

FULL OF GOOD THINGS FROM COVER TO COVER!

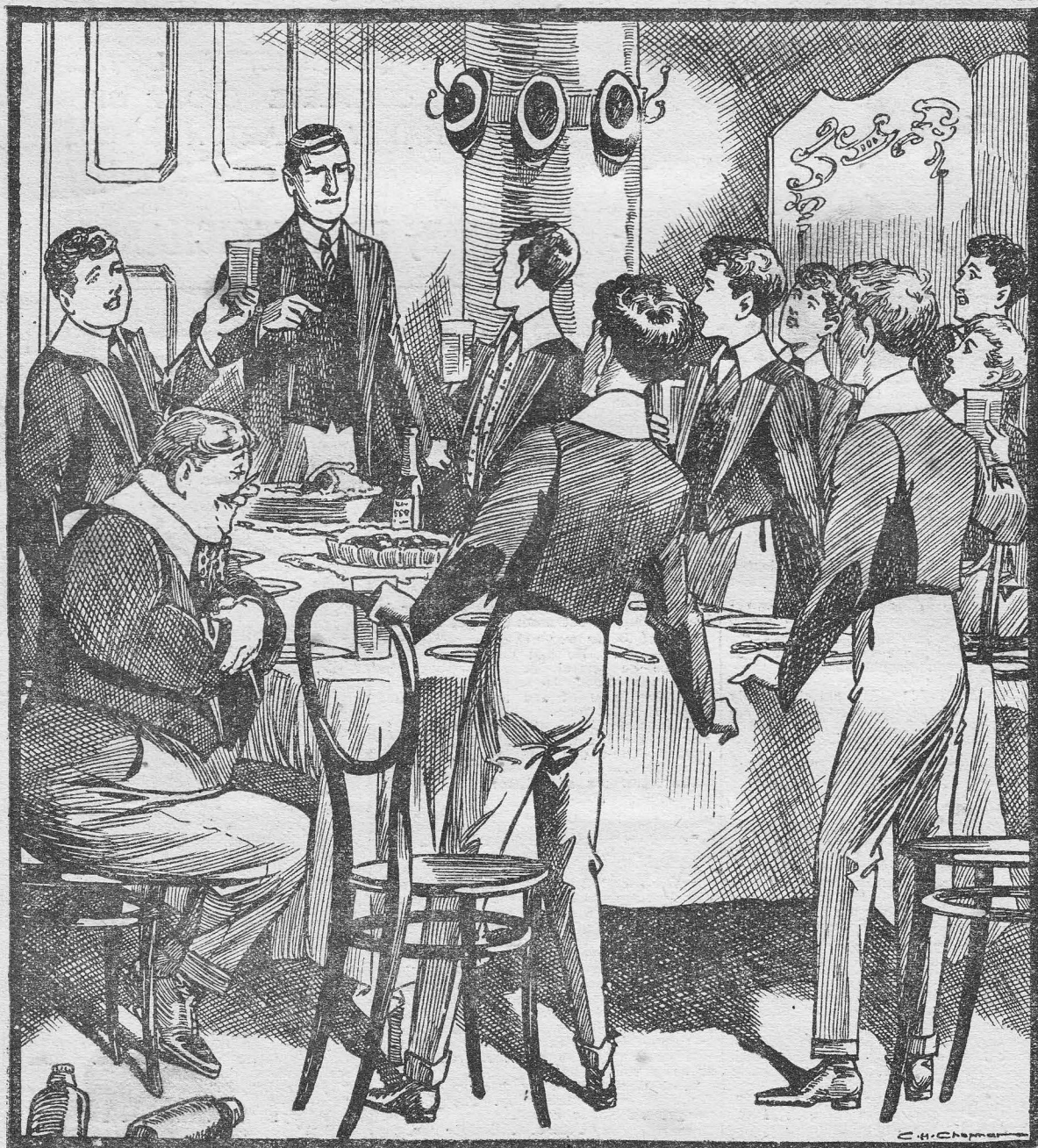
The
Penny $1\frac{1}{2}$ ^d
Popular

Week Ending
April 10th, 1920.

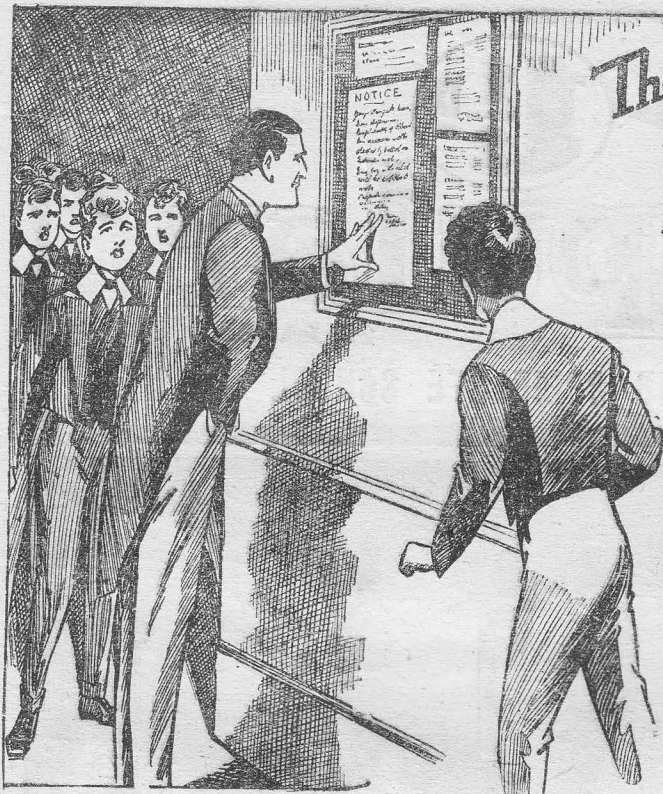
No. 64.
New Series.

20 PAGES.

GRAND CINEMA SERIAL AND COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES.



LODER'S DRAMATIC APPEARANCE AT THE FEAST!
(A Thrilling Incident in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



The New Captain of Greyfriars!

A MAGNIFICENT, LONG,
COMPLETE STORY OF
HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
OF GREYFRIARS.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Billy Bunter Complains!

THIS new grub is enough to break a fellow's heart!"

Such was the verdict of Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars Remove, and Bob's opinion was echoed and re-echoed on every side.

The Removites had just had tea in Hall—not the sort of tea to which they had been accustomed. It had consisted of hygienic bread, hygienic margarine, and hygienic cakes.

Even Billy Bunter, who was not fastidious as a rule, drew the line at hygienic food-stuffs.

"I say, you fellows," said the fat junior, "I shall write and complain to my pater about these new regulations."

"A fat lot of use that will be!" grunted Peter Todd. "What can your pater do?"

"My pater's a jolly influential man—"

"Does he still serve behind the bar at the Bunter Arms?" inquired Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Field! My pater's a jolly sight more distinguished than yours, anyway! He hopes to become an M.P. shortly. There's a vacant seat in the House of Commons—"

"If your pater's anything like you in bulk, he'll require about half a dozen vacant seats!" said Dennis Carr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his schoolfellows through his big spectacles.

"You're a chicken-hearted crowd," he said. "You'd sit down tamely under any injustice. But that's not my way. I mean to raise Cain about this new grub! I shall tell the pater all about it, and you'll see him coming down to Greyfriars with a hunting-crop."

"To give you a jolly good licking?" asked Nugent.

"No; to have it out with the masters!"

"My hat!"

Billy Bunter was very much in earnest. He had put up with the new food for nearly a fortnight, and he was rapidly losing weight—in his imagination. He considered that the time was ripe for lodging a complaint with his father, who would insist upon his being well nourished.

The fat junior rolled away to Study No. 7, and calmly proceeded to ransack Peter Todd's desk for some notepaper.

Peter, however, happened to be out of

stationery, and the Owl of the Remove drew blank.

After an unsuccessful quest along the Remove passage, Billy Bunter suddenly remembered that Mr. Quelch, his Form-master, had a golfing appointment that afternoon with Mr. Prout.

"I know!" muttered the fat junior. "Quelch's study will be empty, and I shall be able to use his typewriter!"

Billy Bunter rolled cautiously along to the Remove-master's study. After a stealthy glance up and down the passage he entered the sacred apartment. It was empty, as he had anticipated.

Mr. Quelch's typewriter stood on the table, its keys glimmering in the afternoon sunlight.

"Here goes!" murmured Bunter.

And, after inserting a sheet of paper in the machine, he sat down and got busy.

The fat junior was not an expert typist. Far from it. He had used Mr. Quelch's machine on several occasions—when the owner was out of the way—and instead of improving in speed and accuracy he had grown steadily worse.

It took Bunter quite half an hour to concoct the letter to his father, and the finished article was anything but a model of neatness.

The letter ran as follows:

"greyfriars skool,
"friardale, kent.
"my dear pater,—i have to bring a very Serious komplaint befor you.

"a forinite ago one of the guvverners of the skool, sir hilton popper, interjuiced sum new food regulashuns, we have had to say good-bye to the good old roast beef and yorksher pooding, & in its plaice they have had the cheek to give us what they call High-jennick grub.

"i am loosing wate terribly, & if these new restrickshuns aren't nocked on the head i shall soon bekum kwite a skellington.

"dear pater, i no you have a grate deel of inflewence. will you please do ail you can to stopp this frantick injustiss.

"i can't stopp to rite more, as i have an aking vide inside me.

"dear pater, please try & come down to the skool & stir things up. The poodings we get are simply awfull.

"Yore affeckshunate son,
"BILLY.

"p.s.—the masters pretend to like the new grub, but, of corse, they don't reelly. i saw old quelch tern kwite pail at dinner-time when he lifted a spoonfull of High-jennick pooding to his mouth!"

Billy Bunter chuckled to himself as he perused that postscript.

"Old Quelch would have several sorts of a fit if he saw this!" he muttered.

But it was Bunter who had several sorts of a fit.

A stern voice immediately behind him caused the fat junior to leap up from the chair.

"Boy! Bunter! What does this mean?"

The speaker was Mr. Quelch!

Billy Bunter was completely taken aback, and for a moment he could only stand and goggle at Mr. Quelch in a helpless manner.

Then he managed to blurt out:

"Oh crumbs! I—I thought you were playing golf, sir!"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Quelch had been to the links, only to find that his opponent, Mr. Prout, had not turned up. Consequently the Remove-master had been compelled to retrace his steps to Greyfriars, and he was in a far from amiable temper.

The sight of Billy Bunter calmly seated at his typewriter had goaded Mr. Quelch almost to fury.

"How dare you enter my study without permission, and make free use of my typewriter?" rumbled the angry Form-master.

Billy Bunter's knees were fairly knocking together.

"I—I—I—"

"Do not stand there stuttering!" roared Mr. Quelch. "Answer my question!"

"Ahen! You—you gave me permission to use your machine, sir," faltered Bunter.

"When?"

"Last August, sir."

Mr. Quelch snorted.

"In a moment of weakness I certainly said in August last that you might use my typewriter, Bunter; but I certainly did not imply that you could go on using it indefinitely, as the spirit moved you. What have you been doing?"

"Typewriting, sir."

"I am already aware of that, you utterly stupid boy! What have you been typewriting?"

"A—a document, sir."

"What sort of a document?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"A—a list of New Year resolutions for next year, sir!" said Bunter, lying desperately.

"I am sorry I cannot believe you, Bunter. Stand aside!"

So saying, Mr. Quelch pushed the fat junior to one side, and perused the letter which Bunter had written to his father.

The thunderclouds gathered on the Form-master's brow during the perusal, and when he came to the postscript he appeared to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit.

"Wretched boy! How dare you concoct such a scurrilous epistle to your father! How dare you invent such a malicious jumble of misstatements!"

"They're not misstatements, sir!" said Bunter, in a sudden flash of indignation. "You must admit yourself, sir, that the new grub is beastly!"

"I admit nothing of the sort, Bunter! You will throw that letter into the waste-paper-basket, and follow me!"

"Where—where to, sir?"

"To the headmaster's study."

"Oh, crumbs! Are you going to report me to the Head, sir?"

"I am!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You have entered my study without permission; you have made use of my typewriter—also without permission; and you have attempted to make an altogether unfounded complaint to your father. These offences are so serious that I do not feel justified in dealing with you myself. Come, Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch swept out of the study, and Billy Bunter followed, quivering like a fat table-jelly.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the Close, and they grinned as the Remove-master and his victim passed them.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Looks as if he's written that letter to his pater, and Quelch has bowled him out."

"In which case," said Huree Singh, "the unworthy Bunter will get it in the neckful portion of his anatomy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Listen!" said Dennis Carr, a moment later.

From the direction of the Head's study came a sound of steady swishing, accompanied by wild yells of anguish.

Billy Bunter was loudly lamenting the fact that he had ever thought of complaining to his father of the new food regulations!

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Out of Bounds.

"I SAY, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, when he appeared, groaning and squirming, in the Close, "I've just been lammed by the Head!"

"No need to advertise the fact!" growled Johnny Bull. "Your yells could have been heard in Friar-dale."

"Oh, really, Bull, I only gave a slight yelp—"

"Well, if that was a slight yelp," said Johnny, "I shouldn't care to hear you in full blast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why were you licked, Bunter?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"I haven't the foggiest notion! Quelch caught me writing a letter to my pater on his typewriter, and perhaps that may have had something to do with it."

"Ha, ha! Perhaps it did!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I say, you chaps, I'm fed-up—"

"Wish I could say the same!" grunted Dick Penfold. "Personally, I feel as if I'm in the throes of starvation."

"Hear, hear!" said Ogilvy. "I'm fed-up with not being fed-up!"

"Tea in Hall was certainly the limit!" said Wharton. "We shall simply have to get something to eat before bed-time!"

"Don't see how it's going to be done," said Nugent. "Mrs. Mimbles got nothing in the tuck-shop except a lot of hygienic trash which even a cannibal would turn up his nose at."

"And we're not allowed to feed anywhere outside the school," said Bob Cherry.

"Or smuggle grub into the building," added Johnny Bull.

"In fact, we're fairly stumped," said Peter Todd. "And it looks as if we must go hungry till to-morrow."

"Say not so, brother," said Dennis Carr. "I have an idea!"

The others turned quickly to Dennis.

"Get it off your delicate chest, my little man!" said Bob Cherry.

"As you fellows know," said Dennis Carr, "I had a fiver this morning from my Uncle Dick—"

"Bless his heart!" said Nugent.

"And Mauly, my esteemed study-mate, also had a fiver. If he would be willing to combine his wealth with mine—and I think he will—we'll take a trip as far as Burchester, where there aren't likely to be any masters or prefects on the prowl, and have a top-hole feed!"

"Ripping!" said Peter Todd. "Is Mauly here?"

"Yaas, dear boy!" drawled the schoolboy earl. "Carr's weeze is toppin', and I shall be pleased to share the expense with him."

"Good old Mauly!"

"There's one drawback," said Wharton. "We haven't a great deal of time to get to Burchester and back. And I don't believe there's a train for another hour or more."

"We'll hire the village char-a-banc," said Dennis Carr.

"Good!"

"How many of us are going?" asked Dick Russell.

"A dozen, I think," said Dennis. "If the whole Form went, it would arouse suspicion."

"Is Bunter coming?" inquired Peter Todd.

"We shall have to bring him, I'm afraid, to keep him quiet. If we left him behind, he'd give the whole show away."

Billy Bunter's little round eyes glistened with delight. He even forgot his tingling palms in the glorious prospect of a feed.

"Late passes will be required," said Wharton. "We'll go along and see Wingate."

In the excitement of the moment, the juniors quite overlooked the fact that Wingate had recently been deposed from the captaincy of Greyfriars for having fearlessly criticised the new food.

Harry Wharton led the way to Wingate's study in the Sixth Form passage. He tapped on the door, and entered in response to Wingate's invitation. The remainder of the juniors crowded in the doorway.

Wingate was standing in front of the mantelpiece, with a clouded brow. These were dark days for the ex-captain, who had a genuine love for his school, and an equally genuine hatred of the new regulations.

"Well, Wharton, what is it?" he asked, as the captain of the Remove came in.

"Twelve of us want late passes, Wingate," said Harry.

"Then you've come to the wroag shop. I have no authority for issuing passes."

"But—"

"You seem to forget that I'm no longer captain of Greyfriars."

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton, quite taken aback. "Matter of fact, we'd all forgotten it."

"But you're still a prefect, Wingate!" chimed in Bob Cherry from the doorway. "And a prefect is entitled to issue late passes."

Wingate hesitated.

"Where do you want to go to?" he asked. "Burchester," said Wharton briefly.

"To have a bust-up?" said Wingate, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes."

"Thought as much," said Wingate. "And I don't blame you in the least. The new grub here is intolerable. I've just been jawing to some of the prefects about it, and they're all of the same opinion—with one exception."

The Removites did not need to be told that the exception was Gerald Loder.

The black sheep of the Sixth was supporting the new regulations in order to curry favour with the authorities.

Now that the captaincy of the school was vacant, Loder intended to make a bold bid for it. For a long time past he had cast covetous eyes on Wingate's position, and he hoped soon to be monarch of all he surveyed.

After some hesitation, Wingate issued a dozen passes to the juniors.

"Mind you don't get spotted," he said. "If you're caught having a feed in Burchester it will make matters jolly unpleasant for me. I shall be deprived of my prefectship for a cert."

"We'll be very careful, Wingate," promised Wharton.

"Awfully, fearfully careful!" added Nugent. "Off you go, then!"

The twelve juniors set off in high spirits.

The Famous Five led the way, of course; and the other members of the party were Dennis Carr, Peter Todd, Dick Russell, Donald

Ogilvy, Mark Linley, Lord Mauléverer, and Billy Bunter.

"We shall have to hustle," said Wharton. "Put the pace on, you fellows!"

The juniors passed through the school gateway, and set out with long and rapid strides in the direction of the village.

Billy Bunter brought up the rear. The fat junior was anything but athletic, and he found it difficult to maintain the pace.

"I wish you wouldn't walk so fast," he said peevishly.

"This will work off some of your superfluous fat, my dear porpoise!" said Dennis Carr, looking back over his shoulder at the perspiring Owl of the Remove. "Put a jerk in it!"

By the time Friar-dale was reached Billy Bunter was in a parlous state. The perspiration streamed down his flabby cheeks, and he was puffing and blowing like a grampus.

The juniors halted at the garage where the char-a-banc was housed, and a few moments later they were on board.

The driver was given instructions to take the party to Burchester, and to stop outside the railway-station at that town.

The sight of a char-a-banc pulling up outside a restaurant would attract too much attention. Harry Wharton realised this, and decided that the party should walk into the town from the station.

"There aren't likely to be any masters or prefects prowling about in Burchester," said Dennis Carr. "Still, it's as well to be on the safe side."

"Yes, rather!"

The char-a-banc bumped and jolted along the road at a great rate.

Billy Bunter clung tightly to the side of the vehicle, fearing that at any moment he might be deposited into the nearest ditch.

Burchester was reached in record time, and the juniors dismounted at the station and strolled along the High Street. They kept a sharp look-out, but saw no sign of an enemy.

"The coast is clear," said Dick Russell.

"Now's our chance to dodge into the Imperial Restaurant."

"Nobody can deny that we're acting with interior motives!" said Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors lost no time in entering the restaurant. One moment they were standing in a group on the pavement; the next they were seated at a couple of daintily-arrayed tables.

"Good!" murmured Billy Bunter, who was fairly in his element now. "Buck up with the first course, waitress!"

The dinner proved a tremendous success.

Both Dennis Carr and Lord Mauléverer had money to burn, and they did things in style.

"After the beastly hygienic grub we've had lately," said Johnny Bull, "this steak-and-kidney pie is top-hole!"

"Hear, hear!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm going to have another helping!"

"You're jolly well not!" said Peter Todd.

