

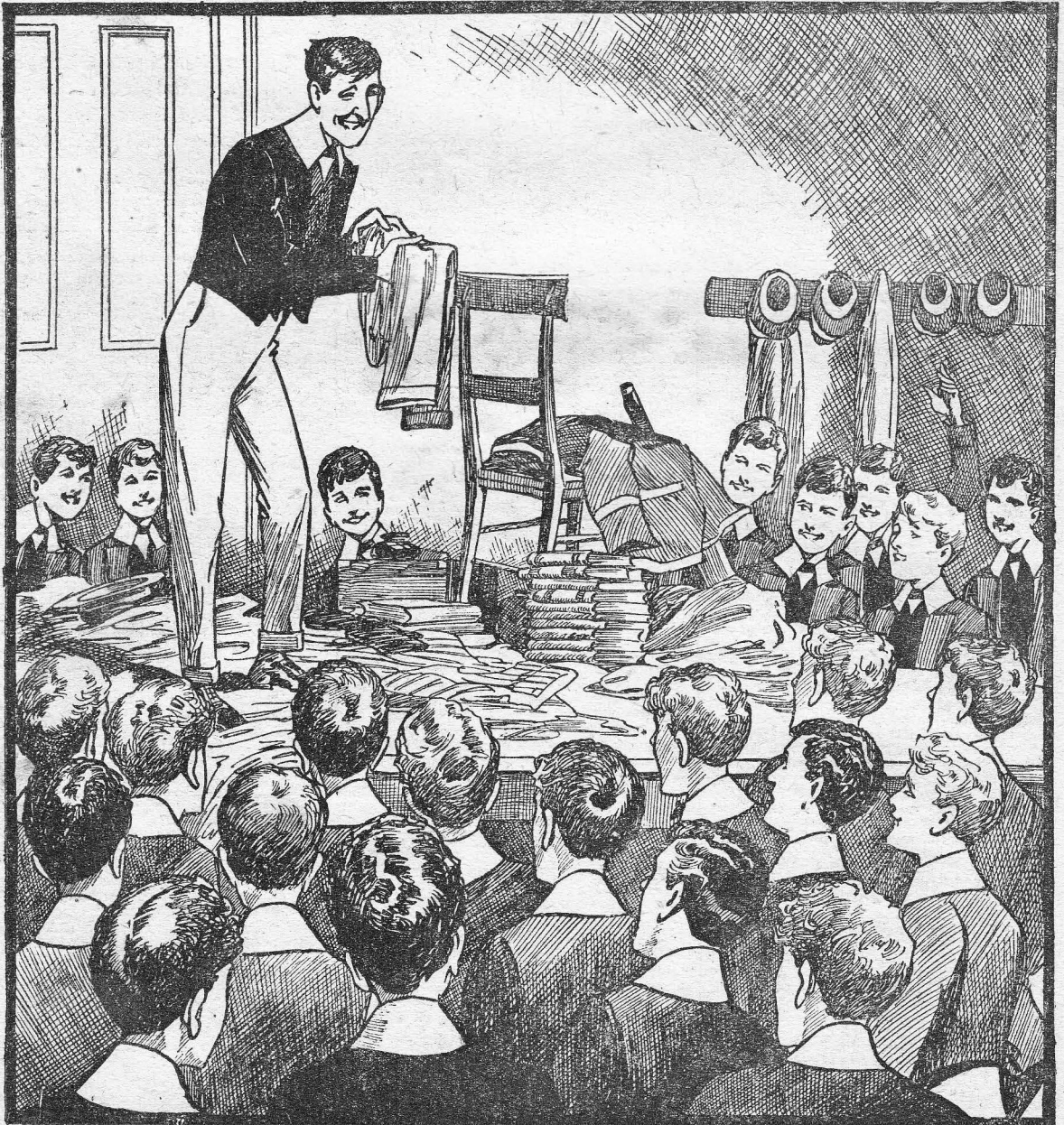
GRAND FREE PICTURE SCHEME! (See page 13.)

The Penny **1½!**
Popular

Week Ending
January 10th, 1920.

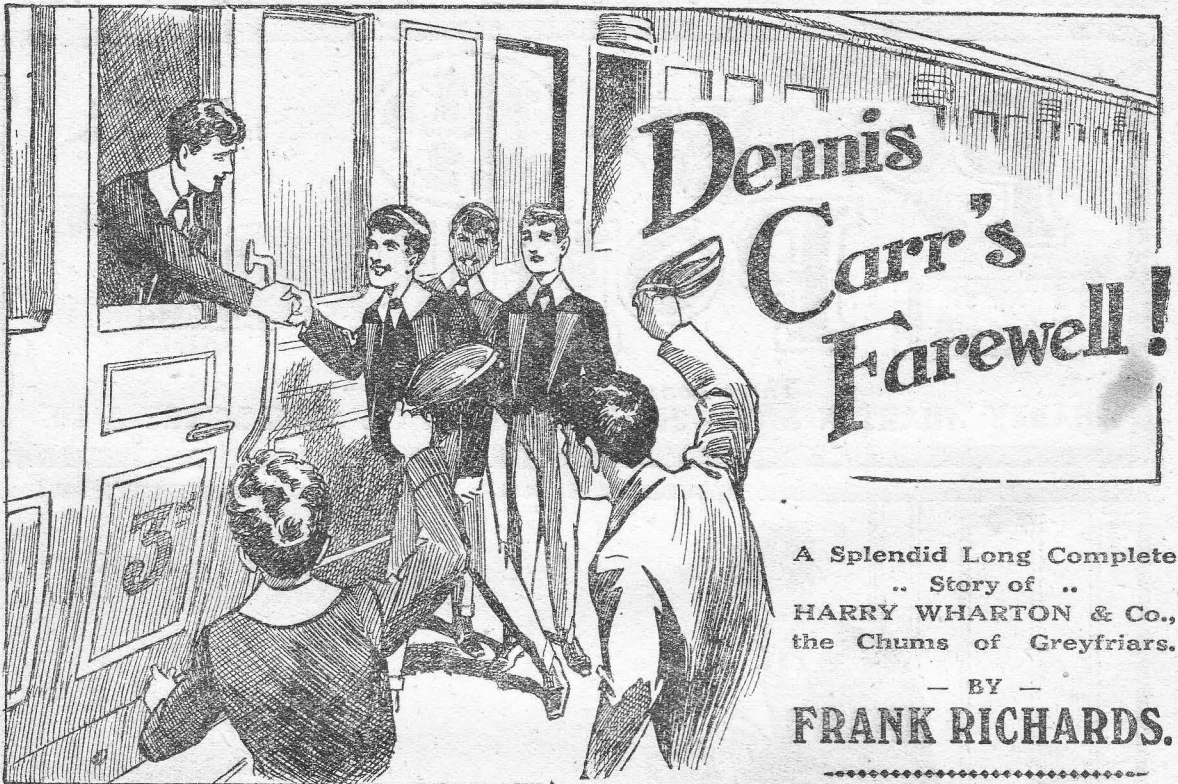
No. 51.
New Series.

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



FISHER T. FISH'S GREAT AUCTION SALE!

(A Remarkable Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



THE FIRST CHAPTER. For a Deserving Object.

"I AM this way!"

"Pass the cake!"

"Likewise the esteemed butterful scones!"

The Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove were going strong in Study No. 1.

An excellent feed had been prepared, and Harry Wharton & Co., fresh from their strenuous exertions on the football-field, proceeded to do full justice to the good things.

"What I like about the beginning of the term," said Bob Cherry, "is that there's plenty of tin flying around. It's a case of 'For to-night we'll merry be; to-morrow we'll be stony!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was certainly plenty of "tin" in the coffers of the Famous Five.

Harry Wharton had been handsomely tipped by his father, and so had Bob Cherry by his. Frank Nugent had received a less substantial, but quite a useful sum; and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh had received fat remittances by post.

As a result, Study No. 1 in the Remove passage resembled a land flowing with milk and honey.

Presently there was a tap on the door.

"Come in, fathead!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Peter Todd, the leader of Study No. 7, marched in. He had a sheet of paper in his hand and a beaming smile on his face.

"Rally round, you fellows!" he exclaimed.

The Famous Five stared.

"Whom do you want us to rally round, and why?" asked Harry Wharton.

For answer, Peter Todd spread the paper out on the table. It appeared to be a subscription list, though it did not contain any signatures as yet.

At the top of the list appeared a cutting from the local paper. It ran as follows:

"BOY'S LONELY STRUGGLE!"

A very sad case of extreme hardship has recently been brought to our notice.

Little Bob Wheeler, aged fourteen, who is employed in the Courtfield Provision Stores, has been left to fight single-handed against poverty. Our readers will remember that Bob's father was killed early in the war, and the widow has been in receipt of a pension, which has enabled her to keep things going.

Now comes the sad news of Mrs. Wheeler's death; and Bob is left practically destitute.

His salary, of course, is not large; and we appeal to our readers to support the boy in this crisis.

Contributions of money, clothing, etc., will be gratefully received by the Editor."

"Poor kid!" said Bob Cherry softly. "He's up against it, and no mistake!"

"Both parent's dead, and he's earning about eight bob a week," said Wharton. "If ever there was a deserving case, it's this one!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Are you collecting contributions, Teddy?" inquired Nugent.

Peter nodded.

"It struck me as being a good plan," he said. "It ought not to be difficult to raise two or three quid from the Remove. Will you set the ball rolling, Wharton?"

Harry shook his head.

"The captain of the Form ought to head the list," he said.

"That's so," said Johnny Bull. "Go along and collect a contribution from Carr; and then come back to this study."

"All serene!" said Peter Todd.

And he went along to Dennis Carr's study; which Dennis happened to have to himself at that moment.

The new captain of the Remove—Dennis had been elected at the end of the previous term—was seated at the table writing a letter. Evidently the composition of the letter was causing him a good deal of anxiety, for his hair was ruffled and awry, and there was a thoughtful frown on his handsome but rather pale face.

Peter Todd advanced into the study with the subscription-list.

"Look here, Carr—" he began.

Dennis made an impatient gesture.

"Buzz off!" he growled.

"But I want you!" protested Peter Todd.

"Well, I'm not available at the moment. Can't you see that I'm busy?"

But Peter was not to be put off. He held the subscription-list under Dennis Carr's nose, and Dennis could not help reading the newspaper cutting which was pasted on the top of the sheet.

"It's a very deserving case, as you'll see," said Peter Todd. "This kid Bob Wheeler often comes up to the school to deliver groceries. He's a decent little chap, and it's rough luck that he should have lost his mater. It's up to us to rally round him and set the poor kid on his feet again!"

A Splendid Long Complete

.. Story of ..

HARRY WHARTON & Co.,
the Chums of Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

Dennis Carr was silent.

Peter Todd waited, with growing impatience for the captain of the Remove to put his hand in his pocket and head the subscription-list with a generous donation.

But, Dennis Carr did not do so—for the simple reason that he couldn't! He had quarrelled with his father during the vacation, and had refused to accept any pocket-money from him. The result was that Dennis had come back to Greyfriars with only a few shillings in his pocket, and that amount was now exhausted.

But how could he explain to Peter Todd—or to anyone else, for that matter—that he was in the state known as "stony"? They would not understand. They would imagine that he had been playing ducks and drakes with his money—that he had expended it in gambling.

Peter Todd glanced curiously at the captain of the Remove.

"Are you wondering how much to give?" he asked.

"No."

"You're going to give something, I take it?"

"No."

Peter Todd jumped. Astonishment was written all over his face.

"You— Surely you agree that this is a deserving case?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, quite!" said Dennis.

"And yet you refuse to set the ball rolling?"

"I'm sorry, but—"

Peter Todd bristled up.

"Bless your sorrow!" he snapped. "I expected you to fork out a quid right away. I thought you were a generous sort of fellow, but I'm dashed if I think so now! You're as mean as they make 'em!"

And with this Parthian shot the indignant collector of subscriptions stamped out of the study.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, when Peter Todd reappeared in Study No. 1. "Wherefore that clouded brow, Toddy?"

Peter Todd fairly exploded.

"Carr refuses to give anything!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"It's a fact! I tackled him for a subscription, and he told me, in effect, that there was nothing doing."

"Great Scott!"

The Famous Five stared blankly at each other.

They liked Dennis Carr very much, and they had never deemed him capable of an act of meanness—until now.

"This takes the bun!" said Bob Cherry. "Did Carr explain why he won't give anything?"

"No," said Peter Todd. "He agreed it was a deserving case, but he wouldn't stump up. There's a Form-captain for you! A fat lot Carr cares about this kid Wheeler! All he thinks about is himself!"

The Famous Five were surprised and indignant. They had expected Dennis Carr to head the subscription-list, and he had refused.

"If Carr won't pave the way, I suppose I'd better!" said Harry Wharton.

And he handed a ten-shilling-note to Peter Todd.

The other members of the Famous Five followed suit.

"That's the style!" said Peter. "I'm giving half-a-quid myself, so that makes three quid already."

"You spoke of raising two or three quids," said Johnny Bull. "But if the other fellows rally round there's no reason why you shouldn't raise ten!"

Peter Todd nodded, and continued his quest for subscriptions.

He reaped a rich harvest from most of the Remove students.

Lord Mauleverer contributed a pound, and so did Vernon-Smith. Other fellows, including Russell, Morgan, Wibley, Ogilvy, Linley, Desmond, Newland, Penfold, Bulstrode, and Redwing, gave five shillings each.

Even Skinner and Bolsover major came up to the scratch—although Skinner admitted that it was like having teeth extracted to part with half-a-crown.

Having obtained nine pounds, Peter Todd went along to his own Study—No. 7. His cousin Alonzo was present, likewise Billy Bunter and Tom Dutton.

"How is the collection progressing, my dear Peter?" inquired Alonzo.

"Famously!" replied Peter. "I want another quid to make it up to ten."

Billy Bunter looked uneasy.

"I—I say, Toddy," he faltered, "wouldn't it be a good idea to leave this study till last?"

"That's precisely what I have done," said Peter.

"Oh!"

"There's only another quid wanted," Peter went on, "and I'm looking to you three to raise it between you."

Alonzo counted out seven-and-sixpence, and handed the money over to Peter.

At the same moment Billy Bunter sidled towards the door.

"No, you don't, my pippin!" said Peter Todd grimly. "You're going to pay your whack!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I—I've got an appointment."

"Rats! Shall I put you down for seven-and-six or five-bob?"

Billy Bunter brightened up.

"You can put me down for fifteen bob if you like," he said. "I'll settle up when my postal-order comes."

Peter Todd snorted. He knew that postal-order of old. It existed, certainly, but only in the fertile imagination of William George Bunter.

"You burbling chump! I want spot-cash at once," said Peter.

The fat junior replied mournfully that he was "broke," and Peter, realising that it was impossible to get blood out of a stone, turned to Tom Dutton.

"What can I put you down for?" he asked.

"Eh?" said the deaf junior. "I wasn't frowning!"

"I didn't say you were, fathead! How much are you going to give towards the relief of this sad case?"

Tom Dutton jumped to his feet.

"What's the matter with my face?" he demanded warmly.

"Oh, my hat! I said case—case!" shouted Peter.

"I quite agree with you," said Dutton. "You're a case, right enough—for Colney Hatch!"

"You—you—"

Peter Todd came within an ace of punching his study-mate with great violence on the nose. But he was very anxious to make up the amount to ten pounds, and it would be unwise to quarrel with Tom Dutton.

Placing his mouth close to his study-mate's ear, Peter literally bellowed at him, as follows:

"We're getting up a subscription for the

relief of a poor kid in Courtfield who is down on his luck. I've already collected nine pounds seven-and-six from the fellows. What will you give?"

Tom Dutton, understanding at last, readily plunged his hand into his pocket.

"Why didn't you explain this to me before?" he said.

Peter gasped. It was a habit of Tom Dutton's to pretend that a misunderstanding was never his fault.

But the deaf junior could be forgiven a great deal, for he handed seven-and-sixpence to Peter Todd, and said he was sorry that funds wouldn't run to more.

"Many thanks!" said Peter. "This brings us to within five bob of the required amount."

"Why not raise five bob from the Head?" suggested Billy Bunter.

"Rats! This is the Remove's show. We're going to raise ten quid on our own, independent of the masters."

And Peter succeeded, too!

Fisher T. Fish, who had been absent from his study when Peter Todd had called before, actually subscribed the necessary five shillings.

Fish was not given to generosity as a rule, but the appeal on behalf of the orphan lad proved irresistible.

That evening Peter Todd cycled over to Courtfield and deposited the ten pounds with the editor of the local paper.

The Remove had certainly rallied to the occasion. Only two fellows—Dennis Carr and Billy Bunter—had turned a deaf ear to the appeal.

In Bunter's case this was understandable. The fat junior had no money, and even if he had he would not have given any of it to charity. It would have found its way into the till at the tuckshop.

But Dennis Carr's failure to do the decent thing was not so readily understood. Even Dennis's chums were beginning to suspect him of meanness.

Dennis was the last to arrive in the Remove dormitory that evening, and he flushed as a hostile chorus greeted him.

"Yah!"

"Mean cad!"

"Close-fisted rotter!"

With burning cheeks Dennis crossed over to his bed.

"Shut up!" he snapped irritably.

But the juniors were angry and indignant with their Form-captain, who had to suffer a good many taunts and sneers before Wingate of the Sixth came in to see lights out.

Twenty-four hours before, Dennis had been the most popular in the Remove. Now no one had a good word to say for him. He had fallen from favour, and he alone knew that it was through no fault of his own.

Dennis had declined the financial assistance offered him by his father, with the result that he was as badly off as Bunter. He hadn't a penny to call his own; but it would have been no use telling the other fellows that, for the simple reason that they would never have believed him.

Even after Wingate had retired there was still a buzz of protest at the supposed meanness of Dennis Carr.

The captain of the Remove did not pass a pleasant night. He was haunted by the knowledge that he would have to go through a whole term without pocket-money.

It would be a great ordeal, but Dennis determined to face it rather than sink his pride and write to his father for money.

His father had treated him with rank injustice, and Dennis hated him. And he would never be able to bring himself to ask favours of a man he hated.

"I'll remain broke!" was his final reflection. But the prospect was anything but cheerful.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Black News.

"BLESS my soul!"

Dr. Locke uttered the exclamation in great perplexity.

The Headmaster of Greyfriars was going through his morning correspondence. In his hand he held a narrow strip of pink paper, attached to which was a letter.

The strip of pink paper was a cheque, and the letter was from a well-known London bank.

Still perplexed, Dr. Locke laid down both letter and cheque on the table in front of him. He took off his glasses and polished them, still gazing intently at his unusual item of correspondence.

Replacing his glasses, and even now unable

to believe the evidence of his eyes, he glanced again at the cheque.

Across it was scrawled in blue pencil the terse words, "No account."

"Dishonoured!" murmured the Head. "This is amazing! Mr. Carr's cheques in the past have been quite—"

He turned back the cheque and perused the letter, which ran as follows:

"Dear Sir,

Mr. Richard Carr's Account.

With reference to the attached cheque, we regret we are unable to honour this, as our client's account has now been closed.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

The London and Suburban Bank."

Dr. Locke's astonishment grew.

That cheque had been sent in payment of Dennis Carr's school fees for the current term, and the bankers had refused to accept it.

What was wrong?

Had Mr. Carr transferred his banking account elsewhere? Or had he come to the end of his financial resources?

Never before had Dr. Locke had a cheque returned to him in this way, and he could not for the life of him understand what was amiss.

