

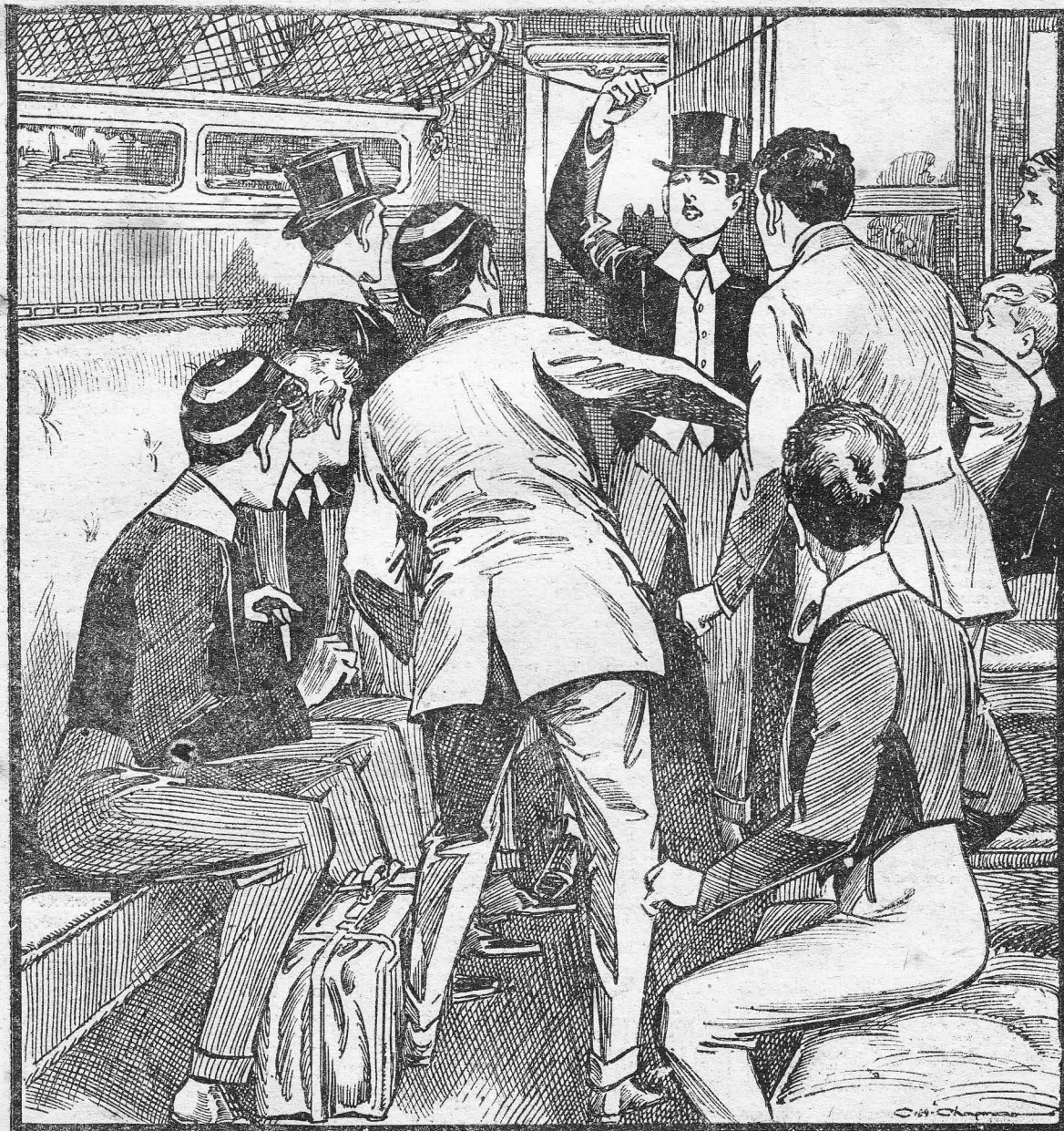
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS.

The Penny **1½**
Popular

Week Ending
January 3rd, 1920.

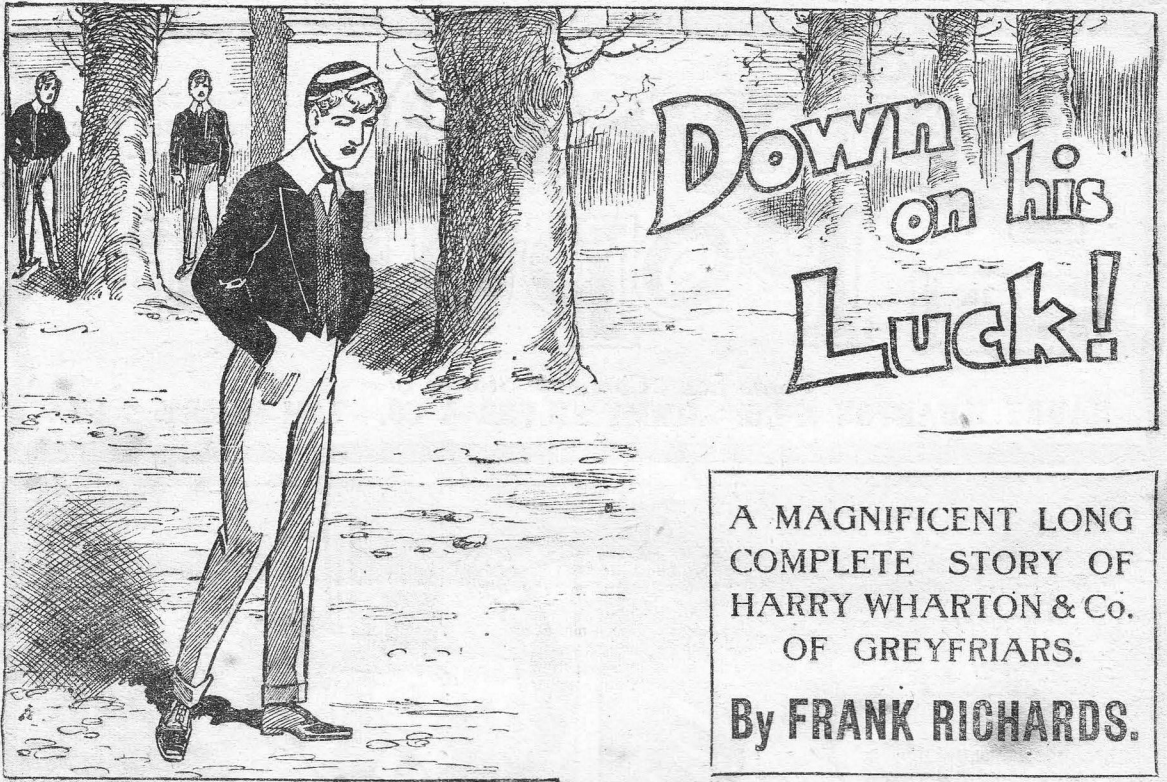
No. 50.
New Series.

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



MAULY STOPS THE TRAIN!

(A Thrilling Incident in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
An Unexpected Meeting.**

DENNIS! Dennis Carr looked up rather sullenly from the book he was reading.

His father, a tall, forbidding-looking man, whose hair was tinged with grey, stood in front of the mantelpiece in the library, scowling at the boy in the armchair.

Dennis was home for the Christmas vacation, though he had frequently wished during the past few days, that he was at somebody else's home.

Mr. Carr's London residence, like Mr. Carr himself, was gloomy and forbidding. Home had not been home since Dennis' mother—a gentle, sweet-tempered lady—had died.

In the presence of his father, the junior felt uncomfortable and ill at ease, as he had always done.

No real affection existed between father and son. Dennis had been passionately fond of his mother; but from his earliest days he had regarded his father as something of a monster. He respected his father—feared him, perhaps; but that was all.

"Dennis," repeated Mr. Carr, "what are you doing?"

"I was trying to read," replied Dennis. He emphasised the word "trying."

"Do not be impertinent!" snapped Mr. Carr. "What are you reading?"

"The Romany Rye."

Mr. Carr gave a snort.

"Instead of filling your mind—polluting it, I ought to say—with romantic trash of that sort, you would be better employed in preparing for your next term at Greyfriars!"

Dennis flushed.

"I don't see why you should slang me like that, dad," he said. "I finished up top of the Form last term!"

"You ought not to boast of old achievements, but to prepare for new!"

Dennis felt his temper rising.

"I'm not boasting!" he said heatedly. "And what's more, I'm not going to spend the vac in swotting. No other fellow does. Do you imagine that Wharton and Cherry and the others are mugging up Latin and Greek at this moment? Not a bit of it! They're either playing footer, or skating!"

Mr. Carr knitted his brows.

"Does that mean that you envy those boys, Dennis?"

"It does! They're having a ripping time, whereas my holiday's a perfect frost. A

Merry Christmas, indeed! I've never had such a miserable Christmas in my life—never!"

Mr. Carr nearly choked. "How dare you talk like that?" he exclaimed. "You have had good food—"

"It takes more than good food to make a merry Christmas!" retorted Dennis. "A fellow wants friendship, amusement, recreation; and I've had none of these. I have been stewing indoors all the time—"

"I have not debarred you from going out!" Dennis laughed scornfully.

"There's a fat lot of fun to be gained in going out by myself!" he said. "Still, I'll give it a trial. I'm fed up with this place!"

Up till now Dennis had treated his father with civility and respect. But the dullness and loneliness of the so-called holiday had got on his nerves to such an extent that he had come to the end of his tether. He rose to his feet, flung down his book, and then, before his father could prevent him, he strode from the room.

The maid saw him a moment later putting on his cap and coat in the hall.

"It is tea-time, Master Dennis," she hinted. "Blow tea!" said Dennis crossly.

And he stepped out into the quiet Kensington thoroughfare.

The winter dusk was already descending, and the bleak, cheerless outlook harmonised with the junior's frame of mind.

"I only wish the vac was over!" he muttered, as he strode along. "Greyfriars is a thousand times better than the pater's place!"

Headless alike of direction and destination, Dennis walked on and on.

Presently he found himself in a densely-thronged, brilliantly-lighted street.

Piccadilly!

Dennis envied that fashionably-dressed throng. They had been a happy Christmas—his had been a "wash-out." Theirs would be a glad New Year—but there would be no gladness in the House of Carr.

Most of these people, Dennis reflected, were on their way to the pantomime or to house-parties. They were in pursuit of happiness, and doubtless many of them would find it.

Dennis felt like an alien, an outcast, as he rubbed shoulders with the gay passers-by. He could not be deemed one of the crowd. He was among them, but not of them.

The junior struck off into Bond Street. And as he did so a familiar voice exclaimed:

"My hat! Here's Carr!"

Dennis looked up, and saw that the speaker was Dick Russell, of the Greyfriars Remove.

Russel was not alone. Ogilvy, Morgan, and Micky Desmond, all of the remove, were with him.

The quartette was resplendent in silk toppers, fashionable overcoats, and fur gloves. Dennis felt decidedly shabby by comparison.

Dick Russell promptly shook hands. "This is a corker, and no mistake!" he said. "Fancy meeting you!"

"Faith, an' it's mighty pleased we are to see ye, Carr darlint!" said Micky Desmond.

However much of an exile he might have been in his own home, Dennis Carr found a warm welcome now.

The four juniors shook hands with him in turn; then they marched him off along the street as if he were their personal property.

"Staying in town, old man?" asked Ogilvy. Dennis nodded.

"What sort of a Christmas did you have?" "Gross!"

"As bad as that?" said Russell. "Hope you didn't make yourself ill with gorging?"

"No; but the vac's been awfully tame so far. I've not seen anyone worth seeing, or done anything worth doing."

Russel stared.

"You mean to say you've been moping indoors all the time?"

"Yes."

"You haven't even been to a panto?" ejaculated Ogilvy.

"I've been nowhere."

"What a holiday!" gasped Morgan. "What a giddy, exciting time our new Form-captain is having!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you fellows enjoyed yourselves?" inquired Dennis.

"Yes, rather!"

"We're staying with Dick's uncle," explained Ogilvy, "and he's a brick! He's shown us the sights of London, and he's taken us to heaps of shows."

"Our programme is something like this," said Dick Russell. "We turn out in the morning at about eleven, and after lunch we go and visit places of interest—the Tower, the National Gallery, Madame Tussaud's, and so forth. On Boxing Day we saw a professional footer match. In the evenings we have a box—"

Dennis smiled.

"Getting into trim to squash the bullies next term?" he asked.

"Not that sort of box, fathead—a box at one of the theatres!"

"Oh!"
 "My uncle's been called away this evening, so we've got to find our own entertainment."
 "And where are you going to look for it?"
 "Drury Lane, of course!"
 "There's still one pantomime left that we haven't seen more than twice!" said Ogilvy, with a chuckle.

At this point Dick Russell hailed a passing taxi. The vehicle slowed up near the kerb.

"Hop in!" said Russell briefly.
 Dennis Carr hesitated.
 "Look here—" he began.

"No time for those optical performances, old chap. In you get!"
 Dennis still hesitated: whereupon Morgan and Micky Desmond each took one of his arms and bundled him into the taxi.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.
 "Drury Lane," said Russell.
 "Very good, sir, thank you!"
 Dick Russell gasped.

"My hat! I shall have to write to the 'Times' about this. Amazing incident in the West End. Taxi-driver says 'Thank you!'"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Dennis Carr sat wedged between his school-fellows, half angry and half amused.
 "You silly asses!" he exclaimed. "I haven't the pater's permission to go to a pantomime—"

"Rats!"
 "He won't be waiting up for you with the poker surely?" said Ogilvy.

"I don't know so much. He'll be awfully ratty. He wasn't exactly amiable before I came out, and what he'll be like when I come rolling home in the middle of the night, goodness only knows!"

"It will serve him right, look you!" said Morgan. "He shouldn't be such a beastly killjoy!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "I think," said Dennis seriously, "that I'd better go home."

"Feeling funky?" asked Russell.
 Dennis flushed.

"It isn't that," he said. "But—"
 "We'll see you home after the show," said Ogilvy, "and we'll stave off the paternal wrath. Hallo! Here we are!"

The taxi came to a halt beside several others which stood outside the theatre.

A box had been booked by Dick Russell some time previously, and the five juniors made their way up the winding staircase.

There was no escape for Dennis Carr now. For three hours or so he would remain a captive in the theatre, whether he liked it or not. Dick Russell & Co. would not let him slip through their fingers.

Russell liked Carr immensely, in spite of the fact that Dennis had beaten him in the recent election for the captaincy of the Remove.

The other three, too, held Dennis in high esteem, and were very pleased to have met him.

Before the performance commenced Dennis was restless and uneasy. He was wondering what his father would say on his return. Mr. Carr was a man of hasty and uncertain temper, and he would not be likely to make allowances for his son. Dennis experienced a good many qualms as he sat there, waiting for the curtain to rise.

But when it did rise, he promptly forgot all about his parent—and everybody else, for that matter.

The pantomime fascinated and thrilled him. It seemed to take him into another world. The old happy flush returned to his cheeks, and his eyes glowed with their former lustre. All his attention was fixed upon the stage, and when his chums spoke to him they got no answer. Dennis was like a fellow in a trance.

It was not until the interval that he came back to earth, as it were.

"My hat! What a topping show!" he murmured.

"It seems to have fairly captured you," said Ogilvy. "We've seen it twice already, so it's lost some of its novelty."

"All the same, it's top-hole!" said Russell. "Absolutely!"

Micky Desmond made frantic signals to a young lady who was selling chocolates. A large box changed hands, and the Greyfriars juniors were munching contentedly as the curtain rose again.

Dennis Carr enjoyed the second part of the performance better than the first, which was saying a good deal. He leaned over the rail of the box, drinking in every word that was said by the gaily-attired performers.

"He's got his eyes on the principal girl!" murmured Dick Russell.

"So have you!" chuckled Ogilvy. "Something like Phyllis Howell, of Cliff House, isn't she?"

"Rats! Phyllis would beat her all ends up in a beauty contest!"

The hour was late when the curtain fell, amid terrific applause. It was half-past eleven, to be precise, and Dennis Carr reflected rather grimly that it was a good way from Drury Lane to Kensington.

"Well, I've had my fling, and now I must face the music!" he said, as the juniors quitted the theatre. "After the feast, the reckoning!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sequel.

"MIGHT as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb!" said Dick Russell.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Dennis.

"Well, now that you're bound to be late home, why not go the whole hog? What's the matter with coming to my uncle's place to sleep?"

"My dear fellow, it's unthinkable! I'm much obliged for the invitation, of course; but—"

"Oh, do come!" urged Ogilvy.
 But Dennis was adamant.

"I'm not a funk," he said; "but to stay away from home all night without my pater's permission would be more than I dare do!"

"Oh, all right!" said Russell. "Don't come if you think it would mean ructions. Do you feel peckish?"

Dennis admitted that he did.
 "Good! There's a topping restaurant near here where we can have supper."

In spite of his forebodings, Dennis Carr burst into a laugh.
 "I look like getting home in the small hours!" he said.

"Can't you nip into the house without rousing your pater?" asked Morgan.
 Dennis shook his head.

"The pater's a light sleeper," he said, "and he's bound to hear the housekeeper letting me in."

"Never mind, Carr darlint!" said Micky Desmond. "We're seein' you home, and you can rely on us to back you up."

"Yes, rather!"
 Dick Russell led the way into the restaurant, and the juniors had supper. It was a sumptuous repast, and Russell "stood the racket." The others wanted to pay their share, but Russell wouldn't hear of it.

It was past midnight when the party emerged into the street.
 "Now for a taxi!" said Ogilvy.

But all the taxis seemed to have taken into themselves wings. There was no sign of one.
 "Here's a pretty go!" grunted Morgan.

Dennis Carr turned to his companions.
 "You fellows had better get home," he said. "Never mind about me. I don't mind facing the pater alone."

"Rats!" said Dick Russell. "We'll see you to Kensington, if we have to tramp all the way!"

Half an hour had elapsed before a derelict taxi drifted along the almost deserted thoroughfare.

"Taxi!" bellowed five voices in unison.
 The vehicle halted.
 "Park Crescent, please!" said Dennis Carr, as the juniors clambered in.

The driver nodded, without speaking, and the taxi crawled away.
 It was a nightmare journey to Dennis.

During the pantomime he had forgotten the wrath to come. He had forgotten it, too, during the dinner. But now that he was on his way home, he pictured only too vividly his father's anger. There was certain to be a "scene."

"Buck up, old man!" said Russell, clapping his chum on the back. "If your pater's a sport, he'll overlook it this once!"

Dennis might have said that his father wasn't a sport, but he held his peace.

The taxi slowed up at last outside the big, bleak house, and the juniors jumped out.

Dennis Carr was about to pay the fare, but Dick Russell stopped him.

"It's all right, old chap!" he said. "Don't pay the driver off. We shall want him to see us home."

Dennis ran up the wide stone steps, and his chums followed.

A light was burning in the drawing-room, and Dennis knew only too well what that meant. It meant that his father was waiting up for him!

"Keep a stiff upper-lip!" muttered Ogilvy.

"Faith, an' the pater can't eat you!" said Micky Desmond.

For a moment Dennis Carr hesitated at the top of the steps. Then he rang the bell.

After a brief interval footsteps sounded in the hall. They were the footsteps of a man in a temper.

Then the door was thrown open, and Dennis Carr stood face to face with his father.

Mr. Carr was fully dressed, and his face was white with passion. He glared at his son without appearing to notice the existence of the other juniors.

"Dennis, this is disgraceful! Do you know what the hour is? It is one o'clock—no o'clock in the morning!"

"I'm sorry, father! I—"
 "Your sorrow does not impress me in the least!" said Mr. Carr drily. "Where have you been?"