"You've had five already. If you go on at this rate, you'll be helpless long before you come to the peaches and cream!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In spite of the fact that Peter Todd kept him under close observation, Billy Bunter did himself remarkably well. He was nodding off to sleep by the time the biscuits and cheese were served.

When the feed was near its conclusion, Harry Wharton jumped to his feet. A glass of ginger-beer was poised in his hand.

"Here's to Dennis Carr and Mauly, the founders of the feast!" he exclaimed, in ringing tones.

The others rose to respond; but before they could raise their glasses to their lips, a dramatic interruption occurred.

"So this is what you came to Burchester for?" said a voice.

There was a gasp of dismay from the majority of the juniors.

For the voice belonged to Loder of the Sixth!

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Checkmated.

"THIS isn't the first time you kids have set the Head's orders at defiance," said Loder. "A week ago you were caught smuggling food into the school. The Head let you down very lightly in my opinion. But he won't be so lenient this time. I shouldn't be surprised if the ringleaders of this affair were fired out of Greyfriars."

The rascally prefect seemed to be gloating at the prospect.

"Well, you needn't raise your voice, you

rotten spy!" said Harry Wharton, clenching his hands. "We don't want all Burchester to know our business!"

Loder flushed. He was not thin-skinned, but the insinuation about spying stung him to the quick.

"I wasn't spying!" he said sharply. "I happened to be passing, and—"

"Rats!" growled Johnny Bull. "You must have known we were coming here!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm not going to argue with you," said Loder. "The fact remains that I've caught you red-handed in a public restaurant, and all eating-houses are out of bounds. I shall take your names, and report the whole lot of you to Dr. Locke when I get back to the school!"

The Famous Five looked very grave. They knew that the consequences of their escapade would be very serious. This was not their first offence; and the Head had already made it clear that if the new food regulations were again defied punishment of the severest nature would follow.

And that was not all. Wingate would have to suffer. It would transpire that he had issued passes to the twelve juniors—that he had aided and abetted their excursion to Burchester.

"This is rotten!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Simply awful!" agreed Wharton.

"Shall we mob the ludicrous Loder, and force him not to sneakfully report us?" murmured Hurree Singh.

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"Can't be done," he said.

The only fellow who appeared not to care was Dennis Carr.

Dennis was smiling, and his schoolfellows quite failed to understand why. Loder's intervention was a matter for tears rather than for laughter.

Presently, however, the smile was fully understood.

"You've quite made up your mind to report us, Loder?" said Dennis Carr.

"Quite!"

"Well, you'll have cause to feel sorry for yourself if you do!"

Loder glared at the speaker.

"What do you mean by that, you cheeky young cub?"

"I mean," said Dennis calmly, "that I shall pay you back in your own coin. As a general rule, I don't believe in reprisals; but in this case I consider they will be justifiable."

For a moment Loder was silent. Then he said:

"I suppose you intend to tell the Head that I occasionally nip down to the village after lights-out? If that's the case, the Head will never believe you. A junior's word won't be taken before a prefect's."

"But supposing I back up my accusation by producing proof that you break bounds?" said Dennis.

"You couldn't do it!" blustered the prefect.

"Oh, yes, I could!"

"How?"

Dennis Carr produced a letter from his pocket and held it up for Loder's inspection.

"If the Head were to see this letter," he said, "your innings at Greyfriars would be finished. You'd be sacked from the school!"

Loder gave a violent start. He recognised instantly the letter which Dennis Carr held in his hand. It was a note from the landlord of the Cross Keys demanding settlement of a debt which he—Loder—had incurred through gambling.

The rascally prefect well knew that if that letter reached Dr. Locke's hands he could expect no mercy.

The landlord's note afforded ample proof of the fact that Loder had broken bounds—that he had visited the Cross Keys for the purpose of gambling.

Loder took a sudden stride towards Dennis Carr.

"Give me that letter!" he demanded fiercely.

But Dennis tucked the incriminating document away in his pocket.

"I'm hanging on to this letter," he said.

"And if you dare to breathe a word to the Head about our being here, you can look out for squalls!"

Loder was in a cleft-stick. He could not recover the letter by force, for he was no match for a dozen juniors. And he could not report the Removites to Dr. Locke, or he himself would be courting exposure and disgrace.

The baffled prefect scowled savagely at Dennis Carr.

"How did you come to get hold of that letter?" he demanded.

"Found it in the Close early this morning," explained Dennis. "You should be more

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careful with your private correspondence, Loder!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were smiling now. They realised that Loder was helpless. Dennis Carr had unexpectedly saved the situation.

"Under the circumstances, Loder," said Bob Cherry, "I take it you won't report us?"

"No!" growled the prefect. "But you'll return to the school at once, all of you!"

Loder was anxious to send the juniors packing, because he was in need of food and drink. And he could not very well partake of refreshment in the presence of the juniors whom he had threatened to report.

"It's all right, Loder, old top!" said Dick Russell impudently. "We've practically finished."

"We'll just toast the founders of the feast, and then we'll retire," said Wharton.

The toast was duly honoured, and Dennis Carr and Lord Mauleverer settled the bill between them.

Billy Bunter, whose doze had developed into a sound sleep, was snoring loudly.

"Come along, porpoise!" said Johnny Bull, prodding the fat junior in the ribs. "Time to fold up our tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away."

The Owl of the Remove awoke with a start and blinked around. He nearly fell out of his chair when he caught sight of Loder.

"Oh crumbs!" he ejaculated. "It's all up now, you fellows. Loder will report us as sure as eggs are eggs!"

"Don't take any notice of that lanky lamp-post!" said Nugent disrespectfully. "He's quite harmless—"

"But—"

"Don't start butting like a blessed billy-goat!" said Bob Cherry. "We don't want to hang about here all night."

"Can I shove a few of these tarts in my pocket?" asked Bunter.

"No, you can't!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—I shall be quite peckish by the time we get back to Greyfriars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter had to be forcibly frog-marched from the restaurant, and the juniors proceeded to the railway-station, where the char-a-banc was waiting to take them back to Friardale.

Harry Wharton & Co. clambered on board in high spirits, happy in the knowledge that Loder's hands were tied, and that he would be unable to report them.

"Dennis, my dear fellow," drawled Lord Mauleverer, "your little bit of blackmailing came in extremely useful, begad!"

"I simply had to threaten Loder," replied Dennis Carr, "or he would have made matters unpleasant for Wingate, as well as us."

"That's so," said Peter Todd. "It was a jolly lucky thing that you found that letter!"

"The luckfulness of the esteemed find was terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "And now, my worthy chums, let us returnfully proceed to our alma aunt."

"To our what?" gasped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha! Inky means 'alma mater'!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I have not yet masterfully studied the esteemed English language to perfection," said Hurree Singh, with a sad shake of his dusky head. "But I shall persevere. Nothing succeeds like a bird in the hand, as your English proverb has it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The char-a-banc rattled away along the stony street, and the juniors, homeward bound after their adventure, laughed and chatted in high good-humour.

Meanwhile, Loder of the Sixth had seated himself at one of the tables in the Imperial Restaurant, and had ordered a nice little repast. He took his time in consuming it, and over an hour had elapsed when he rose to pay his bill.

Hanging on the wall of the restaurant was a railway timetable. Loder consulted it.

"There's a train to Friardale at eight-five," he murmured. "That will do fine. I mustn't miss it, though, because it's the last one."

Eight o'clock was striking when Loder arrived at the railway-station.

He expected to see Harry Wharton & Co. on the platform waiting for the train. He did not know that the juniors had come over to Burchester by char-a-banc.

"That's queer!" muttered the prefect. "There hasn't been a train to Friardale for over two hours, so those kids can't have gone back yet!"

The minutes passed, and at five-past-eight Loder glanced down the line to see if his train was signalled. It wasn't. Moreover, the platform was deserted. There was not even a porter to be seen.

"Dashed if I can understand this!" growled Loder.

He waited until a quarter-past eight, and still there was no sign of animation on the platform.

Filled with a strange foreboding, Loder made his way to the stationmaster's office and looked inside.

The stationmaster—a sleepily-eyed man—blinked at the Greyfriars senior.

"What d'you want?" he growled.

"I say, the last train's jolly late, isn't it?" said Loder.

"The last train went half an hour ago!"

"What?"

"It left at seven-forty-five, to be precise." Loder looked flabbergasted.

"According to the time-table," he said, "the last train goes at eight-five."

"An out-of-date time-table," said the stationmaster calmly. "The company hasn't revised them yet."

"Then the sooner the company wakes up the better!" snorted Loder.

And he strode away, wondering how he was going to get back to Greyfriars.

"It means hiring a car, I suppose!" growled the prefect. "It'll cost me a small fortune, but it's the only way."

It was getting late, and Loder could not help wondering what had become of the Greyfriars juniors. But he saw no sign of them as he made his way to the solitary garage in the High Street.

"I want to hire a car," explained Loder, addressing the proprietor.

"So do a good many more people!" was the gruff reply. "Unfortunately, our cars are all in dock for repair."

Loder gasped.

"You mean to say you haven't a single car available?"

"Not one!"

"Great Scott! And this is supposed to be a modern, go-ahead town!" ejaculated the prefect. "P'raps you'll be good enough to tell me where I can hire a horse-cab or a pony and trap?"

The proprietor shook his head.

"There'll be nothing doing at this time of night," he said.

Loder stamped his foot impatiently.

"Look here, man, I've got to get back to Greyfriars!"

"Well, it's no use carryin' on at me!" said the proprietor of the garage, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Haven't you got a motor-bike that I could hire?"

"No."

"A push-bike, then?"

"I've got nothing—not even a wheelbarrow!"

"Then it means," hooted Loder, losing his temper, "that I've got to tramp all the way back to Greyfriars!"

"It's a beautiful evening, sir," said the proprietor. "And Greyfriars can't be more than fifteen miles from here."

"You—you—" spluttered Loder.

It looked for a moment as if he would commit assault and battery upon the sympathetic proprietor. But he refrained, and stamped out of the garage.

"There's nothing for it but to walk!" he muttered. "Fifteen miles, by Jove! And I feel fagged out already!"

In the April twilight the prefect started on his gigantic task. He set off at a long, loping stride, but after a mile or two the pace began to tell, and Loder slowed up considerably.

On and on he went, and dusk descended like a pall over the range of fields which stretched on either side of him.

The walk would have taken the stuffing out of stronger fellows than Loder; and the occasional cigarette which he smoked hindered rather than helped his progress.

It was quite dark now, and the black clouds overhead portended a storm.

Loder gritted his teeth, and strode on through the night.

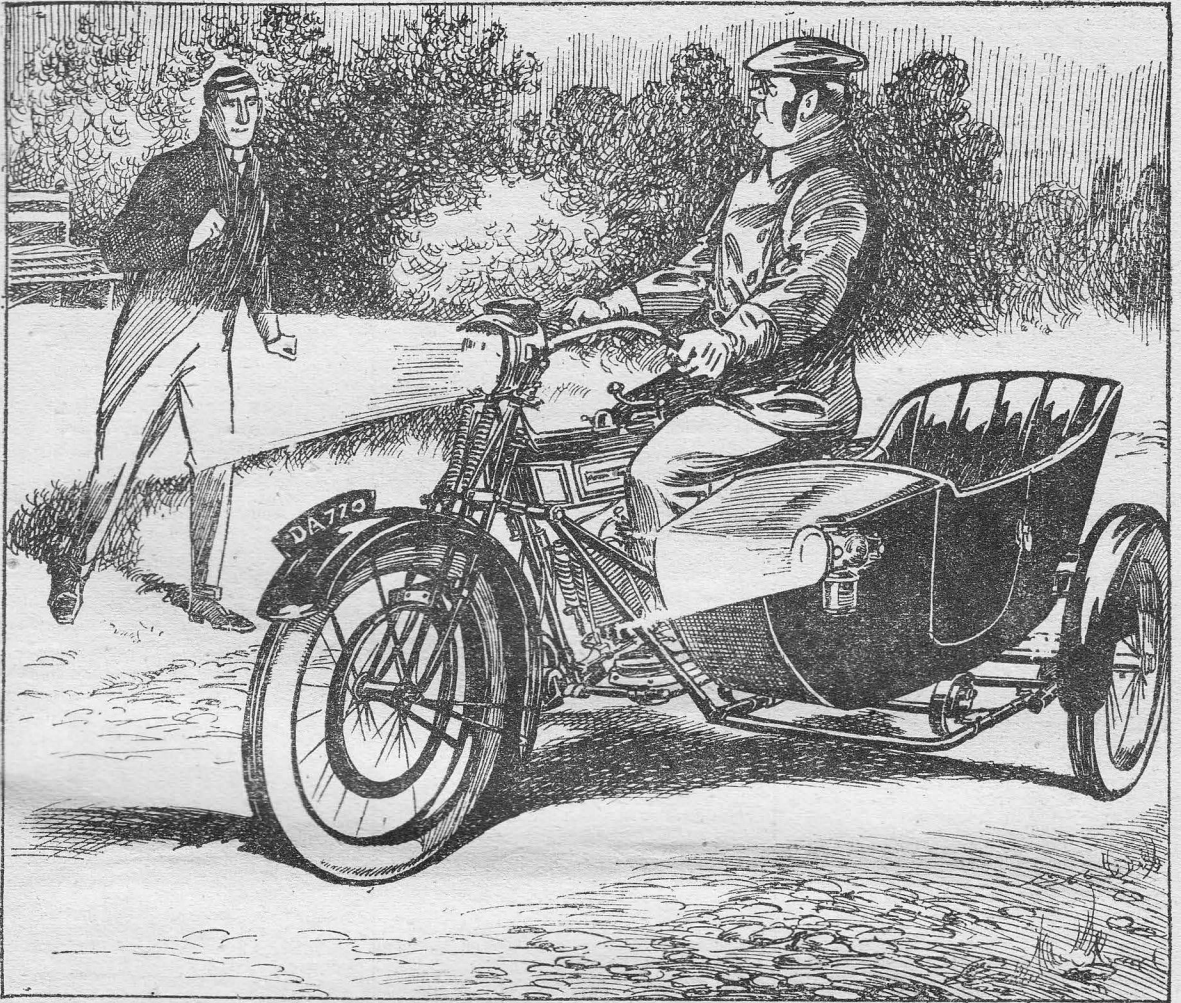
Then, with almost uncanny suddenness, a hailstorm descended, and in a very short space of time the unhappy prefect was drenched to the skin.

"Confound it!" he muttered. "I must get under cover somewhere!"

But there was no shelter of any sort to be seen—no friendly barn, no farmhouse, nothing but a dreary waste of countryside.

The hail ceased as suddenly as it had begun; but it was followed by fierce gusts of wind, which buffeted the prefect's face and almost took his breath away.

Loder was bitterly regretting his excursion to Burchester. The only thing which gave him consolation was the hope that Harry Wharton & Co. were also exposed to the storm.



"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Prout. "It is Loder! What are you doing here?" Loder tottered to his feet. (See this page.)

Had Loder but known it, however, the Removites were tucked up safe and sound in bed.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the lights of Courtfield came in sight. Loder felt that he could not go a step farther. He was utterly done up.

On the brow of a hill, just outside Courtfield, was a rustic seat. The prefect threw himself on it, and he might have remained there indefinitely had not Mr. Prout, of Greyfriars, happened to pass on his motor-cycle.

The master of the Fifth slowed up on catching sight of the huddled figure on the seat.

"Why bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "It is Loder! What are you doing here?"

Loder tottered to his feet, and explained that he had tramped all the way from Burchester.

"And you are wet through!" said Mr. Prout. "Dear me! This is terrible! Fortunately, my side-car is available. Pray get in, Loder!"

In the ordinary way, Loder would never have dreamed of risking life and limb by travelling in Mr. Prout's side-car. But it was his only chance of getting back to school that night, and he jumped at it.

Scarcely had Loder covered his knees with the rug when the motor-cycle bounded forward like a live thing. It passed through Courtfield in a flash, and Loder was obliged to hang on for dear life.

More by luck than anything else, Mr. Prout managed to convey his human cargo to the school without mishap.

Loder did not even thank his benefactor as he stepped out of the side-car. He was too tired and dispirited for words.

"I should advise you to remove your wet garments without delay, Loder," said Mr. Prout.

The prefect nodded without speaking, and staggered into the building.

And when Harry Wharton & Co. heard next morning of Loder's misadventures, they one and all agreed that it served him right!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Rivals for the Captaincy!

AFTER breakfast—a "high-jennick" breakfast, as Billy Bunter would have called it—the following announcement was posted on the school notice-board:

"NOTICE!

George Wingate having been deprived of the captaincy of the school, his successor will be elected by ballot on Saturday next. Every boy in the school will be entitled to vote.

Prospective candidates are requested to affix their names to this announcement without delay.

(Signed) H. H. Locke,
Headmaster."

The Famous Five were among the first to read this notice.

"I'm willing to wager a bag of doughnuts," said Bob Cherry, "that the first name on the list of prospective candidates will be Loder's!"

"No takers!" growled Johnny Bull. "Everybody knows that Loder would sell his soul to become skipper!"

"Then it's our duty, as patriotic citizens,"

said Harry Wharton, "to see that Loder doesn't get a look-in!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'd rather vote for Coker of the Fifth than for Loder," said Nugent. "Coker's a chump, but he's not a cad!"

Whilst the juniors were speaking, Loder himself stepped up to the notice-board. He perused the Head's announcement, and then, producing a fountain-pen from his pocket, he signed his name with a flourish.

"What hopes?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder scowled at the Famous Five. "You cheeky young cubs will be kept in your places when I'm captain of Greyfriars!" he said.

"When!" chuckled Nugent.

And Johnny Bull started humming:

"When I am the skipper
I'll cluck like a broody hen;
When I am the skipper,
When, when, when, when!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder made a sudden stride towards Johnny Bull, with the intention of cuffing him; but at that moment Walker of the Sixth came up, and Loder knew better than to resort to bullying in Walker's presence. Time was when Walker himself had been a bit of a bully, as well as a pal of Loder's. But that time was past, and Walker was a different fellow now.

Loder strode away, and Walker came up to the notice-board.

"Going to have a shot at the captaincy, Walker?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I don't know."

"You don't mean to say you're going to give Loder a clear field?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. Walker grinned.

"You can set your mind at rest," he said. "Loder will never prance off with the captaincy. There are plenty more candidates coming along."

"Wonder if Coker minor will stand?" said Nugent.

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Walker. "But the question is, will the fellows stand Coker minor?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Reginald Coker, the younger brother of the great Horace, had been placed in the Sixth by virtue of his scholastic ability, and it would have been quite permissible for him to add his name to the list of prospective candidates. But Harry Wharton & Co. shuddered as they pictured the destinies of Greyfriars being controlled by Reggie Coker!

After a good deal of hesitation Walker placed his signature beneath that of Loder. "Bravo!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll undertake to back you up, Walker, provided nobody better comes along."

Walker scowled at this doubtful compliment, and walked away.

The Famous Five dispersed, too, and when they looked at the notice-board again, after morning lessons, they found that a whole batch of names had been added to the list.

"Coker minor hasn't come up to the scratch," remarked Johnny Bull.

"He's got sense enough to realise that he wouldn't stand an earthly," said Wharton.

The complete list of candidates for the captaincy was as follows:

**"GERALD LODER,
JAMES WALKER,
TOM NORTH,
LAWRENCE FAULKNER,
VINCENT HAMMERSLEY,
PATRICK GWYNNE."**

"Gwynne's our man!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"Yes, rather!"

"I didn't think he'd stand, out of sympathy with Wingate," said Wharton.

"I expect Wingate pressed him to," said Nugent. "After all, he's Wingate's right-hand man, and he'd make a rattling good skipper."

"So would Faulkner and Hammersley," said Johnny Bull. "But Gwynne's easily the best of the bunch."

The majority of the Removites were of the same way of thinking.

All the decent fellows in the Form—including Dennis Carr, Vernon-Smith, Mark Linley, Peter Todd, Squiff, and Dick Penfold—decided to vote for Gwynne.

