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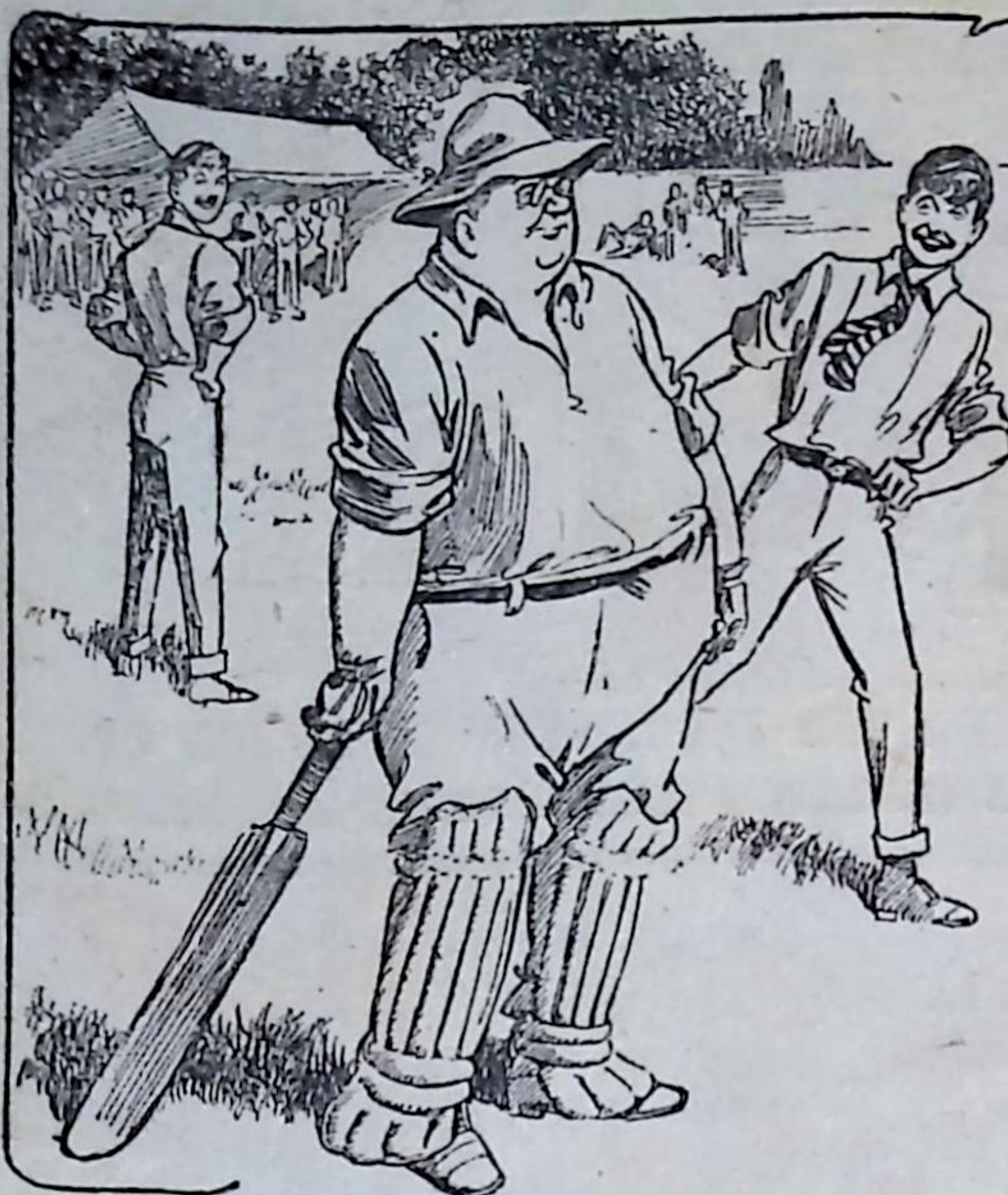
Week Ending
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No. 25
New Series.

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



THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH BUNTER!
(Screamingly funny Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



The Rebels of Greyfriars

A Magnificent Long Complete
Story of
HARRY WHARTON & CO.
AT GREYFRIARS.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Call To Arms!

"IT'S got to be done!" Harold Skinner, of the Greyfriars Remove, was very emphatic on that point. Snoop and Stott were seated with Skinner in a disused barn—far from the madding crowd; and all three were smoking. It was a little habit of Skinner's to smoke in barns—a habit which William Stott cheerfully copied. Snoop had given up these shady practices for some time, but he was just beginning to yield again to the evil influence of Skinner. "I'm fed-up with taking a back seat," said Skinner. "Why should Wharton and Smithy have all the merry plums? This sports' tour of the English counties was wrongly arranged at the start. The real sportsmen never get a look-in." "That's so," agreed Stott. "Same old gang every time!" "The Wharton Select Set, and the Smith Select Set," said Snoop. "Everyone else is taboo." Skinner's eyes gleamed as he blew out a wreath of white smoke. "We've taken it lying down, so far," he said, "but the time has come for action." "You've said that before," said Stott. "Yes; and I jolly well mean it this time! Why should we have to swot at lessons, week in and week out, while other fellows go off on these excursions and enjoy life?" "Echo answers 'Why?'" said Skinner. "Smithy's party are due to go to Salisbury to-morrow to play against the Wiltshire fellows. I asked Smithy to drop some of the usual players, and give us a look-in." "And what did he say?" asked Stott. "He said he'd bear us in mind when he was playing a blind school!" he said indignantly. "As if we were a set of blessed crocks!" "Then there's no chance of getting into Smithy's team?" "Not an earthly! And there's no chance of getting into Wharton's, either. There's only one thing for it!" "Namely?" "We must get up a team of our own." "Eh?" said Snoop. And Stott blinked questioningly at his leader. "It can be done," said Skinner. "I don't say we can get up a gilt-edged, eighteen-carat team. We can't. Wharton's already got twelve fellows, and Smithy's got twelve. That only leaves the rag, tag, and bobtail of the Remove—barring we three, of course!"

"There wouldn't be enough left to form a team," said Snoop. "Oh, yes, there would! Besides us, there's Bunter—" "Oh, help!" "And Fishy—" "Jerusalem crickets!" groaned Snoop. "There's Trevor and Treluce—" "That's better!" "And Wun Lung—" "Me no savvy!" said Stott. "And we could soon make up the rest," went on Skinner, unheeding. "There's Alonzo Todd, and Dupont, and Kipps—" "What a collection!" gasped Snoop. "Are you trying to pull our legs, Skinny?" "I'm dead serious," said Skinner. "Of course, we shouldn't be able to put up much of a show against Wiltshire. We should probably be licked all along the line. But what does that matter? It's the trip we want. These fellows have a jolly good time on tour—plenty to eat and drink, and no end of fun!" Snoop nodded. "That's all right," he said. "But how are you going to get permission to take on the tour? The Head would never give it. Neither would Quelch!" Skinner's jaw set stubbornly. "Then we must defy 'em," he said. "What!" "There's such a thing as French leave," said Skinner. Snoop and Stott gasped. "You—you're not thinking of taking it on without permission?" muttered Snoop. "Exactly—if permission is refused in the first place." Skinner's cronies looked startled and uneasy. "We should get it in the neck," said Stott. "The Head would come down like a thousand of bricks." "That's just where you're wrong. There's safety in numbers, you know. The Head couldn't very well sack eleven fellows." "No; but he could lick us," said Stott apprehensively. Skinner gave a snort. "What does a licking matter? It would be the price of a good time, that's all. For a whole long week we should eat, drink, and be merry. We should enjoy ourselves up to the hilt. And I, for one, wouldn't mind paying the piper afterwards." Snoop and Stott looked thoughtful. There was certainly something to be said for Skinner's point of view. A licking from the Head was a very unpleasant ordeal. But it would be more than

balanced by a week of absolute, glorious freedom. But Snoop and Stott were not quite satisfied yet. "How are you going to queer Smithy's pitch?" inquired Snoop. Skinner chuckled. "Problems of that sort can only be solved by a fellow who's one of the choice and master-spirits of the age," he said. "Oh, quit Shakespeare, and tell us how it's going to be done!" growled Stott. "We shall catch the very first train to Salisbury to-morrow morning," said Skinner. "We shall be half-way through the cricket-match by the time Smithy's party arrives on the scene. Then we shall denounce them as impostors, and the Wiltshire fellows will help us turn them off the field. They'll go back to Greyfriars with their tails between their legs!" Stott looked what he felt—extremely doubtful. "I don't think—" he began. "Of course you don't!" snapped Skinner. "If you did, you'd realise that this was the greatest wheeze of modern times. It will be the sensation of the term. Of course, if you fellows are chicken-hearted about it, we'll chuck the idea at once." There was a challenge in Skinner's tone; and Snoop and Stott, in spite of their uneasiness as to the possible consequences, could hardly bring themselves to back out. They hesitated; and Skinner pressed home his advantage. "It will work like a charm," he said. "You leave it to your uncle. I'll go round and put it to the other fellows, and they're bound to back me up. A week away from Quelch's gimlet eye is much too good a treat to miss." The three juniors finished their cigarettes, and emerged from the barn. Skinner was in high spirits as they trudged back to Greyfriars. "Better not tell Bunter about this to-night," said Snoop. "He'd blab it all over the school." Skinner nodded. "I shall tell the others, and bind them to secrecy," he said. "Bunter can be told in the morning, just before we start. If we can get Quelch's permission to go on the tour, so much the better. I'll ask the old bird when we get back." The trio were in a very excited frame of mind by the time Greyfriars was reached. Skinner went straight to the Remove-master's study. He tapped respectfully on the door, and Mr. Quelch bade him enter. "You are looking very pale Skinner," said

the Form-master, as the cad of the Remove came in. "Are you unwell?"

"Yes, sir," said Skinner.

He was careful not to explain that his pallor was due to the fact that he had sampled more cigarettes than were good for him.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I—I'm feeling off-colour, sir. I don't get enough exercise."

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows.

"But you have every facility for athletic exercise, Skinner."

"Not so much as the other fellows, sir. I don't belong either to Wharton's touring-party or to Vernon-Smith's, sir. The result is that I'm run-down."

Mr. Quelch looked hard at Skinner.

"Why have you come to me with this complaint, Skinner?"

"I'm not complaining, sir. I merely came to ask if it would be possible to give Vernon-Smith a rest this week, and to let me conduct a touring-party in his place."

"But you are not a sportsman, Skinner!"

"Oh, yes, sir! I'm jolly hot stuff at cricket, sir!"

"Then why is it that neither Wharton nor Vernon-Smith has any use for your services?"

"Ahem! They—they select their teams by favouritism, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked grim.

"Are you suggesting that there is unfairness in this matter, Skinner?"

"Yes, sir. The best men are left out every time, and only the personal friends of Wharton and Vernon-Smith get a look-in. I—"

Skinner broke off suddenly as Mr. Quelch produced a cane.

"What's wrong, sir?" gasped Skinner in alarm.

"I am going to cane you, Skinner! You have made a most unqualified attack upon two of your schoolfellows. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh!"

Skinner obeyed, and received three stinging cuts, which made him yelp.

"There!" panted Mr. Quelch. "Do not dare to come to me again with such slanderous statements, Skinner! As for your suggestion that you organise a touring-party, I absolutely forbid you to do so! You may go."

And Skinner went, muttering things under his breath, which, had they been audible to Mr. Quelch, would certainly have brought about a further chastisement for the cad of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Rebels.

HAROLD Skinner spent a very busy evening.

After the swishing he had received at the hands of Mr. Quelch he was feeling ripe for revolt.

Never before had Skinner entertained such a wild scheme as that which he now contemplated.

Dr. Locke was sometimes a very lenient headmaster, but he would not be able to take a lenient view of the matter if eleven juniors travelled to Wiltshire without permission.

Skinner experienced a great deal of difficulty at first in rounding up his recruits.

The first junior he approached—Kipps—told Skinner in blunt language that there was nothing doing.

"You must be off your rocker to suggest such a hare-brained wheeze!" said Kipps.

"You won't come, then?" said Skinner.

"No, thanks! I'm not sickening for the sack!"

Skinner tried Alonzo Todd next.

Luckily, he ran Alonzo to earth in Study No. 7, where the Duffer of the Remove happened to be alone.

"Well, my dear Skinner," said Alonzo pleasantly, "can I be of any service to you?"

Skinner propounded his scheme.

"Are you game to be one of the party, Lonzy?" he concluded.

Alonzo shook his head.

"My dear Skinner," he said in his grave way, "pray pause and reflect before proceeding with such a rash and ill-advised scheme! It will most certainly recoil on your own pate."

"Ass!" retorted Skinner. "Are you coming with us, or not?"

"My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Burst your Uncle Benjamin! Yes or no—sharp!"

"No!" said Alonzo politely but firmly. "I decline to incorporate myself with such a

wild and reckless proposition. I consider that—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Skinner.

And he departed, closing the door of Study No. 7 with a slam which re-echoed the whole length of the Remove passage.

After that, however, Fortune began to smile.

The other fellows responded willingly enough.

Fisher Tarleton Fish "guessed" he was on. He also "calculated" he would score a century in each innings.

Wun Lung said that he "savvied," and was quite prepared to go on the forbidden tour. And Trevor and Treluce, impressed by Skinner's theory that there would be safety in numbers, also rallied round.

Dupont, the French junior, not realising the gravity of the situation, enrolled under Skinner's banner, and the number was gradually made up to ten.

The eleventh man would be Billy Bunter, whom it would be inadvisable to let into the secret until the morning.

Harold Skinner went to bed in a very satisfied frame of mind.

But he did not sleep.

His mind was occupied with thoughts of the morrow, when he and his followers, hurling defiance at authority, would start off for Salisbury.

Vernon-Smith and the members of the genuine touring-party noticed that Skinner & Co. seemed unusually excited, but they had no notion as to the cause.

Skinner was up and doing at the first note of the rising-bell.

He cycled into Friardale, waited impatiently for the little post-office to open, and then despatched the following wire to the captain of the Wiltshire team:

"Cricket-match starts eleven this morning, not 2 p.m., as previously arranged.—Vernon-Smith."

The despatch of that wire made a big hole in Skinner's pocket-money, and it was like having teeth extracted to part with the cash.

But Skinner soothed himself with the reflection that Stott and Trevor and Treluce were heavily in funds. Those three would, in fact, finance the tour.

Skinner cycled back to Greyfriars in high feather.

He met Billy Bunter in the Close.

"I say, Skinny—"

The fat junior blinked at Skinner through his big spectacles.

"Smithy won't let me come to Wiltshire with his party," he said plaintively.

"Never mind, old barrel," said Skinner affably. "You shall come with mine!"

"Eh?"

Skinner explained his scheme in detail.

"We've arranged to meet at Friardale Station at half-past eight," he said. "We're going to bunk out of gates one at a time, so as not to attract attention."

"But—but who's coming?" gasped Bunter in surprise.

Skinner rattled off the names.

"We mean to make it a regular joy-week," he said. "Only for goodness' sake don't go giving the show away!"

"But what about Smithy—"

"Smithy's dead in this act. When his crew arrives at Salisbury we shall know how to deal with 'em. I'm going to pretend to the Wiltshire fellows that I'm Vernon-Smith."

"My hat!"

"Keep mum about this, mind!" said Skinner. "If you let your tongue wag during brekker I'll slaughter you!"

"Rely on me!" said Billy Bunter, his eyes fairly gleaming with excitement. "What an awfully deep wheeze, Skinny!"

The two juniors passed in to breakfast. The meal progressed very much as usual.

Mr. Quelch, at the head of the table, knew nothing of Skinner's scheme.

Had Mr. Quelch patrolled the Close after breakfast, however, he would have observed a number of juniors, at various intervals, stealthily proceeding out of gates.

Skinner's luck was in.

Neither he nor any of his followers were detected.

Even Billy Bunter managed to work the oracle, and the whole team finally met together on Friardale platform.

Stott and Trevor and Treluce pooled their resources, and tickets were taken for Salisbury.

Some of the juniors were a little scared as they clambered into the train.

"There will be the very dickens to pay for this!" said Trevor.

Skinner laughed.

"Who cares?" he said. "We'll stand together, and face the music afterwards. Matter of fact, there may not be any music to face. If we do well against Wiltshire—"

"lick 'em at cricket, and so forth—the Head will be so bucked that he won't dream of lamming us. And it may mean," added Skinner, letting his imagination run riot, "that we shall be selected for future tours!"

"I don't think!" grunted Treluce. "Still, we've taken the giddy plunge, and we must sink or swim together."

The train rattled on through the green pastures of Kent, bearing the eleven tourists to their fate.

Whether that fate would prove a happy one or otherwise remained to be seen.