"I shall have to write to Mr. Carr for an explanation," murmured the Head.

And he was about to carry out his intention when there was a tap on the door of his study.

"Come in!" said Dr. Locke.

Trotter, the school page, entered with a telegram.

"For me?" queried the Head.

"Yessir."

Dr. Locke was already in a bewildered frame of mind as a result of the returned cheque, and his bewilderment increased as he opened the telegram.

The message ran thus:

"Headmaster, Greyfriars, Friardale.—Please wire or phone whether Dennis Carr's term fees have been paid.—Chambers & Temple, Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn."

"Dear me!" muttered the Head. "This is indeed an eventful morning!"

"Any answer, sir?" asked Trotter.

Dr. Locke debated for a moment whether he should wire or telephone to the solicitors. Finally he decided to adopt the latter course.

"No, Trotter, there is no answer," he said.

The page withdrew, and the Head consulted the London Telephone Directory. He found the number he wanted, and took up the receiver.

"I want Holborn 0158, please!" he announced.

"You'll have to wait an hour or so for the call to come through, sir," answered the operator.

"Very well," said the Head.

And he replaced the receiver, and returned to his writing-table.

Work, however, was impossible. Dr. Locke was trying to fathom the mystery which surrounded Dennis Carr's father.

What could be the meaning of those two communications—the letter from the bank, and the telegram from the solicitors?

The only explanation which occurred to the Head was that Mr. Carr was involved in money troubles.

At the end of an hour the telephone-bell rang.

Dr. Locke stepped quickly towards the instrument.

"Your call's through, sir," said the operator.

"Thank you!"

There was a moment's pause; then a voice sounded over the wires.

"Hallo! Who is that?"

"I am the headmaster of Greyfriars. Is that Messrs. Chambers & Temple?"

"Yes—Mr. Chambers speaking. You received our telegram?"

"I did," said Dr. Locke. "I trust nothing is amiss?"

"There was a cough at the other end of the wire—the preliminary cough of a man about to break unpleasant news."

"You may have wondered why we wired you, Dr. Locke, on the subject of Dennis Carr's school fees. We are the solicitors dealing with the affairs of the late Mr. Carr—"

The Head gave a jump. He nearly dropped the receiver.

"The—the late Mr. Carr!" he gasped. "I do not understand—"

There was another cough at the other end of the wire—followed by the staggering message:

"Mr. Carr is dead!"

Dr. Locke uttered an exclamation of dismay—almost of incredulity.

"Dead!"

"Yes. He died suddenly last evening. It is very tragic, Dr. Locke—painfully so, especially as the boy—Dennis—is now bereft of both parents. To make matters even worse, our late client's financial affairs are, so far as we can ascertain, in a deplorable condition. You may or may not be aware that shortly before his death he was involved in a libel action—"

"I certainly was not aware of it," said Dr. Locke.

"Unfortunately," continued the solicitor, "judgment was given against Mr. Carr, and he was called upon to pay a very large sum of money. This calamity appears to have drained his resources."

"Bless my soul!"

"Owing to his sudden and unexpected demise, Mr. Carr's affairs are in a most complicated condition," Mr. Chambers went on. "It is difficult to know what accounts have been settled, and what bills are still outstanding. With regard to his son's school fees—"

"They have not been paid," said the Head. "Mr. Carr certainly sent a cheque, but it has come back from the bank this morning, marked 'No Account.'"

"Then I fear that Dennis will have to be withdrawn from the school. It is extremely unlikely that there will be sufficient money to pay his fees for the term."

"Good heavens!" murmured Dr. Locke, in great distress. "This is a tragedy indeed!"

There was a pause. Then the curt voice of the operator exclaimed:

"The three minutes are up!"

"Keep us on!" said Mr. Chambers. "We will have another three. Are you there, Dr. Locke?"

"Yes."

"I am about to write to Dennis Carr, on behalf of the firm, to acquaint him with the sad news of his father's death."

Dr. Locke shuddered a little. He could well imagine the effect such a letter would have upon the unfortunate junior. It would be couched in cold, formal tones, and the shock would be terrible.

"Excuse me," said the Head, "but I should prefer to break the news to Carr myself."

"Very well, Dr. Locke."

The two men continued to discuss the tragic event of Mr. Carr's death until the operator's voice again interrupted them.

Then the Head slowly replaced the receiver on its hooks, and resumed his seat at the writing-table.

"Poor lad! Poor lad!" he murmured.

For some moments he sat immersed in thought, hesitating to send for Dennis Carr. But he realised that the sad tidings would have to be told sooner or later.

The Head pressed the bell, and Trotter appeared.

"Go to the Remove Form-room, Trotter, and tell Mr. Quelch that I wish to see Carr."

"Werry good, sir."

And the school page departed on his errand.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Dennis Declines.

A FEW moments later Dennis Carr crossed the Close with a thoughtful expression on his face.

A summons to the Head's study in the middle of morning lessons was a most unusual occurrence.

Why had Dr. Locke sent for him?

The new term had only just started, and it was inconceivable that the Head had discovered some misdemeanour.

What, then, could be the meaning of this sudden summons?

"Must be something important," muttered Dennis, "or the Head would have left it till after lessons."

"I say, Carr. Where are you going?"

Dennis looked up with a start as Billy Bunter encountered him with that question.

The fat junior had successfully dodged morning lessons by representing to Mr. Quelch at the breakfast-table that he was suffering from a cough, a cold, a splitting headache, violent pains in the back and chest, and various other ailments.

Mr. Quelch had been sceptical, but he had

noticed that Bunter looked paler than usual, and had told him to report to the matron.

Billy Bunter, however, did not appear to relish the prospect of a morning in the sanny, and was spending his time in the Close, with an excuse handy in case anyone questioned him.

"Where are you going?" repeated the fat junior, blinking at Dennis.

"Head's study," said the latter curtly.

"What for?"

"Haven't the foggiest notion!"

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"He, he, he! I reckon you're going to get licked. And it serves you jolly well right, for being such a mean beast!" added Bunter, retreating to a safe distance as he spoke.

"All right, you fat worm!" said Dennis grimly. "I can't stop to slaughter you now, but I'll settle your hash afterwards!"

And he passed on to the Head's study.

Billy Bunter followed stealthily, like a fat cat in furtive pursuit of a mouse. He was very curious to know why the Head had sent for Dennis Carr; and he intended to make good use of Dr. Locke's keyhole.

Blissfully unaware of the fact that he was being followed, Dennis Carr tapped on the door of the Head's study.

Dr. Locke's voice—unusually low and husky—bade the junior enter.

One glance at the Head's face told Dennis that something was wrong—more, that something was very seriously wrong.

"You sent for me, sir," said Dennis, his heart beating quicker than usual.

The Head nodded. He rose to his feet, and laid his hand on the junior's shoulder.

Dennis glanced in alarm at Dr. Locke's troubled face.

The junior recalled a scene in this same study, some months before, on the occasion of his mother's death.

Had anything happened to his father?

Presently the Head spoke:

"I have bad news for you, my boy. It was with considerable regret that I learned this morning that—that—"

The Head could not go on. Dennis Carr's white face, and his anxious, wistful expression, almost unmanned him.

It was a terribly difficult task to have to communicate the sad news. And the Head could scarcely bring himself to pronounce the fateful words. The junior, however, simplified matters for him.

"My father!" exclaimed Dennis. "He is ill?"

"No, my poor boy; he is—"

There was no necessity for the Head to finish the sentence.

Dennis Carr realised only too clearly the dreadful truth.

His father was dead!

To the junior's stunned gaze everything in the Head's study became blurred and indistinct.

The Head was speaking to him, but Dennis neither heard nor heeded what was said.

Dr. Locke led the junior to a chair, and Dennis sat down and buried his face in his hands. He was stricken with grief—and remorse.

He had hated and insulted his father. He had parted from him in anger and bitterness.

And now it was too late to offer an apology—too late to patch up the quarrel. His father had been taken from him.

After a long interval, Dennis Carr looked up.

No tears had come as yet to afford an outlet for his grief. Dry-eyed, but with pallor in his cheeks, Dennis addressed the Head.

"Tell me all about it, sir," he said quietly. "I—I think I can bear to hear it now!"

And then the Head related the details, as he knew them. He did not withhold any of the facts. He explained that Mr. Carr, shortly before his death, had become involved in an action for libel, which resulted in the loss of practically all his money.

Dennis gave a violent start.

"No wonder he was cross and irritable during the vac!" he exclaimed. "No wonder he seemed to be harsh and unjust! He must have been worried at the loss of his money."

"Undoubtedly!" said the Head.

"And yet he wanted to give me five pounds as pocket-money for the term," said Dennis. "It was probably the last five pounds he had in the world. And I didn't accept it. I flung it back at him, and insulted him! I acted like a low-down cad!"

"Hush!" said the Head gently. "You must not talk like this. I am indeed sorry for you,

Carr, in your extremity—though I fear my poor consolation will be of little use."

"Does this mean that my term-fees haven't been paid, sir?" inquired Dennis.

The Head nodded.

"In that case, sir, I must leave Greyfriars. I must give up my schooling, and work for a living."

"I am hoping that we shall be able to avoid that contingency," said Dr. Locke. "You have acquitted yourself very creditably here; you have risen to be captain of your Form; and I should not like to see you withdrawn from the school."

"But—but I cannot stay here unless my fees are paid, sir!"

"I shall put your case before the governors," said the Head. "In the exceptional circumstances, I have no doubt they will consent to your remaining at the school."

Dennis flushed.

"I couldn't stay here on charity, sir," he said. "That would be quite impossible. I hope you don't think me ungrateful—I appreciate your kindness more than I can say—but now that my fees cannot be paid, I should prefer to clear out."

The Head sighed.

"It is as you wish, Carr," he said. "But I shall be sorry to see such a promising school career cut short. Will you not think it over?"

"I've already made up my mind, sir," said Dennis steadily. "The governors are awfully decent, I know, but I couldn't allow any of them to pay for my schooling. I'll go."

"You will find it a very harsh world, I am afraid," said the Head. "You will be fighting an up-hill battle. In these days of inflated prices, it is doubtful if you will be able to support yourself."

"I'm ready to take my chance, sir."

It was eventually decided that Dennis should leave Greyfriars for good the next day.

The junior had received many crushing blows in the past, but none so crushing as this.

Just when his school career was full of promise for the future, he was compelled to give it up.

On the morrow he would be no longer a public schoolboy. He would be a toiler, taking his part in the great world of work.

Fate had indeed dealt Dennis Carr a knock-out blow.

Not only had his father's death been unexpected, but also the news concerning Mr. Carr's financial affairs.

Dennis had always regarded his father as rich; not, perhaps, on such a large scale as Vernon-Smith's father or Johnny Bull's uncle, but rich for all that. And now came the intelligence that he had died in a state of bankruptcy.

When the interview with the Head was at an end, Dennis Carr quitted the study with a heavy heart.

As he opened the door a fat figure scuttled away along the corridor.

Billy Bunter, stationed at the keyhole, had heard every word of the conversation between the Head and the junior.

Dennis saw the Owl of the Remove disappear, but he did not give chase. He went along to his study, threw himself into the armchair, and stayed there for the remainder of the morning, reviewing the past and attempting to make plans for the future.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for the Remove!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter's voice fairly vibrated with excitement.

The fat junior encountered the Removeites as they swarmed out of the Form-room, and he stood in their path, bursting with importance and news.

"You young spoofer!" growled Harry Wharton. "I don't believe you've spent the morning in the sanny at all!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

The other members of the Famous Five chuckled.

"How's the lumbago, Buntzy?"

"And the gout?"

"And the broken back?"

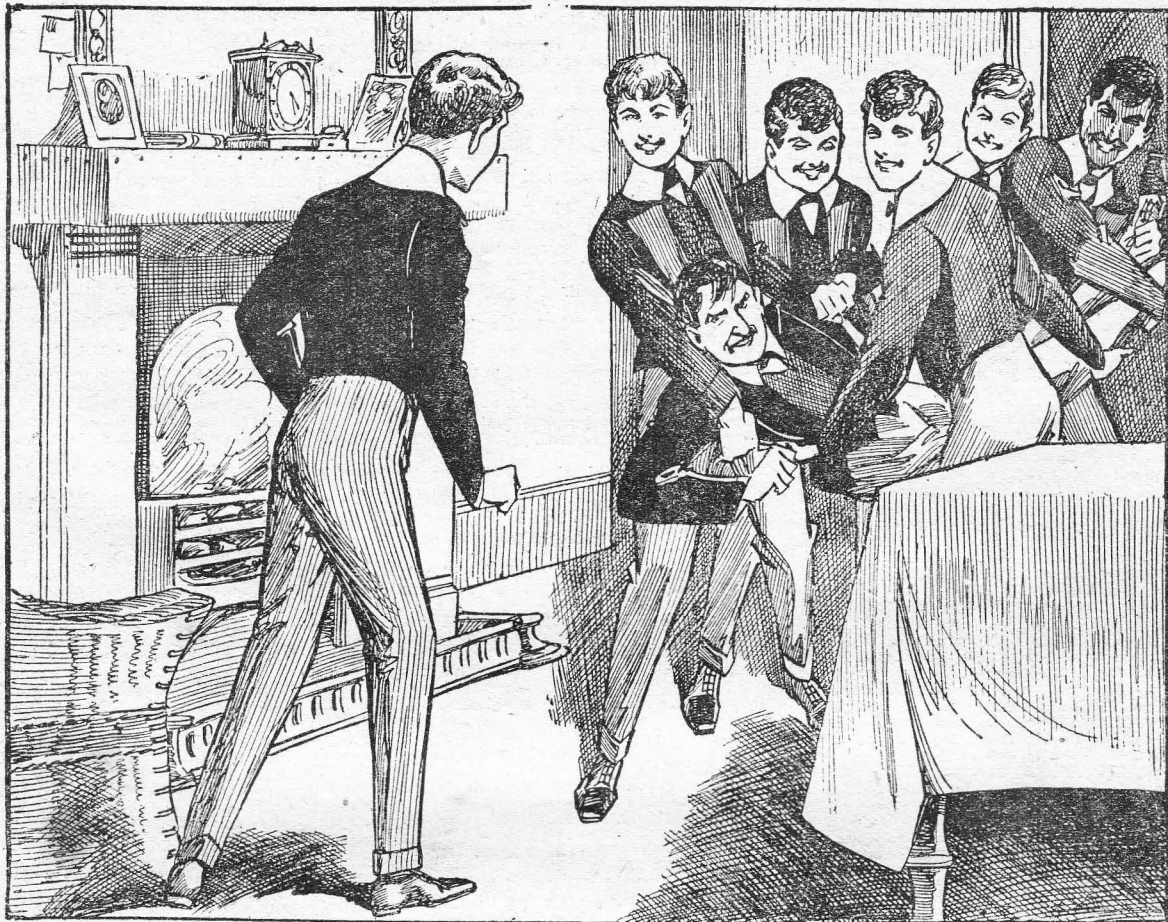
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter ignored these little pleasantries.

"I say, you fellows, something awful's happened!"

"Has Mrs. Mible put up her prices?" inquired Nugent.

"Rats! It's about Carr."



Dennis Carr looked up in surprise as Fisher T. Fish entered under escort. "What the thump——" he began. "The auction sale realised exactly eight quid," said Bob Cherry. "We've brought the auctioneer along, so that he can hand over the spoils. (See page 7.)

"Carr!" echoed Bob Cherry. "What's wrong with Carr?"

"He's leaving Greyfriars."

"Eh?"

"His pater died last night——"

"Great Scott!"

The faces of the juniors became grave at once. They knew that Billy Bunter was a notorious fibber, but he would scarcely be likely to tell a lie of that sort.

The fat junior saw that he had made an impression, and he continued, in tones of excitement:

"His pater died last night, and he didn't leave a penny—not a single cent! Carr's a pauper!"

Harry Wharton seized the speaker by the arm.

"Where did you pick up this information?" he demanded.

"Ahem! The—the Head told me in confidence, you know!"

"Rats!"

"You've been listening at the Head's key-hole, you spying worm!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull, I hope I'm above that sort of thing! It's true that my bootlace happened to come undone outside the Head's door, and while I was doing it up I happened to hear the Head telling Carr the whole miserable story. Poor old Carr! I feel rather sorry for him, really. You see, he's got to leave Greyfriars, and go out and earn his living—as an errand-boy, most likely."

The juniors exchanged startled glances.

They could not doubt that Bunter, for once in a way, was telling the truth.

The fact that Dennis Carr had not returned to the Form-room suggested that something was seriously wrong.

"You fellows were chipping Carr yesterday," Bunter went on, "because he didn't come up to the scratch with a subscription. The fact of the matter was, he was broke."

"My hat!"

"At the end of the vac his pater offered him a fiver, but he refused to take it. There had been a quarrel, or something. The result was Carr came back to the school with hardly any pocket-money."

"Oh, help!" gasped Peter Todd. "And I called him a mean rotter!"

"We all thought him mean," said Wharton, "and he was nothing of the sort. He'd have given cheerfully if he'd had the cash."

"Where is Carr now?" asked Bob Cherry.

"In his study," said Bunter. "I expect he feels like putting a bullet through himself. I know I should, in similar circs. I——"

"Bunter!"

It was the stern voice of Mr. Quelch, who had just emerged from the Form-room into the passage.

Billy Bunter stood blinking at the Form-master, his knees fairly knocking together.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Mr. Quelch. "I understood you were in the sanatorium."

"I ought to be, sir," said Bunter. "But the—the fact is, I hadn't the strength to get up there!"

"Boy!"

"I feel awfully weak, sir," Bunter went on. "So weak that I doubt if I shall be able to tackle a fifth helping of pudding at dinner-time. I've got shooting-stabbing pains in the chest and back——"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"You will shortly experience similar pains in the palms of your hands!" he said grimly. "I am convinced that you lied to me at the breakfast-table, when you represented that you were unwell. Follow me into the Form-room, Bunter!"

Very reluctantly, the fat junior obeyed.

In his eagerness to communicate the latest news to the Removites, Billy Bunter had quite overlooked the possibility of being "spotted" by Mr. Quelch.

But he was fairly caught now, and the next moment his yells rang through the Form-room.

Harry Wharton & Co. had no sympathy to waste upon the Owl of the Remove. They went along to Dennis Carr's study.

Dennis was still seated in the armchair. His schoolfellows could tell at a glance that he was utterly "down and out."

"Carr, old fellow," said Mark Linley quietly, "we've just heard bad news about your pater. Is it true?"

Dennis nodded without speaking.

"And is it true that you're leaving Greyfriars?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"But—but why?"

"My term-fees haven't been paid," said the junior dully.

"But surely you've got some rich relations who'll see you through?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Dennis shook his head.

"I haven't a relation in the world now," he said.

There was a long silence in the study.

The looks of Dennis Carr's visitors were very sympathetic. They felt for him in his crushing misfortune. But what could they do to remedy the appalling situation?

"When are you going, Carr?" inquired Wharton, at length.

"To-morrow."

"So soon?"

"There's nothing to stay here for."

Johnny Bull was seized with what he considered a brilliant idea.

"Tell you what, Carr," he said. "You stay on here, and win a scholarship. Other fellows have done it."

"I've got to start earning my own living sooner or later," replied Dennis. "Winning a scholarship would only be putting off the

evil day. I mean to take the plunge at once."

"We're awfully sorry about what happened yesterday!" said Peter Todd. "Why didn't you explain that you were broke?"

