, old man!" said the Lancashire boy. "You've whacked me—fairly and squarely!"

And as the hands of victor and vanquished met in a tight grip, a rousing cheer went up from the crowd—a cheer which rang very pleasantly in the ears of Bob Cherry, the hero of the hour!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Good-bye to Blackpool!

THE afternoon was devoted to the swimming sports, which were held in the sea.

A Lancashire boy won the 50 yards' race, and Hurree Singh, who employed a vigorous side-stroke, came in a good second.

The relay race fell to Greyfriars. And then came the biggest swim of all—to the end of one of the piers and back.

Only six fellows—three from each side—entered for this stern event.

The Greyfriars trio consisted of Harry Wharton, Hurree Singh, and Mark Linley.

An interested crowd gathered on the wide sands as the six swimmers lined up for the start; and a good many rowing-boats, manned chiefly by Lancashire supporters, were bobbing up and down on the waves.

The order was given, and the swimmers plunged to their task.

The hopes of the Greyfriars fellows were centred upon Hurree Singh. But, curiously enough, it was Mark Linley who drew away from the rest, and forged on in front.

Mark was in splendid form, and as he breasted the seething waves he felt a keen sense of exhilaration—a sense of mastery.

He was out to win! Behind him, breathing hard as he ploughed through the water, came a Lancastrian.

Mark Linley quickened his stroke. He was nearing the end of the pier now.

Then, to his dismay, he saw a rowing-boat about to cross his path. Mark shouted to the oarsman.

"Hi! Look out! But the boy in the boat took no heed. He wilfully obstructed Mark Linley's progress.

Mark saw that his only chance of winning the race would be to make a detour, and swim round the boat.

He started to do so, and the oarsman—whom he now recognised as Evans—stood up in the boat and raised an oar in readiness to strike.

Mark saw the danger, and struck out vigorously.

The oar swept through the air, narrowly missing Mark's head; and then there was a sudden cry, followed by a splash.

Evans had lost his footing in the boat, and toppled overboard!

Mark Linley saw at a glance that his enemy was unable to swim.

Evans disappeared beneath the surface, and when he came up again his features were distorted and pale.

He tried to clutch at the side of the boat, which, however, was borne away on the tide. "Help!" he panted feebly.

Mark Linley could hear the shouts of alarm from the people on the sands.

The rest of the swimmers were about to

been foul play. They supposed that Evans had accidentally capsized. Had they known the facts, there would have been short shrift for Mark Linley's enemy.

For some moments Evans lay gasping on the sands. Then he struggled to his feet and turned to his rescuer.

"Linley," he said hoarsely. "I—I didn't deserve this! You ought to have left me to drown, like the rat I am!"

Mark smiled. "Better come along and dry your togs," he said. "We'll say no more about this little affair. The others don't know."

"Linley, you're a brick! I called you a snob and an upstart, but, by gum, you're worth fifty of me! I shan't forget this in a hurry."

Mark was now out of the race, of course. But as he moved away with Evans he saw, with great satisfaction, that Harry Wharton had established a fine lead, and was winning hands down.

Shortly afterwards Bob Cherry's stentorian shout proclaimed that the race was over and won.

The Greyfriars Remorse was proving its mettle, after all!

The week passed all too swiftly.

The running races took place next day, and honours were pretty evenly divided.

The hundred yards fell to Frank Nugent, and the hurdle race to the agile Squiff.

Bob Cherry won the mile by a yard from Jack Hardy, and the rest of the events went to the Lancashire boys.

It was with real regret that Harry Wharton & Co. packed up and bade farewell to their late opponents.

The lads of the northern county had proved themselves sportsmen through and through. They had played the game from start to finish. They had accepted victory and

defeat alike with a smile. And they were heartily sorry that the Greyfriars fellows were going back.

As for Evans, his jealousy of Mark Linley changed to the deepest admiration, and he was never likely to molest his former work-mate again.

Greyfriars turned out to a man to welcome its heroes. And Harry Wharton & Co. were made to recount over and over again, in study and dormitory, their stirring tussles with the Loyal Lads of Lancashire!

THE END.

SCORE IN THE GREAT MATCH.

HARRY WHARTON'S XI. v. BOYS OF LANCASHIRE.

HARRY WHARTON'S XI.

<i>First Innings.</i>		<i>Second Innings.</i>	
H. Wharton, b Hardy	22	c Hammond, b Hardy	27
F. Nugent, lbw., b Lennox .. .	30	c & b Hardy	8
R. Cherry, st Brooks, b Lennox ..	0	run out	70
M. Linley, c Wickens, b Hardy ..	8	b Lennox	22
S. G. I. Field, l Hardy	0	b Lennox	15
J. Bull, b Hardy	0	c Brooks, b Hardy	6
M. Desmond, c & b Hardy	15	b Lennox	0
H. J. R. Singh, b Lennox	12	c & b Lennox	4
T. Brown, run out	2	b Hardy	12
M. Newland, b Lennox	3	c R. P. Smith, b Hardy	14
P. Bolsover not out	4	not out	7
Extras	2	Extras	6
	98		191

BOYS OF LANCASHIRE.

<i>First Innings.</i>		<i>Second Innings.</i>	
J. Hardy, b Singh	50	b Singh	0
E. H. Spooner, c Cherry, b Singh ..	7	b Brown	28
J. V. Smith, run out	15	c & b Singh	12
R. P. Smith, c & b Singh	15	c Desmond, b Brown	8
C. W. Wickens, lbw., b Singh	12	b Singh	22
P. Hammond, b Singh	6	not out	34
T. Hindle, b Singh	2	b Singh	20
S. J. Brooks, c Bull, b Wharton ..	5	b Singh	8
R. Fletcher, c Linley, b Singh ..	9	c Wharton, b Brown	4
G. Manning, b Wharton	5	not out	12
C. E. Lennox, not out	10	did not bat	—
Extras	4	Extras	2
	140	(for 8 wkts.)	150

Umpires: G. Wingate (Greyfriars) and Mr. P. Marsh (Lancashire).

make for the spot, but Mark shouted to them:

"Carry on with the race! There's no danger!"

In a few swift strokes he was at Evans' side.

"Over on your back!" he rapped out. "And rely on me."

Evans was too terrified to comply, so Mark forcibly wrenched him backwards in the water, and then, swimming on his back, commenced to tow the youth to the shore.

A cheer went up as Mark Linley safely landed his burden.

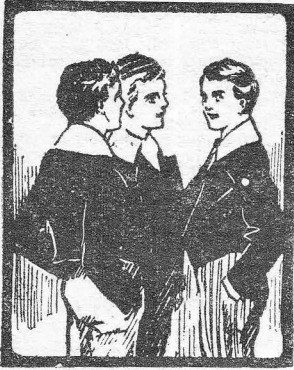
The crowd were not aware that there had

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FOUND OUT!

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Chums of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Arrival of the Swell.

MY hat!!
Jimmy Silver ejaculated that remark as he was crossing the quad from the Modern House to the Classics.

With him were Newcome, Raby, and Lovell, and as they looked in the same direction they, too, found cause for surprise.

"My giddy grandmother!" said Raby. "What the dickens is it?"

"Escaped from some circus, I should think!" exclaimed Lovell.

Jimmy Silver chuckled. "We'd better go and talk to it," he said.

And the four chums made their way towards the gates.

The object for their surprise was not an animal, as Lovell's remark seemed to imply. But certainly Jimmy Silver & Co. had never seen anything like that which had appeared in the gateway of the famous old school.

A boy, about their own age, judging by his dress and general appearance, was standing at the gates and gazing about him in an interested manner.

There was nothing peculiar about that, but there was something very peculiar about the new arrival's clothes.

He was dressed in the most perfect-fitting clothes Jimmy Silver & Co. had ever seen. His waistcoat was of a gorgeous pattern, and over the tops of his shoes he wore a pair of check spats.

His topper glistened in the sun, and as he moved something glittered on his fingers.

"He's got a diamond ring on!" gasped Lovell. "My hat! And spats!"

"Look at his waistcoat!" cried Silver. "Isn't he a picture?"

"Come to advertise some tailor's shop, I should imagine," said Newcome drily.

They approached the gorgeously-dressed boy, and as he saw them coming he advanced to meet them, topper in hand.

"Pway tell me, deah boys," he drawled, "is this Rookwood?"

Jimmy Silver chuckled. "This is, your lordship!" he said, with a faint bow.

The stranger looked surprised. "You make a mistake," he said in the same languid tones. "I am not a lord, you know. My name is Percy Montgomery, you know."

Evidently the Fistical Four were expected to know a lot.

"And are you going to honour us with your company in this noble and illustrious school?" asked Silver, adopting a servile tone. The stranger nodded.

"Yes, rathah!" he drawled. "Seems an awfully beasty good sort of a place, you know."

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled. "I should say it is!" said Raby warmly.

"This place is the top-hole school in the country!"

"Good! Fellows rich, I suppose?" The remark was made casually enough, but there seemed to be a trace of eagerness in the way in which it was spoken.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. New boys were always, more or less, coming to the school, but never before had they seen one to rival this one.

Percy Montgomery seemed to be aware of the scrutiny the chums were making of him. He put his hand up to straighten his tie, although it was perfectly correct.

And as he moved his hand there glittered on his white fingers a huge diamond ring that must have been worth a hundred pounds at the least.

Jimmy Silver pointed to it. "Shouldn't wear that here," he said quietly.

"Nobody wears rings or spats at Rookwood. Besides, you'll get ragged to blazes if the fellows see it!"

Percy Montgomery looked surprised. "Oh, really, I am much obliged for the hint, deah boy!" he said, and drew the ring from his finger.

He made a movement as if to throw it away, and the Fistical Four fairly gasped. They knew that there were some men in the world to whom a hundred pounds was nothing, but that a junior at a public school should throw away a valuable diamond ring because he couldn't wear it at the school staggered them.

"Don't do that, dummy—sorry, Montgomery!" said Silver hastily.

"Why not?" ejaculated the new boy. "Can't see the sense of carrying a ring in one's waistcoat-pocket, you know."

"Still, there's no need to feed the crows with it!" said Raby, somewhat sarcastically.

"There's such a thing as a postal service, and you could send it home."

"Thanks, deah boy, I will," said Montgomery. "Would you please show me to the Head-chap?"

"Better not let Dr. Chisholm hear you alluding to him as a Head-chap!" snapped Newcome. "You'll get it where the chicken got the ancestral battle-axe!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. escorted the new junior to the Head's study, passing many fellows, who stopped to stare at the wondrous waistcoat and check spats.

Several humorous remarks were passed, to all of which Montgomery disdained to reply. But Silver noted his eyes gleam a little as they made their way along the passage to the Head's study.

"We'll wait," said Silver. "Knock, and the Head will call you when he's ready for you."

The junior knocked, and was almost instantly bidden to enter. The Fistical Four stared at one another when the door had closed behind him.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" exclaimed Newcome. "Fancy trying to throw away a diamond ring like that!"

Jimmy Silver nodded. "Must be worth pots of money!" he said slowly. "Pots hardly describe it; should have said barrels!"

"I can see some fun with the Johnny," chuckled Raby. "Hope he goes to the Moderns, 'cos we'll be able to chip Tommy Dodd & Co. about him."

