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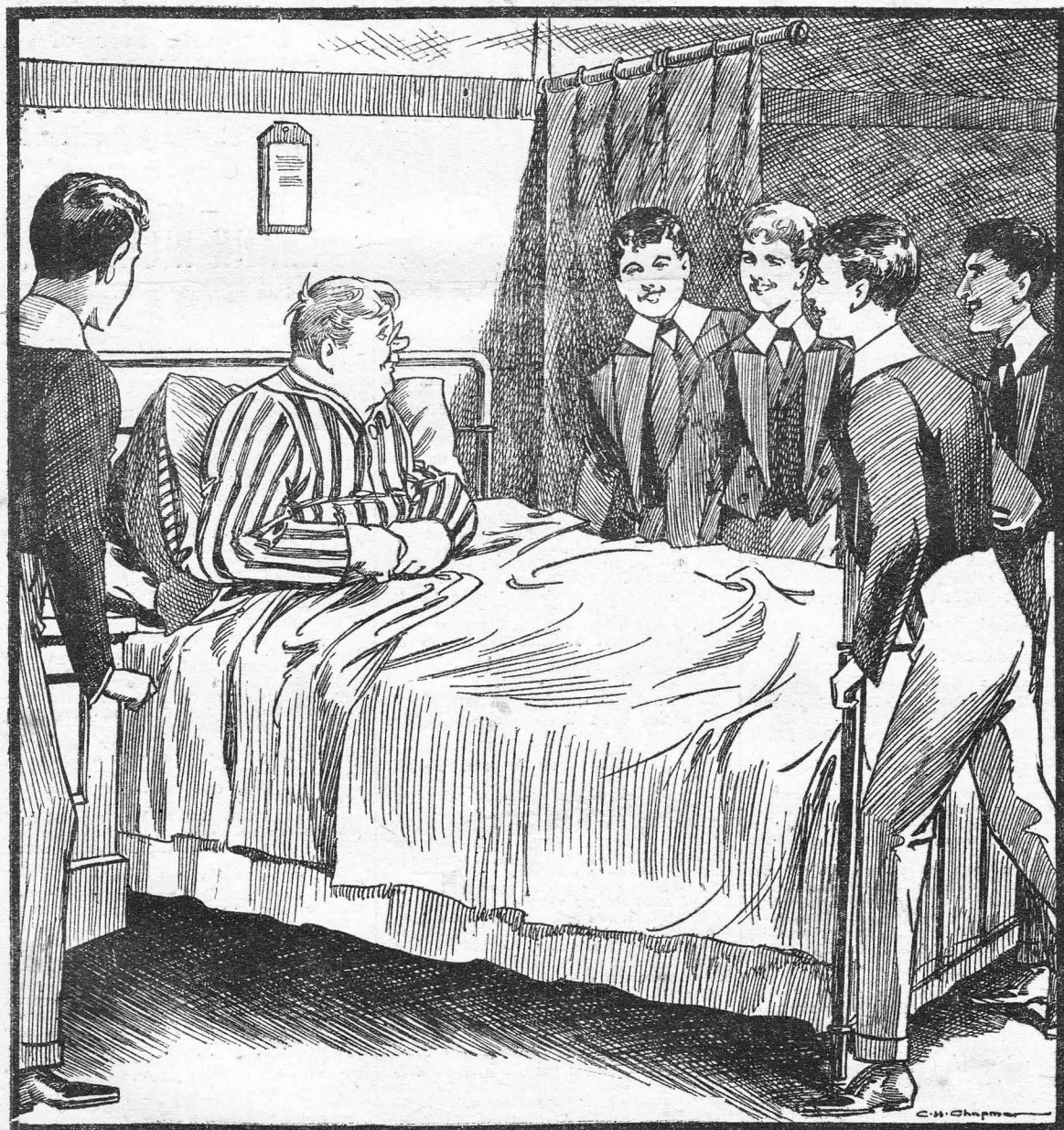
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THE BEST PAPER FOR HOLIDAY READING!



BILLY BUNTER'S DRAMATIC RETURN TO GREYFRIARS.
(A Surprising Incident in Our Grand School Story.)



A Magnificent Long
Complete Tale of
BILLY BUNTER and
HARRY WHARTON
and Co., the Chums of
Greyfriars.

— BY —
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Outcast.

BILLY! What are you doing here? You'll be late for calling-over!" It was Bessie Bunter, of Cliff House, who spoke. She was standing in the gateway of the girls' school, in the cool of the summer evening, when her plump brother from Greyfriars rolled into view along the roadway.

Billy Bunter halted when he reached the gateway, and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Bessie!" he said dramatically.

"Eh?"

"We've come to the parting of the ways!" Bessie Bunter blinked at her brother in amazement.

"What on earth are you talking about?" she exclaimed.

"I've come to say good-bye!"

"But—but why? You're not going away, surely?"

Billy Bunter nodded.

"You—you're leaving Greyfriars?" gasped Bessie incredulously.

"Yes."

Bessie looked utterly bewildered, and for a moment her bewilderment made her tongue-tied. Then she blurted out:

"Billy, does—does this mean that you're running away?"

"Not exactly. I've been fired!"

"Fired!"

"Sacked—if the word suits you better."

Bessie Bunter nearly fell down. Had her brother suddenly dropped a bomb in the gateway the effect could not have been more startling.

"You—you can't be serious, Billy!" she stammered. "You're telling me a fib!"

"There wouldn't be any sense in inventing a whopper of that sort, Bessie. I've been kicked out of Greyfriars. I didn't deserve the order of the boot, of course; but I've got it all the same."

"What ever for?"

Billy Bunter related the series of misdemeanours which had led up to his expulsion from Greyfriars. He made light of his offences. Even now he did not realise the enormity of them. He could see no great harm in having dug trenches on the Remove cricket-pitch; and he excused himself for having attempted to wreck the Head's study on the ground that he had to get a bit of his own back somehow.

Bessie listened to her brother's narrative in amazement.

"You—you dug trenches on the playing-pitch?" she gasped.

"Yes."

"And you—you wrecked Dr. Locke's study?"

"Partly wrecked it," amended Bunter.

"And then you're surprised that they expelled you! Why, the wonder is that you weren't handed over to the police!"

"Oh, really Bessie! Fellows have done far worse things than that, and they've been let off with a lamming!"

"You must have been mad to do such things!" exclaimed Bessie.

She knew that her brother was hardly a paragon of all the virtues; yet she had never imagined that he would behave like a hooligan. She did not know that Billy's mind had been influenced by dangerous doctrines, which had been imbibed from a pamphlet, entitled "A Short Cut to Bolshevism."

"I consider that the Head went too far in sacking me," said Bunter. "But I don't care! I was fed-up with Greyfriars, anyway! They never gave a fellow enough to eat there."

"You got better treatment there than you'll get at home!" said Bessie grimly.

Billy Bunter gave a faint chuckle.

"I'm not going home," he said. "Not likely!"

"But you must—"

"And get a licking from the pater? No jolly fear!"

"But—but if you don't go home, where will you go?"

"I haven't thought it out yet."

"Oh, you're mad!" said Bessie, with conviction. "Stark, staring mad! You simply must go home—or starve!"

"I hope to get a job of some sort somewhere," said Bunter vaguely.

"Where? Who's going to employ a duffer like you?"

"Look here, Bessie—"

The Cliff House girl stamped her foot impatiently on the gravel.

"I'm sick of you!" she declared. "You've disgraced yourself, and you've disgraced me and Sammy!"

"Oh, really—"

"When the girls get to know that you've been expelled, they'll never let me hear the end of it! Can't you get back to Greyfriars somehow? Can't you apologise to the Head?"

"It wouldn't be any use," said Bunter.

And he spoke truly. Dr. Locke was not likely to give another chance to a fellow who

had acted so outrageously as Bunter had done.

"I'm ashamed of you!" said Bessie, her voice rising. "And I hope that when you get home—for you'll have to go home sooner or later—father will give you a jolly good thrashing, and set you to work in his office!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter had expected sympathy from his sister—not recriminations. He had even hoped that he might be able to squeeze a loan out of Bessie. But that hope was already shattered. Bessie had worked herself into quite a fury.

"You'd better go!" she said angrily.

"Won't you say good-bye, Bessie?"

"No, I won't! I don't want to talk to you! You've disgraced us all, and I'll never forgive you!"

It was not often that Billy Bunter was stung by a verbal outburst. But Bessie's vehement words touched him on the raw.

"I—I say—" he faltered.

Bessie turned her back on her brother, and walked away.

For a moment it looked as if Billy would follow, and plead with her to take a more sympathetic view of the situation. But he thought better of it, and set off along the road in the gathering dusk.

Where should he go? That was the first point to be considered. He had determined not to go home—in fact, he was afraid to go, for he knew that his father would be very angry.

Mr. Bunter had already been notified by telegram of his son's expulsion, and he would probably be waiting for the delinquent with a hunting-crop.

Bunter shuddered at the thought.

"I—I can't face it!" he muttered. "The pater would never take my part. I should never be able to convince him that I'd done nothing wrong. He'd wallop me, and put me to work in his office. Groo!"

Many fellows would have liked to be in their fathers' employ. But not so Bunter. His paternal relative was a hard taskmaster—stern and exacting. There would be no freedom for Bunter, once he was chained to an office stool.

"I must get a night's lodging somehow," murmured the expelled junior. "That ought to be easy enough."

Bunter was not in his usual state of impetuosity. Before leaving Greyfriars he had represented to several of the masters that he lacked the wherewithal to pay his railway-fare home. And he had succeeded in

raising quite a useful sum—sufficient to tide him over for several days if he went slowly. But Bunter possessed a prodigious appetite, and he was not likely to have sense enough to husband his resources.

It was to Courtfield that Billy Bunter wended his way. As he entered the main street of the little country town, he glanced from one side to the other, half-expecting to see some Greyfriars fellows. But none were abroad at this hour. It was locking-up time at the old school.

Bunter halted at length outside an apartment-house. There was a card in the window bearing the words: "Bed and Breakfast—7s. 6d."

"This will do me a treat!" murmured Bunter.

And he ascended the steps and rang the bell.

A sharp-featured woman appeared in response to the summons. Her greeting was far from reassuring.

"What do you want here?"

Billy Bunter jerked his thumb in the direction of the card which was displayed in the window.

"Can you put me up for the night, ma'am?" he asked.

"No; I can't!"

"Oh, really! I'll pay you in advance, you know!"

But that tempting offer quite failed to impress the sharp-featured woman.

"I don't take in runaways!" she snapped.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Anyone can see that you've run away from school! And I don't want my house searched by the police!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter started back in dismay. And as he did so the door was slammed in his face.

"Horrid old cat!" growled Bunter, as he went down the steps. "Perhaps I shall have better luck somewhere else. Let's hope so, anyway!"

But the expelled junior was doomed to a series of disappointments. He visited at least half a dozen places, at each of which he was eyed with suspicion, and refused admittance. The fact that he was in Etons and wearing a school cap conveyed the impression that he had run away from school. And the cautious residents of Courtfield had no desire to give shelter to a runaway.

At last, in desperation, Bunter tried the hotels and the inns. At the Blue Boar—which was a none too reputable hostelry—he was actually granted admission by the landlord. But when the landlord's wife came on the scene she promptly sent the unfortunate Bunter packing.

"Oh, dear! This is awful!"

Bunter was feeling down and out by this time. For a moment he entertained the wild notion of going back to Greyfriars, but he knew that Gosling, the porter, would never let him in.

"I suppose it means I shall have to go home, after all!" he muttered.

But even that undesirable course was impossible. The last train had gone.

There was nothing for it, Bunter reflected, but to seek out some friendly barn wherein he might take shelter for the night. And, with this resolve, he tramped on through the outskirts of Courtfield and into the open country beyond.

He had been tramping fully an hour before he found a suitable resting-place.

Standing in a silent meadow was a crudely-constructed wooden barn. It was hardly the sort of place in which anyone would have cared to make a temporary abode, even in these days of acute house-shortage.

But Bunter had no choice in the matter. He was too exhausted to tramp further. So he clambered through a gap in the hedge and made his way to the barn.

There were a number of sacks inside on the floor, and Billy Bunter threw himself upon them. He was hungry, fagged out, and utterly dispirited. And it was hunger that prevented him from sleeping.

As he lay there in the darkness the out-cast realised the full extent of his folly. He had told Bessie that he didn't want to go back to Greyfriars, but he would have given anything to be in the Remove dormitory now.

What a fool he had been!

He had got it into his head that the masters at Greyfriars were tyrants, and that the pupils were the slaves of their tyranny. He had considered himself hard done by; he had actually started a campaign for the suppression of the so-called tyranny. But none had supported him in that absurd cam-

paign, and he had discovered, to his cost, that it didn't pay to rebel against authority. The "short cut to Bolshevism" had led to a short cut to expulsion.

At last Billy Bunter realised that he had been on the wrong track. Bitterly he regretted having carried out those raids on the cricket-pitch and the Head's study. Bitterly, too, he regretted his foolish impertinence to Mr. Quelch.

Now that he could take a detached view of his conduct the expelled junior realised that he had only himself to blame for what had come to pass.

If only he could go back!

But it was useless to think of that. The Head would never have him back after what had occurred. He had travelled by crooked ways, and he was now paying the penalty.

The sense of loneliness became so acute that Bunter began to blub. And they were not the usual crocodile's tears which he had formerly turned on to order. They were tears of remorse—selfish tears, perhaps, but none the less real.

And so, hungry, exhausted, and cast down, Billy Bunter eventually cried himself to sleep.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Good Advice for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER'S awakening was decidedly rude.

He sat up, blinking in the strong shaft of sunlight which came through the open doorway of the barn, and painfully aware of the fact that a heavy boot was in close contact with his ribs.

The boot belonged to a burly farmer, who was glaring down at Bunter with an expression of ferocity on his sun-scorched face. "Get hout o' this, you young imp!" he roared.

"Oh crumbs!"

"If you think you can turn my barn into a doss-ouse you're greatly mistook! Hout of it, sharp, or I'll 'ave the lor on yer!"

Billy Bunter was far from agile as a rule, but he evacuated that barn in record time. And the farmer toed him to the door in a manner which suggested that he had been a professional footballer in his time.

"Ow-ow-ow!" groaned Bunter, as he stumbled wildly across the meadow.

Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw that the irate farmer was still in pursuit. So he quickened his pace, and did not pause until he saw that his pursuer had abandoned the chase.

Panting from his exertions, Billy Bunter sat down on the bank to rest. But it was only a momentary respite. He feared every second that the farmer might come charging towards him, and he was soon up and away, walking as rapidly as possible in the direction of Courtfield.

Presently he groped feverishly in his pocket, fearing that in his hurried flight he had lost his money. But it was there all right, and with a gasp of relief Bunter turned into the familiar High Street.

"Now for some brekker!" he murmured.

But there were difficulties in the way of obtaining food. If the Courtfield people had refused to harbour a suspected runaway, they would also refuse to feed him.

It would be useless to go into Uncle Clegg's shop at that time of the morning. Uncle Clegg would probably detain him, and communicate with the Greyfriars authorities.

But presently a brilliant inspiration occurred to Billy Bunter. He signalled to a small boy who was roller-skating on the pavement.

"I say, kid, will you do me a favour?"

"All depends."

"Pop into Uncle Clegg's and get me ten-bob's-worth of tuck!"

The small boy looked astonished.

"Why can't you go yerself?" he demanded.

"Ahem! You see, I—I owe Uncle Clegg some money, and I'm afraid he might ask me for it."

The youth grinned.

"Right you are!" he said. "And over the ten bob."

Bunter dropped four half-crowns into the small boy's hand.

"I'm not particular what you get," he said, "so long as it's something in the eating line."

The youth on the roller-skates nodded. He glided across the pavement, and skidded into Uncle Clegg's shop. Billy Bunter kept a wary eye on him, lest he should attempt to make off with the ten shillings.

After a brief interval Bunter's benefactor

emerged, with his arms full of bulky paper bags.

Uncle Clegg was a pastrycook as well as a grocer, and five of the ten shillings had been expended on mixed pastries, which were delivered to Billy Bunter in a curious manner.

The boy on the roller-skates came a nasty cropper. He pitched forward on his face, and a variety of jam-tarts, doughnuts, and cream-buns were deposited at Bunter's feet.

"You clumsy young idiot!" roared Bunter. "How do you think I'm going to eat those things when they're smothered in dirt?"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" replied the roller-skater, picking himself up.

Billy Bunter gathered up those of the pastries which were still fit for human consumption, and he was in the act of turning away when the small boy hailed him.

"Hi! Ain't yer goin' to gimme somethin' for gettin' that grub?"

"You can have the change out of the ten bob," said Bunter magnanimously.

"There wasn't any."

"Well, you can help yourself to those pastries, then!" said Bunter, nodding towards the spoil collection lying in the roadway.

"Stingy beast! Yah!"

Billy Bunter ignored that derisive yell. He bolted up the High Street with his provender, and did not pause until he reached a secluded meadow.

Having made sure that there was no furious farmer in the vicinity, Bunter made himself comfortable in the long grass and "piled in" with avidity.

The pastries disappeared at an alarming rate. Bunter was ravenous, and he popped tart after tart into his mouth as if he were posting letters.

In addition to the pastries there were a couple of large veal-and-ham pies. Bunter left these till last, and his appetite was still keen when he started on them.

"There's nothing like laying a solid foundation," he mumbled. "I feel tons better already."

The veal-and-ham pies went the way of the pastries, and Billy Bunter lay back in the grass, with his hands clasped in the region of his waistcoat. He felt very drowsy, not having had his usual quota of sleep.

A moment later he was in the arms of Morpheus. The cooling breeze from the sea fanned his face, the long grass waved and rustled around him, and overhead was an azure sky.

When Billy Bunter awoke the sun was high in the heavens.

"Wonder what the time is?" he mused.

It seemed as if he had slept but a few minutes, but he knew that several hours must have elapsed. As a matter of fact, it was past one o'clock.

Billy Bunter rose to his feet. He was wondering what he should do next.

The only alternative to going home was to find work of some description.

Work!

The word had an unpleasant ring about it. Billy Bunter disliked expending his energy on anything except eating. He had no ambition to become a captain of industry.

Yet work of some description must be found, and that speedily. Loafing about and slumbering in meadows could lead to one thing only—starvation.

Bunter knew better than to seek employment in Courtfield. He was known to the Courtfielders, not one of whom would have employed him—even in the capacity of errand-boy.

"I'll try some of the farms round about," murmured Bunter. "I've heard that a lot of the farmers are taking on spare hands this summer."