"I thought you might not understand. After all, when a fellow tells you at the beginning of a new term that he hasn't any pocket-money, it takes some swallowing."

"We all voted you a mean cad," said Bob Cherry; "and we should like to take that back."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's quite all right," said Dennis. "I could hardly blame you for thinking as you did."

Having attempted, but with scant success, to comfort their stricken schoolfellow, Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the study.

They had originally intended to play football; but, instead, they strolled to and fro in the Close, discussing the tragic situation.

"It's an awful shame that a fellow like Carr should be ruined for the want of a little money," said Harry Wharton.

"And the others agreed."

"I only wish we could help him in some way," Wharton went on. "I'm sure my pater would agree to pay part of Carr's school fees, if the case were explained to him."

"So would mine, like a shot!" said Bob Cherry.

"My uncle would help, too," said Johnny Bull. "He took quite a fancy to Carr the last time he came down."

"Supposing we go and put it to Carr?" suggested Nugent.

"I'm afraid we shall have no luck," said Mark Linley. "Carr's pride wouldn't allow him to accept favours from others."

"Still, we'll put it to him like Dutch uncles," said Bob Cherry.

And the juniors did. They returned to Dennis Carr's study, and asked for permission to write to their parents and guardians, with a view to Dennis being kept on at Greyfriars.

Mark Linley's prophecy proved correct.

Dennis Carr would not hear of such a course.

"It's awfully decent of you fellows to suggest it," he said. "The Head suggested the same thing. But I can't stay here on charity—I simply can't!"

"But think of the alternative!" said Wharton. "Think of all the hardships you'll meet in trying to earn your own living!"

"I've already thought of them," replied Dennis; "and, what's more, I'm ready to face them!"

There was determination in the junior's tone. And Harry Wharton & Co. were obliged to retire from the study realising that there was nothing more to be said.

Dennis Carr had finally and definitely made up his mind to bid good-bye to Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Raising the Wind.

LORD MAULEVERER and Sir Jimmy Vivian, who shared Dennis Carr's study, were very upset to know that they would shortly be losing their study-mate.

They were very much attached to Dennis, and his going would leave a gap which would not easily be filled.

"I wish you would let us help you, begad!" said Mauly, for the tenth time.

But Dennis resolutely refused to accept help, although he knew that the schoolboy earl was simply rolling in riches.

"It's not a scrap of use, Mauly," he said. "You're an awfully good sort—one of the best—but I'm not going to sponge on you."

"It's not spongin', dear boy."

But Dennis seemed to think otherwise. "I hate to behave like a bear with a sore head," he said; "but I'd rather you didn't mention the subject again, Mauly. It only makes things harder for me."

The schoolboy earl nodded sympathetically, and he and Sir Jimmy Vivian quitted the study.

When they had gone Dennis gave himself up to gloomy reflection.

It was a half-holiday, but he naturally didn't feel up to playing football, despite the fact that this was his last chance of a game.

"Time I did my packing," he murmured.

And then it occurred to him for the first time that he lacked the money to pay for his railway-fare to London on the morrow.

It was absolutely essential that the money should be raised; and it would also be necessary for Dennis to have some cash in

hand in order to keep himself in town while he searched for employment.

"My hat!" muttered the junior. "I'm fairly up against it! I've refused help from the fellows. How on earth am I going to raise the wind?"

There was only one solution to this problem, and it occurred to Dennis at length.

He must sell up his belongings. His cricket flannels, his bat, his books, his pictures—all would have to go.

It was not a pleasant prospect, but it was the only way.

Dennis gathered up his belongings, and made a little pile of them on the study table. He was contemplating them rather wistfully, when Fisher T. Fish of the Remove appeared in the doorway.

"Hallo, Carr!" he said. "I just looked in to—"

"Then I think you'd better look out again!" said Dennis.

"I guess—"

"This is no place for guesswork! Buzz off!"

Fisher T. Fish, instead of removing his unwelcome presence, advanced into the study.

"I guess I was wondering if you had anything to give away!" he said.

"Eh?"

"You're quitting this sleepy old place tomorrow. Got any souvenirs to leave behind? Got anything to throw to the mob?"

Dennis stared.

"I'm giving nothing away, if that's what you mean," he said.

"You've got some good stuff there," said Fish, running a critical eye over Dennis Carr's property.

"I know. But I want to sell it—not give it away."

Fish comprehended at once.

"I get you!" he said. "But don't you worry about selling it. Leave that part of the bizney to me. I'll dispose of it by auction in the Rag."

Dennis Carr hesitated.

He realised that it would be a distasteful task to conduct the sale himself.

Why not appoint Fisher T. Fish as his auctioneer?

"I'll see that you get jolly good prices for all this stuff!" said Fish persuasively. "That cricket-bat alone will fetch four dollars."

Dennis smiled faintly.

"I doubt whether it will fetch half-a-crown," he said. "It's the wrong time of the year to sell a bat. If it was the spring—"

"Don't you worry," said Fish confidently. "I'll get four dollars for this hyer bat, or perish in the attempt! In fact, I'll make this auction-sale a roaring success—right from the word go! There are no flies on me, I guess! I get there every time, and the other galoots are left floundering on their backs at the first hurdle! Will you let me see this through for you, Carr?"

"All right!" said Dennis shortly.

"Of course," said Fisher T. Fish, clearing his throat, "I shall deduct ten per cent. from the proceeds of the sale—my commission, you know. You can't expect me to offer my services free, gratis, and for nothing."

"Trust you to look after Number One!" said Dennis. "All right, Fishy. I'll leave it in your hands. But mind you don't run the prices up too high. I don't want the fellows to be swindled!"

Fish chuckled.

"They won't be swindled, bless their hearts!" he said. "Can I take the stuff along to my own study?"

"No; you'd better leave it here until the auction's due to start," said Dennis.

Fisher T. Fish nodded, and withdrew, rubbing his bony hands in anticipation of doing great business.

When Harry Wharton & Co. trooped into the building at tea-time, they found the following announcement on the notice-board:

"NOTICE!

MR. FISHER TARLETON FISH

(of New York City)

has been instructed to sell by public auction, in the Rag, at 8 p.m.,

THE HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE AND

EFFECTS

of

DENNIS CARR,

including a set of Cricket Flannels, a Magnificent Bat, a Fishing-rod, and many Priceless Books and Pictures.

WALK UP! WALK UP! WALK UP!

F-I-S-H SPELLS STRAIGHT DEALING!"

"Rather rich, that!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"I always thought F-i-s-h spelt Fish!"

"And a very fishy Fish at that!" said

Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Carr's a chump!" was Harry Wharton's verdict. "I can quite understand him wanting to get rid of his things. But fancy appointing a shark like Fish to be auctioneer!"

"We'll see that Carr gets a good price for his stuff," said Nugent.

"And we'll also see that Fishy doesn't bag any commission," said Mark Linley.

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of the Remove made up their minds that the auction sale would prove a big success for Dennis Carr, and a ghastly failure so far as Fisher T. Fish was concerned.

Quite a crowd of fellows swarmed into the Rag at the appointed time.

Dennis Carr didn't turn up; but the auctioneer was early on the scene with the property which was about to be sold.

Fish had placed a chair on the table, and he was seated on the chair, which was surrounded by the various items awaiting disposal.

"Roll up, gents!" he said affably. "Auction starts at eight sharp!"

"Want any help, Fishy?" inquired Billy Bunter.

"Go and chop chips!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

When the first stroke of eight sounded from the clock-tower the auctioneer rose to his feet, and from his exalted position he surveyed the big throng of intending purchasers.

"Now, gents," he said briskly, "we have here—"

"A wooden-headed American citizen!" chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order, please! We have here a magnificent array of schoolboy equipment—all going for a mere song! This is to be a lightning sale. I'm not going to make an all-night sitting of it. The first bidders will stand the best chance. Now then, are you ready?"

"Fire away!" exclaimed several voices. The auctioneer picked up Lot No. 1—the set of cricket flannels.

"Gentlemen, see you before you a spotless, speckless set of flannels, suitable either for summer or Christmas wear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't ruin your Etons by wearing 'em when playing games," continued Fish. "This is exactly what every galoot wants so that he can roll in the mud to his heart's content—a set of flannels! Now, gents, what offers?"

Several juniors were about to make humorous bids in the nature of buttons and farthings. But Bob Cherry showed that he meant business by chiming in with:

"One pound!"

The auctioneer beamed.

"One pound I am bid!" he said. "Going—going—"

"Thirty bob!" said Vernon-Smith promptly. "Thirty-five, begad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer.

Mauly's was the final bid. And the cricket flannels were duly handed over to him in exchange for the money.

"Lot No. 2," said Fisher T. Fish, warning to his task, "is a cricket-bat—"

"Well, we didn't imagine it was a fire-engine!" said Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This bat," continued Fish, "is a regular corker! More runs have been made with it than there are hairs on my head! It's a lovely piece of wood—"

"Still talking about your head?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is not the place for jokes, gentlemen—"

"Then take your face away!" growled Johnny Bull.

And there was a fresh outburst of laughter. Fisher T. Fish gave an expressive snort. Then, without going into any further details concerning that wonderful bat, he exclaimed:

"What offers, gentlemen?"

"Ten bob!" said Dick Russell.

"Fifteen" added Bulstrode.

"Seventeen-an'-six!" said Lord Mauleverer. The juniors gasped. Why Mauly, who played cricket only under the strongest compulsion, should want a bat was a mystery.

Fisher T. Fish raised the hammer—borrowed from Gosling's tool-shed.

"Going—going—"
"I bidfully offer the esteemed quidfulness!" said Hurree Singh.

And down went the hammer.

Hurree Singh took the bat, and Fish took the money, Harry Wharton & Co. keeping a sharp eye on him the while, and making a note of the prices which the various articles fetched.

"Lot No. 3," said Fish, "is a fishing-rod—not a common or garden fishing-rod, gentlemen, but a very good-looking specimen, worth four dollars of any galoot's money! With the butt-end of this rod you could stun the biggest fish that ever showed its face out of the water!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What am I offered, gentlemen?"

Bolsever major started the bidding at half-a-crown; but it soared to fifteen shillings before the fishing-rod was disposed of. The purchaser was Frank Nugent.

The next lot consisted of a miscellaneous parcel of books.

Dennis Carr was a wide reader, and he had quite a useful collection of books, including the Waverley Novels. His own particular favourites, however, he had kept back. They would accompany him when he went to London in quest of employment.

The parcel of books realised thirty shillings—quite a useful sum. Half a dozen pictures followed. They were almost valueless, but Harry Wharton & Co., anxious that Dennis Carr should benefit by the auction, paid good prices for them.

It was, as Fish had predicted, a lightning sale, for it was all over in twenty minutes.

"Have you kept a note of the amounts, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton nodded.

"Carr nets exactly eight pounds," he said.

"Good!"

"And it's up to us to see that Fishy hands over the money intact!"

"Yes, rather!"

The auctioneer gathered up the spoils, and made rather a hurried move to the door. On reaching it, however, he found that the Famous Five barred his exit.

"Stand aside, you jays!" said Fish.

"Look here," said Harry Wharton, "we're going to see that you hand over that eight quid to Carr."

"Eight quid? Six, you mean!" said Fish.

"How do you make that out?"

"I'm deducting twenty-five per cent. commission for myself for services rendered," said Fish calmly.

"You spoofer!"

"You swindler!"

"You welsler!"

Fisher T. Fish recoiled as those and other epithets were hurled at him.

"I—I guess—" he stammered.

"March him along!" commanded Harry Wharton.

And the American junior was frog-marched to Dennis Carr's study.

Dennis looked up in surprise as Fisher T. Fish entered under escort.

"What the thump—" he began.

"The auction sale realised exactly eight quid," said Bob Cherry. "We've brought the auctioneer along so that he can hand over the spoils."

Fisher T. Fish blinked wrathfully at the Famous Five.

"I guess you slabsided jays aren't going to swindle me out of my commission!" he exclaimed.

"Dry up!" snapped Wharton. "You're not entitled to a single penny-piece!"

"I conducted the auction—"

"Any other silly chump could have done that. Hand over that money to Carr!"

Very reluctantly Fisher T. Fish obeyed. He deposited a little heap of notes and silver, amounting in all to eight pounds, on the table.

"This is far more than I expected, you fellows," said Dennis. "It looks as if you've paid absurd prices for the stuff, out of pity for me."

"Not at all!" said Nugent. "Your things were sold at fair and reasonable prices, and we're well satisfied with our bargains."

"Hear, hear!"

"I guess and calculate—" began Fish.

"About turn—quick march!" rapped out Bob Cherry.

And the schoolboy auctioneer, whose great expectations had not been realised, was forcibly marched out of the study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Good-bye to Greyfriars!

DENNIS CARR stirred uneasily in his sleep, shivered a little, and awoke.

A strange sense of oppression and impending calamity gripped him.

He stared dazedly into the darkness of the winter morning, and then the realisation of his unfortunate position came home to him with staggering force.

This was his last morning at Greyfriars! Dennis struggled into a sitting posture, and gazed around.

All his schoolfellows appeared to be asleep, and the dormitory was silent save for the unmusical snore of Billy Bunter.

Glancing at his luminous watch, Dennis saw that it wanted half an hour to rising-bell.

The junior laid his head back on the pillow, and reviewed the eventful past—his escapades, adventures, triumphs, and failures.

To think that everything should end like this! To think that he was so soon to shake the dust of Greyfriars from his feet!

After a very shaky start, Dennis had made good, and become captain of the Remove. And now he was called upon to sacrifice that position—to sacrifice everything—because of his father's death.

"The Head was right when he said it was a harsh world!" muttered Dennis.

Why had Fate been so cruel—so terribly relentless?

The death of Dennis' father was a bitter enough blow. But, in addition to this, the junior was plunged into poverty. True, he possessed eight pounds, thanks to the loyalty of Harry Wharton & Co. in rallying round at the auction sale. But eight pounds was not likely to last long in London.

A succession of gloomy thoughts surged through the junior's brain as he lay there, until at length he could stand it no longer.

Dennis slipped out of bed and started to dress.

The darkness of the morning was relieved by a faint glimmer of light which crept in at the high windows.

Dawn!

Dennis had barely finished his toilet when the sombre notes of the rising-bell clanged out on the morning air.

Fellows stirred drowsily in their beds, but Billy Bunter's unmusical snore still went on. It took something more than the clanging of a bell to awaken the fat junior.

Before his schoolfellows were aware of the fact that he was up and doing, Dennis stole from the dormitory with his boots in his hand. He put them on when he reached the landing, and then went quietly down the stairs and emerged into the half-light of the Close.

It was a bleak, cheerless morning—in harmony with the junior's thoughts.

Gosling, the porter, with a surly frown on his face, was tramping back towards his lodge.

"Young rip!" snorted Gosling, as he caught sight of Dennis. "Which I'm sure you're up to some lark or other gettin' out of bed so early!"

Gosling knew nothing of the crisis which had arisen in Dennis Carr's affairs, or he would have spoken less harshly.

Without replying to the porter's remark, Dennis began to pace to and fro beneath the old elms.

He had originally decided not to leave Greyfriars until the afternoon, but he amended that decision now. He felt that he could not bear to look upon the familiar sights and scenes of Greyfriars much longer.

Shortly before breakfast Dennis made his way to the Head's study. Dr. Locke was already at work.

"Well, Carr?" he said, when the junior entered.

"There's a train leaving for London in an hour, sir," said Dennis. "Have I your permission to catch it?"

"But I understood your were not going until this afternoon!"

Dennis explained that he preferred to take the plunge quickly.

"Very well," said the Head. "Have you made any plans, my boy, with regard to the future?"

"None, sir."

Dr. Locke looked grave.

"You cannot go to London without a definite object in view," he said.

"I shall hunt for work, sir."

"And supposing, you fail to find it?"

Dennis shrugged his shoulders.

"Then I shall starve, sir."

"This is nonsense!" said the Head. "I can-

not allow you to face such a possibility. Have you no friends in London to whom you can apply for assistance?"

Dennis was about to answer in the negative when he remembered his father's solicitors, Messrs. Chambers & Temple.

"There's Mr. Chambers, sir," he said. "He may be able to do something. But I should prefer to get a job by my own efforts. If I have no luck I shall approach Mr. Chambers."

Dr. Locke nodded.

"That will be far better than running the risk of starvation," he said.

At the end of a further conversation the Head extended his hand.

"Good-bye, my boy! Do not leave me in ignorance of what happens to you when you reach London."

"I'll write, sir," promised Dennis. "I—I'm awfully grateful to you for your kindness to me! Good-bye!"

After taking his farewell of the Head, Dennis Carr went along to his study and collected his trunk. It was empty save for the few books from which he could not bring himself to part.

The corridors were deserted as Dennis carried his trunk out into the Close.

All the fellows were at breakfast, but Dennis himself had no appetite just then.

Leaving his trunk in the Close, the junior proceeded to the dining-hall.

He opened the door, advanced a yard or so into the large room, and then, in a voice which sounded suspiciously husky, he said:

"Good-bye, all!"

At the sight of Dennis Carr every fellow had stopped eating. Even Billy Bunter had suspended operations upon his eggs-and-bacon.

A loud murmur arose—a murmur which quickly swelled into a roar.

"Good-bye, Carr!"

"Good luck!"

A sudden mist rose before Dennis Carr's eyes.

In that moment he felt afraid—afraid that he might make a fool of himself. So he turned quickly and quitted the hall. And when he stepped out again into the gloomy Close he broke down completely, sobbing as if his heart would break.

It was hard—it was terribly hard—to part from everything that life held dear.

Meanwhile the Famous Five, together with Mark Linley, Lord Mauleverer, and Sir Jimmy Vivian, had jumped to their feet.

"Sit down, my boys," said Mr. Quelch, not unkindly.

"May we go to the station and see Carr off, sir?" asked Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch hesitated.

"We want to cheer him up, sir," said Bob Cherry. "He'll be awfully down in the dumps unless he's got some pals with him at the finish."

"Very well," said the Remove-master, "you may go."

The eight juniors left their breakfast unfinished, to the delight of Billy Bunter, who promptly made a rich haul.

Dennis Carr had pulled himself together when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived in the Close.

"What do you mean by trying to give us the slip, Dennis?" exclaimed Bob Cherry sternly. "Hand over that trunk! We're coming to see you off!"

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

It was useless for Dennis to protest.

His schoolfellows accompanied him to the railway-station, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull carrying the almost empty trunk between them.

When the London train came in, Dennis turned to his chums with a smile. Not one of them realised how much that smile cost him.

"Good-bye, you fellows! Good-bye! I shall never forget how decent you've all been to me. Good-bye, Manly! Good-bye, Marky—the best pal any fellow ever had!"

Dennis shook hands all round, and stepped into a third-class carriage.

The guard waved his flag, and the train rumbled slowly out of the little station.

Dennis Carr had gone!

With heavy hearts Harry Wharton & Co. retraced their steps to the old school.

Had they seen the last of their chum?

Was it indeed a case of good-bye, or was it merely au revoir?

THE END.

(Another grand, long, complete school story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "An Uphill Fight." Order your copy in advance.)



REGGIE THE RECKLESS.

A Magnificent New
Long Complete
Story of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Going to the Bow-wows!

LET him alone!" said D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third.

"The worst of letting him alone," answered Levison minor, "is—" "That doesn't matter. The worst of taking any notice of him is that it makes him think he's it! And he's a jolly sight too much inclined to think that already!"