"To the panto."
 "Where?"
 "To the pantomime."
 "Faith, an' it was a rippin' show!" said Micky Desmond.

"Simply top-notch!" said Ogilvy.
 Mr. Carr deigned to notice his son's companions for the first time.

"I am not asking you young rascals for your opinions!" he snapped. "Dennis, this conduct is outrageous! I shall see to it that you are adequately punished!"

Dennis passed into the hall, and Mr. Carr attempted to slam the door in the faces of Dick Russell & Co. But Russell sprang forward and prevented the action.

"Don't be too hard on Dennis, Mr. Carr!" he said. "It's our fault, not his. We happened to meet him by chance in the West End, and we dragged him along to see the pantomime. He insisted on coming home, but we wouldn't let him."

"That's so," said Morgan. "Dennis isn't to blame."

Mr. Carr frowned.
 "You would naturally champion his cause," he said. "You have been keeping high relief with him, and now you wish to try and shield him! I may as well tell you at once, however, that your efforts are futile! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for being out so late! If you were sons of mine, you would be made to regret such conduct!"

The juniors thanked their lucky stars that they were not the sons of such a killjoy as Mr. Carr.

Dennis's father was in a tyrannical mood, and Dick Russell and his chums saw that further argument would be futile. They darted sympathetic glances at Dennis, and retreated down the steps. Their taxi was waiting for them outside.

When they had gone, Mr. Carr turned to his son.

"I have been waiting up for you," he said. "My mind has been in a turmoil of doubt and apprehension. How did I know but that you had met with a street accident? Hour after hour dragged by, and I had no notion what had become of you. You left the house without my permission, and now I find that you have visited a vulgar and unrefined performance!"

Dennis thrust his hands into his pockets, and regarded his father with sullen defiance.

"It wasn't vulgar!" he said. "And it wasn't unrefined, either! It was a rattling good show! The principal girl—"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Carr angrily. "I want to hear no sordid details! Go to bed—to bed at once! I will deal with you, sir, in the morning!"

Dennis made one final effort to restore peace—not because he was funky of what might happen in the morning, but because he hated the thought of being at loggerheads with his father.

"Aren't you making a mountain out of a molehill, dad? I've done nothing glaringly wrong, that I can see. If I had been drinking or gambling, or even smoking, I could understand you being ratty. But it's a bit thick to rave at a fellow just because he goes to a pantomime!"

"Silence!" repeated Mr. Carr, making a stride towards his son. "You are an insolent young puppy, and you shall smart for this! I hesitate to punish you now, lest I should lose all control of myself; but you are fast goading me to it! Go!"

Dennis turned on his heel without another word, and went up to his bed-room.

The junior was tired, but his mind was too active to sleep.

For hour after hour he lay staring into the darkness. And his thoughts were as black as the dark pall which enshrouded him.

Why was his father such a beast? Why

wasn't he broad-minded? Why did he begrudge his son a few hours of healthy enjoyment?

"I've never liked him," muttered Dennis, "and now, by Jove, I'm beginning to hate him! If only my mother were alive!"

The long, dreary night dragged out its slow length; and it was not until the first grey glimmer of dawn that Dennis Carr fell into a troubled doze.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Last Straw.

YOUR father's in an awful rage, Master Dennis!"

This warning accompanied the cup of tea which the housekeeper brought into Dennis' rooms at eight o'clock.

"Sorry to hear that, Mrs. Bennett!" said the junior, with a yawn. "I know he was in the tantrums overnight. But I thought he would have got over it by now."

"Which he's carryin' on something awful!" said the housekeeper. "I've never seen him look so wild since that time when he lost a lot of money on the Stock Exchange. Which he's stridin' up an' down in the drawin'-room like a caged lion!"

"Sounds cheerful!" said Dennis. "Hope he's not going to flay me alive, or anything like that!"

"I'm afraid you're booked for a bad time, Master Dennis!" said the old servant, as she withdrew.

Dennis Carr gulped down his tea; and then, unrefreshed by his brief slumber, he turned out, and started to dress.

"So the paternal wrath is still bubbling over?" he muttered. "What an enjoyable vacation, to be sure!"

Dennis had completed his toilet when Mrs. Bennett again appeared. She was looking very scared.

"Which your father would like to see you, Master Dennis, in the drawin'-room."

"All serene!" said Dennis. He wondered vaguely, as he went down stairs, what form his punishment would take. Little did he dream that the punishment would be of a corporal nature.

True, his father had hinted at corporal punishment a few hours before; but Dennis had not taken him seriously.

"I suppose he'll make me swot for the rest of the vac," murmured the junior. "Or he will forbid me to go outside the house except under his escort. My hat! What a life!"

When Dennis entered the drawing-room, however, a surprise awaited him.

His father was pacing angrily to and fro, and on the table lay a hunting-crop!

Dennis gave a violent start. Was it possible that he would have to submit to the shame and indignity of a thrashing?

Although Mr. Carr had been in many ways a stern father, he had only thrashed his son on one occasion—several years before—and Dennis' mother had successfully intervened. The thrashing had been curtailed, but the memory of it still rankled.

Mr. Carr stopped short in his stride. "Have you any apology to offer for your base conduct?" he rapped out.

Dennis flushed. "I've done nothing to apologise for," he said.

"Nothing?" stormed Mr. Carr. "You left this house yesterday without my knowledge or consent; you kept a secret appointment with four of your shady companions—"

"That's a lie!" The junior's voice rang out fearlessly. Mr. Carr nearly choked.

"You— you dare to insinuate that your father is guilty of falsehood?"

"I may have left the house without your consent," said Dennis. "But I had not arranged an appointment with the other fellows. I didn't even know they were in London! I met them quite by chance. And as for saying that they are 'shady,' why, they are four of the best fellows breathing!"

"Bah! If they were paragons of virtue, as you assert, they would not be parading the streets at one o'clock in the morning! I regard them as young reprobates who possess a powerful influence for evil. The statement concerning the pantomime was, of course, utterly untrue—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Dennis. "I do not believe for one moment," continued Mr. Carr, "that you visited a pantomime. I may have believed it at first, but on reflection I can clearly see that the

pantomime story was a bluff. You attempted to pull the wool over my eyes—"

"Nothing of the sort!" flashed Dennis. He was every bit as angry as his father now.

"I am firmly of the opinion," Mr. Carr went on, "that you spent the evening—half the night, rather—smoking or gambling. I do not intend to stand idly by and see my son go to the dogs! You must be cured once and for all of this craze for low pleasures! I shall give you a horsewhipping!"

"You would not dare—" began Dennis. "Be silent, sir! I have suffered quite enough impertinence from you. Stand there!"

Mr. Carr indicated a space between the large oak table and the fireplace. Then he seized the heavy hunting-crop, and stepped towards his son.

Dennis clenched his hands hard. His brain was in a whirl. Should he submit tamely to this injustice, or should he offer resistance?

Dennis debated the matter swiftly in his mind, and he decided that he could not oppose force with force, so far as his father was concerned. He would not have allowed any other man in the world to thrash him in this way. But, after all, the angry tyrant who now confronted him was his own father. And to attack his father would be out of the question.

Dennis made up his mind to submit to the humiliation of a thrashing. He stood unresistingly in the centre of the open space.

"Carry on!" he muttered, between his clenched teeth.

And then followed an exhibition of brutality, which was destined to haunt Mr. Carr to the end of life.

The hunting-crop rose and fell. Dennis stood still, and made no murmur, although the pain was intense.

A flogging administered by Dr. Locke, at Greyfriars, was a picnic by comparison with this.

The cruel thong lashed upon the junior's back and shoulders; and the inhuman father, who wielded the whip did not desist until his arm ached.

"There!" he panted, hurling the whip into the corner. "Let that be a lesson to you to conduct yourself in future like a gentleman. On your return to Greyfriars, I shall send a note to your form-master, explaining that you are in danger of getting out of hand, and requesting him to keep a sharp eye on you. Now you may go!"

And Dennis went.

His face was very white, but his head was erect, as he quitted the drawing-room.

He had borne his punishment without a murmur. But as soon as he gained the privacy of his own room he threw himself on to the couch, and burst into tears.

It was not physical pain which produced that outburst. It was the thought that his father had no feelings towards him save those of repulsion and contempt.

Once upon a time, it was true, Dennis smoked and gambled, and, in the language of his schoolfellows, had "gone to the bow-wows."

That time was past; but Mr. Carr appeared to think otherwise. He seemed to be under the impression that Dennis was still a "wrong 'un."

Dennis remained in his room all the morning, brooding on the injustice which had been meted out to him.

He was an exile in his own home. He was despised by his father!

The unhappy junior did not go down to lunch, firstly because he was not hungry, and secondly because he could not trust himself to speak to the man who had wronged him.

Early in the afternoon, however, the housekeeper came up to his room, with the information that Mr. Carr had gone out.

"Come down to the kitchen and have something to eat, Master Dennis. I can't bear to see you like this!" said the kindly Mrs. Bennett.

And she insisted upon Dennis eating a square meal. After which he felt better.

But he was not happy. Far from it. The remaining days of the vacation dragged by like a slow nightmare.

Father and son scarcely spoke to each other. Dennis spent the whole of the time indoors, and his books were his only consolation.

One evening Dick Russell & Co. called at the house, and sent a message to Mr. Carr asking if Dennis might be allowed to go out with them. They undertook that he should be home again by nine o'clock.

Mr. Carr's answer was more emphatic than polite. And the Greyfriars juniors retired discomfited.

Dennis found himself looking forward to the new term at Greyfriars. He wanted to get away from the depressing atmosphere of his father's house. He wanted to forget all the bitterness and discord, and to plunge once again into a happy, care-free existence.

And at last the time of departure came. Dennis packed his portmanteau, happy in the knowledge that he was returning to school; whereas most of his schoolfellows were only too sorry that the vacation was at an end.

In duty bound the junior went to the library to take farewell of his father.

Mr. Carr regarded him coldly. "I have written to your Form-master, asking him to keep you under close supervision," he began.

Dennis flared up at that. "Anyone would think I was a beastly criminal!" he exclaimed. "You're horribly unfair!"

"I consider that you need to be kept under strict watch and ward," was the reply. "I cannot forget that you brought disgrace upon yourself—and upon me—last term."

"It's cruel to rake up the past!" said Dennis. "I admit that I got into bad company, and smoked, and played cards for money, but I've chucked all that sort of thing long ago, and I thought you would be the last person in the world to reproach me with it."

"You have yet to prove that your reformation is genuine," said Mr. Carr. "In view of what happened the other night, it is difficult to believe that you have reformed at all!"

Dennis bit his lip. "You've made a mistake, father," he said. "As I said before, I've done nothing during the vac to be ashamed of. I merely went to a pantomime—"

Mr. Carr made an impatient gesture. "We will not discuss the matter any further," he said. "I have my own views as to what happened on that particular night."

Dennis sighed. It was not a scrap of eye trying to convince his father that he had acted honourably.

Mr. Carr took out his wallet, and produced therefrom a five-pound note.

"This represents your pocket-money for the term," he said. "I should advise you to expend it wisely, for you will get no more."

"I don't want it!" said Dennis passionately. "I know what you think. You think I shall blud it on cards, or backing horses. Well, I won't take it, and then you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that I can't indulge in any little flutters!"

"This is nonsense!" said Mr. Carr. "You know very well that you cannot be without money. There is your railway-fare—"

"I've already got sufficient to pay that!" "And you are determined not to accept any pocket-money?"

"Quite!" "Very well. You will soon have cause to regret this folly!"

And Mr. Carr replaced the five-pound note in his wallet.

There was a long pause. It was eventually broken by Dennis.

"I must be getting along now," he said, "or I shall miss my train."

Mr. Carr nodded. "Good-bye!" he said; but he did not extend his hand, and there was no cordiality in his tone. He seemed to have addressed a stranger rather than his only son.

"Good-bye!" said Dennis. And he turned abruptly on his heel.

On reaching the door, he glanced back over his shoulder. Perhaps he expected his father to unbend at the last moment.

But Mr. Carr's expression was grim and unrelenting.

Dennis passed out into the hall. He gave directions for his portmanteau to be sent to the station; then he stepped out into the dismal London fog.

The vacation was over at last. And surely no Greyfriars fellow had ever spent such a depressing holiday! It had been a period of gloom from start to finish—with the exception of the evening of the pantomime—and there had been no cheery end-off for the unhappy junior, who, through no fault of his own, was estranged from his father.

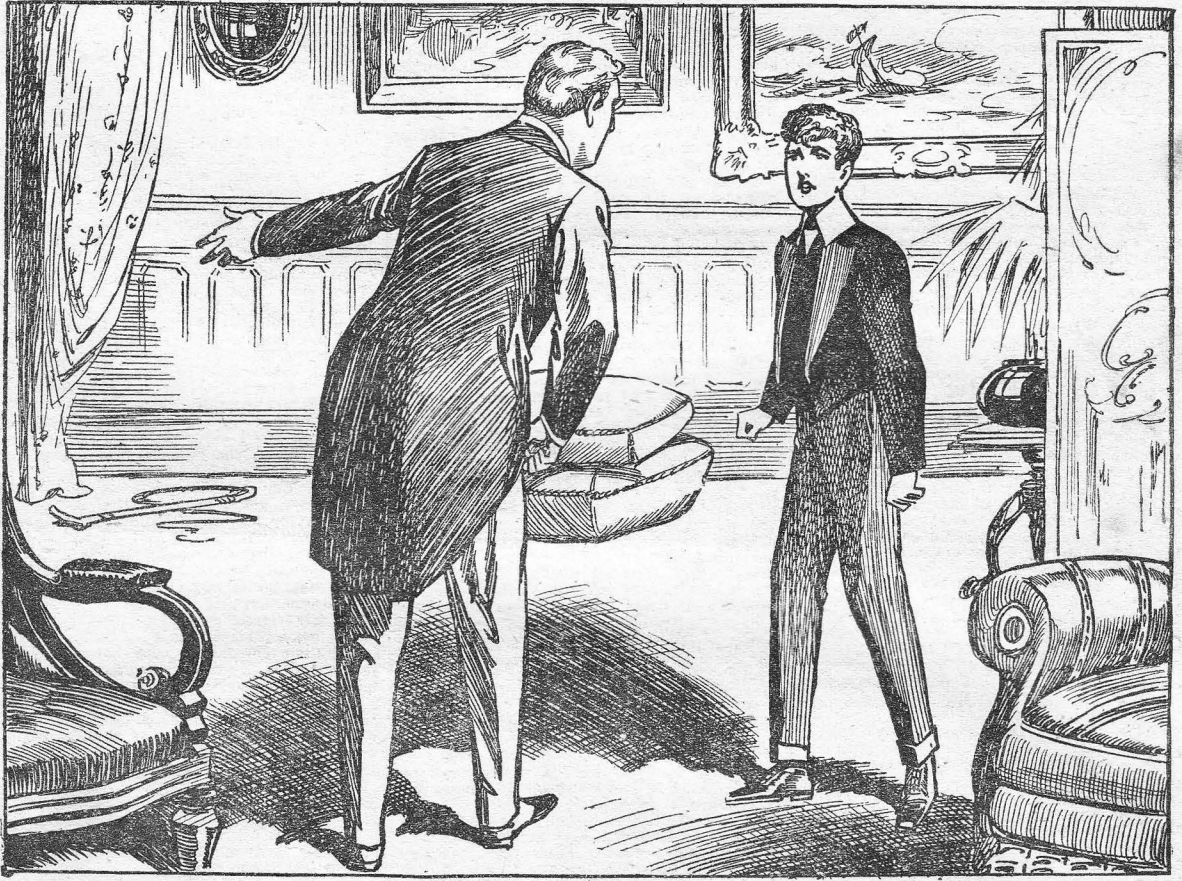
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A FRIEND!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Back to School.

"HERE he is!"
"Poor old Carr!"
"He's been released from prison at last!"
Dick Russell & Co. were standing on the departure platform at the London terminus when Dennis Carr turned up.
"I don't envy you your pater, old man," said Ogilvy. "Talk about a giddy tyrant! When we dragged you off to the panto the other night we had no idea it would ruffle the old bird's feathers to such an extent!"
Dennis smiled.
"Did he calm down afterwards?" inquired Morgan.
"Or did he give you a fearful lecture?" asked Russell.
"Yes," said Dennis grimly. "He lectured me all right—with a hunting crop!"

money for another twenty-four hours of freedom!" said Micky Desmond.
"Here's the train!" said Ogilvy suddenly.
"Wonder if we shall see any of the other fellows?" said Morgan, running his eye along the platform.
So dense was the crowd, however, that it was impossible to detect any familiar faces.
The five juniors commandeered a first-class carriage, which they were hoping to have to themselves all the way down.
But their hopes were soon dashed.
An elegantly-attired youth lounged towards the carriage, and a porter opened the door for him.
"Hallo!" ejaculated Russell. "Here's Mauly!"
"Good old Mauly!" said Ogilvy. "You can come in, old chap, provided you're not lumbered up with luggage."
"My goods an' chattels are all in the

The porter promised himself a happy New Year—a happy commencement of it, anyway. A good deal of liquid refreshment could be procured with a pound-note.
Lord Mauleverer leaned back 'in his seat and languidly closed his eyes—a little habit of Mauly's.
"Had a good time?" inquired Morgan.
"Toppin', thanks!"
"Seen all the sights of London?"
"Yaas—an' they've exhausted me. These vacations are fearfully wearin' an' tearin' to the constitution, begad!"
"My hat!"
"But you had an enjoyable time surely?" exclaimed Dennis Carr.
"Not altogether. A very scrappy Christmas an' a blighted New Year."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I've been dancin', an' rompin', an' visitin'



"There!" panted Mr. Carr, hurling the whip into a corner. "Let that be a lesson to you to conduct yourself in future like a gentleman. I have requested your form-master to keep a sharp eye on you. You may go!" And Dennis went, with a white face, but holding his head erect. (See page 4.)

"My hat!"
"You mean to say he lammed you?" exclaimed Ogilvy.
Dennis nodded.
"Faith, an' that was a bit thick!" said Micky Desmond, in great indignation.
"I can't think what's come over the pater just lately," said Dennis, as the juniors strolled along the platform. "We've never been exactly pally, but this was the first time he'd licked me for donkeys' years. When the next vac comes, I think I shall invite myself to somebody else's place. Talk about a holiday! It's been more like penal servitude!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Your pater seems to have blossomed into a proper old Bolshevik!" said Dick Russell. "Fancy lammung you just because you went to a panto! Of all the rotten acts of tyranny that fairly takes the bun!"
"Never mind the pater just now," said Dennis. "I want to forget all that's happened during the vac. I'm simply dying to get back to Greyfriars!"
"Faith, an' I'd give a whole term's pocket-

luggage-van, dear boy!" said Lord Mauleverer, dropping into a corner seat.
"Ahem!"
The porter who had opened the carriage door, and incidentally seen to Mauly's luggage, emitted a gentle cough.
The schoolboy earl took no notice, and the cough was repeated—louder this time.
"Ahem!"
Mauly blinked at the porter.
"What's the matter with the man, begad?" he exclaimed.
"Which it's the custom, sir, to bestow a tip—"
"My hat!" murmured Mauly. "Aw'fy sorry, my dear fellow! Quite a lapse of memory, I can assure you. I shall have to Spelmanise."
Lord Mauleverer produced a fat-looking wallet, and handed a pound-note to the delighted railway servant.
"You mean to say you're tipping him a quid?" gasped Dennis Carr.
"Why not, dear boy? Too much fag to hunt for small change."
"Great Pip!"

theatres!" explained Mauly. "An' that sort of thing takes a heavy toll of a fellow's energy."
"I should like to have swooped places with you, anyway!" said Dennis.
Lord Mauleverer made an impatient gesture.
"Don't jaw, my dear fellow. I want to go to sleep."
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Just as the train commenced to move three flustered and excited youths came dashing up. They were Coker, Potter, and Greene, of the Greyfriars Fifth.
Coker wrenched open the carriage-door, and he plunged into the compartment with lowered head, just like a bull.
"Yaroooooh!"
There was a roar of anguish from Ogilvy as Coker's elephantine boot collided with the junior's shins.
"You clumsy ass! Can't you look where you're going?"
Before Coker could reply Potter and Greene came sprawling into the carriage.
The Fifth-Formers had caught the train.
THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 50.

by the skin of their teeth. They had left things till the last moment, doubtless the result of Coker's folly.