Back in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars Mr. Quelch surveyed a sadly depleted class.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Where is everybody?"

About fifteen pupils were present, including the Famous Five.

There was no response to the Form-master's question.

"Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove rose respectfully.

"Can you explain the non-appearance of more than half my class?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Vernon-Smith and eleven others are getting ready to go to Salisbury, sir."

"Yes, yes! I am aware of that fact," said Mr. Quelch testily. "But there are other absentees—eleven of them, to be precise. Do you know where they are?"

"I haven't the foggiest notion, sir!"

Alonzo Todd rose in his place.

"If you please, sir—"

"Well, Todd?"

"Skinner appears to have disregarded my warning, sir," said Alonzo, in great distress.

"I entreated him not to put such a wild and unprincipled scheme into operation."

Mr. Quelch stared at the guileless Alonzo in astonishment.

"Todd! To what scheme do you refer?"

"Skinner's idea of taking a team to Salisbury, sir, without the sanction of the authorities."

Mr. Quelch gasped. So did the class.

Alonzo Todd had not intentionally played the sneak. Sheer distress of mind had caused him to speak out.

"Do you mean to tell me, Todd," said Mr. Quelch, "that Skinner and ten others have proceeded to Salisbury?"

"I fear such is the case, sir. The invitation was extended to me, and I remonstrated with Skinner, hoping he would be brought to see the error of his ways. Apparently my eloquence was in vain."

Mr. Quelch said nothing for some moments. He was almost dazed by Skinner's audacity.

Never before, in the varied and extensive history of the Greyfriars Remove, had such a glaring breach of the rules been perpetrated.

Mr. Quelch asked no more questions.

He left the Form-room with a brow like thunder, leaving a buzz behind him.

"My only aunt!" murmured Bob Cherry. "If this doesn't fairly take the bun!"

"The silly asses!" said Wharton. "They're asking for the sack!"

"Quelch's gone to see the Head about it," said Johnny Bull. "The Head will soon put the kybosh on Skinner's little excursion. He'll telephone to the railway people, and have the silly chumps brought back in record time."

Such did not prove to be the case, however.

When Dr. Locke heard of Skinner's action he sent for Gwynne of the Sixth, who was to accompany the genuine touring party.

"I sent for you, Gwynne," said the Head, "to tell you, in case you do not know already, that a number of misguided juniors in the Remove Form have gone to Salisbury, with the object of forestalling Vernon-Smith's party, and participating in the sports tournament against the boys of Wiltshire."

Gwynne could scarcely believe his ears. Before he had recovered from his astonishment the Head went on speaking.

"The boys in question must, of course, be punished severely. I do not, however, wish to court publicity by placing the matter in the hands of the police or the railway authorities. I therefore rely upon you, Gwynne, to see that Skinner and his

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companions are brought back to the school. You may use whatever measures you consider necessary."

"Very good, sir," said the prefect.

And there was an expression on Gwynne's rugged face which suggested that there would be short shrift for Skinner & Co.

Vernon-Smith and his party, armed with cricket-bags, were waiting for Gwynne when he came out into the Close.

The prefect briefly explained what had happened.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "I shouldn't have thought Skinner would have had nerve enough for this. But there it is. The bounders have gone off to Salisbury, and they're trying to cut us out."

"The sooner we get on their track the better," said Peter Todd.

"Yes, rather!"

"If only we could hire a motor char-a-banc!" sighed Dick Russell. "We should get to Salisbury almost as quickly as they would."

Vernon-Smith's eyes sparkled.

"Dashed if we won't do it!" he exclaimed. Gwynne smiled.

"Make it an aeroplane," he said. "You'd be just about as likely to raise the necessary cash."

"Don't let that worry you," said Vernon-Smith.

And he drew a wallet from his pocket, containing a bundle of crisp fivers.

"I've got enough to see us through," he said. "And there's plenty more where this came from. Shall I use the telephone in the prefects' room, and order a motor char-a-banc from Courtfield?"

"Certainly, if you think the expense is justifiable," said Gwynne.

So Vernon-Smith telephoned for the char-a-banc, which, twenty minutes later, rumbled into the Close.

"Hop in, you fellows!" sang out Vernon-Smith.

The tourists clambered into the vehicle, and a moment later they were speeding along the dusty road.

As Peter Todd pointed out, a lot of time would be saved in making the journey by road.

There was a direct route to Salisbury, and it would not be necessary to go to London first, as Skinner & Co. had done.

Had the rebels but known it, Nemesis was overtaking them fast!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Brought Back.

"HERE we are!"

Harold Skinner stepped out of the train at the Great Western platform at Salisbury.

Behind him—most of them looking very sheepish—trooped his followers.

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter was not sheepish. He was wolfish.

"Don't you think we'd better get some grub somewhere before we start the sports?"

"No time," said Skinner briskly. "The match was arranged for eleven, and it's that now. Time we got to the ground."

"Where is it?" asked Stott.

"Follow your uncle."

Skinner led the way through the streets of the cathedral city, and many curious glances were directed at the juniors by passers-by.

Surely such a weird collection of freaks had never been seen in Salisbury before!

On the stroke of eleven Skinner's team arrived on the ground.

The Wiltshire boys were already there.

Curly Williams, a Swindon schoolboy, and captain of the side, came forward to greet the Greyfriars fellows.

He could scarcely conceal his surprise as he shook hands with the weedy Skinner.

"I don't want to be rude," he said, "but is this really the Greyfriars team?"

"Of course!"

"And you're Vernon-Smith?"

Skinner nodded.

"Well, you don't look a very athletic crowd," said Williams—a fellow who seldom minced his words. "Fancy your licking the Isle of Wight fellows in every contest bar one!"

Skinner chuckled.

"We hope to do even better against you," he said.

Curly Williams took stock of the Greyfriars team.

"What on earth have you brought that fat chap for?" he inquired. "Are you going to use him to roll the pitch?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Billy Bunter wrathfully, "I'm as good a cricketer as any man you can produce, and chance it! You ought to see my form."

"I don't need a microscope to do that!" said Curly Williams.

"Me tinkee time to start cicket-match," said Wun Lung.

"Yep!" agreed Fisher T. Fish. "We'll show these galoots how to knock up the goals, I guess."

"Great pip!" gasped the Wiltshire skipper. Williams was frankly puzzled.

He had read the reports of the previous tours, and he knew that Vernon-Smith's party had acquitted themselves well against Surrey, Essex, and the Isle of Wight.

How they had managed to achieve these performances with such a team of freaks was a mystery.

Williams spun the coin, and Skinner, winning the toss, decided to bat first.

He took Stott in with him to open the innings.

Skinner fully expected to lay quite a good foundation of runs at the outset. Then, if fellows like Billy Bunter came a cropper—as they were almost certain to do—it would not matter so much.

But there was a shock in store for Skinner. Wiltshire possessed two very fast bowlers—Jack and Harry Harper.

The first ball just missed Skinner's off-stump.

The second hit the wicket with such force that the balls whizzed through the air, and were deposited at the feet of the umpire.

"How's that?"

It was a superfluous question.

Skinner, saying things under his breath, walked back to the pavilion.

Snoop, who followed on, was caught and bowled.

Then Trevor and Treluce lost their wickets before a single run had been scored.

The Wiltshire boys did not laugh at this extraordinary collapse.

They were very annoyed.

Like most sportsmanlike teams, they detested walk-over victories.

They had expected a keen game and a close one, and the sorry show the Friars were putting up disgusted them.

But they had to laugh a few minutes later, when Billy Bunter rolled out to the wicket.

Bunter's fat legs were encased in pads, which had been put on upside-down. The opening of his cricket-shirt revealed the large rolls of spare flesh which adorned his neck; and on his head he sported a weird and wonderful sun-hat—said to have been worn by Mr. Prout in the Rocky Mountains.

"Man in!" spluttered Curly Williams. "Oh, my aunt! Roll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean, roll!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled on.

He halted in front of the wicket, and thumped the turf impressively with his bat.

"Excavating for hidden treasure?" asked Jack Harper, who was bowling.

"Rats!" said Billy Bunter. "I like everything to be shipshape before I start piling up centuries, that's all."

"Great Scott!"

Billy Bunter was ready at last.

Harper took a short run, and his arm whizzed round like a catherine-wheel.

"Yarooooogh!" roared Bunter.

The ball had duly reached the wicket—via the fat junior's shin!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's that, umpire?"

"Out!"

Billy Bunter hopped about on one leg while he caressed the other.

"'Tain't fair!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "I—I wasn't looking when the ball came!"

"You're out!" repeated the umpire sharply.

But Billy Bunter refused to budge.

He remained where he was, and the Wiltshire fellows were just arranging to dribble him off the field, when—

Toot, toot!

A horn sounded, and the next moment a motor char-a-banc, laden with juniors, swept through the gates of the cricket-ground.

Skinner was one of the first to see the vehicle, and he at once rallied his men.

"They're here!" he muttered. "Now we've got to say that they're impostors, and chuck them out!"

But Skinner's followers hung back.

They were not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Twelve determined-looking juniors, together with Gwynne of the Sixth, stepped down from the vehicle. And Skinner & Co. would find it very difficult—even if the Wiltshire fellows offered to help them, which was unlikely—to keep the new-comers at bay.

Gwynne strode up to the pavilion, and his hand fell upon Skinner's shoulder.

"You young rascal! What do you mean by it?"

"Leggo!" muttered Skinner.

"Not likely! You're coming back to Greyfriars at once—all the lot of you!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Skinner's courage oozed out at his fingertips.

With no one to back him up, he realised that further defiance would be worse than useless.

Vernon-Smith was already explaining matters to the Wiltshire skipper, and Russell and Rake and Ogilvy were engaged in dragging Billy Bunter forcibly from the playing-pitch.

Skinner turned a haggard face to Gwynne. "I—I say, this was only a joke!" he stammered.

"Faith, and it's a joke you'll be made to answer for!" said Gwynne grimly. "This way!"

And he started to propel the wretched Skinner towards the waiting char-a-banc.

Skinner made no attempt at resistance.

The game was up, with a vengeance.

One by one the members of the freak eleven were dumped into the char-a-banc, and Gwynne clambered into the driver's seat.

"I—I say, Gwynne!" faltered Billy Bunter. "Can we have a little snack before we go back to Greyfriars? I'm jolly peckish, you know!"

"You're coming straight back!" said Gwynne. "And I hope you'll like your joy-ride!"

Gwynne's hope was ill-founded.

Skinner & Co. felt like victims of the French Revolution being whirled along to the guillotine.

Gwynne drove recklessly along the open road, and his passengers were scared out of their wits long before the familiar village of Friardale came in sight.

Greyfriars was reached without mishap, however, and Gwynne marched his little army of defaulters in a melancholy procession through the Close.

Even the most loyal supporter of Harold Skinner felt in the humour for blessing him at that moment.

The sword of Damocles, so long suspended over the heads of the rebels, was about to descend!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Paying the Piper!

"COME in!"

Gwynne of the Sixth opened the door of Dr. Locke's study, and Skinner & Co. were shepherded into that terrible apartment.

"Ah! You have brought these foolish boys back, Gwynne?"

"Yes, sir."

"You found them at Salisbury?"

Gwynne nodded.

Skinner and his companions stood in a row in front of the bookcase.

Not one of them looked happy.

Even Wun Lung, who usually possessed a good flow of spirits, looked as downcast as the rest.

As for Billy Bunter, he was already beginning to snivel.

The Head selected a couple of stout canes from his cupboard.

Skinner & Co. watched him in considerable apprehension.

"Skinner!" thundered Dr. Locke.

"Ye-es, sir?"

"You have been guilty of an unprecedented breach of the rules. Without permission, you have organised a cricket eleven, and incited them to break bounds. It was your intention, I believe, to remain away from Greyfriars for a week?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! We—we were coming back this evening, sir!"

"I am sorry I cannot believe you, Skinner. Your conduct is unpardonable. It would be no more than you deserved if I were to expel you and your associates from this school!"

"Oh!" gasped Skinner.

"I shall not, however, take that step," the Head went on. "I am ready to believe that



Billy Bunter descended into the water with a mighty splash. "Yoooooop! Gug-gug-gug!" he spluttered. (See page 7.)

your action was due in a large measure to thoughtlessness. Instead of expelling you, therefore, I shall administer a most severe thrashing all round!"

The members of the freaks' eleven shivered in their shoes.

"You first, Skinner!" said the Head.

And he beckoned to Gwynne to hold the cad of the Remove in position over the desk. Whack, whack, whack!

The cane rose and fell with terrific vim.

In his younger days Dr. Locke had been an accomplished athlete, and he seemed to be recovering his lost youth.

Skinner roared as the cane lashed upon his tight-fitting trousers.

He had been licked many a time and oft; but previous records went by the board in the light of this new and painful experience.

"There!" said the Head, at length. "Let that be a lesson to you, Skinner! And consider yourself extremely fortunate that this punishment is not crowned with expulsion!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Skinner lurched towards the bookcase, groaning and gasping.

"Stott next!" said the Head. "Bunter! Where are you going? How dare you attempt to leave my study by stealth?"

Billy Bunter paused in the doorway.

He had been hoping to steal out unseen, but the Head's keen eye had detected him.

"Ahem! I—I feel faint, sir!" stammered Bunter. "It—it's due to lack of nourishment. I've had nothing to eat for hours and hours, sir! A good feed and a breath of fresh air would put me right."

The Head gasped.

"Bunter!"

"M-m-may I go, sir?"

"Certainly not!" thundered the Head.

"You will wait and receive suitable chastisement for your misconduct!"

"Oh crumbs! I—I had nothing to do with this business, sir—nothing at all!"

"What!"

"Instead of being licked, sir, I consider I ought to be patted on the back—"

"Boy!"

"You see, sir, I went to Salisbury to fetch Skinner and the others back! I got wind of Skinner's little scheme, and followed hot on the trail, sir! In my way, I'm a bit of a detective—"

"Silence!" rapped out the Head. "Do you seriously expect me to believe such a jargon of falsehoods, Bunter? You shall be severely punished when I have dealt with Stott!"

Billy Bunter groaned.

He had realised that no sort of art or artifice would avail to preserve him from the wrath to come.

The Head turned to Stott; and that junior's howls echoed dismally through the study.

Billy Bunter came next.

As a last resource, the fat junior pretended to fall down in a faint just as the Head called his name. But Gwynne picked the Owl of the Remove up with difficulty, and slung him across the desk.

Then the cane came into play.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooooh!"

The dust rose in a cloud from Billy Bunter's draughtboard trousers.

"Oh dear! Oh crumbs! Help! Fire! Murder!"

The effect of these wild howls upon the Head was to add vigour to his strokes.

When the castigation was over, Billy Bunter subsided on the floor of the study like a pricked balloon.

The rest of the culprits followed in turn. Not one of them took his licking quietly.

Indeed, the fellows who were listening in the Close likened Dr. Locke's study to a slaughter-house.

"Now," said the Head, when it was all over, and the two canes had been broken, "you will all return to your Form-room. Your behaviour has been abominable, and you will know what to expect next time!"

Skinner & Co. crawled out of the study, reflecting that the way of the transgressor is hard.

There was likely to be no "next time"!

"This is what comes of your precious wheezes!" growled Stott, turning fiercely upon Skinner. "We were silly clumps ever to have followed your lead!"

"Hear, hear!" said Snoop. "We might have known this would happen."

"I kinder calculate I'm not going on any more sports tours!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "Enough's as good as a feast! I guess you're a slabsided jay, Skinner!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Skinner.

"Oh, bump him!" growled Treluce.

"Hands off!" gasped Skinner, in alarm.

But his schoolfellows closed in upon him, and he descended upon the flagstones in the Close with a bump and a roar.

"And again!" sang out Trevor.

And Skinner descended once more—with a bump which shook every bone in his body.

"Now we're square!" grunted Stott. "Come on! Quelchy will be waiting for us in the Form-room. And I'm not exactly pining for another licking!"

The discomfited members of Skinner's eleven went back to resume their normal routine.

Gwynne of the Sixth, his task accomplished, returned to Salisbury, where the genuine touring-party had started on their campaign against the sportsmen of Wiltshire.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Against Odds.

"WE want 200 to win," said Vernon-Smith.

"And we've all the afternoon to get 'em in," remarked Peter Todd, strapping on his pads. "I'm not pretending it's an easy job, but I rather fancy we can do it."

The cricket match on the Salisbury ground was being keenly contested.

The scores in the first innings were level, each side having compiled 90.

Then Wiltshire had rattled up 199 in their second venture, leaving Vernon-Smith's team to face an uphill task.

The crowd round the ground was a large one.

The match had been advertised locally, and a good many soldiers from the surrounding camps had put in an appearance.

There was a cheer of encouragement as Vernon-Smith and Peter Todd walked out to the wickets.