The other juniors nodded. At that moment Percy Montgomery came out of the Head's study. His face was flushed, whether with embarrassment or anger the juniors couldn't say at the time.

But it was noticeable that he carried his spats in his hand, and his coat was buttoned up over his gorgeous waistcoat.

"All right?" asked Silver. "Which House are you going to?"

"What a beast of a chap, you know!" said Montgomery, as if he had not heard Silver's question.

There was no trace of a drawl in his voice. His eyes were glittering angrily, and his white hands were clenched so hard that the knuckles showed prominently through the skin.

The juniors reddened as they heard the revered Head referred to as a beast.

"Chuck it!" snapped Silver jaconically. "The Head's a top-hole chap! Bit crusty at times, perhaps, but he's far from being a beast!"

"Talked to me like a blessed kid, indeed!" went on Montgomery angrily.

The juniors stared. "Well, aren't you?" demanded Silver hotly.

The new boy started. He seemed to become aware of the Fistical Four for the first time. The anger died out of his face, and the languid manner was once more apparent.



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"Sorry, deah boys!" he drawled. "Not used to be spoken to sharply, you know. Had my own way."

"Fond mamma—eh?" suggested Newcome. "That's it, deah boy!" assented Montgomery hastily. "However, I'm in the Physical Fourth, so will you—"
"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose you mean 'Classical Fourth,' don't you?" laughed Silver; while his chums chuckled.

"That's it!"
And Montgomery was taken to the Classical Fourth's quarters, where they found him an empty study.

The new boy looked round somewhat disgustedly at the small quarters which would be his as long as he remained in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

The floor was bare of any carpets, and the windows needed cleaning. It was smaller than most of the studies in the Fourth Form passage, and although it would look decidedly more comfortable when a few pieces of furniture and a carpet were put in, in its present state it did not appear inviting.

"Buy our own blessed carpets, I suppose?" said Montgomery.

"Well, you'll get something in that way, of course," explained Jimmy. "But if you want a luxurious place, you have to set it up yourself."

"Thanks, deah boy! I'll toddle down to the gates and see if my boxes have arrived," said Montgomery. "Much obliged for your kind help, you know."

"Don't mench!" said Silver lightly.
And the four chums proceeded to their own study, discussing the peculiarities of the new junior. They chuckled with amusement as they pictured Percy Montgomery being told by the Head to take off his spats and cover up his gorgeous waistcoat.

But the making of the tea soon put all thoughts of Percy Montgomery out of their heads; and then came evening prep, so, despite the impression the new junior had made on Jimmy Silver & Co. when he first entered the gates of Rookwood, he was soon forgotten.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Something Wrong.

"SILVER!"
It was Percy Montgomery who called out that name as the juniors were leaving the Form-room after morning lessons the day following Montgomery's arrival at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver turned as he heard his name called.

"Hallo! Who calleth me?" he cried cheerily.
"I did, deah boy!" said Montgomery languidly.

He came to the Fistical Four as he spoke, and thrust his arm through Jimmy Silver's.

"Come along to the tuckshop," said Montgomery. "Must have a bit of grub before dinner, you know."

"You'll spoil it," said Jimmy, gently but firmly removing the new boy's arm from his own. "We get jolly good grub here, and we never have anything until after dinner—then only some fruit, as a rule."

"That's all right," said Montgomery, pressing on. "Once in a way won't hurt you—not unless boys have altered since my—ahem—I mean since I left my last school."

"What was that?" asked Silver.
"Er—er—Grevfrians," said Montgomery hesitatingly. "Come on!"

And Jimmy Silver & Co., somewhat against their will, followed the new junior across the quadrangle to the tuckshop.

There was nobody there when they arrived, which seemed to please Montgomery. They partook of ginger-beer and a few cakes, which Montgomery paid for out of a pound-note taken from a wad he carried in his coat-pocket.

Jimmy Silver & Co. found the new junior quite a pleasant fellow to get on with. He was evidently anxious to make a good impression on his Form-mates, for he persistently endeavoured to make Jimmy Silver and his chums have some more ginger-beer and cakes. But the juniors shook their heads. They did not want to spoil their dinners.

"Then wait while I have another pop," said Montgomery.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.
"Half a tick, old son!" he said, thrusting his hand in his breast-pocket. "I've got a quid-note here somewhere. Have one with me."

Montgomery shook his hand to signify that it didn't matter, but Silver was adamant. He fumbled into his pocket, and, taking out a letter, extracted the note.

In putting his letter back into his pocket, he dropped the note. Instantly the new boy's hand came out of his trousers-pocket, and he picked up the note and handed it to Jimmy.

"Thanks!" said Jimmy. "Here—another pop, please!"

Sergeant Kettle, who kept the tuckshop at Rookwood, handed over the bottle of ginger-beer, and took the proffered note. He was about to put it in his till, when he hesitated, and bent his head over it.

"What's up?" asked Jimmy. "Think it's a dud?"

The sergeant nodded.
"Yes, I'm afraid it is, Master Silver," he said slowly. "Of course, I know—"

"Here, hand it over!" said Jimmy. "You've made a blessed mistake. I only got it from my father yesterday. Let me have a look."

The juniors crowded round as Silver took the note, and examined it closely. To all appearances it was a genuine one, but when one came to closely examine it, there seemed something faulty in the colouring of the printing.

Jimmy Silver stared at it in surprise.
"Well, I'm jiggered!" he said. "Blessed if I would have noticed it myself!"

Montgomery peered over Silver's shoulder.
"Yes—doesn't look a good one when you come to peer closely," he said languidly. "However, doesn't matter. I'll—"

"Doesn't matter!" snorted Jimmy. "Think we're all blessed millionaires? That's got to last me a long time, my son!"

Raby chuckled.
"I think it will last you until we get to the study," he said.

"What do you mean, ass?" demanded Jimmy angrily.

"Why, we'll light the stove with it," said Raby.

Silver glared.
"Let me catch you lighting your blessed stove with my note!" he said heatedly.

"Right-ho, ducky! Keep your wool on!" murmured Raby.

Newcome was called upon to lend Silver a shilling to pay for the ginger-beer, which was forthcoming.

Silver, still peering at the bad note, and flushed and angry because he had not found out before he passed it over the tuckshop counter, led the way back to the Classical House for dinner.

The news that Silver had got a bad pound-note very quickly spread, not only over the Classical Fourth, but the Modern House as well.

Tommy Dodd & Co. heard about it, and came over to see for themselves.

They humorously suggested that James Silver & Co., Unlimited, except for cheek, had set up a counterfeit printing-machine, and were going to swindle their unsuspecting schoolmates.

To which remark Jimmy Silver had replied, not in words, but in forcibly ejecting the three Tommies from their study. Newcome, Raby, and Lovell, though they chuckled at the expression on their leader's face when Tommy Dodd made the suggestion, assisted in the performance.

Tommy Dodd & Co. thereupon departed to their own House, not a bit ruffled by the heavy handling they had experienced.

"I'm jolly well fed up!" snapped Jimmy, when he had dusted his coat after the ejection. "Anybody would think I tried to swindle old Kettle."

"Never mind!" said Raby comfortingly. "It's only once in ten blue moons one gets done like that. Send it back to your pater and he'll send another one."

To which course Jimmy Silver finally agreed, and the bad note was posted. But for the rest of the day Jimmy Silver & Co. had to put up with a considerable amount of chipping.

It was to get away from their tormentors, in fact, that accounted for Jimmy Silver & Co. to be standing by the gates of the School at dusk.

But they were not alone for long. Montgomery, the new junior, came hurriedly along soon after they had reached the shadows of the gate. He appeared to be in a hurry, and not over-anxious to be seen, judging from the hurried glances he flung behind him every few yards.

"Is the ass going to break gates?" whispered Raby.

Jimmy Silver held up a warning finger.
"Shush!" he murmured. "Wait and see—"

"Shush yourself!" began Raby hotly. "I—"

But further utterance was stopped by Jimmy Silver's hand being placed over his mouth.

Raby glared, but the peculiar manner in which Percy Montgomery was approaching the gates attracted his attention, and he forbore to resist his chum's act.

Montgomery was literally crawling towards the gates, looking over his shoulder to see if he was being followed.

He must have heard Raby when the latter spoke, but he only gave the shadows one suspicious glance before he continued his way.

He passed out of the gates at last, and after one final glance round he put his arms to his side and ran.

Jimmy Silver peered at his chums through the darkness.

"What's up with that idiot?" he demanded. "How do we know, fathead?" snapped Raby.

"Better chase him," suggested Newcome. "Come on!"

And the Fistical Four set out from the school without a thought of the consequences which would follow their being found out of gates at that time of the day.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

His Deserts!

"AFTER him!"
Jimmy Silver panted the words from between his teeth as he and his chums ran down the country lane in the darkness.

"The fathead!" gasped Raby. "I expect he's only out for a feed or something."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Not him!" he said emphatically. "A chap doesn't take all the trouble he did to break gates if he's only out for a lark."

"We'll bump him!" said Newcome. "Can't have the Classics doing that sort of thing, you know."

Jimmy Silver & Co. ran on in silence for some minutes. Their feet were encased in rubber shoes, so they made little or no noise as they ran.

Suddenly Lovell stopped.
"Halt!" he cried. "There's somebody ahead!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. halted.
They could not see anybody at the moment, but they took their chum's word.

"What did you see?" asked Raby.
"Somebody—looked like two people—walked slowly past that lamp right ahead," replied Lovell quickly. "One was a small chap, and the other was a fairly tall, stout man."

"You think it was Montgomery?" asked Silver.

Lovell nodded.
"Yes. But I say, you chaps, doesn't this bizz savour of eavesdropping?" he said slowly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.
"Blessed if I know why we came, come to think of it!" said Raby. "None of our business, anyway!"

"Something wrong," said Silver. "I don't know what it is; but I'm sure nobody breaking gates would be so anxious as Montgomery was. Any-old-how, I'm going to see for myself."

"May as well," said Lovell, with a shrug of his shoulders. "If he's up to no rotten bizz we can push off back before we're discovered."

And the juniors hurried along the lane, keeping close to the hedges to avoid being seen.

They had gone about half a mile, when again Lovell pulled his chums up short.

"There he is!" he whispered. "There—right ahead!"

The rest of the Co. looked in the direction indicated by Lovell's finger, and out of the darkness they made out the dim outline of two figures.

"Better go up ahead—behind the hedge," murmured Silver.

And, without waiting for his chums, he mounted the low embankment and pushed his way through the hedge.

He waited a moment, then as he saw the Co. were through, he led the way slowly and carefully towards the pair who were still talking in the shadows.

"Don't like this blessed stunt," whispered Raby disgustedly. "I feel like a beastly, listening, prying worm!"

"Shush! They'll hear you," murmured Silver. "If it's any consolation to you, you can kick me if my suspicions are unfounded."

"I jolly well will!" growled Raby.

"Shut up, you two," snapped Newcome, "or I'll kick you both now!"

They drew near the unsuspecting talkers, and could ever catch a stray word here and there in the conversation.

As their eyes grew used to the darkness they could make out the figures to be Montgomery and a stout, overdressed man of middle age.

The junior was talking as the Fistical Four stopped immediately behind them.