Accordingly he set out on his quest for employment. But the luck was against him. The very first farm he went to was tenanted by the ferocious-looking farmer in whose barn Billy Bunter had spent the night. It was not surprising, therefore, that the applicant for work was ordered to "get hof the premises!"

At the other farms he visited Bunter was curtly informed that there was nothing doing.

The farmers eyed the plump youth in Etons with extreme disfavour. They thought—as the Courtfielders had thought overnight—that Bunter had run away from school, and they paid no heed to his protestations and appeals.

Wearied by his hopeless quest and his disheartening experiences, Billy Bunter turned back towards Courtfield. He was seriously alarmed by this time. The outlook was appalling.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

That familiar ejaculation greeted Bunter's ears as he rolled disconsolately along the High Street.

He turned suddenly, and as he did so the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove bore down upon him.

Harry Wharton & Co., out for an afternoon stroll, were astonished to see Billy Bunter in Courtfield. They had thought and spoken about the fat junior a good deal, and they had pictured him toiling in his father's office in London. Their surprise, on coming across him in the neighbourhood of the school, was manifested in their expressions.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Bob Cherry. It was Bob who had hailed Bunter in the first place. "What on earth are you doing here, porpoise?"

"I—I'm looking for a job, you fellows," explained Bunter.

The expelled junior looked so utterly woe-begone that the Famous Five were roused to sympathy. They had been anything but sympathetic before, when sentence of expulsion had been pronounced. But now it was different. Bunter's piteous and dishevelled condition would have melted a heart of stone. "You silly duffer!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You'd never get a job round here—not if you hunted for a thousand years!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Why don't you go home?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"My pater will be ratty—"

"Of course he'll be ratty! You don't suppose he's going to fall on your neck, do you, after you've been sacked from Greyfriars? But you must go and face the music. It's madness to hang about here!"

"We thought you'd gone yesterday," said Nugent. "Where the dickens did you spend the night?"

"In a barn."

"My hat!"

"A beastly farmer came and kicked me out—"

"I should jolly well think so!" said Johnny Bull. "You were lucky not to have been arrested!"

"If you take my advice," said Wharton, "you'll go home right away. Your pater will be awfully anxious about you. The Head wired him that you were being sent home, and he'll wonder what's become of you!"

"I—I can't go home!" wailed Bunter.

"Rot! I dare say you'll get a lamming from your pater, but you'll soon get over that. And you'll have a roof to cover you. That's more than you've got at present."

"Oh, dear! I wish the Head hadn't sacked me—"

"He couldn't have done anything else, after the mad way you behaved!" said Bob Cherry. "You're all against me!" said Bunter bitterly. "It's not playing the game to hit a fellow when he's down!"

"Bosh! We're merely giving you sound advice," said Wharton. "Go home, there's a good chap! If the Head gets to know that you're still in the district he'll have you taken home by the bobby. And you don't want that to happen, I suppose?"

Billy Bunter ~~began~~ ^{blenched} at the Famous Five through his big spectacles.

"Do you fellows really think I ought to go home and face the music?" he asked.

"Of course!" said Nugent. "What's the use of staying here? You're only putting off the evil day. You'll have to go home sooner or later."

"That's exactly what Bessie said."

"Well, Bessie's right for once," said Johnny Bull. "There's a train in a quarter of an hour. You've just got time to get to the station!"

"We'd come and see you off, only we've got some shopping to do," said Wharton.

Then, after a second's hesitation, the captain of the Remove held out his hand:

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

There was sincerity in the handshake and in the farewell.

The day before Wharton had declined to say good-bye to the fat junior. Anger and contempt had prevented him from feeling sorry for Bunter in his extremity. But he was sorry now.

"Good-bye!" said Bunter. "And he shook hands all round. "I don't suppose I shall see any of you fellows again!"

"You've only yourself to blame," said Bob Cherry. "But it's not too late, even now, to make amends. If you work hard to redeem the past, your pater may decide to send you to another school."

"That's so," said Nugent. "Keep a stiff

upper lip. Bunter, and face the music like a man. Good-bye!"

Billy Bunter rolled away in the direction of the railway-station. He had decided to act on the good advice given him by the Famous Five—to go home and face the issues in a manly way.

At the little booking-office Bunter took a ticket to Charing Cross.

"Train in yet?" he asked.

"Not yet," answered the booking-clerk, peering curiously through the bars at the dishevelled Bunter.

When he arrived on the platform and saw the train approaching Bunter began to waver. He thought of the reception he was likely to get at the other end, and his knees shook at the prospect.

The stern-faced father—the hunting-crop—the cheerless routine of a City office.

No; he could not face these things. Bunter's little store of courage, which the Famous Five had succeeded in bringing to the surface, now oozed out at his finger-tips.

He was afraid to go home!

The train rumbled to a standstill. Gruff voices were exclaiming:

"Take your seats, please!"

Billy Bunter stepped towards a third-class compartment. Then he shrank back. Again he went forward, but he was too late. The guard had waved his flag, and the train began to steam out of the station.

"Hard lines!" said a porter at Bunter's elbow. "You'll 'ave to wait for the next. It goes in two hours' time."

But Billy Bunter had decided not to wait for the next, or for any subsequent train. He had decided, once and for all, not to go home. He had faced one big ordeal at Greyfriars, and he hadn't the courage to face another.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

DOWN on your luck—what?"

Billy Bunter looked up quickly. He was seated on a stile in one of the country lanes near Courtfield, brooding over his misfortunes—the misfortunes which he had brought upon his own head.

The man who addressed him was a tall, finely-proportioned individual. He was clad in a sweater, flannel trousers, and white canvas shoes. He gave the impression of being a first-class athlete.

"Yes," said Bunter, in reply to the stranger's question. "I'm fairly up against it."

"Thought as much. Run away from school?"

"Not exactly."

"Been sacked?"

Bunter nodded.

"What for?"

"Nothing."

The stranger laughed.

"Nearly every expelled schoolboy one meets—and I've met a good many—tells the same tale," he said. "They all say they did nothing to merit the sack. Did you pinch anything?"

"Of course not!" said Bunter indignantly.

"Did you crib in an exam?"

"No."

"Then what—"

"I merely made one or two holes in the cricket-pitch, and smashed up a few things in the Head's study."

"Gee whizz! And yet you say you were sacked for nothing!"

"Fellows have done worse things than that, and not been sacked."

"P'raps so. But doubtless you were an old offender. Several previous convictions against you—what!"

"Not at all! I was the straightest fellow in the Form!" declared Bunter. "A jolly good scholar, and a ripping athlete!"

The stranger seated himself on the stile beside Bunter.

"Good athlete, are you?" he said. "I shouldn't have thought so. You've got too much avoidpouis."

"What's that?"

"Superfluous flesh, my pippin! However, after a strenuous course of training—physical jerks, and so forth—there's no reason why you shouldn't get quite slim!"

"I shall get slim without physical jerks," said Bunter dolefully. "You see, I'm starving!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's a fact," said Bunter. "I've blued every penny I had, and I don't know where my next meal's coming from."

"Bad as all that?"

"Yes."

The stranger was silent for some minutes. He ran his eye over Billy Bunter's plump figure, as if he were debating whether it would be humanly possible to turn such a fat specimen into an athlete.

"I think it can be done," he said, at length. "You're very raw material, but I fancy I can lick you into shape!"

"Eh!" gasped Bunter, in alarm.

"Don't be scared. I'm not going to eat you! What I'm suggesting is that you become a pupil of mine."

"But who—who are you?"

"Jack Harper. You've heard of me, I dare say?"

"No."

"What! You haven't heard of me, and my nursery's situated only a couple of miles away!"

Billy Bunter looked utterly bewildered. "Your nursery!" he repeated blankly. "Do you mean a babies' nursery?"

"Ha, ha! No. It's a gymnasium—a training centre for young fellows who are desirous of becoming good athletes. We call it a nursery. And I'm the boss of the show."

"My hat!"

"I'm a philanthropist," explained Jack Harper.

"What's that?"

"A fellow with more money than sense!" The speaker chuckled at his cynical definition. "You see, I train all these kids for the love of the thing. I charge nothing for tuition. There are people who go about saying that this country is degenerating in the matter of sport, and it's my object to give the lie to that statement."

"Oh!"

"So I'm coaching a number of kids in boxing, cricket, swimming—in fact, all sports. And I'm game to coach you. As I say, you're very raw material; but that will only increase my satisfaction if I succeed in turning you into a first-class sportsman. By the way, you haven't told me your name?"

"Bunter—Billy Bunter."

"Well, Bunter, what do you say to my proposition?"

"I—I don't know. It fairly takes my breath away!"

"I'm perfectly serious," said Jack Harper. "Would you like to undergo a fortnight's course of instruction at my nursery? There's nothing to pay, and you'll live on the premises. But I forgot! You'll be going home, won't you, now that you're sacked from the school?"

Bunter shook his head.

"I've got no home to go to," he said.

"What he really meant was that he had no home at which he would be assured of a cheery welcome."

"Well, if that's the case," said Jack Harper, "you can throw in your lot with me for a bit."

Billy Bunter felt suspicious. It seemed extraordinary to him that a man should give free tuition in every kind of sport. There seemed to be something fishy about it.

The truth of the matter was that Jack Harper's offer was perfectly genuine.

For some years Harper had been games master at one of the biggest public schools in the country, and he had unexpectedly come into a big fortune. He was a man who loved sport, and who lived for nothing else; and he had decided to establish a big training-centre in Kent, where he could coach boys and young men, and mould them into good athletes. It was an ambitious scheme, and it had progressed very satisfactorily so far. Harper had upwards of twenty pupils, and the majority of them showed great promise.

And now, having chanced by accident upon Billy Bunter, it was Jack Harper's desire to enrol him as a pupil.

It was not difficult to train fellows who already showed an aptitude for sport. But Billy Bunter would be a tough proposition, and the ex-games master welcomed the opportunity of tackling a real big job, and turning a fat, ungainly youth into a first-rate athlete.

"I—I say, Mr. Harper, you're not pulling my leg, are you?" said Bunter.

"I've already told you I'm perfectly serious. You've only to say the word, and I'll take you to my nursery right away."

"And you'll keep me in food, and so forth."

"Yes, so long as your course of training lasts."

"Is the grub good at your place?"

"Excellent, both as regards quality and quantity."

Billy Bunter hesitated no longer. His suspicions melted away. Here, he reflected,



"Get hout o' this, you young himp!" roared the farmer. Billy Bunter was far from agile as a rule, but he evacuated the barn in record time. And the farmer toed him to the door in the manner of a professional footballer. (See Chapter 2.)

was a friend in need—a Good Samaritan. Bunter was not at all keen on physical jerks and the like, but he realised that a course of athletic training would be infinitely preferable to roaming the country in a hopeless and futile quest for employment.

"Right you are!" he said. "I'll come!"
"Splendid!"

Jack Harper and his new pupil dismounted from the stile, and set off across the fields. The nursery was situated in one of the outlying hamlets. It was a large, splendidly-equipped gymnasium.

"My hat! It must have cost quids and quids to build this place!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"It did," was the reply. "And although I shall never get my money back, I shall have the satisfaction of having turned out some topping athletes. And I hope, Bunter, that you'll be one of them."

"I sha'n't need a great deal of coaching," said Bunter. "You see, I'm hot stuff already."

"Did you play for your Form at Greyfriars?"

"No. Personal jealousy kept me out of the team. The skipper always selected his own pals."

"I see!"
Jack Harper led his companion into the vast building.

The place was divided into two parts by massive green curtains. One half was a gymnasium pure and simple; the other half was a kind of dormitory, with camp beds ranged in a row beside the wall.

"Some of my pupils sleep in, others go home every evening," explained Jack Harper. "You'll sleep in, of course."

"Where's the food cooked?" asked Bunter. "In one of the outbuildings."

"Have you got a cook?"

"A couple."

Billy Bunter brightened up considerably. It all seemed like a strange and wonderful dream. Yet it was real enough. He remembered now having heard one of the Greyfriars fellows speak of "Harper's Nursery," though he had never imagined it to be a place like this.

"You ought to be quite comfy here," said Jack Harper, "provided you pull well with the rest of the pupils."

"Where are they?" inquired Bunter. For, save for those two, the building was deserted.

"Playing cricket."

"You've got a cricket-ground?"
"Close handy. Step this way!"

At the back of the gymnasium was a large and carefully kept meadow.

A practice match was in progress, and Billy Bunter surveyed the players with interest. Some were about his own age, but the majority were a year or two older. They seemed very decent fellows.

At the fall of the next wicket, when the fieldsmen congregated in a group in the middle of the pitch, Jack Harper took Billy Bunter forward, and introduced him.

"This is a new pupil—William Bunter," he announced.

A pleasant-faced fellow with dark, curly hair extended his hand to Bunter.

"Jolly pleased to meet you!" he said. "Hope you'll be happy here!"

"I'm sure I shall be!" said Bunter.

"Play, cricket?"

"Yes."

"Any good?"

"My grandfather," said Billy Bunter, with dignity, "played for Gloucestershire."

"Yes, but you are not your grandfather! What sort of game do you play yourself?"

"I'm a top-hole performer!" said Bunter modestly.

"H'm! P'raps we can include him in the team which is playing the Greyfriars Remove to-morrow, sir?" said the curly-headed fellow, turning to Jack Harper.

"I hardly think Bunter would care to turn out against his old school, Derrick," said Harper. "You see, he left it under—rather unfortunate circumstances."

Billy Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Are you really playing the Remove to-morrow, Mr. Harper?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"At Greyfriars?"

"Yes. But it wouldn't be advisable for you to come with the team."

"But supposing I went in disguise?" said Billy Bunter excitedly.

"Eh?"

"The fellows wouldn't recognise me if I was properly made up."

"My dear kid," said Jack Harper, with a smile, "the smartest make-up in the world wouldn't conceal your identity. Your bulk would give you away every time. It's possible to make a thin fellow appear fat, but when it comes to making a fat fellow look thin it's a poser."

"Then I can't go?"

Jack Harper shook his head.

"It would be asking for trouble," he said. "They'd twig your identity in an instant. You'd better stay here and do some physical jerks."

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter was very disappointed that he could not take part in the match against his old Form, the Greyfriars Remove. But he realised that Jack Harper was right. The keen eyes of Harry Wharton & Co. could penetrate most disguises, and they would certainly

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tainly penetrate any disguise which Bunter might adopt.

"Besides, we haven't seen you play yet," said Jack Harper. "We've only your word for it that you're a budding Jessop."

"Perhaps Bunter would like to take a knock now?" suggested Derrick.

"Er—no, thanks!" said Bunter hastily. "I'm not feeling in form this afternoon. You see, I'm awfully peckish!"

"In that case you'd better come and have something to eat," said Jack Harper. "I won't bother you with any tuition to-day. But you'll have to go into strict training to-morrow, mind! I don't allow any slacking in this establishment!"

Billy Bunter was given a substantial meal, to which he did full justice. And he spent the rest of the day in watching the exertions of his fellow-pupils.

Bunter liked his new quarters immensely. But whether he would still like them on the morrow, when the strict training commenced, remained to be seen.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Toils!

TUMBLE out, my fat tulip!" It was Derrick who spoke. Derrick was the recognised leader of the band of pupils at Jack Harper's Nursery. He was a dashful sort of fellow, brimful of energy and enthusiasm.

Billy Bunter sat up in his bed, and blinked around.

"Why, what's the time?" he asked drowsily.

"Five o'clock," said Derrick.

"Grog! What do you want a fellow up in the middle of the night for?"

Derrick grinned.

"Our routine begins at five," he said. "Put a jerk in it!"

Billy Bunter saw that the rest of the pupils were hurrying through their ablutions. Dearly would he have loved another forty winks; but there was an expression on Derrick's face which seemed to say:

"If you don't turn out I'll pitch you out!"

So Bunter got up.

"What time's brekker?" he inquired.

"Seven," said Derrick.

"What! Have I got to go hungry for another two hours?"

Derrick nodded.

"The physical jerks will give you an appetite," he said.

Billy Bunter's favourable impression of Jack Harper's Nursery was considerably modified now. He didn't like early rising. And he detested physical jerks.

But the discipline at the gymnasium was strict, and it was enforced by Derrick, who rapped out commands to the others.

"Get a move on, Terence! Mind you wash your neck this morning, Marshall! Put that copy of the 'Boy's Friend' away, Peters!"

Peters, a freckle-faced youth, raised a shrill protest.

"I'm reading a ripping Rookwood yarn, Derrick!"

"Read it another time! The whistle will go in a minute!"

Even as Derrick spoke there was a loud "Pheep!" from without.

"What's that whistle going for?" asked Billy Bunter.

"Parade!" said Derrick briefly. "By the way, didn't Mr. Harper rig you out with a sweater and flannel bags?"

"No," he said he hadn't any that would fit me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"We'll soon work off that superfluous fat of yours," said Terence.

"Yes, rather!" said Marshall. "Physical jerks will do the trick."

"Buck up, everybody!" rapped out Derrick.

The parade was held on the cricket-field, which also served the purpose of a drill-ground.

Jack Harper himself conducted the proceedings. He called the roll, and there were no absentees.

After this, dumb-bells were distributed to the fellows, and the physical jerks began.

Billy Bunter was not accustomed to dumb-bells. And these particular dumb-bells were very weighty. In the opening stages of the drill, Bunter contrived to drop one of them on to his head.

"Yaroooooooh!"

Billy Bunter uttered a wild yell of anguish. The rest of the pupils yelled, too—with merriment.

"Five minutes!" suggested Bunter.

"Five hours, you chump! And you've missed cricket practice! You'll be fired out

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You seem to have slightly dented your napper, Bunter!" chuckled Derrick.

"Did you see any sawdust fall out?" inquired Terence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, there!" exclaimed Jack Harper.

"Pick up that dumb-bell, Bunter, and stop groaning!"

"Yow! I—I believe I've got concussion of the brain!"

"You can't have concussion of an organ that isn't there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter picked up his dumb-bell, and the exercise proceeded. It was very distasteful to the new pupil.

Before the physical jerks had been in progress three minutes the perspiration stood out in beads on Bunter's brow, and cursed down his flabby cheeks.

"Oh dear!" he panted. "This is simply awful!"

"You'll get used to it in time," said Derrick cheerfully. "These dumb-bells will feel like feathers!"

"Ow! They feel like ton weights at present!" groaned Bunter.

"Never mind! Stick it out!"

Billy Bunter stuck it out, knowing that Jack Harper would have a short way with him if he slacked.

When at last the exercises were over, Bunter's face resembled a boiled beetroot.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped, pumping in breath. "I wish I'd never set foot in this show!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to cackle at, you fellows! A chap with a frail and delicate constitution like mine ought never to indulge in violent exercise. Phew!"