As for the cads of the Remove, they intended to support Loder.

Gwynne stood for law and order; Loder stood for lawlessness. Small wonder, then, that Skinner & Co. ranged themselves on the side of the rascally prefect.

Billy Bunter, when asked for whom he intended to vote, replied that he hadn't quite made up his mind.

As a matter of fact, Bunter was waiting for one of the candidates to offer him a bribe; and he was likely to wait in vain, so far as everybody but Loder was concerned.

Having decided to do all in their power to support Pat Gwynne, who was Wingate's best chum, Harry Wharton & Co. got busy with the production of a special election number of the "Greyfriars Herald." They had very little time at their disposal, but they hoped, by the consumption of much midnight oil, to produce the special number in a couple of days.

Football was forgotten in the general excitement, and the Famous Five's spare time—plus a good deal that was not to spare—was devoted to writing articles and poems which had a bearing on the election.

At last the "copy" was ready for the printers, and Harry Wharton cycled over to Courtfield with it.

Then, in the interval of waiting for the copies to be printed, the high-spirited juniors placarded every available portion of wall-space at Greyfriars with the injunction:

"VOTE FOR GWYNNE!"

Loder, furious at seeing a rival candidate's name brought so prominently before the public eye, detailed a number of fags to tear down the offending placards.

The fags did their best; but every sheet of THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 64.

paper they tore down was replaced immediately by another.

One night the whole of the placards were removed. Next morning, a fresh lot seemed to have sprung up like mushrooms.

The message "Vote for Gwynne!" greeted Loder wherever he went. He complained to the Head that the walls were being defaced by mischievous juniors, and Dr. Locke issued an order that bill-posting of any sort was not to be indulged in.

Loder was able to prevent the placarding; but he was not able to prevent the appearance of the special election number of the "Greyfriars Herald." Copies were distributed throughout the school; and the "Bitter gents" of the Remove had done their work well.

The cover picture showed an imaginary scene in Big Hall. The Head was in the act of conferring the captaincy upon Gwynne. The senior was depicted on one knee before Dr. Locke, who was saying:

"Rise, Sir Patrick!"

Loder was also portrayed in the picture. He was to be seen sinking out of Big Hall, and sobbing:

"Boo-hoo! I didn't get a single vote!"

The cover picture was much admired by Gwynne's supporters, but Loder's parasites nearly tore their hair when they saw it.

Dick Penfold, the poet-laureate of the Remove, had also been busy. A specimen of his handiwork appeared on the first page:

"If you wish to do the right,
Vote for Gwynne!
Back him up with all your might,
Vote for Gwynne!
He's a sportsman, true and famous,
And his rule will never slame us;
Do not be an ignoramus—
Vote for Gwynne!"

Loder scowled when he read that verse in the privacy of his study. But his scowl became blacker when he read on:

"If you wish to play the fool,
Vote for Loder!
Biggest cad in all the school—
Vote for Loder!
If you want to risk disaster,
If you want your nose in plaster,
If you want a Hun for master—
Vote for Loder!"

"The cheeky young villains!" snarled Loder, clenching his fists. "I'll jolly soon get this trashy rag suppressed!"

And Loder strode away to the Head's study with a scowling brow and a copy of the special election number.

"Well, Loder," said Dr. Locke, rather impatiently, "what is this time?"

"I have a complaint to bring before you, sir—"

"You seem always to be making complaints, Loder!"

"Just look at this, sir!" said the angry prefect.

And he handed over the copy of the "Greyfriars Herald."

The Head tried hard not to smile as he glanced at the cover picture, but his efforts failed lamentably. He not only smiled; he laughed outright.

"Ha, ha! This is very good fun, Loder!"

"Fun, sir!" almost shouted the prefect.

"Look at this apology for a poem!"

Dr. Locke ran his eye over Dick Penfold's perpetration.

"I can well understand, Loder," he said at length, "that the sentiments expressed in these verses do not please you."

"I'm referred to as the biggest cad in all the school, sir!" snarled Loder.

"Quite so. That is certainly a strong statement to make. At the same time, the juniors responsible for this production are entitled to express their opinions in its pages, provided they do not carry the thing too far."

"They've carried it too far in this case, sir!"

"I am sorry I cannot agree with you, Loder. You must make due allowance for the excitement under which these boys laboured at the time they went to press. They merely wish to emphasise the suitability of Gwynne for the captaincy, and the unsuitability of yourself. You must not take their written comments too seriously, Loder. I am surprised that you should come and complain to me in this way."

"Aren't you going to punish the impertinent young rascals, sir?"

The Head frowned.

"I do not regard Wharton and his assistants as young rascals, Loder!" he said sharply.

Loder clenched his hands.

"I demand the instant suppression of this paper, sir!" he said.

The word "demand" was unfortunate. Had Loder said "request," he might possibly have gained his point. As it was, the Head waved him from the study.

"You have no right to make demands of your headmaster, Loder. I refuse to sanction the suppression of a paper which contains nothing but harmless fun!"

"But, sir—"

"That is all, Loder. Kindly leave my study!"

And Loder, choking back his wrath, went.

As he crossed the Close, a refrain, chanted by a score of high-spirited Removites, greeted his ears:

"If you want to risk disaster,
If you want your nose in plaster,
If you want a Hun for master—
Vote for Loder!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Blow for Greyfriars.

ELECTION DAY!
Harry Wharton & Co. turned out amid scenes of unprecedented excitement.

Every fellow at Greyfriars took a strong interest in the election upon which so much depended.

Even Lord Mauleverer, who was usually bored stiff by elections and similar functions, was heard to say that he hoped old Gwynne would get in. And "old Gwynne" stood an excellent chance, for his supporters could be reckoned by the dozen.

It would be no runaway-victory for Gwynne, however, for North, Faulkner, and Hammersley were great favourites with the fellows in the Upper Forms.

As for Loder, who was prepared to move heaven and earth to secure the captaincy, he had a very poor backing. Hardly anybody in his own Form intended to vote for him; and the Fifth, the Upper Fourth, the Shell, and the fag fraternity were openly hostile to him. The only support the unpopular prefect was likely to receive was that extended by Skinner & Co. of the Remove.

Loder did his utmost to obtain votes. He nodded civilly to fellows who, in the ordinary way, he would either have bullied or ignored. He also held a celebration in his study, and invited all and sundry. But the only guests who arrived were Skinner & Co. and Billy Bunter.

As the time of the election drew near Loder realised that his chances of stepping into Wingate's shoes were extremely remote.

The cad of the Sixth tried to devise some scheme whereby he could outwit the rival candidates. But, try as he would, he could not get a sufficiently good brain-wave.

All through the day Loder heard shouts of "Vote for Gwynne!" varied occasionally by cries of "Vote for Faulkner!" or "Vote for Hammersley!" Not once did he hear the three words which would have fallen like music on his ears: "Vote for Loder!"

The election was due to take place in Big Hall at seven o'clock.

Shortly before that time Loder went along to the Hall.

His entry was greeted with hoots and hisses.

Everybody knew that Loder had helped to bring about Wingate's downfall, and all the decent fellows regarded the black sheep of the Sixth with scorn and loathing.

"Loder's a rank outsider!" declared Bob Cherry. "And we're not going to let a rank outsider boss the show, are we?"

"No, rather not!" came in a chorus from the Removites.

Harry Wharton mounted a form.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

There were mingled cries of "Hear, hear!" and "Dry up, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove surveyed the sea of excited faces.

"Those who haven't yet made up their minds who to vote for still have five minutes to decide!" he exclaimed. "I don't want to influence your decisions in any way. I merely wish to urge you, one and all, to give your votes to—"

"Gerald Loder!" said Skinner.

"Hear, hear!" roared Bolsover major.

There was a chorus of protest at once—not only from the Removites, but from fellows in other Forms.

"Turn those cads out!"

"Sit on them!"

"Suffocate them!"

"Pulverise them!"

Skinner and Bolsover began to feel heartily sorry that they had spoken. They found themselves surrounded by a hostile crowd, which included Coker & Co. of the Fifth and Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth.

"Where are these worms who are going to vote for Loder?" demanded Coker aggressively. "Let me get at them!"

"Hold on!" panted Skinner. "We were only joking, weren't we, Bolsover, old man? Of course, we shouldn't dream of voting for Loder!"

But Skinner's voice was drowned in the uproar.

"Order, there—order!" shouted several of the prefects.

But their voices, too, were lost in the commotion that followed.

There was a big movement on foot to eject all Loder's supporters from Big Hall.

Unfortunately, Coker & Co. were not quite sure which were Loder's supporters and which were not. Consequently they made the immense mistake of attacking certain fellows who were loyal followers of Gwynne.

A free fight was soon in progress, and the scene resembled a gigantic Ruby scrum.

Mr. Prout had been due to arrive at seven o'clock to preside at the election. Unfortunately, however, the master of the Fifth was many miles away at the time, his motor-bicycle having been badly punctured.

With no master present to check the disturbance, and with the prefects powerless, the fight raged fast and furious.

"Take that!" shouted Dick Russell, aiming a terrific blow at Coker's rather prominent nose. "I'll teach you to accuse me of backing up Loder!"

Coker went down with a crash; but Potter and Greene sprang forward to avenge him, and the din which followed was indescribable.

Removites and Fifth-Formers rolled on the floor together, and the fags joined in for the fun of the thing.

"The election will never come off at this rate!" remarked Gwynne.

"Stop it, you mad young hooligans—stop it!" roared Faulkner.

"You might as well shout to a brick wall, old man, for all the notice they'll take!" said Wingate. "They'll come to their senses when Prout arrives, and not before!"

But the minutes passed; the battle increased in violence, and the master of the Fifth failed to put in an appearance.

When the pandemonium was at its height Loder of the Sixth slipped out of Big Hall and made his way to the Head's study. Nobody saw him go.

"What is it, Loder?" asked Dr. Locke, as the prefect came in rather breathlessly.

"I am afraid, sir," said Loder, trying to speak calmly, "that the captain of the school will have to be appointed by some other means than an election."

"Bless my soul! Would you be good enough to make yourself clear, Loder?"

"The school has got out of hand, sir. At the present moment there's a free fight going on in Big Hall."

"Good gracious! Can it be possible that Mr. Prout is unable to preserve order?"

"Mr. Prout hasn't arrived, sir. And the young rascals in the Remove are fighting like wild cats. It was they who started the disturbance."

The Head rose to his feet.

"I will come and stop this unseemly brawling at once!" he said.

As Dr. Locke and the prefect crossed the Close together Loder ventured to say:

"I don't think an election by ballot will prove at all satisfactory, sir."

"Why not, Loder?"

"Because the majority of the fellows—especially those in the lower Forms—are not in a position to judge who would make the better captain. I think the new captain ought to be selected by you, sir, or by a committee of masters."

Dr. Locke made no reply. He was impressed, however, by Loder's views.

A deafening clamour greeted the Head's ears as he approached Big Hall. No sooner did he set foot in the vast room, however, than the din died away as if by magic.

The combatants sorted themselves out, and stood blinking sheepishly at the Head.

"Boys!" said Dr. Locke sternly. "I am amazed and disgusted to find that you are incapable of holding an election without all this horseplay! Wingate! Gwynne! Faulkner! You are all prefects! Why did you not quell this uproar?"

"That's easier said than done, sir," answered Wingate.

The Head frowned.

"Do not be impertinent, Wingate! You should have taken measures to prevent this disturbance. I can clearly see that it was a mistake to allow the boys to elect their own captain."

Silence followed, broken only by a groan from Coker of the Fifth, who was very much the worse for wear.

After a pause the Head announced:

"I shall take no action in this matter, except to cancel the election. The new captain will be nominated this evening by me. The school will now dismiss!"

The majority of the fellows were acutely disappointed as they streamed out of Big Hall. They had wanted the satisfaction of choosing their own skipper, but, thanks to Loder's cunning, that privilege was denied them.

"Let's hope the Head's wise in his old age, and selects Gwynne," said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

"But supposing he chooses Loder?" said Dennis Carr.

"He's not likely to do that, unless he's got bats in his belly!" was Bob Cherry's comment.

The juniors—and, indeed, the whole school—waited impatiently for the Head to announce his decision.

That evening the Head interviewed the whole of the candidates for the captaincy. He sent for them in turn, and it was Gwynne who received the first summons.

"I will not detain you a moment, Gwynne," said Dr. Locke. "I merely wish to ask you a question. Should I decide to appoint you captain of Greyfriars, will you give me an undertaking that you will support the new food regulations introduced by Sir Hilton Popper?"

Gwynne's answer was brief and to the point.

"No, sir!"

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"You do not approve of the new hygienic food, Gwynne?"

"No sir," said Gwynne again.

"Very well, Gwynne. That is all I wished to ask you."

Faulkner was the next to be sent for, and he returned the same answer as Gwynne, but with less bluntness.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I really couldn't see my way to back up the new food regulations."

North and Hammersley and Walker, questioned in turn by the Head, gave the same answer as Gwynne and Faulkner had done. They were sorry; they had no wish to be disrespectful, but they really couldn't tolerate the new hygienic food.

Loder was the last candidate to be interviewed.

"I desire to ask you, Loder," said the Head, rather wearily, "if, in the event of your being appointed to the captaincy, you would be prepared to support the new food regulations?"

"I'd support them with all my might, sir!" The Head looked up quickly. He had expected Loder's answer to be couched in the same terms as those of the other prefects.

"Do you like the new food, Loder?"

"I think it's splendid, sir!" said Loder, who really thought nothing of the sort.

After a long pause, during which he reflected with his head resting in his hands, Dr. Locke looked up.

"I have decided, Loder, after careful consideration, to appoint you captain of the school in succession to Wingate."

Loder's eyes gleamed.

His ambition was attained at last! He could hardly speak, so powerful was his elation.

"You will take up your duties at once," continued the Head, "and I will announce my decision to the whole school this evening."

Two hours later Dr. Locke summoned a general assembly.

"Now we shall know who is going to be skipper," said Bob Cherry. "Anybody prepared to make a wager on the subject?"

"Gwynne will get the job, without a doubt," said Wharton.

"I rather think it will be Faulkner," said Vernon-Smith.

"I'm willing to wager," said Ogilvy, "that the new skipper will be either Gwynne, Faulkner, North, or Hammersley."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No takers!" said Dennis Carr, laughing. "You'd be absolutely certain to win!"

But there was a shock in store for the Remove, and, indeed, for all Greyfriars.

The Head swept into Big Hall, and he did not keep the school long in suspense.

"I have interviewed the various candidates for the captaincy," he announced, "and, as a result of those interviews, I have decided to appoint Gerald—"

"Gwynne's Christian name isn't Gerald!" muttered Wharton.

"I have decided to appoint Gerald Loder to be captain of Greyfriars!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

A deep groan followed the Head's announcement.

Loder himself was flushed and triumphant, but the rest of the fellows looked extremely wrathful.

The groaning continued; and somebody cried "Shame!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "How dare you presume to quarrel with my decision? I have acted in the school's best interests, and I feel confident that Loder will justify my selection."

The groaning ceased, but the black looks of the majority of the fellows did not disappear.

"The school will now dismiss," said the Head.

There was a great deal of excited and wrathful discussion as the fellows streamed out of Big Hall.

In appointing Loder to the captaincy in Wingate's stead Dr. Locke had exploded a veritable bombshell.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not get over it. They decided that the Head must have experienced a mental lapse.

"Loder—the worst fellow in the school bar none!" ejaculated Nugent.

"And he's been appointed captain of Greyfriars!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"It's a shame!"

"We won't stand it!"

"No jolly fear!"

"We won't be bossed by a rank outsider!" declared Dennis Carr. "Loder will have to resign, or there will be trouble!"

"Pass along there, you kids!" rapped out Loder, coming on the scene.

"He thinks he's a police-constable now!" said Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take a hundred lines for impertinence, Bull!"

"Oh, make it a billion!" said Johnny indifferently.

And there was a fresh burst of laughter.

"Now that I'm captain of Greyfriars," said Loder, "I mean to keep you in your places! You had an easy time under Wingate, but you'll feel the draught now. I mean to stand no nonsense! Get a move on, you kids! You're blocking up the passage!"

"And we'll block up your eye, if you're not jolly careful!" muttered Bob Cherry.

Fortunately, Loder did not hear Bob's remark.

The juniors moved on, but they continued to give vent to their feelings.

"Dashed if I know what Greyfriars is coming to!" said Vernon-Smith. "First they foist the new grub on us, and then they appoint Loder captain. The next item on the programme will be a rebellion!"

"Hear, hear!" said Peter Todd. "We won't stand much more of this sort of thing!"

When the new captain of Greyfriars saw lights out in the Remove dormitory that evening, he made himself more objectionable than ever.

"I'm going to search the dormitory!" he announced.

"What on earth for?" ejaculated Wharton. "To make sure that you kids haven't been defying orders, and smuggling grub into the school?"

"Search away!" said Dennis Carr contemptuously. "But I might tell you in advance that you'll be unlucky."

And so it proved. Loder ransacked the dormitory from end to end, but he failed to find any trace of food. Having extinguished the lights, he withdrew, and a loud hiss followed him.

The new captain was decidedly unpopular. And the only person who congratulated Gerald Loder on the honour which had been bestowed upon him was Gerald Loder himself!

The cad of the Sixth was convinced in his own mind that he would make a much better captain than Wingate.

Time will show!

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled: "THE SCHOOL AGAINST HIM!" Order your copy EARLY!)



Our Grand New Serial, dealing with the Adventures of a Young Acrobat who Rose to Fame and Fortune as a Cinema Star.

By STANTON HOPE.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Micky Denver, an orphan lad, is an acrobat in Beauman's Gigantic Circus. One night, in Liverpool, he is accused unjustly by the bullying proprietor of having stolen a gold watch. Micky is arrested, but escapes to the river-front and stows away on a tramp-steamer. In New York Harbour Micky gets through an open port and swims ashore. There he meets a slim, red-headed American, Alec P. Figg, who is also anxious to get out West. With him Micky "jumps" the "Chicago Flyer" and by stages they beat their way to Kansas City. Figg, known as Smart Alec, is one of the most expert cracksmen on the continent, and he attempts to crack the hotel safe. Micky frustrates him, and makes the rest of his way to Los Angeles alone. Once in the city he loses no time in trying to get taken on at the cinema studios, but without success. One day he visits Santa Monica, on the coast, and there he rescues Mary Maidstone from the surf. In consequence, Micky is given a job as assistant to Buddy Gaylord, the property-man, in the great K. N. Broad-

worth's cinema company. The film company goes on location, where Floyd Unwin, the Broadworth star, is to perform a death-defying feat before the cameras. He is to ride a motor-cycle over a high cliff into the sea, but the opium habit, to which the star is addicted, has undermined his nerve, and he is unable to do the stunt. He insults Mr. Broadworth, and is ignominiously fired out of the company. Seizing his opportunity, Micky leaps on the motor-cycle, and performs the stunt himself by dashing over the edge of the cliff into the sea. Afterwards, he is given a contract to appear in one photo-play production. Micky receives an invitation from Mrs. Chaplin, whom he has met once before, to tea at the Chaplin studios. To his surprise, he finds that there are present the Big Four of Filmland—Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and D. W. Griffith, the great producer!

(Now read on.)

Chappie Among the Film Stars!

THE three men, Chaplin, Griffith, and Douglas Fairbanks, were anxious to learn something of the past history of the English lad who had so quickly risen in their profession, but it was only the tactful and sympathetic questioning of Mrs. Chaplin and Mary Pickford that induced Micky to talk about himself.

All had heard of the youngster's amazing dive over the cliffs on the motor-cycle, which had been the direct factor in enabling him to secure his now exalted position, and perhaps it was to avoid discussion of this that Micky chatted about his old life at home in the travelling circus.

The Big Four and Mrs. Chaplin listened attentively. All were impressed by the lad's frankness and modesty, and, although Micky gave the matter no thought, they conceived an excellent impression of him on account of his deportment.