"Not much use, so far," Montgomery was saying, in his drawing way. "Too blessed tight on their money."

"Drop that drawl when you're talking to me, Ernie!" the stout man said sharply.

The juniors jumped. Percy Montgomery, being addressed as "Ernie" and told not to drawl!

There was something wrong. And Jimmy Silver triumphantly poked Raby in the ribs.

"Ow! You ass—" began Raby, in a fierce whisper.

The two figures in the roadway started, and peered intently at the spot where the juniors were hidden.

"What was that?" ejaculated Montgomery.

"Nothing—a rat, maybe," answered the other slowly.

And the juniors breathed again.

"Haven't you got anything at all yet?" asked the stout man.

"Yes; I managed to get one in the school tuckshop," said Montgomery, with a chuckle. "I had a dud note in my hand all the time in case an opportunity popped up. One did—chap named Silver dropped a note—a good one—and in picking it up I gave him the dud."

"And did he find it out?" demanded the other anxiously.

"Well, no. He didn't see me do it—I was too quick!" said Percy boastfully. "Wonderful how the hand deceives the eye, isn't it, George?"

"What ho!" he muttered.

"But the chap who keeps the shop spotted it. But I got the good one all right. I'm thinking of having a competition or something to get plenty of the notes in my hands—then for a haul and a bunk!"

"Trust you, Ernie. I always did say you were smart!" said George enthusiastically.

"Well, look here, I'm off now. Let me know how you get on. Want any more duds just now?"

"Not at present. I'll break gates again soon, and come and see you—with some good quid notes in place of those I've got in my pockets," said Montgomery. "However, so-long!"

The two shook hands warmly, and went their respective ways—Montgomery towards the school, and the man he called George towards the village.

For a moment Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at each other in silence. That such a daring swindler should come to Rookwood, to get rid of his spurious notes—they had never heard anything like it! It absolutely took their breath away.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Silver. "So that's how the blessed bounder did me, was it? I'll jolly soon teach—"

Raby caught his arm.

"Whoa back!" he said sharply. "Jimmy, my son, I'll own up you have done us a bit of good over this business. Now it's up to us to spoil their little game."

"That's it," said Lovell quickly. "Look here, I'll go into the village and inform the police, and you chaps go and look after Percy, the drawler!"

And, without waiting for an agreement to be reached on that subject, Lovell was running quickly down the lane, almost before the words were out of his mouth.

The juniors stared after him in surprise.

"Like a blessed 'tec after rogues!" chuckled Raby. "However, he's gone now, so we can't get him back. I think I ought to have gone, though."

"Rats!" said Silver. "Of course, I ought to have gone! I—"

"And while you're talking about who ought to have gone," interrupted Newcome sarcastically, "the illustrious Percy has gone! Come on, you duffers, let's get back to Rookwood!"

"And Percy!" added Silver, with a frown.

The juniors set out for the school, talking in low tones. Fortunately, they did not meet

anybody on the way, otherwise they might have been unable to account for their being out at that time of the evening.

Supper was over when they reached the Classical House, and the majority of the juniors had retired to their studies to chat before going up to bed.

Jimmy Silver & Co., after one peep in the Common-room, went up to the Modern Fourth Form passage, and knocked on Montgomery's study door.

They were bidden to enter in the drawing tones they had come to know was affected.

"Come in, deah boys!" called out Montgomery.

Jimmy Silver & Co. went in, and quietly shut the door.

Montgomery looked alarmed for a moment at the stern faces of the juniors, then his lips twisted in a smile.

"What you call a jape—eh?" he said lightly.

"I'm afraid we don't!" said Jimmy Silver hotly. "If you call coming to a decent school and swindling the fellows with dud notes a jape, I'm jolly sure you're mistaken!"

Montgomery's face whitened.

"Wh-what do you—you mean?" he stammered.

"You know jolly well what I mean!" said Silver disgustedly. "You—you worm! We heard your little chat with Mr. George—"

"Sneaks! Spying taught here, then!" sneered Montgomery, all the drawl gone from his voice.

Jimmy Silver flushed.

"Another word like that, and we'll bump the cheek out of you, you—you toad!" he snapped angrily. "We saw you at the gate, if it interests you, and your manner roused our suspicions. We—we followed you—thought perhaps you were pub-haunting. But you're worse than a pub-haunter!"

"And now?" sneered Montgomery.

"And now George is already under arrest—if Lovell has been quick enough!" said Silver.

"What!"

Montgomery's face whitened still more. He half-rose from his chair, clutching the arm so tightly as to almost force his knuckles through their covering of skin.

"Think we're going to let a dangerous couple like you go about at large?" snorted Raby. "You're jolly well going through it, my son!"

"Where's my note?" said Silver.

"I've—I've given it to—George!" stammered Montgomery, as he chose to call himself.

"And now we're going to give it you!" said Silver angrily. "Collar him, you chaps!"

Montgomery, half-dazed with the shock of being discovered, was helpless in the hands of the sturdy juniors.

"What shall we do with him?" asked Raby.

"Chuck him in the swimming-baths!" said Silver disgustedly. "Do the beggar good to have a bath before he goes to prison!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" began Montgomery. But words were futile.

Montgomery was half-dragged, half-carried down to the swimming-baths, and flung into the middle. He met the water with a yell which was drowned in the resounding splash which followed.

And as he crawled to the side, he found a police official from the village awaiting him with open arms.

Lovell stood just behind, a grin of satisfaction on his face, while every moment brought more juniors to the scene.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. carried their laurels with becoming modesty, being thankful enough for having rid themselves for ever of Percy Montgomery!

THE END.

(There will be another Splendid New and Original Long Complete School Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood in next Friday's issue of the PENNY POPULAR. Order your copy in advance.)

NEW TALES TO TELL.

CHARACTER SKETCH OF MOTHER.

Mr. Muddlefog suffers rather from fits of abstraction, when he forgets that anyone else is present, and does his thinking aloud.

The other evening he was toasting his number elevens before the parlour fire, while his wife was busy mending a sock that would have made a very respectable cinder-sifter. Presently she began to talk about her mother, but the lord of the manor was in one of his absent moods, and from time to time he murmured such unkind things as:

"Ugh, the beast! She ought to be shot! I never heard of such a vicious old brute! Boiling alive is too good for her!"

"Oh, Murgatroyd!" said his wife at last. "Poor, dear mother may have her faults, but you shouldn't say such dreadful things about her!" And she began to weep salt tears.

"What's that?" said Muddlefog, rousing himself. "I was not speaking of your mother, my dear. I was thinking of the next door cat!"

INGRATITUDE.

The car was full, and the old lady tired and feeble. Quickly a young man offered his seat.

"One minute!" she said. "Do I look eccentric?"

"No, madam."

"Or as if I'd go straight home and alter my will in your favour?"

"Such a thing never occurred to me!" stammered the young man, while the other passengers stared and giggled.

"Then I'll take the seat," said the old lady. "But I don't want any misunderstanding."

When he had whispered to the conductor that the days of chivalry were gone for ever, the young man jumped from the car, and tried to work off his emotions by walking home.

JUST AS GOOD.

It was early in the afternoon when the young man entered the saloon of the tonorial artist.

Presently there stepped from behind a chair, which had hitherto concealed him, a small boy.

The customer looked at him doubtfully, but the boy's hair was so lavishly oiled as to inspire a certain amount of confidence; and the young man sat down in the solitary chair.

"Hair-cut," he said.

Without a moment's hesitation the boy began to lather his victim's chin.

Then the customer rose in his wrath, and tried to get some of the soap out of his mouth with the towel.

"Boy," he said, "I don't want a shave!"

"But I can't cut your hair, sir," said the budding barber. "All I do is to rub the customers with lather. You may as well let me; it'll be twenty minutes till the boss comes back."

NOT HIS MASTER'S VOICE.

She had been at a great annual clearance sale, and she had indeed secured a bargain. She had seen that blouse in the draper's window for months marked 14s., and now she had bought it for 13s. 11½d.

The opportunity had been too good a one to lose, and what did it matter though she had bought it out of the week's housekeeping money? Her husband would give her a further supply when he learnt what a scheming, saving little woman she was!

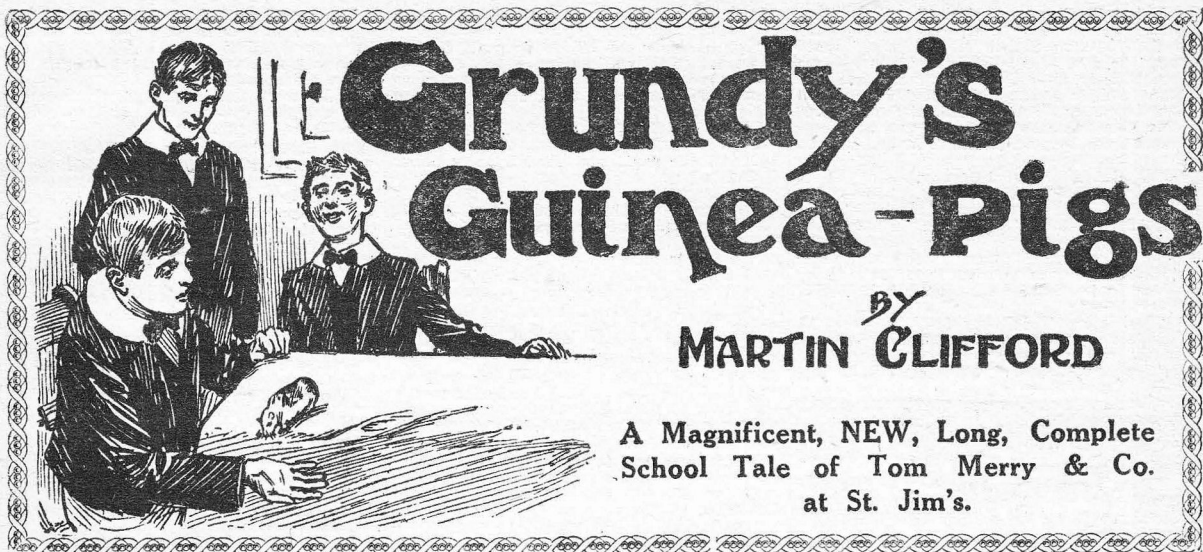
On tenterhooks to tell him of her good fortune, she paced the drawing-room and listened for the first sound of his footsteps.

Ah, a noise at last!

"Mary," she said, as the maid entered the room at that moment, "is that your master downstairs?"

"No, mum," said Mary. "That was the dog that was growling!"

Let us leave her, dear readers, to keep her wifely vigil.



A Magnificent, NEW, Long, Complete
School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Rescued from Baggy's Clutch!

WHAT have you got there, Grundy?" asked George Wilkins as the great George Alfred Grundy came into the study which those two shared with William Cuthbert Gunn on the Shell passage at St. Jim's.

Gunn looked up from the "Talisman," which he was reading for the fourth or fifth time. Gunn was a bookish fellow, and never grew tired of Sir Walter Scott. Neither did Grundy or Wilkins, for that matter. But then they never read him.

Wilkins sat in the armchair by the fireplace—Grundy's armchair. He knew that, in the ordinary course of events, he would be ordered out of that chair within twenty seconds of Grundy's entrance; but he felt lazy, and was not inclined to move until ordered—if then.