The brothers Harper were bowling, and their attack was deadly.

Vernon-Smith went through the first over without scoring.

It was about as easy to get blood out of a stone as to get runs off Harper's bowling.

Peter Todd managed to nick the ball through the slips for a couple; but the very next ball sent Peter's bails whizzing into space.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter, in dismay. "Where did that one go to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's one wicket down!" said Curly Williams, with satisfaction, as Peter Todd made his way to the pavilion.

Others soon followed.

Dick Penfold, usually the bright particular star of his side when things looked black, was clean bowled; and Bulstrode and Morgan and Wibley amassed between them the anything but grand total of 2.

Vernon-Smith managed to keep his end up while the other two wickets fell; but the score was still very low, and the hopes of the Friars sank lower.

The limit was reached when Vernon-Smith himself, hitting out at a loose ball, was caught in the long field.

"Play up, Don!" said Dick Russell, as his chum Ogilvy emerged, padded and gloved, from the pavilion. "We only want a hundred and fifty or so!"

Ogilvy grinned ruefully. But he made a mental resolve not to succumb to the deadly attack of the brothers Harper.

He began by scoring two boundaries; and from that time the good work went on without a break.

Dick Rake, at the other end, backed Ogilvy up well.

But there was no enthusiasm from the crowd until the 100 went up.

When, half an hour later, 150 appeared on the telegraph-board, the hopes of the Friars revived.

"Those fellows are great!" said Vernon-Smith. "They'll see us out of the wood yet."

Scarcely were the words spoken, however, when Dick Rake's middle-stump started performing revolutions.

There was a buzz from the crowd as Rake came back to the pavilion. He had scored 60—a performance which was all the more creditable because of the Remove's bad start.

A flannelled figure came down the pavilion steps, gripping his bat with a purpose there was no mistaking.

It was Dick Russell.

When Russell and Ogilvy got together it was a bad omen for the Remove's opponents.

Although not the leading lights of Vernon-Smith's party, Russell and Ogilvy were stirring cricketers, with a happy knack of grasping opportunities.

The Rake and Ogilvy partnership became the Ogilvy and Russell combine.

A hundred runs still remained to be knocked off, and the batsmen set about their task with vigour.

"They'll do it!" said Peter Todd. "Just look at 'em! Oh, well hit, sir!"

Dick Russell had just hit one of the Harpers clean out of the ground.

The progress was admirably maintained. Russell and Ogilvy were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Once Russell spooned the ball in the direction of point, and there was a gasp from the crowd.

But point was fielding too deeply, and he dashed up too late for the catch.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 25.

Russell breathed again. So did the Friars watching from the pavilion.

The score mounted so swiftly that Curly Williams took a turn with the ball.

This change caused the score to mount more rapidly than ever.

Russell pulled the Wiltshire skipper to leg three times in succession, and in each case a boundary resulted.

Vernon-Smith & Co. were dancing a Jazz in their excitement.

"Only thirty more!" said Bulstrode.

"Stick it out, you fellows!"

Russell and Ogilvy exchanged breathless glances.

They did not speak, but their looks said as plainly as any words could have done:

"We mean to see this through!"

Curly Williams began to tear his hair.

At one time Wiltshire seemed to have had the game well in hand.

But the fortunes of cricket are ever-changing. A game is never lost until it is won—a fact which Russell and Ogilvy remembered.

There was yet another batsman to follow on—Hazeldene.

But Hazel was not needed.

Russell and Ogilvy scored the necessary number of runs between them; and when Donald Ogilvy made the winning hit—the best of the day—the crowd sent up a cheer which echoed again and again.

The Greyfriars Remove had defeated the boys of Wiltshire by two wickets.

"Carry them off!" shouted somebody.

And the next moment Dick Russell and Donald Ogilvy became the centre of a hustling, enthusiastic crowd.

Gwynne of the Sixth had arrived on the scene by this time, and when the demonstration was over he escorted the juniors to their hotel.

"I rather fancy you kids have distinguished yourselves more than Skinner's gang!" said the prefect.

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"This is cricket!" he said. "What Skinner & Co. played was a prehistoric form of hop-scotch."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In a merry mood the tourists sat down to dinner, and here again they distinguished themselves.

Their appetites were keen, thanks to the Wiltshire air.

Back at Greyfriars the rebels of the Remove had paid the penalty for their misdeeds, and the genuine tourists had come into their own at last!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Real Thing!

"MARATHON races," said Curly Williams, "ought to be abolished."

The Greyfriars tourists were seated in the lounge of their hotel in the cool of the evening, and the Wiltshire skipper had been invited to a discussion on the sports.

"Wherefore this objection to a Marathon?" asked Gwynne, becoming interested.

Curly Williams, frankly expounded his views.

"A Marathon race isn't sport, in my opinion," he said. "It's sheer martyrdom. Just think of it! Fagging along a dusty road for miles and miles! It saps a fellow's energy, and plays the very dickens with his constitution!"

"Something in that," said Vernon-Smith. "They're not holding a Marathon in the next Olympic Tournament at Stockholm. It's been ruled out on medical grounds."

"Exactly!" said Curly Williams. "And if it's considered too big a strain for trained athletes, what about kids like ourselves?"

"Kids!" said Ogilvy. "I like that! Ever since I made my 75 not out I've felt like a seasoned veteran!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I quite agree with what you say about Marathon races," said Gwynne, addressing Curly Williams. "When I was a kid I remember how Dorando nearly croaked himself for life in a Marathon race. But if we decide not to hold a Marathon, what do you suggest to take its place?"

Curly Williams reflected.

"What about a contest of this sort?" he said at length. "You walk a mile, bike a mile, row a mile, and run a mile. It's a pretty stiff ordeal, but it's exciting, and not half so fagging as a Marathon."

"Good!" said Gwynne. "Do you kids agree?"

"Yes, rather!" came in a chorus from the Greyfriars juniors.

"It's quite a topping idea!" said Peter Todd. "Hope you Wiltshire fellows haven't been going over the course beforehand."

"No fear!" laughed Curly Williams. "Both sides will start equal. I'd better be going now. We're having eight hours' sport tomorrow, and I want eight hours' sleep to make the way."

And the Wiltshire skipper, with a cheery nod to his guests, left the hotel.

After breakfast next morning Curly Williams led his men into action.

The fact that they had lost the cricket-match did not daunt the Wiltshire fellows. They would have plenty of opportunities to make good.

They made a rousing start.

Curly Williams won the hundred yards race, beating Vernon-Smith by a yard; following which the brothers Harper, who could jump as well as bowl, won the long and high jump respectively.

The Greyfriars juniors began to look grim. Peter Todd called upon his only Aunt Sepronla, and Vernon-Smith invoked the aid of the gods.

Apparently, these supplications were not in vain, for Dick Penfold won the quarter-mile; and the Greyfriars' team, with a long, long pull, and a strong, strong pull, won the tug-of-war.

The other events were fairly equally distributed between the two sides.

And then came the Curly Williams' Race, as the newly-arranged feature was called.

"This is where we keep up the old traditions," said Peter Todd. "We walk a mile first, don't we?"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"Good! Gimme my crutches!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The competitors—there was a fair sprinkling of them—lined up for the start, and Gwynne rapped out the word of command.

Those who had imagined that the walking part would be tame were swiftly disillusioned.

It was a strenuous affair from the outset.

Vernon-Smith went ahead with long, swinging strides; and Curly Williams, of Wiltshire was just behind.

The others kept close together, their legs going like clockwork.

When the mile was covered, the competitors mounted the bicycles provided for them and sped away like a whirlwind.

Vernon-Smith scored heavily in this part of the race.

None knew better than the Bounder how to get the utmost speed out of a machine. He raced along in great style with the dogged Williams and another boy named Jefferson hard on his track.

The third part of the race was the most strenuous of all.

To walk a mile and to cycle a mile at top speed is not a joke, and to row a mile at top speed is still less humorous.

Vernon-Smith leapt off his machine when he reached the river at the end of his bicycle-ride, and a moment later he was flashing through the sparkling water in a single-seater skiff.

The Bounder had the river to himself, but not for long.

Other boats dotted the water; and a number of eager, straining oarsmen sped along in Vernon-Smith's wake.

Some of the competitors had dropped out by this time. They were finding the pace too hot.

But the majority—fellows of the Vernon-Smith and Curly Williams stamp—stuck gamely to their task.

And then came the last mile of all.

Vernon-Smith leapt from his skiff; and Gwynne, who stood on the landing-stage, directed him along the course.

But the Bounder was too impetuous.

His leap from the skiff had caused him to injure his ankle—only slightly, but it was sufficient to impair his fine turn of speed.

Curly Williams took the lead, and Jefferson and Jack Harper came next.

It seemed for a moment that the Friars were completely out of the picture.

But there was one fellow who had been reserving his energies till the last.

Dick Rake stepped from his skiff feeling fresh, and in the pink of condition.

He had three opponents to overtake. But a mile is a good distance, and it gave him time to achieve his purpose.

Swift as a deer, Dick Rake sped along the white stretch of road.

He left Harper behind; and, in due course, he overhauled the wiry Jefferson.

But Curly Williams was still a power to be reckoned with.

He was a host in himself, and Dick Rake

realised that he must put forth every ounce of energy to win.

It was a keen, close finish. First Rake, and then Williams, gained the advantage; but it was the Greyfriars fellow who finished first, the margin between the two runners being almost imperceptible.

"Well run, kid!" said Gwynne, who had cycled to the spot. "That was the finest bit of work on the tour!"

Dick Rake sat down on the grassy bank, and pumped in breath.

"It was hot work, by Jove!" he panted. "I shouldn't care to go through that last mile again!"

When the other Greyfriars fellows toiled to the spot, determined to finish the course at all hazards, they overwhelmed the victor with their congratulations, and Dick Rake bore his blushing honours thick upon him.

The next contest of importance took place in the afternoon, when Dick Russell met Curly Williams in the boxing-ring.

There was little to choose between the two fellows as they faced each other.

Williams had the longer reach, and he was the heftier of the two; but he was not so well built as the Greyfriars junior.

Dick Russell forced the fighting at the outset.

But Williams could take any amount of punishment, and he stood his ground doggedly.

Then the Wiltshire fellow became aggressive, and Dick Russell had to concentrate upon defence.

At the end of six stubbornly-contested rounds no knock-out had been registered, and the verdict had to be awarded on points.

There was a cheer from the audience when the result was announced.

The bout had ended in a draw.

"Quite a fair verdict, by Jove!" said Vernon-Smith. "That was one of the most even fights I've ever seen."

"Sorry I didn't pull it off, you fellows," said Dick Russell, as he stepped out of the ring.

"Nothing to be sorry about," said Ogilvy. "You stood up to him like a Trojan."

"Yes, rather!"

"Who says tea?" asked Dick Penfold.

"Tea!" echoed eleven voices.

And the Remove tourists returned to their hotel, more than satisfied with the result of their day's sport.

The Wiltshire boys were delighted, too.

At the outset they had anticipated a tame and uninteresting series of contests. But when Skinner & Co. were exposed, and Vernon-Smith and his followers took their place, everything had gone swimmingly.

Curly Williams was a born leader and a great sportsman. His only regret was, as he wistfully confided to his comrades, that the Greyfriars Sports Tour could not be confined solely to Wiltshire.

"Fellows like Vernon-Smith," he said, "aren't met with in every day's march. He's a sportsman to the core."

To which the Wiltshire fellows responded, with one voice:

"Hear, hear!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Homeward Bound!

"TUMBLE out, kids!" Gwynne passed along the corridor of the hotel, and roused the juniors who were sleeping in the various rooms.

It was the last morning of all.

Only the swimming sports remained to be contested, and the morning was certainly ideal for swimming in the cool, clear water.

"Phew!" gasped Bulstrode, glancing from the window. "There's a blessed heat-wave—and it isn't eight o'clock yet!"

"It's simply sweltering," said Vernon-Smith.

The Removees went down to breakfast with healthy appetites.

Then a general move was made to the river.

Curly Williams & Co. were already on the spot. They sang out a cheery "Good-morning!"

"I'm afraid we're going to get it very much in the neck," said Curly Williams. "We can play cricket, we can run, and I'm supposed to be a fairly good hand with the gloves. But swimming's our weak point."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Modesty, thy name is Williams!" he said. "I bet we shall find that you can swim us off our legs!"

The first race, however, revealed the fact that Curly Williams had not exaggerated the position.

However brilliant the Wiltshire boys might be in other forms of sport, Greyfriars were literally "all over them," so far as swimming was concerned.

It was Peter Todd who won the opening race.

"Told you so!" said Curly Williams ruefully. "That's only the first failure. There are more to follow!"

And there were!

Vernon-Smith, who felt in capital form, won the next three events on his own.

Every single event fell to Greyfriars.

The Wiltshire boys, who had no opportunity of sea-bathing, were far less expert than their opponents.

Nevertheless, they put up a plucky fight, and many of the races were fought to a stubborn finish.

"Here endeth the programme!" said Peter Todd, as he stood on the river bank and towelled himself vigorously.

"Worse luck!" grunted Hazeldene. "Now we've got to return to our kind teachers! Groo!"

The juniors hurriedly finished dressing. Then farewell greetings were exchanged, and the Removees started on their homeward journey, calling at the hotel en route for their baggage.

It was late in the afternoon when a dusty and weary procession flocked in at the gates of Greyfriars.

A crowd of juniors in the Close besieged them with questions.

"How did the tour go, you fellows?"

"Did you mop up Wiltshire?"

"Have you been piling up centuries, Smithy?"

"We won everything, barring a few running races and the boxing, which was a draw," said Vernon-Smith.

"Hurrah!"

"Jolly well played!"

"I say, you fellows," chimed in Billy Bunter, "I believe Smithy's telling fibs, you know!"

"What!" roared Vernon-Smith.

"I consider it was a downright shame to rob us of our tour! Just as we were going strong, too! What did you want to barge in for, Smithy?"

"I haven't quite finished barging in yet!" said the Bounder grimly.

And, taking a tight grip on Billy Bunter's collar, he yanked the fat junior towards the fountain.

"Here, I say, hold on—I—I mean, leggo!" gasped Bunter. "What's the little game?"

With a superhuman effort—for Billy Bunter carried a good deal of overweight—Vernon-Smith heaved the fat junior into the bowl of the fountain.

Billy Bunter descended into the water with a mighty splash.

"Yoooooop! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Owl of the Remove struggled out of his unfortunate position; and he ventured no further remarks concerning Vernon-Smith's tour.

The tourists went early to bed that evening, and they slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning they turned up as usual in the Remove Form-room.

Mr. Quelch spoke to Vernon-Smith before morning lessons commenced.

"I trust you had a pleasant tour, Smith?"

"Very pleasant indeed, sir!"

"You defeated the Wiltshire boys?"

"In most of the events, sir."

"That is very reassuring news. I should like to congratulate—"

"Atishoo-um-yum!"

It was a very loud and prolonged sneeze, and it proceeded from Billy Bunter.

"Bunter!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Shoo!"

"Cease making that ridiculous noise, Bunter!"

"I—I can't help it, sir! I've got a beastly cold, and I didn't ask Vernon-Smith to duck me in the fountain! Atishoo!"

"What nonsense is this?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Did you submerge Bunter in the fountain, Smith?"

The Bounder could scarcely repress a grin.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"For what reason?"

Vernon-Smith was silent.

"I accused him of telling fibs—and he was!" shrilled Billy Bunter. "I don't believe his team won a single event! It wasn't to be expected, sir! You see, I wasn't there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a ripple of laughter from the class.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I have no sympathy to waste upon you, Bunter!" he said. "You are a perverse and foolish boy, and I feel certain that you must have provoked Vernon-Smith to punish you."

"Oh, really, sir—Atishum!"

"If you make that absurd noise again, Bunter, I shall cane you!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter's sneezing fit subsided as if by magic.

His behaviour in class during the remainder of the morning was exemplary. And when lessons were over, he made no further attempt to criticise Vernon-Smith and his followers.

Skinner & Co. likewise held their peace. They were heartily sick of sports tours. And it was likely to be a long, long time before a fresh outbreak occurred among the Rebels of Greyfriars!

THE END.

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AFTER LIGHTS OUT

A New Long, Complete Story
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Tommy Cook's Birthday.

TOMMY!" Tommy Cook turned as he was mounting the stairs leading to the Modern House Fourth Form passage. Tommy Doyle and Tommy Dodd, his chums, were running up after him.

"What's the matter now?" asked Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd snorted.

"Phew! You might well ask what's the matter!" he said, between pants for breath. "You go chasing upstairs on your own, and leave us to run after you. Fathead!"

"Same to you, old top!" grinned Cook.

"But whyfore the hurry?"