It was of Reggie Manners that they talked. The three minors—as Wally D'Arcy, Frank Levison, and Reggie Manners were sometimes called by their chums—were pretty good friends, on the whole.

But Reggie was quite the most troublesome member of Wally's little band. He admitted Wally's right to the leadership only by fits and starts, and was apt to kick whenever he remembered to do so. He seemed to think that he had as good a right to boss the show as Wally; and that youth, who had taken his place as leader of the Third before Reggie had even been heard of at St. Jim's, quite naturally could not see it in that way.

"Manners major is worried about him," remarked Frank.

"Can't help that. We've enough to do looking after our own bizny, without bothering ourselves about our majors, or each other's majors," replied Wally.

"Manners major is a good sort," argued Frank.

"So is my major, come to that. But I let him look after himself—mostly. Your major's a good sort, and you might do the same."

"Ernie doesn't need looking after!" flashed Frank, colouring.

But there had been a time when Ernest Levison had needed just that, and when his minor had done more than anyone else to pull him into the straight path. Talbot had helped, and Gussy and Tom Merry had taken a hand; but little Frank had done most.

"Fact of the matter is, you're a lot too tender-hearted, Franky," Wally said.

"Oh, that's rot! Reggie's a pal of ours, and what's the good of a chap if he won't do something for a pal?"

"I'm willing to do something for Reggie. I'm willing to knock the stuffing out of the sulky young bouncer!"

"But that wouldn't do any good, Wally!"

"No, I suppose not. He's a queer young freak!"

Wally spoke as though it must be a very queer freak that objected to reformation by the simple method of having the stuffing knocked out of him. But Frank did not see things in quite the same light. He had even a suspicion that Wally himself might have had some slight objection to that method when applied to himself.

Not that Wally needed reformation, of

course. In Frank's eyes Wally was very near indeed to perfection.

"Look here, is he going to play this afternoon, now Buttercup's dropped out of the team?" Frank asked.

"May as well let him, I suppose. He's a beastly young slacker; but he can play, and most of the other kids can't."

"Well, you might tell him, Wally. I dare say that will bring him round a bit."

Wally grunted. He was not sure that he was in any hurry to bring Reggie round.

Wally & Co. were the backbone of the Third footer team, though to make up an eleven it was necessary to include four others.

They were all capable, and they were all sure of their places. That made no difference to five of the six who followed the lead of D'Arcy minor, Frank Levison, Joe Frayne, Curly Gibson, Hobbs, and Jameson never slacked.

But Reggie Manners did slack at times. On his best form he was very near being the pick of the six, though Frank was more reliable, and Jameson more powerful, and Hobbs faster, and Joe Frayne trickier.

Reggie had been slacking a good deal lately. He had told Wally once that "footer wasn't everything"—a speech which had annoyed not only Wally, but all the rest as well. It might be true. They were interested in other things besides footer. But when offered as an excuse for wretchedly bad play, it was one of those half-truths which are said to be worse than lies.

It had done more than anything else to move Wally to a very drastic action—no less than leaving Reggie out of the Third team.

And that had led to Reggie's sulking and refusing to speak to Wally, which in turn had led to Frank's worrying. Wally would not admit that he was worried.

But he was rather glad of the chance to include Reggie after all.

The sore throat which had sent Butt to sanny gave him that chance. And it was likely enough that Reggie might make all the difference to winning or losing the game—a match with a preparatory school recently started at Wayland. For a shocking display on the part of Manners minor was as often as not followed by something very like brilliance.

"You can go and tell him, Franky!" Wally said. "The sulky young beast won't speak to me, and I don't see why I should lower myself to speak to him!"

"Tisn't lowering yourself, fathead! You're the skipper of the team. Besides, why should you be sulky just because Reggie's sulky?"

"Well, I'm not going to—that's flat! You can go. I'll put his name on the list instead of Butt's; but you know that he's just as

likely to pretend that he never saw it, and leave us a man short at the last minute!"

Frank knew that that was true. It was the kind of trick which Reggie, in sullen mood, would take a perverse pleasure in playing. But he should have no excuse for playing it. Frank made up his mind to that.

"Right-ho! You go and alter the list, and I'll go and tell Reggie," he said.

They parted. Frank found Reggie—in bad company.

Reuben Piggott was by long odds the worst fellow in the Third. He was the Form's one black sheep, and Wally & Co. regarded him as quite outside the limits.

But Manners minor had more than once chummed up with Piggott and with Piggott's patrons of the Shell—Racke and Crooke. And now it appeared that he was chumming up with Piggott again.

"I want to speak to you, Reggie," said Frank.

"What's hindering you, then?" returned Reggie. "Has D'Arcy minor told you that you're not to?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Piggott.

Frank ignored him.

"That's rot, and you know it!" he said warmly. "Look here, Buttercup's out of the team for this afternoon!"

"Well?"

"And Wally's put you down in his place."

"Has he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Piggott, as though Reggie's insolent manner of receiving the news struck him as the very cream of humour.

"Yes, he has," answered Frank, still ignoring Piggott. "The question is whether you're going to play."

"Oh, there's no question about that!" said Reggie.

"Right-ho! I'll go and tell him you will."

"It doesn't matter to me what lies you tell him. But that one will be a whacker!"

Now at length Frank was getting angry. He was a patient little chap, and had a real talent for peacemaking. But this was more than he could stand.

"Do you think it matters to me whether you play or not?" he flashed. "I didn't come to you for my own sake."

"Don't put yourself out for me, young Levison!" sneered Reggie.

"I'm not going to. Then I'm to tell Wally you refuse?"

"Tell him that my pal Piggott and I are going over to Wayland together on purpose to see you kids licked!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Piggott.

Frank would not even glance at him. He gave Reggie just one look of reproach, and walked away.

"The young cad!" said Wally, when he

heard. "He's going straight to the bow-wows—that's about the size of it!"
 "It does look rather like it," admitted Frank, thinking of Piggott.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Match With Prospect House.

"HALLO! Which of you is captain?" asked a tall, slim fellow of fourteen or so, with fair hair, as Wally and the rest of the Third-Formers got off their bikes before a big red-brick house on the far side of Wayland.

"I am," replied Wally.
 The St. Jim's boys knew little about Prospect House, the preparatory school recently started at Wayland. A challenge had come for a junior team from St. Jim's, and had reached Tom Merry. He had handed it on to Wally. Tom Merry's team did not play preparatory schools. For any practical purpose that team might be held the second Eleven at St. Jim's, and it was not so long since the big majority of its members had turned out for the school team at Westwood, and had helped the side to a victory against heavy odds.

But if the fair-haired youngster was to be accepted as a sample of what Prospect House could put in the field, then Prospect House was assuredly no kindergarten.

"My name's Vere. I'm skipper of our team," said the fair-haired boy easily.
 He was waiting at the gate alone, garbed for the fray, and quite cool and self-reliant. And there was something about him that suggested he could play.

"Mine's D'Arcy—D'Arcy minor," answered Wally.
 "Oh! I thought the junior skipper at St. Jim was Merry," answered Vere.

"We're the Third Form Eleven. Tom Merry's team don't play kids, you know," Wally said.

"Don't they? Well, I think we could have given them a game. But I mustn't grumble at what they've sent us. Come along and change."

The fags, not feeling quite pleased, followed Vere; and Piggott and Reggie Manners, who had dismounted just behind, followed them. Vere led the way to a small but very ornate pavilion, before which stretched a pitch that looked fit for bowls, so true and so beautifully kept it was. By the side of it was another pitch, which showed signs of wear and tear.

"That's our practice-ground," said Vere, indicating the latter. "What d'ye think of the top-pitch?"

"Top hole!" answered Wally promptly. But he could not help resenting ever so slightly the other fellow's swank.

The rest of the Prospect House team were kicking a ball about near one of the goals. They averaged a year or more in age and an inch or two more in height than the Third-Formers, and looked a very hefty lot. But Wally & Co. were not dismayed.

"A lickin' for our young bounders, by gad!" said Piggott, who modelled his speech on that of Racke and Crooke.

That sneer was very like Racke and Crooke, too; and, somehow, Reggie, though he tried to persuade himself that a licking for Wally's band was what he wanted, did not quite like it.

"Looks something like that," he growled.
 "But you never know."

"I'll give you five to one in bobs on Prospect House," said Piggott.

"I don't bet against my own side," grunted Reggie.

"You mean you're afraid to bet at all, by gad!" gibed Piggott.

"I'm not afraid, Piggy. But I don't hanker after having to sit on a chap to make him shell out what he owes me, and that's what has to be done to you before you settle up!"

Piggott's sallow face was mottled with red.

"Look here, Manners minor—" he began.
 "You know it's true!" snapped Reggie.

Piggott did know it to be true, and the knowledge rather handicapped him in argument. He took refuge in sulks.

"If that's your tone, I'm off!" he said.
 "Oh, don't be a fathead!" retorted Reggie.

"Aren't we going to the pictures and to tea after this farce is over?"

"An' because of that you think you can say what you like to me, I suppose?" snarled Piggott.

"I say what I like to anybody. That's why I've quarrelled with D'Arcy minor. If you want me to quarrel with you—"

"I don't. But you might be civil."
 Reuben Piggott had rather a lonely time of it in the Third, and it was only once in a way that his exalted patrons of the Shell condescended to take him into their pleasures. He would have been glad to pal up with Reggie, after the fashion of his kind. That is to say, he would have gone about with Reggie, accepted a half of all that his pal had, doled out to his pal a twentieth or so of what came his way, done with him the things which should not be done, and left him in the lurch when the hour of reckoning came.

But that was not what such fellows as Wally D'Arcy and Frank Levison considered being pals; and Reggie, silly as he was, had just sense enough to see the difference.

Now the St. Jim's youngsters emerged from the pavilion in their red shirts and white shorts, and Wally and Vere tossed.

Wally lost, and Vere chose to kick with the slight breeze that was stirring, and with the bright sunshine at his back.

As the teams lined up the disparity between them looked more marked. Vere's side had hardly weight enough to have stood any chance against Tom Merry's team; but it looked strong and heavy beside Wally's.

D'Arcy minor himself faced Vere at centre-forward. On his right were Frank Levison and Hobbs. Joe Frayne and Watson were on the left, the latter filling the place which should have been Reggie's.

Curly Gibson, Kent, and O'Toole were the halves. Jameson, a tower of strength at back, had with him Bury, also of the New House, who was not such a tower of strength, but was the best available. Leggatt kept goal. He was not too reliable, but he had his good days; and, anyway, the job between the sticks is not a popular one with young footballers. Leggatt, told to go in goal, went, without even a stuttered remonstrance. That was more than Wally could count on any of his chums doing.

At the start the superior weight and strength of the Prospect House boys told heavily. Vere went through on his own, tumbling over Kent, dashing past Bury, and tricking Jameson. Leggatt had no chance.

"A-ku-ku-ku-couldn't help it, Wally!" he gasped.

"That's all right. I know you couldn't," said Wally.

But Leggatt ought to have stopped the second goal, which came within five minutes, for Jameson kept side by side with Vere, and forced him at last to shoot from a difficult angle. The shot trickled through, and Leggatt stood and stared at the ball in the net as though he really could not understand how it had come there.

"They're goin' to get it in the neck!" chortled Piggott, in unholy glee. "I'll bet you they're beaten by double figures, Manners!"

"I don't bet," growled Reggie.

"Will you bet they don't get beaten at all? I'll give you ten to one that they are!"
 "I'll give you ten to one, come to that!"
 "Then I'll take it, by gad!"

Reggie stared at Piggott. But there was method in that youth's seeming madness. He would only lose a shilling in the unlikely event—as it seemed to him—of the Third Form's pulling off the match; and he had induced Reggie to bet against his own side, the very thing he had said he would not do.

A third goal came very soon, from a well-concerted bout of passing by the Prospect House forward line. Vere shot it, and Wally noticed that the other forwards appeared to look to Vere to shoot the goals.

"Franky," he said, "I'm going to shift you."
 "Where to?" asked Frank.

"To centre-half. That long-legged, fair beggar is all over Kent. Your game is to stick to him, and see that Jamface gets a chance. Kent isn't too bad forward."
 "Right-ho!" replied Frank cheerily.

He looked a midget by the side of Vere. Those long legs ought to be able to outstrip him easily, one might have thought. But Frank was very quick, and his tackling was first-rate. He could not be passed and beaten; though he might be passed, he would make ground again, and stick to his man.

"I'm rather afraid that your people sent us the wrong team!" remarked the referee, a very young master, to Wally.

"Think so, sir?" returned the leader of the Third, quite cheerily. "We haven't started yet, you know."

"Isn't it almost time you had?" said the master, with a friendly smile.

"We're just going to," Wally replied, taking his stand behind the ball.

He tipped it to Kent, who, in accordance

with instructions, sent it out at once to Hobbs—a nice pass which Frank could not have bettered.

Hobbs got away. He had pace, and this was the first chance that had come to him.

He meant to make the most of it, and he eluded his rival outside-wing man and the half behind him in fine style. Reggie had all he knew how to keep from cheering. He managed to refrain by dint of telling himself that Hobbs was one of the worst of the gang—the gang being Reggie's real chums, who had stood by him in more than one tight place.

Now Hobbs swung in towards goal, and the ball still kept close to his toe. He drew a back towards him, and then centred.

The ball was coming straight for Wally, and the other Prospect House back naturally came straight for him, too. Wally and he met just in front of the leather, which was still travelling at a good pace.

It looked as though Wally had overshot it; but that was not the case.
 "Take it, Joe!" he cried.

Joe Frayne, quite unmarked, ran in, trapped, steadied himself, and beat the goal-keeper all ends up before Wally's opponent could get round and get at him.

"That wasn't so bad," said Reggie, unable to keep up his pose of indifference.

"A fluke!" sneered Piggott.

"It's the kind of fluke that wants a lot of doing, Piggy!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The End of the Match.

NOW the game became more even, though rather more than half of it was in St. Jim's territory.

Wally's judgment had not been at fault. The Prospect House forward line consisted of five speedy players, who could dribble and pass; but Vere was the only one of them who could shoot. That may have been due to the fact that he had coached the others to let him have the ball near goal. It was clear that he was the dominating personality of the side. But, however that might be, the recognition of it made no end of difference; and probably not one fellow in twenty of Wally's age would have twigged it so soon, if at all.

Now Vere got few chances to shoot. Frank stuck to him in the gamest possible fashion, and Jameson watched his chance to get at him and charge him off the ball—a feat Frank could not achieve, but one which was quite in the line of the burly New House junior.

Vere gave his colleagues the tip, and presently they began to try shots on their own. But there was little danger from these. They were weak attempts, with which Leggatt easily dealt. And dealing with them did Leggatt good—gave him back the confidence he had lost. By-and-by, when Frank had slipped and fallen and Jameson had charged in vain, he surprised everyone by running boldly out and getting to the leather before Vere, who had kicked it a trifle too far ahead, could reach it.

"Bravo, Leg!" howled Wally.
 Reggie checked himself only just in time. His mouth had been open to echo that shout.

Now Piggott tried a fresh tack.

"If they'd only got you there, old top, I do believe they'd pull it off even now," he said.

Reggie only grunted.
 "Watson isn't so dusty, but he's not a patch on you—hasn't the pace or the cleverness," continued Piggott.

The flattery was grateful, the more so that Reggie knew that, though Piggott seldom told the truth, he was telling it now.

Watson at his best was not equal to Reggie at Reggie's best, though Watson's form today was far ahead of what Reggie had displayed in the last match.

"It's my own fault I'm not playing!" growled Reggie.

"Well, I shouldn't say that," replied Piggott.

"I was asked."

"Yes, after a third-rater like Butt had dropped out, by gad! An insult to one of the best men of the side, I should call that!"

Reggie's breast swelled, and he tried to persuade himself that Piggott was right: He was longing to be in the fray. He would rather have been in goal, even, than right outside of it all like this.

Some of the other fags had turned up to watch. But they did not join Piggott and Manners minor. They clustered on the other side of the pitch, and yelled frantically

whenever a Third-Former did anything notable.

Half-time came with the score still 3-1, and the sections of lemon were politely handed round by Vere.

"You're giving us quite a decent game, after all," said that lordly young gentleman to Wally.

Wally looked at him hard. Wally of the Third was not accustomed to condescension, and had no use for it. A hot retort trembled on his lips.

But he contented himself with saying:

"I think we are. May lick you yet, you know?"

"Three to one you don't!" replied Vere.

"We don't bet!" said Wally, with some severity.

"Not any of you?" queried Vere, with raised eyebrows.

This was Reggie's chance to assert himself. He and Piggott had drawn up close to the players.

"I'll take you on!" he said.

Vere turned. Wally frowned, but said nothing. Jameson growled:

"You've nothing to do with this, young Manners!"

"Done with you!" said Vere, holding out his hand.

He might have been less ready had the taker of the odds been the sallow and crafty-looking Piggott. But Reggie Manners, when he was not scowling, was open-faced and attractive, the sort of fellow whom Vere and his comrades were likely to accept at once as of their own type.

"Bobs?" said Reggie.

"Right-ho!"

"Well, it isn't quite so bad as though the young bouncer was betting against his own side!" muttered Wally to Frank.

Piggott heard that, and made a mental note of it.

"Not quite," answered Frank.

"Anybody else on?" asked Vere.

The Prospect House fellows seemed to hold different views from the St. Jim's Third as to betting on matches. The young master must have heard; but he said nothing.

"Not any of my team!" Wally said, with decision. "We don't care about it."

Then the master spoke.

"Quite right!" he said. "It's silly, Vere!"

"Oh, there's no harm in it, sir!" replied the home captain airily.

"I'm on!" said Piggott.

"I won't do any more, thank you, as Mr. Ralf objects," Vere replied.

In spite of his slight swank, he had quite a charming way. There was not a trace of resentment or sulkiness in his reference to the master.

Reggie began to wish that he were at Prospect House instead of at St. Jim's. He was sure that Vere and Vere's pals would suit him.

The teams lined up again. Vere kicked off, and Leggatt had to save within half a minute.

He saved quite neatly, and Jameson cleared with a lofty kick. The ball fell near Frank, who was on it in a twinkling, and tipped it to Joe Frayne. Joe slung out to Watson, and Watson rushed down the touch-line and centred as well as Reggie could have done it himself.

Wally got the leather, touched it past one back, tumbled over the other, and ran into goal, giving the custodian no chance.

Three-two! Not such a certainty for Prospect House now!

Less than ever a certainty ten minutes later, when Hobbs scored with a shot from a very awkward position.

Half an hour to go, and the score equal—anybody's game!

And now something that had not shown up in the early stages of the game began to tell.

The Prospect House boys were less fit than the St. Jim's fags. It was not difficult to guess that they had an easier time of it in many ways—did more as they liked, and slacked off more. They lacked the example that Wally and the rest had in the athletes of the Middle School at St. Jim's. Vere and his crowd were more of a law to themselves.

The Third Form began to get quite unmistakably the upper hand. Vere had almost played himself out, and his right-wing pair had faded away to mere passengers. But the halves showed up well still, and the backs were better than at the outset, so that, though the visiting forwards kept the ball for the most part near the home goal, they

failed to score during more than twenty-five minutes.

"He's called young Levison up again!" said Reggie suddenly.

"Fat lot of use that will be!" sneered Piggott. "Probably let Vere through, by gad!"

But Wally knew that there was no longer any real danger of that. Vere's bolt was shot; Jameson was all over him now. So Kent was sent back to his original place, and Frank returned to the forward line.