For once, however, Grundy overlooked the trespass.

He opened his big right hand, and showed something which looked like a small ball of yellowish fur.

"What is the thing?" inquired Wilkins. He did not get up to look, for he thought he might as well stick to the armchair as long as Grundy would let him.

But Gunn rose, laying the "Talisman" face downwards on the table to keep his place in it, and inspected what Grundy held.

"Why, it's a guinea-pig!" he said, with evident surprise.

"My hat! What's old Grundy want with a guinea-pig?" exclaimed Wilkins.

"As a matter of fact," said Grundy, in his most majestic manner, "I don't know that I did want it when I took it. I've always considered keeping this sort of thing rather a kid's game. So it is, in a general way, of course; but—"

"Not when you do it—eh, Grundy?" broke in Wilkins, who had detached himself from the armchair now.

"Will you let me explain, George Wilkins?" hooted Grundy.

"Oh, that's all right, old chap. Explain all you jolly well like. It isn't so very often you have the condescension to explain to us, is it, Gunny?"

"I should say it was," replied Gunn. "Old Grundy's a rare hand at explanations. He's jawed both our heads pretty well off with them before now."

But Wilkins shook his much "jawed" head. "Not with explaining," he said. "If you'll think it out, old top, you'll see that he never does that. He lays down the law, and argues, and orders, and threatens. But he never explains. It needs a brain to think out explanations."

Grundy passed over this gibe, which was not at all in his usual line.

But it really was a surprise for Wilkins and Gunn to find Grundy taking up guinea-pigs.

Nothing smaller or less ferocious in appearance than a bulldog seemed an adequate pet for the mighty George Alfred.

"Let's hear, old chap!" said Gunn encouragingly.

"I took this from that fat beast of a Trimble," said Grundy.

"Was he going to eat it?" asked Wilkins. "Eat it? No, chump! Why, even Baggy wouldn't eat a guinea-pig, I suppose!"

"Not so sure," said Gunn. "Anyway, what did Baggy want with anything that wasn't grub?"

"I don't know what he wanted it for. I'm not interested in the motives of a chap of Trimble's sort, let me tell you! All I know is that he'd got the thing, and that he was starving it!"

"I say, though, that's beastly thick!" exclaimed Gunn.

Gunn's sympathy was easily aroused.

"Just what you might expect of Baggy," said Wilkins, shrugging his shoulders.

Wilkins was made of rather tougher stuff than his chum.

"Are you sure he hasn't finished the job, Grundy?" asked Gunn. "The thing looks to me as if it hadn't got a kick left in it, poor little beast!"

"No, 'tain't dead!" replied Grundy. "It's warm, and it moves a bit. But it's jolly near pecking out. See here, Gunn, old chap, make some milk warm, will you? I don't know what else to give it, and a drop of warm milk may do it good."

"Right-ho!" said Gunn.

"That milk was for our tea," remarked Wilkins, as Gunn poured the fluid into a saucepan. "I don't see having it wasted on a half-dead guinea-pig!"

"You measly boulder!" hooted Grundy. "Do you mean to tell me you grudge a dying animal a drop of milk?"

"No, I don't. I don't grudge it anything, come to that; but if it's dying, I can't see the use of trying to stuff it up."

"'Tain't dying; you utter imbecile!"

"Well, you said it was."

"I didn't mean it that way. You're so beastly literal, Wilky!"

"Oh, all right! Have it your own way, old man. You'll do that anyway, and you can say the thing's dead and alive at the same time for all I care. It's welcome to my share of the milk, I'm sure, though it's wasting the stuff, in my opinion."

Gunn looked up from the saucepan.

"It won't want much more than a thimbleful, Wilky," he said. "It's worth trying, at any rate. What did you pay Baggy for it, Grundy?"

"Pay him? Do you suppose I paid him anything, ass?"

"But you can't take a fellow's—"

"Oh, can't I? You ought to know me better than that, William Gunn!"

"Well, I do, I suppose," admitted Gunn.

"You always do think that you've a right to do anything that it comes into your silly old napper to do. All the same—"

"The rotter was starving it, I tell you!"

"Don't worry about Baggy, old top!" said Wilkins.

"My hat! Do you suppose I should worry about Baggy? All I mean is that Grundy always seems to go to work in the kind of way that makes trouble, and I can't see the use of it. Baggy would have sold the thing for about nincence, like a shot!"

"I wasn't going to lower myself by buying it from him!" snorted Grundy. "I confiscated it—that was all!"

"You—you confiscated it?" gasped Gunn. Wilkins grinned.

"Yes—confiscated it! Don't you understand plain English, Gunn?"

"But—but— Oh, I say, you know, you haven't any right to—"

"No right? Don't talk such silly rot! My position in the Form—"

Tap—tap!

"Oh, come in!" roared Grundy.

Tom Merry, the skipper of the Shell, entered, his sunny face more serious than usual.

"Well, do you want to speak to me, Merry?" said Grundy defiantly.

The unusual conjunction of Tom Merry and Baggy Trimble was enough to show to even the mind of Grundy—which was not such a keen and bright mind as Grundy imagined it—that there was something in the wind.

"That's about the size of it, Grundy!" answered Tom cheerily.

"If you've come here to make a row—"

"I haven't come here to make a row, fat-head!"

"Good thing for you! Two can play at that game, you know. Well, what do you want? I say, Gunn, is that milk ready?"

"Yes, old fellow! Here you are!"

Gunn poured a little of the warm milk into a saucer, and brought it to Grundy.

Tom Merry's eyes fell upon the tiny animal in Grundy's big hand.

"So that's Trimble's guinea-pig?" he said.

"Wrong!" snorted Grundy wrathfully. "It belongs to me!"

"Oh, I say, Merry, he—he's ly—I mean, that ain't the truth!" burred Baggy. "It's mine—and—and—"

"Chuck it!" snapped Tom. "How do you think you're going to get it to take the milk, Grundy?"

Tom was already feeling more interest in the guinea-pig than in the claim made by Baggy to its ownership.

"I'll do that all right!" replied Grundy confidently.

He moistened the tip of his little finger with the milk, and applied it to the creature's mouth.

Tom noticed that the big hands were very gentle, in spite of their clumsiness. He had had small sympathy with Baggy from the first, though he had not felt justified in neglecting the fat junior's complaint.

It was very doubtful whether Tom's position as skipper of the Shell entitled him to exercise authority in such a case as this; and George Alfred Grundy was not a personage easily amenable to authority, at the best. But Tom had thought it worth while to see what he could do in the way of argument before Baggy proceeded to lay his complaint before Mr. Railton, the Housemaster.

"It's mine!" protested Baggy. "I'm not going to have—"

"You're going to have a boot put against you, hard, if you don't dry up, you fat clam!" snapped Wilkins.

Wilkins had also grown interested and sympathetic.

It had its element of absurdity, the anxious concentration with which the four juniors waited to see whether the guinea-pig would take the milk thus administered. But it was not entirely absurd, and their attitude was at least more decent than that of Baggy, who cared nothing about the animal as such, but only about the few coppers it was worth—or might have been worth before he had starved it.

"It's taken it!" cried Grundy. "It's mine!" burred Baggy. "I— Oh, look here, Tom Merry, you told me—"

"You fat sweep!" said Tom, in utter contempt. "I can see plainly enough why Grundy took the thing, and I don't blame him a bit! A cad of your sort oughtn't to be allowed to have any animal. You've starved—"

"I didn't! 'Tain't my fault, anyway. I hadn't any money to buy grub for the little beast, and no one would lend me any! You've no idea how much it cats—bobs' and bobs' worth!"

"How much do you want for it?" demanded Tom, putting his hand in his pocket.

"'Tain't only what I paid for it—it's what it cost me!" whined Baggy, keen on getting the last possible copper out of Tom.

"Here, I say, Merry, I can't allow that, you know! It's against my principles!" objected Grundy, with his finger-tip to the guinea-pig's mouth again.

"That's why I'm doing it, old bean!" said Tom, in the friendliest way possible. "It's not against mine, and I'm saving yours. I'll take care it sha'n't break me, too. How much, you dissipated bladder of lard?"

Baggy heaved a heavy sigh. He saw that the sum he had vainly imagined was not coming his way.

"I— Shall we say eightpence, Merry?" he whined.

"Say half that!" put in Wilkins. "The thing's more than half-dead. That's bound to take something off the price."

"I'll give you a bob—not a farthing more!" Tom said.

"'Tain't fair! I've spent more than that on it. But I'll take it."

The fat Fourth-Former held out a podgy and dirty hand. His fingers clutched the coin Tom dropped into it.

"It's robbing me!" he burred. "But— Owwww! Yaroooooh! Wharrer doing, Wilkins, you beast?"

Wilkins had manoeuvred himself into position, and as Baggy turned to go, had shot out his foot.

Now he launched it at Baggy again. "That's what I'm doing!" he hooted. "And that—and that! Do you begin to get on to it at all now?"

Baggy had got on to it sufficiently to realise the prudence of getting away from it. He fled down the passage, with Wilkins in pursuit.

But the Shell fellow only pursued him for a few yards. Then he came back, with a satisfied grin on his face.

"Good!" said Grundy, in majestic approval. "I'm glad you've some feeling in you, George Wilkins!"

"And I'm glad Baggy has!" replied Wilkins. "You can make him feel with a boot, anyway!"

"Here, don't go, Merry! I want—"

"Sorry, Grundy, old top! Tea's waiting for me. Hope the little beggar will pull through!"

And Tom departed. "Tom Merry's a jolly good chap!" said Gunn warmly.

"He is—oh, yes, he's a good chap! He means well," said Grundy. "But he's a silly, meddling ass!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Grundy, the Animal Trainer.

"YOU silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"What's the matter with you now, fathead?" inquired Bernard Glyn politely.

"You barged against me, hang you!" "Sorry, I'm sure!"

But Glyn did not look truly sorry. "Bernard don't know how fragile you are, Grundy, old gun!" said Kangaroo, with a grin.

"Fragile? Fragile he hanged! Who's fragile, I'd like to know? Glyn couldn't hurt me if he barged his hardest. I'm tough, I am! But it's different with Jeremiah."

"Jeremiah? Who is he?" asked Glyn. "You don't mean the prophet, do you? He couldn't be hurt by barging, anyway—he's been dead too long for that."

"And not worth worrying about even when he was alive!" remarked Lowther. "Sniffy!"

person, Jeremiah, to my mind—did too much lamenting, like Lord Ullin—"

"My hat, how you fellows do gas!" Grundy snorted. "I'm not talking about any old back number of a prophet, and no one with a scrap of sense could think I was! I mean my guinea-pig!"

"Your whicher?" inquired Clifton Dane, pretending not to understand, though by this time all the Shell and Fourth knew about Grundy's pet.

The magnificent George Alfred thrust his right hand into the pocket of the Norfolk jacket he wore, and produced Jeremiah.

The Shell had just come out from classes, and it was in the exodus from the Form-room that Glyn had barged against Grundy.