When they had sorted themselves out and taken stock of their surroundings, they saw that the six seats in the carriage were occupied by Lord Mauleverer, Dennis Carr, and Dick Russell sat on one side, and Morgan, Ogilvy, and Micky Desmond on the other.

"Now, you cheeky fags," said Coker in his lofty way, "make room for your betters!"

"Rats!"

"Hand over three of those seats!" commanded Potter.

"Not for all the potty Potters who ever potted!" said Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Coker wrathfully, "we're not going to stand—"

"Afraid you'll have to!" chuckled Morgan. "We're prepared to give up our seats to ladies and to old men, but we're not going to give them up for three tame lunatics!"

"No, rather not!"

Coker made a signal to his companions, and with one accord the trio rushed at the Removites, intending to take their seats by storm.

"Pile in, kids!" exclaimed Dennis Carr. The next moment a wild and whirling battle was in progress.

Lord Mauleverer was a non-combatant, but the juniors managed quite well without his assistance.

The odds were five to three—not overwhelming odds, certainly, but sufficient to give the Remove the victory.

Coker & Co. were successfully beaten off, and finally they had to content themselves with "strap-hanging."

The train rushed on through the outskirts of London, and Dennis Carr and his companions chuckled as they beheld the discomfiture of the Fifth-Formers.

No further attempt was made by Coker to secure the seats occupied by the juniors. But the three strap-hangers presently decided to have their revenge by ragging the slumbering Mauly.

It so happened that Coker & Co. had peashooters in their pockets—relics of the days when they were fags.

The shooters were produced, likewise the ammunition, and at Coker's word of command the Fifth-Formers opened fire.

A perfect deluge of peas rained upon Lord Mauleverer. He shot up suddenly, as if he had been stung by a swarm of wasps.

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Potter and Greene. Lord Mauleverer blinked at the hilarious Fifth-Formers.

"What's the little game?" he asked. Then he caught sight of several stray peas on the seat beside him, and he understood.

"So you've been bombardin' me with peas—what?" he exclaimed.

"And scoring bullseyes every time!" chuckled Potter.

"Dashed if I'm goin' to stand that sort of thing!" said Lord Mauleverer, with unusual spirit. "Go away!"

"What?"

"Get out of the carriage!"

"How can we get out of the carriage, ass, when the train's going at top speed?" roared Coker.

"You will oblige me by gettin' out at the next station an' transferrin' to another carriage!"

"Well, of all the cheeky—" gasped Green. "If you start playin' any more of your monkey-tricks," said Lord Mauleverer grimly, "I'll have you ejected right away, begad!"

"Good!" said Dick Russell. "That's the stuff to give 'em!"

Coker winked at Potter and Greene, as a sign that the bombardment was to be resumed.

Accordingly, the Fifth-Formers again brought their peashooters into action, with dire results.

A hail of peas stung the face of the schoolboy earl, and he rose to his feet and reached up for the communication-cord.

"You—you're not going to pull that thing, surely?" exclaimed Coker in alarm.

For answer Lord Mauleverer tugged at the cord.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Ogilvy. "Now look out for squalls and cataracts!"

The train began to slow up, and presently it rumbled to a halt.

Coker & Co. stared in astonishment at the schoolboy earl.

"You'll get it in the neck for this!" said Coker. "You've held up the train by pulling that cord, you young ass!"

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"Penalty for improper use, five pounds," quoted Potter.

Even the juniors were alarmed. They considered that Lord Mauleverer had been guilty of amazing recklessness.

There was an interval of perhaps a couple of minutes, and then the face of the guard appeared at the carriage-window. The expression on the face of the guard was one of extreme annoyance, which vanished when the guard caught sight of Lord Mauleverer.

"Anything wrong, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Yaas," drawled the schoolboy earl. "I wish these three louts to be removed from the carriage. I cannot travel in comfort while they are pelting me with peas."

The guard glared at Coker & Co.

"I'm surprised that young gents of your size don't know how to behave yourselves!" he said. "Out you come!"

"What!" roared Coker. "You mean to say you're going to eject us?"

The guard nodded.

"I can't allow this sort of thing to go on," he said. "I can clearly see that you have been making yourselves objectionable, and I must ask you to go into another carriage, or to accompany me in my van."

"My hat!"

The Removites chuckled gleefully.

"This is where the fifth get the order of the boot!" said Dick Russell.

"Yes, rather!"

"What are you going to do about it, old man?" muttered Greene, turning to Coker.

"Do!" echoed Coker. "Why, we'll stay where we are, of course!"

The guard advanced into the carriage and confronted the Fifth-Formers.

"Tickets, please!" he said.

Reluctantly Coker & Co. produced their tickets.

"Thought so," said the guard. "You are travelling first-class with third-class tickets!"

"Ahem! The fact is," stammered Potter, "we only caught the train by the skin of our teeth, and we had to hop into the first carriage we came to."

"That's so," said Greene.

"We're quite willing to pay the excess—" began Coker.

"Out you come!" repeated the guard grimly.

"Look here—"

"This train has been delayed quite enough already. If you don't come out quietly I'll summon force!"

That threat was all-sufficient for Coker & Co. They had no wish to submit to the indignity of being forcibly "chucked out."

Slowly and with reluctance the Fifth-Formers quitted the carriage, and the guard saw them safely into a third-class compartment. A few moments later the train moved on again.

"Bravo, Mauly!" exclaimed Dennis Carr.

"How on earth did you manage to work the oracle?"

"I happen to know that guard," explained the schoolboy earl, with a smile, "and he knows me. You see, I happened to be on his train when I went home for the vac. He saw to my luggage, an', one thing an' another, so I tipped him handsomely. One good turn deserves another, an' the merry old guard's turned up trumps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the journey was thoroughly enjoyed by the Removites, but not by Coker & Co., whose dignity had been made to suffer on the first day of the new term.

At length the familiar voices of the porters could be heard shouting:

"Courtfield! Courtfield Junction! Change 'ere for Friardale an' Greyfriars!"

Dennis Carr and his chums crossed over to the local line, where quite a crowd of Greyfriars fellows, who had come from all parts, were herded together, waiting for the train which would take them to Friardale.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. In a Tight Corner.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

It was Bob Cherry's familiar ejaculation.

The Famous Five, looking very fit and ruddy as a result of their holiday, were waiting on the platform with the rest. Bob sang out a cheery greeting to Dennis Carr & Co. as they came up.

"Welcome, little strangers!" How have you been enjoying yourselves?"

"Top-hole, thanks!" said Dick Russell.

And he explained how Coker & Co. had been made to sing small, thanks to Mauly.

"Good old Mauly!" said Johnny Bull. "He

deserves a putty medal for taking a rise out of the Fifth!"

Whilst the juniors were chatting about their experiences on vacation, they were reinforced by a dozen of their Form-fellows.

"Here they come!" exclaimed Nugent. "Same old faces! How are you, Linley? Had a good time, Newland?"

"Here's Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Same old cargo of rolling-stock!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows!" said the fat junior.

"I've had such a ripping time during the vac that I howled when I came away!"

"Have you been visiting Lord Bunter de Grunter, or the uncle who keeps the Bunter Arms?" inquired Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you know! I've been staying, as a matter of fact, with some of my titled relations."

"And you've come back bursting with postal-orders?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Not exactly! The postal-orders are going to be sent on in a few days. In the meantime, if you fellows would care to advance me a loan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Same old Bunter!"

"Always trying to get something for nothing!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his schoolfellows.

"I say, I'm awful peckish!" he remarked. "I've been existing for eight hours on a stale railway-sandwich!"

"You are not the only fellow who feels the pangfulness of hunger," said Hurree Singh. "We are all in the same ship boatfully."

"Hear, hear!"

The fat junior nodded.

"In that case I've got a suggestion to make," he said. "Instead of waiting here for the local train, which might not come in for about an hour, why not come and have a big feed at the new restaurant in Courthield?"

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze," said Mark Linley. "Personally, I've had nothing to eat since I left Lancashire early this morning."

Most of the juniors agreed that Bunter's suggestion was a very sound one, and a large crowd followed the Famous Five out of the station.

Dennis Carr experienced some qualms as the juniors swarmed into the restaurant. After paying his first-class fare from London he had very little pocket-money left. He had enough for a feed certainly, but he felt that he would be wiser to husband his resources.

However, he did not care to explain to the others that he was in danger of becoming financially stranded; and he took his place at the same table as the Famous Five. That select little community may not have altogether approved of Dennis Carr being captain of the Remove; but they all voted him a jolly good fellow, and they certainly bore him no malice for having defeated Harry Wharton in the fight for the captaincy.

"Light refreshment for six!" said Bob Cherry, when the waitress appeared.

"The refreshments may be light, but I'm thinking the price will be dashed heavy!" said Johnny Bull.

And Dennis Carr groaned. He was already beginning to wish that he had declined to participate in the feed.

But, as captain of the Remove, he could not afford to be unsociable, and he endeavoured to laugh and crack jokes with the rest—though he was not feeling one-tenth as happy as he looked.

The Famous Five, of course, knew nothing of Dennis' financial position. If they thought about the matter at all, they supposed that he was "rolling in quids." Nearly every fellow had come back from the vacation with his pockets well lined.

The light refreshments arrived at length. They were excellent, both as to quality and quantity.

Midway through the repast Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"I've hit upon a ripping wheeze, you fellows!"

"Get it off your chest, Bob!" said Wharton.

"I vote we draw lots to decide who is to pay for the grub."

"Good!"

"This is quite a nobby and esteemed notion!" murmured Hurree Singh.

Harry Wharton looked curiously at Dennis Carr.

"Anything wrong, old man?" he asked.

"No," said Dennis. "Why?"

"You've turned out pale!"

"Ha-have I?"

"Yes."

"It—it's the atmosphere of this place, I

expect," said Dennis. "I shall be all right in a minute!"

The possibility of having to pay for six teas instead of one fairly haunted the unhappy Dennis.

Bob Cherry was already shuffling six scraps of paper. Five of them were blank, but the sixth had been marked with a cross. And the fellow who drew that particular piece of paper would be called upon to pay the piper.

In vain Dennis tried to look cheerful and unconcerned. He was wondering what would happen if he drew the paper marked with a cross.

The sugar-basin happened to be empty. Bob Cherry used it in lieu of a hat, and invited his companions to draw.

The juniors unfolded their papers amid breathless silence.

Then, when the tension was over, Frank Nugent spoke.

"Blank!" he said.

"Same here!" said Johnny Bull. "Thank goodness I'm not the giddy victim!"

Dennis Carr was fumbling with his paper. His hands were trembling.

"Blank!" said Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry together.

"I, too, have drawn the esteemed blankfulness!" said Hurree Singh.

Five sympathetic glances were directed towards Dennis Carr.

"Hard lines, old chap!" said Johnny Bull. Dennis scarcely seemed to hear. He was staring at an unfolded scrap of paper.

And the paper was marked with a cross! "Oh crumbs!" he gasped.

Here was a pretty go. The bill—which the waitress had just laid on the table—amounted to thirty shillings. And Dennis didn't possess ten!

"Cheer up!" said Harry Wharton. "This will make a big hole in your pocket-money, I'm afraid, but better luck next time!"

The remainder of the meal was like a nightmare to Dennis.

He had refused the five pounds which his father had offered him; and his pride would not allow him to wire to Mr. Carr for the money.

What was to be done?

"Poor old Carr looks quite upset!" said Nugent. "After all, thirty bob is a bit steep. We'll rule out this lottery business, and each pay our own whack."

"No, no!" said Dennis.

He may have been a pauper, but he was still a sportsman, and shortly afterwards the Famous Five finished their tea, and seemed to be waiting for Dennis to pay the bill.

"I—I—Perhaps you fellows wouldn't mind carrying on without me?" stammered Dennis. "I—I'd like to be alone for a bit!"

"What the thump—" began Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

Harry Wharton caught Bob by the arm. "Come along!" he said. "Carr's not feeling very grand, and he wants to be left to himself. It's quite understandable!"

The Famous Five rose from the table, and nodding sympathetically to the captain of the Remove, they quitted the restaurant.

When they had gone, Dennis plunged his hand into his pocket and produced his small change, in the hope that by some miraculous means it had multiplied, like the widow's oil.

But the hope proved a forlorn one. The junior's sole resources consisted of nine shillings and fourpence-halfpenny. And there was the bill staring him in the face—a bill for thirty shillings!

Dennis replaced the handful of silver and copper in his pocket, and beckoned to the waitress.

"I should like to see the manager," he said. The waitress surveyed him coldly, and then, with a toss of the head, she went off in search of the manager.

That individual arrived at length. He was a big blonde man—a man whose grim and determined expression seemed to say, "No credit allowed."

"Well," said the manager, "what is it?"

"I—I—You see this bill?" stammered Dennis.

The manager replied that there was nothing wrong with his eyesight.

"Well, I—I—The fact is, I've got no money to meet it!" faltered Dennis.

"Oh!" said the manager grimly. The junior's statement did not appear to surprise him in the least.

"It—it was quite an oversight," said Dennis. "I'll settle up to-morrow."

"You'd better, or your headmaster will hear of it. What's your name?"

Dennis gave the required information.

"Very well, Master Carr. I shall expect to see you here to-morrow with the money. If

it is not forthcoming, I shall be compelled to take action."

Dennis was only too thankful that the manager didn't take action there and then. He had expected a policeman to be called in, or something of that sort, and he was relieved at being spared such an awkward scene.

The junior said good-afternoon to the manager—who failed to respond—and then he stepped out into the street and started on the solitary walk to Greyfriars.

His troubles were by no means over—in fact, they had scarcely begun. How was he to raise the thirty shillings by the morrow?

He could not, in his new position of captain of the Remove, go round in quest of loans. No doubt plenty of fellows would be willing to lend him the money, but they would naturally wonder why he was in a state of bankruptcy at the beginning of term.

Borrowing the money seemed to be out of the question. But how was Dennis going to raise it, if not by borrowing?

That was a problem which occupied Dennis Carr all the way from Courtfield High Street to the gates of Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Linley Takes a Hand.

"FEELING better?"

Bob Cherry asked the question as Dennis Carr came into the junior Common-room.

"Much better, thanks!" said Dennis; though he neither felt nor looked it.

A cordial welcome awaited the captain of the Remove from the whole Form. Fellows flocked round and shook him by the hand, and there was no doubt that his popularity was greater now than it had ever been.

"Mind you keep your end up, Carr!" said Squih. "Wharton will fight hard to win back the captaincy, you know!"

Dennis nodded.

"I'm not going to be content to rest on my laurels," he said. "I'm going all out to keep my position."

"That's the spirit!"

There was no prep that evening, of course. Most of the fellows were engaged in unpacking their trunks and putting their studies in apple-pie order.

Dennis Carr helped his studymates, Lord Maulverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian, to make their sumptuous apartment better than ever; and they laughed and chatted merrily in the process. But Dennis was concealing his real feelings all the time under a mask of light-heartedness. Try as he would, he could not dismiss from his mind the fact that he was in debt, and that he lacked the wherewithal to pay.

Dennis knew, of course, that Lord Maulverer had an abundant supply of pocket-money, but he could not bring himself to ask for a loan. And the problem of raising the thirty shillings remained unsolved.

It was still unsolved when the juniors went up to their dormitory.

Dennis was worried to distraction.

For long hours he lay awake, staring into the darkness and picturing to himself the scene on the morrow, when the manager at the Courtfield restaurant would report him to the Head.

It was not until the small hours of the morning that Dennis Carr fell into a troubled doze.

Dennis was awakened at length by the rude clanging of the rising-bell.

Billy Bunter and several of the slackers remained in bed; but Dennis made no effort to spur them into action. He left that to Bob Cherry.

When he had washed and dressed, Dennis went down into the Close, and paced moodily to and fro beneath the leafless elms.

"I shall have to think of a way out, somehow!" he muttered. "This is awful!"

And then the junior made a startling discovery. He put his hand in his pocket, and his fingers closed over something which rustled—two separate pieces of paper.

Dennis knew that he had no letters in his trousers-pocket, and he was astonished.

"What on earth—" he began.

He withdrew the two pieces of paper, and stood blinking at them in stupefied surprise.

One was a pound-note, the other a ten-shilling one!

"My only aunt!" gasped Dennis. "Thirty bob! Just the sum I want! How the dickens did this get into my pocket?"

Dennis could not for the life of him understand it. He had counted his money in the restaurant on the previous afternoon, and it had amounted to just over nine shillings. That amount still reposed in his pocket; but

it had been augmented, in some mysterious way, by two currency-notes.

At first Dennis was strongly tempted to say nothing about his discovery.

How easy it would be for him to go over to Courtfield after morning lessons and settle his debt!

The junior fought down the temptation, however. The money was not his, and he had no right to retain it. A fellow like Bunter would have acted on the principle that findings were keepings; but that was not Dennis Carr's way.

After breakfast Dennis caused the following announcement to appear on the notice-board:

"NOTICE!

"Will the fellow who has lost or mislaid two currency-notes, numbered E01234 and P689, apply to me for same.

"(Signed) DENNIS CARR.

"Captain of the Remove."

There was only one applicant. That was Billy Bunter.

"I say, Carr," said the fat junior, button-holing Dennis in the passage, "I'll trouble you to return my notes."

"Where did you lose them?" asked Dennis. "Ahem! In—in the Close," said Billy Bunter. "I distinctly remember dropping the two quid-notes."

"You fat young fraud!" said Dennis indignantly. "It so happens that only one of the notes is for a quid. The other's a ten-bobber. What do you mean by making a false claim, you worm?"

"Oh, really, Carr—"

Dennis gave the fat junior a cuff, which sent him spinning against the wall. Then he strode away.

There was a good deal of excitement in the Remove in connection with the notes, but up to dinner-time they were still unclaimed.

Dennis Carr decided to consult Mr. Quelch on the subject. The Form-master would be best able to tell him what to do.

Mr. Quelch received the junior coldly.

"I learn from your father, Carr, that you have been giving a great deal of trouble during the vacation. I understand that you have relapsed into your former wild ways."

"I hardly like to contradict my father, sir," replied Dennis. "But I give you my word of honour that I have done nothing to be ashamed of. What's more, I mean to play with a straight bat this term!"

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"Very well, Carr. I am willing to believe that there has been a misunderstanding. Why have you come to see me?"

Dennis informed Mr. Quelch about the discovery of the thirty shillings.

The Form-master looked surprised.

"You are certain it is not your own money, Carr?"

"Quite certain, sir!"

"Then, the only conclusion I can come to is that one of your schoolfellows deliberately placed the notes in your pocket, intending them as an anonymous gift."

"I've advertised for the owner of them, sir, but he hasn't come forward."

"In that case, I consider you are quite justified in keeping the notes."

"Very well, sir!"

After dinner Dennis Carr cycled over to Courtfield, and settled his little bill.

How that thirty shillings had got into his possession Dennis never knew. He did not know that Mark Linley, his loyal chum, had slipped the notes into his pocket during the night. Yet such was the case.

Mark had heard Dennis chattering in his sleep, and had gathered that he was urgently in need of thirty shillings to settle a bill.