Reggie watched with parted lips. In the ordinary way the Third forward line was Wally & Co.—that is, five of the seven, only Curly Gibson and Jameson figuring in the defence. And those five had practised many movements together; in fact, it was partly Wally's keenness for constant practice of these movements which caused Manners minor to get a trifle fed up with footer.

If Reggie had been in Watson's place, Wally would certainly have tried one special movement in which he had great faith. It had earned the Third a goal against Tom Merry's team, and Tom Merry himself had praised it. But Watson could hardly be depended upon for his part; he might mull the whole business.

Wally was trying it, though!

He had tapped the ball to Joe Frayne on his left. Joe made a little ground outwards, as though he meant to send on the leather to Watson, and drew the centre-half towards him. Then, quick as a flash, he swept the ball to the right, straight to the feet of Frank, unmarked.

Frank trapped nicely, and an on until threatened by a back. Wally was close up, Hobbs out on the right, much farther away. The pass to Wally was an easy and obvious move, and Wally would have had a chance.

But it was to Hobbs that Frank slung the leather, he and Wally both hanging back a little so as to keep behind it and avoid getting offside.

Then Hobbs, with one of the accurate long kicks that were his special forte, slung it right across goal, and Wally, Frank, and Joe all rushed in.

A Prospect House back touched the ball first, but could not clear. Joe nipped it away from him. Joe might have passed to Wally or Frank; but Reggie knew that, had he been there, Joe would have passed to him, for that was the game as schemed.

Reggie was not there, but Watson was, and in place, just as if he expected what was coming. Reggie thought it quite cheeky of him, but felt sure he would be disappointed.

But, coolly, without even a glance, Joe backheeled to his colleague, and Watson shot on the run, a high shot that took the ball in just under the bar—a fine shot that won the game for the Third!

And the glory of that winning shot might have been Reggie's!

Anybody's fault but his, of course—Wally's for leaving him out of the team at first; Watson's, for having the sheer cheek to take his part in a concerted movement that he had never practised, though he had often seen it tried; Joe Frayne's for putting such foolish faith in Watson—anybody's! Reggie felt sick, not because his side had won, but because he had missed his share in the victory.

"Another beastly fluke!" said Piggott, by his side.

"Oh, you're a silly fool!" snarled Reggie.

"You don't know footer from hopscotch!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Worse Than Ever.

"MY hat, that was a game!" said Vere, taking the unexpected licking wonderfully well. "But I think we'll turn the tables when we meet again."

"We lasted a bit the best; that was all there was in it," answered Wally.

"Well, come along to tea as soon as you're changed," Vere said. "Oh, I say, I owe you three bob! Haven't got it here, though. Come up to the house with me. You'll stay to tea, won't you?"

This was to Reggie, and it soothed his ruffled feelings for the moment.

He glanced towards Piggott.

"Oh, your pal too, if he care to," said Vere. "The merrier!"

But he did not look as though he counted on Piggott's adding greatly to the merriment of the party.

Piggott went. This was just the kind of place that he would have taken some trouble

to get his nose into. The Prospect House boys seemed what he called "sporty." They also seemed to have pocket-money in abundance.

They cleared off to change at the school, leaving the pavilion to the visitors. But a couple of non-players were left to escort Wally and the rest to the house. Vere certainly had nice manners, they thought.

He left Reggie and Piggott in his study while he went to change.

Piggott mooched round, inspecting everything in a way Reggie thought rather off. But Piggott was always like that, and it was no use saying anything to him. Reggie thought he ought to have seen that he was not really wanted. But that kind of thing made no odds to Piggott.

"Pack of cards!" he said, opening a drawer in the table.

"Leave 'em alone!" snapped Reggie.

Piggott shut the drawer just in time. Another second and Vere would have seen that he was prying. Reggie went cold all over at the thought of such a catastrophe. He would have felt it far more than Piggott would have done.

"Want to wash your hands?" asked Vere. "Come along to the bath-room."

They went with him.

"I say, Vere, what's your particular game?" asked Piggott, making dirty marks on a towel after a very poor show of washing.

Piggott's ways were not nice, and Reggie felt that Vere was just the fellow to notice them.

"Oh, cricket, I think," answered Vere. "Footer's all right, but cricket's best."

Piggott sniffed.

"I don't mean that sort of game," he returned. "I mean card games."

Reggie nudged him hard. But Piggott only squirmed impatiently.

"Auction bridge. We play a lot of that at home," Vere replied.

"Ah, that's one of my games," said Piggott.

"Is it?"

That was all Vere said. Reggie wondered whether he suspected the cause of Piggott's inquiry. One thing was plain—Vere did not take to Piggott.

Quite a lavish spread was set out in the dining-hall and the Third Form players were already at the tables. Wally elevated his eyebrows when he saw Reggie, and gave something like a low whistle on perceiving Piggott behind him, but said nothing.

There were two masters present, and that fact had some restraining influence on Piggott, though it had none on the rest. But then they did not need the same kind of restraint that Piggott did. They were not itching to transfer to their own pockets some of the Prospect House fellows' superfluous cash, as Piggott was.

Mr. Ralf got up and made a very friendly little speech after the meal was over. He said that the game of the afternoon had been no end good, and that he trusted Prospect House and the St. Jim's Third would have many more such meetings, both at footer and cricket. He promised, at Wally's request, to come over to St. Jim's and referee the return, and said he regarded the invitation as a compliment, as it really was, since the Third might have expected to put in a referee of their own for that match.

Then he and the other master went, after the latter had said that the two teams had twenty minutes or so remaining to cement their comradeship in.

Hardly were they out of the door before Piggott turned to Vere and said:

"Couldn't we work a game of 'auction' now, old sport?"

"No time," answered Vere, with frigidly very plain to everyone but Piggott.

"Oh, I don't suppose that twenty minutes is the real limit," Piggott said, winking.

Vere turned his back on him.

Within the time named the St. Jim's fags made ready for going. Vere and half a dozen others came to the gate with them.

Wally & Co. rode off in high feather. They had had an afternoon in every way to their taste.

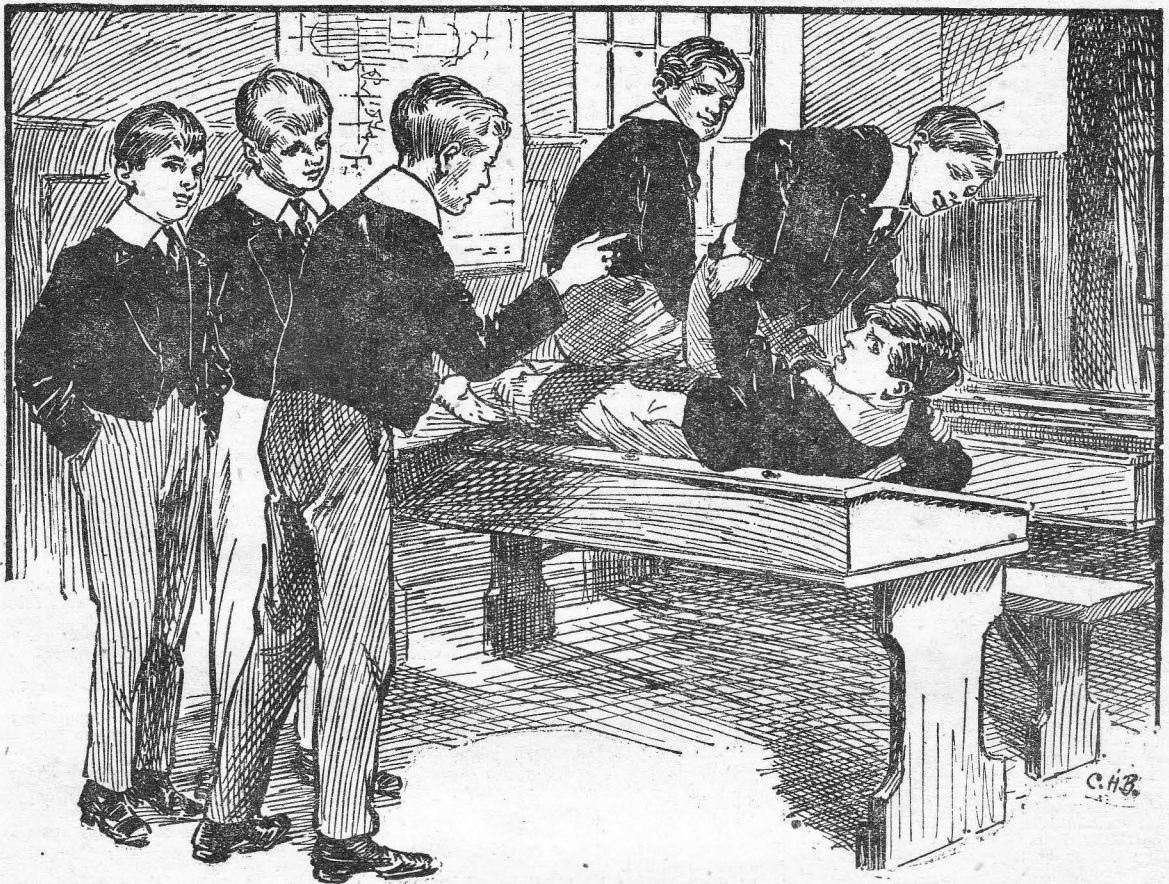
"Decent kids!" said Vere, in his lordly way. Someone nudged him, and he saw that two of the visitors had not gone.

"Oh, I didn't twig that you fellows were here," he said lightly. "You needn't tell D'Arcy that I called him and the rest kids. I didn't mean it rudely."

"We're not likely to," replied Reggie. "We aren't on speaking terms with young D'Arcy."

Vere's blue eyes opened widely.

"Rather a pity, that!" he said slowly. "He struck me as quite the right sort."



"Oh, go for him!" howled Jameson. Reggie Manners was bowled over like a ninepin and sat upon. "What shall we do with him?" asked Hobbs. "A dozen with old Selby's cane," said Wally. "He deserves it for being such a cad!"

"Oh, he's no sport," sneered Piggott. "Are you any judge?" countered Vere. The two mounted. "Look us up again some time," said Vere. "Right-ho! Thanks!" answered Reggie. It was to him the invitation had been given, but Piggott also took it. "We will," he said warmly. "A game of 'auction,' eh, Vere?"

No answer was made to that. "What did you keep harping on cards for, you silly fathead?" asked Reggie, when they were clear of the gate.

"Can't you see that Vere's keen?" replied Piggott.

"Do you mean on you? Blessed if I can!" Piggott sulked nearly all the way home after that.

Reggie might have known that he would have to pay for it. But he had forgotten completely that he had put himself into Piggott's hands. By the time they reached St. Jim's he had very nearly made up his mind to a reconciliation with his chums.

He wanted very much to play in the return with Prospect House a fortnight hence, and he was thoroughly fed up with Piggott.

But Piggott had other views. Even to him, thick as was his hide, it was plain that he would not be a welcome visitor to Prospect House alone. But he was sure that he could squeeze in there in Reggie's company, and he had no notion of letting Reggie make it up with Wally and Frank and the rest.

When prep was over, and Mr. Selby had taken his sour face out of the Form-room, Piggott struck the blow he had been meditating.

"I say, Manners," he said, taking care that everyone present should hear him. "I hate to bother you, you know; but I'm dashed hard up. Is it convenient for you to shell out that half-quad you owe me?"

Reggie stared as if he could not believe his ears. He had forgotten all about that foolish bet.

"Half-quad I owe you?" he said. "What do I owe you any half-quad for?" Then his face flamed crimson, for suddenly he remembered.

"You bet me ten to one that Prospect House would win," replied Piggott, leering unpleasantly.

"You rotter, Manners!" roared Hobbs. "Just because he wasn't playing himself!" snorted Curly Gibson.

"It's the outside edge!" snapped Wally. "Bad enough for you to go betting with Vere, young Manners—that let us down—but to lay against your own side, and with a cad like Piggy!"

"I didn't—I wasn't—I mean, it wasn't like that!" spluttered Reggie. "You'd no right to say anything about it, Piggott."

"You don't deny it, then?" said Jameson. Reggie's retort to that was very weak indeed.

"You've no right here, Jamface! Get over to your own kennel! All the other New House puppies have gone!"

"Oh, go for him!" howled Jameson. And he led the rush upon Reggie which followed.

Wally and Frank did not share in the rush. But they watched it without disapproval. Reggie was tumbled over and sat upon.

"What shall we do to him?" asked Hobbs.

Wally went to Mr. Selby's desk. That gentleman had left out a cane—a very appropriate emblem to represent him in his absence.

"A dozen with this," said Wally. "He deserves it for being such a young cad! Then we'll take him back if he throws over Piggy and all the other works of the—ahem!"

"Take me back, will you? Think I'll crawl to you on my hands and knees and ask to be forgiven, do you? Likely, isn't it?" roared Reggie, struggling hard. "Lay that cane on me once—only just once—any one of you, and I'll never speak to a fellow among you again, there!"

"It's not going to be once," answered

Wally. "Who'll take on the job? I don't care about it."

"Is it worth while, Wally?" asked Frank. Reggie's furious face hurt him somehow.

"Rather!" roared Jameson. "Give me that cane, Wally! I'll make him sit up!"

Jameson did not mean that quite literally, for Hobbs and Curly Gibson, by holding Reggie down, rendered his sitting-up a physical impossibility.

But in the sense in which it was intended the threat was carried out. There was a touch of the bully in Jameson at times, and he evidently liked this job.

When he had finished, Reggie had bitten almost through his lower lip to keep himself from crying out. But he had not cried out.

All the red had gone from his face now. He confronted them, as pale as death, with a wild look in his eyes. That caning would have meant nothing but bodily pain to Piggott, and very little more to Jameson or Hobbs; but it seemed to Reggie to scar his very soul.

"All right!" he said. "I used to think you fellows were my chums, but I shall never make that mistake again. I don't care what happens to me now—why should I, after I've been treated like this? Don't you forget what I've said! I mean it!"

And he broke from Frank's detaining clasp and rushed out of the room.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Reckless Reggie!

"SILLY young ass! He's going from bad to worse," said Wally. "Smokin' cigarettes, and poring over pink sporting papers, and loafing round with that outsider Piggy. He'll get the boot if he isn't jolly careful!"

"But he won't be careful," replied Frank. "That's just it. If he's to be saved we shall have to save him."

"Blessed if I'm going to bother about him!" growled Wally. "Let the sulky young sweep go his own silly way!"

"Wally, don't you care about Reggie any more?" pleaded Frank.

"Don't you be soft, young Levison! Care about him! Why should I? I never did particularly, come to that. He was always rather an outsider."

"He's been our pal, Wally!"

"Yes, he has. And now he isn't any longer, and it's all his own rotten fault! I'm not going to do anything, and I advise you not to."

Frank found that advice hard to take. He knew that at heart Wally wanted to be friends again with Reggie, but was just as stiff-necked as Manners minor himself.

But he might have steered clear of Reggie for a while but for a few words he had with Manners major.

"Frank," said Harry Manners, meeting him outside the School House, "what's wrong between you kids and my minor?"

"Well, we aren't very chummy just now, that's a fact, Manners," confessed Frank, with downcast eyes.

"You're not chummy at all. You're cold-shouldering him!"

"It's more that he's doing to us, really."

"There are six of you, and he's just one young fool!" answered the Shell fellow, with a touch of bitterness. "Easier for you to come round than for him, isn't it? I wouldn't say anything, but it's no use my talking to him. He only sneers at me for preaching. And I can't bear to see him going about with that young sweep Piggott!"

"I can't, either," replied Frank, lifting big, troubled eyes to the older fellow's face. Manners patted him on the back.

"There, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Franky," he said. "I know you'd never let a pal down. And you're nearly as silly as I am about Reggie. He's not worth half the worry we waste on him. Only I can't help worrying, and I suppose you're the same."

No more was said, but Frank had a feeling that he had been put on his honour to do something. It is likely that Harry Manners did not look at it quite in that way. But still he had hopes.

He did not know—what Frank knew only too well—that a word from Wally would go farther with Reggie than many words from Frank.

At the bottom of most of Reggie's sulking was jealousy. He could never quite forgive Frank for coming first with Wally. The others did not think of that, or, if they did, thought of it as natural enough. But Reggie brooded over it.

It was only a few hours later that Frank made his attempt, and failed.

"Does D'Arcy minor allow you to speak to me?" sneered Reggie.

"I can speak to anyone I like, I suppose? That's all rot, and you know it, Reggie. Look here, let's make a fresh start! Wally will, I'm sure."

"Has he said so?"

"No; but—"

"He can save his breath! If he and all the lot of you were to come to me on your knees and apologise—"

"That's not likely!"

"If you did, I should only laugh at you! I don't want you!"

"Piggott—"

"Oh, I know all about Piggy! Young cad, isn't he? Anybody who is pally with him is going to the dogs, eh? Well, I want to go to the dogs! I'm desperate! I don't care if I'm sacked—there!"

"That shows you do want—"

"You don't know what it shows! But I can tell you this. If I take to smoking and gambling and—and booze and all that, it's your fault and your precious pal D'Arcy's!"

"I don't think so. It seems to me it will be partly Piggott's, but mostly your own."

"We can find pals outside St. Jim's," sneered Reggie. "We're going over before long to take a hand at bridge with that chap Vere. He's more my sort than any of you."

"But I shouldn't think Piggy is his sort," replied Frank. "Lot of rot, Reggie, fancying that the Prospect House fellows gamble!"

"Vere does—I know that."

It was no good arguing with Reggie, and Frank left him.

During the few days that had passed since the match Piggott had been urging Reggie to improve Vere's acquaintance. The black sheep of the Third knew that he would get no welcome at Prospect House alone, but felt

sure that he could squeeze in there with Reggie.

Manners minor was keen, and yet not keen. He had the gambling spirit, and he knew it. He had promised his father to keep as clear of temptation as he could, and, wayward as Reggie was, a promise meant something to him. But Piggott had worked upon him, and he felt that to do and gamble with Vere would be a rare slap in the face for Wally & Co.

That afternoon Butt came up to the six in great excitement.

"I say, you fellows, it ought to be stopped!" he said. "That young ass Manners is in the cloisters with Piggy smoking and drinking beer!"

"Let 'em smoke and drink!" growled Jameson.

"I'm not going to," snapped Wally. "This is up against the Form. It doesn't matter a fat lot what Piggy does, but young Manners has got to be made to toe the line!"

Now, it was no unusual thing for foolish juniors to steal into the cloisters for a surreptitious smoke, but drinking beer was beyond the limit.

The six, with Butt, Watson, and one or two more, went off at once.

Piggott and Reggie had found a secluded and sheltered place. They had put down a thick rug on the flags, and each had a cigarette between his lips and a beer-bottle at his right hand.

As their Form-fellows drew near Piggott winked at Reggie, and both removed their cigarettes and lifted their bottles to their lips.

"Good health, Piggy!" said Reggie.

"Here's how, old son!" returned Piggott.

He put his bottle down, and next moment Wally's boot sent it flying.

A smell of beer was at once evident. Reggie snatched up his bottle, but Jameson clutched at it and dragged it from him.

"Smash it!" roared Wally.

"Don't—not yet! I don't believe that bottle has been in it at all!" cried Frank.

They stared at him, and Jameson held his hand.

"It has, then!" howled Reggie furiously. "What do you suppose is in it?"

"Niff it, Jamface!" said Frank. Jameson sniffed.

"I don't know a lot about beer," he said, "but I'll eat my hat if this is the stuff! It don't niff a bit like Piggy's lap."