That Norfolk jacket had been the subject of sarcasm from Mr. Linton during the afternoon. The Shellmaster had asked Grundy whether he fancied himself above the sartorial rules which were obligatory upon others; and Grundy had had to have it explained to him that what Mr. Linton meant was that, as Eton jackets were the correct wear for the juniors of St. Jim's, Norfolks were not considered allowable.

Which was rot in the eyes of Grundy. For really an Eton jacket did not provide anything like a comfortable retreat for Jeremiah.

"Oh, I say! Hope I haven't hurt the little beggar!" said Glyn, with real concern.

"You couldn't," answered Grundy. "He wasn't on that side, as you would have noticed if you ever noticed anything. You're a dull fellow, Glyn, I'm afraid. But you might have hurt him if he had happened to be on the side you barged against."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Reminds me of the dreadful accident that nearly chanced to the kid in the perambulator—"

"I've no doubt it would remind you of some rot, Lowther! You've a silly, childish mind!" broke in Grundy crushingly. "Sit up, Jeremiah! There! Did you see him?"

It was not obvious to anyone present that Jeremiah had sat up in Grundy's hand; but Grundy seemed to believe it, and to argue with him was waste of words and time.

There were those at hand who minded neither waste—Lowther, Cardew, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy among them. But it was Tom Merry who spoke.

"Are you teaching him tricks, Grundy?" he asked.

"Spends all his time at it," said Wilkins. "But Jeremiah don't learn them," added Gunn.

"Rot!" snapped Grundy. "The intelligence of guinea-pigs has been vastly underrated. Now, this chap has as much sense as I have—"

"But surely no one ever underrated the intelligence of guinea-pigs to the absurd extent of doubting that, Grundy?" put in Lowther.

"You—you— Oh, it's no good talking to you silly asses!" hooted Grundy.

And he marched off to his study, with Jeremiah in his hand.

"He's gone potty about that little beast, hasn't he?" said Manners.

"Well, you might say that. But it's no odds, really," Gunn answered. "Old Grundy's always potty about something or other. And we don't mind Jeremiah, do we, Wilky?"

"No. He's rather a comical little begger," Wilkins agreed.

Gunn and Wilkins had assisted to nurse Jeremiah back into life and health, and it was only natural that they should feel some interest in him.

"Bai Jove, though, I considah that it was vevy decent of old Grundy to take so much trouble about the little beast!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Fourth had been released at the same moment as the Shell, and a number of them had joined the Shell crowd around Grundy in the passage.

"So do I!" Kerruish of the Fourth said.

"Why don't you fellows take your robin in to classes?" gibed Digby.

Study No. 5 still had as a pet the robin which Dick Julian had found broken-legged in the quad.

Julian shook his head.

"No go!" he said. "Lathom's easier-going than Linton, but he wouldn't stand that. Grundy had better look out, or Linton will get on to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah will be ordered off to execution."

"Oh, come on, you cripples!" said Blake. "We can't stand here all the blessed time between now and tea gassing about Grundy's guinea-pig."

The crowd melted away to quad or playing-fields, and Gunn and Wilkins followed their great chief.

They found him seated at the table, with Jeremiah in front of him.

If Jeremiah had any expression at all it was a bored one—at least, so it seemed to Wilkins and Gunn.

But Grundy was quite sure that Jeremiah was no end keen on learning tricks. So sure was he that he had already started in to teach him a few score—which was possibly one reason why the guinea-pig had not as yet mastered any one of them.

"Look at him!" said Grundy. "I tell you that animal has more brains than most of the Shell and Fourth put together! I can teach him to do everything except speak, and I wouldn't be too jolly sure that I may not teach him to do that in time. We don't know what the limits of animal intelligence are. I don't mean so much the limits as the—er—the—er—"

"Potentialities," suggested Gunn.

"That's the word! Why don't you read Scott, Wilky?"

"Why should I, chump?"

"To improve your silly mind, of course, idiot! It's improving Gummy's; I can see that. Why, he thought of the right word then, when for a moment I was actually at a loss for it myself!"

"Actually!" echoed Gunn, grinning.

"If I wanted words like that I should go to the dict. for them," said Wilkins. "But I don't."

"Talking about intelligence—"

"Don't let's!" yawned Wilkins. "Let's talk about something you know a little about, old chap, if there is anything!"

"What?" roared Grundy.

"You may well say that," returned Wilkins. "But, on my word, I don't know what I can suggest."

Grundy gave him a glare of concentrated disdain. It did not appear to hurt the feelings of George Wilkins in the least. He did not even seem hurt when, for the next few moments, Grundy pointedly ignored him, and addressed all his remarks to Gunn.

"I've a way with animals, you know," said Grundy.

"First I've heard of it!" murmured Wilkins. "There was a horse at my Uncle Grundy's when I was there last."

"Also an ass when you were there, first and last!" murmured Wilkins.

"He was a troublesome brute. No one could do anything with him at all until I took him in hand."

"And what did you do with him, old bean?" asked Gunn, with a wink at Wilkins, which Grundy did not see.

"I—well, it's not easy to explain. It's partly whispering in the horse's ear."

"Yes, I've heard of that sort of thing—at least, I've read of it," said Gunn. "One man in a hundred thousand or so has what you might call the magic word that tames a horse. But what is it?"

"Ah! That's more than I can tell you!" replied Grundy quite truthfully. But he spoke as though he might have told had he cared to.

"Come and have a drink, old man!" murmured Wilkins.

"What do you say, George Wilkins?" howled Grundy.

"I said, Come and have a drink, old man," answered Wilkins.

"But I don't want a drink, you silly ass!" "I never hinted that you did, old chap. But didn't the geegee?"

"You burbling maniac! That wasn't what I said to the horse!"

"No. More like what I said to the ass," Wilkins replied.

"Oh, shut up, Wilky! You know well enough that old Grundy isn't a scrap afraid of Tower!"

"Well, am I?" demanded Wilkins. "There were fellows at St. Jim's who were rather afraid of George Herries' bulldog, whether Wilkins was one of them or not."

"That's not the point. The point is that Grundy can quell Tower by the mere power of his eye."

Grundy beamed upon Gunn. Here was a disciple indeed!

"Which eye?" asked Wilkins. "You silly fathead! Gummy's quite right. Tower cowers before my gaze—simply cowers!"

"And so does Jeremiah!" said Gunn. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy looked at Gunn in a bewildered fashion. His disciple had gone back on him. There was no fellow at St. Jim's whose leg could be pulled more easily than Grundy's;

but Grundy did sometimes recognise the fact that it had been pulled, and he recognised it now.

Wilkins sat and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

Jeremiah waddled to the edge of the table and walked over, in a heedless manner that suggested that there might still be room for further development of his intelligence—if he chanced to survive the fall.

But Grundy saved him from that. A big hand shot out, and Jeremiah was caught with a deftness that amazed Wilkins and Gunn.

"Get out, both of you!" hooted Grundy. "I've done with you! Get out, I say! Jeremiah's got more sense and affection than both of you together! I won't have you in this study, that's flat!"

Clifton Dane popped his head in at the door.

"Oh, you are here, you fellows!" he said. "Care to come and have a look at Glyn's latest? It's all complete now, and in some ways I think it tops everything that the bouncer has ever done before."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Glyn's Latest.

"COMING, Grundy?" inquired Wilkins. "Go to Jericho!" hooted Grundy.

"No, thanks!" replied Wilkins.

"We'll go to No. 11. Not so far as Jericho, and more interesting."

"Better come, Grundy," said Dane genially. "It's worth seeing."

"An invention of Dane's?" asked Grundy loftily.

"Yes, you might call it that."

"Then I don't care to see it. Between you and me and the gatepost—"

"Two wooden-headed ones in that little lot!" said Wilkins.

"I think nothing at all of Glyn's inventions!"

"Ah! I've often heard it said that you can't think," replied the Canadian junior.

"Glyn potters round with all sorts of silly gadgets that are of no use to anyone," continued Grundy. "He is as bad as Skimpole. I'll allow that some of his things work, which is more than can be said for the other maniac's."

"Kind of you to allow that. Glyn will be so pleased!" said Clifton Dane sarcastically.

But sarcasm was wasted upon Grundy.

"They work," he went on. "That can be said for them—sometimes. But what use are they? Tell me that! Now, if I put the powers of my brain to invention—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Dane. "Come along, you fellows, if you're coming! I don't know that I can stand up against hearing what would happen if Grundy put the powers of his brain to invention!"

"He would have to find the brain first," said Wilkins, taking care to be on the outside of the door before he spoke.

"He'd better stick to guinea-pigs!" said Gunn, also from the passage.

The three went, leaving Grundy gazing in rather a dazed fashion at Jeremiah.

Grundy did wish in that moment that Jeremiah was a little more responsive. It seemed to him that Jeremiah absorbed affection, so to speak, without returning it. And certainly he did not get on with learning his tricks to the extent that a properly minded guinea-pig, which had spent four days in the improving society of George Alfred Grundy might have been expected to do.

Jeremiah was put into his hutch—the joint work of Gunn and Wilkins, for Grundy was no carpenter—and Grundy went out.

But he did not go to the study shared by Noble, Dane, and Glyn, to which his chums had gone.

Grundy really believed that he could do better than Glyn in the inventive line if he tried. All his previous failures had not served to convince Grundy that there were many things at which he was a hopeless duffer.

But they had served to convince Wilkins and Gunn of that fact. And Wilkins and Gunn, gazing with wide-open eyes at Glyn's latest, certainly never for a moment thought that Grundy could come within many miles of it for cleverness.

And they were right.

Glyn was a true mechanical genius, with a bent towards the adaptation of electricity to unusual ways. And this time, though there was nothing that could have been styled specially useful in his device, he had gone beyond what he had accomplished before.

On the table was a big tray, and on the tray were miniature buildings—farmhouse,

barns, stables, granaries, and so on. Glyn did something with a handle at the side of the tray, close to which was an electric accumulator, and behold, things happened on that tray.

The farmer—about six inches high, but every inch a farmer—walked out of the door of his house. A dog followed him, wagging its tail. The farmer's wife looked out of the window. A man led a horse out of the stable. The cows fled out of the cowshed, and a milkmaid came in their rear.

"My hat!" gasped Wilkins.

"I never saw anything like it in all my puff!" exclaimed Gunn.

Glyn smiled, and Kangaroo and Dane beamed.

Bernard Glyn was rather a nuisance to them when he had one of his inventions under way; but they were very proud of their chum's success when an invention was finished, and working as successfully as this one did.

"It's only a toy," said Glyn modestly. "I've made it for a kid cousin of mine. The poor little image has hip-disease, or something like that, and has to lie up all the time. I think he'll like it, don't you?"

"Can't be off it," said Gunn.

"May want to pull it to pieces to see how it works, though," Wilkins said.

"No, I don't think he'll do that. He's got a fair to middling notion of electricity now, and I can explain it all to him easily enough. He'll lie and look at things for hours, imagining no end about them, and yet all the time feeling happier because he really knows how they're worked. In spite of his handicap, I believe he'll invent things himself yet, unless he takes to writing instead."

"And that's only another way of invention," remarked Gunn. "There were times when Gunn could fancy himself a great writer of the future."

Glyn nodded.

"It's jolly hefty," said Wilkins. "I say, Glyn, could you make an electric guinea-pig, do you think?"

The other four all stared at Wilkins.