But there was more, violent exercise to follow.

After his pupils had taken a breather, Jack Harper ordered them to run three times round the field.

Billy Bunter, who was never designed by nature to be a Shrub or an Applegarth, quite failed to stay the pace. He went round the field once, and then dropped in the grass, where he lay fluttering like a plump partridge.

"Get up!" said Jack Harper tersely.

"Ow! I—I can't!"

"If you don't complete the course you'll get no brekker!"

That terrible threat spurred Billy Bunter into action once more. He picked himself up, and stumbled forward.

The rest of the pupils had finished their run by this time, and they gave Bunter the doubtful benefit of their encouragement.

"Come on, old barrel!"

"Stick it out!"

"There's a booby-prize for the last man home!"

Rolling from side to side like a ship in distress, Billy Bunter went on. He completed the course at length, to the accompaniment of boisterous cheering.

"Hurray!"

"Good old Tubby!"

"You'll make a Marathon runner yet!"

"Ow-ow-ow-ow!" moaned Bunter, mopping the perspiration from his brow.

"I think you've reduced your weight by a couple of stone already, Bunter," said Jack Harper, with a smile. "You'll soon get quite slim at this rate!"

The next item on the programme was breakfast; and Billy Bunter's appetite had never been so keen. He had three helpings of porridge and two of eggs and bacon, and when he came to the toast and marmalade he looked as if he was never going to stop.

"I'm afraid," said Derrick gravely, "you'll have to go into a sanatorium."

"Eh? Why?" asked Bunter, looking up in alarm.

"Because of your chronic consumption."

After breakfast the pupils were allowed to take their ease for an hour. The majority of them produced books and magazines, and started to read. But Billy Bunter, feeling that he had a lot of leeway to make up in the matter of sleep, curled up like a fat dormouse beneath the shade of a large beech tree.

The trunk of the tree, and the long grass in which he lay, effectively screened Bunter from view; and it was not until nearly mid-day that Derrick discovered his whereabouts.

"You lazy slacker!" he roared. "Do you know how long you've been asleep?"

"Five minutes!" suggested Bunter.

"Five hours, you chump! And you've missed cricket practice! You'll be fired out

of this establishment on your neck if you don't pull yourself together!"

Billy Bunter rose to his feet.

"What time's dinner?" he inquired.

"It's being served now."

"Oh, good!"

And Bunter hurried away towards the building.

"You haven't got a soul that rises above eating and drinking!" said Derrick, in deep disgust. "As soon as one meal's over you begin to think of the next! It's all you live for!"

"Ahem! I've got a constitution that requires constant nourishment, you see," explained Bunter.

"Br-r-r!"

Dinner at Jack Harper's training-centre was a sumptuous meal—the biggest and best of the day.

Billy Bunter was in his element, and the "ragging" of his fellow-pupils did not interfere with his appetite.

After dinner, the members of the cricket eleven set out for Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter gazed after them wistfully. He would have given anything to be able to accompany the cricketers, but he realised that it was quite impossible. The presence of an expelled junior would not be tolerated at Greyfriars.

The fellows who were left behind devoted the afternoon to more physical jerks, under Jack Harper's supervision.

Beneath the blazing summer sun, Billy Bunter was compelled to carry out the various drills and exercises; and he was nearly dead—at least, he declared he was—by the time the cricketers returned.

"How did the game go?" inquired Jack Harper.

"We were licked," said Derrick. "The Greyfriars Remove are jolly hot stuff! We bagged a lead on the first innings, but in the second they simply pulverised us! They won by forty runs!"

"Never mind!" said Jack Harper. "It was your first match of the season, and you'll do better as time goes on. Had your tea?"

"Yes, rather! Those Greyfriars fellows know how to entertain visiting teams! They gave us a gorgeous spread!"

"I—I say, Derrick," said Billy Bunter, "you didn't let any of the Greyfriars chaps know I was here, I suppose?"

"Of course not!"

"We heard some of them talking about you," said Terence. "They concluded that you'd gone to London."

"They were saying what a fine fellow I was, of course!"

"On the contrary," said Marshall. "They were saying that the Remove wasn't the same without their Peeping Tom—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And their Paul Pry!"

"My hat!"

"And their tame boa-constrictor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The beasts!" growled Bunter. "A fellow who makes his mark at a public school is never properly appreciated until he's been gone about twenty years! But future generations will speak of me with awe!"

"I don't doubt it," said Derrick. "You'll go down to posterity as the fellow who ate everything in the tuckshop at one sitting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tea's ready, for those who haven't had it yet," announced Jack Harper.

Billy Bunter was off in a twinkling. Not for whole hemispheres would he have missed his tea.

The meal was an enjoyable one, and Bunter hoped that he would not be called upon to undergo any more athletic training that evening.

But alas for his hopes!

After tea the pupils were lined up in the gymnasium, and boxing-gloves were produced.

"Now, I'm going to pair you off," said Jack Harper, "for friendly bouts of three minutes' duration."

Billy Bunter groaned.

"Terence! Peters!"

"The two fellows addressed stepped out of the ranks, and donned the gloves. And at Jack Harper's command they went at each other hammer and tongs.

Although it was supposed to be a friendly bout, Terence and Peters seemed to be doing their best to wipe up the floor with each other. There was plenty of give-and-take, and no quarter was asked. But the contest was of a sportsmanlike nature throughout, and the opponents shook hands at the finish.

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

"Burke! Bunter!"

Billy Bunter looked up with a start as his name was called.

"Oh crumbs! Have I got to box?" he faltered.

"Yes," said Jack Harper. "You needn't look so sad about it. It will be quite a friendly scrap, and Burke won't eat you!"

Burke was a meek-looking fellow, who gave the impression that he couldn't say "Boo!" to a goose. He was smaller and slimmer than Bunter.

"Go ahead, Tubby!" said Derrick. "Don't show the white feather, for goodness' sake! Why, you ought to be able to knock spots off that kid!"

Very reluctantly Billy Bunter plumed himself for the fray, and when Jack Harper called "Time!" he screwed his courage to the sticking-point, and rushed at the diminutive Burke as if he intended to annihilate him.

But the boot was on the other foot. It was Burke who did the annihilating. He got Billy Bunter's head in chancery, and rained blow after blow upon it.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Burke continued to hit, with perhaps more vigour than was necessary, and presently Billy Bunter went to the boards with a crash.

"Up you get!" said Jack Harper encouragingly. "You're not licked yet!"

But Bunter had had enough, and more than enough. He lay squirming on the floor, and Burke turned away in disgust.

"Why, he hasn't the backbone of a mouse!" he said contemptuously.

And the only answer which Billy Bunter made to this scathing remark was:

"Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Back to the Fold!

BILLY BUNTER decided, as soon as the boxing-bouts were over, that he would shake the dust of Harper's Nursery from his feet at the first available opportunity. He had never had any great ambition to become an athlete; and although Jack Harper's establishment provided him with food and shelter, it also provided him with hard knocks. And Bunter could not stand hard knocks.

Then there were the physical jerks. He was "fed-up" with them. It was all right for fellows like Derrick, who possessed unbounded stores of energy. But the strenuous routine of Harper's Nursery did not suit Billy Bunter's book at all.

"I must get out of this!" muttered Bunter. "I simply can't stick it!"

An opportunity of escape presented itself almost at once.

Jack Harper's tireless pupils went for a voluntarily cycling spin, leaving Billy Bunter alone in the gymnasium. And Jack Harper himself was not to be seen.

"Now's my chance!" murmured Bunter. And he slipped out of the door and scuttled away across the silent playing-field.

Glancing back over his shoulder, the runaway saw that he was not being pursued, and he dropped into a walk.

Half an hour later Billy Bunter stood on the familiar pavement of Courtfield High Street, wondering what he should do next.

Although it was not long since he had had tea, Bunter was feeling peckish. The Courtfield shops were closed to him, and in any case, he had spent all his money.

Bunter happened to be standing just outside a pastrycook's shop. In the window was a choice array of cakes and pastries.

"My hat! If only I could sample some of those! Wish I could find somebody who was willing to stand treat!"

Bunter's eyes were glistening and his mouth was watering as he spoke.

And whilst he stood there, with his eyes glued to the good things in the window, a little girl came tripping along the pavement, and entered the shop. Bunter saw her place half-a-crown on the counter, and receive in return a large bag of assorted pastries.

Delighted with her purchases, the little girl ran out of the shop and across the roadway. She did not notice—but Bunter did—that a big car was bearing down upon her. She did not hear—but Bunter heard—the warning toot of the horn.

"Look out!"

Billy Bunter and the driver of the car uttered the exclamation simultaneously.

And then, for the first time, the girl became aware of her danger. And she acted as many people act in a similar emergency.

She started forward, hesitated, stepped back, and started forward again. And the big car, despite the efforts of the driver to swerve to one side, was upon her!

Moved by a sudden impulse, Billy Bunter rushed into the roadway. It was not so much of the little girl that he was thinking, but of the pastries she carried. They might be knocked out of her hand into the roadway and ruined. That was how Bunter looked at it.

Scarcely realising his peril, he seized the little girl by the arm, and swung her back into safety. And in thus saving her he saved the bag of pastries also.

But he did not save himself! There was a warning shout from the driver, and Billy Bunter flung himself, as he thought, out of the danger-zone.

But he was too late! He was conscious of something striking his shoulder; he was conscious of falling. And then his senses seemed to swim, and all was blackness and oblivion.

"Poor kid!" said a voice. But Bunter did not hear it.

"He saved her life," said another voice.

"Yes—at the risk of his own!"

"Any idea who he is?"

"Yes; he's a Greyfriars fellow. I can tell by his cap."

"Then we'd better take him along to the school at once in the car."

The speakers had been the driver of the car and a portly gentleman with white hair and a white moustache—the Mayor of Courtfield.

It was the mayor's little daughter whose life Billy Bunter had saved—unwittingly, perhaps, but there it was.

The unconscious Bunter was conveyed to Greyfriars in the car, and on arrival he was taken at once to the school sanatorium.

Dr. Short was summoned from Friardale, and his verdict was favourable. There were no bones broken, he explained; but Bunter had sustained several cuts and bruises, and it would be necessary for him to remain where he was for several days.

The dramatic return of Billy Bunter caused a profound sensation at Greyfriars. And the sensation was heightened when it became known that the Head had decided to pardon Bunter, and to give him another chance.

Dr. Locke had been influenced, of course, by the Mayor of Courtfield, who was loud in his praise of Billy Bunter's heroism.

"But for that brave lad," said the mayor, "my daughter would have lost her life. You say that he has been expelled from the school, Dr. Locke? Well, the very least you can do, in appreciation of his gallant conduct, is to give him another chance."

The Head demurred at first, but the mayor succeeded in winning him over. And Billy Bunter was permitted to remain at the school.

Harry Wharton & Co. were amazed when they learned the facts.

"Fancy Bunter turning out to be a giddy hero!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "It fairly beats the band!"

"And he's won the Head's pardon!" said Frank Nugent.

"Good luck to him!" said Wharton heartily. "It must have needed some nerve to dash right in front of the car and save that kid."

"I proposefully suggest," said Hurree Singh, "that we procedefully adjourn to the sanny and congratulate our fat and gallant porpoise."

"Hear, hear!"

Quite a crowd of fellows were wending their way in the direction of the sanny. But the Famous Five got there first, and the matron allowed them to go in and see Bunter, who was now rapidly on the mend.

Billy Bunter sat up in bed as his school-fellows, with smiling faces, came in to greet him.

"I say, you fellows," he said excitedly, "the Head's given me another chance!"

"Well, you deserve it, for saving that kid's life!" said Harry Wharton.

"It was simply zipping of you, Bunty!" said Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I knew you were the sort of fellow who went about saving people's lives!"

"Oh, it was nothing," said Bunter modestly. "I couldn't have stood by and seen those pastries ruined."

"Eh? What pastries?" gasped Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter explained, and the Famous Five chuckled.

"So you tried to save the pastries, and you saved the mayor's daughter instead—or,

rather, you saved both!" said Wharton. "Not a bad evening's work. But look here. Do you mean to say that you didn't go home last night after you left us in Courtfield?"

"No. I took a ticket to London, but I—I changed my mind at the last moment."

"But where have you been ever since?" exclaimed Nugent.

"In Harper's Nursery. I was admitted there as a pupil."

"My hat!"

"And I had a terrible time!" said Bunter, shuddering at the recollection. "Got up at five o'clock this morning, and I seem to have been doing physical jerks ever since."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter," said the fat junior. "I've lost at least a couple of stone in weight."

"Well, you don't exactly look like a skeleton, Bunty!" said Bob Cherry.

"I—I feel awfully peckish!" said Bunter.

"Here comes the matron with some gruel," said Johnny Bull.

"Gruel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five urged Billy Bunter to buck up and get fit. And then they retired, leaving him to take his gruel.

The Owl of the Remove had already taken his gruel in another form. He had passed through some unpleasant experiences since his expulsion from Greyfriars. And although it was doubtful whether those experiences would lead to a complete reformation of Bunter's character, they had certainly had the effect of sweeping his mind clear of all wild Bolshevistic notions. He would not be in such a hurry again to rebel against those in authority. He saw clearly that he had acted very wrongly, and he determined to make amends by exemplary conduct in the Form-room and elsewhere.

And when, after an interval of a few days, Billy Bunter appeared in public once more, there was a very hearty reception—and a magnificent spread in the junior Common-room—for the fellow who had been instrumental in winning the Head's pardon!

THE END.

GOOD STORIES.

ALMOST BEYOND HIS KEN.

"Boy, just watch my horse!" the squire commanded an urchin, as he went into a post-office for a moment.

"Yessir!" said the lad, touching his hat.

Two minutes later a motor-car roared past. The horse reared and snorted, and bolted up the road like lightning.

As the unhappy lad was just starting to pursue the runaway, now nearly out of sight, the squire came out of the post-office.

"I'm glad you've come, sir," said the boy, in vast relief. "I couldn't have watched him much longer!"

THE POOR THING WAS COLD.

The horses of a particular brigade of artillery had just been clipped, and that evening the sergeant went round the stables with a singing lamp, trimming them up here and there.

One of the privates, a particularly green townsman, watched him in silence. Then suddenly he called out:

"Hi, sergeant!"

"Yes?" said the non-com., turning round.

"Here's one gee wants warming up," said the greenhorn. "He's shivering like a leaf!"

WORTH THE MONEY.

A new safe could not open its door, and business in the Lancashire factory was handicapped.

At last, in despair, the mill-owner sent an urgent wire to London, and a mechanic travelled north at once.

He tested the lock, examined the key, and then, with a quiet smile, fished some dirt out of the key barrel with a piece of wire.

"What's the charge?" asked the mill-owner sheepishly.

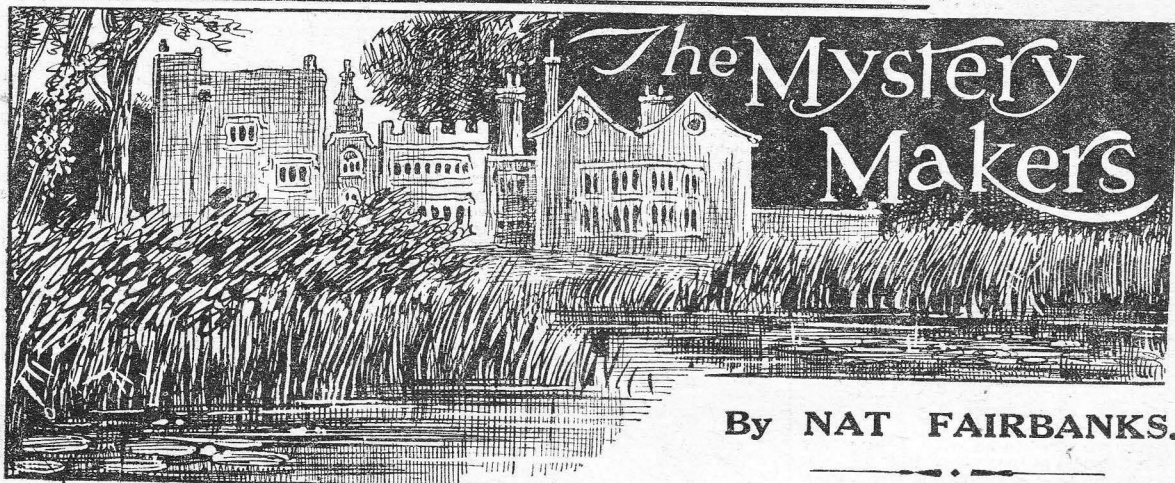
"Five pounds," said the mechanic calmly. "Does anyone know you are in town?"

"No one except yourself, sir."

"Then here's an extra fiver. Get back to London at once. If anyone in town knew that I paid you five pounds to clean out a key for me, I should never do another shilling's-worth of business here!"

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A GRAND NEW CINEMA SERIAL YOU WILL GREATLY ENJOY!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dick Tulliver, to escape being apprenticed to Wibbleswick & Co., a firm of drapers, by his uncle, makes his way to the country town of Dorminster. There he comes across the Western Super-Film Company, who are located in a ruined manor house, known as Wildfell Grange, which is reputed to be haunted. By a piece of luck, Dick is able to be of service to Mr. Halibut, the producer. Through the good offices of a friend named Harry Trent, who is working for the company, Dick is taken on in place of Archie Deen, the star actor, who has mysteriously disappeared. He is introduced to an actor-friend of Trent's named Biglow. Later, Dick has the misfortune to make a dangerous enemy of a hunchback dwarf, named Bernard Grimshaw, whose room he shares. It is found that Grimshaw is subject to fits. But Dick has reasons to believe that he is shamming.

Later, Dick visits the Red Lion inn, outside Harrowsfield, with the company, to act a part in a film. Being anxious to know the lie of the land, he disguises himself to go into the town.

(Now read on.)

Dick Assists in Discovering Himself.

DICK TULLIVER, feeling secure in his disguise, the false moustache, the make-up on his face—to say nothing of the mist that was gradually enveloping everything in Harrowsfield—picked his way in the direction of Mike O'Flatherty's house.

It was now about eight o'clock, and O'Flatherty should be coming along on his way to the Grammar School. The road was usually practically deserted at this time of the morning, so Dick looked forward to a short conversation, uninterrupted and unobserved.

Dick paused when he came in sight of his old home. He wondered what his uncle and aunt were doing at the present moment. Probably just got down to breakfast. Oh, those breakfasts! How he had dreaded them, with their perpetual accompaniment of his crimes recited in the form of a duet by his worthy relatives. Wild horses shouldn't drag him back to that life.