As tea was being cleared away Mrs. Chaplin rescued two or three cakes and some pieces of loaf-sugar for Chappie, who had been sitting quietly by, quite unconscious of the distinguished nature of the society in which he found himself.

"Will he sit up and beg if I tell him so?" asked Mrs. Chaplin, as Chappie cocked his eye at the dainties in her hand.

"Try him!" answered Micky, with a laugh.

"I will. What's his name?"

"Chappie." Micky turned to Charlie Chaplin. "He's named after you, you know, sir."

"Is he, by jingo?" cried the great film star, looking with fresh interest at the little terrier. "Would it surprise you, Micky, if I were to tell you that years ago in England about the time when I was taking a part in Fred Karno's 'Mumming Birds' on the music-halls I got the notion for my waggie-walk by watching the curious walk of a small mongrel dog?"

"I don't think it would, sir," said Micky. "But would it surprise you if I told you that Chappie can imitate your waggie-walk to a 't'?"

The cinema stars and the great producer all looked at Micky as though they suspected a joke somewhere.

"Oh, I mean it," said Micky, noticing their amused glances. "But I'll tell you all about it. Years ago I found Chappie, a half-frozen stray, outside the big tent of Beauman's Circus. He was only a small pup then, and he hadn't any good looks to boast of in those days. All wet and covered in mud, I took him to the caravan I was living in, and gave him a good warming before the stove and a feed. We grew to be great pals. I spent any amount of time on his education, but he's repaid every minute of it."

Micky paused, feeling as though he were boring the party, but, seeing the interest on the faces about him, he was encouraged to proceed.

"I taught him all the usual tricks," he went on, "and he was as quick as lightning in picking 'em up. Well, I used to go to the picture-palaces whenever I had a few coppers to spare, and it was in one of them that I first met Mr. Charlie Chaplin here."

A good-humoured smile lighted the faces of the film folk at the naivete of the young English lad. As for Micky, he was delighted to have such a sympathetic audience for the topics he best loved to talk about—his dog and the cinema.

"That night at the picture-palace I nearly died laughing, and so did my old pal, Clancy the Clown. I went straight back to where my little dog was lying in his kennel under the caravan, and tried to teach him Mr. Charlie Chaplin's walk. It took lots of patience, and it was several months before he could do the waggie-walk properly, but in the end he did it—he did it!"

Micky's eyes were flashing as he called to mind the thrill he received when, as the reward for his boundless patience, he saw Chappie do the walk in perfect imitation of the one and only Charlie.

"That night I changed his name from Gyp to Charlie—short for Chaplin, you know—and old Clancy and I christened him with half a pint of milk. We sprinkled a few drops over his ears, and with the rest we let him drink the health of his famous namesake."

"Well, I never!" cried Chaplin, laughing heartily. "I suppose, then, I'm a sort of god-father to him—eh? If so, I think I've the right to see his performance of what is called the 'Chaplin walk.'"

"Right-ho, you shall, sir!" said Micky. "I'll put him through his paces."

Mrs. Chaplin and Mary Pickford rose from their seats, and the men of the party followed suit.

Charlie Chaplin donned his little bowler-hat, clutched his walking-stick, and ran a few steps in the manner known to every picture-goer.

The rest of the cinema folk smiled broadly at the effervescent spirits of the prince of film stars, and Micky roared with laughter as he saw the famous waggie-walk performed precisely as he had seen it so often upon the silver screen.

But a hearty laugh burst from all present, including the great Charlie himself, as they caught sight of the expression on Chappie's face. If ever a little dog showed a sense of superiority over a human being, Chappie did at that moment.

He sat and watched Chaplin with such a look of contempt on his sharp little face that it was clear that, had he been able to speak, he would have summed up the performance in but one word, "Rotten!"

Charlie Chaplin stooped, and patted the terrier's wiry coat.

"So you think you can do-better, old man—eh?" he laughed. "Well, I'm waiting to see you!"

Micky gave a low whistle, and Chappie sprang up expectantly.

The cinema people stepped back to allow the little dog plenty of space in which to perform his tricks.

Then Micky snapped his fingers.

"Up, Chappie!"

The little mongrel raised himself on his hind legs.

"Walk, Chappie!"

A breath of approbation had escaped the onlookers when Chappie stood on his hind legs, but it turned to a murmur of disappointment a moment later as the dog dropped down on all fours again.

Micky flushed hotly with surprise and chagrin. For the first time since that night long ago, when he and Clancy had christened the little terrier in honour of his performance of the Chaplin waggie-walk, Chappie had failed to respond to the order.

It was a bitter disappointment to the lad that Chappie should have reached the culminating point of his recent acts of disobedience by refusing to obey before the most distinguished audience he had ever had.

Micky looked hard at the dog in an effort to discover some reason for his apathy.

Chappie's head was turned on one side, one ear was down, and the other cocked straight up in the air; his eyes were cast appealingly in the direction of Mrs. Chaplin.

In the hand of the film actress were the cakes and pieces of sugar she had rescued, and Chappie's thoughts were entirely centred on these dainties.

At the Broadworth studios Mary Maidstone, Reggie Eton, Jeff Romery, and many others had given him cookies and candies without even requiring him to sit up and beg. Why, therefore, should he have to show all these strangers the correct way to do the waggie-walk before getting the sugar and cakes which were held out so enticingly before him. It was not good enough.

Micky broke into a hearty laugh.

"I can read his thoughts like a book!" He walked across to Mrs. Chaplin. "Please let me take charge of that sugar," he said. "I'm afraid his friends at the Broadworth Studios have been spoiling him."

Micky took the dainties, and held his finger up to Chappie, who, seeing his young master's action, sat up and begged appealingly.

"Now, listen to me, Chappie!" said Micky seriously, wagging his finger before the nose of the little dog. "If you do the Chaplin walk properly, you shall have these; if not, you won't get anything! D'you understand?"

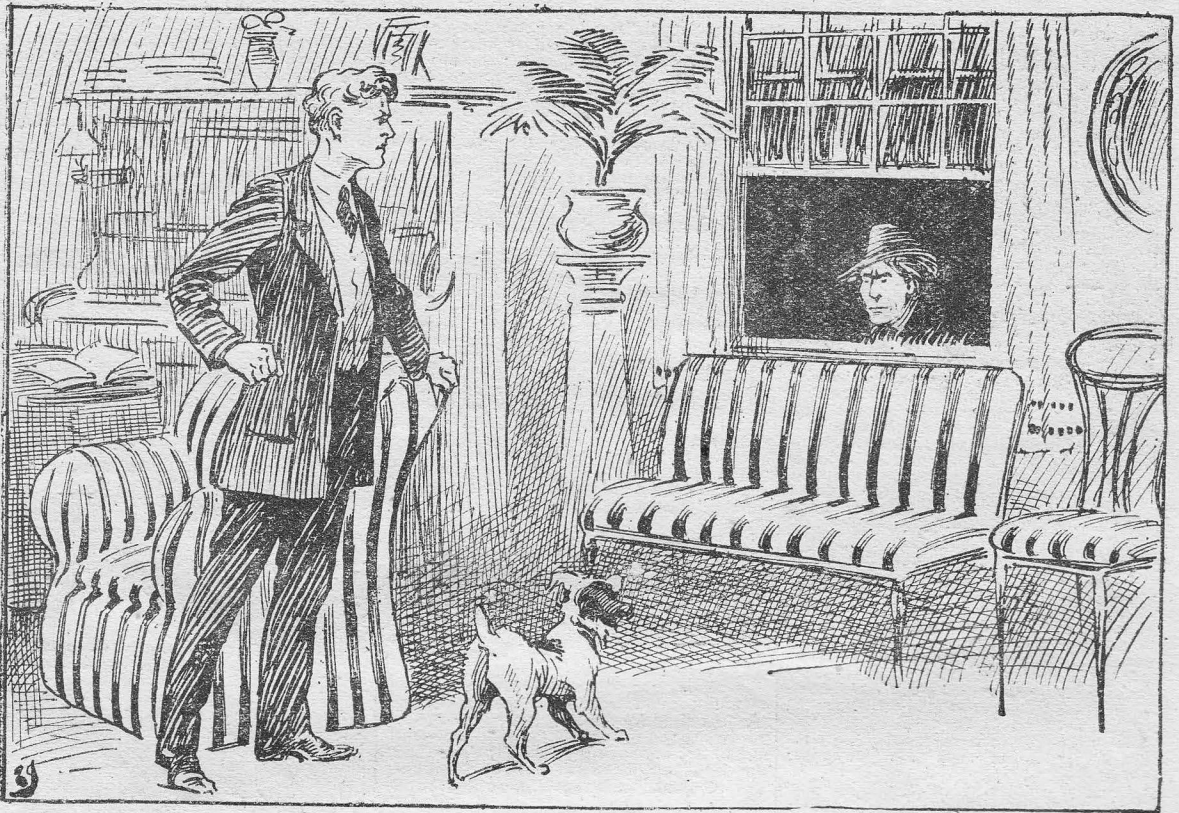
Chappie dropped on all fours, and gave a resounding bark.

"Up, Chappie!"

Without hesitation Chappie raised himself on his hind legs.

"Walk, Chappie!"

By this time Chappie was only too anxious to do his clever trick to the best of his ability, for he knew instinctively that a



The large window opening on to the garden was raised half-way from the bottom, and peering in was the lean, evil face of Alec P. Figg, the cracksman! (See page 11.)

couple of cakes and some fine large pieces of loaf-sugar hung in the balance.

He ran along a few paces towards the tea-table with his hind feet turned out. His back was turned towards the little group of famous cinema folk, and the sight was comical in the extreme.

A loud roar of laughter broke simultaneously from all beholders.

Encouraged by the sound, Chappie put on a spurt. Then he made a sharp turn round the table-leg, hopping on his left foot, and swinging the right clear of the ground.

A roar of applause greeted the fine performance, the best he had ever given, as Chappie dropped to all fours, and hastened across to his young master. The next few seconds he spent in catching cakes and pieces of sugar with practised dexterity.

"Well, what did you think of it?" asked Micky turning and facing the cinema people.

It was Charlie Chaplin who was first able to conquer his laughter sufficiently to be able to reply.

"It was great—absolutely great!" he cried. "I wouldn't have believed it possible for a dog to have been trained to do that wobble-walk as he did it unless I'd seen it performed before my own eyes! Ha, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Chaplin and Mary Pickford, both great lovers of animals, took charge of Chappie as soon as the little dog had finished his sugar, and proceeded to spoil him further by making a tremendous fuss of him. Unlike his master, Chappie was not a bit shy with the ladies, and he licked their hands, wagged his tail, and showed generally that he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

The great film-producer, Mr. Griffith, strolled over and took Micky by the lapel of his coat.

"Say, do you realise, lad," he said, "that you're a small gold-mine in that dog? Has he ever done any work for the screen?"

"A little, sir," replied Micky; "but he's never done any tricks before the camera, if that's what you mean."

Mr. Griffith turned and addressed himself to Charlie Chaplin.

"You'll miss the chance of a lifetime, Chaplin," he said, "if you don't fix up a

contract for this youngster's dog to appear in some of your future productions."

"You're right," answered the world-famous film star. "There's ample scope for a dog of his attainments on the screen. If you'll give me the first call on Chappie's services, Micky, I'll fix up a contract with you later in the week when I have gone thoroughly into the matter with members of my staff."

Micky was so delighted at the prospect of Chappie performing for the films under the distinguished auspices of Charlie Chaplin himself that he felt little interest in the monetary arrangement.

"I'll bring him along whenever it's convenient," he promised; "and as long as you supply him with a few lumps of sugar both Chappie and I shall be satisfied."

The unusual experience of finding in America anyone not anxious to grab with both hands a chance of making a few more dollars amazed and amused the three famous film men.

Had they not been the soul of honour Micky might have missed a great opportunity of adding substantially to his already greatly increased income. As it was, he lost nothing by his open generosity, as later events were to prove.

Before the little party broke up both Mary Pickford—that most winsome and popular of all cinema stars—and Douglas Fairbanks invited Micky to drop into their studios at Hollywood when he happened along that way. And it was with no little feeling of importance that Micky jotted down the two addresses—the one in Vine Street and the other in Selma Avenue. He felt himself in the swim, indeed!

Mary Pickford was the first to take her departure in her smoothly-gliding limousine car, and then Douglas Fairbanks and Micky made their adieux to Mr. and Mrs. Chaplin and Mr. Griffith.

"Hop into my car, youngster," said Fairbanks, as they reached the roadway together. "I'm passing near Buddy Gaylord's place, and can easily drop you there."

So it was that Micky, with Chappie snuggled up in his arms, rode home in state with the film hero he had so often seen on the screens in the Old Country—the man

who, by sheer daring and cleverness, had raised for himself the reputation of being the greatest stunt actor in the cinema profession!

What an afternoon to describe to the genial Buddy and Mrs. Gaylord!

Before the Camera!

THE life of a film star does not consist of doing half an hour's work a day before the cameras and at the end of the week drawing a fat cheque, as so many people seem to imagine.

Micky Denver certainly had no such illusions, and, if he had, he would speedily have been relieved of them.

On the morning following his visit to the Chaplin studios he arrived early on the Broadworth lot for his first day's work as a fully-fledged star film actor.

He had looked forward to the morning's work with the keenest of relish, but, as is so often the case, the anticipation was better than the realisation. As a matter of fact, Micky had the most trying morning he had ever had at the studios.

In the first place, he had to attend a sort of conference. Apparently Mr. Broadworth considered it advisable to make some alterations in the scenario of the new production on account of the fact that Micky was to fill the part which had been intended for Floyd Unwin, and a considerable amount of discussion was the outcome.

The conference was held at the long oak table in the board-room of the company's offices, and was attended by every head of a department.

Among the members were Jeff Romery, the chief director, and Buddy Gaylord, the property-man. Others were the scenario editor, or continuity writer, as he is more often called in America, the stage carpenter, the costumes expert, the chief camera man, and the head of the research department.

Each big film company, it is interesting to note, has its own research department and library of books on architecture and costumes of all periods. Employed in it are a number of people all thoroughly versed in these subjects, who are responsible for the

correct details of every photo-play which is produced.

Thus, whether the scenes are laid in ancient Babylon or in modern Paris, the setting and costuming are rendered as correct as humanly possible.

It was the Broadworth research department that once caught Buddy tripping. Knowing that a letter had to be written during one of the scenes of a certain photo-play of the eighteenth century, the little property-man laid out a quill pen, an ink-pot, and a sheet of blotting-paper. Then the chief of the research department mentioned the fact that blotting-paper had not been discovered at that date, and Buddy had to hunt up some powdered chalk as a substitute.

When the conference was over and a general outline of his duties for the next six weeks had been given to him, Micky was taken in hand by Jeff Romery.

It was Jeff's desire to film an interior scene that day, and he took Micky into the studio proper to rehearse him for the part he was to play. Micky felt nervous and over-anxious, but the chief director knew that well enough, and exercised the limit of his tact.

Without a single onlooker being present he gradually put Micky wise to every detail of what was required of him, making him do the motions of his part time and again, and registering every facial expression slowly until the lad had gained more confidence.

Afterwards Jeff assembled other actors and actresses, including Mary Maidstone, and went through the whole scene about half a dozen more times.

When he was satisfied at the progress made he dismissed everybody for the purpose of their being made-up for their parts.

In the luxurious dressing-room near the studio which used to be Floyd Unwin's an expert make-up artist prepared Micky for his first appearance as a principal before the camera.

Ten minutes later, when the lad looked in one of the large mirrors which adorned the spacious dressing-room, he hardly recognised himself. His face was an almost uniform dull yellow colour, his mouth the colour of a plum, and his eyebrows picked out in blue. Then he was handed a yellow shirt and a yellow collar to put on.

Micky had seen this curious colour scheme a good many times in the studio, of course, and Buddy had once given him a more or less scientific explanation of it.

It is a strange thing that the cinema camera will not photograph white properly. White invariably appears on the films as a dull grey, and so everything that should be white—such as linen, white-washed walls, and so forth—must be of a yellow hue. Then when the films are developed the yellow articles appear a brilliant white.

The country lass with the rosy cheeks whom you see on the screen had not ruddy cheeks when she took her place "in the set"—they were blue! Had they been red when she appeared before the cameras her cheeks would show great hollows when the film was projected on the screen.

When Micky returned to the studio he found the camera in position, the camera men standing by, and Jeff waiting. A horrible sense of stage-fright seized the lad, and he felt as though he would sooner perform a dozen death-defying feats in the open than this one interior scene within the studio walls.

It was with a deep breath of relief, then, that he heard Jeff ordering yet another rehearsal. This the astute director did entirely for Micky's sake, and as it proceeded the lad regained most of the confidence in himself.

The luncheon-hour had long passed before Jeff announced that the actual filming would take place.

"Take your places in the set, ladies and gentlemen," he requested.

"The set," in this instance, consisted of the interior of a log cabin—that is, three sides of one. The set was built of real logs, for, unlike a scene for the stage of a theatre, it cannot be made of painted canvas.

When all was ready Jeff gave a sharp order, and a row of arc-lamps sizzled forth into dazzling bluish-white light.

The Broadworth studios were so fitted that either daylight or the arc-lamps could be used for the filming of interiors, but usually, when a "close-up" was to be made during the scene, the latter were utilised.

Upon the order, "Action!" Micky began the

movements which the director had so painstakingly taught him during the morning.

Then Jeff Romery turned to the cameramen, and gave the command, "Shoot!" and next moment the young film actor heard the clicking of the machine, which he knew was recording his every action for the cinema screen.

The Broadworth director always insisted on the actors and actresses speaking words and sentences when working before the camera, and, although Micky had learnt no actual part to speak, he entered heart and soul into the spirit of the scene, and talked and acted in a very natural manner.

Two converging tape lines had been carried across the floor of the set for his benefit, and Jeff had been very particular in warning him that he was to keep between them, and on no account to stray outside the marked area. To do so would be to move "out of the set"—that is, out of the picture altogether.

His real trial took place when he had to accompany Mary Maidstone, the star actress of the Broadworth company, to the narrow area six feet from the camera for a "close-up."

On either side of the camera were placed two powerful arc-lamps, and the terrific glare and heat from these almost blinded and scorched the lad. Mary Maidstone was experienced in "close-ups," and took the grueling as a matter of course, and Micky had sufficient heroism in his nature to go through the ordeal without wincing or doing anything which might necessitate a retake of the film.

Jolly glad was he, however, when he heard Jeff's order to "cut" and the camera men ceased to revolve the handles of their machine whose searching eye missed nothing, good or bad.

Micky staggered back to his dressing-room with a gasp of relief, and the perspiration streaming down over his yellow grease-paint. As he washed the muck from his face with olive-oil and doffed his yellow shirt and collar he almost wished he had chosen some easier way of earning a living than acting for the films!

He thought so even more when he met Jeff Romery on his way from the company's lot.

"That was dandy work you did this morning, Micky!" said the director; "but that galoot Mailgw, who played the part of the private detective, spoiled the whole shooting-match! Mallow n'er can act worth a whoop without music! I'm going to scrap all the footage taken this morning, and retake the scene with musical accompaniment. So get right back to the studios directly you've had a snack, kid."

And, with dragging steps, Micky trudged home to where Ah Mee and luncheon had been waiting two hours on his coming.

The Midnight Visitor.

THE filming of the first interior scene in which Micky appeared as a star has been recorded for the purpose of showing that the life of a screen hero or heroine is not by any means all milk and honey.

Hard work by scores of experts go towards the making of a big five-reel production such as "The Mysterious Pearl," the one the Broadworth company, including Micky, were engaged upon, and the actors and actresses participating get their fair share of it.

In addition to the actual work of rehearsing, acting, making-up, frequently changing costumes, there are more often than not many hours of tedious waiting to have to be undergone, and these periods, to many people, are more trying than anything else.