"Got guinea-pig on the brain," said Kangaroo. "That comes of being with Grundy so much!"

"Bet you he hasn't!" Gunn replied. "Wilky's got no brain to have that or anything else on."

"I've got as much as you have, and more, Gunny! I don't mug Scott and stuff, but I can think out wheezes!"

"What's the particular wheeze?" asked Dane.

"Never mind that yet. Could you, Glyn?"

"Not quite in this way," said the boy inventor thoughtfully. "You see, all these figures move in slots, and the motive power is supplied from beneath—electricity, you know. I could make a guinea-pig on a small tray, and it would move about as these do. But there must be an accumulator."

Wilkins shook his head.

"Wouldn't do," he said. "Even a duffer like—even a howling duffer, I mean, couldn't take that for a live guinea-pig."

"Bernard could make one that would be taken for real, though," said Kangaroo, with tremendous faith in his chum's powers.

"If it wasn't looked at too closely," Glyn said. "But I think Grundy would know the difference between my beast and Jeremiah. It wouldn't sit up on his hand, you know."

"That don't make such a big difference between it and Jeremiah," remarked Gunn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it wouldn't tackle its grub," said Glyn.

"Well, Jeremiah ain't really a big eater," replied Wilkins. "We could get over that."

"What's the dodge? If you'll tell me that I'll see what can be done," Glyn said. "I should rather like to take down old Grundy. He says I'm no jolly good at inventions."

Glyn plainly resented that a little; less, however, than he might have done had some fellows said it. For no one ever took very much notice of the opinions of George Alfred Grundy.

"Well, it's like this," said Wilkins. "Gunn and I were, getting jolly well fed up with old Grundy's cocksureness and swank."

"Getting!" murmured Dane.

"The patriarch Job wasn't in it with Wilky and Gunn," said Kangaroo. "Mere 'also ran,' Job!"

"What do you mean, you fatheads?" snapped Wilkins.

But Gunn understood.

"They mean that everyone else has been jolly well fed up with it all long ago, Wilky," he explained. "But there is a difference.

You fellows don't know old Grundy at we do."

"And we don't want to," said Glyn.

"The chap's a good chap, really," Gunn said loyally. "No end decent, in ever so many ways. But he does need some of the swank knocked out of him; and it don't seem as if anything could do it."

"My dodge will," Wilkins said confidently.

"Oh, not much, I suppose, and the effect won't last! But it will do something."

"And you want a clockwork guinea-pig, as nearly like life as possible, for your dodge, Wilky?" asked Glyn.

"That's the idea."

"Can't say I quite get on to it; but—"

"I'm not sure myself just how it's to be worked. But I know I can work it if I get the guinea-pig."

Glyn held out his hand.

"Shake on it, old bean!" he said. "You shall have the guinea-pig!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Progress of Jeremiah.

"HOW'S Jeremiah getting on?" Wilkins asked, when he and Gunn went back to the study for tea.

"Don't you worry about Jeremiah—he's all right," growled Grundy. "Fill the kettle and put it on the gas-stove, and look slippy about it. I don't know whether you've tumbled to it, but I've nearly been kept waiting for my tea!"

Wilkins was about to return an answer that would certainly not have pleased Grundy. But just as he opened his mouth he saw something that caused him to open his eyes widely instead, and to close his lips.

Grundy had been to the tuckshop, and had made lavish provision for tea. All the things that Wilkins specially liked were there—a fact which might have touched Wilkins had he not been perfectly well aware that Grundy's tastes in the food line were much the same as his, and that Grundy had gone in for what he himself liked. That mattered little, however. There was the stuff.

And it must be admitted that some part of the affection which Gunn and Wilkins had for Grundy was due to his generosity and to their appreciation of the flesh-pots.

So Wilkins and Gunn prepared tea while Grundy sat in the armchair meditating deeply.

"All ready!" said Wilkins. "Ham and tongue or pie, old chap?"

"I'll start on pie, I think," replied Grundy, drawing up a chair to the table. "I don't really want much, you know. Oh, come in!"

Had Grundy known who it was that had fapped, there might have been some excuse for the angry roar in which his invitation was given.

But even Grundy, though he flattered himself that he could see much farther into most things than most people, could not discern Baggy Trimble through an inch and a half of solid oak.

Baggy it was who entered.

Grundy gave him a portentous glare. Gunn sniffed audibly. Wilkins pointed to the door.

But it took quite a lot to discourage Baggy when he smelt grub.

"I say, you chaps—"

"Outside!" hooted Grundy.

"But—but—but I say, you know, I—"

"On your feet or on your neck—but outside!"

"Oh, don't be so hard on a chap, Grundy! You had my guinea-pig dirt cheap, because it was going to die—"

"You'd starved it, you miserable, fat rascal!"

"I hadn't—I never did! And now they say it's all right again. It's worth more than a bob now—heaps more! I should think a generous, open-handed chap like you, Grundy, would see that."

Grundy's wrath abated somewhat. The great man was always open to flattery, even in the gross form in which Baggy administered it.

"I didn't pay you a bob for it, Trimble," he replied. "I said at the time that it was dead against my principles. If Tom Merry was ass enough—"

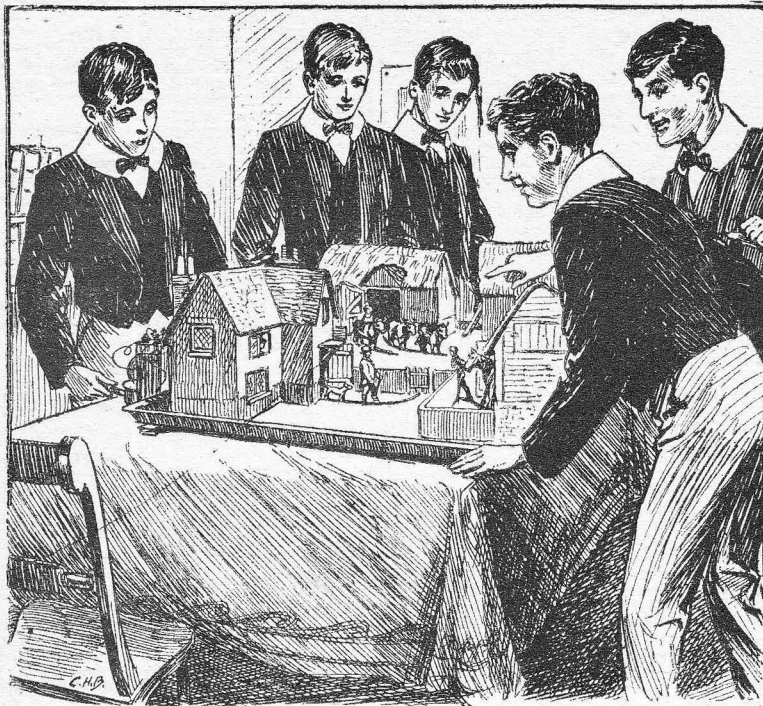
"That's just it!" broke in Baggy eagerly. "Tom Merry paid that bob; you haven't paid me anything. It ain't fair, you know, Grundy, and it ain't a bit like you. You're always such a fair-minded chap!"

"If you've come here under the delusion that you can screw another bob out of me, Trimble—"

"But it wouldn't be another! Can't you see that?"

"You won't get a copper, that's flat!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 13.



On the table was a big tray, and on the tray were miniature buildings. Glyn did something with a handle at the side of the tray, and behold! things happened. (See page 12.)

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll have tea with you chaps. That will square it up."

"You're always telling 'em, porpoise!" said Wilkins. "That's only one more to a jolly long account. For you won't have tea—"

"I'm not talking to you, Wilkins! I suppose I know who is head of this study, don't I?"

That diplomatic speech might have softened Grundy again. But Baggy had rather a rolling eye, and just at that moment it chanced to roll—the eye Grundy could see, that is; but no doubt the other rolled in concert with it—in the direction of Jeremiah's hutch.

Suspicion seized upon Grundy at once.

"Get out!" he roared.

Baggy backed towards the door.

But not lightly could he leave such a spread as that.

"I say, though, Grundy—"

"Bump him!" yelled Grundy.

There were times when Wilkins and Gunn obeyed the orders of their chief with an alacrity which should have satisfied even his exactingness.

This was one of them. Baggy was seized. Grundy had the condescension to open the door. Baggy made exit, hard gripped by Gunn and Wilkins.

Bump!

"Ow! Yow! Yaroooooh!"

More bumping followed, more "Ows" and "Yows" and "Yarooooohs."

Then Baggy was left sitting on the cold, unsympathetic, linoleum, and Wilkins and Gunn returned to the tea-table, with looks as of those who have done virtuously.

"That fat cad was after Jeremiah!" growled Grundy.

"After grub, more likely," replied Gunn. "Will you allow me to know best?" Grundy howled.

"S'pose I shall have to," said Gunn, shrugging his shoulders, and helping himself to pie.

"I'm not like you fellows," said Grundy loftily. "Mine is a practised observation. Very little goes on in my presence that I don't notice. Now, I say Trimple was after Jeremiah, and that proves it!"

Gunn and Wilkins were silent. That was rather a wide assertion, even for the great George Alfred. But to argue with him would have been waste of time, and time was not to be wasted just then.

"I'm not sure that I haven't been rather on the wrong tack with Jeremiah," remarked Grundy, a few minutes later, when the last

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 13.

crumbs of a first-class feed were being cleared up by his chums.

"Impossible!" muttered Wilkins.

"What did you say, George Wilkins?"

"Nothing, Grundy—nothing of any importance, that is."

"You needn't tell me that! You can't say anything of any importance! But don't let me have any of your cheap attempts at sarcasm, that's all!"

Gunn tried to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"How are you going on with Jeremiah in future, then, old man?" he asked.

"I'm not going to try to teach him quite so many tricks at once. I haven't the slightest doubt that he will learn to do them all in time; but he's quite a young animal yet—not half-grown—and I don't want his brain to get addled, like Wilkins'!"

"Oh, come off it, fathead! I'm not a blessed guinea-pig!"

"You most certainly are not. You haven't half the sense of one!"

Wilkins checked a hot retort. He was interested in Grundy's plans for the future of Jeremiah.

"Go on, old top!" said Gunn.

"I don't think I shall take him into the Form-room any more. That man Linton does bellow so; I'm sure it's bad for Jeremiah's nerves."

"Couldn't you call him Jerry, for short, old chap?" asked Gunn. "Jeremiah is rather a mouthful."

"I couldn't think of it!" said Grundy decidedly. "I insist upon my guinea-pig being treated with proper respect. What are you cackling at, Wilkins, you ass?"

"Nun-nun-nothing!" spluttered Wilkins. "Oh, go on, Grundy—do go on! You'd got to the bit about bowing down and worshipping Jerry. Go on, do!"

"I didn't say anything of the sort, you utter idiot, and I'm not talking to you at all! Look here, Gunny, I shall keep Jeremiah more in his hutch; but I shall talk to him a good deal, you know."

"Yes. That will be better than talking to a silly ass like Wilky," said Gunn.

"He'll get used to my voice, and in time he will come to understand every word I say."

"What a treat for Jerry!" spoke Wilkins, apparently to the ceiling.

Grundy rose, gave Wilkins one glare of majestic wrath, and stalked out.