But here comes Mike O'Flatherty. Dick chuckled to himself. He would disclose his identity all at once. No; he'd test the thoroughness of his disguise first.

O'Flatherty approached, whistling in rather a doleful key. Under his arm were half a dozen lesson-books. In between his whistles Dick could see his mouth working. He was evidently attempting to memorise a certain portion of his home work.

He would have passed Dick without a word, but Dick wasn't having any.

"Good-morning, my lad!" said Dick, in a deep voice.

O'Flatherty stopped.

"Not so much of the 'my lad'!" he granted.

"Ah," smiled Dick patronisingly, "we're growing up, it seems! Off to school? That's right! Work hard, and then play hard. But work's very important. I hope you don't neglect your studies. What's two and two?"

O'Flatherty looked as if he didn't know

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whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

"Don't you try and be funny!" he growled. "I don't know you, and I don't want to!"

"Tut, tut!" said Dick, shaking his head. "What a ferocious infant! Look here, my little man. If I give you twopence, how will you spend it?"

O'Flatherty threw his books on the ground, and placed himself in a pugilistic attitude.

"Mike," said Dick suddenly, dropping into his natural voice, "is this the way to greet an old friend?"

O'Flatherty's jaw fell.

"Be jabbers!" he ejaculated, for the minute travelling the other side of the Irish Channel. "It's old Dick!"

"Rather!" chuckled Dick. "I'm just paying a flying visit to hear all the news. You got my letter, I hope?"

"Ay, I got your letter," replied O'Flatherty, shaking hands vigorously.

"And it's meself that had to go a long way outside the truth through that letter. Ye see, Dick, you and me being such friends, your uncle and aunt thought I was sure to know where you'd got to. At first, it was all right, because I really didn't know for certain. But when your letter came it was another matter. They've been worrying the life out of me. But I didn't give you away. And look at your disguise, now! Splendid! Tell me all about things."

Dick gave a brief outline of his doings.

"Ah!" sighed O'Flatherty. "That's the life that would suit me if I could only do it. Think of me sweating away at lessons and classes. 'Tis beastly! And so you've seen the bill your uncle has got out? He showed us the proof the day before yesterday, and I tried to get him to alter some of the description so that it wasn't so like you. Told him you'd got a pimple over your left eyebrow. 'Twas no use. He swore you were quite free from all pimples and warts. I did my best, Dick."

"I'm sure you did, Mike," returned Dick. "Do you think my uncle has placed the matter in the hands of the police?"

"Likely enough. But you haven't much to fear from the Harrowsfield coppers," said O'Flatherty contemptuously. "They couldn't catch a lost cow! Young Wibbleswick has kept a still tongue, too. You see, Dick, after pretending that his blessed old motor had run away by itself he couldn't very well say anything about you being mixed up in the affair. When he passes me in the street he always looks the other way. But your uncle talked about employing a private detective agency. Don't know if he's done so."

By this time they were approaching the outskirts of Harrowsfield, and Dick thought it wiser to part company with Mike. In a small country town everybody's business is known. The mere fact of O'Flatherty walking with a stranger would be discussed all over the place if they were seen together.

Well aware of this, Dick was on the point of saying good-bye, when a hoarse voice hailed O'Flatherty by name.

O'Flatherty turned.

"My word, it's old Gadget!" he muttered.

"Bother it! I wish he hadn't seen us together, Dick. I forgot to tell you. He's interested in you."

Dick knew the man Gadget perfectly well.

He was an old ex-London policeman, who had been pensioned off on arriving at the age limit. He had bought a little cottage and paddock in Harrowsfield, where he posed as a very important personage.

Dick glanced cautiously over his shoulder. A hundred yards or so behind, Mr. Gadget was pounding along as fast as his fifteen stone would permit.

"Stop!" he bellowed.

"Why's he so interested in me?" hurriedly inquired Dick.

"He wants to find you and get the reward. Once a policeman always a policeman! You remember his craze for finding clues and solving mysteries? Well, your disappearance has set him going. He's always trying to waylay me to get information about you. I've spun him some yarns! What do you think we'd better do—push on and pretend not to hear him? He'd never catch us if we ran."

"No," said Dick, "that'll look too suspicious. He might smell a rat. By Jove, it's suddenly struck me! He's recognised my back view! Here's a go!"

"He must see your front view at all costs," declared O'Flatherty. "It's your only chance."

Dick felt O'Flatherty was right.

Accordingly he wheeled round.

Mr. Gadget approached him in a breathless state. His whole attitude plainly told them that he had recognised Dick's back view. Indeed, his hands were already stretched out to grasp his prey. His surprise, therefore, was tremendous when his eyes lighted on the middle-aged countenance of O'Flatherty's companion.

"Oh!" he mumbled. "I thought I recognised—"

He broke off into vague mutterings concerning the mist and tricks it was liable to play the eyesight.

Dick, in the meanwhile, had hit on a plan of action. It was risky, but then old Gadget was not a very difficult person to take in. In fact, several people in Harrowsfield habitually referred to him as "that old ass." On the strength of this Dick boldly took the plunge.

"Good-morning, sir!" he said, addressing Mr. Gadget in a husky voice. "This lad has just been showing me some of the sights of your 'fine old town. I'm a stranger here. Just come from London."

"London!" echoed Mr. Gadget, instantly becoming interested. "Ah! There's precious little of London that I don't know! This mist reminds me of the good old London fogs!"

"I knew you were a Londoner directly I clapped eyes on you!" cried Dick, pretending to great enthusiasm. "I said directly I saw you coming along. He's trod the London pavements in his time. I mentioned it to you, didn't I?" continued Dick, turning to O'Flatherty.

O'Flatherty's face was buried in his handkerchief. He could only mumble a reply.

"Well," said Mr. Gadget, with a fat laugh, "I won't say that you're wrong."

Dick immediately grasped Mr. Gadget's hand, and wrung it firmly.

"I thought I wasn't mistaken," he said.

"Perhaps, if you've got a few minutes to spare, you might oblige me by adding a little

information to what this lad has already told me. You see, he's got to get off to school."

Dick turned to O'Flatherty, and gave him a fatherly pat on the back.

"Run along, there's a good boy!" he said. "Here's the twopence I promised you!"

O'Flatherty fled. Had he stopped there another moment he would have choked with suppressed mirth.

"Very pleased to do anything for you!" said Mr. Gadget. "As a fellow-Londoner, I feel you're in a sort of way under my protection, being in foreign parts, like."

"Good!" replied Dick.

He looked cautiously around as if to see whether they were being observed. Then he turned once more to Mr. Gadget, and said in a hoarse whisper:

"I see you recognise me as a detective!"

in these parts. By the way, I suppose that isn't the job that has brought you down here, is it?"

"Now none of your thought-reading ways with me!" exclaimed Dick, feigning great amazement. "I won't have it—no, not even by you, sir! But, there, I may as well make a clean breast of it. This Mr. Tulliver sent up to my people in London for a reliable detective agent. The job was given to me, and here I am. But, so far, it seems a bit above my weight. Besides," continued Dick, entering more and more into the spirit of the part, "the country police are prejudiced against private-inquiry men, and won't help me. Well, how about your coming in with me, and going halves in the reward?"

Mr. Gadget, who for the last two days had become rather despondent over his lack of success in tracing the whereabouts of Dick

"I fancy," he added, to himself, "that I shall be able to show you parts of the downs that you don't know!"

"Hangman's Wood."

HOW thick the mist had grown. Out on Windbury Downs it was difficult to distinguish any familiar landmarks. An impenetrable wall of shadow seemed to surround everything.

A few minutes' walk under these conditions caused Mr. Gadget's mind to be filled with doubts. He wasn't quite so sure now of his boasted knowledge of the downs. However, he didn't like to hint at any misgivings to Dick—otherwise "Hawksley." He felt he had the reputation of Scotland Yard to keep up.

Dick, on the other hand, knew perfectly well the direction in which they were heading.



Dick remained where he was, crouched over the water. The footsteps were coming nearer and nearer, and he looked up as the newcomer passed. There was no mistaking that squat figure. He recognised it instantly. It was Bernard Grimshaw! (See page 10.)

Ah, the old policeman—London one, mind you!—is not to be taken in!"

"That's a fact!" said Mr. Gadget complacently.

He hadn't done anything of the kind, but he wasn't going to refuse a reputation for smartness.

"Of course," went on Dick, pulling up his coat-collar. "That lad didn't spot me. But directly you came along I says to myself, 'Hawksley'—that's my name—'Hawksley,' I say, 'here's a man that will size you up in two-two's! Scotland Yard will recognise a tee, no matter how he dresses, or how he speaks!'"

"Ha, ha! I don't know but what you ain't right!" chuckled Mr. Gadget, highly flattered. "But I didn't give you away, did I? I didn't show the least sign of knowin' wot you was."

"Not as much as moving a muscle!" returned Dick solemnly. "Why, it's simply marvellous the command you have over yourself! D'you know, for the moment you almost took me in, and I began to think I'd escaped your eagle eye."

"Well, as a matter of fact," confessed Mr. Gadget, "for the moment I did take you for someone else. I took you—ha, ha, it's too absurd!—I took you for a lad who is missing

Tulliver, rather welcomed the proposition, but got up several easily overcome objections before he finally consented.

"I've had so much to do with these cases," he said carelessly, "that the novelty's worn off; but I don't mind helping you, if you wishes it. I suppose you've pumped that lad you were with?"

"Pumped him dry!" returned Dick. "I'm convinced he knows nothing. No. If I dare make a suggestion to an old hand like you, I should say a little investigating work in the direction of the downs might be useful. You see, in this mist we shouldn't be noticed, and we could go thoroughly over the ground. I don't say I have a clue, but I have a strong suspicion that we shall come across tracks of this young Tulliver there."

"I thought of the downs myself," owned Mr. Gadget.

"Of course you did," said Dick. "And no doubt you know them blindfold. Very well. You're the man to guide me!"

"Guide you!" echoed Mr. Gadget boastfully. "Why, some of the folk who have lived here all their lives I could lose on them downs. I know them so well!"

"Could you?" said Dick. "Then come on now, and lets make a start!"

There was a short cut which would eventually land him within a mile of Wildfell Grange. He rather fancied Mr. Gadget had never explored this route. Properly speaking, it was not on the downs at all; it skirted them to the north-east, and followed the twistings and turnings of the river.

They stumbled—or, rather, Mr. Gadget did—along for some minutes in silence. Then Mr. Gadget decided he would like to know a little more about their expedition.

"In what part of the downs do you think he is hiding?" he asked.

"From information received, it is somewhere near a spot called 'Hangman's Wood,'" returned Dick. "You know it, of course?"

"Oh—er—yes!" answered Mr. Gadget.

"And you can guide me there?"

"I think so," said Mr. Gadget, for the first time allowing a note of doubt to creep into his voice. "It's over there," he said, waving his hand vaguely towards the right.

Dick knew it was to the left, but he didn't say so. He merely nodded his head and plodded on at a good rate.

Mr. Gadget soon began to puff and blow. He was very glad when about a mile

farther on they struck the river, and Dick suddenly pulled up.

"You know where you are now?" asked Dick.

"Oh, certainly!" said Mr. Gadget. "This is part of the Swift. It runs quite near Hangman's Wood. We've only got to follow the river's course."

"Right!" said Dick. "Come on!" They didn't meet a soul, and, continuing to walk at a good four miles an hour, were soon at a point where the river forked, one branch, the main navigable portion, going straight on, and the other, a much narrower stream, taking a sharp turn to the left.

The mist hid all this, and Mr. Gadget, having never been there before, fondly imagined he was following the main portion of the river, when in reality he was only following the tributary.

Dick, however, knew better.

Apparently it was no one's business to look after this stream, to bank it up, or to maintain something like a decent footpath. Even in the dry season it was always more or less flooded, and the marshy substance formed an admirable soil for the willows and osiers, which grew there in great abundance.

The swampy travelling made no difference to Dick with his heavy riding-boots. It was otherwise with Mr. Gadget. That unfortunate gentleman sank ankle-deep every other yard.

"I say," he grumbled, "I don't believe we're going right! Ah! Blow the stuff! Here, I'm slipping! Poof!"

A stream of brown muddy fluid flew all over him.

What had happened was this. Some thoughtful person had at some time or another placed some large stones across the path. Dick, who was leading the way, stepped safely from one to the other. Mr. Gadget, however, stepped on a loose one, and no sooner did his weight press on it than it began to rock. The result was he lost his balance, slipped, and down went one leg right into a deep pool of slush.

Dick hauled him out with some difficulty.

"My word," he cried, "you are in a mess!"

"Mess!" bellowed Mr. Gadget. "I wish I'd never agreed to come on this wild-geese chase!"

"I thought you knew the way," said Dick. "I was so frightened of slipping myself that I didn't think about you! Sorry—"

"Precious lot of good that is!" snapped Mr. Gadget. "I've had enough of this. I'm going back."

"And leave me here all alone—a stranger who doesn't know an inch of the ground?" protested Dick. "Come, come, that's not playing the game!"

"There's no need for you to stop here—" began Mr. Gadget.

"Excuse me," broke in Dick, "I have my duty to my employers to consider. Whatever you do I shall attempt to go forward. I believe the missing boy to be hiding somewhere about here. I mean to leave no stone unturned—"

Plunk!

The unfortunate Mr. Gadget had fallen foul of some roots this time. They tripped him up heavily, and he sprawled on all fours.

Mr. Gadget's language was decidedly unofficial when Dick helped him to his feet.

"Not another inch farther do I go!" he snapped. "You can go on if you want to. I've had enough of it!"

Dick was delighted, but he put on a great show of indignation.

"Very well," he snorted. "Our agreement terminates. If I am to do all the work I shall take all the reward. I expected better things from an old member of the Force. I'm disappointed in you, sir—bitterly disappointed! I wish you good-morning!"

Mr. Gadget grew as red as a turkey-cock. "Don't you try and teach me my duty!" he bellowed.

"I'm not going to," retorted Dick. "You are far too old and too fat to learn!"

And with this parting shot Dick turned on his heels, and a second later the mist swallowed him up.

"That's one up against old Gadget!" he chuckled.

Relieved of Mr. Gadget's presence, Dick put on a better pace. The ground soon got firmer, and the osiers and willows gave place to other trees. They grew closer and closer as he proceeded, and he knew by this that he had entered Hangman's Wood. He and O'Flatherty had spent many a half-holiday here together in the summer. The mist at present hid everything, but Dick recollected what a charming spot it was in

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the fine weather. He knew that the tree-tops met overhead, forming a picturesque, leafy arch, under which the river silently flowed.

Very rarely were people from Harrowsfield seen in this part of Hangman's Wood, and for a very good reason. The river, with its swampy banks, made it practically inaccessible. Unless you knew every part, as Dick did, you might find yourself landed waist-deep in some black morass, without the possibility of help even though you shouted your loudest.

"I should like to see old Gadget stuck here," said Dick to himself. "Twenty-four hours of this mud would do him good!"

For an hour Dick pressed forward, following the winding course of the river. He knew that it would eventually emerge not very far from a spot near Wildfell Grange. He looked at his watch. It was half-past twelve. He ought to reach the Grange by dinner-time. Dinner! The word awoke responsive echoes in Dick's interior organs. He suddenly discovered that he was ravenously hungry. No wonder! He had had practically nothing since the previous night's supper.

He went on. The river showed no signs of coming out by the downs. Dick began to have doubts in his mind as to whether he was going in the right direction.

At that moment he heard a rustle in the bushes at his left. It was like the noise of a large bird. Dick walked on, but he kept his ears open. For some minutes there was no recurrence of the sound. Soon, however, he heard a fresh noise, and there could be no doubt as to its nature. Someone was evidently behind him, and walking very fast.

Dick stopped. A shrill whistle broke out. The bushes parted, and a man stepped out.

"Are you from Harrowsfield?" he asked. His voice was rough, and his appearance, from the little Dick could see of it, was rougher still.

"Yes," replied Dick. "I've just come from Harrowsfield."

"You ain't on the look-out for anyone, I suppose?" he inquired. "You ain't meeting anyone about here? No appointment, or any thing of that sort?"

"No," replied Dick.

The man peered at him doubtfully. "Some mistake," said Dick. "By the way, I want a place called Wildfell Grange. Am I going in the right direction?"

"Wildfell Grange!" repeated the man slowly. He seemed dreadfully puzzled about something. He looked Dick up and down, and then scratched his head.

"Well?" said Dick. "I'm sure I hope you'll know me again!"

"No offence, gov'nor," returned the other. "Wildfell Grange you want? You follow that there stream for about a mile and a half, and you'll come out by the downs. You'll see the Grange from there. You can't miss the way if you keep by the stream."

Dick thanked him, and proceeded on his way. As he walked along Dick wondered who it was the man expected to meet.

"Now, that was a jolly queer place to arrange a meeting!" he ruminated.

However, it was no business of his.

The path now began to get wider. He must be pretty near his journey's end now. A few minutes later he noticed that the trees grew thinner. There was also an added keenness in the atmosphere. That showed that the downs were close at hand.

It suddenly occurred to Dick that there was no necessity now for his disguise. It might raise some comment if he entered the Grange in his present get-up. He had a pot of vaseline in his pocket, the river was by his side. Why shouldn't he remove the make-up and the moustache?

No sooner resolved on than done.

He went to the bank, and knelt down among the bulrushes.

He was in the midst of destroying all traces of "Hawksey" from his face, when his ear caught the sound of approaching footsteps. For the moment he thought it might be the man who had accosted him. But no. The footsteps were coming from the other direction—that is, from the downs.

Dick remained where he was, crouched over the water. He looked up as the newcomer went by.

There could be no mistaking that squat figure. It was Bernard Grimshaw!

The dwarf never noticed Dick. He hurried along, and in the twinkling of an eye had disappeared in the fastnesses of Hangman's Wood.

A Photographic Mystery.

WHEN Dick entered the house the first person he met was Mr. Halibut.

"Well, young man," said the manager, "where have you been all the morning?"

"Looking around Harrowsfield and district," answered Dick.

"Humph!" Mr. Halibut gazed keenly at Dick. "It's a good thing you weren't here half an hour ago," he said. "An aged relative of yours has been making inquiries as to your whereabouts."

Dick's heart sank.

"Yes?" he said dismally. "Gentleman with the same name as yourself, with Jasper added to it. He came here in a motor. A bumpitious ass called Wibbleswick was with him. Said he was Mayor Harrowsfield. D'you know him?"

"Did Dick know him?"

"What did you tell them?" faltered Dick. "I told them a lot of things," returned Mr. Halibut—"especially Wibbleswick. He actually wanted to search the house."