"It is beer!" howled Reggie, looking sidelong at Piggott.

"Give me the bottle, Jamface," said Wally. It was handed over, and he sniffed at it critically.

"Toast-and-water!" he said. "Oh, you are a silly young fathead, Reggie!"

Piggott's face showed that he had not been in that secret.

Hobbs snatched at Reggie's cigarette. "This is a fake, too!" he said. "It's one of those rotten stramonium things!"

"Well, I like them better than tobacco," said Reggie sulkily. "And it's smoking all the same, isn't it?"

"Piggot," pronounced Wally, "you're just the low pothouse cad we always knew you were! But you're only a silly kid, Reggie!"

"All right! You wait and see, D'Arcy minor!" roared Reggie, as the small crowd moved off, laughing.

"He had you, Buttercup!" Wally said. "The young sweep wanted you to come and tell us."

"Can't see it," replied Butt. "What for?"

"He wanted to make us believe he's reckless enough for anything—even boozing in the cloisters. But he kicked at doing it, though he didn't mind Piggy's doing it, which, wasn't quite the straight thing, really."

"If they'd been caught, Reggie wouldn't ever have said that it wasn't beer or tobacco," said Frank. "He's straight enough that way, Wally. He wouldn't let Piggy down."

"He'll come round now," Hobbs said sardoniously.

But Hobbs was wrong there. The showing up and Piggott's jeers only made Reggie feel more bitter than ever.

"Shut up, Piggy!" he said. "It shall be beer next time, though I hate the taste of the stuff. And I tell you what—we'll go over and play auction bridge with that chap Vere any day you like!"

Piggott grinned.

"You're a sport, Reggie, after all," he said. "Write and tell him we'll come to-morrow evening. We can wangle an excuse from prep, you know. I shouldn't say anything about cards, though, if I were you."

"What about their prep?" asked Reggie. "Oh, I suppose they do that in their studies. That will be all right. The masters don't meddle much at Prospect House."

"Look here, don't let's write at all. Let's go over without saying anything beforehand. We know the way in, and it will be a surprise for them. But I don't see how to get off prep."

"I've a dodge for that," answered Piggott.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Standing By Reggie.

P IGGOTT'S dodge was simply a lie. Mr. Selby was not a sympathetic person; but even he could not refuse to allow a boy who said that his head felt so bad that he could not work to leave classes, and, though he might feel suspicious, he could not prove that the second claimant to possession of a head of that kind was less genuine than the first.

"He may ask where we are at prep," said Piggott; "but I've told young Leggett to remind him that our nappers were bad, and he'll suppose we're lying down."

Now that it came to the pinch, Reggie began to feel that the enterprise was not so simple as it had seemed. They had had to plan for their absence from prep, and had to take a risk there. They had to conceal their bikes outside, and get over the wall to reach them. They had to ride into Wayland at peril of being seen and dropped on. And when they were there they must return within an hour or so.

But Reggie felt that the desperate character of the foolish adventure was its justification. This would show Wally & Co. what a wild blade he really was, and how bent he was upon going straight to the dogs.

It still wanted half an hour or more to the time of prep when Watson came into the Third Form-room with news.

"Just seen Piggy and young Manners get over the wall," he said; "and their bikes aren't in the shed, for I looked. They're off somewhere."

"They're supposed to be laid up," remarked Curly Gibson.

"Oh, that was just one of Piggy's dodges," said Kent. "I wonder the old Hun didn't smell a rat when he tried it on after Manners."

"Pip-pip-pip—" stammered Leggett.

"Nothing to say 'pip-pip' about!" snapped Wally.

"I wasn't! I only sus-sus-said Pip-Pip-Piggott tut-tut-told me to tut-tut-tell Sus-Sus-Selby—"

"Got it!" cried Hobbs. "Dry up now, Leg! We can't listen to you all night. Selby was to be told that they were ill. I say, Wally, where have the bounders gone?"

"I know," said Kent. "Heard them yarning about it. Over to Prospect House, to play cards with that chap Vere."

"What?" shouted Wally.

"It's right," said Kent.

"Sure they weren't kidding you?"

"Yes. They didn't know I heard."

"This has got to be stopped," said Wally. "I don't care about Piggott; shouldn't care if the cad was hanged! But if Reggie's caught playing cards at Prospect House he may be sacked; and, anyway, there will be the merry dickens of a row, and his pater will rag Manners major, who's worth fifty of Reggie baldheaded! I'm off!"

"Well all-come," Hobbs said, speaking, of course, not for the whole Form, but for the brotherhood.

"Won't do!" Wally replied. "I'd better go alone, for if we're all away from prep—"

"You're not going alone, Wally!" said Frank. "I shall come if no one else does."

"I spoke first!" objected Hobbs.

"Well, you two come. No, Jamface, you can't—not yet Joe, nor Curly. But you can get our bikes over the wall to us."

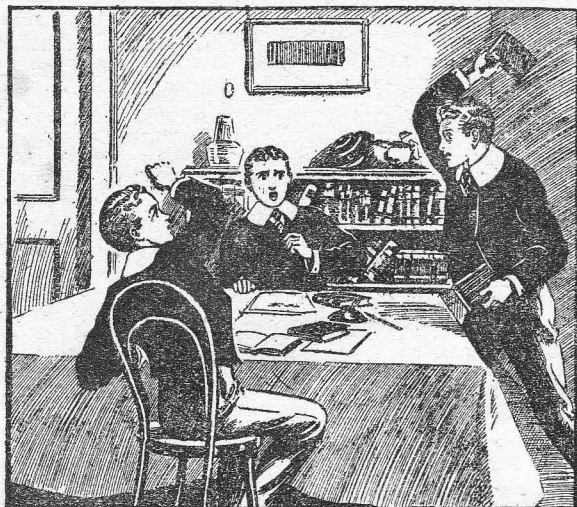
"And if there's a row we shall be in it," answered Jameson, seeming to find consolation in that thought.

Within ten minutes Wally, Frank, and Hobbs were pedalling their hardest across the moor, gaining on Piggott and Reggie with every yard they rode, but too far behind to have any real chance of catching them.

"Wonder what Vere will say?" said Reggie, as they neared Prospect House.

"Oh, that will be all serene!" replied Piggott easily.

Reggie did not feel too sure of that. It was taking rather a liberty, he felt. But



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Towny Knows What to Do.

"HUSH! Here's Jimmy Silver!" Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, heard that hurried whisper as he came into the junior Common-room.

Jimmy had come in to look for his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome of the Fourth. The Co. were not there. Townsend and Topham and Peele, the champion slackers of the Fourth, were there, talking in low tones, and chuckling apparently over some good joke.

But as Townsend whispered his warning the three juniors became silent.

Jimmy Silver glanced at them suspiciously. "Hallo! What's that I'm not to hear?" he demanded.

"Fine afternoon, ain't it?" said Townsend blandly.

"What are you three slackers mumbling about?"

"Rippin' weather—what!" said Topham.

And Townsend & Co. chortled.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"You're plotting something—I can see that," he said. "I suppose it's something up against that new kid Rawson. Look out for a thick ear apiece, that's all."

And Jimmy Silver, with a disdainful snort, walked out of the Common-room.

"Rotter!" said Peele. "As captain of the Fourth, Jimmy Silver ought to be backin' us up against that new cad."

"He ought, but he won't," said Townsend. "But that don't make any difference to us. Rawson's got to have it!"

"Yes, rather!" said Topham.

"It would do the cad good to have a lickin'!" remarked Peele. "But—"

"But—" said Townsend.

"But—" said Topham.

The three Nuts of the Fourth looked at one another very doubtfully. Licking Rawson, the outsider, was a splendid idea—it would undoubtedly do him good, from the point of view of the Nuts. But there were certain difficulties in the way.

"He really ain't fit to touch!" said Townsend, after a pause. "It would be lowerin' to a chap's dignity."

"Infra dig., by gad!" said Topham. "I don't care to soil my hands on him for one!"

"He's rather a strong beast, too!" said Peele thoughtfully.

"Of course, that's got nothin' to do with it!" said Townsend loftily.

"Ahem! Of course not!" said Peele hastily.

"Besides, my dodge is really a better one. The cad is as poor as a church mouse. Look at the clothes he wears!"

"Horrid!"

"The cut of his trousers is enough to make a fellow ill—it is, really, you know! I believe some old aunt of his makes them. I don't believe the rotter has a tailor at all!"

"And he's got the cheek to come to Rookwood—and on the gentlemanly side, too! 'Twouldn't be so bad if he were on the Modern side!"

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 51.

HOLDING HIS OWN!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & Co., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

"Well, to come back to our mutton," said Townsend. "The cad is out now, and we've got a chance. He's got the cheek to share our study, and his things are there. It will be as easy as fallin' off a form to muck them up. Bet you nincepence to fourpence that his people haven't got the money to buy him a fresh lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "That's goin' to be a beginnin'," said Townsend. "After that we'll deal with his clobber. He's only got two suits of clothes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "We can get at his Sunday suit any time, and we'll deal with the others while he's in bed one night—what?"

"Rippin'!" "Come on, then!" said Townsend. "We'll have a little surprise ready for him when he comes into the study again."

The three Nuts chuckled, and left the Common-room.

"Hallo! Here he is!" said Topham.

Rawson of the Fourth was in the passage. "Seen Jimmy Silver?" he asked, as the three Nuts passed him.

Townsend and Topham and Peele appeared to be deaf. They walked on without being aware, apparently, of the existence of Tom Rawson.

A flush came into Rawson's cheeks.

It died away, and a cloud settled over his brow as he watched the Nuts of Rookwood disappear up the staircase. He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped out into the quadrangle.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Row With the Moderns.

"KEEP smiling!" Jimmy Silver greeted the scholarship junior cheerily, as he spotted him in the quadrangle.

Rawson was tramping along moodily, his hands in his pockets. He looked up, colouring, as Jimmy greeted him.

Rawson had been only a few days at Rookwood, but he had already found his path a thorny one there.

The fact that he was a workman's son, and had come to the old school with a scholarship he had won by brains and hard work had put up the backs of some of the Nuts of Rookwood.

Smythe of the Shell professed to be unable to breathe the same air with him. Townsend & Co. of the Fourth were disgusted. It came all the harder on them, because the rank outsider, as they called him, shared a study with Towny and Topy in the junior passage. They were compelled to be at close quarters with him, whether they liked it or not.

Yet Rawson did not look much like a rank outsider, if a fellow had taken an unprejudiced view.

He was a sturdy, quiet fellow, good-tempered, and good-natured. He was patient, and he had had plenty of exercise for his patience since he had come to Rookwood.

Certainly he was not dressed so expensively as the elegant Nuts; but poverty could not

really be considered a crime. Doubtless he would have preferred to be a millionaire.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had found Rawson what they called the right sort, and they had become pally with him; a fact that exasperated the Nuts more than ever.

Had Jimmy, the leading member of the Classical Fourth, taken sides against the scholarship boy, his life might have been made unendurable at Rookwood, which was the amiable object of Townsend & Co.

Jimmy, however, liked or disliked a fellow for what he was, and he didn't care twopence whether he was the son of a duke or a dustman—an attitude of mind which the snobs of Rookwood found it hard to understand. Jimmy's opinion was that of the great poet: "The rank is but the guinea's stamp; the man's the gowd for a' that!"

In Jimmy's opinion, anybody who thought differently was a snob or an idiot, or both, and he made no bones whatever about saying so.

Jimmy rather liked Rawson, but he would probably not have come much in contact with him in the ordinary way. But he made it a point to go out of his way to be friendly with him, to make up for the shortcomings of some others of the Rookwood fellows.

"What's the trouble?" asked Jimmy, stopping Rawson in the quad. "I'm looking for duffers in my study, but I can spare a minute. Tell your Uncle James!"

Rawson grinned.

"Nothing," he said.

"Has Bootles been giving you lines?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, no!"

"Knowes been cuffing you?"

"No."

"Nothing at all the matter—what?"

"Nunno!"

"Then what are you looking like a boiled owl for?" asked Jimmy.

Rawson laughed.

"I—I didn't mean to look like a boiled owl," he said. "I don't quite know what a boiled owl looks like. I—I— It's nothing! Only—" He paused. "Well, the fellows in my study won't speak to me!"

"All the better for you," said Jimmy. "Towny and Topy are a pair of first-class duffers, and they talk like idiots! It must be a relief not to get any of their conversation. They only talk about geegees—and dead certs, too!"

"It isn't that," said Rawson moodily. "But a fellow doesn't like to be thought an outsider, even by a pair of fools like Townsend and Topham. I've been civil to them—the best I know how!"

"That was a mistake," said Jimmy gravely. "I'd advise you to knock their heads together. Then they'd say something, you bet!"

"I suppose they would," said Rawson, laughing. "But I won't do it. Perhaps they'll come round in time—I hope so."

"When you get fed-up with them there's always the end study," said Jimmy Silver.

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May there."

"You're awfully good!" said Rawson

gratefully. "If all the fellows here were like Townsend, I shouldn't much like to stay."

"If we were all like Townsend, dear boy, Rookwood wouldn't be what it is! Don't think about the silly asses—they're not worth it. Do you play footer?"

"A little."

"Then come down to Little Side, and we'll see what you can do. If you're any good you may have a chance in the Eleven."

Rawson brightened up. Jimmy Silver generally had a brightening effect upon fellows when they were down in the mouth. He helped them to live up to his own motto of "Keep smiling."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were discovered in the tuckshop, and Jimmy routed them out, and the chums of the Fourth went down to footer.

Flynn and Oswald and Jones minor were there, and they nodded cheerily to the new boy. All the better fellows in the Classical Fourth liked Rawson, and the snobs were in a minority, which made them rather more than less unpleasant.

A Modern junior was looking on, with his hands in his pockets—Leggett of the Fourth. Leggett's lip curled as he saw Rawson with the Fistical Four.

"Hallo, young Shavings!" he remarked.

"Hallo, you Modern worm!" said Rawson cheerfully.

"Got a hammer and tacks about you?" asked Leggett, with great humour.

"No," said Rawson. "But if you want any hammering done I've got a set of knuckles here, and you're welcome to them, Leggett."

He walked up to Leggett as he spoke.

The Modern junior backed away. Leggett wasn't a fighting-man. His tongue was acid; but his fists were not at all dangerous.

"Clear that Modern worm out!" said Jimmy Silver. "What's a Modern cad doing here, anyway? They can't play footer."

"Hands off!" roared Leggett.

But the Classical juniors, laughing, surrounded him, and he was whirled off his feet, yelling.

"Frog's march!" said Lovell.

Bump, bump, bump!

Leggett, roaring, was frog's marched off the footer-ground. His roars rang far and wide.

"Yah! Leggo! Classical cads! Rescue! Rescue, Moderns!"

There was a shout from the distance, and Tommy Dodd & Co., the heroes of the Modern Fourth, rushed to the rescue.

"Buck up, Classics!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Down with the Moderns!"

"Give the spalpeens jip!"

"Let Leggett go!" shouted Tommy Dodd, grasping the cad of the Fourth to wrench him away. "Pile in, you chaps, and lick those Classical dummies!"

"Yaroo!" roared Leggett. "Leggo!"

There was a wild and whirling combat round the unhappy Leggett. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook grasped his head and shoulders to wrench him away, but Lovell and Jimmy Silver had his legs, and held on like grim death.

Leggett's last state was worse than his first.

Between his friends and his foes he had a terrific time. And as the rivals of Rookwood closed in combat Leggett was dropped on the ground with a bump, and both parties trampled over him. More Moderns rushed up, however, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were driven back.

"Rescue, Classics!" shouted Jimmy.

"Cave! There's Bulkeley!" gasped Oswald.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was bearing down on the scene. The two parties separated as if by magic. They did not want to argue with the captain of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. scudded back to the footer-field, and the Moderns bore Leggett off, rescued, and in great triumph.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Leggett is Sorry.

"D ONE them!" gasped Tommy Dodd, as the Moderns came panting to a halt outside Mr. Manders' House.

"Not that Leggett was worth the row about, Leggett?"

Leggett gasped for breath.

"Grooh! Hoooh, hoooh! Oh dear! I'm bumped all over! Oh! Oh!"

"All in the day's work," said Tommy Dodd comfortingly. "We've rescued you, haven't we? What are you grouching about?"

"You silly ass, you nearly lugged my ears off!"

"Well, I had to get hold of you somewhere

to get you away from Jimmy Silver, hadn't I?"

"That fathead Doyle trod on my chest!"

"Sure, I thought I was treading on something!" said Tommy Doyle. "Was it you, Leggett darling?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that idiot Towle kicked my ankle!" groaned Leggett.

"Might have been your nose!" said Towle.

"Oh, rats! Oh dear!"

"But what was the row about?" asked Tommy Dodd curiously. "You generally keep clear of rows, Leggett."

"Nothing. I was chipping the new cad—"

"Do you mean Rawson?"

"Yes," groaned Leggett, "that beastly outsider! I thought they'd all be down on him, same as I was; but they backed him up, instead. Ow! Ow!"

"Chipping him about being a Classical, do you mean?"

"No, fathead; about being a scholarship bounder!" growled Leggett.

Tommy Dodd's eyes gleamed.

"You can leave that sort of thing to Towy and Topham and the Classical snobs," he said. "We don't want them on the Modern side."

"Oh, rats!"

"So you were setting up to be a snob in your old age, Leggett!" went on Tommy.

"I don't quite see what a crawling worm like you has to be snobbish about, but I know jolly well that we're not going to have any Classical rot on the Modern side. You'll apologise to Rawson!"

"What!" howled Leggett.

"Or you'll be kicked round the quad! You can take your choice."

"Look here, Tommy Dodd—"

"I mean it," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "That chap Rawson is decent enough, so far as I've seen anything of him. Call him anything you like for being a Classical, that's all in the game. But don't hit below the belt."

"I'll do as I like, confound you!"

"That's just where you make a mistake!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "You won't do as you like, you'll do as I like. Savvy?"

Leggett scowled and swung away towards the House.

Tommy Dodd promptly gripped him by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Let go!" shouted Leggett furiously.

"Take his other arm, Tommy Doyle!"

"Sure, I don't like touching the reptile, Tommy Dodd, but I'll do it to oblige yez."

"Leggo!"

"This way!" said Tommy Dodd.

Between the two Tommies, Leggett was marched off, wriggling. Tommy Cook followed behind, helping Leggett with his boot when he hung back. The little party marched on the football-ground, where the Classics were punting a ball about.

"Blessed if those Modern worms ain't coming back!" exclaimed Raby. "Give 'em socks! Bulkeley's gone in."

"Pax!" called out Tommy Dodd. "We're a flag of truce!"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy Silver warmly.

"What are you bringing that reptile here for, then? Take him away and bury him!"

"He wants to apologise to Rawson, and we're seeing him through."

"Oh," said Jimmy, "I see! Here, Rawson!"

"I don't!" yelled Leggett.

"Yes, he does; that's only his way of putting it," said Tommy Dodd calmly. "We're going to help him get it out by twisting his arms—like that!"

"Yaroo!"

Rawson came up, looking puzzled. He stared at the three Tommies and stared at the writhing, wriggling cad of the Fourth.

"What's wanted?" he asked.

"Leggett wants to apologise for being a howling cad," explained Tommy Dodd. "Go ahead, Leggett!"

"I won't!" shrieked Leggett.

Twist.

Leggett uttered a fiendish yell. There was a howl of laughter from the Classics. They had never seen an apology offered under such peculiar conditions before.