"I've just seen Jimmy Silver," said Dodd. "He wants us to rake up a team to play his on Saturday. I said we would do our best to find somebody easy."

"Mentioning yourself, for one, I suppose?"

"Eh? Rats! Of course, I shall have to go—must have one decent man in a cricket team to lead them. Any kid of the Modern House could beat Classic chaps—providing I'm captain of the team he's in!"

"Rats!"

"Eh?"

"I said 'Rats!' Plenty of them, my son. You know jolly well that you'll have to find eleven jolly good men to beat Jimmy Silver's team. It makes no difference whether you lead them or not."

Tommy Dodd simply stared. He could not remember Tommy Cook speaking to him like that before.

"I admit I pulled Jimmy Silver's leg about the kids," he admitted wrathfully. "But what are you talking like a bear with a sore head for?"

Tommy Cook grinned.

"Ever heard a bear talk?"

"Fathead!"

Tommy Cook looked offended.

"If that's the way you treat a chap who's just going to invite you to a glorious feed—"

"Good!" interrupted Tommy Dodd heartily. He thrust his arm affectionately in that of his chum, and the three juniors walked towards their study.

"Suddenly had a brain-wave? Or a remittance?"

"Both, old son. I've had a brain-wave—a glorious feed. The remittance came in the shape of a fiver from the gov'nor."

Dodd and Doyle stared.

"A fiver? Is it your giddy birthday?"

"It is."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Sure, and ye didn't tell us! We'd have sent ye a picture-postcard—wan of those pretty ones intoirely, if we'd—"

Dodd and Doyle shook hands heartily with their chum. They had not known it was his birthday until Cook mentioned the fact himself.

Tommy Dodd's wrath died away as if by magic.

"Say, old son," he said, "I wish you'd let us know before this. Goodness, you've had a birthday nearly fifteen hours, and you haven't said a word about it. If you call that chummy—"

"Who wants to sing about a birthday?" demanded Cook. "Do you sing out from the top of the school every time you have a birthday?"

"No; but I would tell my chums."

"And then it would get out. Your chums would tell their chums—Jimmy Silver & Co., for instance—they'd tell their chums, and so on, etcetera!"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 25.

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"Any old how—what about the feed?" he said.

"It's a special occasion, so it demands a special stunt," said Cook thoughtfully. "I was thinking of the tuckshop—"

"Much better to have it in the study—Jimmy Silver could come over then."

"But tuckshop can only supply cakes and eggs and bacon, and stuff. What we want is a nice little course supper."

"Or the moon!" suggested Tommy Dodd sarcastically.

He flung open the door of the study, and they went inside and shut the door.

Tommy Cook sat on the edge of the table, and thoughtfully puckered his brow. He apparently did not hear Tommy Dodd's satirical suggestion.

"That's it—a little course supper!" he said firmly.

"But, you silly ass—"

"We could go after lights out—"

"Oh, come off it, Tommy, for goodness' sake!"

Tommy Cook started.

"Did you speak, Dobby?"

Tommy Dodd started.

"Speak! Of course I spoke—I mean, spoke—you dummy! Haven't I been speaking for the last couple of minutes?" he roared.

"I couldn't say!" said Cook coolly. "I'm afraid I was thinking of more important things."

Tommy Dodd lapsed disgustedly into silence.

"So we'll go out after lights-out, and down to Coomb tuckshop," said Tommy Cook.

"We'll celebrate my birthday in right royal style, my noble chums. A little excitement in the way of dodging prefects will add to our enjoyment."

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle looked at one another and grinned.

"Top-hole!" said Tommy Dodd. "I didn't think you could get hold of a stunt like that. We shall remember your birthday all right for next year!"

"Sure! 'Specially if old Bulkeley catches us!" murmured Tommy Doyle.

"Go it, cheerful!" said Tommy Cook. "Any old how, we're off for a night out. Don't make a row when you get up, chaps!"

The rest of the evening was spent in settling up the minor details of their enterprise. The three chums were in very high spirits when they at last trooped cheerfully up to bed.

If everything went as well as it was planned, then they were indeed destined to have a good time.

But, as the old saying has it, "The plans of mice and men oft gang agley," and the celebration of Tommy Cook's birthday was one which they would certainly not forget.

Most of the Modern House juniors had been down on the playing-fields immediately before going up to bed, and were very quickly off to sleep in consequence.

But there were three very wakeful juniors lying in bed, waiting for the last whispering voices to die away. They were Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle.

At last Tommy Cook gave a soft whistle. Almost immediately his two chums raised themselves in their beds and peered cautiously round them.

But no one moved, and five minutes later Tommy Dodd & Co. were climbing over the wall that enclosed Rookwood.

They did not speak until they were well on their way to Coomb.

"So far, so good!" said Tommy Todd, with a suddenness that made the other juniors jump.

"Fathead! You made me jump!" snorted Tommy Cook. "You should warn us when you're going to speak!"

"Of course, I shouldn't have to speak to do that!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "One doesn't—"

Tommy Cook grasped his arm, and jerked him to a standstill.

"Look here, Tommy Dodd!" said Cook sulphuriously. "Way back at Rookwood we admit that you're leader. But to-night is my night out—you're my guests. If you dole out any more sars, I'll punch your silly head. That's that!"

Tommy Dodd chuckled cheerfully.

"Sorry!" he said. "Come on, I'm wanting that feed, old son!"

The matter of leadership thus settled, the three juniors strode rapidly along the lane towards Coomb.

Their voices seldom rose above a whisper. They did not want to make their presence known.

Suddenly Tommy Doyle stopped in his stride, and stared across the dark fields.

"What's up?" demanded Tommy Dodd curiously. "Seeing things?"

"No—not exactly. But I saw a light over there just now."

"Nothing funny in that is—"

"There it is again!"

There was no need for Tommy Doyle to tell his chums that. They saw it for themselves, and a puzzled frown came to Dodd's face.

"I thought— Must have been mistaken!" he muttered. "But—"

"That's old Colonel Redhouse's place, isn't it?" whispered Tommy Cook; and for the moment he forgot all about the feed they had risked so much for.

"Yes," said Tommy Dodd. "But I'm sure he is away. He was demobilised a month or so ago, and he went away for a holiday. I remember seeing him leave Coomb Station—a big fellow of about thirty years of age."

"Then he's come back," said Tommy Cook. "Kim on!"

But Tommy Dodd stopped where he was, his eyes fixed on the dark outline of the big house across the fields. A light flashed again, only for an instant, but unmistakably.

"Come on, Dobby!" said Cook impatiently. "What's the good of staring like that? A the grub'll be gone if we don't hurry!"

Still Tommy Dodd stood motionless.

"I heard the colonel say he would be back the first week-end in July!" he muttered. "I distinctly remember that, now I come to think about it!"

"Oh, rats! Catch hold of his other arm, Doyle!"

"Sure! Come on, Dobby!"

Tommy Dodd suffered himself to be led for about a hundred yards, but then he pulled himself free and stood still again, watching the big house.

It seemed to fascinate him. He was thinking, not of the feed for which they had left Rookwood, but of a certain day a week or so past, when he had seen Colonel Redhouse on Coomb Station.

But his chums were not thinking of the colonel. They were far more concerned about the feed.

"Come on, Dobby!" pleaded Cook. "You're wasting time. That light only shows the colonel has come home—"

"I'm going to see!" interrupted Tommy Dodd firmly. "I'll meet you chaps in the tuckshop later on."

"Fathead!" growled Tommy Cook. "As if we'd let you do that!"

"Well, I'm going to see if everything is all right," said Tommy Dodd. "I've got a kind of a sort of a feeling that something's wrong."

"Just because you see a light?"

"No—partly, p'r'aps. You chaps go on—"

"Brrr-r-r!"

And thus Tommy Cook effectually interrupted his chum.

"Come on, then!" said Tommy Dodd quickly. "After all, we sha'n't be so very late if we go straight from the house back to Coomb. And I shall feel easier in my mind when I've satisfied myself about that light."

The other juniors nodded, and together they set out across the field towards the big house.

They should have gone round by the road, which took them through Coomb, and then by another road to Santa Cruz, the name by which Colonel Redhouse's mansion was known.

But by going across the fields the juniors cut off a big corner, and time was precious.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Something Wrong.

"WHAT'S that?" Tommy Dodd gripped his two chums by their arms, and pulled them to a halt.

They were entering the gates of Santa Cruz, and they had no sooner set foot on the gravelled drive than a soft whistle floated to their ears.

The Rookwoodites stood, motionless, for the sound to be repeated. But nothing happened.

"Fancy!" murmured Tommy Cook. Tommy Dodd shook his head in the darkness.

"I thought I heard a whistle," he said quietly. "I'm almost sure of it."

He led the way down the drive, on either side of which stood stately chestnut trees.

Suddenly a shrill whistle rent the air, and from behind one of the trees a man suddenly sprang.

"Look out!" shouted Tommy Dodd warningly.

The man was followed by another, and yet another. Three of them came suddenly from behind the trees, and there was no time for the juniors to run.

Tommy Dodd had just time to pant out "Told you so!" before he was seized in a grip like a vice.

At the same instant Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were attacked by one of the men, and there started a silent fight for the mastery.

Tommy Dodd thought his arm would break under the pressure of his powerful assailant. He thought of crying for help, but, realising the utter hopelessness of anybody hearing, resolved to save his breath.

He fought on silently, a shiver of disgust passing through him as the hot breath of his assailant fanned his cheek.

Tommy Doyle struggled fiercely with his man, and his fists found a mark more than once on the man's unshaven face.

Cook, who was a clever wrestler, was having the fight of his life against his assailant. He flung the man to the ground, and dropped on top of him, but he was rolled off the next minute.

But, like an eel, he twisted round, and was on his feet again before the man could stop him. Seeing something whiter than the rest of his assailant, Cook lashed out fiercely with his fist.

But the man ducked his head, and caught the blow on his shoulder. Cook's eyes gleamed as he heard a slight, sneering chuckle.

"Rats!" he panted. "I'll do you yet!"

He glanced round quickly, and saw that Tommy Dodd, still fighting gamely, was on the ground, his assailant's knee on his chest. Tommy Doyle, his Irish fighting blood thoroughly roused, was still struggling fiercely.

That was all Cook had time to see, for his man was at him again.

Silently, save for the crunching of feet on the gravel of the drive, the three juniors fought on against three fully-grown men. And they fought hard.

But it was almost hopeless. They were not strong enough to keep up the pace, and gradually they were worn down. Tommy Dodd lay motionless at last, glaring fiercely into the eyes of his captor.

"Lemme get up!" he panted. "I'll fight you, you boulder!"

"Jiminy!" gasped the man. "You fight like a wild-cat! You stay where you are, my buck, until I get my breath back!"

Tommy Doyle was in much the same plight. His man had his heavy knee on his chest, and the Irish junior lay, panting, but undaunted.

"Bedad! I'll scalp ye, ye rotten boulder! Lemme get at you, Oi'll!"

But the man kept his knee where it was,

and Tommy Doyle was reluctantly compelled to remain helpless.

But Tommy Cook was not done with yet. He fought with all his strength, and he used every bit of cunning he could bring to mind. He tried every grip and every twist he could think of, and his assailant was bewildered.

Silently the struggle continued long after Tommy Dodd and Doyle were rendered hors de combat, and neither could gain the mastery.

On the gravel drive the two wriggled and twisted, and Tommy Cook could see the hopeless position of his chums as he was momentarily whirled round to face them.

Suddenly there came into his head the wily old trick he had read so many, many times, and would doubtless read of again. He played "possum."

He became limp in the grasp of the man who held him, and for an instant the grip upon him was loosened. But that instant was enough for Tommy Cook.

With a sudden heave, he sent the man on to his side. Twisting his own legs in those of his assailant, Tommy Cook gave them a sharp wrench.

The man groaned, and the next moment Tommy Cook had jumped to his feet, and disappeared amongst the trees that bordered the path.

The man who held Tommy Dodd growled out an imprecation.

"What did you let him go for?" he said. "He'll spoil our little game!"

"The bloomin' eel!" panted he whom Cook had so nicely done. "He's all lightnin'!"

Despite the seriousness of their position, Tommy Dodd and Tommy Doyle could not restrain from chuckling.

"Good old Tommy!" said Dodd fervently. "Your little game's stashed up, you rotter!"

A grimy hand was thrust over his mouth, and Tommy Dodd bit it sharply. The man growled, removed his hand, but did not loosen his grip.

"Something will have to be done—and quickly!" said Dodd's captor.

"He won't do any harm," said the other. "He's a blinkin' school kid, and he's broke out, I'll bet. The village bobby'll run him in for playing a lark."

"He won't look as if he was playing a lark, 'ces I'll bet there's some gravel on his clobber. I'm for clearin'!"

He whistled sharply, and Tommy Dodd saw a light flicker for an instant in the upper window of the house. It was gone in an instant, only to reappear again and be moved about in a dozen directions.

Dodd's assailant watched it intently.

"It's— Hang me, he says we're to keep the coast clear for another five minutes!" he muttered, when the light had gone again. "Bill, old Bert's nearly busted the safe, I s'pose, and—"

"Heave 'em round to the back. There's sheds there!" said the other shortly.

The man who had been addressed as Bill was the one that had unsuccessfully tackled Tommy Cook, and he came to his confederates' assistance.

The two juniors were pulled to their feet and hurried round to the back of the house. They looked round for Tommy Cook, refusing to believe that he would leave them in the lurch.

Had he gone for the police?

Tommy Dodd doubted it. He would only make it known that they had broken gates, and would thus lead them into trouble.

Far rather would he wait his chance, and do his best to capture the burglars—for the men certainly were burglars.

Their capture meant Tommy Dodd & Co.'s going off when their escapade came to light.

Dodd did not struggle as he was hurried along, and Doyle, taking his leader's cue, went as meekly as a lamb.

But Tommy Cook had not gone rushing off to the police. He was far more concerned with the safety of his chums than he was of Colonel Redhouse's property.

When his chums were hurried down the drive Tommy Cook might have been seen dodging from tree to tree as he followed them. But the men did not look carefully about them.

The signal from the man in the house had set them tingling, so to speak. He was on a good job, and did not want to be disturbed for a time.

Tommy Dodd and Doyle were roughly thrown into a garage, and the door was closed and locked upon them. Then the three men hastily retraced their steps, muttering to each other in low tones,

Tommy Cook waited only until they had passed out of sight before he left his cover, and ran quickly and silently to the door of the garage.

The men had left the key in the lock, and Tommy Cook lost no time in turning it.

Tommy Dodd came out with a rush, and Cook was bowled off his feet.

"Got you!" panted Tommy Dodd. "Now—oh, my hat!"

"Gerroff me chest!" gasped Cook. "You burbling chump!"

"Shush!" warned Doyle. "Ye'll be having them back again!"

The two juniors jumped to their feet, and Dodd fairly glared at his chum.

"You fathead!" he whispered hotly. "I thought it was the giddy enemy again!"

"If that's your gratitude," growled Cook, "I'm blessed if I don't wish I'd left you there!"

"Why didn't you go to the police?" demanded Tommy Dodd, changing the subject.

"Oh, you ass! Do you think I was going to leave you in the lurch? Blow the police! Let them look after their own job!"

"Yes; but—"

"I don't think we ought to let them—"

Tommy Cook broke off suddenly. From the direction of the front of the house there came the sound of feet crunching gravel.

The three Rookwoodites looked at each other.

"Shall us?" whispered Dodd.

"Let's!" said Doyle and Cook, in unison.

And the three Modern House juniors, throwing caution to the winds, rushed round to the front.

But they were too late.

The very instant they turned the corner they realised it.

A powerful motor-car was rushing down the drive, its engine purring softly. Only a small lamp showed the driver the way, and there was no rear light.

The car had evidently been hidden from sight on the farther side of the house.

"My hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd sulphurously. "They've done us brown!"

"They have! The rotters! Fancy having a car!"

"Sure, it's us that's to decide in wan minute what's to be done!" interrupted Doyle sagely.

Tommy Dodd nodded quickly.

"We can only warn the police," he said hastily. "They'll 'phone round the countryside, and the rotters will be caught!"

"If they stop when they're told to!" growled Cook.

"Any-old-how, while we're gassing, the rotters are getting away!" said Dodd. "Come on—it's a run!"

The three juniors set their arms to their sides, and ran down the drive and out of the gates.

"What about our birthday feed?" grumbled Doyle. "Begorra—"

"Hang the feed!" snapped Tommy Dodd.

"This is just a nice little bit of excitement—give us an appetite for the little bit of cake that's in the study cupboard!"

Doyle and Cook growled something unintelligible, and then lapsed into silence.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Long Chase!

TOMMY DODD & CO. had run nearly half a mile before they met anything on the road. They had hopes that a car would pass them, and give them a lift into Coomb.