"He's getting fed up with Jerry," chuckled Wilkins.

"Oh, I don't know, really."

"He always does, Gunny; you know that. In a day or two it will be as much as he will do to remember to feed him—you'll see. Then—then— Oh, never mind!"

"If you're going to spoof the old bird you will have to time your spoof before that," said Gunn.

"Oh, I know—I know! Let me think. You do talk so much, Gunny!"

Gunn took up the "Talisman," and Wilkins plumped himself into the armchair and corrugated his brow in deep thought.

Thereafter he watched Grundy closely.

Jeremiah's progress was not quite such as the mighty mind of Grundy had hoped for. It was easy to talk to Jeremiah; it was by no means so easy to be sure that Jeremiah lent an attentive ear. He took some interest in his food, however, and two or three days more passed without Grundy's forgetting to supply him with the necessary provender.

Then Jeremiah disappeared!

And Grundy did not know it!

Jeremiah was taken in Wilkins' pocket to join the other pets. His presence in the study had been a breach of the school rules, of course. Perhaps Wilkins had grown alarmed on that score—perhaps not!

Anyway, Jeremiah disappeared, and Grundy never missed him.

For he had in his place Glyn's clockwork guinea-pig, which looked exactly like Jeremiah, and could move its head and give a squeak at times.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Grundy on a String.

"HOWS the guinea-pig getting on, Grundy?" asked Manners of the Shell a day or two later.

By this time half the Shell and Fourth knew of the spoof played upon Grundy. No one was at all inclined to let on, but everyone awaited with keenness the coming of the moment when Grundy should find out that he had been spoofed.

Not that anyone wanted to hurry that moment. The longer Grundy laboured under the delusion, the funnier it became. Monty Lowther proclaimed it the jape of the term. Cardew said it saddened him. The conscience of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was troubled, though not quite so sorely troubled that there was any danger that it would make him let on prematurely. Gussy thought Lowther right in considering it "funny," and Cardew also right in saying that it was "dashed sad, y'know."

Grundy's reply to Manners' query was gruff.

"You're not really interested in my guinea-pig!" he growled. "Better get on with your photographic potfiness, and let me alone."

"But we're all interested, no end," protested Lowther.

"Oh, rather!" chimed in Tom Merry.

"Quite one of the most interesting experiments I've heard of for a long time," remarked Tabbot.

But probably he meant the experiment upon the credulity of Grundy.

"Is it too much to beg for a sight of the highly intelligent creature?" asked Cardew.

Grundy looked at Cardew doubtfully. The languid dandy of the Fourth, who could show such unexpected vigour and keenness at times, was even more puzzling to Grundy than Monty Lowther, whose jokes and quotations were far beyond Grundy's ken.

But Cardew's face showed no sign of anything but genuine interest.

"Come along, all of you that like!" said Grundy liberally.

He was not quite prepared for such a crowd as followed him, however. If a highly-popular entertainment had been offered them, they could hardly have shown greater enthusiasm; and, of course, Grundy did not guess that he was actually providing a highly-popular entertainment.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther—Tabbot, Blake and D'Arcy and Herries and Digby—Noble and Dane—Julian and Reilly and Kerruish and Hammond—Levison and Cardew and Clive—Durrance and Roylance and Gore—all came.

Only three fellows present neglected the invitation.

Lumley-Lumley walked away, silent and smiling. Skimpole said he had more important matters to attend to. Glyn remarked that he didn't care for guinea-pigs.

"Prefer your potty inventions, I suppose?"

said Grundy, with his best best attempt at a sneer.

"I do," confessed Glyn. "So do you, really. Grundy, if you could only realise it!"

"My hat! Why, I wouldn't be seen dead with one of them!"

"Wouldn't you? And yet I don't mind betting that you will be caught out fairly cherishing one of them before long!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hanged if I can see what all you silly asses are cackling about!" snapped Grundy. "Glyn may think he's jolly funny. I consider him little better than an imbecile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared around him as the crowd laughed again. His big hands clenched. He felt inclined to deny them all a sight of Jeremiah.

But he had bragged too much about the little animal to be able to make up his mind to that; and, though he was getting a trifle bored by the unresponsiveness of Jeremiah, there were still in him the remnants of his belief in himself as an animal-trainer.

The crowd filled the study. Wilkins and Gunn, coming along a minute or two late, had difficulty in forcing their way in.

"The hutch is kept beautifully clean, I must say," remarked Talbot.

"Oh, Wilkins attends to that!" replied Grundy, in lordly manner.

"And Gunn feeds him, I suppose?" said Levison, winking at Wilkins.

"Yes, Gunn feeds him," answered Grundy.

"An' what is your share in the charmin' little animal's rearin', may I ask, Grundy?"

"You may ask, Cardew; but I consider it one of the silliest questions I ever heard in all my life. I do everything that really matters."

"As how?" inquired Roylance.

"I train him. Before I've finished with him I shall have taught him to do most things that a dog can, and lots that a dog can't. A heap more than that lumbering beast of yours is good for, Herries!"

"That thing wouldn't be a mouthful for Towser!" growled George Herries.

"I don't believe Towser would touch it," said Blake.

"Of course he wouldn't. He's too good-hearted!" replied Towser's owner.

"There are other reasons!" said Dig, with a grin.

"There are!" snapped Grundy. "If Towser jolly well tried it on, I'd—"

"Can he talk?" asked Cardew.

"Who—Towser?" rejoined Herries. "No, he can't exactly talk, but—"

"I mean Jeremiah!" said Cardew blandly.

"He can't talk," admitted Grundy. "At least, you wouldn't call it talking, I suppose; but when I speak to him he answers me."

"But isn't that talking?" said Lowther.

"Well, no. He squeaks!"

The automatic guinea-pig had been squeaking at intervals—suspiciously regular intervals, too—ever since the crowd had entered; but no one said anything about having heard him.

"Talk to him, Grundy, old sport!" said Tom Merry encouragingly.

"Right-ho! Be quiet, all of you. If you get making a row, he'll be nervous. He's no end of a nervous little chap—that's why I'm going slow on trick-training with him. I think I shall have to get Wilkins to change out of this study. Wilky's face frightens Jeremiah. It's all very well for me and Gunny—we're used to it. But Jeremiah's not."

Wilkins suffered the insult to pass in silence—save for a giggle which he did his best to choke.

"Never mind about the misfortune that Wilkins has to carry about in front of him," said Lowther. "Get on with the washing!"

"Quiet, then!"

A hush fell upon the crowd. It was a difficult hush to maintain, for nearly every fellow present was almost choking.

"Jeremiah!"

"Squeak!"

"Did you hear him?" asked Grundy exultingly.

"We heard him," replied Tom Merry gravely.

"Jeremiah, what's your opinion of these silly asses?" asked Grundy fatuously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth—I don't see— You are silly asses, the whole crowd of you! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rocking and roaring with laughter, the juniors poured out. They dared not stay longer, or they would infallibly have given the game away.

"Blessed if I can see what they are making all that silly row about!" snorted Grundy.

"Can you, Gunn?"

"It is a bit puzzling," agreed Gunn.

"I don't see that it's any funnier to keep a guinea-pig than to keep a dog. In fact, I think it's a heap more sensible than keeping a dog like that ugly brute Herries thinks so much of!"

As a matter of fact, Grundy would have found it much easier to love Towser than to love Jeremiah. But Jeremiah was his, and Towser belonged to Herries.

"So it is," Gunn said. "Jeremiah's smaller and—er—neater. And he's got no end of a musical squeak."

Gunn was right. There was no end of it. That squeak was timed for half-minute intervals, and Glyn had done his work well.

"He squeaks a bit too much," said Grundy, looking a bit worried. "It—it's a trifle monotonous. Do you think he's quite well, Gunny? I might take him out and let him have a run about the floor, now that Wilky's not here."

"I shouldn't do that—not after all that crowd upseting him," Gunn said, in some haste.

"You think they upset him?"

"Must have done a bit, with his delicate nerves, and all that."

"Well, I dare say you're right!" Grundy said graciously. "But he isn't ill? You don't think he's ill, do you?"

Grundy's tone rather puzzled Gunn for a moment. Then he understood. Wilkins was quite right. Grundy was fed up with Jeremiah, but shirked admitting it!

"No, I don't think he's ill," Gunn replied.

"He seems to eat his grub all right," said Grundy.

"It goes, anyway," answered Gunn.

And it did go—Wilkins took it, to feed the flesh and blood Jeremiah.

"Well, if he dies I can get another one—that is, if I want one," said Grundy thoughtfully. "I'm not sure that I wouldn't rather train a dog—more fun in it. And, of course, I should never like another guinea-pig as much as I liked—I mean, as I like—Jeremiah."

"No, I shouldn't think you could!" agreed Gunn.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Heroes—on Two Legs and on Four.

"HE, he, he, he! Fancy old Grundy being done down like that!" chortled Baggy Trimble.

Baggy chortled to himself. He was alone. A moment before he had been in company, so to speak—that is to say, he had been where he could hear others talking, though they were quite unaware that he heard.

That was because their voices came to him through a keyhole. The Terrible Three and Talbot had been discussing Grundy and his guinea-pigs in Study-No. 10 in the Shell passage; and Baggy had taken a silent and unofficial share in the discussion.

Baggy was not one of those chosen to share the secret. Others had been kept out of it. Not a word had been breathed to any New House fellow—not even to Higgins & Co., or to Dick Redfern. After all, Grundy was School House, and this sort of thing was best kept in the family. And fellows like Racke, Crooke, Scrope, Mellish, and Trimble, had been left outside because they were not to be trusted a yard.

But now Baggy knew.

Greed was the ruling power in the make-up of Baggy; but the inquisitiveness was also strong in him.

He felt now that he could not be satisfied till he had had a look at the mechanical guinea-pig.

So he hung about the Shell passage till he saw Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn all leave their study.

It was after classes and before dinner, and most of the juniors were at the nets on Little Side. The coast seemed clear for Baggy.

He stole into Grundy & Co.'s study.

The cupboard drew him first. But there was very little in that.

As a rule, the horn of plenty flowed in No. 3 with a freedom such as was the case in few studies. But there were times of leanness, and this chanced to be one of them.

Baggy could find nothing but a few biscuits and half a pot of jam.

He did not trouble about a spoon. He scooped out jam with his podgy and dirty fingers, and thrust it into his mouth with biscuit until he could crowd in no more.

"Measly bouncers!" he grunted, when he had finished both jam and biscuits. "And that lout Grundy always has plenty of tin, too!"

He wiped his fingers on a dingy handkerchief, and approached the hutch.

The guinea-pig squeaked. Baggy started back in alarm.

Jeremiah the Second was no longer squeaking with such regularity as at first. The sound came now only at long intervals, and Baggy had not heard it before. Moreover, he had not heard about it; and for the moment it almost frightened him.

"They must have changed them again," he muttered. "But that's no odds. Guinea-pigs don't bite, and if it's the old one back, he ought to know me."

If Jeremiah had one hundredth part of the intelligence with which Grundy had at first credited him—but that was princely—knowing Baggy and loving Baggy would have been two very different things with him.

But Baggy, who never considered the feelings of anyone or anything but himself, did not perceive this.