Dick's eyes brightened.

"Then you didn't let them know I was here?" he cried. "By Jove, sir, you're a brick! That was uncle! You see—"

"I don't see!" cut in Mr. Halibut. "I don't want to see. I don't want to hear what you've done, or why you've left home. You're of use to me, and it's in my interests to keep you here. I told them nothing!"

"And they went away?"

"Yes—eventually. Between you and me, I don't think this uncle is exactly heartbroken at losing you. I may be wrong, but that was my impression."

"Oh, well," said Dick. "As long as he doesn't find me I don't much care what he feels. There was never any love lost between us. I can tell you that, Mr. Halibut."

"The best way is to tell me nothing," returned the manager. "Least said, soonest mended, you know. I can give you a lot of work if you stick to me. It'll pay you."

"Rather!" cried Dick.

This was a great load off his mind. Dick had been expecting this visit all along. His uncle, knowing of his ambition to get into the cinema world, would guess that if he was to be found at all, it would be in some such surroundings. The wonder was that he hadn't looked up the Western Super-Film Company before. Dick devoutly hoped that Mr. Halibut had thoroughly convinced his Uncle Jasper that it was useless to try Wildfell Grange any more.

Really, when he came to think of it, he wondered why his uncle took so much trouble over finding him. Dick knew that by the terms of his father's will Uncle Jasper received a certain sum per annum for his keep, but he imagined that the amount was so small that there could be no profit in it. In other words, Dick imagined that he was more trouble than he was worth. It was probably only because of a stern sense of duty that his uncle took any steps at all. Uncle Jasper had a horror of any sort of acting, and classed everyone who had anything to do with the stage or screen as rogues and vagabonds.

Highly elated with the turn events had taken, Dick wandered upstairs to report his successful return to his friends.

When he reached the quarters shared by Harry Trent and Biglow, he heard the hum of voices inside.

He turned the handle of the door and entered.

"Hallo, Dick! Got back? You're just in time to see something interesting!"

These were the words that greeted Dick.

It was Harry Trent who spoke. Biglow said nothing. He was too deeply engrossed in a photographic negative he held in his hands to trouble about anything else. He was peering at it from all sorts of angles. First he would hold it at arm's-length, then he brought it back to within an inch of his nose, he laid it flat on the table.

Finally he handed it back to the dark, lantern-jawed fellow who was standing behind his chair.

"It's a corker, Martin!" said Biglow.

"Hallo!" he added, turning to Dick. "We were just thinking of sending out a search-party for you. How are the old folks at home? Did they kill the fatted calf, or haven't you been to see them?"

"Do your people live near here?" suddenly inquired the lantern-jawed person.

(Continued on page 17.)

Two Short Stories of St. Jim's.

Carried Unanimously

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

TWO innings each, if there's time, then," said Figgins. "If not, we decide the match on the first innings!"

"Agreed!" said Tom Merry. It was a meeting of the leaders of the School House and New House juniors, that was being held in Tom Merry's study, to settle details of the forthcoming junior House match.

The junior House matches at St. Jim's were matters of portentous importance to the juniors concerned, and the preliminaries were discussed with proportionate gravity. All was now settled for the match on the following Saturday.

Figgins, the leader of the New House juniors, got up; and his chums, Kerr and Fatty Wynn, did likewise.

"Then that's everything! Stumps pitched at two o'clock—what?"

Tom Merry nodded. "Good! Then we'll be getting along!"

"Just a moment, deah boys—"
It was the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, who had hitherto sat quiet—a most unusual proceeding for him.

Figgins paused.

"What's up, Gussy? Haven't forgotten anything, have we?"

"Not exactly, deah boy. But I was just thinkin'—"

Figgins shook his head solemnly.

"Tell us another, old son! You can't!"

Arthur Augustus snorted.

"Wats! I was thinkin' that I'd like to put a wpososition to the meetin' befoah we bwreak up."

"Well, what is it, Gus?" said Tom Merry impatiently. "Out with it! It'll be prep time in a minute!"

Arthur Augustus coughed, and groped for his famous monocle, and jammed it in his eye. He seemed to have an unusual feeling of diffidence in making his proposition, and the meeting of juniors eyed him impatiently.

At last, however, it came out.

"I was goin' to wposeose somethin' else for Satahday next, in—instead of the House match, deah boys! A—a picnic, in fact, You—you see—"

He was interrupted by a general shout of derision and indignation.

"A picnic instead of the match!"

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"You must be dotty!"

Tom Merry looked hard at Arthur Augustus, who was very red in the face. Then he looked round the circle of juniors, and tapped his forehead significantly.

"It's hot," he said—"very hot! The heat has evidently affected our funny friend with the eyeglass! I propose that we forgive him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus turned redder than ever. But he spoke out manfully:

"Tom Mewwy, you're an ass! If you won't accept my wpososition, I am afraid I shall have to stand out of the team on Satahday!"

"What!"

There was a howl of incredulity. Gussy really was the limit. Tom Merry eyed Arthur Augustus sternly.

"If you stand out on Saturday, you can stand out altogether!" he said warmly. "If you're slacker enough to prefer a blessed picnic to a House match, you're no good to us!"

"Hear, hear!"

D'Arcy looked distressed.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, that's wotten! You know I'm not a slackah! But you don't want me to disappoint a lady, suahly?"

"What!"

"My cousin Ethel is havin' a picnic, and she particularly wants me to go, and to bring some of you chaps! I thought—"

"Oh!"

"Ahem!"

"Cousin Ethel!"

D'Arcy's statement made a very considerable difference to the feeling of the meeting. Cousin Ethel was a very great friend of all

the juniors present. If Cousin Ethel was having a picnic—

There was a long pause.

It was George Figgins who rushed into the breach, as it were. Figgy's rugged face was very pink, but he spoke quite firmly.

"I propose that the House match be postponed till Saturday week!"

There was a roar of assent.

"Hear, hear!"

"Carried unanimously!" said Tom Merry, with a grin.

Arthur Augustus looked flabbergasted. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and gazed round at the throng of juniors.

"But—but, deah boys, I thought you said you—"

"Blow what we said!" said Figgins emphatically. "Just you sit down and write to your cousin, and say we're all coming to her picnic!"

"Hear, hear!"

And Arthur Augustus, in a great state of bewilderment, did as he was told.

THE END.

Unlucky for Baggy!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

MY hat!" Tom Merry made that exclamation as he halted outside the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage at St. Jim's with his chums Manners and Lowther. The door of that famous apartment was half-open, and plainly could be seen the figure of Baggy Trimble perched upon a chair against the cupboard, helping himself to the supply of tuck the juniors had laid in for tea. So engrossed was the fat junior in his task that he failed to notice that the study held fresh visitors.

"Slaughter him!"

"Oh d-dear!"

Baggy Trimble shook like a jelly as he saw the grim faces of the Terrible Three confronting him, so much so, that he lost his footing, and pitched off the chair to the floor.

"Ow-yow-yow!"

Tom Merry yanked the fat junior to his feet by the simple process of hauling on one ear.

"Ow! Leggo, you beast!" howled Trimble.

"I—I—I just happened to look into your study, and I thought I would get tea ready for you."

"What!"

"That's it, Merry, old chap. You know I'd do anything for a pal I—"

"My hat!" gasped Lowther. "How does he do it?"

"Echo answers 'How!' grinned Manners.

"Really, Lowther," said Baggy. "I hope you don't doubt my word. If you do I shall have to leave this study!"

"You're right!" roared Lowther. "You will! Collar him, you chaps!"

The Terrible Three laid hands on Baggy's ample person and hoisted him into the air.

Bump!

"Grooough-ow-yow!"

Bump!

"Now sling him out!" said Tom Merry.

"One—two—three—go!"

The juniors released their hold on the person of the fat junior, and he landed in a heap in the passage.

"Now clear off, you fat ass!" roared Tom Merry. "It will be a lesson to you, Baggy, and if I catch you at my cupboard again I'll skin you!"

"Yah, beasts!" yelled Trimble. "I'll make you sorry for this!"

Monty Lowther reached for the poker with a threatening gesture, and Baggy caught his meaning on the instant. He hastily retreated, only pausing to shake his grubby fist at the Terrible Three. When his pattering footsteps had died away down the passage, Tom Merry closed the door.

"We'll lock that cupboard door before we have a dip," he said, taking out his bathing-costume from the drawer.

"Hear, hear!" agreed Manners.

The three juniors left the study with their towels and bathing-costumes over their arms, and made their way to the bathing-pool for a dip before tea. Under the soothing influence of the warm water, Tom Merry & Co. soon forgot of the existence of Baggy Trimble and his muttered threat, but they were soon to be reminded of it in a startling manner.

"This is top-hole!" muttered Tom Merry, as he swam easily along the pool.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners. "Here's old Railton! Looks as if he's coming for a swim, too!"

The tall form of the popular School House master hove in sight, and it was seen he was carrying a bathing-costume and towel over his arm.

"Good-afternoon, my boys!" was his friendly greeting, as he entered the enclosure.

"Glad to see you're making the best of the warm weather. I'm going to have a dip myself."

"The water's just right, sir," replied Tom Merry.

The Housemaster quickly undressed, and placed his clothes alongside those of the juniors. A neat dive, and he was swimming powerfully towards the Terrible Three. A game of water-polo was soon in progress, and the four swimmers failed to notice the appearance of a fifth person in the shape of Baggy Trimble. Glancing stealthily about him, the fat junior gathered up the pile of clothes, and, with an inward chuckle, departed whence he had come.

"I think we'll be getting dressed now," said Tom Merry at length. "It's time for tea!"

"Right-ho!"

The juniors scrambled out of the water, and hurried over to the spot where they had left their clothes. But not a sign was to be seen of them anywhere.

"Great Scott!" gasped Manners. "Where's our togs?"

"Blessed if I know!" growled Tom Merry, perplexed. "We left them here, didn't we? Railton's clothes have gone, too!"

"Great snakes, so they have!"

"Somebody is going to get it in the neck!" said Manners. "Railton's coming out now!"

The junior captain in a few words explained the position to the Housemaster, whose brow grew dark as he listened.

"This is unheard of, Merry. I shall make it distinctly warm for the practical joker!"

And the Terrible Three saw that the master was annoyed. Something had to be done and Tom Merry quickly made up his mind to be the martyr.

"I'll go and fetch them back, sir," he said. "I have an idea who's responsible."

"Thank you, Merry!" exclaimed the master. "If you don't recover the clothes you had better go to my room and bring another suit for me."

"Very well, sir!"

And Tom Merry set off at the double to the school gates on his unpleasant mission. As he expected, a crowd of juniors were awaiting him at the gates, and foremost amongst them was Baggy Trimble, grinning triumphantly. He had lost no time in spreading the news that Tom Merry & Co. would have to return to the school in their bathing-costumes, and the juniors had crowded out to chip the party.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "What price Tom Merry now?"

"Listen, you chaps!" said the junior captain, holding up his hand. "Some silly ass has taken old Railton's clothes as well as ours, and he's waxy!"

"Whew!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Baggy Trimble's face turned pale quite suddenly, and Tom Merry caught him by the shoulder.

"You see what you've done, you ass? The best thing for you to do is to take old Railton's clothes back and apologise!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Baggy. "Oh dear!"

A fresh cheer went up from the juniors. Baggy was fairly in the toils.

Tom Merry hurried over to the dormitory, with the crowd after him, but they were chipping Baggy now. The laugh was against him.

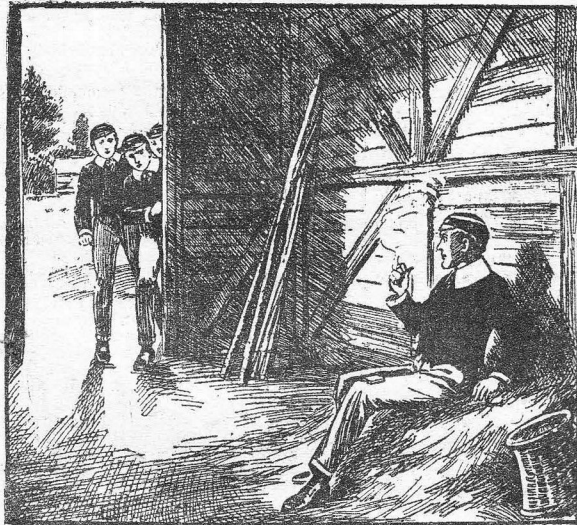
Five minutes later a fat and perspiring figure arrived at the bathing-pool carrying a bundle of clothes; and there followed an unpleasant interview with Mr. Railton, in the course of which Baggy was commanded to appear in the Housemaster's study in half an hour.

When that command was obeyed several juniors waited for the practical joker outside the door. It opened at length, to emit the doubled-up figure of Trimble, squeezing his palms. Baggy's reward for practical joking was a severe caning. Altogether it had been a very unlucky day for Baggy Trimble!

THE END.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 75.

ANOTHER LONG, COMPLETE STORY!



TRACKED DOWN!

THE ... ROOKWOOD DETECTIVES!

A SPLENDID LONG, COMPLETE
SCHOOL STORY, DEALING WITH
THE ADVENTURES OF JIMMY
SILVER & CO., AT ROOKWOOD.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Missing—a Fiver!

PATRICK O'DONOVAN FLYNN, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was in high feather.

His ruddy, cheery face was covered with smiles.

He came out of the Form-room, after morning lessons, looking as if he were treading on air.

A good many juniors gathered round him, also with smiling faces. Flynn of the Fourth was popular among the Classical juniors. But his popularity seemed to have increased by leaps and bounds.

Flynn was in luck.

Only that morning a letter had arrived with the Cork postmark, and inside the letter was a crisp, rustling, brand-new fiver.

It was a birthday present from Flynn's uncle in Cork.

Five-pound notes were not as common as blackberries in the Classical Fourth. Only wealthy fellows like Smythe of the Shell, as a rule, ever had the opportunity of showing fivers about. It was Flynn's first fiver, and, naturally, Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was very pleased. All his friends were pleased, too. Flynn's fiver was not likely to last him long—and that day he had more friends than usual.

"Sure, it's a high toime we're going to have," said Flynn, beaming upon his numerous friends. "Me uncle's a broth av a boy intoirly! Jimmy Silver! Hold on, Jimmy, me jewel!"

Jimmy Silver and Lovell and Raby and Newcome, the Fistical Four, were going down the passage, en route for the cricket-ground. But they stopped as Flynn called out.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy.

"Sure, ye're going to join me little party this afternoon," said Flynn. "We're going to picnic in the woods, me boy. I've got a fiver—"

"Yes, I've heard of the fiver," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Congrats! I'll change it for you if you like."

"Faith, ye've got five quids about yez?" exclaimed Flynn, in astonishment.

"Oh, no; I've got nincepence! But I'll change the fiver with pleasure—if nincepence will do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, it's an omadhaun ye are!" said Flynn. "I'm goin' to me study now for the fiver, bedad! Come on, bhoyis!"

Flynn & Co. marched upstairs to the Fourth Form passage. The Fistical Four followed. They were interested in Flynn's fiver, especially as a picnic was to be the outcome of it, to which apparently nearly all Rookwood was to be invited.

Flynn's study was soon quite crowded. Everybody wanted to see the fiver.

The Irish junior threw open his desk with a flourish.

"Here it is, me boys!"

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Then Flynn uttered a shout of dismay.

"Bedad! Where is it intoirly?"

Flynn stood staring into his desk.

There were books, and papers, and a pocket-knife, and several broken pens, and a chunk of sealing-wax, and some old letters, and some stamps, and a stick of toffee in the desk. But there was no sign of a fiver.

"Well, where is it?" asked Townsend.

"Begorra!"

"Isn't it there?" exclaimed Topham.

"Bedad! It's gone!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "How can it be gone? Search through the desk, fathead!"

"Sure, I left it here—"

"Why didn't you look it up, ass?" said Lovell.

"How could I look it up when the lock doesn't work at all, at all? And, faith, I've lost the key, too!"

"And now you've lost the banknote, you duffer!" said Rawson. "Feel in your pockets."

"But, sure, I left it in me desk," said Flynn. "It couldn't blow away with the lid shut intoirly. It's a rotten jape!"

"Sure you had a fiver at all?" grinned Townsend. "I haven't seen it yet."

"Why, you silly omadhaun—" began Flynn indignantly.

"He had it right enough," said Oswald.

"He showed it to me when he took it out of the letter this morning."

"And I put it in me desk to be safe," said Flynn.

"First I put it in me pocket, and then, sure, I thought I might lose it intoirly, and I ran up and put it in me desk after brekker. I tould half a dozen fellows that I put it in me desk."

"So he did!" said Dickinson minor. "He tould me."

"Well, where is it, then?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Some silly gossoon has taken it out for a joke, to worry me intoirly, and, sure, I'll hammer him for that same!" exclaimed Flynn. "Now, who's got it?"

"Not much of a joke in pinching a banknote," said Jimmy Silver drily. "If any silly ass here has moved it, he'd better own up at once."

There was a general shaking of heads. The "silly ass" in question did not seem to be present.

"Well, I've got to have it," said Flynn warmly. "Whoever's taken it had better own up. Sure, there's a picnic this afternoon, and we can't have the picnic without the fiver."

"More likely you dropped it somewhere," growled Lovell. "You know what a careless ass you are, Flynn. Do you know the number?"

"How should I know the number at all?"

"Well, it's printed on the note, fathead!"

"Faith, I never thought of lookin'."

"You wouldn't! You'd better put a notice on the board; somebody may have picked it up."

"But I tell ye I left it in me desk!" howled Flynn.

"Oh, rats! You've lost it! Put a notice on the board, anyway, and you'll get it back if anybody has it."

"That's the best thing you can do," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Nobody would be idiot enough to take it for a joke. You've lost it!"

"Sure, I tell ye—"

"Bow-wow! Come on, you chaps, or we sha'n't get any cricket before dinner."

The Fistical Four left the study, and most of the juniors followed them, grinning most unsympathetically. Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was left staring in dismay into his desk.

At dinner-time a notice appeared on the board:

"Lost! A five-pound note, number unknown. Anybody finding same is hereby requested to return it to the owner, P. O'D. Flynn of the IVth."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The First Clue!

FOUND your fiver?"

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth came down to the cricket-ground after lessons that day.

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn's high spirits had departed.

The picnic had not come off.

Instead of "rolling in quids" that afternoon, as he had expected, Flynn had spent all his spare time in hunting for the missing fiver in all likely and unlikely places.

He shook his head dismally in response to Jimmy Silver's question.

"No; it's vanished."

Jimmy looked very grave.

"Look here, Flynn, banknotes can't vanish on their own. If you left the fiver in your desk—"

"Sure, I did!"