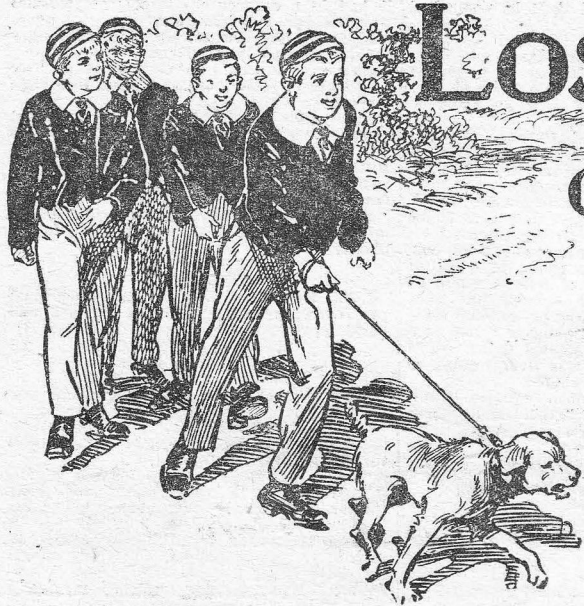
Linley realised that this was no idle chatter, but it was a fact. So the Lancashire lad had played the part of a Good Samaritan, and got Dennis out of a tight corner.

But fresh troubles were in store for Dennis Carr. He was starting the new term at Greyfriars practically a pauper. He, the captain of the Remove, would shortly be "on the rocks." And what then?

"The prospect of being perpetually 'stony,' and at the same time being alienated from his father, was anything but a pleasant one to Dennis. And he asked himself, during the intervals when he was not engaged in speeding goalwards with the ball, how it was all going to end!

THE END.

(Another grand, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "Dennis Carr's Farewell!" Order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR early!)



LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED

A Magnificent New Long
Complete Story of
**TOM MERRY & Co., of
St. Jim's.**

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Pair of Bags Spoiled.

**"Y
OW!"**

A wall of fear and anguish came from Study No. 6 on the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's, and heads were popped out from neighbouring doors to see from whom it had come.

It had proceeded from Aubrey Racke of the Shell. And Aubrey Racke now proceeded from No. 6—though perhaps a better word than "proceeded" might be found to describe the manner of his coming.

He came in haste. Yet he did not come as fast as he would have done had there been no impediment.

The impediment which slowed him down was Towser, George Herries' bulldog.

Towser appeared to have taken a violent fancy to Racke's nice grey bags.

He was hanging on like grim death to the seat of them, while their owner strained his hardest to get away.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerruish, from the door of Study No. 5.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorused Julian and Hammond and Reilly, appearing in his rear.

"I didn't know Towser loved Racke like that!" remarked Lumley-Lumley.

"If that's the way Towser shows his love, I hope he'll never get truly fond of me," replied his study-mate, Durrance.

There came a rending sound. Racke, suddenly released, fell forward on his face; and Towser slipped back on his haunches, with a considerable section of grey trousering in his jaws, and an expression of self-approbation on his grim old countenance.

Cardew ran up with a travelling-rug. "Wrap this round you, Racke!" he said. "Dash it all, let's be decent, whatever we are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the chorus of laughter, as Racke lifted his head to scowl at Cardew.

"Good dog! Good old Towsy!" said Clive.

"I'll kill the ugly brute!" roared Racke.

"He'd no right here at all. I'll kill him!"

"Kill him now!" suggested Cardew. "But don't count on any help if the killin' happens to go the other way!"

"What's this mean?" snapped Jack Blake.

Blake and Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just come in together from Rylcombe, rather past the usual hour of tea.

"That brute of yours, Herries——" began Racke.

"Give that to me, Towser!" said Herries, disregarding Racke. "Good dog! Give it to me, then. I'm not going to have you poisoned!"

"Poisoned! By my bags?" howled Racke.

"Anything you've worn is enough to poison any decent dog, you cad!" growled Herries.

"Good old chap! Let me have it!"

Very unwillingly Towser let the sample of trousering go. No one but his master could have taken it from him.

Herries flung the rag into the face of Racke.

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"No need to tell us what you were up to!" he snapped. "Towser wouldn't have touched you unless you were up to something fishy!"

"Hear, hear!" said Levison major.

Aubrey Racke was a long way from being a favourite in the Fourth, and he had not a single sympathiser among the score or so who looked on now at his discomfort.

Even Percy Mellish and Baggy Trimble, who were humble hangers-on of the wealthy Racke when he would let them hang on, grinned from the door of No. 2. They had had no favours from Racke thus for this term, and their sympathy was never given free.

"Towsy knows the difference between a Fourth-Former and a Shellfish!" said Kerruish.

"That brute has no right in your study, Herries!" fumed Racke, as he scrambled to his feet.

"Neither have you!" retorted Digby.

"Who says I was there?" demanded Racke. "Nobody could prove it. No one had seen him go in, and no one had actually seen him come forth—though half a dozen fellows had only missed that spectacle by the fraction of a second."

"We say you were!" snapped Blake.

"An' I deny it! This foul brute came behind me in the——"

"Yaas, he must have come behind!" drawled Cardew. "It wasn't the front aspect that suffered dilapidations. The damage was done from the rear—so far I'm with you, Racke!"

"It's no concern of yours at all!" retorted Racke.

"That's true, too," replied Cardew. "I can't say that I'm concerned in the very least. But I shall think seriously of gettin' a bulldog for No. 9. They're not exactly beautiful; but it's plain that they have their uses—as plain as Towser, say."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Towsy's a jolly sight better-looking than either of you are!" snorted Herries.

"Also better-tempered than his master," murmured Cardew.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Levison. "Herries wouldn't have bitten Racke's bags!"

"No, I should have put my foot against them!" snapped Herries. "And that's what I'm going to do now!"

"You dare—that's all!" roared Racke.

"Oh, I dare, if that's all! Here goes!"

And Herries' right foot—the biggest and heaviest in the Form—shot out.

"Shame, shame!" cried Cardew. "He wasn't properly protected against that, y'know, Herries!"

Racke's face was fiendish. But he knew that George Herries carried too many guns for him; and his fist, raised to smite the burly Fourth-Former, dropped to his side.

"Oh, I'll get even with you, Herries!" he hissed. "Railton shall hear about that brute bein' here, an' you know what will happen then!"

He turned to go; but Blake's hand clutched his collar.

"What we want to know is what were

you doing in our study, Racke," said Blake grimly.

"I wasn't in your study, you lunatic!"

"That's a lie!"

"Prove it, then!"

Blake could not prove it a lie; and yet he was absolutely certain that it was so. Blake had not the same exalted opinion of Towser's intelligence that Herries had; but he was sure that Towser would never have gone for Racke in the passage.

"Did anyone see this sweep come out?" Blake asked.

"Yaas, wathah! That is the question, deah boys!"

"Ass! That's not the question at all!" said Digby warmly. "There's no question as to whether Racke went in; Towser wouldn't have gone for him outside. What we want to know is whether Racke's going to fight you or me, Gustavus!"

"Weally, Dig, you are wathah——"

"Don't you see, fathead? Herries is too big a handful for him. So is Blake. But he might pluck up courage to take on you or me."

"Now I see youah meanin', Dig, an' I am quite weady——"

"I don't see what this has to do with either of you!" said Racke.

"But we do," returned Dig.

"I decline to lower myself to——"

"What? Wepeat that, if you please, Wacke! Do you dare to say that it would lowah you to——"

"I'm not goin' to fight," answered Racke sullenly. "I've suffered enough already from that dashed brute of a dog. You'll have to pay for these bags, Herries!"

"With sixpence extra for the kick you gave Racke!" gibed Cardew.

"Not sixpence. Penny a kick!" said Levison. "I'll take twelve!"

"I'll see you hanged first, Racke!" snorted Herries.

"Very well. I'll make you pay for them some way or another, I promise you that, by gad!"

And Racke stalked away, amidst a burst of derisive laughter.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Racke's Confederates.

HERRIES came into No. 6 with a very long face next day.

"What's the matter, old chap?" asked Digby sympathetically. "Was it about Towser?"

"Oh, you guessed, did you? I felt pretty sure it would be that when Railton sent for me. He was decent enough, and didn't threaten to have the old boy done in, or anything of that sort. But he said that I knew all along I was breaking rules—and I did, come to that. There will be a big row if he hears of Towsy's being up here again."

"Any lines? Or did he come you instead?" asked Blake.

"No lines, and no caning. He was jolly decent, I tell you."

"Come, now, Hewwies, that is not so bad!" said Arthur Augustus cheerily.

"Not so bad, dummy? What do you mean, ass?"

"Weally, Hewwies, youah cwass wudeness—"

"Shurrup, Gustavus! It isn't so bad, though, Herries," said Blake. "After all—"

"But don't you understand? Towsy's not to be allowed up here any more!"

Towsy crept from under the table, and looked up into his master's woeful face, wagging the latter half of his body as he gazed. Towser had no tail worth mentioning, but he had to wag something.

For once Gussy had less sympathy than Dig. Theoretically, Gussy liked Towser very well indeed; but he liked him best at a distance. He never had really felt that Towser was in place in No. 6.

Blake, who was less worried about the appearance of his lower man than Gussy—or Racke—nevertheless felt that Towser was just as well at the kennels.

But Dig had grown very fond of the old chap; perhaps because Towser showed more liking for him than for Gussy or Blake. Dig could not feel it as Herries did, but he would be sorry to miss Towser, if only on account of his use as a warm footstool. Dig would slip off his slippers on cold evenings, and put his feet on Towser's back. If Blake or Arthur Augustus tried that game, Towser growled. Herries never did it, and had objected to Dig's doing it until he found that Towser rather liked it.

"Can't be helped," Blake said. "After all, he's not delicate. He'll be all right at the kennels with Wally's Pongo and Figgy's old Spot and the rest of them."

"Not delicate!" growled Herries. "That's all you know about dogs, Blake! I'm sure Towsy's got a weak chest."

"It doesn't look weak," replied Blake.

"Wathah not!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, what do you know about it? Well, I've got to take him down, I suppose. Coming, Dig?"

Digby went. To his credit, he reported that he did not even wink at Blake and Gussy. Digby's sympathy really was worth something.

"That's Racke," said Blake, when they had gone, Towser carried in the arms of his master, though he really was perfectly fit to walk, in spite of any possible weakness of the chest.

"Do you think so, deah boy?"

"Think? I jolly well know it, fathead!"

"Well, it may be. I wathah think that it was, though I dislike bein' suspicious. Wacke is a spiteful beast. He has done us wathah a good turn now, though. I am free to confess that I can do vevy well indeed without good old Towsah's company."

"So can I. I don't mind if Racke stops at that; but—"

"Weally, what else do you imagine Wacke can do in the mattach?"

"I don't know. But I don't a bit believe that he's going to be satisfied with so small a revenge as this. Mellish might be—not Racke."

And Jack Blake was right. Even at that very moment Racke was plotting further vengeance.

He and his precious pal, George Gerald Crooke, were on their way back from Rylcombe, when they were accosted by a rough-looking fellow with a stubby beard, a dirty face, and a fox-terrier on a lead.

"Wanter buy a nice little dawg, young gents?" asked he of the beard.

"We don't!" replied Crooke, with more decision than politeness. It was seldom Crooke wasted any politeness on members of what he called the "lower classes."

The fellow scowled at the arrogant tone.

"Wait a moment!" said Racke, to Crooke's surprise.

"We don't want a dog!" snarled Crooke.

"Let yer pal speak for 'isself," said the bristly one.

"Oh, I don't want to buy one—wouldn't have one at a gift!" said Racke. "I've nee too many now."

"Why, you—"

Crooke was going to say that Racke had no dog at all, but he felt his pal's elbow in his ribs, and dried up.

"I ain't buyin' no dawgs ter-day, mister," said Bristles.

"Nor any day, by gad!" retorted Racke. "You know a dashed cheaper way than that. I bet!"

And he winked at Bristles, who first stared at him, and then, with growing intelligence, winked back.

"If you've got a dawg ter give away, guv'nor, an' 'e's worth more'n a row of pins, I'm yer man!" said Bristles.

"Well, I have, as it happens," replied Racke coolly. "He's supposed to be a good dog, too—a bulldog, if you're particular about breed."

"I can do orl right with a 'bull.' I knows a chap as knows a gent wot wants a good bull."

"Far away?"

"Twenty mile or so."

"Ought to be far enough. Towser hasn't a dashed lot of sense; he wouldn't find his way back twenty miles if he were taken off in a cart from here."

"I say, y'know, Aubrey, it's dashed risky!" muttered Crooke.

"I don't think so," answered Racke.

"I serpose as 'e ain't reely your dawg—the bull ain't?" said Bristles cunningly.

"Does that make any odds to you?"

"Not a scrap! A dawg's a dawg—that's my motter."

"If I put him over the wall to you in a hamper after dark, would that be all serene?" asked Racke.

"That would do me a treat."

"I fancy I can see you gettin' Towser into a hamper, Racke!" gibed Crooke.

"Better go without your bags on when you try it. Ha, ha!"

Racke scowled blackly. The breach of Racke's breeches was no joke to Racke.

"I dare say our friend here can get vevy any trouble of that sort," he said.

"I dessay I can. If you're the wust enemy the dawg's got, guv'nor, 'e won't cut up nasty if you give 'im a bit of meat with a few drops of stuff as I've got in my bloomin' pocket enter it."

"There you are, Gerry!" said Racke.

"Oh, hang it! You can do Towser in for all I care!" Crooke replied. "I hate the clumsy old brute, an' I don't exactly love his master. But I'm not in this."

"You're not needed, by gad!"

The dog-stealer produced a small bottle.

"Ere yer are, guv'nor," he said. "This is the magic draught."

Racke sniffed at it, and pulled a face.

"Ah, dawgs ain't the same tasteses as folks!" said Bristles. "All dawgs love that stuff—cats, too. I can make the tabbies foller me like as if I was a gent with a cats'-meat barrer in me own right, so ter speak."

"But what good are cats?" asked Crooke, mildly interested.

"Fur—that's the good of them! But it ain't catsees as is in question—it's dawgses. Arnsers to the name of Towser, does 'e, guv'nor?"

"Yaas."

"Nice-tempered dawg?"

"Oh, no end—with people he takes to!"

"Well, I'm dashed if I'd say that, Aubrey! He took to you—hard. But from what I've heard, he wasn't altogether nice-tempered about it!"

"Never mind orl that," said Bristles, much to Racke's relief. "I've bin 'andlin' dawgs orl my blessed life, an' I knows 'ow. Time, sir?"

"Be on the other side of the school wall—St. Jim's, you know—at a quarter to seven to-night," replied Racke. "Come along behind us now, an' I'll show you just where you'd better stand."

"Better 'ave some signal, 'adn't we?" said Bristles.

"I'll whistle a bar of—oh, anything. 'Rule Britannia,' say."

"Didn't know you were so musical, Aubrey!" sneered Crooke.

"I don't pretend to be so dashed musical as that lout Herries, but I suppose I can whistle 'Rule Britannia,' can't I?"

"Dashed if I know! Let's hear you try!"

The result would have amused the Shell and Fourth greatly. For Racke tried. And Racke was quite hopelessly unmusical.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Crooke.

"Perhaps you could do better?" snorted Racke.

"I don't mind tryin', if you'll tell me what it was."

"Didn't you recognise it?" demanded Racke of Bristles.

Bristles scratched his head.

"It sounded a little like 'Gawd Save the King,' an' a little like 'Two Lively Black Eyes,' he answered. "But if you says it was 'Rulin' Britannier,' guv'nor, why,

that's a go, an' good ernuff for me. Anyways, you whistle it like that there, there or thereabouts, an' I shall know as there's somebody t'other side of wall. An' when the hamper comes over I shall know as it's you. So that's all right-ho, though we ain't such musical conservers as this 'ere young gent. I say, wot am I to 'ave for my trouble in takin' Towser away?"

"You can have Towser!" replied Racke.

"An' a quid to boot—jest one little quid, as open-arted young nobleman like you wouldn't never miss—come now!"

Bristles got his quid, and followed them to the school wall, and had his place of waiting indicated to him, and went.

"He won't come," said Crooke.

"If he doesn't," hissed Racke, between set teeth, "I'll take the dashed hamper down to the dashed river, an' dashed well chuck it in!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Woe of Herries.

"H ALLO, Racke!" It was not often Racke condescended to visit Study No. 2 on the Fourth Form passage, shared, not too harmoniously, by Baggy Trimble and Percy Mellish.

Mellish spoke now as if the visit were an honour. He was a born toady.

"Cut, Trimble!" snapped Racke.

"Well, I like that, blessed if I don't!" burred Baggy. "This is my—"

"I don't care whether you like it or lump it! Just cut!"

"Clear out when you're told, Baggy!" said Mellish. "Racke and I don't want you when we've business to talk."

"Look here, Racke, I'm hard up! Can you lend me half-a—"

"Half-a-crown? Oh, yaas, here you are, Baggy! But clear out, there's a decent chap!"

A decent chap would not have accepted a bribe of half-a-crown to go. But Baggy did, though it had been half-a-sovereign he had meant to ask for, as Racke had guessed.

"Have you a hamper, Mellish—a dashed big one?" asked Racke.

"No, I haven't!" replied Mellish. "That's not the sort of hamper I ever do have. But there are plenty in the box-room."

"Can you get me one?"

"What's the job worth?" countered the sneak of the Fourth.

"Five bob."

"Three half-crowns, more likely! You gave Baggy half-a-dollar just to clear out for a tick!"

"Oh, all right! Seven-an'-six. Biggest hamper you can find. An' put it—let's see—oh, stick it down just outside the side door the minute before prep to-night. Don't let anyone twig!"

"You aren't on the roost-robbing game again, Racke, are you?" asked Mellish, grinning.

"No, chump! This is only—er—a matter of supplies."

Mellish looked as if he believed that. But he did not believe it.

He got the hamper—it belonged to Tom Merry, but that did not matter to Mellish—and put it under the table in No. 2 until half-past six.

Baggy saw it there, but said nothing. There were times when Baggy's tongue was a very unruly member; but there were also times when, like Brer Rabbit, Baggy could "lie low an' say nuffin."

Mellish was too crafty to go just before prep. He went just after the hour when prep began. There was less risk that way, for everyone was then supposed to be in his study.

Baggy had not arrived on the scene when Mellish stole downstairs; but he was there when Mellish came back.

He said nothing, however.

Racke went down, more than a little nervous, some ten minutes later.

Now that it came to the pinch, he did not feel quite so confident about the efficacy of that queer-smelling stuff in the little bottle.

But Bristles—though probably not above lying—had told the truth in this instance.

Towser growled threateningly when Racke approached. And not Towser alone—every dog there growled. Pongo and Figgy's Spot yapped, too. None of the dogs liked the cad of the Shell.

But he did not care about that; and he did not venture within Towser's reach until he had held out the doped sausage he carried for the bulldog to sniff at.

Towser sniffed, and was a lost dog from that instant.

Racke put the sausage inside the hamper, and, trembling, unfastened Towser's chain at the collar.

Towser paid no heed to Racke after he had once sniffed. He leaped into the hamper. It is to be feared that, howsoever shining and many were the virtues of Towser, he was rather greedy. For Herries had fed him well not half an hour earlier.

The hamper lid shut down. Towser gave one low growl at that; but he did not struggle to get out. He went to work on the sausage at once.

Racke's hands trembled as he tied up the hamper, and his whistle—quite unrecognisable as "Rule, Britannia"—was shaky. But he plucked up spirit as it was answered at once from the other side of the wall.

He had to use all his puny strength to hurl the hamper over. But spite urged him on, and he managed it.