He stuck his hand into the hutch, and pulled out the guinea-pig.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" he stuttered. "'Tain't alive! But it squeaked. I heard it! Mum-mum-my hat!"

There sounded a patter of feet in the corridor—not the patter of human feet, as Baggy recognised at once.

He made a heavy rush at the door. But he was too late. Even as his hand touched it the great blunt head of Towser was thrust in.

"Ow-yow! Gerrou, you beast!" howled Baggy.

He had dropped the automatic guinea-pig, and had forgotten all about it in his alarm at Towser's appearance.

Baggy and Towser had never been chums. More than once had Baggy meditated letting the Housemaster know that, against all rules, the bulldog had again become practically a regular inmate of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

But George Herries had a heavy hand, wherefore Baggy had held his hand, and had not even dared an anonymous communication.

If Towser had seen Baggy in No. 6 he would at once have proceeded to sample the fat junior's trousering. But, meeting him on neutral ground, he had no notion of doing more than make it clear to Baggy that he did not approve of him.

So he merely growled and showed his teeth.

"Oh, get out!" wailed Baggy. "Oh, help! Oh, good dog, Towsy—dear old fellow! Good doggy, then!"

Towser growled some more, and showed his teeth again. He felt that Baggy was taking liberties with him in talking like that.

Baggy, still speaking false, kindly words, backed towards the fireplace.

The dog, still showing his teeth, came slowly towards him.

On the floor Jeremiah the Second, unperceived by either for the moment, was moving towards Towser. He moved as much like a crab as a guinea-pig, and rather more like a defective automatic toy than either; but he moved!

And now Towser saw him, and stopped as if petrified.

Towser was not all that George Herries thought him; but certainly he was not, in ordinary circumstances, a canine coward.

But he feared now.

Instinct told him that this was no animal. Yet it moved and it squeaked.

"Help! Murder! Oh, help!" howled Baggy, expecting that at any second Towser would spring at his throat.

From the passage sounded voices and the rush of feet.

Baggy hailed them with relief. But Towser heard not, or heeded not. His eyes were fixed upon the automatic guinea-pig. They bulged almost out of his head. There was something uncanny about this thing to Towser.

It stopped.

"Brrrrrr!" said Towser.

Squeak!

Towser drew back, and his hindlegs faltered under him.

"Help! I'm being murdered!" yelled Baggy, more sure than ever that in another second Towser would spring upon him.

The thing moved again.

Towser darted forward desperately, like one afraid, but refusing to let fear master him. His blunt nose came in contact with Jeremiah the Second. He gave a toss of the head that sent the small automaton flying to the feet of Baggy, and a howl of anguished fright such as no one had ever heard from him before.

Then he turned and bolted for dear life.

"Yooop!" roared Grundy, smiting the linoleum with a mighty thud.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 18.

Towser had rushed between his legs, and had upset him completely.

"Was that Towser I heard?" cried Herries, coming up at the double.

"Towser, was it? Hanged if I know; but if it was that beast, I'll jolly well—"

"Where is he, you silly clump? There will be no end of a row if he's been heard, and I don't know what they may not do to the poor old boy! Where is he?"

"Just you find him, and I'll do something to him!" hooted Grundy. "The brute bowled me over like a—"

"Like a silly dummy, as you are!" yelled Herries. "For two pins, I'd punch your silly head! Where is he? Oh, I say, Tom Merry—Blake—Gussy—help me to find old Towser!"

A crowd was collecting. It was nearly dinner-time, and fellows in flannels were coming from the nets to change.

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

"I shouldn't sit there if I were you, Grundy," remarked Cardew. "Dash it all, man, it's hardly dignified! An' what are you if not dignified?"

"My hat! It's Jeremiah that's frightened Towser!" said Digby.

"Bai Jove! He appears to have frightened Trimble, too. Buck up, he isn't alive, you know!"

"I'll bet you'd have said he was alive if he'd come at you as he did at me!" bubbled Baggy, quivering like a jelly with fright.

"You wretched funk! Afraid of a thing like that?" snorted Blake.

"Here's is that Trimble? I know what he was up to, then! The fat thief was after my guinea-pig!" howled Grundy.

"Really, Grundy, you must moderate your language!" spoke the stern voice of Mr. Railton. "What does all this tumult mean, boys?"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Grundy Rushes Up Guinea-Pigs!

HERRIES gushed off. He found Towser cowering just round the corner, snatched him up, darted with him into No. 6, and sat there holding his great jaws, lest he might make some sound which should come to the ears of the House-master.

Mr. Railton looked straight at Tom Merry for an answer to his query.

"I really don't know, sir," said Tom. "I've only just come in from cricket."

"Does anybody know?" snapped the House-master.

Nobody answered.

"Grundy?"

"I don't know anything about it, sir—except that Trimble must have been trying to steal my guinea-pig!"

"I didn't! I don't want the thing! I shouldn't want it even if it was alive, but 'tain't alive!" howled Baggy.

"Then you've killed it, you fat sweep!"

And Grundy rushed at Baggy. But a strong hand fell upon the collar of the great George Alfred, and hauled him back.

"Surely you have the sense to realise, Grundy, that I will not permit you to deal violently with Trimble under my very eyes?" rapped out the master.

Grundy struggled hard. When he was in a rage he was no respecter of persons.

"Let me get at him!" he panted. "The fat swindler! First he starved the thing, and now he's killed it!"

"I never killed it! I couldn't kill it! It was dead already, and it never was alive!" bubbled Baggy.

"What is all this about?" demanded Mr. Railton, utterly puzzled.

He still held on to Grundy; but Grundy had ceased to wriggle now. His eyes were fastened upon Jeremiah the Second.

Jeremiah the Second certainly looked very thoroughly dead. The clockwork had run down at last, and he lay quite motionless.

It was plain to Tom Merry and the rest that the truth would have to come out now. Tom stepped forward and picked up the small automaton.

"This is what all the trouble is about, sir," he said.

Mr. Railton started. He had had his hands so full with Grundy that he had not noticed the mechanical guinea-pig at all.

"What is that?" he asked sharply. "Trimble, if you have been playing tricks here—"

"He has, sir! He killed my guinea-pig!" bawled Grundy.

"I couldn't kill the thing, I tell you! 'Tain't alive, and it never was!"

"Well, well, if an accident has happened to the animal—"

"It wasn't an accident! He killed it, I tell you!"

"I must insist upon a more respectful tone from you, Grundy! This matter will be investigated. In the first place, I should like to know what the creature was doing here. You are well aware of the regulation against keeping pets in studies, I am sure, Grundy."

Blake and Digby and Arthur Augustus looked round anxiously. It would be something not far short of a catastrophe if Towser made his appearance at this moment.

But there was little fear of that. Herries was still holding Towser's jaw for him.

"It—it— Oh, you know, sir, it was such a little thing—I didn't think it mattered much."

"I don't think this counts, sir," Tom Merry said, smiling. "You see, it's only a fake guinea-pig."

Grundy's eyes almost bulged out of his head, and his jaw dropped.

"A fake guinea-pig? What do you mean, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was impossible for the fellows in the passage any longer to restrain their merriment. They thought of how Grundy had talked to the automaton, and how it had squeaked answer to him, of how sure he had been that he could train it to do all kinds of remarkable things, of his accusation against Baggy of killing it—they thought of all this, and they roared.

Tom Merry put Jeremiah the Second into the hands of Mr. Railton.

The master's face had been stern and angry. But now a smile which he tried in vain to keep back curved the corners of his mouth and eyes.

"This thing is most certainly not a real guinea-pig, Grundy," he said.

"But it must be, sir!" gasped Grundy. "Why, it squeaked! It used to squeak whenever I spoke to it! And I talked to it quite a lot."

"You have been taken in, you very absurd boy!" said the House-master. "Just take this thing yourself. A moment's examination must convince you that it is a mere toy, not a live animal!"

Jeremiah the Second again changed hands. Grundy's face as he felt it was a study in conflicting feelings.

"I've been had!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton did not join the chorus of laughter. But the smile still played about his mouth and eyes.

"I am afraid you have, Grundy," he said. Then he glanced over the crowd, and met the eyes of Bernard Glyn, who had pushed his way to the front.

"Your work, Glyn?" he said quietly.

"Yes, sir," replied Glyn meekly.

"I thought as much! Grundy—"

"It's all very well, sir, and I can see now that this isn't Jere—that this isn't my guinea-pig! But that's because Glyn got Trimble to change them. That's what must have happened—he changed them! Why, all these fellows know that my guinea-pig was

here yesterday. They saw it, and I talked to it, and it answered me. They all heard it."

"That thing had a squeak, sir," explained Glyn. "It could move, too. But, of course, it wouldn't go on for ever, and I suppose it's run-down now."

"Oh, rats!" roared Grundy.

"No, not rats—guinea-pigs!" murmured Lowther.

"Oh, rats, I say! Could a thing like that eat? Tell me that!"

"Are you sure that there has been any eating, Grundy?"

"The grub I gave it went, anyway!"

"Yes—I took it," confessed Wilkins.

Grundy cast upon his chum a look of such utter reproach that Wilkins really felt uncomfortable.

"So it was a plot? How many of you were in it, besides Glyn and Wilkins?" asked the House-master, scanning the faces around him.

"I think you might say that all of us were, sir," answered Talbot.

"And when Grundy was so ridiculous as to talk to his supposed guinea-pig in your hearing, you all knew that the thing was merely one of Glyn's automations?"

"That's it, sir," replied Tom.

"I'm not sure that it was quite fair," said Mr. Railton. "But—but—"

Then a spasm of uncontrollable laughter seized him, and lasted till the tears fairly ran down his face.

He recovered himself at length.

"I really do not know what to say to you," he said. "I cannot punish any of you; the whole business is too absurd to be taken seriously. How long is it since the automaton was substituted for the live guinea-pig, Glyn?"

"I did that, sir," said Wilkins. "Let's see—this is Thursday. It was on Monday I changed them."

"That's right," said Gunn. "You haven't—I mean you didn't have him out of the hutch after Sunday evening."

"And for three days Grundy has been talking to this thing under the delusion that—"

"Well, he wasn't talking to it all the time you know, sir," said Gunn.

"Grundy, I have had many proofs that you are among the most absurd fellows I have ever met! But this really is the most absurd thing of which even you have ever been guilty, I think. I shall say no more about it. But let it be a lesson to you."

And the House-master strode away, his shoulders shaking.

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

"Three cheers for Jeremiah!" cried Kangaroo.

"There goes the dinner-bell!" said Clive.

It was the next day, and Wilkins had made full confession. Grundy knew that no lamentations were needed for Jeremiah, who was as well as ever.

But Grundy had no wish to see Jeremiah again, it appeared.

He stopped Levison in the quad.

"I say, young Levison," he said, "do you want a guinea-pig?"

Any other Third Former would have cackled in his face. Frank Levison did not do that, though it was with difficulty he kept a straight countenance.

"Is his name Jeremiah, Grundy?" he asked.

"Don't you be cheek— Yes, then, it is!"

"I'll give you a bob for him."

"You won't give me anything! But you can have him. I—I know you'll treat him well, and—and—well, I should like him to be treated decently. But—but don't you ever bring him into my reach, or I shall wring his dashed neck!"

THE END.

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