Micky was heartily relieved when, after two retakes, his first interior scene was passed as O K by the chief director.

It was with a pleasurable thrill that he learned from Jeff Romery that the next work arranged for him before the camera was an athletic feat among the sky-scraper of Los Angeles.

Tucked away in Mr. Broadworth's roll-top desk was a typewritten card, on which was set out every qualification of the young film star, and this next scene was to afford him ample opportunity for his acrobatic ability.

When he left the company's premises after his first day's work for the films he was joined by Reginald Clarence Eton, the dude of film-land. Buddy Gaylord, the genial little property-man, at whose home Micky was residing, was staying late on some work connected with his props.

"Well, deah boy," murmured Reggie, "I heah you've had a twyng day before the camcwa—eh, what?"

"It's been harder work than I imagined," said Micky, with a tired little smile. "How-ever, I suppose a chap soon gets used to it."

"Oh, wathah! By the way, Floyd Unwin was hanging about outside the pwnises whilst you were working in the studio."

"Floyd Unwin! What the dickens is he after now? I'd have thought he'd be trying to bag a job elsewhere."

"My deah boy," said Reggie, lighting a gold-tipped cigarette, "Floyd has got pots of money; he doesn't need to bothah about work. I wouldn't, either, if I had all his brass."

The famous dude of the films raised a white-gloved hand to stifle a yawn. Anyone watching him or listening to him would never have dreamed that Reggie was as keen on his profession and almost as fine an athlete as Micky himself. In times past more than one American with a taste for practical jokes, who had been deceived by the English dude's immaculate attire and languid manners, had received a rude awakening when attempting to take a rise out of Reginald Clarence!

But the news that Unwin had been loitering near the Broadworth lot fostered an uneasy thought in Micky's mind.

"I'd like to know what his object is," he mused, "for I suppose he has some object in coming up from town."

"Undoubtedly, deah boy, and his object seems to have been to discovah as much as possible about your future movements."

"Why? How do you know?" demanded Micky, eyeing the film dude narrowly.

"I found out from one of the studio workahs whom I took the twouble to question. Floyd, the boundah, had been pumping the man, and the foolish fellah told him about your next stunt among the sky-scraperahs. Fortunately, he didn't know anything more."

"By Jove, that sounds fishy, doesn't it?"

"It does; and if you take my advice, Micky, you'll keep your eyes skinned. Floyd Unwin may not contemplate playing any dirty twicks, but you don't know what to expect of a wottah that twequents low Chinese opium 'joints.' Well, I leave you heah. So-long, deah boy!"

And, swinging his gold-handled walking-stick, the famous dude of Film-land sauntered off.

Micky walked the rest of the way home in a worried mood.

It might be, as Reggie had said, that Floyd Unwin did not contemplate playing any underhand tricks; on the other hand, it was possible that he might try to get even for the wrong which he imagined had been done him.

Micky had secured his job of star stunt actor to the Broadworth Film Company by fair means, but Unwin had accused him of toadying to the great K. N., and was nursing considerable bitterness on account of the youngster having landed into his shoes when he had been fired from his exalted position.

Apart from Floyd Unwin, Micky was also worried about Alec P. Figg and what might be the next move of the elusive crook.

Smart Alec had threatened that unless a thousand dollars were paid to him on Thursday evening at Li Chang Foo's opium-den, in Chinatown, Los Angeles, he would inform the police of Micky's reason for escaping from England.

But Foo's den had been raided by the police, and Micky was surprised that he had not been notified of some other meeting-place and other means of handing over the money.

The lad had no intention of acceding to Figg's blackmailing request, nor, for that matter, did he have sufficient by him for the purpose. He had received a thousand dollars from Mr. Broadworth, but of that he had sent a hundred to San Francisco for Dicky Rickey, his old shipmate of the Plunger.

Two more days of grace remained—after that he must expect momentarily to be denounced before the world as a thief by the unscrupulous crook.

But much was to elapse before those two days were out—events which were to put an entirely different complexion upon the whole situation.

It was late that very night when things began to develop.

Micky was sitting in the drawing-room at the back of the house reading a book on "Making the Movies" which he had ferreted out of the bookcase. So interested was he that when Buddy and Mrs. Gaylord rose to retire he announced his intention of sitting up for awhile.

"Ah, I guess now you're a full-fledged star with nothin' to do, Micky, you kin afford the luxury o' late hours," said Buddy, as, with a yawn, he lifted himself from his comfortable armchair. "Still, don't over-do it, kid; it's kinder bad for the nerves. Don't forget to switch off the electric-lights when you turn in. Goo'-night!"

With Chappie curled up on the rug by his feet, Micky read on until his eyes began to ache.

Suddenly a low growl from Chappie caused him to take his eyes from the print of the book. Every wiry hair on the back of the little terrier was bristling, and his feet were twitching as though for a spring at something or somebody.

Then two distinct taps sounded behind him, and Micky leaped to his feet and swung round in the direction of the sound.

The large window opening on to the garden was raised half-way from the bottom, and peering in was the lean, evil face of Alec P. Figg, the cracksmán!

With a vicious growl Chappie made a spring forward, but Micky intercepted him.

"Lie down, Chappie!" he ordered. Then he faced the crook again. "Well, what the blazes do you want here at this time of night?"

An amused smile curled the lips of the cracksmán.

"Say, kid, you ain't quife the politest o' ginnies, are you?" he said. "You might say you're kinder glad to see me, even if you can't raise a real, genuine smile o' welcome."

The coolness and cheek of the American crook made Micky's blood boil. Smart Alec had evidently crept through the garden and raised the window of the drawing-room so noiselessly that even Chappie had not been disturbed at first. He had obviously come about the thousand dollars.

"See here, Figg," said Micky, keeping his voice down, "if you've come to see me, I've only got one thing to say to you, and that is—beat it, and quickly, too!"

"Oh! Cut that out!" hissed the crook. "Remember, a word from me and you'll be deported to the Yew-nited Kingdom for the thief you are! Ah, I guessed that would kinder bring you to sense! I see you ain't forgotten your li'l theft from the circus in Liverpool."

"You blackmailing cad, I'll—"

"Say, those tongue-fireworks cut no ice with me. I've heard you've been making quite a tidy wad o' greenbacks lately. Now, you pony up those thousand 'bucks and I'll keep my face closed. I'll jest climb in and hev a li'l pow-wow with you."

As Figg talked on his voice grew louder

and louder, and Micky was afraid that the sound would awaken the Gaylords or Ah Mee, the old Chinese servant. This he was not at all anxious to happen.

"You're not coming in this house, Figg," said Micky quietly, "and you'd better beat it before you wake anyone up and raise a thundering row about your ears! I've got no money for you."

Smart Alec lowered his voice to an insinuating whisper.

"Now, see hyer, kid," he murmured; "jest quit handing out that line o' chin goods and get down to business. I don't want'er be too hard on you. Give me something on account; you kin dibby up the rest later."

Micky stood gazing thoughtfully at the face of Alec P. Figg framed in the window, and the crook smiled as he noticed the lad's hesitancy.

Then, with sudden resolution, Micky leaned down towards the cracksmán.

"All right, you blackmailing rotter," he said; "but keep out of the light of this window. I don't want you to be seen here. I'll come into the garden to you in half a minute."

With a smile of triumph Figg disappeared round the wall of the house to await his victim.

Without troubling to close the window or draw down the blind, Micky stepped back into the drawing-room and held his finger up to Chappie, who was looking up inquiringly from his seat on a footstool.

"You stay in here, Chappie," was all the lad said.

Next moment he quietly unlocked the glass door leading to the garden and stepped out of the house.

Near the window of the drawing-room he discerned the figure of the cracksmán leaning against the wall.

Figg greeted him with a smile.

"Waal, kid, you've come to reason at last, eh?" he murmured. "That was sure a cruel trick you played on me at old Foo's 'joint' in West Canton Street, but we'll let bygones be bygones. You see, I ain't sech a fierce kinder guy as you've been thinking. I don't want all that's due to me for keeping my trap shut about your li'l thieving stunt in the Old Country right now, so I'm letting you off easy. Jest give me something on account."

"All right, Figg," he said quietly, "you shall have it."

And Micky's right fist shot out like a piston-rod.

The blow caught the crook full on his aquiline nose, and he was bowled clean off his feet.

A foul oath escaped the lips of Smart Alec as he sprawled on his back on the ground, and he drew an automatic pistol from his

hip-pocket. But Micky, anticipating some such move, had taken up a position behind the crook, and with a sharp kick he sent the pistol flying among the rhododendrons that bordered the garden-path.

Figg staggered to his feet, and again Micky's fist shot out.

"There's something more on account," said he.

This time the cracksmán got it between the eyes, and he went to the ground like a log, and lay very still.

A hosepipe for watering the garden was close handy, and, to revive his visitor, Micky switched on the tap in the wall.

The first jet of water from the hosepipe wielded by Micky made the crook squirm. He rolled over and over, vainly endeavouring to escape the merciless stream that was drenching him from head to foot.

A sharp bark sounded. Chappie, hearing the commotion outside, had leaped on to the window-sill to see what it was all about. Seeing his young master playing the hose on the man whose face had appeared at the window a few minutes before, he also wanted a hand in the proceedings.

Straight from the window he leaped, and, despite the water from the hosepipe, he fastened his sharp little teeth into the crook's leg.

With a wild, unearthly yell, Smart Alec jumped to his feet.

Micky gave a whistle, and Chappie released his hold. Then, followed by the flying spray from the hose, Alec P. Figg dashed madly away through the garden until he was swallowed up in the darkness.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Micky. "We gave him something on account all right—didn't we, Chappie? I reckon he'll think twice before he comes for the rest of what's due to him!"

Followed by the little terrier, who was feeling highly pleased with himself, Micky re-entered the house and fastened the door and window.

He listened for a few minutes to discover if there was any movement indicating that the Gaylords or Ah Mee had been roused by the commotion outside, but the place remained in dead silence.

Finally, Micky switched off the electric-lights and made his way to bed.

He had a lively satisfaction in having bested the astute Smart Alec, but he realised only too well that his triumph might be very short-lived.

What would be the next move of the unscrupulous crook?

ANOTHER LONG INSTALMENT OF THIS MAGNIFICENT SERIAL STORY OF THE CINEMA WILL APPEAR IN NEXT FRIDAY'S "PENNY POPULAR."

A NICE RECEPTION!

A SHORT STORY OF ST. JIM'S.

"I'M fed-up with Knox!"

Thus D'Arcy minor of the Third Form at St. Jim's to his chums, Jameson and Gibson, who were swinging their legs on the desks in the Form-room.

Both nodded in silent agreement. It was had enough having to fag for the rotter, as Gibson expressed it, but the fagging was always attended by cuffs and canings in plenty.

"What's to be done?" asked D'Arcy.

"I've got an idea," said Jameson brightly. "I happen to know that Knox is expecting a visit from his uncle this afternoon."

"Well, what about it?"

"That's where we come in," chuckled Jameson. "D'Arcy will have to prepare the study, and if I know him right, he'll make it really beautiful—ahem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fags caught on to his meaning at once and appreciated heartily.

"Jolly good idea!" commented D'Arcy. "I'll make him sit up!"

Manners minor came into the Form-room, and seeing D'Arcy, walked over to him.

"You're wanted by Knox to clear up his study and prepare tea this afternoon," he said, with a grin. "He gave me the message; it's his uncle coming, I think."

"Right-ho, young Manners!" said the fag cheerfully. "So-long, you chaps!"

So saying, the junior moved off to the Sixth Form passage and entered the prefect's study. It was empty; evidently Knox had gone to meet his uncle.

D'Arcy was very busy for the next half-hour, and the study underwent a startling transformation at his hands.

The pictures on the walls were all turned round, the castors were taken from the table and slung out of the window, the tablecloth was poked up the chimney, the chairs piled in a heap at one corner, and the curtains at the window hung in shreds. Soot there was in plenty, and liberal quantities bespattered the floor. The study looked as if it had been in an air-raid.

"I fancy Knox will be pleased when he shows his uncle into this hole! Serve him right, the beast!" muttered the fag meditatively.

A finishing touch here and there, and D'Arcy minor left the study hurriedly. Footsteps were sounding along the passage, and those steps were familiar to him. They belonged to Knox.

"Here you are, uncle!" said Knox, pushing open the door. "Why? what— My hat!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed his uncle. "What is the meaning of this? Is this your idea of a joke, nephew?"

The old gentleman pranced and spluttered

in rage and fury. "How dare you, sir—how dare you?" he roared.

"Some young scoundrel is responsible for this!" bellowed Knox savagely. "It's a rag!"

"Rag is it?" yelled the irate gentleman. "You, a prefect, participating in a boyish prank. 'Tis disgraceful!"

"I tell you, uncle—" began Knox desperately.

"Silence! Not another word! I'm off, and I shall not forget this—this scandalous reception! I—I—Brrrr!"

Words failed the excited uncle, who stamped off down the passage, literally bristling with rage. Knox ran after him, but the hot-tempered gentleman, now thoroughly roused, brought his walking-stick into play, and the prefect retired with damages.

Breathing threats of vengeance on the head of young D'Arcy, the prefect picked up an ashplant, and strode towards the junior quarters.

Somebody was going to pay for that rag, judging by the expression on Knox's face.

Needless to say, D'Arcy was conspicuous by his absence. As a matter of fact, he was down at the gate with his chums watching the departure of Knox's uncle.

He had carried out his plan with success. But after the feast the reckoning, and D'Arcy minor's face proved the truth of the old saying when he entered the Third Form room half an hour later, squeezing his hands.

When the pain had somewhat subsided, he confided in his chums that "It was jolly well worth it!"

And they sagely remarked, "Hear, hear!"

THE END.
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KNOX—FAG!

A SHORT STORY OF ST. JIM'S.

"B Al Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's uttered that ejaculation. He was with his chums, Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby.

Towser, Herries' dog, was also with them, but he was no friend of the swell of the Fourth. Towser, in D'Arcy's opinion, thought too much of other people's trousers.

The School House Co. had been to Rylcombe to visit the circus that had recently arrived. Tom Merry & Co., the leaders of the Shell, had also expressed their intention of visiting the circus, but Mr. Linton, their Form-master, had taken exception to their playing football in the Shell passage. Thus Tom Merry & Co. were detained.

"What's the matter with you now, Gussy?" asked Blake pleasantly.

Blake felt in a pleasant mood. It had been an exceedingly good show, and the chums were in high spirits.

"That's that Injun fellah!" said D'Arcy, pointing to where a tall, lithe figure was standing between two tents. "You know—the one that wode the white horse!"

"Well, we've seen him before," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I did not say that we had not seen him!" said D'Arcy stiffly. "As a matter of fact, I was thinkin' of speakin' to him."

Jack Blake & Co. stared. "Ass!" said Blake witheringly. "He'd probably stare at you—wouldn't be able to understand English, let alone your beautiful accent!"

"That's just what I want to find out, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, with a superior smile. "I was wonderin' if the Injun bizz is spool!"

Digby nodded knowingly. "You bet it is!" he said. "These circus people are as artful as a carload of monkeys!"

After a moment's hesitation the swell of St. Jim's walked quickly from the side of his chums to the Indian.

The circus performer was a magnificently-built fellow, fully six feet six in his socks. He possessed the high cheekbones characteristic of the Indian race, and the dark, piercing eyes held a haughty expression.

All this D'Arcy noticed as he gracefully raised his topper and bowed before the warrior.

"Pway excuse me, sir!" said the Fourth Form swell politely. "I and my friends had the pleasuah of watching your widin' in the circus."

The Indian peered down at the elegantly-dressed junior, but there was not a flicker of interest in his eyes. D'Arcy flushed slightly as he saw his chums approaching them, a smile on their faces.

"And we would wathah like to know, sir," went on D'Arcy, in some confusion, "if you are weally a membah of that vevy gallant wace, the Wed Indians?"

The tall man turned slightly, and drew himself up to his full height. D'Arcy felt smaller than he had ever felt in his life as he looked up into the dusky face.

"Eagle Feather is chief of the Sioux!" he said haughtily. "I thank the young white gentleman for his speech!"

Which was not very encouraging. But D'Arcy was wound up, and went on with more confidence.

"We wish to congwatulate you, sir!" said the Fourth-Former. "I can wide myself—I might say I'm a toppin' widah—but you beat me into a cocked hat, deah boy—I mean, deah sir!"

Eagle Feather nodded curtly, but the faint smile which twisted at the corners of his lips took away any unpleasantness that could be associated with such a curt acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Ask him to tea, Gussy!" whispered Blake humorously.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy instantly. "Would you care to join us at tea?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby gasped. They had not thought for an instant that D'Arcy would have the nerve to ask the Indian chief to tea, but he had done it, and they would have to stand by him.

"Eagle Feather will be proud to eat and drink in the wigwam of the white gentlemen!"

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said the Sioux calmly. "Eagle Feather is lonely amongst the white peoples—friends he has but few."

"Then pway come with us, deah boy!" said D'Arcy coolly.

And he walked by the side of the stalwart chief, directing him towards St. Jim's. Blake, Herries, and Digby, overcoming their surprise, followed in the rear, chuckling. There would be a sensation for St. Jim's in about five minutes.

It was unfortunate that Knox, the prefect of the School House, should encounter the little party in the Fourth Form passage at St. Jim's. He stared at the juniors' guest in surprise.

"Who is this?" he asked rudely.

Blake, watching the red man, saw his eyes glint dangerously.

"Our guest, Knox!" said D'Arcy curtly. "I should feel much obliged if you would treat him with respect!"

"Where has he come from?" demanded Knox.

"The circus!" said Blake. "You see, Gussy—"

"Then he can get back to the circus!" interrupted Knox, and turned to the Sioux. "You hear, fellow? Bunk! Scoot! Skeddadle!"

Eagle Feather peered from Knox to the juniors. Blake winked one eye, and in a moment Knox felt a grasp of steel on his neck.

"Bah!" said Eagle Feather, with a sneer. "The white man is but a dog! My young friends, shall I kill him?"

"K-k-kill him!" stuttered Blake & Co. in unison.

The Sioux moved one hand suggestively towards his belt, where the juniors noticed for the first time, hung a tomahawk.

"N-no! Nunno! Not at all!" said D'Arcy hastily. "Pway welease the wotthah, sir!"

Knox cringed under the vice-like grasp of the red man, his face the colour of putty. He could not speak. The Sioux chief's suggestion had taken all his breath away.

"Then he shall be servant to my young friends!" said Eagle Feather.

Blake & Co. gasped and chuckled. For a Sixth-Former to fag for Fourth-Formers would be something in the way of a novelty.

"Rather!" said Blake gleefully. "Hoist him along here!"

Knox was almost lifted from his feet by the stalwart Sioux, and pushed along the passage to the Fourth-Formers' study. Here Blake gave him his orders.

"Lay the tea, young Knox!" he said coolly. "Come on! Look sharp!"

"You—you—you— All right!"

Knox, stuttering with rage, broke off as he saw Eagle Feather's hand move again towards the tomahawk and withdraw it enough to show the bright steel head.

From that moment Knox had no rest. He had to lay the tea, wait on the juniors and their guest; then forced to stand in a corner of the study and listen to the Sioux chief as he recounted exciting adventures.

But the time went on, and the chief had to get back to the circus for the evening performance.

"The white coward had better not touch the friends of Eagle Feather!" were the Sioux chief's parting words. "They have only to tell Eagle Feather, and he will return! Wah! I have spoken!"

Knox, white with rage, but not daring to face the chief, cowered back against the wall as the juniors and their guest passed out of the study on their way back to the circus.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the heroes of the Shell, met the Fourth Form Co. as they returned to St. Jim's.

"Here," said Tom Merry abruptly, "what's all this about Knox being made to fag for you? Is it true?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "Knox was forced to wait on us, deah boys. It was weally vevy funny!"

"And you didn't send for us?" demanded Manners wrathfully.