But nothing came their way until a big car, with powerful headlights, appeared before them. It was coming in their direction at a great rate.

"That chap ought to be going our way," said Tommy Dodd resentfully. "We'd get a lift, then!"

"Hold him up!" said Cook. "If he's a decent chap, he'll turn round."

"But—"

Tommy Dodd did not have time to say any more. The car came rushing towards them, its headlights sending a beam of light fifty yards in front.

The three juniors stood in the middle of the road, as soon as the beam reached them, waving their hands and shouting.

Almost immediately the car slackened speed; but it was going too fast to pull up where the juniors were standing.

They leapt nimbly out of the way as it passed them, and ran quickly down the road in its track.

It jerked to a standstill a hundred yards beyond where they had stood, and the juniors were not long in reaching it.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 25.

The driver proved to be the only occupant; and he turned to the juniors as they came up.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Burglary at Colonel Redhouse's place!" explained Tommy Dodd quickly. "Will you give us a lift—"

"What?" ejaculated the driver. "I am Colonel Redhouse, my boy!"

"Then your house has been broken into!" said Tommy Dodd. "The roppers had a car—a big, powerful one—and they took the road to the coast. We were just going to inform the police."

Colonel Redhouse flashed the light from a rocket-lamp on to the three juniors, and a gasp of amazement escaped him.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "You're Rookwood boys! And—and what on earth have you been doing to get in that mess?"

Tommy Dodd & Co. surveyed one another critically. They certainly were in a mess—gravel-stained almost every inch of their clothes.

"We've been fighting your burglars!" said Tommy Dodd. "But—but they were too good for us, and they locked us up. So—"

"Here, jump in!" interrupted the colonel hastily. "We'll chase the roppers! I guess my car'll go as fast as theirs!"

The three Modernites needed no further bidding. Doyle and Cook leapt into the back, and Tommy Dodd ran round and jumped in beside the colonel.

They were thrown back in their seats as the colonel dropped in the clutch, and the next instant they were speeding down the road.

Not unnaturally, the juniors began to get excited. A rush through the countryside on a powerful car at midnight was an experience that seldom fell to their lot.

Colonel Redhouse was a skillful driver. He kept the speed of the car at a high rate, but his hands were as steady as rocks upon the steering-wheel.

"Tell me something about it, sonny!" he said, raising his voice to make himself heard above the roar of the rushing wind.

Tommy Dodd turned towards him. "We broke gates to have a feed!" he shouted. "It's Tommy Cook's birthday, you know, so we thought we'd celebrate it. Then we saw a light, and we investigated. We had only just got inside the gates when three roppers seized us. But we put up a fight—"

"Bully for you, my boy!"

"Tommy Cook, who is a great wrestling Johnny, licked his man, and got away. Doyle—that's the other chap behind—and little me—Dodd is my name, sir—got licked, and were shut up in the garage."

"Hard luck!"

"But Tommy Cook let us out, and we went round to continue the giddy battle, but they were just leaving in a motor-car. Say, sir, aren't we chewing up the miles?"

"We are, sonny! She's doing nearly sixty!"

"Any sign of the enemy?" roared Cook. "Not yet!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Here, what about the rest of that yarn?" cried Colonel Redhouse.

Tommy Dodd turned to him again. "So we were just running off to inform the police," he went on, "when we saw your car coming up at a great lick. We were going to ask you for a lift—and here we are!"

"Yes; and it's mighty good of you chaps!" said the colonel heartily. "You've lost your feed; it's far too late to get anything to-night!"

"Blow the feed!" said Tommy Dodd; and then he flushed. "S-s-sorry, sir; but—but I meant, we don't mind losing the feed. That's what I—I meant to say!"

The colonel laughed. He evidently was not worrying very much over the burglary. They turned a corner sharply, and the car lurched badly.

Tommy Dodd nearly bumped into the driver. "My hat! Only two wheels that time, sir!"

They must have traversed nearly forty miles before they saw anything on the road. Then a red light suddenly came into view.

"A car!" snapped the colonel; and his foot pressed harder on the accelerator.

The car simply leapt over the ground, and the red light in front drew nearer and nearer until they could make out the dim shape of the car.

Cook and Doyle had seen the light, and they stood up in the back of the car, peering over the heads of Dodd and Colonel Redhouse.

Nearer and nearer—then suddenly farther and farther away!

The colonel peered in dismay at the speedometer. It registered only forty miles an hour!

"It's the petrol running out!" said the colonel. "Oh, my stars! What rotten luck!"

"Haven't you got any more?" asked Dodd. "Yes; but we shall have to stop. Oh, hang it!"

Reluctantly, the colonel was compelled to bring the car to a standstill. He was out almost before it had stopped, snatching up a tin of petrol from under the driver's seat.

The tin was emptied into the tank, and once more they took up the chase.

The colonel gave a sigh of relief as the speedometer registered fifty miles an hour, and still crept up. Fifty-five—sixty!

"Now we're off again!" chuckled Dodd excitedly. "Look—there is the light again!"

Colonel Redhouse leant forward, and touched a switch. The headlights flared brighter than before, and the white beam reached the car in front.

There were four men in it—the juniors could see that at once.

"There were four in the burglary!" shouted Tommy Cook excitedly.

One of the men turned his head, his face showing dirty and villainous in the bright, white light of the colonel's lamps.

Tommy Dodd jumped to his feet. "Stop, you roppers!" he roared. For answer the man shot his hand over the back of the car, and something he held glittered.

"Down!" roared the colonel. Tommy Dodd dropped to his knees like a flash.

The next instant there was a loud report, followed by the splintering of glass. The bullet had hit the ground immediately in front of the car, and the splinters of stone crashed into the wind-screen!

"My hat!" stuttered Tommy Dodd. "The awful roppers!"

"Keep down!" ordered the colonel. Again he leant forward and touched the switch which controlled the lights. They beamed forward, brighter than ever, and the man in the front car had to cover his eyes with his hands.

"If my lamps don't burst," said the colonel. "they won't be able to do much. I'll blind them with the light!"

Whether through alarm or fright or both the chase suddenly ended. For the driver of the car in front took his machine on to the grass heath that bordered the road in the particular part they were in.

The car rocked unsteadily for nearly a hundred yards, before it pulled up with a jerk. The men leapt out, and ran to hide from the glaring, blinding lights.

But Colonel Redhouse kept them full on the car, and they could not escape it.

"I can see you!" roared the colonel, as he pulled up. "I have you covered!"

He held his hand for an instant in the beam of the smaller lamps, and it held something that glittered. Tommy Dodd gasped as he saw what it was.

It was an ordinary silver-mounted pipe! "Come forward one at a time!" commanded the colonel. "Hands up, or—"

Utterly cowed, the men came forward as they were ordered.

"You'll find some ropes and straps on the luggage-carrier at the back, Dodd!" said Colonel Redhouse quietly. "Tie 'em up!"

The three juniors set about their work with a right good will, and in five minutes the four men were safely trussed up.

"Now what are we going to do, sir?" asked Tommy Dodd cheerfully.

"Well, I'll take a couple of them along in the back of my car, and come back for the rest. Hit 'em hard if the others attempt to escape. There's a fine big spanner in the box!" said the colonel.

The spanner was procured, and five minutes later the three juniors were left to guard the two men who remained. The colonel took the other two with him.

He was back in an astonishing short time, a village happening to be nearer than they thought. With the colonel came the village constable, all pomp and pride at the responsibility thus suddenly thrust upon him.

The colonel drove them back to the village, and the rascals were safely lodged behind barred and locked doors.

"Now, I'm no end obliged to you fellows," said the colonel, as he led the way back to the car. "And, having settled with these roppers, I feel I shall have to settle with you!"

"Oh, no, sir! Quite all right, sir! We've thoroughly enjoyed ourselves!" said Tommy Dodd hastily.

"Not a bit, sir. Had a fine birthday!" said Cook enthusiastically.

"What about Dr. Chisholm?" suggested the colonel innocently.

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors had entirely forgotten all about the Head. He would probably take a serious view of their night out.

"I think I can settle with him, my boys!" laughed the colonel. "Jump in—you'll have to spend the night in my place."

Dodd was about to jump in the car, when he suddenly remembered the burglar's loot.

"What about the roppers' loot, sir?" he said.

The colonel started. "By Jove! I'd forgotten all about it! It's in the car, I expect!"

They returned to the heath, and, sure enough, the stolen goods were in two large leather bags in the car the burglars had used.

The juniors spent the night in Colonel Redhouse's mansion, and the officer went to Rookwood with them the next morning. What he said to Dr. Chisholm the juniors never knew, but the Head sent for them, gave them a sound lecturing, and then handed out passes for Jimmy Silver & Co. and themselves to spend the day at Colonel Redhouse's mansion.

And a royal time the juniors had!

As Tommy Cook said afterwards, it was worth waiting a day to have a birthday spread like that one.

Colonel Redhouse was voted one of the best, and not for many a day did Tommy Dodd & Co. forget what happened after "Lights Out" on Tommy Cook's birthday!

THE END.



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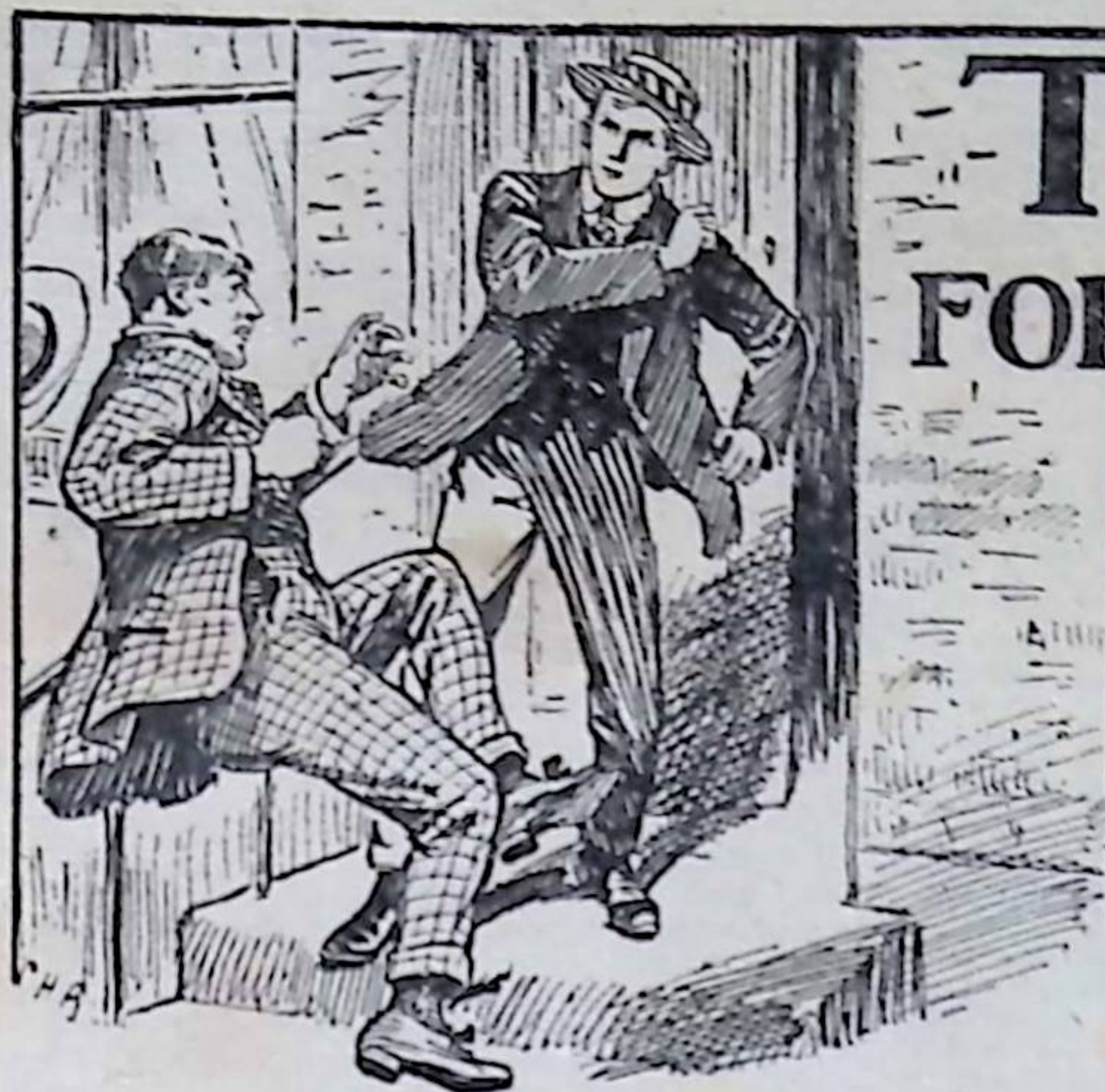
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Justice of Mr. Selby.

MR. HENRY SELBY, master of the Third Form at St. Jim's, sat at his desk in the Form-room, with an open letter before him.

The Third were at algebra.

At least, the Third were supposed to be at algebra. Reuben Piggott might be reading a sporting paper under cover of his desk-lid. Leggatt and Butt might be playing noughts and crosses. Wally D'Arcy and Reggie Manners might have their heads together over a new catapult. Jameson might be gently inserting a pin into the seat of Curly Gibson's trousers. Curly might be displaying his latest acquisition in the philatelic way to Joe Frayne.

But the Third were supposed to be at algebra, and it was partly Mr. Selby's fault if that supposition was an unjustified one.

And one, at least, of the Form really was hard at work on an equation. That one was Frank Levison—Levison minor.

There were several respects in which Frank's chums considered him rather queer; and one of them was his real liking for certain lessons. He did not bar even the classics with the whole-heartedness of the rest of his Form; and he was quite keen on mathematics, especially on algebra.

As Frank liked equations, it was no particular merit in him that he should be at work when his Form-fellows, who did not like them, were taking advantage of Mr. Selby's day-dreaming to idle away their time on that hot and breathless afternoon. But certainly it was nothing against him.

It was just like Mr. Selby, however, to drop on to the one boy in all the Form who did not deserve it at that moment. And that was what he did.

"Levison minor!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir!" replied Frank. He had just solved a problem about cattle, sheep, and pigs being sent to market and being sold at a certain price per head in each case, fetching £510 in all; the answer requiring the number of cattle, and the number of sheep and pigs sold to be stated. It was rather a catchy problem, because the solution suggested an unlikely scarcity of mutton, only one sheep having apparently been disposed of; and Frank was pleased with himself for having worked it out.

It may have been his pleasure that caused his tone to seem to Mr. Selby altogether too bright and cheery for a very hot afternoon and a very perplexed and bad-tempered master.

"Don't say 'Yes, sir,' in that exceedingly impudent manner, Levison minor!" snapped the tyrant.

"I wasn't impudent, sir," answered Frank, in surprise.

Everybody was attentive now. The catapult was out of sight; the sporting paper had disappeared; the game of noughts and crosses was suspended; the Hawaiaian stamp was back in Curly's pocket; and the pin remained harmlessly in Curly's grey trousers, not

having penetrated far enough to make the wearer aware of its presence.

"If you dare to contradict me, Levison minor—Ob, come here, and bring your exercise-book with you! I am sure that you were not at work!"

Frank, sure that he had been, did not in the least mind taking up his work to show it. But Wally whispered to Reggie:

"The old Hun will have him some way or another, you see, kid!"

Wally was right.

Mr. Selby looked at the equations with sour disapproval. He was not going to give Frank any credit for proving him in the wrong, so he said nothing about them. He fluttered the leaves of the book, and something fell out.

Frank grabbed at it as it fell. But Mr. Selby had grabbed also, and it fluttered into his hand.

"That's private, sir!" said Frank, flushing.

"It's a letter from my sister!"

"You had no right to be reading private letters in class hours," said Mr. Selby acidly. And he cast his eyes over the first page of the letter as he handed it back.

It may not have been any real desire to pry that moved him. More likely that glance was due to his natural tyrannical spirit. But, whatever it may have been due to, it fairly made Frank's blood boil. For that letter was really rather particularly private.

Frank's sister Doris had told him in it what they at home had thought of his recent trouble when the full story of it had reached them; and Mr. Selby's eyes were about the last in the world that Frank would willingly have had seen those words.

"You've no right to look at it, sir!" said Frank indignantly.

"Hold out your hand, Levison minor!" snapped the tyrant.

And he reached for his cane. In doing so he brushed a letter off his desk.

Frank Levison was a little gentleman. When he stooped to pick up that letter it was out of politeness; and, in spite of his anger, he had no thought of retaliating upon the master in kind.

But he could not help seeing that the letter was signed, "Nora Graeme."