"Yah! That 'it me on the 'ead!" came the coarse tones of Bristles.

"Shush!" hissed Racke.

Bristles shushed, and his retreating footsteps were audible.

Racke hurried in, full of unholy glee.

"Gay time for Herries in the mornin', by gad!" he muttered.

It was anything but a gay time for George Herries next morning; but it was, nevertheless, much such a time as Racke had meant when he said that.

Of course, Herries went to the kennels before breakfast—he always did that.

A chorus of barks greeted him. All the dogs liked Herries. He was a doggy person.

But the deep bass of Towser was absent from the chorus, and the kennel of Towser was vacant.

Herries stared at the chain on the ground. "Somebody's been along and loosed him," he murmured. "Tom Merry, maybe—he likes old Towser."

But, even while he tried to make himself believe that, Herries was full of doubt and suspicion.

He hurried back to the quad, where a number of Fourth-Formers and Shell Fellows were taking early exercise.

"Seen Towser, any of you?" he shouted.

They gathered round him. None of them had seen Towser that morning.

"I say, you know, there must have been foul play!" said Herries, his face full of trouble. "Someone's stolen him!"

"Not likely!" piped up Wally D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor. "Pongo's there, and all serene! If there'd been a dog-stealer about he'd have bagged Pongo. Pongo's worth heaps more than Towser!"

"Neither of them's worth tuppence-half-a-penny!" said Reggie Manners.

"Shut up!" snapped his major. Harry Manners had some sympathy for troubled Herries.

So had many more there. George Herries was a good fellow; and old Towser—well, old Towser was a good fellow, too, in his way. And to Herries he was a treasure beyond price.

Levison major drew Herries aside.

"That sweep Racke——" he began.

"I thought of Racke," said Herries. "But it couldn't have been. He wouldn't have dared to go within reach of Towser!"

"Well, no; and yet—I know I'm a suspicious beast, it's my nature—I can't help thinking——"

"I'd believe it if I could see it as poss," said Herries. "But it isn't poss."

"Could he have got anyone else to do it? Young Piggett, for instance?"

"Piggett daren't, and no one who dared would. The chaps Towser likes are above mean tricks."

"He never liked me much," said Levison.

"He hadn't any cause to till lately!" answered Herries bluntly. "But he does now—at least, he did. Oh, Levison, suppose he's dead?"

And Herries' rather heavy face worked, and there was just a trace of moisture about his eyes.

Levison felt no inclination to scoff.

"I'll do what I can to find out, Herries," he said gently. "You fellows think I'm fairly wide, and I know that I'm a suspicious bouncer, and that a chap can hardly be too suspicious where Racke's concerned. Anyway, that cad's no pal of mine, and you and old Towser are pals. Don't you get thinking the old boy's done in; I'm sure he isn't!"

"Thanks no end, Levison!" said Herries warmly.

Others besides Ernest Levison thought of THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 50.

Racke, as it was only natural they should. If Towser had been found poisoned few would have doubted that Racke was the murderer. But few could believe that Racke would dare to unchain the bulldog. And Racke, who was as crafty in his way as Levison, had counted upon just that doubt.

But Baggy smelt a rat.

"Mellish," he said, after breakfast—neither he nor Mellish had been in the quad before that meal, exercise having no charms for them—"I say, what did Racke want that hamper for yesterday?"

"What hamper?" inquired Mellish, opening wide eyes of innocence.

"Oh, you can't stuff me! Look here—halves!"

"Halves in what, you fat fool?"

"I'm not such a fool as I look, my boy! Racke nabbed Towser!"

The last three words came in a hissing whisper.

"Rats! He daren't go near the brute," replied Mellish.

"I shouldn't have thought so. I know I wouldn't. But Racke did, all the same, and we can screw no end of tin out of him over the bizney. But it's halves, Percy, my son, or I'll split!"

The suggestion did not fall upon stony ground. Mellish was not so much addicted to blackmail as Baggy; but he was far from being above it.

"I don't know," he said. "It may have been so, though I shouldn't think it. We might try it on. Better leave it to me—you'd make a mess of it!"

"Oh, I'll leave talking to Racke to you! I don't want a giddy thick ear! But it's halves in all you can screw out of him, mind!"

And within twenty-four hours Mellish began to put on the screw.

Herries went about searching high and low for Towser, mourning like Rachel for her children, and refusing to be comforted. And Dig and Gussy and Blake helped in the search. But Dig stuck to it long after the other two had given it up.

And others aided—Tom Merry & Co., and Tabot, and Figgins & Co., and a score of others—all Herries' friends.

But the search was in vain.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Pongo in the Limelight.

"COME along, kids!" cried Wally D'Arcy, as soon as classes were over that morning.

"Where to?" asked Hobbs.

"To look for Towser, of course. I'm going to put Pongo on the scent. Pongo will track him, you bet!"

"I don't think!" scoffed Reggie Manners.

"That ain't news, Reggie!" said little Joe Frayne. "You don't think. 'Cos why? 'Cos you can't!"

"Reggie needn't come," Frank Levison said. "Herries is a pal of ours, if he isn't of Reggie's!"

"And Towser's a pal of yours, too, I s'pose?" sneered Reggie.

"Yes, he is," replied Frank stontly.

"Oh, I've seen you with your arm round his ugly old neck, but I wouldn't have put mine there for a pension!"

"He wouldn't let you!" said Wally. "Dogs know a wrong 'un when they niff him."

"Do you say I'm a wrong 'un, young D'Arcy?" fumed Reggie.

"Yes, I do, young Manners!" retorted Wally.

"Oh, don't squabble!" said peacemaker Frank. "Reggie needn't come. All the rest of us are going."

But Reggie went with the other half-dozen—Wally and Frank and Joe, Curly Gibson and Hobbs and Jameson. The awkwardness of Manners minor was mostly on the surface. He was not nearly as unpleasant a young scamp as he sometimes seemed.

"Now you'd better let me talk to Pongo," said Wally, when they had reached the kennels.

He was allowed to talk. Reggie sniffed. The rest stood by keenly interested.

"Where's old Towser, Pongo?" asked Wally. Pongo shook his stumpy tail, and looked up in his master's face.

Then he strained at his chain.

"There! He wants to go and find him!" said Wally triumphantly.

"He always wants to go for a run," said Reggie.

"I should take Pongo. But I shouldn't take the other pup," said Jameson.

"What other pup?" demanded Reggie hotly. "His name's Manners, but his nature's no

manners," answered the New House fag, grinning.

Wally undid Pongo's chain, and fastened a lead to his collar.

"Don't waste your time with that silly young fathead, Jamface!" he said. "Come along, you chaps!"

Pongo had begun to sniff. Perhaps some faint aroma of the magic drops still lingered near the empty kennel of Towser.

"There you are! He's on the giddy track already!" cried Wally.

"I'll believe that when he finds Towser!" growled Reggie.

But nobody cared what Reggie believed, and when Pongo started for the gates Reggie went with the rest.

Pongo's making for the gates did not really indicate special intelligence on his part. Most dogs know enough to find their way out when they see a chance of a run. But Wally was very sure that Pongo was on the track, and most of the seven shared his belief.

It was to the road leading over Wayland Moor that Pongo turned. This, again, was the most natural thing in the world for him to do. Pongo loved the open moor, with its rabbit-burrows and its wide spaces.

The lead was taken off when they reached the moor. But it had to be put on again. For Pongo seemed to forget that he was tracking Towser—Reggie said that he didn't know—and took altogether too much interest in the subject of rabbits.

With the lead to keep him from straying, he trotted along the road, sniffing now and then.

"Wish he could talk!" said Wally. "He can do almost anything else."

Reggie sniffed much more audibly than Pongo.

"See here, young Manners, if you've got a cold in the head you'd better go back!" snorted Wally.

"Use your handkerchief!" said Hobbs severely.

"If we're not to be late for dinner we'd better all go back!" retorted Reggie. "I'll use my hanky when necessary, thanks, Hobbs. You needn't be afraid I shall want to borrow yours. I like them clean!"

Wally glanced at his watch.

"We shall have to cut back," he said. "Young Manners has shown some sense for once. Who says miracles never happen? But we'll come along here again this afternoon—lucky it's a halfer!"

"Speak for yourself!" said Reggie. "And there's a match with the Second, you know."

"We can put those kids off," answered Wally. "And I'll speak for you, too, young Manners. You won't come if you want to!"

"I jolly well don't want to!" howled Reggie.

But he went, after all. By the time dinner was over both he and Wally had forgotten their little breeze.

They started as soon as the meal was finished. The magnate who skipped the Second had been unceremoniously informed that the match must be played another day.

Now, there was not the remotest chance that Towser would be tracked by Pongo. Pongo's mind was not upon Towser, and even had it been so the fact that Herries' dog had been taken away in a cart and by another road would have made tracking impossible. Yet, in a roundabout way, Pongo was to lead to the retrieval of Towser.

The small dog led them to Wayland, and they were quite satisfied to go thither. Having reached the market-town, Pongo did not seem inclined to go farther, and Wally announced that he had lost the scent.

"Then we'd better go and have some tea," said Reggie.

It was early for tea; but that did not matter to the seven. They had always appetites, but not, always the wherewithal to satisfy them.

"Anybody got any oaf?" inquired Wally, in a tone that made it plain he expected an answer in the negative from everybody.

"P'raps there's some use in young Manners now," said Reggie importantly. "He happens to have had a postal-order this morning!"

"You're a brick, Reggie!" said Wally.

"Oh, you'd do the same if you had any tin, I know that!" replied Reggie. And he led the way into the teashop.

It was while they were at the meal that a bill on the wall attracted Wally's attention.

"Look!" he cried. "There's going to be a dog-show here! I shall enter Pongo!"

Reggie sniffed again. But no one remarked upon it this time. Reggie had purchased the right to sniff as much as he chose.

"What class?" asked Jameson doubtfully. "First, of course!" said Frank Levison, smiling and patting Pongo.



"Towser! Dear old boy! We've found you, then!" cried Wally. "I say, you fellows, won't old Herries be glad?"
For there was Towser curled up in the straw, looking very disconsolate. (See page 12.)

"Boarhound?" suggested Reggie. Wally looked at him hard. There were limits even for the host.

"Terriers," he said, stifling his wrath.

"Is Pongo a terrier?" asked Reggie innocently.

Hobbs kicked him under the table. A cloud was gathering upon Wally's brow.

Reggie dried up then. He liked the importance of playing host, and did not want to spoil it all by quarrelling with Wally.

D'Arcy minor meant it. On the way home he talked much more of the dog-show a week hence than of the lost Towser.

"I shall have to sub on Gus for the entrance-fee," he said.

"I'll lend it to you!" volunteered Reggie.

"Oh, I say, you really are a brick, kid!"

"I like Pongo all right, you know," Reggie confessed. "All the same, I don't believe he's a giddy bloodhound. I don't know what he is; but he's not that."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Towser Found.

THE entrance-fee was duly despatched to the secretary of the show, and Wally got a receipt and two complimentary-tickets, one of which he promptly handed over to Reggie, apologising afterwards to Frank Levison.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Frank. "Ernie says he'll stand me the price of a ticket. I say, have you noticed that Ernie's been a bit queer these last few days? Just as if he had something on his mind, you know."

"You don't think he had anything to do with old Towser's—"

Wally stopped short at the look on Frank's face.

"I'm sorry, Franky!" he said contritely. "I do say things without thinking first. I know jolly well your major wouldn't!"

Frank was appeased, though any reflection upon his brother always hurt him.

"Seems to me he's watching Baggy and Mellish," he said. "And somehow I fancy

that it really has something to do with Towser."

Pongo, though he got plenty of grooming, as a rule, had never had so much before in all his life as during that week. All hands went upon him in-turn; though Wally and Frank did most, since he was more amenable to their ministrations.

Pongo's breed might be doubtful, but when the day of the show arrived there could be no possible doubt about Pongo's condition. He was glossy and sleek; his coat had been combed and brushed till each individual hair seemed to have had attention.

Wally exhibited him proudly to Tom Merry & Co., the chums of No. 6, and other friends in the Shell and Fourth. Herries turned sadly away. If things had gone more happily, Towser would have been shown, and would have had a far better chance of a prize than Pongo. For Towser was a genuine bull-dog, whereas the best that could be said for Pongo was that he was a genuine dog, mostly miscellaneous.

Frank Levison was quite right in believing that his major's mind was busy with a problem. Ernest Levison had taken up keenly the quest of the guilty party in re Towser.

And by this time he had come to have very definite suspicions. He had several times seen Baggy and Mellish with their heads close together, and he had also noticed that Mellish was visiting Racke's study pretty often.

Levison would have been intensely disappointed had he got to the bottom of the problem and found Racke innocent. But he felt sure that he was not going to suffer that disappointment. For neither Trimble nor Mellish had dared to touch Towser; of that he was confident. The parts they had played were subordinate ones, it was certain.

By the day of the show Levison was fairly on the track. He knew, as surely as he knew his own name, that Mellish was blackmailing Racke, and that Baggy was standing in with Mellish. But he had no evidence.

In fact, the two bad eggs of the Fourth

were playing their dirty game for all it was worth. At the outset Mellish, who was a mean-minded young rascal, had been content to accept small sums from Racke, who admitted nothing, but paid up.

Baggy had larger notions in the blackmailing way than his partner, and it was at the instigation of Baggy that Mellish's demands gradually grew bigger, till Racke's patience came near to being worn out; and Crooke jeered at his pal, and asked him whether he had foreseen what he was letting himself in for.

"I want a hamper, Tom Merry," said Wally in Study No. 10. "A good big one, you know. Pongo must have room to move about a bit. Taggles is going over to Wayland, but he won't take Pongo without a hamper for him."

"I've got just the thing!" Tom answered. "Come along to the box-room, my son!"

But though there were several hampers in the box-room Tom's was not among them.

"Somebody's bagged it, I suppose," he said. "Never mind, Wally. Here's one of Cardew's that ought to do."

"I'll tell Cardew, I'm taking it," Wally replied. "Tisn't as if he was in my Form, Tommy."

He went off with the hamper to No. 9, and a few minutes later Ernest Levison turned up in the study of the Terrible Three to ask questions about that hamper. For Levison had heard the word "hamper" mentioned between Trimble and Mellish, and Levison was very keen.

None of the Shell or Fourth meant to go to the dog-show. There was a junior match on that afternoon, but Levison surprised Tom by saying that he would like to give up his place in the team to Clive. He was allowed to do so without explanations, and he might have found it difficult to explain, for he really did not know what he expected to find out that half-holiday.

Yet he persuaded Cardew to stay within gates with him, and after the rest had cleared out of the School House he and Cardew

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dew talked seriously in No. 9. It was not often that Ralph Reckness Cardew could be induced to be serious, but he was so then.

The seven fags cycled off to Wayland in high spirits. Somehow or other all of them had managed to raise the price of a ticket.

"I say, doesn't he look fine!" said Wally, as they stood crowded together, before the pen in which Pongo, with his legs wide apart, stood and yapped his welcome to them. "I sha'n't be satisfied with anything less than a first for him!"

"He'd have had a better chance in the Great Dane class!" scoffed Reggie.

"He isn't a Great Dane, you howling young ass!" snorted Wally.

"No! Really?" returned Reggie sweetly. But even Reggie hoped that Pongo would get a prize.

Now the judge of the terrier class came round. He stood for quite a minute looking hard at Pongo, and Wally's hopes ran high.

"Does he belong to one of you?" asked the judge, turning round to them.

"This chap!" said Joe Frayne, indicating Wally.

"Ah! What do you call him?" asked the judge.

"Pongo, sir!"

A smile rippled the bearded face. "That wasn't exactly my meaning, though I'm sure it's a very good name for the little chap," said the judge. "What breed is he?"

"I thought perhaps you'd know best about that, sir," replied Pongo's owner.

Another smile answered that. But there was nothing derisive in the judge's amusement. He loved all dogs, and had mongrels of his own. The miscellaneous dog is often a far better companion than the pedigree specimen.

"I have seldom, if ever, seen a dog in better condition," he said. "You deserve a lot of credit for the care you take of him, my boy. I shall give him a 'Highly commended.'"

It was straining a point, but it was kindly, and no one was wronged.

Wally, revising his notions as to the unsatisfactoriness of anything short of first prize, was delighted, and even Reggie was pleased.

"Sha'n't chip you about Pongo again, young D'Arcy," declared Reggie. "That chap knows something about dogs, and he thinks Pongo all right—ho. Good enough for me." "Let's go and look at some of the other bow-wows," said Wally.

They spent ten minutes or so with the collies and Old English sheep-dogs, fuzzy and blunt-headed and bob-tailed, and then they found themselves among the bull-dogs.

And there was Towser!

When they caught sight of him he lay curled up in the straw, looking very disconsolate, though a ticket upon his pen told that he had taken third prize in his class. If Towser knew of that—and Herries would have scoffed at the notion that he did not know—he found no comfort in it. He was pining for his master.

But at the sound of Wally's voice a wonderful change came upon him.

"Towser! Dear old boy! We've found you, then!" cried Wally. "I say, you fellows, won't old Herries be glad?"

They all agreed that Herries would be glad, and they all felt glad, too. What a bit of luck it was that Pongo should have been entered!

"Admiring my dog?" asked a voice behind them, and they turned to see a stout, clean-shaven gentleman who certainly did not look like a dog-thief.

But there was not one of the seven who was not ready to suspect him—not one of them but felt it as his own individual business that this stranger should be made to understand that Towser was not his property, but that of a friend of theirs, and really much more theirs than his.

"Is he your dog?" demanded Wally, with emphasis on his first word.

Wally's usual manner to strangers was beyond reproach, though it might lack the extreme polish of Gussy's.

But this was an exceptional case, and the circumstances made the Third-Former's manner distinctly hostile.

A red flush swept over the kindly, clean-shaven face, and its owner said stiffly:

"That question, in that tone, hardly calls for an answer, I think. If you will look at the card above him you will see that he is my dog!"

"But we know he's not!" said Hobbs.

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The stout gentleman looked angrier still—almost too angry to find words.

"You didn't happen to get him from a fellow named Racke, did you, sir?" asked Reggie.

"Never heard the name!" snapped Mr. Edwards. That was the stout gentleman's cognomen, it appeared.

"But you see he knows us, sir," put in Frank.

Mr. Edwards looked down at Frank, and his face softened a trifle.

Levison minor had a way of disarming hostility.

"He certainly seems to know you," said Mr. Edwards. "But that proves nothing. I bought him from a man in whom I have faith."

"Lately?" asked Wally. "I must decline to answer any more questions, my boys!"

And Mr. Edwards stalked away. But his mind was busy, and his wrath was subsiding.

The seven stood and stared at one another.

Then Wally spoke. "I'm going to let him out!" he said.

"My hat!" exclaimed Reggie, aghast at the boldness of that plan.

"Best way," curly Gibson said. "He'll go straight home to Herries."

But curly spoke nervously. Jameson was more decided.

"I'll take the risk with you, Wally," he said. "After all, perhaps Edwards won't know who did it."

"But he will!" returned Wally. "I shall find him and tell him! And—and if he kicks up a fuss he can have Pongo—there! Anyway, Pongo's been highly commended, and there isn't much difference between that and a third prize."

All the six stood almost dumbfounded. That Wally should be willing to let Pongo go for the sake of Herries! Wally always pretended that he thought very small beer of his major and his major's chums; but at heart he was fond of them all.

"Let's do it now!" said Frank. "We'll all go to Edwards. I don't believe he'll take Pongo; but if we have to go to prison for it we ought all to be in it."

"I'd rather go to gaol than lose Pongo," Wally said, brightening up. "Here goes!"

Next moment Towser was free. He stretched himself, and then waddled off straight for the entrance.