"Pile in, Leggy!" said Tommy Doyle. "Get it over! Sure ye're wasting time!"

"Repeat after me," said Tommy Dodd. "I, Luke Leggett, am sorry I acted like a dirty, crawling worm and a Classical snob—"

"Here, draw it mild!" said Lovell.

"I'm referring to Townsend, dear boy. Go it, Leggett! If a little twist will help you get it out—"

"Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—!" stammered the infuriated Leggett. "I—I'm sorry I acted like a dirty,

crawling worm and a—

Classical snob!" Ow! Ow!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There!" said Tommy Dodd. "That's the proper style. Leggett can't help being a disgrace to Rookwood, but he knows how to apologise, you see. Now, cut off, you rotter, and we'll race you to the modern side. Every time we get near enough we shall kick hard, so put your beef into it!"

Leggett started off at top speed, with the three Tommies in hot pursuit. Leggett ran his hardest; but each of the Tommies got in a couple of kicks before the unfortunate cad of the Fourth dodged into Mr. Manders' house, and escaped.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"We might try that dodge on Towy and Topsy," he said thoughtfully. "It seems to work well with Leggett."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Classical juniors, grinning, returned to footer practice. And, much to Jimmy Silver's satisfaction, Rawson showed that he knew how to play the game, and Rawson, too, was delighted when he learned that he was to be put down at once as a reserve for the Classical Junior Eleven.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Turning of the Worm!

RAWSON came into his study some time later, looking very ruddy and cheery. He had kept away from the footer hitherto, apprehensive of rebuffs from the Classical fellows.

Although Rawson was very quiet and very calm, he was sensitive, and the unreasoning prejudice of the Classical snobs hurt him. But his welcome on the footer-ground by Jimmy Silver & Co. had cleared off his doubts on that score, and the prospect of taking a regular part in the junior game elated him. The practice in the keen fresh air had done him good, too, and he was feeling unusually cheerful as he came in. He had had tea in the end study with the Fistical Four—a very cheery meal.

The brightness faded out of his face a little, however, as he entered his own study to do his preparation. Townsend and Topham were there, at work on their prep, and they did not look up as he came in, and kept up their usual appearance of being totally oblivious of his presence.

Towy and Topsy would have been very pleased to expel the new junior from the study by force of arms. But Towy and Topsy were not fighting-men like Flynn, and the probability was that the sturdy Rawson could have mopped up the study with both of them at once.

They had adopted the safer, and at the same time more bitter and malicious method of sending the new junior to Coventry in his own study.

Rawson's quarters were not very cheerful, ignored by his study-mates, and never looked at excepting with a curling lip. But Rawson was patient and quiet; and his patience led his study-mates to adopt harsher measures than they would otherwise have ventured upon.

Rawson was accustomed to stony silence in the study, broken only by Towy and Topsy's remarks to one another. He took no notice of the two, but proceeded to set about his work. But an unexpected difficulty cropped up here. To "prepare" the morning's lesson he required a Virgil, a dictionary, and his Latin Principia. The books were usually on the shelf, but they had disappeared now.

Unwilling to speak to the two supercilious young rascals working at the table, Rawson looked about the study for the books, though he could guess easily enough that Townsend and Topham had put them out of sight.

But the volumes were not to be found, and he turned to them at last.

"Have you fellows seen my books?" he asked.

Only the scratch of a pen answered him. Topham went on writing; Townsend went on studying his "crib."

Rawson's cheeks flushed.

"I want my books," he said, in a louder tone.

"Pass the dick, Towy," said Topham, apparently deaf to Rawson.

"Here you are, old chap!"

Rawson's eyes were gleaming, but he held back his temper, and resumed his search for the missing books.

He found them at last jammed behind the

bookcase. As he drew them out he uttered an exclamation. Each of the books had been torn, cut, and defaced with ink. They were utterly useless.

Rawson looked at the books almost with tears in his eyes.

At Rookwood all school books had to be paid for, and the value of the books was a considerable item to the scholarship junior. But that was not the worst. Without them he could not possibly do his preparation.

"Who did this?" he asked, laying the defaced books on the table.

No reply.

"Who ever did it was a rotten worm!" said Rawson.

"Let me see," said Townsend thoughtfully. "Est is conspectu—is that dative or ablative, Topsy?"

"I can't do my prep without my books!" said Rawson.

Frozen silence.

Rawson's anger was rising fast. He understood clearly enough the game of the two young rascals. He could not replace his books without going to the Form-master—and betraying the "rag" to Mr. Bootles meant branding himself as a "sneak"—which would have delighted the Rookwood snobs, who were anxious to find pretexts for their persecution. But without the books he could not do his work, which meant trouble in the Form-room in the morning.

So far as Townsend and Topham could see, Rawson was in a cleft stick, and they did not see that he could do anything. There was a surprise in store for them.

"You hear me?" said Rawson quietly. "I can't work without my books. You've chosen to destroy mine. I shall take yours."

"What!" ejaculated Townsend, startled into speaking.

Rawson took the dictionary that Topham was consulting, and drew it to his own side of the table. He picked up Townsend's Principia and Virgil, and placed them beside it. Towy and Topsy watched him, almost petrified.

"You guttersnipe!" burst out Townsend at last. "Give us our books!"

"They're my books now," said Rawson.

"Your books!" shrieked Topham.

"Yes. You've destroyed mine, and I'm going to use yours instead. You can have these."

Rawson picked up his torn dictionary and the worn and inky Virgil. He threw the first at Topham's head and the second at Townsend's.

Evidently the worm was turning!

Townsend yelled, and Topham gasped and ducked.

"I'm fed up with this," continued Rawson. "I'm using these books now. I'll let you use them when I've finished."

"When you've finished!" howled Townsend.

"We've got to do our prep."

"You should have thought of that before you spoiled my books."

"Give us our books, you rotter!"

Rawson shrugged his shoulders, and sat down to work. Towy and his chum exchanged furious glances. Both rose to their feet at once.

"Are you going to hand over those books?" asked Townsend, in a tone of concentrated rage.

"No."

"Then we'll take them, you guttersnipe!"

"I'll tackle either of you—I don't mind," said Rawson coolly.

"You'll tackle us both together, if you don't hand over those books at once!" said Topham threateningly.

"Both together, then," said Rawson, rising. "I don't care. You won't have these books, anyway, till I've done my prep."

"Hand them over!"

"Rats!"

"We've got to have them, Topsy," said Townsend. "Collar the cad!"

The two Nuts advanced upon Rawson round the sides of the table. Rawson pushed back his cuffs calmly. The Nuts were two to one, but they looked a good deal more hesitating than Rawson did.

"Well, come on," said Rawson, as they paused, and exchanged glances over the table.

"Will you give us those books?"

"No, I won't!"

Townsend made a grasp at the dictionary. Rawson caught his wrist, and with a twist of his sturdy arm whirled him away from the table.

"Go for him, Topsy!" shouted Townsend

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desperately; and Topham sprang upon the new junior from behind.

Rawson let go Townsend, and whirled round upon Topham. The latter, clutching him, was whirled off his feet. Rawson shortened his arm, and delivered an upper-cut in the twinkling of an eye, and Topham went to the floor with a crash.

He lay there, gasping and nursing his jaw, feeling as if he had been suddenly caught by an earthquake.

Then Rawson turned upon Townsend. The dandy of the Fourth put up his hands to meet a driving attack. Towy's white and delicate hands, however, were not of much use against Rawson's heavy drives. Townsend was driven right round the table, blow after blow coming home on his face, till he stumbled over Topham, and measured his length on the floor.

"Oh, by gad!" gasped Townsend. "Yow-ow-oh! Keep off, you ruffian! Yow-oo!"

Rawson looked down grimly on the two Nuts.

"Have you had enough?" he asked quietly.

"Yow-ow! Yaas!"

"Yaas, you rotter!" "Yow-ow!" moaned Topham, nursing his jaw. "You hooligan! Keep off! I don't want anything to do with you! Oh, my jaw! Oh!"

"I didn't want a row," said Rawson. "You would have it."

He sat down quietly at the table.

Townsend and Topham scrambled up, Topham still holding his jaw, and Townsend rubbing his nose. Rawson sat with his back to them, and the two Nuts were strongly tempted to make an attack in the rear; but they refrained—not from motives of fair-play, but from a wholesome fear of the consequences.

With suppressed groans, the Nuts of the Fourth limped out of the study—to do their prep in Peele's study, and borrow his books.

Rawson worked on quietly, with the books he had taken possession of. It was a case of the victor to the spoils. The "rag" had not turned out quite as the Nuts had intended.

Peele stared at his downcast pals as they came into his study.

"What's the matter with your jaw, Topsy?" he asked.

"Yow-ow!"

"What have you been doin' to your nose, Towy?"

"Wow-wow!"

"Well, you look a merry pair," said Peele unsympathetically. "You don't mean to say you let that outsider handle you like that?"

"Groogh!"

It was some time before the Nuts felt equal to explaining. Peele whistled as he listened to their lugubrious account.

"A regular ruffian!" he said. "We ought to get Smythe to lick him. Smythe's bigger than he is. He could handle him, if he had pluck enough!"

"He hasn't!" growled Topham. "Rawson knocked him down the other day, and Smythe sneaked away."

"He might go into trainin' for it if we egged him on," said Peele. "He's a head taller than Rawson, dash it all! Look here, there'll be no standin' that hooligan unless one of our crowd can lick him!"

"There's other ways," said Townsend savagely. "There's his clobber. We'll see what he looks like when he gets up in the mornin', the cad!"

And the hardy-used Nuts were somewhat consoled by the prospect.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Exchange—No Robbery.

CLANG—clang—clang!

Jimmy Silver, always the first out of bed, turned out as the rising-bell began to clang over Rookwood School next morning.

Townsend and Topham, always the last, yawned and turned over.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were the next out, and Rawson. The cheery juniors splashed merrily in cold water. Townsend & Co. had professed to be surprised at seeing the scholarship junior take a cold bath in the morning. They were not quite so liberal with cold water on cold mornings themselves.

Rawson rubbed himself down, glowing and ruddy, and began to dress. Townsend and Topham, sitting up in bed, winked at one another and watched.

Rawson took his clothes off the chair, where they were neatly folded. As he lifted them, the jacket and trousers hung in strips in his hands. Rawson gazed at them blankly.

In the dark hours of the night, the clothes had been ripped to pieces with a knife.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked Jimmy Silver, as Rawson uttered a roar of wrath.

"Look at my clothes!"

"Great Scott!"

"What a rotten, dirty trick!" exclaimed Lovell. "You'll have to put on your Sunday bags, kid!"

Rawson nodded, and went to his box. Townsend and Topham smiled sweetly. A discovery awaited Rawson in his box.

Quietly the new junior drew out his Sunday clothes. They were ripped to strips.

Jimmy Silver's brow grew dark as he looked at them, hanging in tatters in Rawson's hand.

"Whoever did that wants the licking of his life!" he said angrily.

"Never mind," said Rawson.

"But what are you going to wear?"

"The dear boy has only two suits, you know," chortled Townsend. "Hard cheese, Rawson! A chap should really have more than two suits, you know!"

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Lovell.

All the Classical Fourth were looking at Rawson, wondering what he would do.

Rawson seemed very calm.

"You must wear something, Rawson," said Raby. "I'll lend you some clobber if you like."

"All serene," said Rawson. "I don't need it."

"But what clobber are you going to wear, then?"

"Townsend's."

"What!" yelled Townsend, with a jump.

"Mine!"

"Yes, yours," said Rawson calmly. "Your things will fit me—a bit tight, perhaps, but I can manage."

"Do you think I shall let you touch my clobber, you rat?" yelled Townsend, bounding out of bed.

"I think you can't help it. I'm going to put on your clothes to-day, as you've cut up mine, and I'm going to have Topham's Sunday clothes."

"My Sunday clothes!" shrieked Topham, agast.

"Yes, certainly!"

Rawson took Townsend's elegant "clobber," and began to put them on. There was a yell of laughter from the Classical Fourth.

"But—are you sure it was those chaps cut up your clobber, Rawson?" asked Oswald.

"Quite sure. They tore up my books last evening in the study—"

"Shame!"

"Another dirty trick," said Jimmy Silver.

"I had to take their books instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to keep their books until they buy me a fresh set," said Rawson quietly. "I can't afford to buy new ones myself. I think that's fair."

"Fair as a die!" chuckled Flynn. "More power to yer elbow!"

"Let my clothes alone!" screamed Townsend.

Rawson went on dressing.

"You've got nothing to complain of, Towy," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "The kid can't go down in his pyjamas. You ought to have expected this!"

Towy and Topsy certainly ought to have expected it, after what had happened in the study the previous evening. But they didn't. They were thunderstruck.

"Give me my clothes!" exclaimed Townsend, advancing upon Rawson with his fists clenched.

Rawson put up his hands, and the dandy of the Fourth backed away promptly enough.

"You won't have them unless you take them," said Rawson. "The same applies to you, Topham. I'm going to take your Sunday suit and lock it in my box."

"You thievin' scoundrel!" yelled Topham.

Rawson shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall keep your clothes until you pay for mine. My people are too poor to be stuck for unnecessary expenses like this!"

The Fistical Four chortled gleefully. Rawson's drastic method of dealing with the problem tickled their sense of humour. It was fortunate for Rawson that he was a strong man with his hands. Such drastic measures had to be backed up by physical force. Luckily, Rawson had the physical force.

"You won't give me my clothes?" panted Townsend, stammering with rage.

"No."

"Then I'll go straight to Bootles and ask him to make you!"

"Sneak!" hooted Flynn.

"Sneak or not, that guttersnipe isn't going to steal my clothes!"

"Hold on," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "If you go to Bootles, Towny, he will want to know why Rawson has taken your clothes. You know best whether you want Bootles to know that you've cut up his clobber. It means a flogging!"

Townsend paused. In his rage, that very obvious consideration had escaped him. But he thought of it now. The destruction of the scholarship junior's clothes would have been regarded very seriously indeed by the Head.

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy. "It's only fit for tat. You've asked for it, you know!"

Townsend and Topham looked at one another in helpless wrath. There was nothing for it but to submit, or to overcome Rawson in fistic combat, and they had had enough of the latter alternative.

Rawson finished dressing himself calmly. The change was to his advantage, for Townsend's clothes, if they did not fit exactly, were very much better made than his own, and very much more expensive. Having dressed, he went to Topham's box and threw the lid up.

"Let my box alone, you hound!" yelled Topham.

Unheeding, Rawson took out Topham's neatly-folded Sunday suit, and transferred it to his own box—a proceeding that was watched with many chuckles by the Fourth-Formers. Topham watched it in helpless rage. Rawson carefully emptied the pockets, and those in the suit he was wearing, pitching the articles on Towny's bed. Then he locked up the captured suit in his box, and put the key in his pocket.

"If you're not satisfied, you can pay for my things you've destroyed," he said quietly. "I'll let you know the exact figure. But I shall have to wear your clothes till I get new ones."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You poverty-stricken rotter!" snarled Townsend.

Rawson whistled, and walked out of the dormitory. He left the Classical Fourth shouting with laughter. Even Peele had joined in the laugh against his discomfited friends.

Townsend, who had plenty of clothes, disinterred another suit to put on. His face was as black as thunder as he dressed.

Once more the rag had turned against the ragers, and what was worse for the unhappy Nuts, they had had to back down in public, and display to all the Fourth the fact that they dared not tackle the scholarship junior hand to hand. It was all very well to assume lofty contempt towards Rawson, but lofty contempt, coupled with barefaced funk, was not convincing. Never had the Nuts of the Fourth felt and looked so utterly humiliated and beaten. But all the sympathy they received from their Form-fellows was expressed in bursts of laughter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Great Adolphus Takes It On.

"YOU could do it, Smythey!"

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

"You're the very chap!"

"The right man in the right place, by gad you are!"

Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, was holding quite a little court in his study. Adolphus was looking pleased, but a little doubtful.

It was very agreeable to be flattered, and coaxed, and soft-sawdered, and buttered-up generally.

But Adolphus had his doubts.

Townsend and Topham and Peele were all talking at once. Howard and Tracy, Smythe's chums in the Shell, were backing them up heartily.

And the burden of their song was that it was up to the great Adolphus to stand up for the honour of Rookwood by bestowing a terrific thrashing upon the rank outsider who had wedged into the school.

"Once he's been licked we can deal with him. Smythey could make him give us back our books and clobber."

"Why don't you lick him, Towny, begad?" asked Adolphus.

"I'm not up to your form, Smythey," said Townsend diplomatically.

And the egregious Adolphus nodded assent to that.

"You're a head taller than he is, and longer in the reach," said Peele. "And, dash it all, you're a good boxer, Smythey!"

"Yaas, that's so."

"And he punched your head the day he came, when you were chippin' him in our study," said Topham.

Adolphus reddened.

"I choose to treat him with contempt," he said.

"Ahem! Exactly! But these low brutes don't understand contempt. What they need is a fearful licking, to put 'em in their places."

"Jimmy Silver could lick him," said Howard, "but the rotter has made friends with him instead. He's rather a low cad himself."

"Smythey is really a better boxer than Jimmy Silver," said Tracy. "And a little trainin' would put you in toppin' form, Smythey."

"Yaas, I could put in a bit of trainin' first," said Adolphus thoughtfully. "But really, dear boys, the blackguard's hardly worth my while."

"But look at the position," urged Townsend. "Here, there comes a fellow from the lower classes to Rookwood. He treats us as if we belonged to the lower classes instead of him. What's the good of belongin' to the upper classes if we can't keep those bounders in their place? It's a disgrace for the upper classes to funk the lower classes—now, isn't it?"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's up to you, Smythey."

Adolphus Smythe lighted a cigarette very thoughtfully.

Adolphus was not adverse to gaining a little cheap glory by licking a fellow smaller than himself. He fully agreed with his chums that that extremely obstreperous member of the lower classes—Tom Rawson—ought to be thrashed and put in his place. But there was a lingering doubt in Smythe's mind. He was not quite sure whether he could do it, and whether, if he could do it, he would not be severely handled in doing it. That was a very important consideration.

Rawson had certainly punched Adolphus for impertinence a week ago. Adolphus had assumed an attitude of lofty disdain; but it had been very broadly hinted that Adolphus' disdain was not founded upon a conscious sense of superiority, but upon sheer funk, which was very exasperating to the lofty, disdainful Adolphus.

Rawson had laid his lower-class hands on Adolphus' noble person, and Adolphus' upper-class hands had been idle, which was evidently not as it ought to have been. As Townsend eloquently put it, what was the aristocracy coming to if they were to be licked by lower-class persons, and take refuge in nothing more energetic than disdain?

"The fact is, it's makin' the beast popular, his bein' able to lick any of our crowd," said Howard. "He actually knocked my cap off this mornin'. I was simply sniffin' at the beast. He knocked my cap off. I declined to be drawn into a vulgar row with him."

"He sticks in our study like a monarch of all he surveys," said Topham. "He's got our books, and he's wearin' our clobber because we tore his up. He'll be thinkin' soon that we're all afraid of him."

"And it's simply impossible to put him in his place without lickin' him," said Tracy. "That kind of person is impervious to contempt. I was curlin' my lip at him yesterday, just to show how I felt, and he only asked me if I was born with a face like that. A vulgar remark!"

"And hardly anybody will agree to send him to Coventry," said Peele plaintively. "Only our crowd. And the fellows are all laughin' at us."