The mean, suspicious mind of Mr. Selby was quite unable to understand Frank. Mr. Selby's face was livid with rage as he slashed with all his force at Frank's back, and he cried as he slashed:

"Leave that letter alone, do you hear?"

Dodging from the blow of the cane, Frank fell, and the letter fluttered to the feet of Piggott.

Piggott caught it up at once, and made a great show of handing it to the master without the slightest glance at it. But Reuben Piggott had learned to look out of the corners of his eyes, and he also saw that clear, somewhat dashing signature.

Frank picked himself up, and went back to his desk. Piggott received Mr. Selby's growl of thanks as if he valued it, and went back to his.

The incident had closed. But it was to have a sequel.

Half an hour or so later the Third were dismissed.

"The old Hun!" said Wally indignantly, as soon as Mr. Selby had gone. "As if you'd look at his rotten letters! It would have served him right if you had, for that matter, for he looked at yours!"

"I never saw such a mean old beast!" Reggie Manners said.

"Well, I did see the signature. I couldn't help it," Frank replied.

"What was it?" asked Jameson eagerly.

"Shut your head, Jamface!" said Wally impolitely. "It's no bizney of ours!"

"Oh, don't pretend to be so dashed strait-laced, D'Arcy minor!" sneered Piggott. "I don't mind saying that I saw the signature, too, and I'm game to say what it was!"

"I'm not asking you, or anyone," returned Wally, with his nose in the air.

"It was 'Nora Graeme,' wasn't it, young Levison? Nice thing for old Selby to be getting letters from actresses! The Head ought to know—that's my opinion!"

"Your opinion isn't worth the paper it's not written on," said Wally. "Come along, you fellows!"

Frank, Reggie, Joe Frayne, Jameson, Hobbs, and Gibson followed their leader out.

In the quad Wally said:

"Was Piggy telling the truth, Franky?"

"Well, it was the truth for once," answered Frank.

"I don't mind telling you fellows. But, of course, it doesn't concern us!"

"I reckon it does a bit," said Wally.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Reggie.

"The old hunks can't go on like that!" said Jameson.

"It's a rotten bad example for us!" was the opinion of the virtuous Hobbs.

"Rats about example!" snorted Wally.

"Jolly likely to have actresses writing letters to us, aren't we?"

"As likely as old Selby," said Curly Gibson.

"But Selby's had one, so that can't be right," Frank objected.

"Of course it ain't right! Like 'is jolly cheek, I call it!" Joe Frayne said.

"She may be his granddaughter, or—

or something, though!" Hobbs suggested.

"Rats! He can't have a granddaughter when he's never been married!" said Wally.

"Well, it licks me what anyone can see in him. But that's her look-out, I suppose," Frank said. "It's a pity, too, for she looked a really nice girl!"

"For twopence I'd cut the old Hun out myself!" said Reggie.

Wally at once produced two halfpennies and a penny.

"Here you are, my son!" he said. "Start in and do it!"

Reggie weakened.

"It might be better fun to track down old Selby and see him with her," he suggested.

"He doesn't like being seen. He scowled at us like one o'clock the other day."

"I don't see how we can do that," Frank objected. "Not after I'd seen that name."

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 25.

"You didn't tell us. That cad Biggy told us, and he pretended not to look."

"Well, that does make a bit of a difference, Wally. I'm on, if you think it's the square thing."

"There he goes across the quad in a tearing hurry!" said Jameson. "Let's get our bikes and ride over to Wayland. He can't stop us from doing that, can he?"

"Kim on, you cripples!" Wally said.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ructions!

MR. SELBY found himself just now spending a small fortune in motoring—as much as three pounds within a week. And Mr. Selby was not a man who liked spending money.

But the trains from Rylcombe to Wayland were not very convenient, and the tramp across the moor was tiring to a man of his age and lack of activity, and a bicycle was hardly in his line. So when he needed to go to the market town in a hurry, as he did now, he would ring up the local garage and have a car sent along.

He rather resented the expense on this occasion. He had been in two minds about complying with Miss Graeme's request that he should call upon her at her lodgings. Twenty-four hours earlier he would have jumped at it; but things had happened since then.

That typewritten letter, signed only by the initials "N. G.," which had taken him to the stage-door of the Empire—the meeting there with the person whom he took to be Miss Graeme, veiled—the walk to the bridge—the soft words—the discovery, awful to remember, that the supposed veiled lady was no other than Ralph Reckness Cardew, of the St. Jim's Fourth, in feminine disguise—all these things had given Mr. Selby furiously to think, as the French say in their own language.

Had Miss Graeme had anything to do with the impersonation?

That thought haunted him.

It was really a silly notion. The only possible justification for it was the difficulty of accounting for Cardew's knowing so much unless he knew the young lady. And, of course, there were other ways in which he might have found out.

As the car sped across the moor, ablaze with the golden glory of the gorse, Mr. Selby's mind was busy with the problem of how he should find out whether Miss Graeme had been in league with Cardew.

If he discovered that she had, he would have no more to say to her; he was quite determined on that point.

Not the remotest notion of why Miss Graeme had written to him entered his mind, although he was aware that she knew Eric Kildare.

She was, in fact, Kildare's cousin, and she was very worried because she thought that she had been the means of getting Kildare into trouble with Mr. Selby. From the little she could gather, the skipper of St. Jim's, the boy who had made love to her when he was a mere kid of fifteen and she three or four years his senior, was in actual danger of expulsion.

Now, it happened that Mr. Selby had shown quite at his best on the occasion when Miss Graeme had made his acquaintance, and she had naturally come to think of him as a much more pleasant person than he really was.

She felt sure that she could put everything right between him and her cousin, and to do that she was prepared to trust him with her own story—which she would hardly have cared to do had she known him better.

That Mr. Selby was very much disposed to be gone on her had no doubt occurred to her. It may have helped to make her confident that she could work him round. But she was not in the very least inclined to be gone on Mr. Selby. She would have thought the very notion of such a thing absurd.

"Hallo! There's old Selby in a motor-car!" said Tom Merry to Manners and Lowther as the car shot past them about half-way over the heath.

"That's the third time I've seen him in one during this week," said Manners. "And I don't know when I ever saw him in one before that."

"The dear old fellow must have come into a fortune, and be in a hurry to get rid of it before old age carries him off," suggested Monty Lowther.

"There's more in it than that," remarked Tom Merry, grinning cheerily. "They say he's gone on a chorus-girl or something of

the sort. And there's a queer yarn about that Cardew made up as the girl last night, and met the old boy in Wayland, and was bowled out. Haven't you chaps heard it?"

"Not a blessed word!" replied Manners.

"Same here," said Lowther.

"Well, that's all I know. Gussy had got hold of something, but you know how long-winded the good little ass is. I hadn't time to wait and hear it all."

"Looks as if there was something in it," Manners said thoughtfully.

"Hope so," rejoined Lowther.

"Why on earth should you hope so?" asked Tom. "It wouldn't have been a surprising thing if Cardew had got the order of the boot for it, and I don't think any of us want that."

"I don't mean that I hope the yarn's true, chump! I mean that I hope old Selby has gone potty over some girl. Why, it would be the joke of all the ages!"

"Come to think of it, there would be something a bit funny about it," Tom admitted. "Whew! He's left some dust behind him. It's still with us, while his giddy car is almost out of sight."

The Terrible Three were going into Wayland on an errand of their own, and they were in no great hurry. They could do their errand, have tea in the town, and get back in plenty of time for prep.

"What-ho, there!" came a voice from behind them. And Tom turned his head, to see Wally D'Arcy & Co., riding hard.

"Quite a crowd off to Wayland this afternoon," he remarked.

Wally & Co. ranged up alongside, as far as the width of the road permitted.

"What are you old fogies after?" demanded Wally, with rather a note of suspicion in his voice.

"We are intending to mind our own business," replied Lowther sweetly. "It isn't half a bad idea, my son. Did you ever try it?"

"Rats to you!" snapped Wally. "Come on, you fellows! We aren't in a funeral procession, if these bounders are!"

"Trying to catch up Selby?" asked Manners.

"Here, I say, do you know anything?" inquired Wally.

"Not a blessed thing!" replied Tom Merry. "When we reach your age we may perhaps—"

"More rats!" Wally snorted. "Oh, come on, you fatheads! These Shellfish make me tired!"

"Is your machine also tired?" asked Lowther.

But Wally had not waited to hear that exceedingly poor pun. He and his liegemen were already making another cloud of dust for the Terrible Three.

Before that dust-cloud had fairly died away Kildare passed. He also was riding hard.

He responded to their cheery greeting only by a nod and a smile, and the smile altogether lacked its customary brightness.

"Kildare looks under the weather a bit," remarked Tom.

"There's something up between him and Selby, and they do say the old Hun means to make things hot for him," answered Manners.

"Oh, I've heard that yarn, of course; but I don't believe there's much in it," Tom said.

"Selby puts himself too much in the wrong to start with. He can't really do anything."

Tom Merry might be sure of that. Eric Kildare was by no means so sure.

But it was not about any trouble Mr. Selby could make for him that he was worrying at the moment.

He had heard from home that morning, and among the items of news in his letter was that of the illness of his Aunt Mary, the mother of Nora Graeme—or, rather, of Nina Dalglish, for that was the true name of the young lady.

How serious the illness was Kildare could only guess. Whether he should tell his cousin he did not know. He had done what he could to persuade her to go home. It was two or three years since the folks there had seen her, or even heard from her, except by an occasional letter with no definite address. She had run away to go upon the stage, and even now, after some disillusionment, she was not willing to give up her dream of fame as an actress.

Kildare was not sure whether he would be playing the game in using the news he had received as an argument to induce her to go. But he was not sure that he would be justified in saying nothing about it to

her. She would not have heard in the ordinary course of events; but her coming to Wayland while on tour had disturbed the ordinary course of events, and had given rise to new problems.

The captain of St. Jim's rode straight to the lodgings which Miss Graeme shared with Miss Mandeville, the leading lady of the "Lights Down!" company. He had grown reckless since he knew that he was in Mrs. Selby's hands.

Let the old Hun do his worst! That was the feeling Kildare had.

What he saw at the door as he jumped from his bike made the blood rush to his eyes.

Miss Mandeville, fair and fat and forty, was standing in the doorway, looking distinctly annoyed; and confronting her, his stylish Panama set at a rakish angle, his dissipated face flushed, was a man whom Kildare had met once, and of whom he had heard before he met him.

Buck Williton, they called the fellow, and he liked the name. He was a raffish scoundrel—gambler, bruiser, betting man—who had some of the manners and something of the appearance of a gentleman. But the veneer was very thin, and Nora Graeme had seen through it at once.

The voice of Miss Mandeville was somewhat high, and the gestures of Miss Mandeville were distinctly theatrical. She pointed a rather large but very well-shaped hand to the middle of the street as she said:

"You had better go at once, Mr. Williton! I know all about you, and my friend Miss Graeme knows quite enough to have no desire for the very doubtful honour of your acquaintance. If you hang about here from morning to night you may see her, possibly, but I will see to it that you don't get the chance to annoy her!"

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind leaving the task of dealing with this person to me, Miss Mandeville?" said Kildare, raising his straw.

The stout lady smiled upon him beamingly. "Ha! The young knight to the rescue!" she said. "I will leave it to you, Sir Eric, with the greatest of pleasure!"

And with that she disappeared into the house, only to reappear in about twenty seconds at an upstairs window.

The gold stoppings of Mr. Williton's teeth fairly glittered as he turned upon Kildare with a wolfish smile.

"You again?" he said. "My good child, I shall have to hurt you before we have finished, I see!"

"Unless you are down from those steps inside two seconds, I shall throw you down!" returned Kildare, in hot wrath.

"Try it!" snapped Williton.

Kildare's hands were upon him in a moment. The hot Irish blood was thoroughly up.

Williton, fit and in condition, should have been more than a match for Eric Kildare, though he was some couple of dozen years older.

But he was anything but fit, and the strength of the grip Kildare fastened upon him took him so completely by surprise, that his resistance was slighter than it might otherwise have been.

One moment, and Kildare was below him; the next, and he sat upon the pavement, dazed and bruised, while his boyish antagonist stood glaring down at him.

He scrambled to his feet, convulsed with rage, just as seven St. Jim's fags came round the corner of the street.

"Oh, I say! Here's a jolly row, and old Kildare's in it!" said Wally.

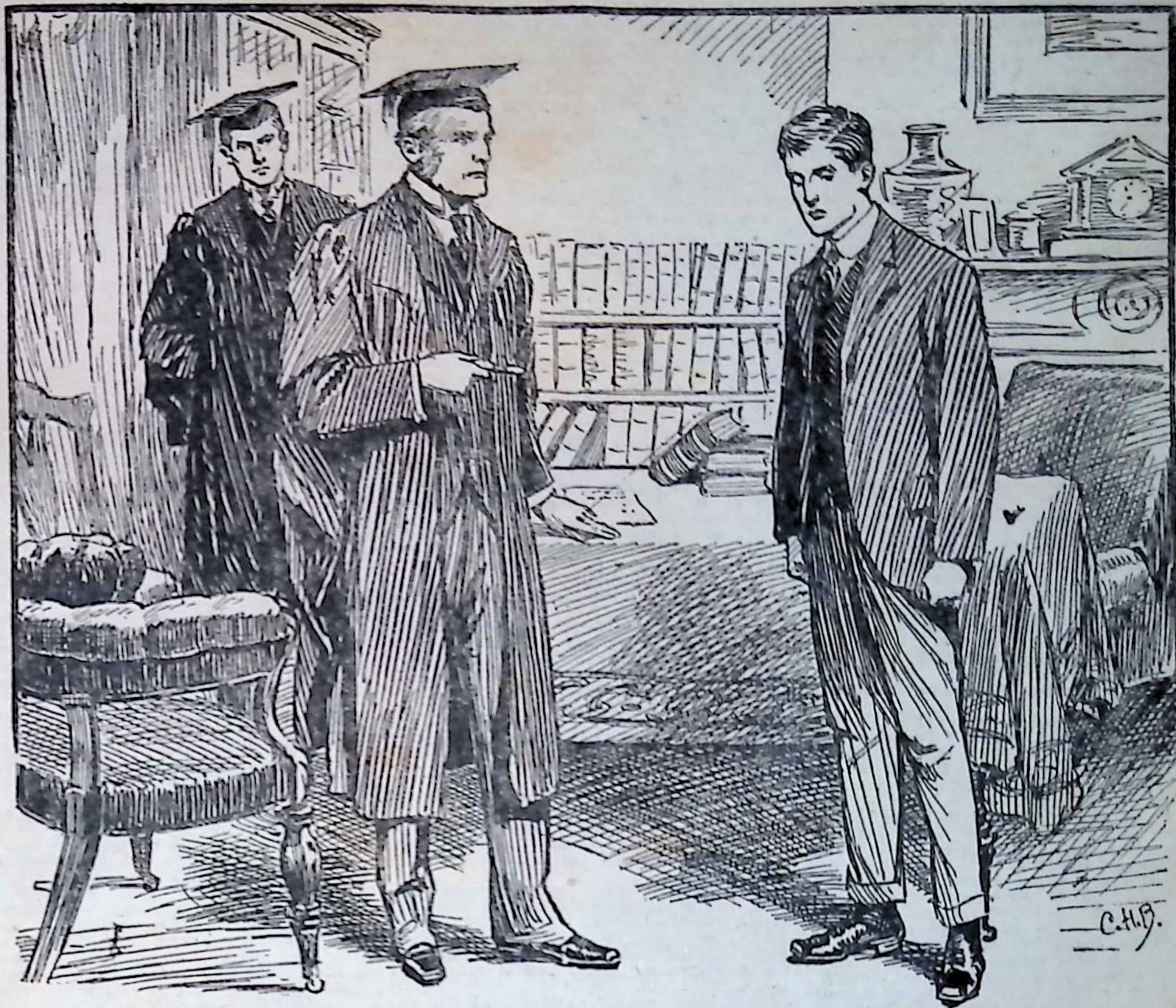
"Hadn't we better clear?" asked Frank Levison. "He won't fancy our seeing him—may think it's spying."

But no one paid any heed to Frank's protest.

Kildare did not see them. He did not see the face of Mr. Selby at the window within a couple of yards of him. He saw nothing but the furious countenance of his enemy, and his fists were ready to batter at that furious countenance if the fellow came for him.

But he did not want a row in the street. He wanted very badly to make Buck Williton feel the weight of his fists; but he would prefer operating upon him elsewhere.

Perhaps Williton felt much the same. The fellow, though a bully, was no coward. He did not fear Kildare; he longed to be at him, and did not doubt his ability to lick him, though he knew his own best days as a fighting-man were over.



"I regret, Kildare, I must take from you your office of captain and prefect," said the Head quietly. "Moreover, for a week to come you must consider yourself as gated." (See page 16.)