"He's off to St. Jim's!" said Wally. "And we must go and find that chap Edwards. I don't believe gaol's so bad as some people make out, and I dare say they'll let us stick together!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Decency of Mr. Edwards.

"I'LL let on! I tell you, Racke, I'll split if you touch me!"

The voice of Baggy Trimble came to the ears of Levison major and Cardew as they neared the corner of the School House, and it did not need Levison's hand on Cardew's arm to hold him back.

"Sherlock on the scent!" whispered Cardew. "I felt sure you'd bring it off, by gad, old gun!"

"Shut up!" hissed Racke furiously. "Mellish, you worm, why did you let this fat brute into—"

"He saw the hamper," whined Mellish. "I couldn't help that, could I?"

"I'll pay Merry for the hamper," said Racke. "I didn't know it was his when you brought it to me, Mellish. You can prove that, an' you've dashed well got to! As for this bloated—"

"Tain't the hamper!" howled Baggy. "That don't matter. Any chap might take a hamper, though I don't care about empty ones myself. Are you going to pay Herries for his dog? That's the question. You know you can't—no money could do it! And if you don't lemme be and shell out another quid I'll—"

"Shut up, you fat worm! Here are the fellows comin' from footer!"

Racke was in a deadly funk. He had not known until the moment before that Baggy was in the secret; but he had realised at once the danger the fact meant for him. Mellish was bad enough; but Baggy was like the daughter of the horse-leech, crying, "Give! Give!"

"This is your cue, Ernest!" said Cardew coolly.

And he and Levison stepped out together just as Tom Merry, Blake, Talbot, Gussy, Herries, and a score more came across the quad.

"We've discovered the villain, Herries!" shouted Levison.

Herries thrust Arthur Augustus roughly aside, and came up at a run.

"What!" he cried. "You mean—"

"There he stands!" said Levison, pointing dramatically at Racke.

Racke's knees were weak as water under him, and his face was livid. No one looking at him then would have doubted his guilt.

Herries caught him by the collar, and swung him fairly off his feet.

"Steady, Herries!" said Talbot warningly.

For the burly Fourth-Former was in such a rage as none there had ever known him to be in before.

"Leave me alone, Talbot!" he roared. "Leave me alone, all of you! I'll break this cad's back! I'll—"

"Can't be did, Herries!" said Blake.

"Deal with him when you're cooler," Tom Merry said. "I don't doubt Levison; he wouldn't have said that if he hadn't been sure. But there's a limit, you know!"

"Look!" cried Lowther, pointing towards the gates.

All turned to look, Herries still gripping Racke.

Down the quad Towser came lolling, his grim old face contorted with joy.

Then Herries dropped Racke to the ground, and rushed to meet Towser.

He fell on his knees. He flung his arms around the dog's neck, and put his face to the face of the grim old fellow. And Towser whined and licked them, quivered with joy, wagged his rear half frantically, and at last gave vent to a long, high-pitched yelp that was utterly unlike his usual singing voice.

More than one fellow felt a lump in his throat. Herries had always been like a child about Towser; but no one felt inclined to jeer at him now. Even Baggy sniffed as though his emotions were touched.

Herries rose.

"I won't handle Racke now," he said huskily. "I've got Towser back. But I warn that cad that I'll kill him—I swear I'll kill him—if he tries his games on a third time! This is the second; he tried to poison Towser once, you know."

Racke got up and slunk indoors. A storm of hissing broke out as he went, and Baggy and Mellish hissed with the rest.

But it was tolerably safe to say that Baggy and Mellish would not save their skins quite as easily as that. There would be retribution for those two as well as for Racke.

"Where on earth has he come from?" asked Manners.

"He looks all right, anyway," said Herries. "Whoever has had him has treated the old boy decently. Come along, Towser!"

"Weally, Hewwies, you do not mean to take that—to take Towser, I should wathah say—to the study, do you? Wemembah what Waitton said!"

Herries glared at Arthur Augustus.

"I don't care about Railton or anyone else living!" he said. "Old Towser's got to be welcomed home!"

"It is rather a special occasion, you know, Gustavus," said Digby.

Blake agreed, and Gussy graciously withdrew his objection.

Towser was being regaled with delicacies before the fire in Study No. 6 when Wally D'Arcy rushed in, splashed with mud.

"We've been trying to keep up with a motor-car!" he said. "But Mr. Edwards got here a hundred yards ahead of us!"

"Who's Mr. Edwards?" growled Herries.

"Chap who had Towser. Showed him at Wayland—third prize—"

"Third!" grunted Herries.

"No end decent chap—we let old Towser out, but he wouldn't send us to gaol, or anything," went on Wally, breathlessly and rather unintelligibly. "Wouldn't take Pongo instead—"

"I should jolly well think not!" snorted Herries.

"Will you come down and see him? And bring old Towser," said Wally. "Oh, it's all serene! He understands, and he says he wouldn't think of making a fuss. Towser came straight home, and Mr. Edwards says that settles it for him."

"Come along, Towser! Come along, you fellows!" growled Herries.

He spoke to Towser first. Towser came first—for the moment, anyway.

Towser evidently regarded Mr. Edwards as a friendly person. He fawned upon him as though he were trying to apologise for preferring Herries. But then he turned to his master, and looked up into his face with all a dog's wonderful wealth of affection in his little red-rimmed eyes.

Mr. Edwards held out his hand. "This is where Towser belongs, no doubt about that," he said genially. "I give you my word I didn't steal him, though our young friends here were inclined to suspect me of the crime at first."

"Not really—really, sir!" said Frank. Herries did not know what to say; but the grip of his hand had a certain rough eloquence of its own.

"I shall make inquiries," said Mr. Edwards. "The man who sold him to me is a fellow I have always trusted; but I'm not sure that my trust was justified. If I can find the thief he shall smart for this!"

They did not tell him about Racke. That story was not to the credit of St. Jim's.

"How much did you give for him, sir?" asked Herries. "Of course—"

"Not at all 'of course'! I refuse to talk about that!"

"Will you come and have some tea in our study, sir?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, please do, sir!" pleaded Arthur Augustus.

"Thank you, I will!" replied Mr. Edwards. "D'Arcy, tell my man he must wait half an hour or so, will you, please?" he added to Wally.

"And then come along to tea, Wally," said Herries. "All you kids, I mean. There's plenty!"

They went, naturally, and, in spite of rules and regulations, Towser went, too.

"I like him, and I think he likes me," said Mr. Edwards, rather wistfully. "But he did not settle down. His heart was here."

Herries caressed the great blunt head, and no one answered that.

They voted Mr. Edwards, when he had gone, the brickiest of all bricks.

A week or two later they learned that Bristles had been caught out. Mr. Edwards had set the police on his track, and the temptation to walk off with a pedigree Pom had undone him.

But before that Racke and Mellish and Trimble had all got their deserts—or part of their deserts.

Racke sullenly refused to stand up to Herries, and had to take a licking with an ashplant instead. It was not to be expected that either of the others should show fight. But Mellish howled for four, and Baggy for forty!

THE END.

(There will be another long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's in next Friday's PENNY POPULAR.)



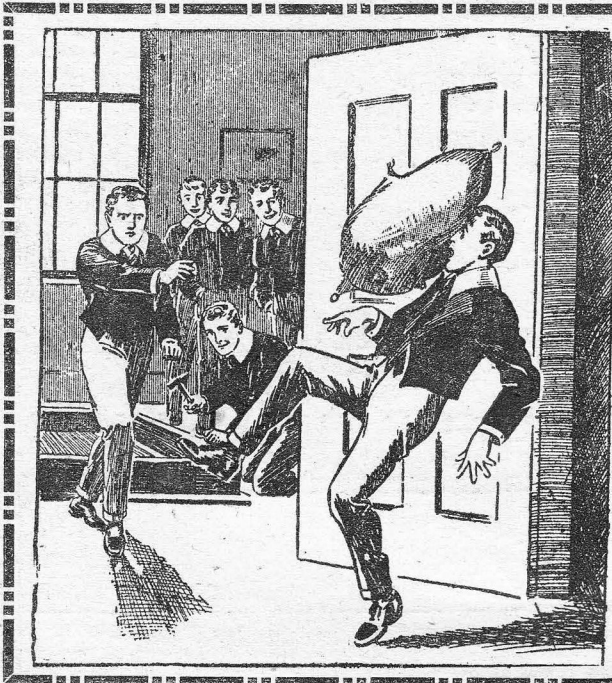
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UP AGAINST THE NUTS!

A Splendid Long Complete
- - - Story of - - -
**JIMMY SILVER & Co., the
Chums of Rookwood.**

By **OWEN CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Simply Awful!

“COMIN’ to the meetin’?”
Townsend of the Fourth put his head into the end study to ask that question.

It was not often that Townsend, the slacker and dandy of the Fourth, visited the end study. Jimmy Silver & Co., to whom that celebrated apartment belonged, had no use for slackers.

But Townsend was in a state of great excitement now. Evidently something unusual was “on.”

Jimmy Silver looked up from the lines he was doing for Mr. Bootles. Lovell looked round from the grate, where he was baking chestnuts. Raby and Newcome were playing chess, and they did not condescend to look up at all.

“Meeting?” repeated Jimmy Silver.
“Yes, meetin’ of the Form.”

Jimmy Silver gave Townsend a freezing glare.

“Meeting of the Form, you cheeky ass! Who’s captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood?” he demanded. “Who’s had the blessed cheek to call a meeting of the Form without consulting me?”

“Let him die the death!” grinned Lovell.
“Oh, rats!” said Townsend.

Jimmy Silver laid down his pen, rose to his feet, and pushed back his cuffs.

“Did you say ‘Rats!’ to me, Townsend?” he asked politely.

“Look here—
“Which side of your face would you prefer your nose to be shifted to?” asked Jimmy Silver, still with great politeness.

Townsend backed through the doorway. Townsend had a cultivated taste in neckties, and a skilled eye to the fit of a waistcoat, but he was not a fighting-man.

“Oh, don’t be an ass!” he said. “I haven’t come here to row with you. Smythe advised us to hold a Form meetin’.”

“Tell Smythe to go and eat coke!”

“He said he wouldn’t stand it if the new cad was comin’ into the Shell,” said Townsend, “so I don’t see why we should stand it in the Fourth. Look here. You ought to come to the meetin’ as Form-captain!”

“It won’t be a meeting unless I come,” said Jimmy Silver loftily. “Merely a crowd of fags; not a meeting!”

“Well, come, then.”

“I don’t approve of Form meetings being called in this unprecedented way,” said Jimmy Silver coldly. “Go and eat coke!”

“But it’s an important matter!” howled Townsend.

“What’s the row about?” asked Lovell.
“Haven’t you heard the news?”

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“What news?”

“Then you haven’t heard,” said Townsend. “I can tell you, it’s sickenin’! I don’t know what Rookwood’s comin’ to, don’t you know! Topham says he’s thinkin’ of askin’ his people to take him away!”

“I didn’t know Topham was a public benefactor like that,” said Jimmy Silver. “Tell him I wish him luck!”

“Oh, don’t be an ass!” said Townsend. “This ain’t a time for bein’ funny! Look here. You fellows ought to come and back us up. We’ll back you up if you like. It’s a question whether Rookwood’s goin’ to be disgraced or not!”

“My hat! What on earth’s the matter?”

“There’s a new fellow coming—”

“Well, that has happened before, hasn’t it? Sometimes it’s a jolly good thing for a school. I was a new fellow once, you know!”

“I tell you I don’t want any of your funny jaw!” howled Townsend. “This new fellow is the limit—past the limit!”

“Not a German?”

“No; worse, if possible!”

“My word! He must be a corker, then!” said Raby, looking up from the chess at last. “Do you know him, Towsny?”

“Know him!” Townsend looked horror-stricken at the suggestion. “Know him! Do you think I’d know such a blackguard? The question’s insultin’!”

“How do you know he’s such an outsider if you don’t know him?” asked Jimmy Silver.

“Oh, I know all about him!” said Townsend. “We’ve heard it from Bootles. I fancy Bootles guessed there might be trouble. He said the new kid would be in my study, as there’s only two of us there—Topsy and me. In my study, you know! The awful beast! I know I’ll smash him—at least, I won’t share a study with him! It’s sickenin’—revoltin’, in fact!”

Townsend was evidently in a state of great wrath; he almost forgot to drop his “g’s.”

“Hard lines if he’s put into your study with you and Topham!” said Newcome.

“Yes, ain’t it?”

“I mean for him!”

“Oh, don’t be a silly idiot, Newcome! I tell you fellows we’re not standin’ it, and we’re holdin’ a Form meetin’ on the subject!”

“But you haven’t told us yet what’s the matter with the new kid!” exclaimed Jimmy Silver. “If he isn’t a Prussian or a convict, what has he done?”

“He’s shoved himself here on a Founders’ Scholarship!”

“Well, there are several chaps here on Founders’ Scholarships,” said Jimmy Silver. “They’re all right, aren’t they? Has it put your aristocratic back up because the kid won’t be paying fees?”

“That’s not it—that don’t matter. The Founders’ Scholarships are all right, so long

as they’re handed out to decent chaps—sons of retired Army men and Naval officers, and that sort. But this chap is a scrubby scoundrel!”

“Oh, dear!”

“A filthy outsider! I’ll tell you what I’ve heard about him,” said Townsend, his voice thrilling with indignation. “His father works for his living!”

Jimmy Silver staggered against the table, apparently overcome with horror.

“Good heavens!” he gasped.

“Look here—”

“You don’t really say so!”

“I do, I tell you!”

“Help!” moaned Jimmy faintly. “Anybody got any smelling-salts? Pat me on the back, Lovell, there’s a good chap! I feel faint! A—a—a chap whose father works for his living is coming to Rookwood! Alas! Alas, alackaday!”

“You silly ass!” roared Townsend. “There’s nothing to be funny about! I tell you this chap’s father is a carpenter!”

“Awful!” agreed Jimmy Silver. “Couldn’t he be induced to give up carpentering, and take to loafing about? Then it would be all right.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Or he might take to burgling, or highway robbery, or go on the Stock Exchange,” said Jimmy Silver. “I dare say it’s never been pointed out to him what an awful thing it is to do honest work!”

Townsend snorted.

“If that means that you are going to back up the cad, you’ll be booked for a high old time. I can tell you that, Jimmy Silver!” he shouted. “I can tell you that we’re all down on the rotter! We’re holdin’ a Form meetin’ to decide what’s goin’ to be done. We’re not standin’ it!”

Jimmy Silver sat down, and resumed writing his lines.

“Are you comin’ to the meetin’, or are you not comin’ to the meetin’?” demanded the dandy of the Fourth.

“Not!”

“Well, we can hold the meetin’ without you, and we’re goin’ to arrange to give that cad a reception when he comes!” said Townsend. “We’ll make Rookwood too hot to hold him, I can tell you that! The scrubby beast, shovin’ himself in among gentlemen!”

“Didn’t you say he was going into your study?”

“Yes.”

“Then he certainly won’t be among gentlemen. Nothing to be alarmed about, dear boy!”

Townsend did not reply. He retired from the study, and slammed the door with a terrific slam. It was evident that he was not to expect any support from the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver calmly went on writing his lines.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver Has a Few Words to Say!

"HAT job's done!" Jimmy Silver laid down his pen with a sigh of relief. Fifty lines of P. Vergilius Maro had been duly transcribed for the benefit of Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

"If you duffers have done chess, we'll have tea," remarked Lovell.

"I've been thinking," said Jimmy Silver. "It's like those fags' cheek to hold a Form meeting without our special orders! Perhaps we may as well drop in, after all."

"Oh, blow their silly meeting!" said Raby. "I'm hungry. We'll finish this game presently, Newcome!"

"Then there's the new chap," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

"Bother the new chap! We don't know him!"

"We shall know him when he comes, I suppose. He's going to be a Classical, or he wouldn't be put in Towny's study."

"Might as well have put him on the Modern side if he's the kind of rotter Towny seems to think."

"But perhaps he isn't."

"Perhaps. Let's have tea."

"Let's give the meeting a look-in first," said Jimmy Silver. "I've got a few words to say to those cheerful idiots."

Lovell looked a little alarmed.

Jimmy Silver's peculiarities were well-known to his chums. He was the champion of most causes, so to speak. When a fellow was down, Jimmy would make it his business to back him up, regardless of consequences. This trait in Jimmy's character had often brought the end study into hot water.

He was, as Lovell had declared in an aggrieved way, always doing it. There was the time when Dick Oswald had been cut by the Form; Jimmy had backed him up through thick and thin, and dragged his chums into no end of rows. True, Oswald had turned out one of the best, and Jimmy had been fully justified, as everybody was willing to admit.

But Jimmy wasn't always justified. He had once played the same trick, as Lovell called it, when a German junior came to Rookwood. The German had turned out so utter an outsider that even Jimmy had had to confess that he was wrong. And he had landed the Fistical Four into whole oceans of trouble.

It was all very well of Jimmy to be the champion of the oppressed, so to speak, but Lovell's idea was that there ought to be a limit.

"Look here, Jimmy," he began, "I can see what you mean in your eye. You've got to draw it mild."

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

"You don't even know the chap. And he may be all that Towny says!" exclaimed Lovell warmly. "If he's a rank outsider you're not going to pal with him."

"Well, I don't generally pal with rank outsiders—unless you're alluding to this study," said Jimmy blandly.

"Oh, don't be an ass! I've got nothing against the new kid, but we're not going to get into a lot of fresh rows about him. Let him rip."

"My dear chap, he may turn out a very valuable acquaintance," said Jimmy seriously. "If his father's a carpenter he may be able to show us how to mend the leg of that table. We've all tried our hand at it, and it gets worse every time."

"Look here, Jimmy—"

"Let's go to the merry meeting," urged Jimmy. "I want to see Towny and Topy in a state of bubbling indignation. It will be funny."

Jimmy Silver walked out of the study, and the Co. followed. They generally did follow when Jimmy Silver led.

The Fistical Four descended to the Common-room.

There was a buzz of voices in that apartment as the chums of the Fourth entered. Nearly all the Classical Fourth were there, as well as some of the Moderns. For once they were not rowing, however. Townsend was mounted on a chair, addressing the meeting in tones of thrilling indignation. The audience did not seem wholly to agree with Towny. Flynn's voice could be heard suggesting that the poor "baste" should be given a chance. Oswald was remarking that Towny was a silly ass. Jones minor was declaring that it was time for tea, and that he was fed up with Towny's rot.

But the majority seemed to agree with the

speaker. His remarks were punctuated with "Hear, hear!"

"I put it to the Form," said Townsend, "I appeal to every gentleman present. Is this horrid bounder Rawson, from the slums—perhaps from the workhouse—a fit person to come to Rookwood?"

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head ought never to have admitted his claim to the scholarship. The Founders' Scholarships weren't intended for his sort."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't want any rotten jaw from you, Jimmy Silver!"

"You're going to get it, and if you interrupt I'll buzz you off that chair before you can say 'Wait and see!'" said Jimmy cheerfully. "About those Founders' Scholarships. Have you read the rules?"

"Of course I haven't!"

"Well, I have. They were founded specially for poor scholars—chaps whose people couldn't afford to send them to expensive schools."

"Oh, I dare say that was so in the beginning!" sneered Townsend. "So were Oxford and Cambridge, if you come to that. But it's always been worked, so as to keep the outsiders outside."

"If it has, dear boy, it was precious near to swindling, and I hope it hasn't," said Jimmy. "Anyway, that's what the Founders' Scholarships were intended for, and in this case, this year's scholarship seems to have been put to its proper use. There's nothing to complain about."

"Rot! Gentlemen, I appeal to you, not to Jimmy Silver. Are we goin' to stand bawin' this rotten, rank outsider Rawson planted on us?"