"Well, if it's been taken it's not a jape—that's all rot. If it's been taken it's been stolen."

Flynn nodded.

"Faith, and I think so intoirly, only there isn't a thief in Rookwood, I suppose."

"There must be if the fiver's been taken," said Lovell. "It's a rotten thing to think of anybody, but there you are! Of course, it couldn't have been a Classical chap. Some Modern worm."

"Oh, of course!" said Raby. And Newcome nodded assent. The Classical juniors had no doubt upon that point.

"Towny says I'd better go to Mr. Bootles about it," said Flynn, with a worried look.

"But, sure, I don't want such a fuss. I'd rather lose me a fiver than have the Moderns sayin' there's a thief on our side."

"It means a rotten scandal," said Jimmy Silver, knitting his brows. "Look here, Flynn, don't be too quick to make it all public. We'd better look into the matter ourselves first."

"If there's a thief in the school we can find him," said Lovell.

"Sure, I don't want to say a word. But I want me fiver," said Flynn.

"We'll hold a pow-wow," said Jimmy Silver. "It's pretty clear that it's been pinched, but we ought to be able to find the fellow who pinched it without calling in masters or prefects. We don't want an expulsion from Rookwood. We can give the rotter a hiding ourselves, and save scandal."

"Hear, hear!"

The Fistical Four went in to tea, and Flynn went with them. Over tea a pow-wow was held in the end study.

Jimmy Silver thought the matter out carefully.

The banknote had been missing since the morning, and all the Lower School knew that it was missing. It was impossible to suppose that a practical joker was keeping it back at the risk of being suspected of theft.

It was a case of deliberate theft. That seemed clear.

But who was the thief?

There were a good many fellows at Rookwood of whom the Fistical Four did not approve, certainly. Smythe of the Shell was a blackguard. Downy and Topsy of the Fourth were little better. But there was not a single fellow whom they felt they could suspect of theft. That was altogether too "thick."

But a theft certainly couldn't have been committed without a thief.

So a thief there must be.

"It's rotten," said Jimmy Silver at last—"utterly rotten!" Flynn ought to be scragged for being so careless with a banknote!"

"Sure, how was I to know there was a thafe in the school?"

"Oh, rats! Now, the fiver's been stolen," said Jimmy. "It's up to us to see the matter through without making a scandal. We can deal with the rotter ourselves when we find him. We ought to go into the matter like Sherlock Holmes or Ferrers Locke."

The Co. knitted their brows in thought.

"Sherlock Holmes always finds a clue," said Lovell reflectively. "Was there any clue in your study, Flynn?"

"Sure, I didn't see any."

"No cigarette-ash on the floor?"

"No, ye fossion!"

"Or finger-marks?" asked Raby. "Lots of criminals are tracked down by fingermarks."

"Divil a wan!" said Flynn, shaking his head.

"Then I'm blessed if I see how we're to begin. If there isn't a clue, we can't follow it up, that's a cert."

"There's the process of exclusion," said Jimmy Silver.

"The—which?"

"The process of exclusion," said Jimmy firmly. "That's how Ferrers Locke does it. You exclude those who couldn't possibly have done it, and among those left you look for the fellow who did it."

"Well, you can begin by excluding this study," remarked Lovell sarcastically. "That leaves you about two hundred chaps to choose from."

"Fathead! We begin by excluding the Classical side," said Jimmy Silver. "I suppose you fellows agree that, if there's a thief at Rookwood, he's a Modern?"

"Oh, yes, rather!"

"That narrows down the ground considerably," said Jimmy, in quite the manner of Sherlock Holmes. "Now, by the process of exclusion, we establish the fact that the thief is on the Modern side."

"Agreed!"

"The question is, which of the Modern rotters dodged over here and pinched Flynn's banknote. The only chap I can think of who's mean enough is Leggett of the Fourth. He lends money at interest among the fellows, and it's only a step from that to stealing. Of course, I don't say Leggett's guilty," added Jimmy magnanimously; "I only say it's suspicious, as he's a Modern. Our investigations will have to be carried out on the Modern side. We'd better go over and see Tommy Dodd about it."

"Sure, we're getting on already!" said Flynn.

"It's really a clue," said Lovell thoughtfully. "If we point out to Tommy Dodd that the thief's bound to be a Modern, he will be able to help us find the chap."

"That's the idea!"

And as soon as tea was over the five juniors crossed over to the Modern side of Rookwood to investigate.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Difference of Opinion!

TAP! "Come in!" sang out Tommy Dodd. The three Tommies—Dodd and Doyle and Cook—were in their study. They had just finished tea when Jimmy Silver's tap came at the door.

Tommy Dodd gave the Classical juniors a cheery nod as they entered. As a rule, Classics and Moderns seldom met without mutual chipping, and sometimes the chipping extended to thick ears and swollen noses.

But the three Tommies had heard all about Flynn's loss, and they were sympathetic. So they greeted the Classics cordially.

"Found that giddy note yet?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Not yet," said Jimmy Silver. "We're taking the matter in hand ourselves, so as to keep it dark that there's a thief in the school."

Tommy Dodd whistled.

"Well, that's a good idea," he said. "It's rotten enough if there's a thief in Rookwood. I shouldn't have thought even you Classics were as bad as that!"

"Why, you silly ass—" began Lovell wrathfully.

"Hold on!" said Jimmy. "We haven't come here for a row! Shut up, Lovell! Our idea is to look into this matter like Sherlock Holmes, Dobby, and find the thief ourselves, and make him disgorge, and give him a thundering hiding!"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Tommy Cook. "You'd like us to come over and help you. Is that it?"

"Ahem! Nunno!"

"We'll help," said Tommy Doyle. "Make up a list of Classical chaps, and then examine them one after another—"

"Look here—" began Lovell.

"Shush! The fact is, Dobby, we've got a sort of clue already," explained Jimmy Silver. "It stands to reason that if there's a thief in Rookwood he's on the Modern side—"

"What!" roared the three Tommies together, jumping up.

"Don't get excited. We want you to help us."

"You cheeky idiot!"

"You burbling cuckoo!"

"You silly blatherskite!"

"Do keep your wool on!" urged Jimmy Silver pacifically. "Let me finish. You chaps, being Moderns, can help us a lot in finding the thief, as he's on the Modern side—"

"How do you know he's on the Modern side?" howled Tommy Dodd.

"Well, he must be a Modern. You admit that."

"You burbling jabberwock!" said Tommy Dodd, in measured tones. "You wall-eyed dummy! Of course, if there's a thief in the school, he's a Classical. That would be quite plain to anybody but a howling idiot!"

"If you're going to talk rot, Tommy Dodd—"

"I'm not. I leave that to you!"

"You'd better go home and search one another's pockets!" snorted Tommy Cook.

"Look here—"

"And don't come over this side again till you've settled which of you is a blessed thief!" said Tommy Doyle.

"I'm not standing this!" roared Lovell. "Look here, you Modern worms, we've come over here to look for the thief! Are you going to help us, or not?"

"We'll help you out of the study!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Kick them out!"

"Go for the rotters!"

"Hold on!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Yaroooh! Oh, you fathead! Here, mop up those Modern rotters!"

Tempers were rising on both sides, and Tommy Dodd had grasped Jimmy, to hurl him forth from the study. But the captain of the Fourth was not easily to be hurled. He returned grasp for grasp, and they staggered about the study in terrific combat.

There was a general engagement at once.

Odds were on the side of the Classics, but only for a few moments. The din in the study attracted Modern juniors from along the passage.

Towle of the Fourth threw the door open.

"What the merry thunder!" he ejaculated. "Rescue!" roared Tommy Cook. "Back up, Moderns!"

"Back up, Moderns!" Towle yelled along the passage, and he plunged into the fray. Modern juniors came racing up, and piled in without stopping to ask questions.

A dozen or more fellows were soon swarm-

ing in the study, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were hopelessly outnumbered.

"Turn 'em out!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Classics!"

"Yaroooh! Wew-wow!"

"Leggo! Yahooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classics put up a tremendous resistance, but the odds were too great.

Jimmy Silver was whirled out of the study with his arms and legs flying wildly in the air, and he went bundling down the stairs.

"Kick 'em out!"

"Hooray! You next, Lovell!"

"Gerroogh!"

Lovell followed Jimmy Silver, rolling and roaring. Flynn went next, in a heap, and then Raby and Newcome.

From the top of the stairs the Moderns roared with laughter.

"Come back and have some more!" yelled Towle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not come back. They did not want any more. They limped away, dishevelled and dejected.

"The cheeky asses!" said Tommy Dodd, as he mopped a streaming nose with a handkerchief. "The nerve of it, you know! I should have thought Jimmy Silver would have more sense. Isn't it as plain as the nose on your face that the thief belongs to the Classical side?"

"Of course it is! Ow, my eye!"

"And I'll tell you what," said Tommy Dodd. "We'll take up the matter ourselves now, and jolly well find the thief, and prove that he's a Classical!"

"Good egg!"

Tommy Dodd meant business. And as soon as the damages resulting from the conflict were a little repaired, the three Tommies prepared for investigation. As Tommy Dodd remarked, the culprit being undoubtedly a Classical, the field of research was thereby narrowed down. There were no other clues, unfortunately; but Tommy Dodd & Co. commenced the search for further clues with great determination.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Shadowed by Four!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. might have been observed looking unusually thoughtful on the following day.

They had a problem to think out.

The banknote had not turned up. It was clearer than ever that it had been taken for "keeps."

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was in a state of fury and dismay. But Flynn, excited as he was, fully agreed to keep the matter "dark" as long as possible. For the honour of the school, the juniors did not want it bruited about that there was a thief at Rookwood.

To have the matter taken before the Head, and all the fellows questioned, and a regular scandal ensue, was, the juniors agreed, too "rotten." The punishment of the thief would be severe enough when they found him.

The notice concerning the missing banknote was taken off the board in order to keep the matter from coming to the knowledge of the prefects.

The notice was not of much use, anyway, now it was assured that the thief did not intend to return his plunder.

Jimmy Silver gave more thought to the investigations than to his lessons that morning, with the result that Mr. Bootles was "down" upon him several times.

But how could the captain of the Fourth put his mind into the Gallic War, or the mysteries of Todhunter, when he had to deal with the mystery of Flynn's fiver? It was evidently impossible. So Jimmy was glad when morning lessons were over.

The Fistical Four were considering the matter with deep and anxious consideration. The thief was on the Modern side of Rookwood, and tracking him down there presented certain difficulties. They could not even visit the Modern side without being "chucked out." And which of the Moderns was it? That was a deep question.

Jimmy Silver drew up a list of possible "suspects," and his comrades read it over approvingly. It ran:

"Leggett of the Fourth. Known to be a mean cad and a Shylock. Mean enough for anything."

"Knowles of the Sixth. Bully and beast. Known to be a smoker and to bet on gees. Gambling next door to stealing."

"Catesby of the Sixth. Same kind of beast as Knowles.

"Frampton of the Sixth. Ditto.

"All Modern rotters!"

This was the biggest list Jimmy could make, after considering the matter very carefully. For the Modern fellows, though cheeky bounders and worms and rotters, in a manner of speaking, were really pretty decent chaps otherwise, and it was impossible to suspect them of stealing Flynn's fiver.

"I can't think of more than four we could possibly suspect," confessed Jimmy Silver. "Now, let's go over the list."

"You can mark off Knowles," said Lovell. "Knowles has tons of oof—simply reeks with it, like all those Modern cads!"

"Yes, he's got fivers of his own," said Raby.

"He gambles," said Jimmy. "We know he bets on horses. The Head doesn't know it, but we do. Gambling leads to debt, even with rich fellows."

"Well, that's so. But how could a chap in the Sixth know anything about Flynn's fiver?"

"H'm! Leggett's the man!" said Lovell. "He's in the Fourth, so he'd heard of Flynn's fiver. He's not rich, either—he's poor. And he's awfully keen after money. He lends a chap a bob at a penny a week interest. A chap who does that would steal a five-pound note."

"Yes, you can bet it wasn't a senior," said Newcome. "I plump for Leggett."

Jimmy Silver nodded assent.

"We'll keep the other clues in reserve, and investigate Leggett first," he said.

"Good!"

"I—I suppose the first thing is to shadow him," said Jimmy doubtfully. "That's what Sexton Blake always does. He shadows a chap, and sets Tinker to watch the chap's accomplices."

"I like Sherlock Holmes' methods better myself," demurred Lovell. "Holmes settles the matter without even getting out of his room at Baker Street. He does it by looking at a chap's boots, or counting up the number of his eyelashes, or something. Then he tells Dr. Watson all about it."

"Sounds easy!" said Raby. "But—but how is it done?"

The Fistical Four looked at one another dubiously. Detecting a criminal on the Sherlock Holmes method did not seem really easy when they started to do it.

"Better shadow him," said Jimmy Silver. "But what's the good of following Leggett about?"

"He might drop the fiver, and convict himself."

"Well, he might. But he mightn't." "Besides," said Jimmy, struck by a brilliant thought, "he's bound to change the fiver if he's got it! Suppose we stop him changing it?"

"Something in that!" agreed the Co.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Eh? Where?"

"You follow your leader, and don't ask questions!"

Jimmy Silver led the way into the school shop, followed by his surprised chums.

Old Sergeant Kettle came out of his little parlour to serve them.

"Ginger-pop for four, please!" said Jimmy. The sergeant served up the ginger-pop.

"By the way, could you give me a fiver for a lot of small change, sergeant?" asked Jimmy Silver astutely.

The sergeant smiled.

"I couldn't, Master Silver!"

"What the thunder!" ejaculated Lovell. "You've only got a bob!"

Jimmy gave his chum a freezing look.

"Dry up!" he whispered.

"But what the dickens—"

"Cheese it! Sure you haven't got a fiver, sergeant? Didn't one of the fellows change a fiver with you yesterday, or to-day?"

Sergeant Kettle shook his head.

"No, Master Silver!"

"Oh, never mind, then!"

The Fistical Four disposed of their ginger-pop, and left. In the quadrangle Jimmy glared at Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You ass, you nearly mucked it all up!" he said. "Can't you see I was leading up to getting information from the sergeant? Don't you jaw, old chap."

"Look here—"

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy marched off, and his chums followed him—to the porter's lodge this time. Old Mack gave Jimmy an affable grin.

"Lovely morning, Mack!" said Jimmy Silver.

"It is that, Master Silver!"

"Has Leggett been out of gates to-day, Mack? You know Leggett—one of those Modern cads?"

"He ain't been out, Master Silver!"

"Dear me!" said Jimmy thoughtfully. "Then he must have been out yesterday afternoon. I suppose you didn't notice, Mack?"

"Master Leggett was detained by Mr. Manders yesterday, sir," said Mack. "Which Mr. Manders give me horders to report 'im if he went out?"

"And he didn't go?"

"No fear!" said Mack emphatically.

"Thanks!"

The amateur detectives marched off again.

"That's a bit of luck!" said Jimmy, when they were out of Mack's hearing. "Leggett can't have changed the banknote yet. He was detained yesterday, and never went out; and he hasn't changed the note with the sergeant. He's still got it on him."

"Oh," said Lovell, "I see!"

"Time you did!" agreed Jimmy. "Now we've got to shadow Leggett, and see that he doesn't get out of our sight."

"And when he goes out to change the note—"

"Then we collar him!"

The Classical chums looked for Leggett of the Fourth next. They found him in the quadrangle, talking to Towle. When Towle left him, they kept Leggett in sight.

The suspected junior, evidently quite oblivious of the fact that he was suspected of anything, went to the tuckshop.

The Fistical Four waited eagerly outside the doorway.

They heard Leggett order ginger-beer, and heard coppers clink on the counter. To their disappointment, Leggett was not changing a five-pound note. This, however, was probably only evidence of his deep artfulness; he was too cautious to change the banknote within the walls of Rookwood.

Leggett came out after disposing of the ginger-beer, and nearly ran into the Classical chums. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked elaborately unconscious.

With a great assumption of carelessness, they shadowed Leggett across the quad, and into Little Quad through the archway.

Leggett strolled round Little Quad idly, threw a stone at the sparrows—a favourite amusement of the amiable Leggett's—and strolled back to the Modern side.

He disappeared into Mr. Manders' House, and the shadowing had to come to an abrupt stop. The three Tommies could be seen in the hall; and the amateur detectives were not looking for a "serap."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were grinning as they turned away. But Jimmy Silver looked serious.

"Well?" said Raby.

"We've established so far that he hasn't changed the note," said Jimmy.

"But we haven't established that he's got it," remarked Newcome.

"He couldn't change it if he's not got it," said Lovell, with an air of deep reflection.

"He couldn't, you know."

To which remark, undoubtedly correct as it was, Jimmy Silver replied only with a snort. Then the amateur detectives went in to dinner.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd Knows Something!

"SMYTHE!"

"Smythe?"

"Yes, Smythe."

Tommy Dodd spoke in a tone of conviction.

The three Tommies had come out of Mr. Manders' House after dinner. During dinner their great chief had been very thoughtful—thinking of the problem he had in hand, and seeking an answer to the perplexing question, which of the Classics had "bagged" Flynn's fiver.

Tommy Dodd uttered the name of Smythe at last. He had thought it out.

Doyle and Cook looked rather incredulous.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was certainly a Classical; and as such liable to suspicion, according to the theories of the Modern detectives. But really there seemed little other ground for suspicion, so far as Cook and Doyle could see.

Smythe was a swanking ass, certainly. He was a nut of the nuttiest variety. He dabbled in gee-gees and nap and banker, and he smoked expensive cigarettes. But it was a long step from that to stealing Flynn's banknote.

"Smythe!" repeated Tommy Dodd. "He's

a gambling beast, for one thing! He as good as tried to swindle the chaps over a sweep-stake once, you remember. He plays cards in his study."

"Yes. But—"

"You see, though those Classics are all worms and rotters, it's rather hard to fix on one who could be suspected of stealing," confessed Tommy Dodd. "That's awfully thick, you know. But it was one of them; we know that for certain. So we're bound to suspect one of them."

"True for you!" agreed Doyle. "But—"

"Well, it's only reasonable to fix on a chap who's got vices, isn't it? Smythe's got lots of vices. Smokes, plays cards for money, goes to the races secretly on half-holidays, and that kind of thing. I've heard a lot about it. But besides that, I've got a clue."

"Go ahead!"

"Suppose a chap were beast enough to steal a fiver, what would he do next?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Change it," said Cook.

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Tommy Dodd—"

"Of course he'd change it," said Tommy Dodd witheringly. "But that isn't the first thing he'd do. If he were beast enough to throw suspicion on somebody else, if he could, to save his own skin. Well, that's what Smythe's been doing."