"No; we had a guest, you see," explained Blake. "A Red Injun chap from the circus, and—"

"Weally, Blake," expostulated D'Arcy, "I object to youah speakin' of our late guest—"

"Brrr!" interrupted Jack Blake cheerfully. "Come inside, you chaps, and we'll tell you all about Knox the fag!"

And Knox, who heard the roars of laughter that came from Jack Blake's study, bit his lips with rage. But the warning which Eagle Feather had given was quite enough!

Knox, very wisely, forgot all about the incident.

A Surprise for Mellish!

A SHORT STORY OF ST. JIM'S.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"And when she got there, the cupboard was bare!" quoted Jack Blake.

The Terrible Three had invited the chums of the Fourth to tea, but now on going to the cupboard to fetch out the supply of things they had laid in for the feed they were faced with bare shelves.

"This is Baggy's handiwork for a cert!" declared Manners.

"No doubt about that!" agreed Jack Blake & Co.

Baggy Trimble had an insatiable appetite, and he was never at all particular from whence he obtained the wherewithal to satisfy it.

"Well, it's no good staring at the cupboard now," said Tom Merry at last. "We must go down to the tuckshop and get some more grub. Good job we're in funds."

"I've got a good stunt!" cried Monty Lowther suddenly. "I'll let him see me come out of the tuckshop to-morrow with a parcel. He'll think it's tuck, of course, and if I leave it in the study he's bound to go in for it. He'll get a shock when he opens it, though."

The rest of the party at once pressed for further details, and in response Monty Lowther gave them full particulars.

"Good old Monty!" cried Tom Merry.

"Hear, hear!"

According to arrangement, Monty Lowther emerged from the tuckshop next day just as Baggy Trimble was passing, and the fat junior's mouth watered as he noticed the bulky package under the Shell junior's arm.

Monty Lowther deposited the parcel on the study table, and then hurried out again, and he noticed Baggy in the shadow at the other end of the corridor, though Baggy did not know he had been seen.

The humorist of the Shell had not been gone long when the fat junior scuttled along to the study, and seizing the parcel from the table darted out again.

Unfortunately for him, Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, spotted him at that moment, and he pounced on him at once.

"I want that parcel, you greedy bounder!" he exclaimed.

"And if you don't hand it over I'll let Tom Merry know that you were sneaking at his study door the other day when they were fixing up about the concert that's coming off."

Baggy looked scared. He knew that the Terrible Three were down on sneaking, and he was not looking for a bumping; he'd had enough of them without looking for them.

While he was still hesitating Mellish snatched the package from his hands and made off.

The Terrible Three had witnessed this little incident from round the top of the stairs, and though they could not hear what was said, they realised what was happening.

"Mellish is a cad, anyway!" said Monty Lowther. "So he'll get the surprise instead, and serve Lim right!"

The cad of the Fourth made his way up to a box-room at the top of the school, and the chums of the Shell and the Fourth waited some distance away.

"Yow-oooh!"

A minute later that piercing yell rang out, and Mellish came rushing from the spare room as though a thousand demons were after him. He had opened the package, which had contained a number of frogs and toads which the chums had gattered in the lanes around the school.

But the great surprise of the whole business came half an hour later, when the Terrible Three heard that Baggy had been seen in the village the whole of the previous afternoon, and could not, therefore, possibly have stolen the tuck from the study cupboard.

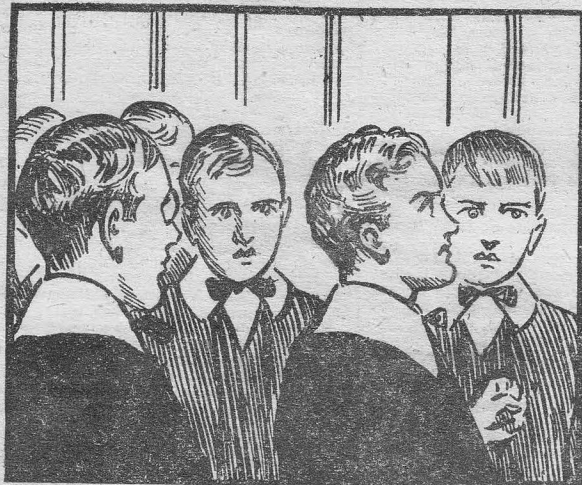
When they tackled Mellish about the stolen package they discovered that he was the culprit of the previous day's theft.

"Well, I'm figgered!" exclaimed Lowther. "If that doesn't take the biscuit!"

"Good job he took the parcel away from Baggy!" laughed Tom Merry.

"Rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



... THE ...

TABLES TURNED!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Loyal Chums.

CLANG, clang, clang! Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Fourth Form, sat up in bed as the first clang of the rising-bell rang out over Rookwood School.

Lovell was the first out of bed. His chums, Raby and Newcome, followed him quickly.

The three chums were dressing quickly, while the rest of the Fourth were still yawning.

Evidently there was something "on" that morning.

There was one bed vacant in the Classical Fourth. It was that of Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Form.

Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth, sat up in bed, and looked at the chums with a sneering smile.

"Goin' to say good-bye to Jimmy Silver?" he asked.

"He won't be gone yet," remarked Townsend. "His pater's comin' to fetch him, Lovell."

"And the sooner the better," said Mornington. "Fancy a chap stickin' to the school after bein' sacked by the Head! Never heard of such cheek!"

"And barrin' himself in his study and hot-pokerin' the sergeant when he comes to turn him out," said Peele sneeringly. "Just like Jimmy Silver! He always had cheek enough for a dozen!"

"We sha'n't have much more of his cheek at Rookwood," grinned Mornington. "It's good-bye to Jimmy Silver to-day for good!"

"Oh, shut up, you cads!" growled Rawson, getting out of bed.

"Shut up yourself!" said Mornington. "Jimmy Silver's a thief, and he's sacked, and— Yaroooh!"

Mornington broke off with a yell as Rawson's pillow smote him, and hurled him over the side of the bed.

The dandy of the Fourth sprawled on the floor in a tangle of bedclothes, yelling.

"Good for you!" said Lovell. "Give the other cads some more of the same, you fellows!"

"Here, hold on!" yelled Townsend, as Lovell rushed at him with his bolster. "I'm not—I— Yooop! Yah! Oh!"

Towny rolled out of the bed under a shower of mighty smites. Peele scrambled out to escape Raby's attack.

They dodged round the beds in hot haste. "Anybody got anything to say about Jimmy Silver?" demanded Lovell, flourishing his pillow.

Nobody had. Mornington & Co. picked themselves up, growling and scowling, but they did not make any more remarks about Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver's chums were quite ready to deal with them if they did. Jimmy was down on his luck, but his loyal pals were standing by him through thick and thin.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome finished dressing, while the Nuts of the Fourth goggled, and left the dormitory with Raw-

son. The four juniors hurried downstairs to the Fourth Form passage.

The passage was deserted, and they hastened along to the end study. The door of that study was closed and fastened—screwed securely from the inside. There was a gap in the door, but inside there was a barricade of the study furniture, screwed with an abundance of screws. Jimmy Silver, expelled from Rookwood by order of the Head, had screwed himself in his study, and was holding the fort against all comers. It was an unprecedented state of affairs, and it caused tremendous excitement in the old school. And Jimmy's pluck and determination caused the belief in his innocence to spread, especially among the juniors.

The Head, perplexed and puzzled by the line taken up by the expelled junior, had sent for his father, and Mr. Silver was expected that morning to take his son away. It was the only way Dr. Chisholm could think of for dealing with the recalcitrant junior. And Jimmy Silver, secure in his fortress, had passed the night there rolled in blankets on the sofa.

Lovell tapped cautiously on the door.

Communication with the expelled junior was forbidden, but at that early hour there was no prefect on the scene.

"Jimmy!"

There was a yawn inside the study. Jimmy Silver rolled off the sofa and tossed the blankets aside.

He grinned at his chums through the gap smashed by Sergeant Kettle's attack the previous day.

"Hallo, kids!"

"Feel all right this morning, Jimmy?"

"Right as rain!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Got plenty of grub for brekker?" asked Rawson.

"Lots!"

"I say, Jimmy," said Raby, "the Head's sent for your pater!"

"I know!"

"He'll be here to-day—this morning, most likely. What are you going to do?"

"Whatever my father tells me, naturally," said Jimmy Silver. "If he tells me to leave Rookwood I shall go. But I won't be expelled by the Head for something I haven't done. I never touched Beaumont's banknote. I never saw it till Bulkeley took it out of my pocket when he searched me. It was planted on me by some cad, and I believe Mornington had something to do with it. My father won't believe me guilty. I don't know what he'll decide. But unless he orders me to leave Rookwood, I sha'n't go."

"Good for you!" said Rawson. "And remember, Jimmy, we're looking into it. I've been thinking it over a lot, and I'm going to see your father, if I can, and tell him about it. Better let him hear your side of the matter before he sees the Head."

"You'll be at lessons," said Jimmy. Rawson shook his head.

"I'm going to cut lessons, and meet your pater at the station."

"Phew!"

"So are we," said Lovell. "That's what we've come to tell you, Jimmy."

"But Mr. Bootles won't give you leave of absence."

"We're going to take French leave."

"I—I say, you'll get into a row," said Jimmy uneasily. "I don't want you to get into a row on my account."

"Rats! Ain't we your pals, fathead?" said Newcome.

"You see, the Head's written to your father that you've stolen a banknote from Beaumont of the Sixth, and that you're sacked," said Lovell.

"Your pater will be cut up about it. It will buck him up no end when we meet him first and explain that it's all lies."

"And it will show him that some of Rookwood, at least, believe in you and stick to you, Jimmy," said Raby.

"It is awfully good of you," said Jimmy Silver gratefully. "The poor old pater will be cut up, there's no doubt about that."

"We'll cheer him up," said Rawson; "and we know how to put him on the track, too. We've been jawing it over, and we've thought of a way of getting some light on the subject."

"You have, you mean," grinned Lovell. "I never thought of it."

"Rawson's hit on something, Jimmy," said Newcome. "Rawson's got a long head, and no mistake. He—"

"Clear off, you young rascals!"

Beaumont, the prefect, came striding along the passage.

"How dare you come here!"

The juniors looked grimly at Beaumont. He was a prefect of the Sixth, but they were not much inclined to treat him with respect.

It was Beaumont's note that had been found on Jimmy Silver, and not one of Jimmy's chums believed he had stolen it. They believed that the bully of the Sixth had been concerned in the "planting" of it on him.

It was the only thing they could believe so long as their faith in Jimmy Silver remained unshaken.

"Do you hear me?" rapped out Beaumont. "It's against the Head's orders for you to come here, and you know it!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Lovell savagely. "We're going to speak to our pal if we choose!"

"Your pal—an expelled thief!" sneered the prefect.

"Liar!" said Jimmy through the door.

"Perhaps it isn't Jimmy who'll be expelled when the truth comes out," said Lovell, his eyes gleaming. "Perhaps it's a bullying cad in the Sixth and a mean ratter in the Fourth, who helped him to plant a banknote in Jimmy's pocket!"

Beaumont started violently.

"You—you dare to suggest—"

"Oh, that touches you on the raw, does it?" said Lovell.

"You young hound!" shouted Beaumont.

He made a rush at Lovell. The four juniors stood up to him grimly, quite prepared to "handle him," prefect as he was.

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But Bulkeley of the Sixth came hurrying up.

"Stop that!" he said curtly. "Those young cads are talking to Silver," he growled. "The Head's forbidden it."

"I know that as well as you do, Beaumont. Clear off, kids!" said the prefect. "You're not allowed here!"

And Bulkeley shepherded the juniors down the passage, followed by the scowling Beaumont. Jimmy was left alone—much cheered by the visit from his chums.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

French Leave.

HERE was intense excitement in Rookwood that morning.

At breakfast it was impossible to still the buzz of excited whispers. On the Modern side the excitement was almost as great as among the Classics.

Fellows who knew Jimmy Silver still had faith in him, in spite of the overwhelming evidence against him.

The Head had had but little choice in the matter; he could only decide by the evidence. But any amount of evidence did not matter to fellows who knew Jimmy Silver to be as straight as a die.

But when Jimmy was expelled by the Head all the school had expected him to go, innocent or guilty.

His action of screwing himself fast in his study and sticking to his room took all Rookwood by surprise.

Even fellows who believed him guilty could not help admiring his nerve.

Sergeant Kettle had been ordered to force the study and remove him, and Jimmy Silver had "hot-poked" him through the split door till the sergeant beat a strategic retreat. And all Rookwood buzzed with excitement at the news. There were few fellows who did not wish well to the bold rebel.

Only Mornington and his set were looking forward to his ignominious departure from Rookwood.

The fact that the Head had given up the attempt to remove the expelled junior by force, and had sent for his father, added to the excitement.

So far Jimmy Silver had won. The honours were with him.

After breakfast a prefect was posted in the Fourth Form passage to see that none of the juniors visited the rebel in his study. He remained on guard until the bell rang for morning lessons.

But when the Classical Fourth turned up in their Form-room there were four absentees. Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, was looking very distressed that morning. He was quite pale and troubled when he came into the Form-room. The disgrace that had fallen upon his Form was a heavy blow to him.

He glanced at the Fourth over his spectacles, and noted the absence of four juniors at once.

"Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Rawson!" There was no answer.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Does anyone know where those four boys are?"

"They went out after breakfast, sir!" said Peele.

"Dear me! Is it possible that they are playing truant?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, aghast at the idea.

"Gone to Jimmy Silver, perhaps, sir!" said Mornington.

"Shut up, you spalpeen!" whispered Flynn fiercely.

Mr. Bootles left the Form-room, evidently to investigate. But he returned in a few minutes. The absentees were not in the House.

Mr. Bootles had no recourse but to mark them down absent, and morning lessons began.

Meanwhile, the four juniors were on their way to the station at Coombe.

They had slipped out of gates quietly, reckless of the result of cutting morning lessons. There would be punishment to follow, but that had to be risked. Helping their chum when he was down on his luck was more important than constraining Latin—at least, Lovell & Co. so considered.

They arrived early at the little station of Coombe, and saw the first train from London come in. Then they waited for the next.

"I suppose Jimmy's pater couldn't get here much before midday," remarked Lovell. "He won't have received the Head's letter until this morning most likely. We may have to wait here all the morning."

"We'll wait all day if necessary," said Raby.

"Yes, rather!"

But the devoted chums did not have to wait so long as that.

When the eleven o'clock train came in a gentleman stepped from it whom they knew very well. It was Mr. Silver.

Mr. Silver looked troubled and a little pale, and his brows were knitted.

The Head's letter had evidently given him a severe shock; but to judge by his expression, it was not in a chastened mood that he was going to Rookwood. He was going to see his son had justice.

The juniors hurried forward, raising their caps.

"Mr. Silver!" exclaimed Raby.

Mr. Silver stopped, looking at them in surprise.

"We came to meet you, sir," said Lovell.

"Indeed!" said Jimmy's father, looking puzzled. "I suppose you are aware of the state of things at the school—that my son has been expelled?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And we know he is innocent, sir," said Rawson.

"You know it?"

"Well, we believe so, anyway."

"Jolly sure of it, sir," said Newcome.

"We're Jimmy's pals, and we're sticking to him."

Mr. Silver's clouded brow cleared a little.

"Then I take it the evidence is not complete?"

"Well—" Lovell hesitated. "It's pretty strong, sir. The Head has decided that Jimmy is guilty."

"Yet you believe in him?"

"You see, we know old Jimmy," explained Lovell. "I don't care twopence for the evidence!"

Mr. Silver smiled.

"I am glad to see there is someone at Rookwood who has faith in my son," he said.

"Lots of fellows believe in him, sir," said Lovell eagerly. "Even Tommy Dodd, and he's a Modern bouncer. Only a few cads are against him. We don't blame the Head."

added Lovell considerably. "You see, he doesn't know Jimmy as we do, and the evidence is pretty thick—I must say that!"

"We wanted to see you before you saw the Head, sir," said Rawson. "It's only fair for you to hear Jimmy's version first. You see, the Head believed him guilty."

Mr. Silver hesitated.

"I came to see Dr. Chisholm," he said.

"It appears that my son has refused to leave the school, although ordered to do so."

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Lovell.

"He's holding the study against everybody. Just like old Jimmy. He won't give in and be sacked when he's innocent all the time. You ain't waxy with him for that, are you, sir?"

"I do not blame him if he is innocent," said Mr. Silver; "and, naturally, I am inclined to put faith in my son. Yet it is extraordinary, if he is innocent, that the evidence against him should be strong enough to cause Dr. Chisholm to sentence him to expulsion from the school. I had better see the Head—"

"But we've got something to tell you that the Head doesn't know, sir!" exclaimed Lovell. "Old Rawson thought of it. He's jolly deep."

"Then I shall certainly listen to you," said Mr. Silver. "Come into the waiting-room."

Mr. Silver was a quiet and self-contained gentleman. But the juniors could see he had been "bucked," as they called it, by learning that his son's friends still believed in his innocence, and stood by him.

"Now, tell me exactly what happened at Rookwood yesterday," said Mr. Silver, as they sat down in the waiting-room.

"Go it, Rawson; you're going to do the talking," said Lovell.

Rawson nodded.

"Beaumont of the Sixth missed a five-pound note from his study, sir," said Rawson.

It was taken from the table-drawer. Jimmy Silver had been sent to the study to fetch his footer, and it seems that nobody else went into the study, sir. Beaumont didn't accuse Jimmy, but he suggested searching him. Bulkeley—he's the captain of Rookwood—searched Jimmy in the presence of Beaumont and Mr. Bootles and two prefects. The five-pound note was found on him."

Mr. Silver took a deep breath.

"It was found in his jacket," went on Rawson. "The lining was torn, and the bank-note had gone through the pocket. They took it for granted that Jimmy had stolen it, then."

"I admit I was rather knocked over," said Lovell, colouring. "It did seem a clincher. But—"

"Did my son make an explanation?"

"Yes," said Rawson. "He said he'd never seen the note before, and that somebody must have put it in his jacket. Only—only it wouldn't be easy for a Sixth-Former to come nosing in our dorm for a chap's jacket in the dark—and it must have been put there in the dark."

"So—so— And, besides, Beaumont's a prefect of the Sixth, and—and the Head's hardly likely to believe such a thing of him. He doesn't know how Beaumont hated poor old Jimmy."

"Was my son on bad terms with this Beaumont?"

"Yes, rather," said Lovell. "Beaumont's the rottenest bully at Rookwood, and, of course, we don't stand that."

"Jimmy kicked him out of our study the other day," said Newcome. "He came there to lick me, and we kicked the rotter out!"

"Surely juniors are not allowed to eject a prefect of the Sixth Form from a study. Did not Beaumont complain to the Head?"

"That shows what a rotter he is!" said Lovell. "He licked Newcome so much that he dared not complain to the Head about it. But he was awfully down on Jimmy for taking the lead in kicking him out! All the fags are laughing at him for it. Some of them serenaded him under his window."

"Then Beaumont had a motive for wishing to injure my son," said Mr. Silver. "But it's a long step from that to attempting to fasten a charge of theft upon him!"

"Yes; but as Jimmy's innocent, that's the only explanation, sir."

Mr. Silver smiled. The eager, unthinking faith of Jimmy's chums touched him deeply.

"My son's innocence has to be proved yet," he said. "Did it transpire that my son knew there was a banknote in Beaumont's study?"

"Yes; and that told against him. But Rawson worked it out that it turns in his favour!"

"Indeed!" Mr. Silver looked very curious at the scholarship junior. "Please go on, Master Rawson!"

Rawson coloured a little.

"I thought of it in talking it over with these chaps," he said. "You see, Jimmy Silver knew there was a banknote in Beaumont's study because he had heard Beaumont mention it to another Sixth-Former in the passage. Well, chaps in the Fourth don't generally hear Sixth-Formers talking about their business. It was jolly odd that Jimmy happened to hear that. I thought it over, and it seems jolly clear to me that Beaumont deliberately spoke about it in Jimmy's hearing so that it would come out afterwards that Jimmy knew the banknote was there!"