"Never!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Fathead!"

The responses were very mixed.

"I propose," continued Townsend, "putting the low cad in his place as soon as he arrives to-morrow afternoon. It wouldn't be so rotten if he were goin' on the Modern side; there's lots of scrubby outsiders there already—"

"Hear, hear!"—from all the Classics, and loud hoots and yells from the few Moderns in the room.

"But the rotter isn't satisfied with that. He wants to come on the Classical side—the gentlemanly side. It's disgustin'! If we put up with this we may as well put up with anything! As for Jimmy Silver, he don't count. It's well-known that he's got an uncle who was a private in Kitchener's Army."

Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed. "Quite correct," he said. "I have. Anybody got any remarks to pass on my uncle being a private in Kitchener's Army?"

"For the love av Moses, Towny, shut yer silly head!" said Flynn, in deep disgust. "Where should we all be if it hadn't been for Kitchener's Army, ye sneakin' spalpeen?"

"Wharrer you at?" shouted Townsend, as Lovell strode up to him. "I'm jolly well going to mop you up!" said Lovell grimly. "I suppose you can't help being a snob and a silly ass; but you're not going to talk rot while I can stop your silly mouth!"

"Leggo! Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Townsend descended from the chair and landed on the floor with a terrific concussion. He roared, and the audience roared—with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do that again, Towny!"

"Back me up, you rotters!" howled Townsend, scrambling to his feet. "Kick those beasts out of the room!"

"We're ready to be kicked!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

But Towny's followers were not ready. The fellows who sympathised with Townsend were not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Townsend glared at Lovell, who was pushing back his cuffs, quite ready for a scrap to follow. But the dandy of the Fourth thought better of it.

"I'm not goin' to scrap with you, Lovell. I'm dealin' with the new rotter now."

"Safer, as he's not here!" snorted Lovell.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Dry up!"

"Gentlemen, I propose that when this scrubby worm gets here to-morrow we forthwith collar him and duck him in the fountain. After that we'll rag his books and rag all his things, and ink his clothes and so on; and in a short time he'll get fed up, and clear off. All we've got to do is to make him

understand that he can't stay at Rookwood, and he'll go."

"Jolly good wheeze!" said Topham. "I don't suppose the poverty-stricken cad will be able to afford new clothes, and if we ink his clobber—"

"Shame!"

"Hear, hear!"

Townsend was mounting on the chair again. Jimmy Silver strode forward and shoved him aside without ceremony and jumped on the chair.

"Gimme my place, you rotter!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth," said Jimmy Silver, unheeding, "you have listened to the remarks of the honourable member who has just spoken. Now you can listen to me. It's proposed to rag the new kid and muck up his things because he's very likely too poor to get new ones. That's a dirty trick!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

"I've got this to say. I don't know the new kid from Adam, and don't specially want to. But any chap who starts nagging him for nothing will find me on his track. As captain of the Form, I put my foot down!"

"Rats!"

"Bravo!"

"The first chap who touches this fellow Rawson will be asked into the gym to settle up with me!" said Jimmy Silver. "Fair play's a jewel. Give the chap fair play. If he's a rotter I'll be down on him as soon as anybody. If he's the right sort he's not going to be ragged. That's all!"

"The Great Chief has spoken!" grinned Oswald.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver jumped down from the chair, and the Fistical Four left the Common-room. It was past time for tea in the end study. They left the room in a buzz behind them.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The "Outsider" Arrives.

RAWSON arrived the next afternoon. Mr. Bootles took him into his study first, and only a few of the Classical juniors had a glimpse at him.

Jimmy Silver & Co., as it happened, were busy on the football-field, and for the time they had forgotten all about the expected new boy. Townsend and his friends had not forgotten, however. Townsend & Co. did not bother much about footer, and were not much interested in what was going on on Little Side.

"Did you see him?" asked Peele of the Fourth, joining Townsend and Topham in the passage, after Rawson had followed the Fourth Form master into his study.

"Yaas," said Townsend; "just a glimpse. A hulkin', shabby-lookin' brute!"

"Looked rather nervous," said Topham.

Peele chuckled.

"Perhaps he guesses what he's goin' to get," he remarked.

"Well, he's goin' to get it, whether he guesses it or not," said Townsend. "Call some of the fellows here ready for when he comes out. We may as well begin at once, while those Fistical beasts are out of the way."

"Good egg!" said Peele.

Six or seven Classics gathered near the Form-master's study. They waited eagerly for the new boy to come out. While Jimmy Silver was off the scene, a favourable opportunity presented itself for the aristocrats of Rookwood to tackle him, and show him how he was regarded by the said aristocrats. The decided bad manners they were going to be guilty of did not worry them in the least. Perhaps they considered that aristocrats had no need of good manners. Or, perhaps, their training in that respect had been neglected.

The study door opened at last, and Rawson came out. He was the average age of fellows in the Fourth Form, but somewhat big and muscular for his age—not tall, but well built and thick-set. Certainly he did not look so elegant as any member of the Nutty Co.; but there was little doubt that he could have knocked any one of them into a coked hat with one drive of his heavy right arm.

His face was not handsome—not nearly so handsome as Townsend's—but there was an open and frank expression upon it which Towny's decidedly lacked. His eyes, blue and clear, had a merry gleam in their depths, and his whole expression was good-natured. There was nothing to take offence at, in fact, excepting the fact that his clothes were evidently not so expensive as most Rookwood clothes. He was, as Topham remarked in an

undertone, as badly dressed as Jobson of the Fifth. But he was clean and neat from top to toe.

To the disappointment of the waiting tementors, Mr. Bootles came out with the new junior. The Form-master sighted the Nuts in the passage, and signed to them.

"Come here, Townsend. This is Rawson, the new boy, who will share your study. Rawson, this is Townsend. I hope you will be friends. Townsend, show Rawson to his study, and show him where to place his things."

If Townsend had dared to refuse a request of Mr. Bootles', he would have refused that one point-blank. He had been waiting to rag the new boy, and was called upon to show him about, and look after him! Townsend's blood boiled at the thought. But he did not venture to let his Form-master see it boiling. He answered meekly:

"You will go with Townsend, Rawson."

"Yes, sir," said Rawson, in a deeper voice than Townsend, and tones that were not so cultivated, and certainly not so flogging.

Mr. Bootles went back into his study, and shut the door.

There was a pause; and then Townsend, with suppressed rage, signed to the new boy to follow him. He had to obey the Form-master's order. It occurred to him, too, that his study would be a nice secluded spot for putting Rawson "through it," by way of a start.

Rawson followed him up the stairs, and Topham and the rest followed on behind.

"What boots!" Rawson heard a voice remark, as he went down the junior passage, and the remark was followed by a giggle.

The new junior flushed. He could not doubt that the remark was aimed at himself, and a look of surprise came over his face. He had expected polished and stately manners at Rookwood School, and had been feeling a little uneasy about his own in consequence. Perhaps he realised now that there was no ground for uneasiness on that score.

Townsend opened the door of the study, and stood aside with mock politeness for the new junior to enter. Flynn, who was in the passage, came up and looked at Rawson.

"Sure, he doesn't look such a baste, Towny," he said.

Rawson crimsoned.

"All serene, old sport," said Flynn reassuringly. "Don't get your wool off. Ye're welcome to the Fourth intoirly. I don't think ye're a baste!"

"Thank you," said Rawson. "I don't see why you should have expected me to be a beast."

"Faith, and I didn't," said Flynn. "It was really Towny. Towny's a howling aristocrat. That's what comes of being brought up in a big grocery-stores, you know."

"You rotter!" shrieked Townsend. "You know my people ain't grocers!"

"Sure, I'm always forgetting," said Flynn. "It's Topp's people who are grocers, and yours keep a public-house. Sorry!"

Flynn walked away, whistling, before the two Nuts could make any rejoinder. Both Townsend and Topham made a movement to pursue him, but refrained. Flynn was not nearly so haughty and exclusive as Towny and Topp; but he could have mopped up the passage with both of them at once, so they decided to treat him with silent contempt. It was much the best way, all things considered.

Rawson, feeling and looking very puzzled, went into the study. The two Nuts followed him in, and Peele and the rest crowded in the doorway. The fun was about to begin, the unfortunate Rawson being quite unaware of it.

"So this is my study?" said Rawson, in an agreeable tone.

"It's our study," said Topham.

"I mean, I'm going to share it with you."

"So Bootles says."

"It's a nice room," said Rawson.

"Glad you like it," said Townsend satirically. "I suppose it would seem a bit more home-like, wouldn't it, if there were a bench or two, and a saw or so hanging up?"

The Nuts of the Fourth chuckled delightedly. Townsend had a pretty wit. But Rawson smiled, too, good-naturedly.

"I see you've heard about me," he replied.

"Yaas. You're a carpenter, ain't you?" said Topham.

"My father's a carpenter. I've learned a good bit of it from him, through helping him," said Rawson. "If there's anything

that wants knocking together about the place, you can leave it to me."

"When there's any carpentry to be done, we send for a man and pay him," said Townsend, with a sniff.

"Well, that would be a waste now I'm here," said Rawson. "I could do anything that a jobbing carpenter could do."

The Nuts exchanged looks of utter disgust and loathing. The fellow was actually not ashamed of knowing how to do carpentry work, and showed no desire whatever to keep his father's trade in the background. If he had lied and shuffled about it, the Nuts could have understood it, and perhaps respected him a little more. But it did not seem to have occurred to the unfortunate Rawson to lie and shuffle. Doubtless he might learn better in time in Townsend's study.

"So your pater's a carpenter?" said Topham.

"My what?"

"Oh, my hat! He doesn't know what a pater is!" giggled Peele.

"Yes, I do!" said Rawson, in surprise. "Pater is Latin for father. I've studied Latin, of course, or I shouldn't be here. But I don't see why you should call my father my pater."

There was a general giggle. This sublime ignorance of school customs struck Townsend & Co. as really the limit.

"Well," said Topham loftily, "here we call a father a pater, and a mother a mater."

"Do you?" said Rawson. "It seems a queer idea, but I dare say I shall fall into it. One of your school customs, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Topham contemptuously; "one of our school customs."

"I suppose you've got hammers and nails and things in your box?" grinned Peele, taking up a new line of attack.

Rawson nodded.

"Yes; I thought they might be useful, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose it's not against the rules, is it?"

"Ha, ha! Only against the rules of good taste," said Townsend. "But, of course, you wouldn't know anything about that."

"I don't see what good taste has to do with it," said Rawson, colouring. "Look here, are you fellows getting at me?"

"What a beautiful expression!" murmured Topham.

"If you are, you may as well chuck it," said Rawson. "I don't like it. I thought every chap at a big school like this had good manners!"

Townsend & Co. looked a little taken aback. They were quite satisfied with their manners. Just at this moment an eyeglass gleamed into the study, with the vacant face of Smythe of the Shell behind it.

"Got it here?" drawled Smythe. "I've heard that it's come. Do let me have a look at it, dear boys!"

"Yaas, we've got it here. Trot in, Smythe!"

Adolphus trotted in, and turned his eyeglass upon Rawson.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Adolphus Goes Too Far.

"BY gad!" said Adolphus.

Rawson looked puzzled.

The extreme elegance and expensiveness of Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, impressed him a little. He was not used to seeing such elegant and expensive persons at close quarters. Smythe's stare could not be called civil, but the stranger was not eager to quarrel.

He wondered whether this kind of thing was part and parcel of the manners and customs of the upper classes. He had not come to Rookwood to quarrel with the manners and customs established there. At all events, he was not in a hurry to take offence, though there was a look about his simple and honest face which indicated that if he did take offence his anger would be a serious matter.

Adolphus Smythe walked round Rawson, inspecting him through his eyeglass as if he had been some curious animal. This performance was watched with growing delight by the Nuts of the Fourth. Rawson watched it with growing astonishment.

"By gad!" commented Smythe. "So this is it?"

"That's it, Smythe!" chorused the Nuts. "It's been washed," said Adolphus—

"washed for the first time in its life, perhaps. But they washed it before they sent

it here. Dawson—your name's Dawson, isn't it?"

"Rawson."

"Oh, Rawson! Delightful name—so poetical!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Rawson, I suppose you know that, as a new boy, you are called to give an account of yourself?"

"I didn't know it," said Rawson; "but I don't mind. I suppose this is some of your fun?"

"Exactly," smiled Adolphus—"some of our fun. It is a funny occasion—never occurred before in the history of Rookwood. You don't mind answerin' a few questions?"

"Not a bit."

"You see, gentlemen, it can speak, and answers quite reasonably and in passably good English," said Smythe. "The accent, perhaps, smacks of Seven Dials, but no matter. One must not be too particular. Now, Dawson—"

"Rawson."

"Yaas, I should say Rawson. My mistake. Now, Rawson, how old are you?"

"Nearly fifteen."

"Did you come straight here from the workhouse?"

"The workhouse!" repeated Rawson.

"Yaas."

"There's some mistake," said the new boy. "I've never been in the workhouse."

"Dear me!" said Smythe, in surprise. "Then appearances are very, very deceptive!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come," said Rawson, "don't pile it on!"

"If you have never been in the workhouse, Rawson, I must take it that your father is a good plumber, and has always been in regular employment?" said Smythe gravely.

"He isn't a plumber," said Rawson; "he's a carpenter. But he's generally been in good employment. My Uncle Joe is a plumber."

The Nuts burst into a yell of merriment. This simple admission almost doubled them up.

"Your—your Uncle Joe is a plumber!" gasped Smythe. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing funny in being a plumber, is there?" asked Rawson, puzzled.

He was finding these merry young gentlemen puzzling in many ways.

"Not at all," said Smythe, recovering his gravity. "May we inquire after your other aristocratic relations? Which one is a gasfitter?"

"None just now," said Rawson. "My brother Dick was a gasfitter, but he's in the Army now."

"Captain or colonel?" asked Smythe.

Rawson laughed.

"Private, of course," he said. "Middlesex Regiment. I've got a photograph of him in khaki."

"That had better be framed and hung up in the study," said Smythe. "A gasfitter in khaki would adorn any study!"

"Well, I was thinking of hanging it up," said Rawson. "Only—only—"

He looked round.

"Only what?" asked Smythe politely.

"Well, I've only got a very cheap frame," confessed Rawson, "and the pictures in this study look too good for my frame to be hung alongside them."

"You see, it is modest," said Smythe. "In these days of workin'-class swank, it is really refreshin' to come across a horny-handed son of toil who is modest. Now, which of your relations is a scavenger, Rawson?"

"None at all, as it happens."

"You wouldn't be ashamed of one if he happened to be a scavenger?"

"No. Why should I?"

"Echo answers, why?" said Smythe urbanely. "Now, we want to know all about your father. Has he given up drink in wartime?"

"He's a teetotaler."

"Quite a model plumber!" said Smythe.

"Carpenter," said Rawson.

"Yaas, I mean carpenter. Now, the next question is, how long has he been out?"

"Out of where?"

"Prison."

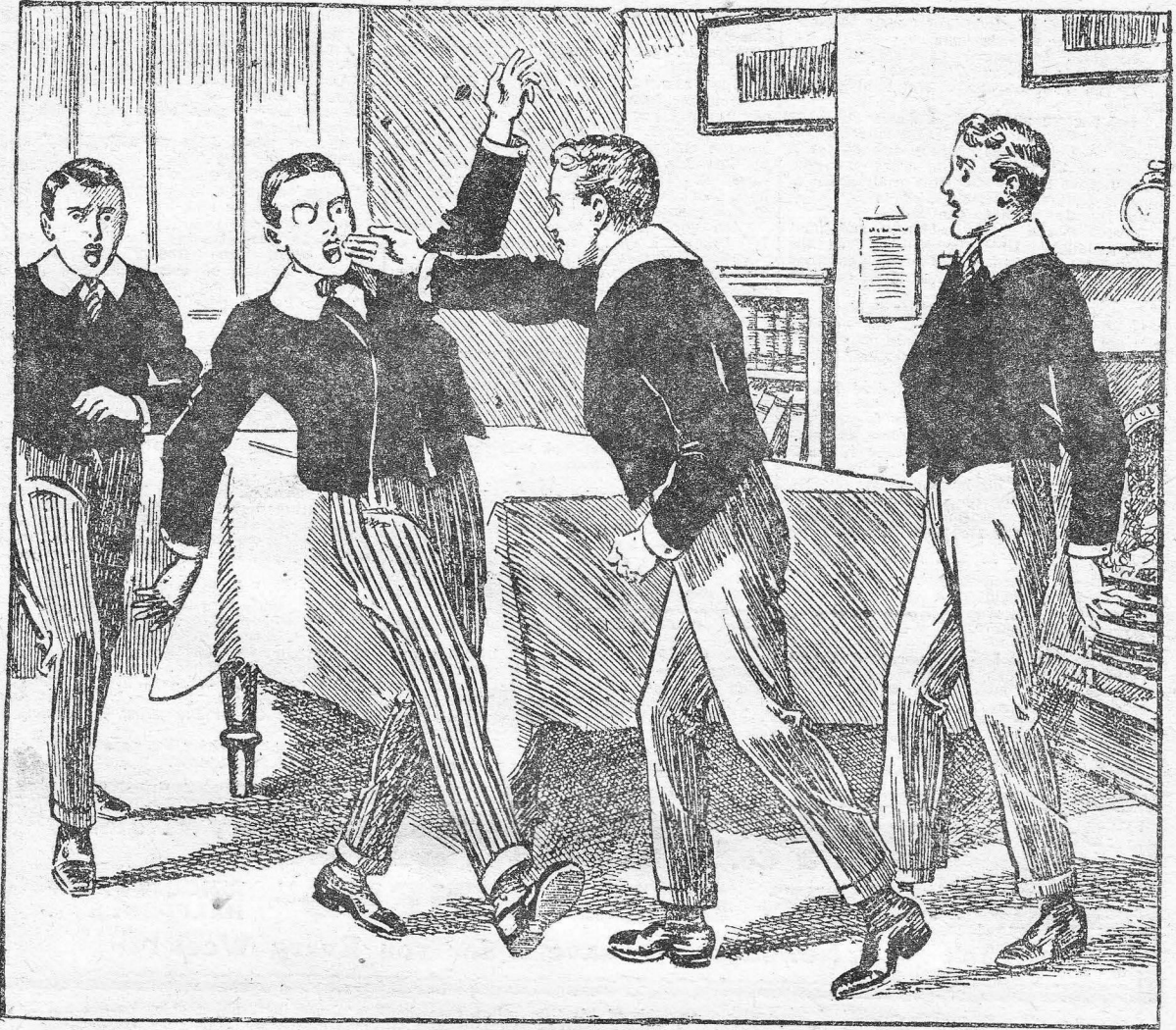
Rawson's eyes glistened.

"My father has never been in prison," he said quietly. "What do you mean?"

"Never been in prison!" exclaimed Smythe, in astonishment. "You don't say so!"

"I do say so."

"Well, well, there's somethin' very wrong with the way the police do their bizney, then," said Adolphus, shaking his head. "I'm



Smack! Rawson's open hand smote the lordly Adolphus Smythe across the cheek, and he staggered backwards with a sharp yell. "By—by gad!" he gasped. (See this page.)

sure he ought to have been in prison lots of times!"

"And why?" asked Rawson, still very quietly.

"Why? Because he's a no-class blackguard, the same as his hopeful son!" said Smythe, with a drawl. "That's why!"

Rawson did not speak for a moment. Up to this point he had been in doubt whether the elegant Adolphus was merely pulling his leg in fun. But there was no fun in Adolphus' brutal remark about his father.

The scholarship boy stepped towards the Shell fellow, with a look in his eyes that Adolphus did not quite like.

"You've no right to say things like that about my father," said Rawson.

"By gad!"