"My hat! Has he?"

"Yes, he has. He's been saying that when a banknote's pinched, fellows had better think of a beggarly, poverty-stricken bouncer of a scholarship kid. That means Rawson, you know."

"The rotter! Rawson's a good sort!"

"Of course he is. Smythe was saying that to throw suspicion on him. See?"

"But he might say that, anyway; he doesn't like Rawson," remarked Cook. "Rawson licked him, you know."

"Well, he might," admitted Tommy Dodd.

"But, on the other hand, it might be a deep move to keep suspicion off himself."

Doyle and Cook nodded. It appeared reasonable.

"It's a clue, anyway," said Tommy Dodd. "I shouldn't wonder if the banknote's about Smythe all the time. Let's go and see Flynn."

"Flynn! What for?"

"To ask him a question, my boy."

Flynn was found on the School House steps, looking dismal. Like Rachel of old, Flynn was mourning his loss, and would not be comforted.

"No news of the fiver?" asked Tommy Dodd.

Flynn shook his head.

"Have you got the number?"

Another shake of the head.

"Have any of the chaps asked you whether you've got the number of it?" inquired Tommy Dodd mysteriously.

Flynn stared.

"Yes; lots," he said.

"Who were they?"

"Well, Jimmy Silver—"

"Ahem! Never mind Jimmy Silver. Who else?"

"Lovell, and Raby, and Oswald, and Jones minor, and Dickinson, and—"

"Never mind them. Has Smythe of the Shell asked you?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good! And did you tell him you didn't know the number?"

"Yes. Fhwat are ye driving at intoirly?"

"Ta-ta!" said Tommy Dodd, and the three Tommies walked away, leaving Flynn very much astonished.

Tommy Dodd was feeling elated.

"That's another clue," he remarked, with great satisfaction. "Smythe has been asking Flynn whether he knows the number of the note. He wants to know whether it can be traced, before he changes it."

"Bedad, it's a janius ye are!" said Tommy Doyle admiringly.

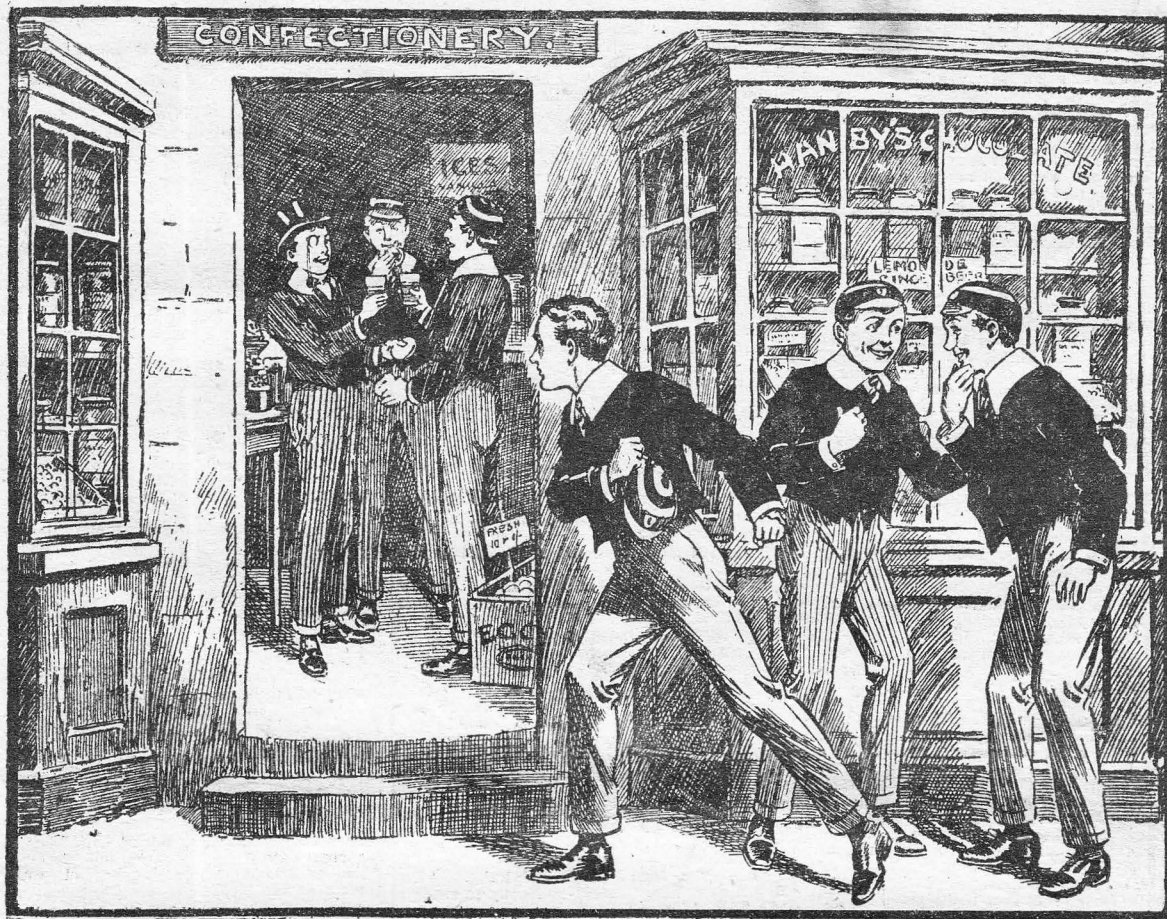
"But lots of fellows asked Flynn that," objected Cook. "They couldn't all have wanted to know before they changed the note—"

"Don't be an ass, Tommy Cook!"

"Well, but—"

"You jaw too much, old chap," said Tommy Dodd. "The other fellows don't matter; it's Smythe we're getting evidence against."

"That's all very well," said Cook, unconvinced. "But suppose Smythe were getting evidence against us? Then he might work out that we were asking Flynn whether he knew the number of his note because we'd got it."



The three Tommies stopped outside the little shop and peered through the window. Through the mountains of biscuit tins, sweet bottles, and other articles in the window they could see Smythe & Co. They were tracked down at last. (See Chapter 7.)

"If you think you can conduct this case better than I can, Tommy Cook, you'd better take it in hand."

"Oh, never mind! But I think—"
 "Don't you start thinking; you ain't used to it. Now we've got four clues against Smythe. First, he's a Classical. Second, he's a gambler. Third, he's tried to throw suspicion on Rawson. Fourth, he's anxious about whether Flynn knows the number of the stolen note. Why, that's evidence enough to hang a chap!" said Tommy Dodd impressively. "Men have been hanged on less evidence than that, I can tell you."

"Then I jolly well think capital punishment ought to be abolished," said Tommy Cook.

"Perhaps you agree with Jimmy Silver that it was a Modern who did it," said Tommy Dodd, with crushing sarcasm.

"Oh, rot! It was a Classical, of course. I shouldn't wonder if it was Smythe," admitted Cook.

"If Sherlock Holmes was here he'd say it was Smythe. I know that. I can just hear him saying, 'Evidently Smythe, my dear Watson.'"

"Well, what's the next step, Tommy darling?" asked Doyle. "Supposing it's Smythe, are we going to denounce the spalpeen?"

"Not till we've got proof. As I work it out, Smythe has extracted from Flynn the information that he doesn't know the number of the note. Now he'll feel safe in parting with it. We've got to shadow him."

"We can't go into the Shell Form-room," said Cook dubiously.

"You ass, he won't want shadowing during lessons!" said Tommy Dodd, exasperated. "He won't ask his Form-master to change the note for him. After lessons we shall keep him under surveillance."

"Well, that's a good word intirely!"

"Under surveillance," said Tommy Dodd firmly. "Hallo! There's the beastly bell for lessons."

The three detectives, suddenly transformed

into schoolboys again, started for the Form-room. They met the Fistical Four on the way—following Leggett to the Form-room. Tommy Dodd eyed the rival detectives disdainfully.

"Well, how are you getting on?" he sniffed.

"First-rate!" said Jimmy Silver confidently.

"Got any clues?" snorted Cook.

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, so have we."

"Oh, you've found out it's a Modern, have you?" chortled Lovell.

"No, you ass! We've found out it's a Classical!"

"You silly ass—"

"You Classical jesser—"

"But, my dear chap," expostulated Jimmy Silver, "we've not only found out that it was a Modern, but we've got the man."

"You howling ass, we've got the man, too; and he's a Classical!"

"Oh, don't be an obstinate mule, Tommy Dodd—"

"Don't you be a silly chump, Jimmy Silver!"

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"I hope you juniors are not quarrelling!"

said Mr. Bootles' voice behind. "Kindly go into the Form-room and keep order."

And the argument was stopped. With mutual sniffs of disdain, the rival detectives of Rookwood went in to lessons.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tracked Down!

AFTER lessons that day there were seven juniors in Rookwood who had no time to give to cricket practice.

The rival detectives were all on the track.

The Fistical Four hung about the Modern side, waiting for Leggett to come out. They

were prepared for fistical encounters with the three Tommies if necessary. But it was not necessary, for the three Tommies were over on the Classical side, watching for Smythe of the Shell.

There had been no news of the missing banknote. Patrick O'Donovan Flynn was still looking glum. Probably he had only a slight faith in the efforts of the Classical detectives.

Rawson of the Fourth, indeed, held the opinion that the banknote had not been stolen at all, and that that ass Flynn had lost it somewhere and somehow.

He urged Flynn to make a minute search of his study, and as Flynn shook his head Rawson proceeded to make the search himself. Flynn sat in the armchair and looked on glumly.

Rawson had told the Fistical Four his opinion, but his remark was greeted only with superior smiles. The Fistical Four knew what they were about. And they were not likely to give up clues that looked so promising to help Rawson go rummaging over Flynn's untidy study.

They waited and watched for Leggett.

"Here he comes!" said Jimmy Silver at last.

Leggett of the Fourth came out of Mr. Manders' House. He did not glance at the Classical juniors. He sauntered away towards the school gates, and disappeared into the road.

The Classicals exchanged excited looks.

This was, as they had discovered, the first time Leggett had been out of gates since Flynn's fiver was purloined.

There was little doubt in their minds as to his object. He had gone out to change the fiver.

"After him!" said Lovell eagerly.

And the Fistical Four followed on the track of the suspect.

Leggett had gone down the lane towards Coombe. He was well ahead of the Fistical

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four as they started in the same direction. But it was easy to keep him in sight.

"Hallo! He's looking round!" muttered Raby.

"Shows he's on his guard!" murmured Jimmy.

"He's seen us!" Leggett was staring at the four. They sauntered on, with an elaborate air of carelessness. Leggett started again, climbed over the stile, and struck off across the fields.

"Dodging us!" said Lovell.

"Knows we suspect him!" commented Newcome. "We shall have to be jolly careful!" Jimmy Silver reflected.

Leggett was evidently seeking to throw the pursuers off his track, and that was undoubtedly a suspicious circumstance. So long as they had him in sight he was not likely to attempt to change the stolen note.

"We've got to shadow him without letting him see us," said Jimmy Silver. "He's got to be taken off his guard. Where is the cad heading for? He will have to go to a shop to change the note, and there's no shops in that direction."

"Might be going to meet somebody to change it," said Lovell. "He knows that bookie fellow Joey Hook, you know. We've seen him talking to him."

"Just the fellow he'd go to with a stolen note!" exclaimed Raby.

Jimmy Silver jumped on the stile, and scanned the meadows. Leggett had gone into the barn on the other side of the field. He did not reappear.

"It's a giddy rendezvous!" said Lovell decidedly.

"Well, it looks like it. Scud round the field, and let's get at the barn from the other side," said Jimmy. "Either he's dodging us, or he's meeting somebody there. Come on!"

Keeping close to the hedge, the Classical juniors skirted the field, and in ten minutes were on the opposite side of the barn. From that side they cautiously approached the building.

The barn seemed deserted. There was no sound of voices within. Was Leggett waiting there for an accomplice, or was he simply dodging the shadowers? True, he did not know that he was suspected. But a guilty conscience makes cowards of us all, and very likely Leggett was alarmed.

With all the skill they had learned at scouting the four juniors drew nearer to the barn. As they came close to the open doorway a smell of tobacco assailed them.

Jimmy Silver peered cautiously in.

Then he gave a jump. Leggett of the Fourth was seated on a bundle of straw, smoking a cigarette. He had a packet of cigarettes open on his knee.

He started a little as he saw Jimmy Silver in the doorway. As concealment was useless now, Jimmy entered the barn, followed by his chums.

Leggett regarded them uneasily.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"We want Flynn's fiver!" said Lovell.

"Eh?"

"Hand it over, you smoky beast!"

"Gone dotty?" asked Leggett unpleasantly.

"Better collar him and take it, Jimmy," said Lovell. "He must have it about him!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"The game's up, Leggett!" he said sternly.

"What game?"

"No good telling whoopers like a Prussian!" said Jimmy. "You're waiting for somebody, you smoky worm!"

"I've come here for a smoke!" said Leggett sullenly. "I suppose it's none of your business!"

"You're waiting for Joey Hook!"

Leggett stared.

"You're going to get him to change the fiver for you," said Jimmy Silver. "The game's up, I tell you! We've worked out the whole case, and the evidence is complete. Now, we want Flynn's fiver!"

"You silly idiot!" yelled Leggett. "Do you think I've got Flynn's fiver?"

"We know you have!"

"Why, you silly chumps, you howling lunatics, you—you—"

"Nuff said! Are you going to hand it over?"

"How can I hand it over when I've not got it, and don't know anything about it?" shrieked Leggett.

"Draw it mild!" said Lovell disdainfully.

"Don't we keep on telling you you've got it, and the evidence is complete?"

"You cross ass—"

"Are you going to hand it over?" exclaimed Raby impatiently.

"Oh, you dummy—"

"Collar him!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Hands off! I tell you—"

Leggett wriggled in the grasp of the Classics. Leggett's word was not worth much; he was known to be almost Hunnish in the extent of his prevarications. He was jerked to his feet in the grasp of the Fistical Four.

"Mind, we know you're guilty!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're going to search you for the banknote."

"I'll complain to Mr. Manders—"

"Bow-wow! Turn out your pockets."

"I won't!"

"Then we jolly well will!"

And they did. Leggett's pockets were carefully examined. Two or three I O U's from unfortunate fellows who had borrowed money of the Rookwood Shylock were found. But the banknote did not come to light.

But the Fistical Four were determined.

"It's about him somewhere," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, he would hide it pretty carefully. Go ahead!"

"Oh, you thumping idiots—"

"Dry up, you burglar!"

Leggett did not venture to resist, but he gasped with rage as he was stripped and searched.

Most of his clothes lay on the floor when the Fistical Four had finished, which was not for a good quarter of an hour.

Then the amateur detectives looked rather blue.

Leggett's clothing had been searched with a thoroughness that could not have been excelled at Scotland Yard itself.

But there was no trace of the missing fiver.

"He's left it at Rookwood," said Lovell, in deep disappointment.

"You howling idiot, I've not got it!" shrieked Leggett. "And I'll complain to Mr. Manders about this, you see if I don't!"

"Please yourself!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Don't forget to mention the smokes when you tell Manders all about it!"

"Oh, you rotter! You—you—"

"Come on!" grunted Jimmy Silver; and the disappointed detectives left the barn, leaving Leggett to dress himself and grind his teeth.

"Rather a frost!" remarked Raby. "He didn't come here to meet somebody to change the note, after all."

Jimmy Silver shook his head. That much was abundantly clear, at least.

"More likely to make arrangements for changing it another time," suggested Lovell.

"Of course, he's the man. His bad temper showed he'd got a guilty conscience."

"Oh, he's the man!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We haven't succeeded yet. But one swallow doesn't make a summer. Next time we'll have it."

"He's on his guard now, though."

"Can't be helped. We'll shadow him every time he leaves Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "Sooner or later we'll catch him with the fiver on him. Now let's

drop in at Mrs. Wicks' and get some ginger-pop."

And the disappointed but still determined detectives headed for Coombe.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

MEANWHILE, the rival detectives were not idle.

The three Tommies were also on the track. Tommy Dodd & Co.

had not long to wait. Smythe of the Shell came sauntering elegantly out of the School House with his chums, Howard and Tracy.

The three Shell fellows sauntered down to the gates, and after them went the three Tommies.

"At last!" said Tommy Dodd dramatically.

"You think he's going out to change the note?" asked Cook.

"I think it's very likely, now he knows that Flynn doesn't know the number of it."

"But he'd go alone, I should think."

"That's where he's awfully deep," explained Tommy Dodd. "He's keeping up appearances by taking Howard and Tracy with him.

Of course, he'll tell them it's a fiver he's had from his people. Smythe does have fivers sometimes—his people are disgustingly rich."

"Still, it would be safer for him to change it on the quiet."

"Smythe doesn't seem to think so," said Tommy Dodd.

The three Moderns followed the Classical Shell fellows out of the gates. Smythe & Co. walked away to Coombe, without once glancing behind.

Never was a shadower's work easier.

Certainly, Smythe's unconsciousness of danger might have been founded on a clear conscience. But that did not enter into Tommy Dodd's theories at all, and he did not even entertain the idea for the moment. He put it down to nerve.

The three Classics reached the village, with an easy saunter, just as if they were simply out for a walk after lessons in the pleasant summer weather.

They stopped at Mrs. Wicks' little shop in the High Street.

Tommy Dodd & Co. exchanged quick glances as the Shell fellows disappeared into the shop.

"Run to earth!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Buck up! Sure, they'll be changing the fiver before we can spot them," said Doyle.

The three Tommies hurried on.

They stopped outside the little shop and peered through the window. Through the mountains of salmon-tins and biscuit-tins and sweet-bottles and other articles in the window they could see Smythe & Co.

The great Adolphus was evidently in funds, for he was standing treat to his comrades in the most magnificent way.

Jam-tarts and cream-puffs galore had been served out, and foaming glasses of ginger-beer.

"They're going it!" murmured Dodd.

"Faith, Smythe's making the money fly," said Tommy Doyle. "Aisy enough when it isn't his own money, bedad."

"He hasn't paid yet. Wait till he pays. If he pays with a fiver—"

"Then we're going to jump on the thafe."

"Exactly!"

The Rookwood detectives waited and watched anxiously. They could not help thinking, with great satisfaction, of their coming triumph over Jimmy Silver. What would Silver have thought if he could only have been there? What, indeed?

"He's paying!" whispered Cook breathlessly.

Adolphus' lofty voice could be heard within.

"How much, Mrs. Wicks?"

"Four-and-sixpence, Master Smythe."

"I suppose you can change a fiver for me—what?"