"You shall answer to me for this!" he hissed.

"When and where you like!" replied Kildare, as hot as he for the fray.

"I don't mean any tomfoolery about pistols or swords, or any such rot!" sneered Williton. "These are what I shall use for your punishment!"

And he held up his fists.

"That will suit me," said Kildare. "I—"

"Kildare, I forbid it! You shall not fight with that fellow!" spoke the voice of Mr. Selby.

"Your forbidding it will make no difference to me, sir," returned the skipper of St. Jim's. "This is a matter altogether outside your authority!"

A small hand was laid on his arm, and he turned, to see his cousin.

Williton leered at her, met the gaze of her clear, fearless eyes, and then stalked away.

"Don't anger Mr. Selby, Eric!" whispered the girl.

But Kildare was in no mood to be prudent. He shook her hand off.

"What's he doing there?" he demanded.

"Hush! I—"

The girl paused. It was not easy for her to explain. She knew her cousin's pride, and was certain that he would resent any intervention on her part.

"Mr. Selby is no friend of mine, Nina, and I can't understand why you should make a friend of him!"

Nina Dalgleish would have liked to say that Mr. Selby was no friend of hers, either, and that she had no intention of making a friend of him. But, unless Mr. Selby was to hear, she could only say it in a whisper. And she was proud, also.

"I think that I have a right to choose my own friends, Eric!" was what she did say.

Mr. Selby heard that, and felt exultant.

"Oh, very well! But you don't expect me to come in while he is there, of course!"

"That is as you please, dear boy!"

Kildare lifted his straw, and went without another word. He had forgotten for the moment all about the news he carried.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Wrath of Mr. Selby.

"I CANNOT understand this at all, Miss Graeme!" said Mr. Selby fretfully, as the girl returned to him.

"I think I can make it all clear to you in a very few minutes," she replied.

"Excuse me if I take leave to doubt that! There is so very much that calls for explanation."

Mr. Selby's tone was almost bullying, and Miss Graeme did not like it at all.

But she remembered the necessity of smoothing him down, for Eric's sake, and she answered him with a smile.

"Let's begin at the beginning," she said.

"What is it that you would like explained?"

"That—er—Kildare called you 'Nina.'"

"Oh, yes! That is my name—Nina Dalgleish. 'Nora Graeme' is only for stage purposes."

"How comes it that he knows your real name?"

"Only because he happens to be my cousin."

"Oh!"

Mr. Selby was fairly staggered. But then a wave of relief swept over him.

He had felt frantically, foolishly jealous of

Kildare. Now he saw—or, thought he saw—that there was no need for that.

"That surprises you, does it not?" said Nina.

"Er—yes, I must admit that it does surprise me, Miss Dalgleish. If you do not mind, I would prefer to call you by that name, though the other is also charming, like its bearer!"

It was quite a nicely-turned compliment—for Mr. Selby.

But it was not for compliments that the girl was looking.

She wanted to get to business, so to speak. When once she had contrived to put matters straight between Mr. Henry Selby and Eric Kildare she did not mind in the least if she never saw the former gentleman again.

"I do not mind at all," she said. "Now that you know—"

"One moment, please, Miss Dalgleish! I— you—that is to say—"

Mr. Selby boggled badly.

His nature was intensely suspicious, and new doubts had now assailed him.

He was trying to remember whether he had ever noticed any signs of friendship between Kildare and Cardew. Of course, close intimacy between a Sixth-Former and a junior was out of the question; but Kildare and Tom Merry were good friends, and so was Kildare and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. In matters of discipline Kildare made no difference between one junior and another; but in other ways there was bound to be a difference.

Kildare was Miss Dalgleish's cousin. Cardew had used some knowledge he had of Miss Dalgleish to trick Mr. Selby in the most

audacious manner. Was the whole thing a put-up job among the three of them?

"Yes, Mr. Selby?" said the girl.

The master of the Third almost blushed as he drew from his breast-pocket a typewritten note and handed it to her.

"Do you know anything about this?" he asked.

And his tone was harsh and authoritative, in spite of himself. Mr. Selby was altogether too much the schoolmaster.

Nina glanced at it.

"Nothing whatever!" she answered at once.

"Read it, please!" rasped Mr. Selby. "Perhaps that will show you that, directly or indirectly, you do know something about it!"

The girl read it, and her face showed a struggle between amusement and anger.

"But surely—surely you did not believe that this came from me?" she asked, lifting her violet eyes to Mr. Selby's mottled countenance.

For queer little red patches showed on the master's face, and between them the skin was yellowish. He looked older than his years, and very unattractive.

"I really do not see how I could have supposed otherwise," he said.

"But is it likely that I should ask you to meet me at the stage-door? You must have a very poor—"

"Not at all—not at all! Have you not asked me to come here to see you?"

"That is quite different. And it is on—"

Mr. Selby interrupted her rudely.

"You give me your word, Miss Dalgleish, that you had nothing whatever to do with that wretched note?" he demanded.

"I will give you my word, if you ask it, Mr. Selby. But I think that it is not quite—that it is not very nice or very kind of you to ask it!"

Mr. Selby thought he saw tears in the violet eyes.

"My dear young lady—my dear Nina—may I call you Nina? Indeed, I did not mean to distress you!" he protested. "Believe me that—that—in short, that I would do all in my power to save you from any trouble or annoyance!"

"You were very good yesterday," replied the girl. "I shall not forget that. It emboldens me to ask more of you, though perhaps it should not."

"If there is anything I can do for you—"

"There is something—something that matters quite a lot. My cousin Eric—you—I hardly know how to say it, but—"

"Your cousin has certainly behaved towards me in a manner for which I find it hard to excuse him," said Mr. Selby stiffly.

"But, don't you see, it was all founded on a misconception! It was not so very wicked of him to come to the Empire to see a cousin of whom he is very fond, and whom he has not seen for years, was it now?"

"That might be excused. But his impertinence to me—his refusal to recognise my authority—"

"But you were rather overbearing, weren't you?"

Mr. Selby had to swallow something in his throat before he could reply to that. He would not have borne with such a speech from anyone else. But Miss Dalgleish was already a privileged person to him.

"I do not consider that I was. I did my duty as a master at St. James', that was all. But let us come to the point. What is it you ask of me?"

"There will be heavy trouble for Eric if you report him to the headmaster, will there not?" asked the girl, with a tremble in her voice.

"Of that there can be no possible doubt," said Mr. Selby grimly.

"You will not report him, will you?"

"I have my duty to do."

"But when you know that I am his cousin—that he wanted to see me in order to persuade me to return to my people, whom I left to go on the stage—that makes a difference, doesn't it, Mr. Selby? I'm a naughty runaway, you know, and Eric wanted to reclaim me. Surely, surely, there wasn't anything wrong in that?"

It was hard for Mr. Selby to give up his revenge upon Kildare—for it was essentially revenge that he desired. Moreover, he was still jealous. He did not like the way Miss Dalgleish spoke her cousin's name; he did not like her evident anxiety about her cousin.

But hard as it was, he tried to do it; and some credit may be given him for that.

"I—you are asking me to shirk my duty, Miss Dalgleish," he said weakly.

"I cannot see it in that way. But if you

must report him, will you explain exactly to Dr. Holmes how matters stand? I know that Dr. Holmes is a good and kind man; Eric has always thought so much of him. When he knows it he will put things straight, I am sure. But Eric is not to be told that I have confessed to you, and through you to the Head."

"Then it is to be our secret—yours and mine?" said Mr. Selby, looking as tender as he knew how, and making a futile attempt to seize Nina's hand.

"Yes, if you like," answered the girl, not too enthusiastically.

"I will—er—you may depend upon me not to be too harsh with the young man," said Mr. Selby grandly. Kildare's blood would have boiled if he had heard. "And now about that foolish note?"

"I have already told you that I know nothing about it."

As she spoke Nina took up the typewritten letter from the table, and she could not suppress a smile of amusement as she thought of Mr. Selby's going to the stage-door to meet her because of it.

"Do you know a boy named Cardew?" asked the master, with a staring glance at her.

"I cannot remember ever having heard the name, and I am sure that I do not know him. Why? Do you suspect him of having played this trick on you?"

"I do not merely suspect, I know that he did it! Worse than that, he had the unexampled audacity to disguise himself as a young lady—to impersonate you!"

A rippling peal of laughter startled and shocked Mr. Selby.

He was prepared for surprise, indignation, almost any feeling but amusement. Yet amusement seemed to be all that Miss Dalgleish felt.

She laughed until the tears ran down her face, and Mr. Selby's scowl grew blacker and blacker.

"Really, Miss Dalgleish!" he expostulated, almost spluttering in his wrath.

"Oh, I'm sorry—I am, indeed! But I couldn't help it, really. It is so funny to think of—"

She broke into laughter again; she could not keep herself from it, though she saw that it annoyed him, and she had no desire to do that.

Mr. Selby gritted his teeth. He could not bear to recall his complete taking in by Ralph Reckness Cardew. The scene was clear before his mental vision, and it fairly horrified him. In imagination, Miss Dalgleish was seeing that same scene, and it made her laugh.

"This is too much!" he thundered, just as if he were addressing his Form. "I perceive that I have been grossly mistaken in you! I will go! I did not come here to be laughed at, and I will not stay to be laughed at! Good-bye for ever, Miss Dalgleish!"

He snatched up his hat and bolted, nearly overturning Miss Mandeville, who was in the passage—suspiciously close to the door, some people might have thought.

He went down the steps like a man half-drunken. Rage had gone to his head.

"My dear, your antique admirer seems a trifle ratty," said Miss Mandeville.

"I'm afraid he is," replied Nina. She wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes. "But it doesn't matter. I think I have put things straight for Eric. And it was such a joke!"

"If there's a joke going it's up to you to share it, kid, and I shall see that you do! But I should never have thought that there could have been the very ghost of a joke in that lantern-jawed, leather-faced old johnnie!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Selby Runs Amok.

IN Malaysia it is quite a common occurrence for a man to dose himself with the drug called bhang until he is practically mad, and in that condition to take his dagger—they call it a creese, but it is a dagger—and rush through the crowd, attacking anyone who gets in his way.

This is called "running amok."

When Mr. Selby came out of Miss Graeme's lodgings he was very much in the condition of the bhang-soaked Malay, and the course upon which he embarked was very much in the way of running amok.

He could not bear ridicule, and he felt that he hated Nina Dalgleish. His malice against Kildare was more rancorous than ever, and it was a great satisfaction to him

to think that he had not actually promised to hold his hand in Kildare's case.

That girl might regard what he had said as a promise, but Mr. Selby did not.

At the corner of the street he encountered Mr. Williton.

"See here, old codger," began that gentleman. "I'm not going—"

"Out of my way!" roared Mr. Selby; and he gave Mr. Williton a push in the chest that sent him staggering off the pavement.

Williton was taken so completely by surprise that he had no time to do anything more effective than curse before Mr. Selby was round the corner and away.

Buck Williton followed, snarling like a bad-tempered dog. It was not one of Mr. Williton's good days, any more than it was one of Mr. Henry Selby's.

Wally and his band were not around the corner—luckily for them.

They had cleared off when they saw Kildare come away. Mr. Selby's coming upon them would only have meant a row and punishments; but it would really have hurt their feelings had Kildare considered that they were spying.

So the seven had repaired to a teashop, Reggie Manners chancing to be in funds. Hardly had they seated themselves when the Terrible Three came in, and sat down at another table. And hardly had the Terrible Three sat down before three Fourth-Formers—Levison major, Clive, and Cardew—followed them.

"Hallo, Ernie!" said Frank Levison eagerly. "Hallo, kid!" replied Levison major. "Got any cash?"

"Not much. Reggie's got some, though, so it's all right."

"Here's half-a-dollar you can have," Levison major said.

Frank took the proffered coin gratefully. The Levisons were not flush, as a rule.

"That's more than my major would do for me!" grumbled Reggie Manners.

"Well, you aren't very civil to him, are you? You just scowled at him when he came in."

"I call it the limit in cheek for those Shellfish to follow us in here!" said Reggie, most unreasonably.

"They didn't follow us, ass!" retorted Wally. "But a fellow doesn't want his giddy major about, of course. I know I bar mine."

"And here he is!" said Hobbs, grinning.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby came in together.

Gussy wore a new panama and grey flannels—the bags most carefully creased. The other three wore any old thing. Of the small crowd that had now gathered Cardew was the only one who could begin to compete with Gussy in splendour. Cardew, as usual, was most stylishly attired.

"Hallo, Gus, old fathead!" said Wally, grinning.

"Weally, Wally, such a gweetin' in a public place is wathah off, you know! Blake, deah boy, don't you think we had bettah go elsewhere! This shop seems to be crowded with fags!"

"Let the fags go somewhere else, then!" growled Blake. "I'm staying, I know that! The ices here are the best in Wayland!"

The seven had already ordered ices. Tom Merry ordered ices for himself and his chums. Cardew did ditto for the No. 9 trio, and Gussy for the quartet from No. 6.

Seven ices were brought in.

"Four and three," said Blake. "That's us and either your lot, Tommy, or these other chaps."

"Ours!" said Clive quickly.

"Your mistake, Clive—ours!" Monty Lowther corrected him.

"They're jolly well ours!" yelled Wally. "We ordered first."

"And if anyone thinks we're going to give them up to our blessed majors they're jolly well off it!" shrilled Reggie.

"Hear, hear!" cried the other fags.

Cardew got up in his languid way, and took the tray from the smiling waitress. He placed an ice in front of Tom Merry, another in front of Monty Lowther. Then he handed one each to Clive, Blake, and Herries, and Dig, and took the seventh himself.

A howl went up from the seven fags.

"What's this mean?" asked Manners major.

"Where's mine?" growled Levison major.

"Weally, Cardew, I considah this wathah invidious, don'tcherknow!" protested Gussy.

"I'm horribly disappointed!" said Cardew, dropping into his seat. "I thought I had arranged things to the satisfaction of everyone. The objection, as I understand it, was to the forgoin' of ices in favour of ancestors

—beg pardon, majors, of course! Wherefore, accordingly and consequently, Manners, Levison, an' my noble kinsman were left out in the cold—I should rather say the heat, perhaps—iceless. It is too late to remedy the mistake—if any—as I see that everyone has already started."

And Cardew dipped his spoon into his own ice.

Wally & Co. jumped to their feet.

"Rush 'em!" roared Wally.

But at this moment another waitress appeared with a big tray of ices.

They rushed her instead.

But as they grabbed a voice spoke.

"Desist at once! Your conduct is perfectly disgraceful!"

The seven whipped round. They knew and hated that voice.

The ten older fellows ceased to attend to their ices—that is to say, seven of them ceased to do so, and the other three needed not to cease, since they had been left out of the distribution—and attended to Mr. Selby.

Never had he looked more acid. One might almost have imagined it possible to wring vinegar out of him.

"We weren't doing anything, sir!" said Wally, in injured tones.

"I have been watching you for the last three or four minutes. Your horseplay in a public place like this is simply intolerable—a disgrace to the school you belong to!"

Now there was no customer at all in the teashop except the St. Jim's juniors. Had there been, their larking might have been a trifle off the rails. As it was, there was really nothing in it that anyone could fairly object to; and the proprietress hastened to make it clear that she had no objection.

"I am sure the young gentlemen have done nothing wrong, sir," she said civilly.

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Mr. Selby.

There was an audible murmur of disapproval. On the whole, the juniors had a higher standard of manners than Mr. Selby.

Cardew arose.

"Are you quite sure, sir," he drawled, "that you know how to speak to a lady?"

There was something in that languid drawl which brought the blood to Mr. Selby's hollow cheeks. There was something in the words that made every Shellite and Fourth-Former grin. All knew the story of Cardew's audacious masquerade, and all knew that the sting of those words to Mr. Selby lay rather in that than their present application—though there was sting enough even in that.

The fags looked aghast. What would happen to Cardew for bearding their tyrant thus?

"Go at once, all of you!" thundered the master, pointing to the door and stamping his foot in his rage.

Wally & Co. began to move towards the door.

They saw the injustice of the command as clearly as did the rest. But they were under Mr. Selby's immediate authority, and they knew what refusal would mean.

"I shouldn't go if I were you, kids," drawled Cardew.

"I say, Cardew!" breathed Tom Merry.

"You will all go, and at once!" rasped the master.

"Weally, Mr. Selby—"

"Silence, D'Arcy! I will not brook your insolence!"

"I was not goin' to be insolent, sir, I do assuah you! I merely wished to reason with you as one gentleman to another."

"That's quite obviously n.g., Gussy," observed Cardew.