"It's a mean and rotten thing to say," continued Rawson. "If you meant it only in fun, I'm willing to look over it; but don't do it again, please!"

"Are you givin' me orders?" yawned Adolphus.

"Not exactly; but I mean what I say."

"Cheeky cad!" said Townsend.

"I don't think that's fair," said Rawson. "You wouldn't like him to speak like that about your father, would you?"

"My father's a bit different from yours, I hope!" said Townsend contemptuously. "Don't you speak of my father, you outsider!"

"The cheek of these people in these days is astoundin'!" said Adolphus Smythe. "They think they're as good as we are, you know—they do, absolutely! Now, this blackguard

"Don't call me names, please!" said Rawson.

"I'll call you what I like, you—you thing!" said Adolphus, with ineffable contempt. "I'll wipe my boots on you if I like!"

"Have 'em cleaned afterwards, if you do!" sniggered Topham.

Rawson looked round him, for the first time seeing clearly the scornful hostility in every face. His ruddy face paled a little.

"I don't see what you want to talk to me like this for," he said. "I didn't mean to offend anybody here!"

"You are an offence in yourself, dear boy!" said Smythe. "You offend our eyesight, you know! The best thing you can do is to go back to the workhouse you belong to!"

"I don't belong to a workhouse!"

"Your father ought to have had more sense than to send you here!" continued Smythe, unheeding. "I suppose it was sheer ignorance and cheek! Your father, dear boy, is nothin' less than a blackguard!"

Smack!

Rawson's open hand smote the lordly Adolphus across the cheek, and he staggered backwards with a sharp yelp, very much like a dog suddenly trodden upon.

"By—by gad!" he gasped.

"I warned you!" said Rawson. "No chap can speak of my father like that without getting my fist in his face! And if you want any more, I'm ready for you!"

"Why, I—I'll smash you!" shrieked Adolphus.

"I don't want to hurt you," said Rawson. "I'm stronger than you are, and I don't want to hammer you; but—"

He had no time for more. Smythe of the

Shell was springing at him like a tiger, cheered on by Townsend & Co. Rawson staggered back as he caught Smythe's right and left full in the face.

He straightened up at once, however, his eyes blazing. His right arm came out, and his fist smote Adolphus full on his narrow chest, and the great Adolphus went to the floor on his back with a crash that almost made the study shake.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Scorned by the Nuts.

"YARGOOH!"

Such was the undignified remark of the great Adolphus as he assumed a still more undignified position on the study carpet.

Townsend & Co. made a simultaneous move forward. The rules of fair play did not trouble much the Noble Nuts of Rookwood. But they paused again. They did not like Rawson's look. And it occurred to them that there was terrific force behind the blow that had stretched Adolphus Smythe on his back.

"Better not touch me!" said Rawson quietly, facing the half-dozen juniors without flinching. "I don't want a row with anybody, but if you touch me I shall hit out hard."

Townsend curled his lip and stepped back. Topham helped the gasping Adolphus to his feet.

Adolphus leaned on him heavily. He was utterly knocked out by that single blow. He

had not the slightest desire to come to close-quarters with Rawson again.

"By gad!" he gasped. "I wish you joy of that fellow in your study, Towny!"

"If you want any more, I'm ready!" said Rawson.

"Don't come near me! I decline to have anything to do with you!" said Smythe. "I refuse to touch you! You're not fit for a gentleman to touch! I'm sorry for you, Towny, that I can't visit this study again so long as that that person is here!"

Smythe staggered to the door. Rawson looked at him curiously, and burst into a laugh. Until he had entered the aristocratic circle of the Nuts of Rookwood such a case of utter funk had never come to his knowledge.

Townsend & Co. looked rather dubious. It was all very well to say that the outsider was not fit to touch, but it could not be concealed that the chief of the Nuts had funk in the most outrageous manner.

The new junior certainly required licking and putting into his place by drastic measures. But the task was beyond the powers and the courage of Adolphus, and none of the Nuts felt inclined to take it on in his pace.

Rawson checked his laugh. "I'm sorry this has happened, you fellows!" he said, with an appealing look at Townsend & Co. "You could see that it wasn't my fault!"

"Don't speak to us, you cad!"

"What are you calling me names for?"

"Look here!" said Topham. "We don't want you in this study. Never mind why. We don't like your sort. We want you to get out of it."

"I'll do that willingly enough if there's another study I can go into."

"You can find that out for yourself."

"That's just what I can't do. The other fellows might cut up rusty just the same."

"I rather think they would," sneered Peele.

"Let me catch you in my study, that's all!"

"Well, I shall have to stay here, then!"

grip of a vice, and the water streamed into his eyes.

"Groogh!" Peele gurgled. "Let go by dose!"

"You knew what you've got to do."

"Help me, you fellows! Drag that ruffian off!" gasped Peele.

Townsend & Co. advanced irresolutely. Rawson changed his grip on Peele's nose to his left hand, and clenched his right and raised it. The Nuts exchanged glances, and hung back. They remembered too clearly how the great Adolphus had fared.

"Led go!" moaned Peele. "Ow—ow—ow! I—I take back what I said! Led go!"

Rawson released him.

"You can cut off!" he said scornfully.

"Blessed if I ever saw such a white rabbit of a fellow! Why, you're bigger than I am!"

Peele did not reply. He limped out of the study, clasping his nose in anguish. Townsend & Co., with scornful glances at the new junior, followed him. Rawson was left alone in the study. The intended rag had certainly not come off. It could not be denied that the unspeakable new fellow had had the best of it all along the line.

But Rawson did not look very cheerful.

"My word!" he murmured. "This is a go!"

For some minutes he stood quiet, a cloud upon his brow. Then he shook himself, as if shaking off unpleasant thoughts, and began to unpack his books.

Meanwhile, a crowd of Classics had surrounded Townsend & Co. downstairs, to inquire what the scholarship bounder was like, and how they were getting on with him.

Townsend's description of him was quite lurid.

The new fellow was a perfect ruffian and hooligan, according to the voracious Topham. They had treated him as decently as it was possible to treat such a fellow, and he had started rows at once, and kicked up a shindy in the study. But for the fact that their self-respect forbade them to touch such a hooligan they would have thrashed him

all about it at the footer. I wonder how he's got on?"

"I dare say he's got on all right. Get on with your prep. We're a bit late already."

"And don't jog the table, fathead!" said Raby, as Jimmy Silver rose. "You know that leg always goes when you touch the blessed table."

"Rawson might help us with that," said Jimmy, "after prep."

"Where are you going?"

"Well, the kid's in Topham's study. May as well give him a look in."

Lovell grinned.

"There's been trouble already," he said. "I've heard from Hooker that Rawson punched Smythe of the Shell, and pulled Peele's nose."

"Well, Peele's nose has wanted pulling a long time. I don't think the worse of him for that," remarked Jimmy. "I dare say Peele shoved it in where it wasn't wanted."

"There's a set against him in the Fourth," said Newcome. "Oswald told me the Nuts all walked out of the Common-room when he came in with their noses in the air."

"Silly asses!"

"Topham and Topy swear they won't share his study. They're going to dig with Peele so long as he stays there."

"All the more room for him," said Jimmy. "I'd rather have a study to myself than whack it out with Topham and Topy."

"Look here," said Lovell grimly, as Jimmy opened the door. "None of your little games!"

"Eh? What little games?"

"We're four in this study already, and we're not going to make it five. You planted a German rotter on us once. Mind, we keep you to that!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I'm not going to plant him on you, old kid. I'm just going to have a look at him, and if he's decent I'm going to be civil to him."

Jimmy walked along the passage to No. 4, and tapped at the door.

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"So you won't go?" said Townsend.

"No, I won't! I can't!"

"Well, we can't put you out, as Bootles put you in," said Townsend. There were other reasons why the new junior could not be put out, but Townsend did not refer to those.

"If you're cad enough to stay where you're not wanted, I suppose you'll do it. It's what we might expect from your sort."

"Just what we might expect!" said Topham.

"I don't see what else I can do," said Rawson.

"Well, you can understand this—you can stay in this study if you're beast enough, but don't speak to us. We bar your sort!"

"All right. I won't speak to you," said Rawson quietly. "I think you might be a bit more civil; but it's your own business. But look here, don't call me names any more, or there will be a row. I don't like it!"

"Do you think we care what you like?" sneered Topham.

Rawson did not answer. His silence encouraged Peele, who remarked:

"Rotten outsider!"

Rawson turned towards him.

"You heard what I said!" he exclaimed.

"Don't talk to me!" said Peele, backing away a little.

"You were talking to me," said Rawson, "and you'll take back what you said, or else you'll put up your hands!"

"I don't fight with your sort!" said Peele disdainfully.

"Nor with any sort, I expect, if you can sneak out of it!" said Rawson. "I think you're a rotter myself, and you'll take back what you said, or there'll be trouble!"

"Ta-ta, Topham!" said Peele, turning towards the door. "See you later!"

A grip on his collar swung him back.

"Let go, you low hound!" screamed Peele.

Rawson let go the collar, and shifted his grip to Peele's nose. It seemed to the unhappy Nut that his nose was enclosed in the

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 50.

within an inch of his life. But they had decided to ignore him, as the best way of dealing with such an utter cad.

The Classics believed as much as they chose of Townsend's narration. What could not be doubted was that Smythe of the Shell had had the worst of an encounter with him, and that Peele's nose was crimson, and that he was moaning nasally over it in his study.

There was a general buzz of interest when, about half an hour later, the new junior came down into the Common-room. He was looking about him, not yet sure of his way about.

"Hallo!" called out Oswald. "Here you are, kid! This is the Common-room! No charge for admission!"

Rawson brightened up at that cordial greeting. It dawned upon him that all the Rookwood fellows were not cast on the lines of Townsend & Co.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Townsend. "If that person's goin' to be here, this is no place for us!"

The Nuts marched off, past Rawson, who stood in astonishment. They walked with their noses in the air, casting glances of ineffable disdain at Rawson, and fled out of the Common-room.

Dick Oswald burst into a laugh. Rawson ejaculated:

"My eye!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. The Right Sort.

BLEST if I hadn't forgotten!"

Tea was over in the end study, and the Fistical Four had started on their preparation, when Jimmy Silver made that sudden remark. Lovell looked up.

"What is it? Lines?" he asked.

"No. That new chap."

"Oh, that new chap? What about him?"

"Well, I haven't seen him," said Jimmy. "I was going to speak to him, but I forgot

"Come in!" said a voice he did not know, evidently Rawson's.

Jimmy opened the door.

Rawson was alone in the study, at work at the table. He was looking a little downcast, and evidently troubled over his work. There was no sign of Townsend or Topham, and a good many of their belongings were gone from the room.

Rawson looked rather grimly at the captain of the Fourth.

"Well? Take a good look!" he said.

"A—a good look?" repeated Jimmy, not comprehending.

"Yes."

"I don't quite catch on. I suppose you're Rawson?"

"Yes, I'm Rawson. Take a good look, and clear!"

"Would you mind explaining what you're driving at?" asked Jimmy Silver politely. "I came in to speak a civil word to you. If you don't like the idea I'll clear off fast enough. You won't have to tell me twice."

Rawson rose to his feet. His honest eyes met Jimmy Silver's very frankly.

"I'm sorry," he said. "No offence. But a lot of fellows have been opening my door and staring at me, as if I were an animal from the Zoo, and I thought you were one more."

"Oh, I see!" Jimmy Silver frowned. "I'm afraid you'll have a rather rotten idea of Rookwood manners, Rawson."

"It isn't quite like I expected," said Rawson candidly. "I thought everybody at a big school like this would have very nice manners, and be as polite as a prince. But quite a lot of them aren't so well-mannered as the chaps at the National School I used to go to!"

"There are all sorts," explained Jimmy. "You'll find the fellows here much the same as fellows everywhere else—perhaps a bit more narrow-minded some of them. But that's not really their fault. Only don't jump to the conclusion that we're all like

Towny and Topsy. How are you getting on with your prep?"

"Prep?" repeated Rawson hesitatingly. "Preparation, I mean. You know we have to prepare lessons for the morning?"

"Yes; Mr. Bootles told me, and he said my study-mates would show me what was to be done," said Rawson ruefully. "But they won't, though. I can't ask them after the row we had. I know it's Caesar, so I'm doing my best."

"Towny is a worm, and Topsy is another worm!" said Jimmy. "They might have told you. You're yards off the right part. Let me put you on to it."

"You're jolly good!"

"How do you get on with Latin?" asked Jimmy.

"Pretty well. It was a subject in the examination for the Founders' Scholarship, you know."

"You were a lucky bargee to bag that."

"Yes; it was luck, and jolly hard work," said Rawson. "I shouldn't ever have done it if it hadn't been for the dad. I used to work at it in his workshop, while he was planing and sawing, you know, and he'd leave off to ask me things and help me. He learned a good bit himself on purpose to help me; but it wasn't only that, it was feeling that somebody was pleased at my getting on." Rawson paused and coloured deeply. "But I suppose I oughtn't to speak about all that here?"

"Why not?" said Jimmy.

"Well, the fellows—" Rawson paused and smiled. "I shall be a long time getting used to this place. I thought everybody at a public school was a gentleman. You see, I've never entered one before to-day."

Jimmy Silver burst into a hearty laugh. "Haven't you met any gentlemen here yet?" he asked.

"Well, not at first. But there was one in the Common-room—a fair-headed chap—"

"That's Oswald. Any more?"

"And an Irish chap. The others I've spoken to seemed to me rather rotten. I don't think a gentleman would hurt a chap's feelings for nothing."

"Quite right, my son!" said Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen aren't as common as blackberries, and they're not made by money and expensive clothes, and dropping their 'g's.' But when you've done your prep come along to the end study, and you'll see some more—three of the best—four, counting myself. By the way, have you got any tools with you?"

Rawson bit his lip hard.

"Is there anything rotten in my having some tools with me?" he asked in a low voice. "I—I saw no harm in it. I'm fond of carpentry, and I thought I might do some here in my own room."

"Of course there's no harm in it!" said Jimmy in astonishment. "Who said there was?"

"Well, Smythe said— But never mind. Why did you ask me?" asked Rawson.

"Because our table's got a gammy leg, and I thought you might lend us a hand getting it fixed, if you don't mind. We've tackled it, but it was N.G. I thought you'd know something about that kind of bizney," explained Jimmy.

Rawson's face brightened up wonderfully.

"I'll be jolly glad!" he exclaimed.

"Right-ho! Come along when you've finished, and bring your tools," said Jimmy.

"What-ho!"

Jimmy Silver returned to the end study.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Rawson Makes Friends.**

"COME in!" sang out four voices in unison, and an hour later, as a tap came to the door of the end study.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had finished their prep, and Raby was making toffee at the study fire. The door opened, and Rawson stepped in with a very red face, and a bag in his hand.

He was plainly very nervous. It was curious that the poor lad, though he could face open hostility with unflinching courage, felt awkward and nervous in the face of friendliness from fellows whom as yet he did not half-understand.

"Here you are," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "This is Rawson, you chaps—Lovell, Raby, Newcome! Got the tools in that bag?"

"Yes," said Rawson.

"Let's see them."

This request on Jimmy Silver's part was tactful. There was no better way of putting Rawson at his ease than in taking an interest in his tools.

Rawson turned out his bag. The Fistical Four examined its contents.

"My hat, that's a ripping set!" said Jimmy Silver. "Beats my tool-chest hollow, I must say. Must have cost a lot of tin."

"I didn't get them all at once," said Rawson. "I've used them helping my father, you know."

"Oh, I see!"

"Could you make a table?" asked Lovell, with interest.

Rawson grinned.

"Yes, I could, and chairs, too!" he said.

"My hat!"

"You get on with the toffee, Raby, and we'll see to the table," said Jimmy Silver. "Turn it over!"

The table was cleared and upended. The juniors gathered round it, and the "gammy" leg was seriously examined. It had caused the Fistical Four no end of trouble, in spite—or perhaps because of—the fact that they had made incessant attempts to mend it by driving long nails into it. The array of nails gave it, in the affected part, somewhat of the appearance of cheveux de frise. Rawson could not help grinning as he looked at it.

"I put most of those nails in it," said Lovell. "Jimmy put in some. I think Jimmy's nails made it a bit more rocky than it was before."

"Why didn't you try screws?" asked Rawson.

"Well, we hadn't any screws, and besides, Jimmy's screw-driver is busted."

"Does it want screws?" asked Newcome.

"Two four-inch will do it," said Rawson.

"I shall have to get these nails out first, though, if you don't mind," he added.

"Go ahead, my son!"

"And I shall want a wedge just here, too. You see, the top of the table-leg has been worn away by—"

"Too many nails!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"I told you a lot of times you were overdoing it, Lovell!"

"It wasn't my nails that overdid it," said Lovell. "I know that."

Oswald opened the door and looked in, with Flynn.

"That toffee done yet?" he asked. "Hallo! Are you breaking up the happy home?"

"No, mending it!" said Jimmy. "Come in and watch. The toffee will be done by the time the mending's done."

"Right you are!"

Rawson set cheerfully to work. The juniors sat round on the overturned table and

watched him. Rawson extracted the nails with the pincers, and with a strength of wrist the juniors noticed. There was a sudden exclamation from the passage, and Townsend looked in. Townsend stared at the scene in amazement.

"So you've taken up that outsider, Jimmy Silver!" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He gripped a cushion that lay near, and it whizzed through the open doorway. It caught Townsend under the chin, and fairly bowled him over. There was a loud bump in the passage, and a loud yell.

Rawson's ears burned, but he gave no other sign of having heard Townsend's words. Townsend did not return to repeat them. He limped away down the passage, mumbling, and his limp became a wild rush when Jimmy Silver stepped out to field the cushion.

Townsend fled-down to the Common-room, to inform the nuts, with thrilling and breathless indignation, that the outsider was in Jimmy Silver's study, and that the iniquitous Jimmy was palling with him. Topham immediately proposed raiding the study, and giving the Fistical Four the ragging of their lives; but when he looked round for supporters, he failed to catch anybody's eye. Silent contempt was still the watchword of the Nuts, and it was a great deal more comfortable than facing the knuckles of the Fistical Four.

Meanwhile, the carpentry in the end study was proceeding apace. All the nails having been removed—a somewhat lengthy task—Rawson set to work on the table-leg. With a tenon-saw he removed the shattered portion—shattered by too liberal an allowance of nails—and fitted in a wedge, which he had made the exact shape and size required—how the watching juniors hardly knew.

"Now, hold it," he said, placing the renovated leg in position.

There were many hands ready to hold it. Rawson drove in a gimlet, and then placed a screw in position, and drove it. Driving a four-inch screw into hard wood was not easy, but Rawson's wrist seemed to be of iron. It showed no sign of aching as the long screw was steadily driven home. Then the other screw was put in, and Rawson rose to his feet, and collected his tools in his bag.

"I think that'll be all right," he remarked.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell grasped the table, and whirled it over and stood it upon its legs. It stood like a rock. Certainly it was "all right!"

Lovell jumped on the table, to put it to the test, and it stood firm and solid under him. He jumped down in great delight.

"Topping!" he exclaimed.

Jimmy Silver clapped Rawson on the shoulder.

"Splendid! Thanks awfully, old fellow!"

"Toffee's ready!" said Raby.

"Sure, and so are we!" said Flynn. "Sure the table doesn't rock at all, at all, and it's a jewel ye are, Rawson; and sure, I'll ask ye to lend me a hand with my armchair to-morrow, if ye'll be so kind!"

And the chums of the Fourth sat down cheerily to Raby's toffee, and it was quite a merry little party in the end study—the muttering, dissatisfied Nuts being totally forgotten. Rawson's face was very bright and happy. His first evening at Rookwood, after all, was one of the happiest of his young life.

THE END.

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