"Laughing at us, you know!" said Tracy. "And the Modern cads are makin' a regular joke of it," said Townsend. "That low brute, Dodd, told me Rawson was like Caesar, because he came, and saw, and conquered. There's only one Modern chap up against him, and that's Leggett; and everybody on that side despises Leggett."

Adolphus Smythe nodded.

"It's sickenin'!" he agreed.

"It was those rotters in the end study began it," said Topham. "If they'd been down on him it would have been all serene. But they weren't. We can't do anythin' with him unless we can produce a man who can lick him. We're misunderstood by all the fellows. They think we funk tacklin'

him because we don't do anythin' but sneer at him. It's rotten to be misunderstood!"

"I'll think about it," said Adolphus at last.

He was the last hope of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood. Unless the obnoxious new boy could be licked, the persecution would have to stop. What was the use of sneering at a fellow and scuttling off if he looked round? Evidently it was no use. It had been all very well while Rawson's patience lasted; but the worm had turned now, and that made all the difference.

"Go into trainin' for it and challenge him for Wednesday next," said Townsend encouragingly. "We'll all be there to back you up."

"You'll lick him easily, Smythey."

"Yaas, I presume I should lick him," said Adolphus loftily. "A fellow like me is not likely to be beaten by a person from the lower-class. But—but I don't want to make hard work of it, so I'm going into trainin' a bit."

"Good egg!"

"Come and challenge him now!" exclaimed Townsend, eager to strike the iron while it was hot. "You'll have plenty of time for trainin' before Wednesday."

Adolphus hesitated. He did not quite like the task. But he was not impervious to the force of public opinion. His pals expected it of him. He was the great chief of the Nuts, and chieftainship brought its responsibilities as well as its pleasures. His prestige was at stake. He could not refuse without openly admitting that he funked the contest. And if he disappointed and disgusted his followers in that flagrant manner, the glory would be departed from Israel with a vengeance.

Besides, Adolphus considered, why shouldn't he be able to lick the brute? He was more than a year older, he was nearly a head taller, he was longer in the reach, and he was a good boxer in his way. All that Adolphus lacked, as a matter of fact, was pluck. In the general atmosphere of praise and flattery and soft-sawder, Adolphus felt his courage rise. He made up his mind.

His followers watched him eagerly as he rose and threw his cigarette into the grate.

"That low cad won't let us smoke in our study," said Topham. "He's actually dared to interfere with us personally! He says he doesn't like a study bein' turned into a tap-room, by gad!"

"Cheeky cad!" said Adolphus. "Leave 'im to me!"

"Come on, Smythey!"

"I'm comin'!"

"The cad's in the Common-room now," said Tracy. "We'll corner him there and challenge him."

Adolphus marched out of the study, feeling quite bucked up by the general satisfaction and confidence. Ater all, it was something to be the chosen champion of the choice spirits of Rookwood.

Townsend and Topham looked rather curiously at one another as they followed the rest down the passage.

"Do you think he can lick him, Towny?" Topham murmured.

"He's big enough," said Townsend.

"Yes, but—"

"Well, if he's licked it will do him good, and take some of the swank out of him," said Townsend coolly.

Topham chuckled. Whichever way it worked out, the result seemed good from the point of view of Towney and Toppo.

But they did not explain those private views to Adolphus. Their remarks to Adolphus were of the most flattering nature; and, indeed, before he reached the Common-room Adolphus Smythe almost began to believe that he really was as brave as a lion, and a very great chief indeed.

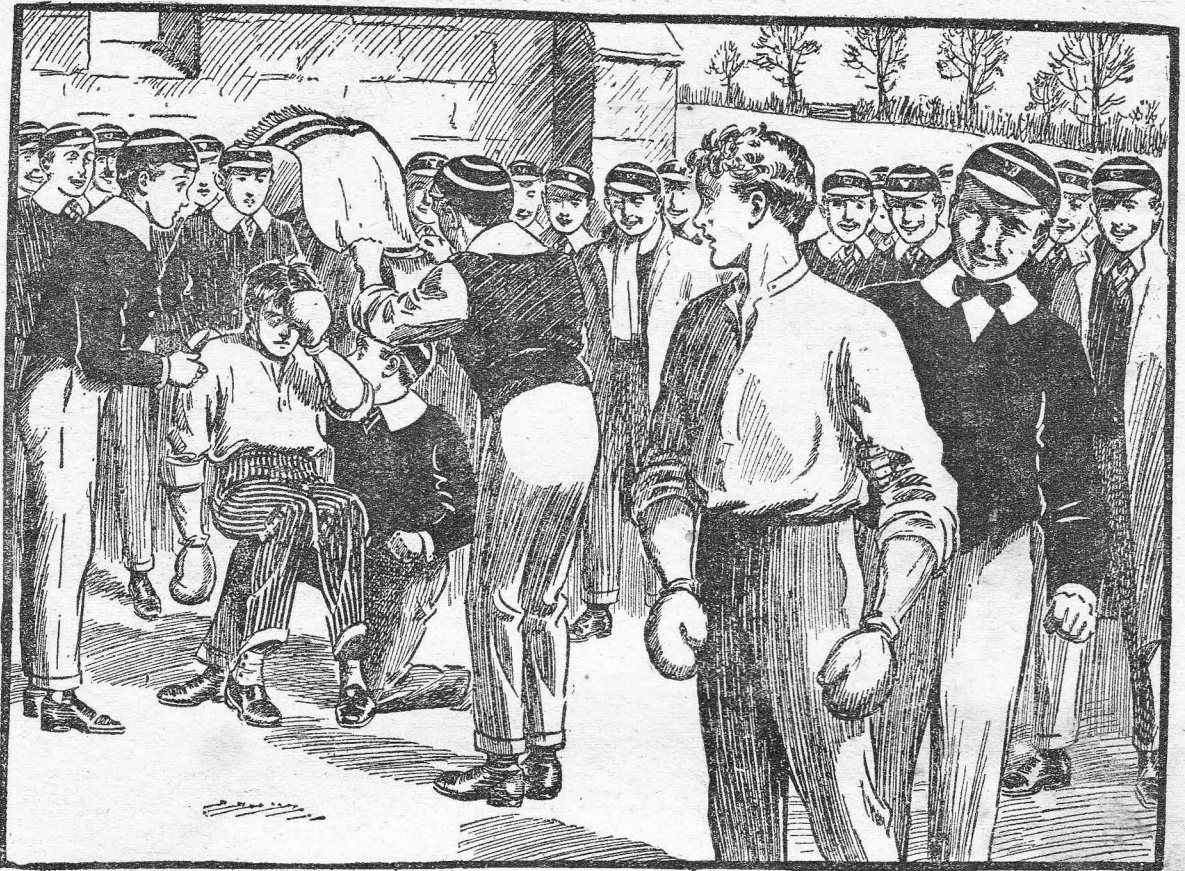
THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Smythe in Earnest.

RAWSON was in the Common-room playing chess with Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy was rather given to chess in his quieter moments, and rather prided himself upon being a good hand at the game. He had discovered, not without surprise, that Rawson could play his head off. Rawson had given him a rook in the present game, but Jimmy found it hard work to hold his own.

There was quite a bustle in the room as Adolphus & Co marched in. The chess-players did not look up, but a good many fellows glanced round. The manner and bearing of



Adolphus gasped his way to his second. Townsend made a knee for him, and Smythe sank on it, panting. "For goodness sake buck up!" whispered Townshend as he fanned his heated champion. "Stick to him and hit hard!" (See page 19.)

the great Adolphus indicated that something was "on."

"There's the rotter!" said Townsend.

Adolphus walked up to the chess-table and dropped his hand on Rawson's shoulder.

"A word with you," he said haughtily.

Rawson looked up impatiently.

"Don't bother now, I'm playing!"

The countenance of Adolphus became crimson with wrath. This person from the lower classes told him not to bother! As if a word from Adolphus was not a distinguished honour for such a person!

"Excuse me," said Smythe, with elaborate and ironical politeness, "I must bother. I've a word to say to you, young ragamuffin."

"For goodness' sake shut up, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver irritably. "If you want to gas, go and gas somewhere else!"

"My business is with this young shaver," said Smythe calmly. "Get up, Rawson!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Shall I lift you up by your collar?"

Rawson jumped up.

"Now, what do you want, you drawing fool?" he exclaimed.

Adolphus extracted an eyeglass from his well-fitting waistcoat, adjusted it in his eye, and surveyed Rawson with lofty scorn.

"Only a few words," he said icily. "It's no pleasure to me to speak to a person of your class. I want you to understand that Rookwood resents your presence in the school—"

"What!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I'm not talking to you, Silver; I'm talkin' to this cad, Rawson, your presence is regarded as disgustin'. We're fed up with you. You don't even know how to keep your place. I'm goin' to teach you!"

"Do you mean that you want me to punch your nose again?" asked Rawson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean that I'm goin' to thrash you, you young scoundrel!" said Adolphus. "It's really rather beneath my dignity to touch you; but, takin' everythin' into consideration, I'm goin' to thrash you as a lesson to you."

"Well, come on," said Rawson, pushing back his cuffs in a businesslike manner. "I'll get

on with the game after I've knocked this silly idiot flying, Jimmy Silver."

"Go it!" said Jimmy cordially. "Have you made your will, Adolphus?"

"Leave me your eyeglass, old chap," said Oswald.

Adolphus did not deign to reply to these remarks.

"I'm not fighting you now, Rawson," he said. "I challenge you for Wednesday afternoon, behind the abbey. If you don't turn up, I'll brand you as a coward before all Rookwood."

"Bravo, Smythe!"

Rawson laughed.

"I'll turn up," he said. "But if it isn't till Wednesday, what the merry dickens are you botherin' me for now? Cut off, for goodness' sake!"

And Rawson sat down again, and went on with his game. The Fistical Four chuckled at the expression on Smythe's face. However, as he was not prepared to tackle Rawson immediately, there was nothing for it but to cut off. Adolphus marched away with all the dignity he could muster under the trying circumstances.

Jimmy and Rawson finished their game, and Jimmy rose and stretched himself.

"Coming down to the gym?" he asked.

"Yes, if you like!"

"You may as well have the gloves on a bit, if you're tackling Smythe in a real set-to on Wednesday. He's half as big again as you are!"

"Yes, all right. I don't know what he wants to pick a row with me for," said Rawson. "It's a week since I punched his nose, and more."

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Smythe has taken his time to think it out," he said. "This really brave chap never acts in a hurry. Come on!"

The chums of the Fourth proceeded to the gym, where Rawson put on the gloves with Jimmy Silver. His boxing was not quite up to Jimmy's style, but his strength was great, and his bulldog determination greater. By the time the round or two were over, Jimmy felt pretty convinced that Adolphus would

have reason to feel sorry for himself on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Adolphus Smythe was hard at work on the punchball in his study.

He was fairly in for it now, and it had to be gone through. He did not mean to get a licking if he could help it. He found his wind very short after a few slogs at the ball.

"I'm goin' to chuck up cigarettes till after Wednesday, dear boys," he confided to his study mates. "No good runnin' risks."

And Howard and Tracy agreed.

Being fairly committed to the contest, Adolphus Smythe left no stone unturned. During the next two or three days quite a remarkable change came over his habits.

The lazy, unfit slacker of the Shell was bucking up.

There were no more smokes in the study. There was boxing practice with his devoted friends every evening. There were sprints round the quad instead of lollings in the easy-chair.

It was all a very painful infliction to Adolphus, who wished it were well over. In his quieter moments he sincerely wished he had not allowed himself to be persuaded. But it was impossible to back out now.

He felt so much better, with this better way of spending his time, that with a little more wisdom he might have resolved to throw up his bad, old, slacking habits, and stick to his new manners and customs for good. But he did not come to such a resolution. He was only anxious to get the affair over, and return to his slacking and dawdling and smoking.

But he was certainly feeling almost a new man when Wednesday came round, and the Nuts were looking forward to the encounter with something like confidence in their chief. That licking, so badly needed by the obnoxious outsider, was to be administered, and after that the fellow would know his place—or, at least, could be put into it. The Dirty Goats would have vindicated their superiority, and all would be calm and bright when that licking came off.

It had not come off yet.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Adolphus Distinguishes Himself.

JIMMY SILVER grinned cheerfully as a big crowd gathered behind the abbey ruins on Wednesday afternoon. The story of the coming contest had spread, and half Rockwood seemed to be determined to see it.

The Classical Fourth were there to a man, and most of the Shell had come to see Adolphus in his new turn as a fighting champion. Tommy Dodd & Co. came over from the Modern side, greatly interested. Tommy Cook expressed the opinion that Smythe couldn't lick a bunny-rabbit, and offered to help carry home the pieces when Adolphus was finished. Tommy Doyle suggested tying the combatants together, so that Adolphus couldn't run away.

The fight was fixed for three o'clock, but long before that time there was a big crowd on the scene. It was a secluded spot, and the contest was not likely to be interrupted by troublesome masters and prefects. Jimmy Silver had brought along gloves for Rawson, and Townsend brought a pair for Adolphus. Gloves were to be used, as they generally were in serious fistic encounters at Rockwood. Adolphus, indeed, had thought of bare knuckles as a means of bringing Rawson even more conclusively to his senses; but on reflection he had decided not, Rawson being quite indifferent on the matter either way.

There was a buzz as the great Adolphus was seen approaching in the midst of an admiring circle of friends. Adolphus had been in hard training, and had shown form that surprised his own backers, and their confidence was at its height. That great desideratum, the thrashing of the outsider, was coming at last.

"Here we are, dear boys!" said Adolphus. "Is the cad here? I'm not goin' to be kept waitin' for him!"

"My man's here," said Jimmy Silver, "waitin' for you, cocky!"

Jimmy helped Rawson off with his jacket. Adolphus glanced rather anxiously at Rawson. He hoped to see some signs of indecision or funk in his face. But Tom Rawson was looking just the same as usual. His ruddy, healthy face did not blanch under the eagle eye of Adolphus.

Townsend peeled off Smythe's well-fitting jacket, and helped him on with the gloves.

"Feel fit?" he asked.
 "Fit as a fiddle!" said Adolphus. "Ready to lick that cad, you know. Hardly worth the trouble, but I'm goin' to do it."

"Bravo!"
 "Who's timekeeper?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I am!" said Tracy promptly.

Jimmy shook his head.
 "We'll have a disinterested party for timekeeper," he said. "Tommy Dodd will do, as he's a Modern."

Tracy scowled, but he had to give in. If he had intended to give his chief any little advantages, as was possible, he was disappointed. Tommy Dodd took out his silver watch.

"Ready?" he asked.
 "Oh, yaas!"

"I'm ready," said Rawson.

"Seconds out of the ring!" said Tommy Dodd, in a business-like manner. "Now, then, shake hands!"

"I decline to shake hands with that bouncer!" drawled Adolphus.

"Shame!" said several voices.

Smythe of the Shell glanced round insolently. Rawson bit his lip.

"Let's get on," he said.

"Time!"
 The first round started. Tommy Dodd kept one eye on his watch and the other on the combat. All the other fellows, crowded round in a thick ring, kept both eyes on the combat.

Adolphus was a good deal taller of the two, and he looked like having great advantages. But Rawson's sturdy, well-knit figure was as strong as an oak, and his honest face was calm, his eyes clear and steady. There was not much doubt who was the fitter of the two.

Smythe of the Shell commenced the attack, sailing in for all he was worth, so to speak. To his surprise, Rawson did not yield an inch.

Adolphus might as well have charged a brick wall.

Both his fists came through Rawson's guard, and bumped on his face; but Rawson was hitting out, too, and his right crashed into Adolphus' noble nose.

The Shell fellow staggered back, and the Fourth-Former followed him up, driving hard. There was a murmur as Adolphus was driven fairly round the ring.

"Buck up, Smythe!"

"Go it! This ain't a foot-race!"

"Stand up to him, Smythe!"

Biff, biff, biff!

Rawson's steady eyes never left his opponent's. Adolphus' hitting and guarding were both growing wild and erratic. As a matter of fact, Adolphus was in a state of alarm. He had screwed up his courage to the sticking-point, but it seemed to have come loose again.

"Time!" called Tommy Dodd.

Adolphus gasped his way to his second. Townsend made a knee for him, and Smythe sank on it, panting.

"For goodness' sake, buck up!" whispered Townsend, as he fanned his heated champion.

"Stick to him, and hit hard!"

"I'm goin' to!" mumbled Smythe.

"Stand your ground, you know, and hit."

"I'm not askin' for your advice, Townsend!"

Townsend grunted. If ever anybody showed signs of the white feather, Adolphus Smythe was showing them then.

"Time!"

Rawson stepped up briskly, and Adolphus entered the ring much more slowly. The combatants faced one another for the second round.

There was a great deal of grinning among the onlookers by this time. Rawson's cool and steady fighting had damaged Adolphus' nerves. Every fellow present could see that Smythe was growing "funky," and there was laughter as he backed and dodged, and dodged and backed, seeking to escape close quarters.

"Go it, Smythe!"

"Buck up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a blessed funk!" said Oswald.

The Nuts were looking furious. This was their champion—this the great chief who had gone into special "trainin'" for the purpose of licking the outsider!

"Pile in!" shouted Townsend. "For goodness' sake, go it, Smythe!"

Smythe flushed as he heard the laughter and muttered remarks of the ring. He screwed up his courage, what little he had, and made a desperate attack. There were loud cheers from the Nuts as he hurled him-

self upon Rawson and the latter was compelled to give ground.

"Bravo! Go it!"

Smythe was going it now, hot and strong. Rawson had to retreat, and he received some punishment.

Smythe felt his courage revive, and he pressed his antagonist harder and harder. But it was only for a minute.

A feat of Rawson's right drew Adolphus, and then his left came out with a shoulder drive that there was nothing to stop.

Full in Smythe's flushed face the hard glove landed, with all Rawson's force and weight behind it.

Crash!

Adolphus was on his back, blinking. Tommy Dodd began to count. But "Time!" saved Adolphus from being counted out. Townsend lifted him, and helped him out.

"Groooh-ow!" said Smythe dazedly.

"You'll nail him next time!" said Townsend.

"Time!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

Slowly and heavily Smythe of the Shell toed the line again. Rawson stepped up, smiling. The Nuts watched anxiously. Rawson was attacking now, and Adolphus was driven round the ring under a shower of blows.

"Yow! Ow—ow!" roared Adolphus, as a series of sharp taps came on his eyes, nose, and chin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of surprise and merriment. Adolphus, confused and considerably hurt by those sharp taps, had turned and run!

Rawson stood in astonishment.

The unfortunate Adolphus fairly bolted from the ring.

There was a roar of inextinguishable laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even the Nuts were laughing. They could not help it. Without even stopping for his jacket, Adolphus fled.

"By gad!" gasped Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rawson grinned.

"I suppose that's the finish!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha! I suppose so!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Here's your jacket, old scout. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Adolphus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd broke up, yelling with laughter. In his study, Adolphus Smythe was gasping for breath and groaning over his damages, and his ears burned as he heard the shouts of merriment from the quadrangle.

The mighty had fallen!

For days afterwards Adolphus could not show his face in public without provoking chuckles and humorous remarks. And Townsend & Co., furious as they were, had reluctantly to admit that their wisest plan was to give a wide, safe berth to the junior who had succeeded so well in keeping his end up.

THE END.

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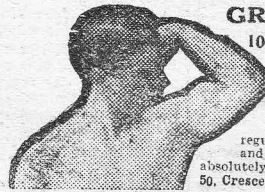
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