"You ought to be a lawyer, young man," said Mr. Silver. "The point is very well taken indeed! But the evidence against my son is overwhelming, and his only plea is an accusation against a Sixth-Form prefect which cannot be proved in any way!"

"That's where old Rawson comes in!" said Lovell triumphantly.

"Rawson's going to jolly well prove it!" "Go on, my dear boy," said Mr. Silver.

And the chums of the Fourth chorused: "Go it, Rawson!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

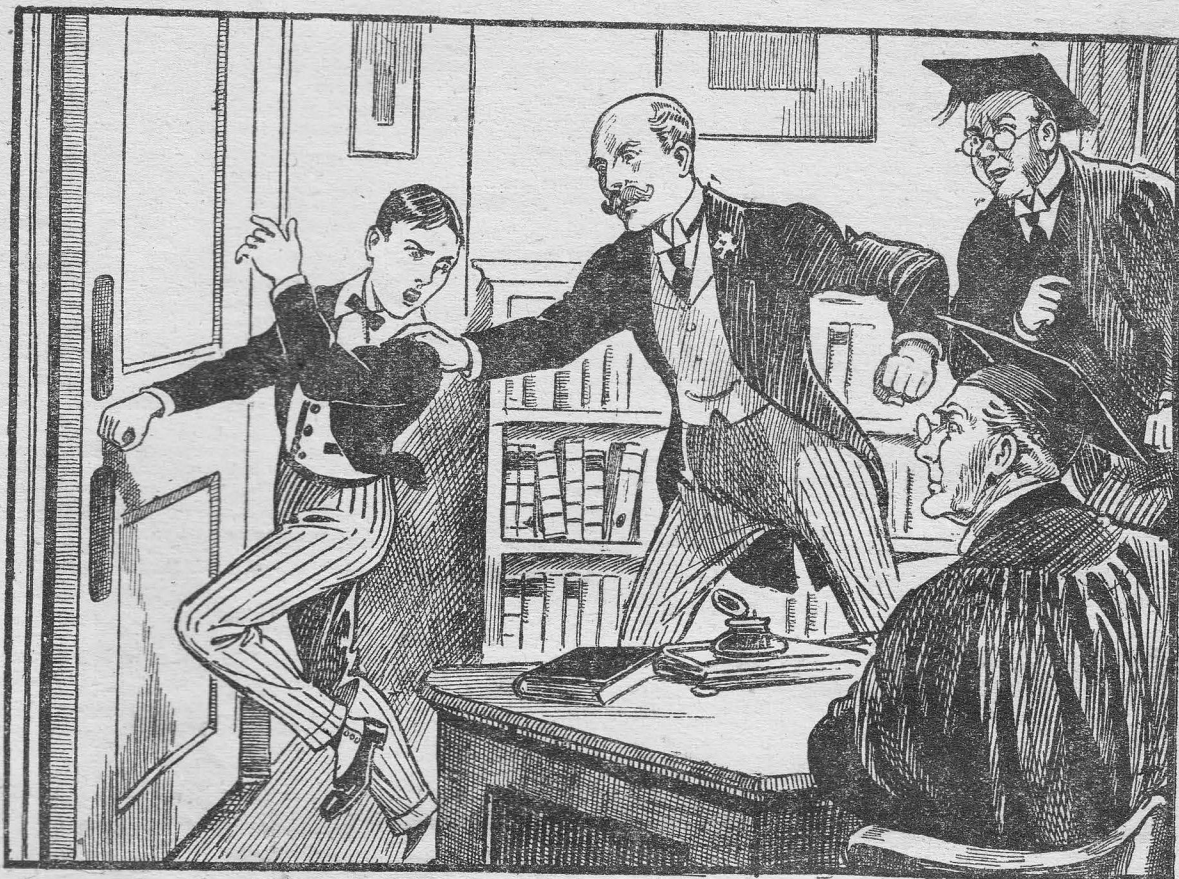
"Good Old Rawson!"

RAWSON coloured and grimed. He had showed considerable acumen in thinking the mysterious tangle out, and the juniors admired him immensely for it. The scholarship boy had had a harder life than most of the Rookwood fellows, and his hard experiences had given him an old head on young shoulders, and Rawson's long head was destined to stand Jimmy Silver in good stead.

Rawson "went it" as his chums requested. "You see, this chap Beaumont is rather a rotter!" he said. "We don't sneak about a chap, of course, even when he's a beastly bully, and I don't know that anything could be proved against him, anyway—he's jolly deep! But we in the Fourth know he's a rotter all through! He's been seen talking to a shady bookmaker who hangs about Coombe, and his fag has found cards and cigarettes in his study, and sporting papers, and all that. Everybody knows he goes the pace, though he doesn't know they know!"

"That is important," said Mr. Silver quietly. "The personal character of an accuser is a very important matter. Pray continue!"

"Well, for the last few days everybody knew that Beaumont was hard up," said



"Stop!" Mornington did not stop. With a spring Mr. Silver was at the door, and his grasp closed like iron on Mornington's shoulder. "Not so fast!" he said grimly. "Let me go!" yelled Mornington. (See page 17.)

Rawson. "The fellows joked about his having had luck on geegees—not to let Beaumont hear them, of course. He's borrowed money of a kid in the Fourth!"

"Mornington," said Lovell, "the rottenest cad in the Lower School! He's been very thick with Beaumont, and he hates Jimmy Silver as a Hun hates the truth!"

"Mornington never told us so, of course," said Rawson. "But his pals knew—Toway and Topham and Peele—and, of course, they jawed sometimes, so most of the fellows knew. Besides, it ain't usual for a Sixth Form prefect to be thick with a Fourth Form junior. It's jolly unusual, and everybody knew it was because of Morny's money. Morny rolls in money; he simply reeks with it! Beaumont wouldn't have stood him for ten seconds if he hadn't been hard up and wanting to borrow!"

"But what does this lead to?" asked Mr. Silver.

"Rawson's coming to it!" chuckled Lovell. "You give old Rawson his head! Go it, Rawson!"

"Well, sir, Beaumont being hard up, as we all knew, to such an extent as to be borrowing money from a junior, where did he get five pounds from all of a sudden?" said Rawson.

"That's it!" said Lovell.

"Five pounds is a good bit of money, even for a Sixth Form chap," said Rawson; "and we know Beaumont hadn't a quid, let alone five quid. Where did he get that fiver from?"

Mr. Silver looked perplexed.

"But it is established that Beaumont had a five-pound note," he said. "It was actually found in the search!"

"Exactly. But I don't believe it was Beaumont's fiver at all!"

"That's the point!" said Lovell, in great delight.

"But whose, then, do you suppose it was, and what has that to do with the matter?" asked the perplexed old gentleman.

"Morny's!" chorused Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

"Morny! Who is Morny?"

"Mornington of the Fourth—Jimmy's worst enemy, and the kid who is thick with Beaumont, sir!"

"You mean that Mornington has lent the five-pound note to Beaumont?"

"Yes, sir, to fix on Jimmy Silver."

"Oh!"

"You see, sir, Beaumont was so well known to be hard up that when he missed the note first fellows said he hadn't one, and was only gassing about having one and lost it."

"After we thought of this I spoke to Neville," said Rawson. "Neville's the secretary of the senior football club, and he used to dun Beaumont for his sub. We all knew it. Some of the fags used to call out to Beaumont, 'Here comes Neville for his sub!' And it made Beaumont awfully wild!"

Mr. Silver laughed.

"I have no doubt it did!"

"Well, Beaumont was looking for the fiver to pay Neville when he missed it," said Rawson; "and my belief is that he fixed it so as to have Neville present when it was missed. Neville didn't half believe at first that he had a banknote at all, and Beaumont had to explain how it was, as Neville knew he was stony. He explained that he'd received it from his uncle."

"Is not that probable?"

"I suppose it's possible," said Rawson. "But I'm jolly certain that if Beaumont got a fiver he'd have paid some of his debts with it, not used it to fix a charge on old Jimmy. But that isn't all. When he couldn't pay Neville his football sub, he couldn't have had a fiver, could he?"

"I suppose not."

"Well, he had a fiver afterwards that day, and he had it from his uncle, so he says. But he never had a letter that day!" said Rawson triumphantly. "We've been inquiring about that, and Beaumont never had a letter yesterday at all. The postman comes only twice a day to Rookwood, and Lovell met him

each time. Lovell's expecting some tin from home!"

"And Beaumont met him each time, too!" chuckled Lovell; "and each time the old boy said, 'No, there isn't a letter for Master Beaumont.' I never thought about it until Rawson started working it out!"

Mr. Silver's face looked grave.

"So you see how we work it out, sir," said Rawson modestly. "Beaumont says he had a fiver from his uncle—he told Neville so—and we know he hadn't a letter yesterday at all. Mornington is simply reeking with fivers, and we know he'd give 'em all to get even with Jimmy Silver. Beaumont couldn't have sneaked into our dorm to shove that banknote into Jimmy's jacket. But Morny sleeps in our dorm, and it would be quite easy for him to sneak out of bed and do it when all the chaps were asleep. He'd know exactly where Jimmy's jacket was, of course. That five-pound note never was in Beaumont's drawer at all."

"Never in its life!" chorried Lovell.

"It was Morny's fiver all the time, and Morny shoved it into Jimmy's pocket, and only gave Beaumont the number, so as he could claim it!"

Mr. Silver drew a deep breath. "My dear boy," he said, "I think your theory has been largely dictated by your belief in my son; but it is certainly possible, and quite certainly this aspect of the matter shall be inquired into."

"That's what we want," said Lovell. "We know you'll see that Jimmy has justice, sir. The Head wouldn't listen to kids like us, but—"

"He will listen to me," said Mr. Silver grimly. "I should certainly require proof to the last iota before I allow my son to be branded as a thief!"

"That's it, sir," said Rawson. "Now, all banknotes are numbered, and that note had a certain number. Notes can be traced by their numbers. If Beaumont had it from his uncle, it can be proved."

"Undoubtedly."

"And if he had it from Morny, that can be proved, too. Morny will deny knowing anything about it—he's a regular Prussian for lying—but it can be proved, all the same. The note must have come from a bank, and the banker will know."

"And if the note proved to be Morny's, that settles the whole business," said Ruby. "Morny put it into Jimmy Silver's pocket and Beaumont claimed it afterwards—and very likely he'd never even seen it."

"And there's another point," said Rawson. "Where's that note now? It's Morny's, we're convinced of that, and it's served its turn in getting Jimmy Silver expelled. I don't believe Morny would let Beaumont keep it. He swanks a lot with his blessed money, but he doesn't give any away. I don't believe for a minute that he would let Beaumont keep that note, if it's his."

"And if he's got it back, he's got it now," said Lovell. "You see, they believe the matter is finished and done with; they don't guess old Rawson has been working it out like a merry Sherlock Holmes." "My dear lads," said Mr. Silver gratefully, "you have lightened my heart very much. I cannot thank you enough for meeting me here and telling me this. I shall now know what line to take at Rookwood. You can safely leave the matter in my hands on that point."

"Oh, yes, rather!"

Mr. Silver rose. The four juniors walked to Rookwood with him in high spirits, and they arrived as the Rookwood fellows were coming out of the Form-room after morning lessons.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Silver Means Business.

DR. CHISHOLM rose as Mr. Silver was shown into his study.

The Head's face was grave and concerned. Angry as he was with Jimmy Silver, he could feel for the blow that had fallen upon the boy's father. He shook hands very cordially with his visitor.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Silver. Please sit down. I need not say how sorry I am to send for you on such an errand."

"I can quite understand that," said Mr. Silver.

"Your son must leave Rookwood," said the Head. "The discovery of his action must, of course, be a very painful shock to you. But you will see I had no resource but to expel the boy guilty of theft."

"If my son is guilty of theft, sir, he deserves to be expelled from the school and go to prison. I should have no pity on him whatever if that were the case," said Mr. Silver quietly. "But if he is innocent—"

The Head made a gesture.

"I stated the whole of the circumstances in my letter to you, Mr. Silver."

"So far as you knew them, sir."

"Really, Mr. Silver, you must do me the credit of believing that I inquired into the matter in the most thorough manner," said the Head, with a touch of asperity. "It is not a light matter to expel a boy on such a serious charge."

"Quite so. But as the boy's father, you must allow for my natural faith in him," said Mr. Silver. "I am quite aware that you intended to administer strict justice, of course. Still, there is a possibility that a mistake has been made."

The Head stiffened visibly.

"There is no room for a mistake," he said. "The stolen property was actually found in your son's possession."

"I understand that he claims that it was placed in his pocket without his knowledge."

"Indeed! Certainly he made that absurd statement, which I refused to listen to for a moment. I did not mention that in my letter to you."

"I have seen some of my son's friends here."

"It is news to me that any boy at Rookwood doubts his guilt," said the Head coolly.

"On the contrary, his friends have not lost faith in him, and neither have I," said Mr. Silver composedly.

The Head drummed on the table with his fingers.

"Mr. Silver, the matter has been adjudged. I have asked you to come here to remove your son, who defies all authority, and has even resorted to violence to remain at Rookwood against my will."

"If he is innocent, doctor, his conduct can be pardoned, I imagine?"

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"If he is innocent, Mr. Silver, I should not only pardon his action, but I should express my personal regret to him for what has happened. But he is not innocent," said the Head tartly. "He is guilty, and his guilt has been proved."

"I do not regard the proof as conclusive."

"I am sorry for that. I must say my decision remains unchanged."

"You have no objection, however, to my inquiring into the circumstances myself while I am here?"

"I have no right to raise any objection, but I do not see the use."

"That may transpire later," said Mr. Silver.

"Doctor, my son's good name, and my own, as his father, are at stake. You can make allowance for a parent's feelings, I am sure."

The Head melted at once.

"My dear sir, you shall be satisfied in every possible way!" he exclaimed. "I am only sorry that I can see no chance of lifting the stain from your son's name. His Form-master tells me that he had a very high opinion of him until now. He was, in fact, a credit to the Fourth Form—something high-spirited, but an excellent lad in every way. That makes his fall more shocking and painful."

"And improbable!" said Mr. Silver.

"Well, you shall satisfy yourself," said the Head. "Heaven forbid that I should deny you the fullest satisfaction in the matter. What do you wish to do?"

"I should like to question Master Beaumont."

"Very well."

Dr. Chisholm touched the bell, and sent the page to call Master Beaumont to his study.

"You must not suppose that Beaumont accused your son," he explained. "Mr. Bootles tells me he expressed serious doubts as to whether Silver had taken the note. He required him to be searched partly for his own sake, as suspicion had fallen on him."

Mr. Silver nodded, without replying.

Beaumont of the Sixth entered the study.

The prefect was looking pale, and his brows were clouded. It was not pleasant for him to meet Jimmy Silver's father. But he nerved himself for the ordeal.

"This is Master Beaumont," said the Head.

Mr. Silver scanned the prefect's face.

"Thank you for coming here, Master Beaumont," he said. "I am Silver's father. I have come to take my son away if he is guilty."

Beaumont's lips quivered uneasily.

"I am afraid there is no doubt about that, sir," he said. "The matter has been proved, I am sorry to say."

"We shall see. It was your banknote, I understand, that was purloined?"

"Yes, sir."

"A five-pound note?"

"Yes."

"You remember the number of it?"

"Beaumont identified the note by the number of it," interjected the Head.

"Exactly. May I ask Master Beaumont whether he is accustomed to possessing banknotes of such value?"

"I have five or six sometimes, sir," said Beaumont.

"May I ask where you obtained this one?"

"Really, sir—" began the Head.

"Let Master Beaumont answer my question. Unless," said Mr. Silver, with bitter emphasis—"unless Master Beaumont objects to answering it!"

Beaumont made an uneasy movement.

"I have no objection to answering it, of course," he said. "I had the note from my uncle."

"You stated as much, I understand, to Neville, of your Form?"

"Yes; I told Neville," said Beaumont, astonished at Mr. Silver's knowledge.

"Please tell me your uncle's name."

Beaumont hesitated.

"I'm waiting," said Mr. Silver.

"I don't see—"

"I must say that I don't see the drift of all this," said the Head, with very visible signs of impatience.

"I have an object, sir. Unless Master Beaumont answers my questions, I shall conclude that he has spoken falsely in saying that he had a banknote from his uncle."

"Mr. Silver!"

"Let him answer," said Mr. Silver.

"My uncle is Sir Charles Beaumont," said the prefect sullenly.

"Very good. Sir Charles Beaumont, doubtless, takes the numbers of his notes," said Mr. Silver. "You have the number of the stolen note, Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes; but—"

"I have finished with Master Beaumont."

The Head made the prefect a sign to leave the study. Beaumont, very pale and perturbed, quitted the room.

"Now, sir—" began the Head.

"I observe that you have a telephone here, sir," said Mr. Silver. "Doubtless Sir Charles Beaumont's name is in the telephone directory—"

"That is the case. I have received a call from him before," said the Head. "But what—"

"Will you kindly telephone to him and inquire whether he sent his nephew a banknote for five pounds yesterday, or this week at all?"

"Really—"

"My belief is that he did nothing of the kind," said Mr. Silver grimly.

"Really, sir—"

"A few words with Sir Charles Beaumont will settle the matter one way or the other," said Mr. Silver.

The Head made an impatient gesture.

"I will do as you wish, Mr. Silver; but—"

"Thank you!"

Dr. Chisholm crossed to the telephone and took up the receiver. He called for his number, and in a few minutes got through.

"Fortunately, Sir Charles is at home," said the Head irritably. "You will see in a few minutes, Mr. Silver, that your very remarkable suspicion is quite unfounded."

"Perhaps so."

"Ah, he is here! Is that Sir Charles Beaumont?"

"Yes," came back the voice on the wires.

"That Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes. Pray excuse me for this disturbance, Sir Charles. I desire to ask you one question concerning a banknote you sent to your nephew this week."

"What? What?"

"You sent a five-pound note to your nephew, Master Beaumont, of the Sixth Form at Rookwood—"

"Nothing of the sort!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I have not sent my nephew a banknote!"

The Head gasped over the receiver.

"You—you have not?" he stammered.

"Certainly not! I have no five-pound notes to send to schoolboys in these times," said Sir Charles crossly. "So far as I can remember, I have sent him nothing since his birthday two months ago."

"You are absolutely certain?"

"Of course I am certain! What the dickens—"

"Pray excuse my troubling you!" gasped the Head.

And he rang off without further speech, probably leaving the baronet very much puzzled.

Dr. Chisholm sank limply into his chair.

"Well?" said Mr. Silver grimly.

"You are right, sir," gasped the Head.

"Sir Charles Beaumont has not sent his nephew a banknote, and Beaumont has spoken falsely. But—but what does that prove?"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In the Toils!

THE next thing to do," said Mr. Silver quietly, "is to cross-examine the boy Mornington. Will you be good enough to send for him, doctor?"

"Mornington! Certainly, if you wish it," said Dr. Chisholm, a trifle wearily. "I will send a message to ask Mr. Bootles to bring him to the study at once."

"Thank you."

In five minutes the Fourth Form-master ushered Mornington into the Head's study.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Mornington.

"Mr. Silver wishes to question you," said the Head.

Mornington looked at the visitor as insolently as he dared.

"I don't see what Mr. Silver can do with me, sir," he replied.

"You will kindly answer his questions, Mornington."

"Very well, sir!"

"I understand that you are on bad terms with my son, Master Mornington," said Mr. Silver.

"I don't like him, sir," he said. "He keeps me out of the footer, chiefly because he's jealous of my form. I don't take the trouble to dislike him; he's not worth it!"

Mr. Bootles coughed, and the Head frowned. Mr. Silver's eyes gleamed for a minute.

Mornington's insolence made a bad impression on the three.

"You are on very friendly terms with Master Beaumont of the Sixth Form, I understand?"

"Not at all. Fourth-Formers are not usually friendly with prefects. But perhaps you don't know much about public schools, sir."