The three Tommies exchanged blissful glances. There was no further doubt now. They moved towards the doorway.

"I shall have to send for the change, Master Smythe," said Mrs. Wicks, very respectfully. "I won't keep you a few minutes, sir."

"That's all right."

"All right, is it?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, rushing into the shop. "We've got you!"

"Run down!" howled Tommy Doyle.

"Unmasked!" exclaimed Cook, with a dramatic gesture worthy of a hero on a cinema.

The Shell fellows stared at them in astonishment.

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"By gad!" said Smythe.
 "What are you silly asses burbling about?" asked Howard politely.
 "Gone off your rockers?" inquired Tracy.
 "Don't try to brazen it out," said Tommy Doyle loftily. "You're found out, Smythe."
 "He's mad!" said Smythe, in wonder.
 "Mad as a hatter! Mad as the Kaiser, by gad! What are you drivin' at, you Modern ass?"

"Hand over that fiver!"
 "What!"
 "Hand it over at once, I tell you!"
 "Hand over my fiver!" said Smythe dazedly.
 "What the thunder should I hand over my fiver to you for?"

"Not your fiver—Flynn's fiver!" said Tommy Dodd sternly.

The Nuts of Rookwood fairly gasped. Smythe's eyeglass dropped out of his eye in his astonishment. The amateur detectives were somewhat disappointed to see no signs of conscious guilt in his face. Evidently he had a tremendous nerve.

"Flynn's fiver," said Smythe, in a gasping voice. "This isn't Flynn's fiver—this is my fiver!"

"Don't try to brazen it out," advised Tommy Dodd. "You're bowled out, Smythe, and you have got to hand over the loot. We're not going to give you away to the Head. We'll leave you to the Classical chaps to deal with. But we've got to take Flynn's fiver back to him, and you've got to hand it over—sharp!"

"It's my fiver!" said Smythe.
 "Oh, don't be funny! You either hand over that fiver to me, or you'll bring it back to Rookwood, and answer for it. That means the whole matter coming out, and the sack for you. But I'll let you take your choice."

"I'm going to pay Mrs. Wicks with this fiver—"

"You're not!" said Tommy Dodd decidedly.

"I haven't any other tin with me!" yelled Smythe. "I was stony till this came by the afternoon post."

"Bow-wow!"

"Don't you dare to interfere with me—"
 "If you want a scrap first, we're ready," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "It would take us about a minute to mop up the shop with you!"

The three Nuts were only too well aware of that, and they had to contain their wrath.

"I suppose you don't want me to take you back by the collar, Smythe?" said Tommy Dodd. "You'd better go quietly."
 "Go quietly! Oh, you idiot!"

"As for Mrs. Wicks, I'll lend you the money to settle for that, for the present, if you're stoney," said Tommy Dodd. "You can't change the fiver, it's not yours. Here's four-and-six, Mrs. Wicks."

"Thank you, Master Dodd!" gasped Mrs. Wicks.

"Come on, Smythe!"

Adolphus Smythe clenched his fists furiously. But he thought better of it. The three Tommies were terribly hard hitters, and the elegant Adolphus simply hadn't the ghost of a chance.

"I'll come!" he said savagely. "I'll make you smart for this, though!"

"This way!" said Tommy Dodd cheerfully.

And the three furious Nuts walked out of the shop, with the three Tommies on guard. It was just then that Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER: Baffled Detectives.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. paused to look at the Modern trio and their capture. Smythe's facial expression could not fail to draw attention.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Jimmy. Tommy Dodd chirruped triumphantly.

"We've got him," he said.

"Got who—Smythe?"

"The thief!"

"Eh?"

"We caught him changing Flynn's fiver!" chortled Tommy Doyle.

"Great Scott!"

"He didn't!" howled Adolphus. "I was changing my own fiver. It came by post this afternoon. Howard saw me take it out of the letter."

"Yes, I did," said Howard.

"Of course, his pals would back him up in his whoppers!" said Tommy Dodd contemptuously.

"But it can't be Smythe!" exclaimed Lovell. "It's Leggett!"

"Leggett!" yelled the three Moderns.
 "Yes, Leggett!" said Jimmy Silver warmly.
 "We've got the evidence against him quite clear. He's a Modern—"

"Oh, you ass! It's because Smythe's a Classical that we got on to the truth so easily. That was the first clue."

"Now, look here, you ass—"

"Oh, I've no time to waste jawing with Classical chumps!" said Tommy Dodd.

"We're taking Smythe back to Rookwood to account for the fiver!"

"You're making a mistake, you ass! It was Leggett—at least, it was a Modern. There isn't a shadow of a doubt about that."

"Lend me a hand, you kids, and we'll mop them up for their cheek!" exclaimed Smythe. "Pile in, and collar the Modern cads!"

"Yes; we can't allow this!" said Jimmy Silver. "Smythe's a worm, I know; but we can't have you accusing Classicals of Modern tricks, Dodd. Let him go!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Rescue!" howled Smythe.

"Go for 'em!" roared Lovell.

"Hang on to Smythe!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Yaroo! Leggo my hair! Yoop!"

In another moment there would have been a wild and whirling combat outside the tuckshop, and the celebrated struggle for the body of Patroclus would have been outdone by the tussle for Adolphus Smythe.

But the well-known voice of Patrick O'Donovan Flynn broke in:

"Arrah, hold on, ye gossoons! Don't rag now when there's a spread on! Come into the tuckshop wid me!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. paused. Flynn had arrived on the scene with a beaming face, and quite an army of juniors were following him. Half the Classical Fourth and a good many Moderns were with Flynn, and they all looked bright and anticipative. Flynn was waving something in his hand, and Jimmy Silver & Co. and the three Tommies stared blankly at it. It was a crisp new five-pound note!

"Wha-at's that?" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Flynn gave a little trill of delight.

"Sure, it's me fiver!"

"Your fiver?" yelled Dodd.

"Me fiver intoirly! Hurroo!"

"Did you get it from Leggett?" exclaimed Lovell excitedly.

"No. Rawson found it in me desk!"

"Rawson found it in your desk!" murmured Jimmy Silver at last.

Flynn nodded cheerily.

"Yis. Sure, when I put it in me desk for safety I shoved it inside a book and, sure, I forgot all about that afterwards intoirly. But I remembered when Rawson shook it out of the book."

"So it wasn't stolen at all?" gasped Dodd.

"Sure, it wasn't—"

"And you've given us all this trouble for nothing!" howled Jimmy.

"Faith, and how could I remember that I didn't reminbe— Yaroo! Hands off, ye spalpeens! Wharrer ye at?" roared Flynn.

The amateur detectives rushed upon the cheery owner of the fiver. Flynn was swept off his feet, and dumped down on the hard, unsympathetic ground, with a bump that made him yell wildly.

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Yaroo! Help! Howly Moses! Tare-an'-oons! Yuroogh!"

"Bump, bump!"

The Rookwood detectives desisted at last. They walked off, and left Flynn sitting on the ground in a dazed state and gasping for breath.

Jimmy Silver did not speak till the Fistical Four reached Rookwood. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were smiling. Jimmy gave them a glare.

"If you fellows ever propose to play the detective again—" he said.

"Us!" gasped the Co.

"Yes, you! If you ever propose it again you—"

"Why, it was you—"

"You all the time—"

"Oh, don't jaw!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

"I never knew such fellows for jawing!"

Lovell & Co. exchanged a wink, and magnanimously forbore from "jawing." Like good chums, they let their Uncle Jimmy down lightly.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week. Avoid disappointment by ordering your copy of the PENNY POPULAR early.)

THE MYSTERY MAKERS!

(Continued from page 10.)

"Not far," returned Dick evasively. He wondered who this fellow was.

"You don't know Martin, I believe," said Harry Trent. "He's one of our camera-operators. He's just taken a wonderfully interesting photograph."

The sad and saturnine-looking Martin solemnly shook hands with Dick. Apparently he was a man of few words. He silently handed Dick the negative Biglow had been examining, and then gazed across the room with a far-away look in his eyes, as if he had no further interest in the proceedings.

"Why, it's a view of the banquetting-hall!" said Dick, holding the negative against the cuff of his coat.

Martin nodded.

"Taken five-thirty this morning," he added.

"Well, what is there remarkable about it?" asked Dick. "It's a jolly good photograph, but I don't see—"

"Left-hand corner," interpolated Martin.

Dick construed this into meaning that the left-hand corner of the negative contained the point of interest.

He accordingly looked there.

"Seems to be a figure standing there," said Dick, after a minute's close scrutiny!

"There is a figure!" cut in Biglow.

"All alone!" murmured Martin.

"Do you mean the place was deserted when you took the photograph?" asked Dick.

"Martin declares he was the only human being present at the time," said Harry Trent.

"But this figure—" began Dick.

"Ghost!" said Martin.

"I suppose the negative hasn't been previously exposed?" suggested Harry.

Martin shook his head.

"New box," he said.

"You'll take a print, of course?" asked Dick.

Martin's face underwent a sort of convulsion. Presently the words popped out of his mouth, as if escaping from a prison.

"Wouldn't print that for worlds—destroy the negative—at once!"

And so saying, he picked it up, placed it in his pocket, and moved towards the door. There he stopped for a second, seemed about to say something else, apparently thought better of it, and jerked his way out of the room.

"Rum business!" said Harry Trent. "What with spirits that walk into photographs, and dwarfs who have fits in the middle of the night, the sooner we clear out of this place the better."

"Ay!" returned Biglow, with a deep sigh. "By the way," he continued, "some of the chaps have played a bit of a joke on friend Grimshaw. It was just before you came up, Harry. I was passing by his door, and saw Bobbin and Waddell looking through the key-hole. 'What's the game, boys?' I asked. Bobbin gave me expression number thirty-two from his collection of funny faces, and told me that Waddell had found the key in the door, and had locked it. 'The dwarf's inside now,' said Waddell. 'He won't be half wild when he tries to get out, and can't!'"

"They are a pair of fools!" said Harry impatiently. "Why can't they keep their funny stunts for business-hours? Grimshaw's a bad man to play jokes on."

Bobbin and Waddell were the heroes of the Western Super-Film Comedies.

"How long ago was this?" asked Dick suddenly.

"About an hour or so," said Biglow.

"Well, he's got out," said Dick. "I met him entering Hangman's Wood on my way here. He didn't see me, but I saw him."

"You couldn't have done!" retorted Biglow.

"I tell you I did."

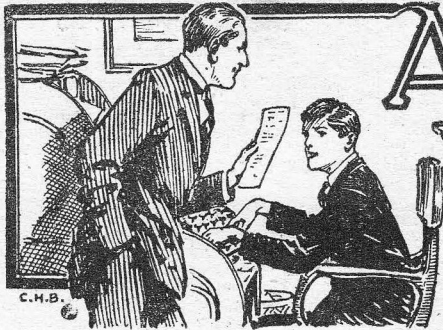
"But if he was locked in—"

"Now, don't argue!" said Harry, getting up. "There's a better way of settling things than that. I'll just pop round to his room and see if he's at home."

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

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 75.

OUR WEEKLY CHAT PAGE.



A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASSED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. Address: EDITOR, THE "PENNY POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

FOR NEXT FRIDAY!

The first of our splendid complete school stories on next Friday's programme is a long tale of Harry Wharton & Co. and Dennis Carr of Greyfriars. The title is:

"SPORTSMAN OR COWARD?"

By Frank Richards,

and in this stirring yarn the author deals in a masterly manner with a crisis that occurs in a curious way in the school life of Dennis Carr. This is an extra fine story.

The second long complete school story deals, of course, with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood. The title is:

"TAMING A TARTAR!"

By Owen Conquest,

and it deals in a most entertaining way with the coming of Alfred Higgs to Rookwood, and the trouble that was caused thereby.

There is also another thrilling instalment of our splendid new cinema story, entitled:

"THE MYSTERY MAKERS!"

By Nat Fairbanks,

in which Dick Tulliver discovers an important clue to the mysterious happenings which haunt the Western Super-Film Company in their lonely "location."

You will be unable to put this story down until you have devoured every word of it!

"HALF-PAST TWELVE."

This is the title of a capital little book which will "put people wise," as they say across the Atlantic, on heaps of subjects concerning which there is plenty of confused thought. Mr. George W. Gough, the writer, explains all about what banks do, the meaning of exchange, the value of work and commerce, and the actual use of money as a token

passing from hand to hand. It is just as well to have a mastery of such matters, and the handy little work will be a first-rate companion during the lunch interval.

A DEEP THINKER.

A correspondent living in Fife writes to me about Burns and Scott, and life generally. "Often," he says, "when I get out in the country I can see things which are as the food of life. There is no old castle or ruin but what I could sit and muse over it for hours." I congratulate my chum, and I am sorry that he has failed to find a good friend through the post. There is nothing in this. Friends just happen. They may come by mail, or down the chimney. You cannot lay down any rule.

PRAISE.

It is a very good thing in its way. A clap on the back, a cheery word at a given time work wonders. Looked at in one way, there is not enough of this kind of thing. The hard work of every day is helped thereby. The employer who puts in a compliment when it has been earned, stands to get better service. But there is far more in it all than that. I always like the splendid reply of Rudyard Kipling when he thanked Lord Tennyson for something he had said about a poem: "The private cannot thank the general for a word of encouragement, but it makes him fight the better the following day." True enough.

A FEW REQUESTS.

Stamp-collectors are asked to communicate with Alfred Beeston, 29, Rifle Crescent, Aston, Birmingham, who has started a stamp club. —R. G. Hobbs, the Manse, Windygates, Fife, is running an amateur club, with competitions. —A reader, of Belfast, asks me for information about a pen coupon. The answer is that he must follow the instructions to the letter. —G. H. D., of Chatham, wants to hear more about the Cliff House girls.—Football for next

season. V. G. Gray, 19, Saltram Crescent, Paddington, W. 9, wants to hear from players, 16 to 20 years of age.

THUNDERSTORMS.

It might be thought that thunderstorms were never expected. There is fuss enough about these splendid visitations when they do come along, and some folks are wary of the lightning. But after a spell of torrid weather the storm follows, as a matter of course. It is wanted. The dust has to be laid. The gardens and meadows have been asking for moisture. There is nothing so restful and inspiring as a walk in the country after a grand summer rain. Everything seems to come to life again. The brooks are singing on once more, the red robins buck up down by the side of the wood, and the hayfields look like business.

THE STORM IN TOWN.

Often enough in a town a big rain takes everyone unawares. The surface drainage seems to have been planned without any idea that a heavy downpour might happen. And the consequence is that you see motor-omnibuses ploughing their way through lakes. Buildings rise sheer out of the flood. Railways suffer no end. Low-lying stretches of line are awash, and the trains have to back out of stations. Up the Thames the inhabitants of the villages have to resort to the upper rooms, and if the rain is exceptionally prolonged, boats have to be requisitioned for bringing food, or taking off the isolated residents. Then, after a bit, the flood subsides, but it all happens again next time, and folks grumble about the drainage system just as usual.

A GIFTED LETTER-WRITER.

A correspondent tells me that she loves writing letters, and often writes long screeds which she has no intention of sending. She just stores them away. This sounds a bit selfish. Doubtless many of her correspondents would be delighted to hear from her, and all the time excellent and interesting letters are waiting to be read, only the trusty postman never gets a chance of handling the missives. But, of course, some of the best letters never do get to the post. There are many things which a fluent and thoughtful writer sets down which seem too near the heart of things. Still, that is just a matter of opinion.

THE ANGRY LETTER.

You know, perhaps, what it is to write an angry letter. It is really called for. It contains just what you really think—at the time. You feel that you will not be satisfied until the vexatious person at the other end reads it and bows under the rebuke! Then, somehow, wiser counsels prevail. The letter never gets a chance. Actually, it should not have the opportunity. It may be all right to give the feelings an outlet by racing on to paper all the smart things you think are called for, but it is best in most cases to hold the communication back a few hours, and then burn it!

THE BRITISH "MAGNET" AND "GEM" CLUB.

Mr. John Penn, 125, Dartmouth Park Hill, Highgate, N. 19, London, sends me a copy of his admirable magazine, which is a model of its kind, and also full particulars of the club

(Continued on page 20.)

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A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR.

(Continued from page 18.)

he is running for the benefit of Companion Paper readers. He wants to hear from more readers. London supporters should write to him. Other representatives are as follows: Scotland.—D. Smith, 476, Great Eastern Road, Parkhead, Glasgow. Ireland.—J. B. Bermingham, 2, Claremont Terrace, Meath Road, Bray. Wales.—G. Humphreys, 106, Mill Street, Tonyrefail, Glam. North England.—F. H. Turton, 21, Farrar Road, Abbeydale, Sheffield. West and Southern England.—B. Barber, 11, Ashgrove Road, Redland, Bristol.

I am very glad to give special prominence to Mr. Penn's workmanlike scheme, as it strikes me that it is just the kind of systematic plan which is wanted.

THE SEA.

I have just read a letter from Botany, New South Wales—it is from Miss Florence

Madden, and her address is Ocean Street, Botany, N.S.W., Australia, and she wants to hear from Companion Paper readers—in which the writer drops into poetry without knowing it. At least, I take that to be the case. She refers to the sea as perhaps the most wonderful thing in creation, and I fancy she is right in her idea. From now on to September everybody will be aiming at the sea. It is just a sight of it which helps, though I have heard town folks speak of the ocean as a disappointment.

It was, perhaps, too wet for them. But there, some individuals always will grumble. When they get houses and motor-cars and piles of money in the bank they still growl. It is no use arguing with them.

It is not reasonable to dislike the sea. It is good on a summer day, when it looks as if it were the most peaceful institution anybody could dream of, and it is magnificent when it wakes up in a fierce storm and the green waves are mountains high.

Can you tell me of anything better than a quiet sort of holiday in some village nestling in a valley, with the scent of fishing-nets, and all the jolly, romantic things in sight? When some of my chums were younger, how they revelled in building sand-

castles! Now they visit the sea and chum up with an old fisherman whose face looks as though it had been carved out of mahogany, and go out in his boat after the squirmy conger and the mackerel.

I hope there will be many such jaunts this season for my friends. Pleasures of this kind leave a wonderfully pleasant memory behind them. You see caves and cliffs, and you hear marvellous yarns of sea trips in and out amidst the islands.

You can like the sea without going to live on it. Most likely you are wanted at home. It is no use for a fellow who is doing excellent work in town or country to determine to go off to sea just because he happens to feel that way. We can appreciate it all without sacrificing duty. And, take it which way you please, the sea is a mighty good friend.

Your Editor

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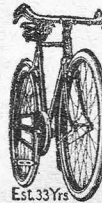


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