And there again was a covert hit at Mr. Selby. The letter which had taken him to the stage-door of the Empire had been signed with the initials "N. G." It was a double hit, too, for Cardew intended to imply that, though Gussy was a gentleman, Mr. Selby was not. But, taken baldly, the words could have been made out to mean that D'Arcy major was in no position to argue the point with a master.

Mr. Selby saw that, and, though he got on to the implied meanings, he could not well drop down on Cardew. In fact, he felt some difficulty in dealing with Cardew at all, and would very much have preferred that that junior had not been one of the crowd.

Ernest Levison looked the master straight in the face. He had a feud with Mr. Selby, and when his back was up he could be as reckless as Cardew.

"I'm not going," he said coolly. "There's no reason why we should be ordered out!"

"Hear, hear!" came from Blake and Digby and Herries, Manners major and Lowther and Clive.

Tom Merry frowned slightly, and Gussy looked distressed. Tom knew that flat defiance of a master, however wrong he might be, did not pay; and Gussy felt that it was not quite the thing.

"Merry, you rank as senior boy here," grated Mr. Selby. "I command you to exercise what authority you assume yourself to possess, and take your companions out—if you can!"

That settled it with Tom.

"I haven't any authority at all that I can assert here, sir," he said. "These fellows are doing nothing against the rules, and if I told them they had to go, they'd simply laugh at me."

"At you, or at anyone, Thomas, dear boy!" said Cardew pointedly.

The infection of rebellion had seized the fags. They had come to a halt just inside the door.

Mr. Selby, his face contorted, was at a loss for words.

While he still hesitated as to what he should say, a familiar figure crossed the window of the shop. It was that of Kildare.

The skipper glanced in, and saw at once that there was trouble in the air. In any case, he would not have shirked any trouble that might be going; but just now he welcomed it. Kildare was much in the mood of the traditional Irishman, who is said to trail the tails of his coat on the ground and defy anyone to step on them.

He walked in.

Ignoring Mr. Selby as completely as though he were invisible, he addressed Tom Merry.

"What's wrong here, Merry?" he asked.

"Mr. Selby has ordered us all out, Kildare," replied Tom quietly.

"An' we weally do not see in the vewy least why we should go," added Gussy.

"In fact, we're not going," said Ernest Levison.

"I have not asked for your interference, Kildare, and I will not put up with it!" thundered the master.

"I don't know that I'm interfering," answered Kildare. "I merely asked what was the matter. Now that I know, my opinion is that you are exceeding your authority. These fellows are not out of bounds; they are doing nothing against the school rules; and if you insist on their going I think they have a right to know why you insist."

The skipper spoke coolly enough, but inside he was as hot with rage as was Mr. Selby.

"They have already been told that I object to their horseplay here!" rasped that gentleman.

"There has been no horseplay, sir—nothing that anyone need object to," said the proprietress, looking past the master to the prefect.

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Mr. Selby again.

He was almost beside himself.

Kildare's lip curled in scorn. He opened his mouth to speak, but before he could get out a word Mr. Selby rushed at him like a madman.

The captain slipped aside. Mr. Selby plunged on—right into the big tray of ices which the waitress had set down on a chair.

There was a mighty crash. The tray and the ices and Mr. Selby mingled together on the floor.

"Yow! Yooop! You shall repent of this, Kildare!" howled the furious master.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Shell and Fourth and Third in unison.

"Ought to cool him a bit!" murmured Cardew. "An', by gad, he needed it!"

"Better clear now," said Kildare quietly. "This is no place for us."

At his word they went without a protest.

Kildare waited till all had passed him. Then he said to the proprietress:

"I will settle the bill, madam."

"Oh, don't trouble, sir," she answered, plainly distressed. "It is really of no consequence."

But Kildare insisted. And he paid—not only for the seven ices partly consumed, but also for those in which Mr. Selby had wallowed.

When he turned Mr. Selby had ceased from wallowing, and had departed.

Kildare went, with a frowning brow. He had been in that shop hundreds of times, as junior and as senior. He wondered whether he would ever enter it again.

Things looked very much as if his number would soon be up at St. Jim's!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Decidedly Not Cricket!

THE Head wants to see you, Mr. Kildare," said Toby Marsh, the School House page.

Kildare had been expecting that summons for nearly twenty-four hours.

He rose from his chair.

"This is where I get it in the neck, George, old man," he said to Darrel, who had been taking tea with him.

"Can I come with you, Eric? I'm in this, really, you know. If Selby has reported you, he can hardly have been off reporting me, too."

"I don't see how you can come without being sent for. But it's likely enough you will be sent for before it's over. I hope not, though. There's more in this than you know of, and a heap more than you've been concerned with."

He went, and Darrel retreated to his own study, to wait in moody expectation. But it was not for himself that George Darrel was anxious.

Kildare found Mr. Railton with the Head. The School House master was Dr. Holmes' right-hand man, trusted far beyond any other member of the tutorial staff of St. Jim's.

He was also Kildare's very good friend. Their natures were akin in many ways, and ever since Eric Kildare had reached the Sixth the relations between them had been close and cordial.

Nevertheless, Kildare was not exactly glad to see Mr. Railton there at that moment. He would rather have been put through it by the Head alone.

"You sent for me, sir," he said, standing up straight, not defiantly, but with no sign of fear or of a guilty conscience.

He could not justify all his dealings with Mr. Selby; but, apart from these, he had nothing at all to reproach himself with. And for anything he had said to the Third Form master he was absolutely unrepentant.

"Yes. A very serious report has been laid against you, Kildare! You have no need to ask by whom, I suppose?"

The Head's face was stern, but not quite implacable. Both these men had a deeply-rooted and well-founded faith in Kildare. He might have done wrong. Anyone may do wrong. But they thought it impossible that he should have done dishonourably.

"By Mr. Selby, no doubt, sir," said Kildare quietly.

"Mr. Selby reports you for breaking bounds specially set with strong reason. He reports you for impertinence to him, and for inciting other juniors to rebellion against him. It is a heavy score, Kildare! And there is more yet. I desire to speak with all restraint, and I would not cast a slur upon anyone. But you must surely be aware that a friendship between a senior at this or any school and a variety actress is scarcely permissible."

What a great gentleman the Head was!

That was Kildare's thought.

The stern brow had not relaxed. There was an unwonted tightness about the firm lips. But the manner in which the whole thing was put—could it have been more nicely, more delicately done? There was not a word that could be construed as offensive to Nina, even though the Head did not know anything about her real relationship to Kildare.

And he did not know. What Mr. Selby had done was most decidedly not cricket.

He had persuaded himself that he had made no promise to Nina Dalgleish. But he must have known that in reporting Kildare without saying a word about the extenuating circumstances he was not playing the game.

Mr. Railton's eyes met Kildare's, with something like a look of appeal in them. The younger master really longed to hear some explanation that should clear this handsome, clean-run youth whom he had come to like so well.

"It is true that I broke bounds, sir, and I am sorry for that," said Kildare. "I think you know that I would not lightly transgress an order of yours. But I had a very special reason."

"Give me that reason, Kildare, and I can overlook that offence, at least, though I do not like the Empire at Wayland or any of its associations."

Kildare's face was becoming more troubled. He could not give his reason. It would be betraying Nina.

He was angry with her. He had not seen her since they had parted at the door, after his encounter with Buck Williton. It was

hard for Kildare to sulk, but he had been something very like sulky during the last twenty-four hours.

"I am afraid I can't give it, sir," he said. "Will you take me on trust? On my honour, I believe that if ever the time comes when I can tell you the story—as I would do now if only I were concerned—you will hold me blameless."

"That is vague, Kildare, and I do not like vagueness. But I have high faith in you, and I will consider whether I can stretch that faith as far as you ask. I cannot do so, however, unless this association is given up at once and entirely. I must insist that you hold no further communication in any way with this young lady."

"But I assure you, sir—"

"I do not need assurances that she is a young lady, and fit to be your friend—in different circumstances. I only say that as things are the friendship is impossible. You must give me your word, or you must resign your office as captain."

"I can't give it, sir! I resign."

"I regret that. I must also take from you your office as prefect. If you are not fit to captain the school, you are not fit to exercise authority at all!"

"And do you think that I am not fit, sir? Do you think so, Mr. Railton?"

Kildare felt this very keenly. It was not so heavy, in a sense, as he had anticipated. He had feared that Mr. Selby's report would have meant something very like expulsion. It was evident that the Head had not even thought of that, for which Kildare had his clean record to thank, no doubt.

Mr. Railton spoke for the first time since the senior had entered the room.

"I should have answered 'No' without the slightest hesitation an hour ago, Kildare," he said. "Now I am compelled to admit that I have my doubts. The line you have taken with regard to Mr. Selby needs a good deal of explanation."

"That at least I can explain," said Kildare, flushing. "I will not say that I think I have been right all through; but I must say that I have had much provocation. What exactly is Mr. Selby's authority over me?"

It was rather a poser for both men. They knew how unfitted the master of the Third was to exercise authority over anyone, and the Head would have received his resignation with quiet joy. Mr. Railton would have preferred that his sour-tempered colleague should not meddle at all with the seniors or the middle Forms. The Head had given Mr. Selby more than one broad hint that such meddling was unprofitable.

But Mr. Selby was a St. Jim's master. Discipline in any school calls for recognition of the fact that any master ranks any boy.

"Mr. Selby naturally cannot be expected to see the school rules broken without intervening, Kildare," said the Head, after a brief pause.

"Oh, I see that, sir! He has the right to speak to the breaker of rules and to report him—not, I believe, to punish in the case of any senior. And I am sure that he has no right to sneak and spy—to—"

"Kildare! This outburst of passion will not serve you!" said the Head warningly.

Kildare checked himself by a great effort.

"As to the charge of inciting juniors to rebellion," he said, in a much cooler tone, "I have a complete answer to that. They were doing nothing wrong. There were seventeen of them in all, and they were taking ices at Merrell's in Wayland High Street. That is within bounds, and the place is one of good class. Mr. Selby came in, accused them of disgraceful horseplay, and ordered them all out. They denied that they had been guilty of horseplay, or of any unbecoming conduct, and Mrs. Merrell, who was there, supported their statement. Mr. Selby was grossly rude to her. I told him plainly that I considered he was exceeding his authority. In the event I told them to go, and they obeyed me, though they were not willing to obey him."

Again the two masters looked at one another. They knew only too well how tyrannical Mr. Selby was. But they could not say so. They did not know the whole story even now. Mr. Selby had said nothing about his crash amid the ices, and Kildare had also left that out.

"Who were the juniors concerned, Kildare?" asked the Head.

Kildare paused a moment before replying, to make sure that he had all the names.

"Merry, Lowther, Manners major, Blake,

D'Arcy major, Herries, Digby, Levison major, Cardew, Clive, D'Arcy minor, Manners minor, Levison minor, Frayne, Jameson, Hobbs and Gibson," he said then. And the Head nodded approval of the business-like manner of the reply.

St. Jim's would not easily find another skipper so well up to his duties as Eric Kildare—Dr. Holmes realised that.

"There is another matter, Kildare," said the Head. "You were not alone on your visit to that music-hall?"

"No, sir. Darrel was with me."

"Darrel knows what you feel that you cannot tell us."

"Yes, sir."

"And he went with you as a friend?"

"Yes, sir. If there was to be trouble, he felt he would rather be in it with me."

"Very well. I will say no more on that score, except that I cannot accept any nomination of Darrel for the captaincy should it be necessary to hold a fresh election. For the present I shall appoint a temporary captain—Monteith or Baker probably!"

"Thank you, sir—though I'm sorry that you should think Darrel disqualified for the post."

"He broke bounds, and he can hardly be said to have had the same excuse that you had, though his motive may have been in a sense a higher one. Now, Kildare, I am going to impose on you a condition that you may find very irksome. For a week to come you must consider yourself as gated."

The senior's face fell. How could he accept that condition? He simply must see Nina again!

"Do you require a promise from me, sir?" he asked, in a low, troubled voice.

"I do not. But I warn you that you will break gate at the peril of expulsion, Kildare! There are limits to the extent to which even a fellow who has deserved and been given so much trust as you have may transgress. Do not answer me—only remember what I say. You may go."

And Kildare went, feeling very sorrowful and heavy-hearted.

Mr. Selby had done his worst, and the worst was pretty bad.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Challenge!

"YOU mustn't do it, Eric!" said Darrel earnestly.

"My dear chap, I simply must! We're not kids, you and I. We may be treated as mere kids here—but outside there we rank with men, and we must behave as men. This fellow has challenged me to meet him with the gloves on, and I'm bound to do it!"

"And you want me to meet this man Roshier, who has been along, and arrange time and place for the pulping process? Is that it?"

"That's the size of it, George."

"I don't think you can ask me anything I wouldn't do for you, old man," said Darrel earnestly. "But I wish you'd do something for me!"

"Of course I will, dear boy!"

"Without knowing in advance what it is to be?"

"Well, hardly that. I smell a large rat, George!"

"I want you to let me take this fight over for you."

"Thought so. But it can't be did, old bean!"

Darrel shrugged his shoulders. He had had little hope. In Kildare's place he would have done as Kildare did.

"I'll see Roshier," he said. "He's just such another cad as Williton, minus some of the varnish; but I can stand him—for five minutes. May I go and see your cousin?"

"I was going to her myself to-day."

"That's risking the boot!"

"And the fight's making it something like a dead cert. But I've got to go through with it. You can go and see Nina, though, George. I'd like her to know the very best chum a fellow could wish to have, old man!"

Further argument was useless, and Darrel went without another word.

The decision of the Head as to the captaincy did not trouble Darrel. He had no wish to take his chum's place as skipper of St. Jim's. But he would dearly have liked to take his place as the opponent of Buck Williton.

And he was not entirely without hopes of bringing that about.

Kildare was a hefty boxer; but Darrel was his superior. Darrel, quiet and anything but quarrelsome, was a born fighting-man. No one at St. Jim's could touch him in that line.

He was not without hope. Going to see Roshier might bring him into contact with Williton, and the generally pacific and good-tempered Darrel was quite ready to pick a quarrel with that individual.

Roshier was a fellow who had lately come to Wayland, and who spent most of his time playing billiards and lamenting the absurd limitations put upon the drink traffic. Darrel found him at the Bull and Magpie, after trying for him at what was perhaps the unlikeliest place in the town for him except at night and at meal-times—his lodgings.

The Bull and Magpie was not at all in Darrel's line. But he was ready to put up with more than that for the sake of his chum.

Mr. Roshier was engaged in a hundred up with a gentleman of his own kidney, whom Darrel had no difficulty in identifying as Williton.

"You are Mr. Roshier?" said the prefect.

"That's my name. What's yours, cocky?"

"Darrel. I have come to you from Kildare, of St. Jim's."

"With an apology, I a'pose?"

"Then you suppose wrongly!"

"Buck, the kid means to fight!" said Roshier, grinning.

Mr. Williton showed his gold-stopped teeth in an unpleasant smile.

"It's as well for him!" he said sneeringly. "It wouldn't be nice if I went along to the place where he sits on a form with other little boys and scrawls on his little slate, and hauled him out by the scruff of the neck, and gave him the hiding he's spoiling for, would it?"

Darrel's gorge rose. He stepped up to Williton.

"You've an uncommonly good conceit of yourself!" he said. "Do you think you could thrash me?"

Williton looked him up and down with a scornful leer. There was little in Darrel's appearance to suggest the punch that he was capable of handing out. He was well-built and athletic; but so are many fellows who have not a tenth part of his fighting ability.

"I don't think—I dashed well know!" said Buck Williton.

"Then I shall be very glad to give you the opportunity," Darrel replied quietly.

"I'll attend to you after I've given your pal his dose."

"I'd prefer it before, thanks!"

"How long do you reckon I mean to hang about here? Not after the end of this week, you bet!"

"But if you're going to take on both of us it is really a very small matter which comes first."

"Well, there's something in that, my lad," replied Williton. "What do you say, Bill? You can fix up for both little affairs. Don't be long about it." He turned to Darrel. "I'll see you again when you come along for your little bit," he said.

Within five minutes Darrel had left the Bull and Magpie, feeling much happier.

He believed that if he could meet Williton on Friday, as he had arranged to do, there would be no chance of that gentleman having any desire to face Kildare on Saturday—the date fixed for him.

What Kildare would say about it he did not know. What he should say to Kildare he hardly knew. Of the outcome of it, as regarded himself and his place at St. Jim's, he was very uncertain. But, in spite of all doubts, he felt happier.

He went from the Bull and Magpie to Miss Dalgleish's diggings. But the young lady was out with Miss Mandeville, and Darrel had to come away without seeing her.

His disappointment was not intense. He had wanted to meet Kildare's cousin; but there would have been a very real difficulty for him in the question how much or how little he should tell her.

The whole affair was a tangle; and Darrel could only guess how it would end. Another story must tell of that, however.

THE END.