"Mornington, you will kindly answer Mr. Silver respectfully!" said the Head warningly. "I am quite aware that such a friendship is unusual," said Mr. Silver. "But in this case, I understand, it exists. You are on friendly terms with a prefect of the Sixth, and both of you are on bad terms with my son."

"Not at all."
"Are you willing for members of your Form to be questioned as to your friendship with Master Beaumont?"

Mornington shifted uneasily. His amazing "palliness" with a Sixth Form prefect had been the talk of the Fourth, and it was not much use denying a fact that could be proved at once by investigation.

"Perhaps Beaumont has been rather kind to me," he said, after a pause. "He rather likes me. I like him."

"That does not agree with your previous statement, Mornington," said the Head frowning. "I warn you to go careful!"

"I don't see that my private affairs are this gentleman's business at all, sir," said Mornington coolly. "I regard this questioning as sheer impertinence!"

"Mornington!"

"You will soon see the object of my questioning!" said Mr. Silver grimly.

"Did you or did you not enter into a scheme with Master Beaumont to fasten a charge of theft upon my son?"

"Good heavens!" murmured Mr. Bootles aghast. And the Head gasped.

Mornington drew a deep breath. "Certainly not!" he replied.

"You did not?"

"No. I regard the questions as an insult!"

"Did you, taking advantage of the fact that you occupy the same dormitory as my son, leave your bed in the night to place a banknote in his jacket, having arranged with Beaumont the next day to pretend it was stolen?"

"No!" muttered Mornington.

"Was the five-pound note yours or was it Beaumont's—the note that was found in my son's jacket lining?"

"Beaumont's, of course. He told the Head so."

"Do you know where Master Beaumont obtained it?"

"I think he had it from his uncle. I don't know much about Beaumont's affairs, of course."

"Beaumont informed us that it was from his uncle," remarked Mr. Bootles.

Mr. Silver smiled, and the Head gave a peculiar cough.

Mornington cast a sharp look from one to the other. He could see that something, at least, was known, and that something filled him with a vague fear. Had he left some point in his cunning scheme unguarded, after all? That was the deadly fear that was gnawing now in the young rascal's breast.

"You did not put the note in my son's jacket?"

"I have said so!" muttered the junior huskily.

"It was not your note?"

"No."

"Very good!" Mr. Silver turned to the Head. "Mr. Chisholm, my point is that that statement is false, that the banknote was

Mornington's, and never in Master Beaumont's possession at all. Therefore, it could not have been taken from his study by my son."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "You—you amaze me!" stammered Mr. Bootles. "What possible reason was there for supposing the note was Mornington's?"

"It was not mine!" shouted Mornington furiously. "This is a rotten trick to get Silver off!"

"Silence, Mornington!" said the Head. "Am I to keep silent while this man is arguing my good name away?" demanded Mornington fiercely. "I give you my word, sir, that the note was not mine, and I never heard of it until it was found on Jimmy Silver, who had stolen it from Beaumont!"

"You need not fear anything but the truth will be established, Mornington. Mr. Silver, I must ask you for the reason for the astounding suggestions you make."

"Proofs are better than reasons," said Mr. Silver quietly. "You have the number of the note in question."

"I have the number here."

"Very good! You have already learned that Beaumont lied in declaring that the note came from his uncle."

Mornington panted. He began to feel the toils closing about him.

"By the number of the note," continued Mr. Silver, "you can ascertain whether it was Mornington's."

"True!" said the Head.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Mornington, I understand that you have a very considerable allowance," said the Head. "You sometimes have banknotes?"

"I've plenty of money," said Mornington, with a touch of his old purse-proud manner.

"Did you have a five-pound note yesterday?"

A denial trembled on Mornington's lips. But a denial was not much use when he had a wad of fivers in his pocket-book at that very moment.

"Yes, sir; several."

"He had five-pound notes and Beaumont had none," said Mr. Silver significantly. "His notes must have come originally from a bank, and either from his guardian or through the banker the numbers can be ascertained. If one of the numbers is the same as the stolen note—"

"That would certainly prove your case, sir," said the Head slowly.

"I will communicate with Mornington's guardian on the subject at once."

Mornington reeled. His face was deathly white. Every eye in the room was on him, and his terror could not escape observation.

"Mornington"—the Head's voice was slow and ominous—"do you admit now that the banknote was yours?"

"No," said Mornington thickly. "I—I deny it!"

"I have yet another point to make," said Mr. Silver, his voice like iron. "The stolen note, I presume, was returned to the supposed owner when it was taken from my son?"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Bootles. "It was given back to Beaumont in my presence."

"I believe that note was Mornington's, and used only for the purpose of fastening a false charge against my son. After it had served its purpose the real owner would doubtless reclaim it. He would have, so far as I can see, no motive in allowing his accomplice to retain it. That being the case, it is very probably in Mornington's possession at this very moment, and I demand he be searched—"

Mr. Silver broke off suddenly as Mornington made a wild and desperate rush to the door.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
"Hurrah!"

"STOP!"

"Mornington!" Mornington did not stop.

He fairly sprang at the door, and tore it open. But, though the Head and Mr. Bootles were taken by surprise, Mr. Silver was on the alert. With a spring he was at the door, and his grasp closed like iron on Mornington's shoulder.

"Not so fast!" said Mr. Silver grimly. "Let me go!" yelled Mornington.

He kicked and struggled savagely in Mr. Silver's grasp.

With a twist of his arm Jimmy's father sent the wretched schemer back into the study and closed the door.

Mornington stood panting.

"Dr. Chisholm"—Mr. Silver's voice was calm and even—"after this boy's action you can have no further doubt that the banknote is upon his person."

"Good heavens!" said the Head. "It certainly appears clear," said Mr. Bootles. "Mornington must be searched."

"Kindly search him, Mr. Bootles," said the Head. "There is little doubt now, I fear. Silver has been cruelly wronged."

Mornington started back as the Form-master approached him.

"Hands off!" he muttered thickly. "Hands off, or—"

"Mornington"—the Head's voice was deep and stern—"submit to a search at once, or I shall call in a prefect to hold you!"

"I—I haven't the note!" panted Mornington.

"A search will prove that one way or the other."

The wretched junior groaned. There was only one explanation of his conduct, and there was nothing to be said.

He made no further resistance. Mr. Bootles drew a fat pocket-book from the junior's pocket and opened it. There were a dozen banknotes in it, and Mr. Bootles examined each one methodically. He paused at last, and drew one note out from the others.

"This is the note!"

The Head took it, scanned the number, and compared it with a number on a slip of paper.

"The number is the same," he said.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

"This note," said the Head, "is the note found on Silver of the Fourth when he was searched yesterday. I need not ask how it came into your possession, Mornington. It was your property, and you reclaimed it from your accomplice when it was taken from Silver. Do you still wish an investigation through your guardian to prove the note was yours in the first place?"

Mornington pulled himself together.


"You needn't trouble," he said. "I own up. Not much use lyin' about it now. I thought the matter was ended, or I'd have left the note with Beaumont, only the silly fool would have blued it on geesees, and I should never have seen it again. The game's up, and I'm ready to take my gruel!"

The Head's brow was black as thunder.

"It is clear that you placed the banknote in Silver's pocket, and somehow induced Beaumont to make a false claim to it," he said. "Now that your guilt is proved beyond doubt you admit it."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders with his old coolness.

"I know the game's up," he said, with a



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snear. "I swore that either Jimmy Silver or I would clear out of Rookwood. I meant it to be Jimmy Silver. My luck's out, but I'm not going to whine. I'm ready to be sacked!"

"You will certainly be expelled immediately from the school, you unmitigated young scoundrel!" said the Head. "Mr. Bootles, call Beaumont here!"

In a few moments Beaumont entered, looking pale and harassed.

His scared eyes dwelt on every face in turn.

"The game's up, Beaumont!" said Mornington flippantly, before the Head could speak. "They've found the note on me."

Beaumont gave a gasping cry.

"The truth is known, Beaumont," said the Head quietly. "How came it, wretched boy, that you, a prefect of the Sixth Form, entered into this dastardly plot with a junior to disgrace an innocent lad?"

Beaumont staggered against the door.

"I—I never wanted to," he said huskily. "You—you don't know that young fiend! He drove me into it. I owed him money. He had me under his thumb! I—I never wanted to do it—"

He broke off with a groan.

Mr. Silver rose. He was not wanted longer.

"May I see my son?" he asked.

Mr. Bootles, kindly conducted Mr. Silver to his son's study. Please tell Silver that now his innocence is proved he is pardoned for his insubordination, and he will, of course, remain at Rookwood."

Mr. Silver left the study with the Form-master. Beaumont and Mornington remained to be dealt with by the Head.

"What news, sir?"

Lovell & Co. surrounded the old gentleman. Mr. Silver smiled jovially.

"The best, my lad!" he said. "Master Rawson, you have saved my son! Jimmy's innocence is proved. Come with me to tell him so, my lads."

The news spread like wildfire, and an army of juniors marched with Mr. Silver to the end study.

"My boy!" said Mr. Silver.

"Dad!"

"It is all cleared up, Jimmy," said Mr. Silver in a moved voice. "You owe it to your schoolfellow Rawson, who suggested to me the line of inquiry I followed. The Head pardons you—"

"Dr. Chisholm overlooks your—ahem!—insubordination, Silver," said Mr. Bootles. "You will—ahem!—kindly come out of the study, and—ahem!—the damage will be repaired. I congratulate you, my boy!"

"Hurrah!" roared Lovell & Co.

"Bravo, Jimmy!"

The screwed door of the end study was forced open—Jimmy Silver's siege was over now. Jimmy came out, his face glowing. His father shook hands with him, Mr. Bootles shook hands with him, Lovell & Co. fairly hugged him. And when he learned all he gave Rawson a thump on the back that made the scholarship junior stagger.

"You did it, you bouncer!" said Jimmy.

"Give us your fist, old son!"

"Hip, hip, hooray!" roared the Rookwood juniors, Classical and Modern alike.

The roar of cheering reached the Head's study, and the Head smiled as he heard it; and it reached the two wretched culprits receiving the sentence of expulsion from the school—Beaumont pale and shame-stricken, and Mornington insolent and mocking to the last.

Jimmy Silver's star was in the ascendant again, and he was not likely to forget the debt he owed to Rawson, whose loyal faith and cool, clear head had saved him when all looked black.

THE END.

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"CHEEK."

The homely, not at all unpleasant, little word is often cropping up. I find it in my letters. The writers tell me that they hope what they are going to say will not be considered cheek. As a rule, the answer is "No."

Cheek, as an old writer says, is indispensable for prosperity in the world. Without it you have not a chance of getting on. Modest merit seeks the shade, and so sure as it does that there will modest merit stick. That is what a certain cynical philosopher held to be true, but he is not always right.

Still, "cheek" has its place. One hears the remark, "I like his cheek!" which shows that the quality is appreciated. Of course, it all depends on how and where "cheek" is displayed. It was "cheek" of the Englishman to slip off and take possession of the one bed in the inn, while others were drawing lots as to who should occupy the four-poster. But it was cheek at which folks laugh.

But it is not always funny. There are people who take the best of everything at once. They would ring up the chief of a Red Indian tribe and ask for the loan of his best blanket. Some individuals are equal to anything, and their coolness would make the Arctic Circle look cheap. But such folks get liked, somehow, all the same. It is so. What is more, audacity gets there. It is a winner all the time!

BUNTER AT AN EARLY AGE.

It appears that William George was never much given to marbles. From a priceless old manuscript which has been dug up in a mountain fastness not far removed from the paternal stronghold of the Bunters it appears that W. G. B. was a fine child—I know all details respecting the infancy of the one and only are appreciated—and could have won prizes for development had he liked.

The Owl of Greyfriars blinked wisely on the world and never uttered meaningless things like "Googli-goo!" which get linked up with other items of humanity. At the age of three he imperilled his valuable life with a doughnut, thus revealing that intrepidity which has caused the porpoise to achieve much fame.

A YOUNG PESSIMIST.

There were some remarkable things in a letter the other day. Perhaps the writer did not mean all he said. I doubt if anybody ever does mean quite all he puts in a letter. This was it: "What's the good of it all—going on worrying with school and all the rest of it? It only means more and then more worry. You will grow up and pay taxes and meet bills, and that's all."

As the poet asked:

"What's the good of anything?
Why, nothink!"

And there you are! I should say my correspondent had a slight fit of "fedupitis." He will soon get over it.

WORDS—IDLE WORDS!

This is not true. Words are not idle; not those we all use. There are many hard-working words which never have a minute's peace. Idle! Not at all! Of course, there are droves of drones eating their heads off in the dictionary. They never come out of their fat retirement and do a decent day's work. Not they! Some of them call themselves obsolete. It is a mere excuse for laziness.

But have you noticed in this connection how few words really are used? You get through the day with a few hundred. The thousands of others occasionally have an airing when a pedant or a scholar gets up to speak, but for the majority of folks the mass of words belonging to the language are not in existence at all.

I am rather sorry for some of these neglected words—such jolly little terms as "Unhap," for instance, or "Proception." There are myriads of them. Some would like to come out in the limelight. Others are mere malingers. Many have lost whatever meaning they may have just through disuse. They are living on scrap-heaps.

Look at some of the fine words Shakespeare employed. There is "frampold," for instance. "I have had a frampold time," sounds far more distinguished than "I have had a rotten time!"

"Rotten" is not in it with "frampold." But there it is. And talking about the dictionary, which I believe Peter Todd reads pretty carefully, it is not half a bad little book, a veritable much-in-little. There are people who say it is not in the least necessary to buy books and papers, as a pocket dictionary contains all the words.

This is true. I should not say it if it were otherwise, and, maybe, somebody will be chipping in with the remark that there is no call for the PENNY POPULAR, as you can find all the words in a smart little lexicon. But don't encourage this idea! I want the circulation of the "P. P." to get bigger and bigger.

TALK.

It was not Sir Auckland Geddes, though he is a wise man, but somebody else, who advised fellows to talk more. I was led to this subject by a remark from a reader who told me that boys did not like a certain story which I was publishing.

How did he know? The fact is, the yarn in question is proving highly popular. I never believe in the theory that fellows do not understand this subject or the other. They do! Fact!

These are days of debating societies and exchanges of ideas. The silent Briton, as he is called, can talk as well as anybody when there is a need. Why, only the other day a fragment of paper was picked up in the Fourth Form corridor. It bore these lines in a plain hand:

"I would rather be talking,
With you out a-walking,
Than rattling after the hounds!"

D'Arcy, of course? No! They might be attributed to the brave topper-wearer, but if he wrote the words he copied them out of a book!

EVERY INCH A HERO.

I have been favoured with particulars of the memorial to Seaman Carless, V.C., at Walsall, which was unveiled by Rear-Admiral Sir Walter Cowan. Carless was mortally wounded in the action in Heligoland Light, on Nov. 17th, 1917, but he still went on serving the gun at which he was acting as rammer. He collapsed, but rallied and cheered on the new gun crew, and then fell and died. This hero's portrait was sent to me, and shows him as a fine, upstanding sailor, who feared nothing and did his duty to the end.

A QUIET ONLOOKER.

This correspondent asks me whether I could not give a column in the Companion Papers to "Situations Wanted and Vacant."

I am afraid not. Useful as such a feature would be, I think many of my supporters would feel that story space was being unnecessarily encroached upon.

AN AMATEUR THEATRICAL SOCIETY.

Albert K. Ingersoll, 26, Harvey Road, Camberwell Green, S.E., 5, wants to know of an amateur theatrical society in his neighbourhood. He is very keen on acting, and is a bit at a loss as to how to proceed

in the matter, for, as a rule, these societies are private affairs, and do not advertise.

I hope somebody interested in private theatrical performances will communicate with my correspondent.

FROM NEW ZEALAND.

A reader at Waitaki, New Zealand, sends me some first-rate information about his school, in which he is in the Upper Fifth. He is just going up for his matriculation and will then pass into the Sixth. He has to go two hundred and seventeen miles to school, and only gets home three times a year. Waitaki is two and a half miles out of Oamaru.

"I can't say we have much freedom, except for going to church twice each Sunday, but we get to town on Saturday afternoons or during the week if we have a good reason. Football, being compulsory, has made big strides, also cricket. Our second eleven was undefeated for fourteen years, and last year our first eleven beat two larger schools by over an innings."

My correspondent is naturally proud of his great country and of the splendid work done by the New Zealand troops.

IN A C NEMA OPERATING BOX.

There was a paragraph in one of the Companion Papers the other day in which the writer said the work was monotonous.

Mr. J. H. Popple, of the Picture House, Scarborough, wants to know what he meant by such a remark. Mr. Popple does not find the business in the least dull, and he knows as much about working films as anybody. He thinks it all extremely interesting. He has no assistant, and everything is on his hands. He is keen on his profession, and—well, it is a pleasure to read such a letter as his with the enthusiasm in every line which spells success and satisfaction all round.

HISTORY.

Those readers who send me letters saying that they have enough history in the class room and don't yearn for any more can skip this paragraph. I have received any number of communications about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's serial, "Rodney Stone," which is appearing in our companion paper, the

"Boys' Friend." Most of my friends like the tale, and they do well. But a few say they dislike history. It is amazing to hear it, for history covers so much, and what a fellow sponges up of the subject in his schooldays can never be more than the fringe of the matter. History is pretty well everything, after all. It concerns what other fellows did in the back ages. It is not just a catalogue of kings and other estimable people who lived in the bygone, what they did and said. That is a limited view of history, after all—nothing much more than a row of wax figures with crowns on their heads and sceptres in their hands, such as you see at Madame Tussaud's.

But I would rather the chums who grumble had a good word for history. Some of them have read the books of G. A. Henty. There you have history—stories of the rise of Venice and what the Doge considered was the best policy for the Great Republic of the Adriatic in medieval times. History means having a glimpse of the Court of the Grand Monarque in the eighteenth century, and seeing how life went then, when the first Duke of Marlborough was doing his best for the old Dutch burghers who might have been swamped by the French king's armies.

I get letters from readers who describe the old castles they have seen on a summer holiday. And each of these ancient strong-holds has its wonderful story of the past. You can draw aside the curtain, as it were, and see the bright tableau or the sombre picture of war and famine, tragedy, and the rest.

It is a mistake to despise history. You are condemning life itself. Of course, some history is dull, but that is just the fault of the writer. The history itself is never tedious. You have to look through the long descriptions and try and see the human element behind.

And a well-told yarn shows things as they were. Morton Pike in his old-time tales of ancient London in the days of the Plague and the Fire gives the reader such a vivid impression of the bygone that he who reads seems in imagination to be transported back into the old, old days.

The great Dumas—he is styled that, though

his son was great as well—has taught the whole world more about the old history of France than any man. Thackeray knew this fact well enough. When Percy Fitzgerald tried to run down Dumas, Thackeray sat down and showed just a few of the mighty things old Dumas had done. And I chose "Rodney Stone" as a serial for the "Boys' Friend" just because it carries on in stirring fashion the magnificent work of the other big writers who have chosen history as their scene of action.

Your Editor

READERS' NOTICES.

G. Becks, Cliff Cottage, The Lees, Herne Bay, Kent, has Vol. 12 of the "Gem" for sale, 3s. 6d.

E. Fishlock, 326, High Street, Brentford, Middlesex, wants "The Outcast's Luck," 9d.; "School and Sport," and "Rivals and Chums," 10d. each. Write first.

F. N. Holmes, 22, Gleedon Road, Streatham, S.W. 16, has for sale 50 "Magnets" between 500-600.

J. Rigby, School Lane, Hartford, Cheshire, has back numbers of the Companion Papers for sale. Write first.

George Newman, 6, Dove Row, Hoyle Hill, Barnsley, wants "School and Sport," and "Rivals and Chums," 6d. each offered.

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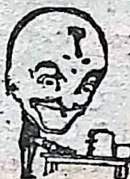
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