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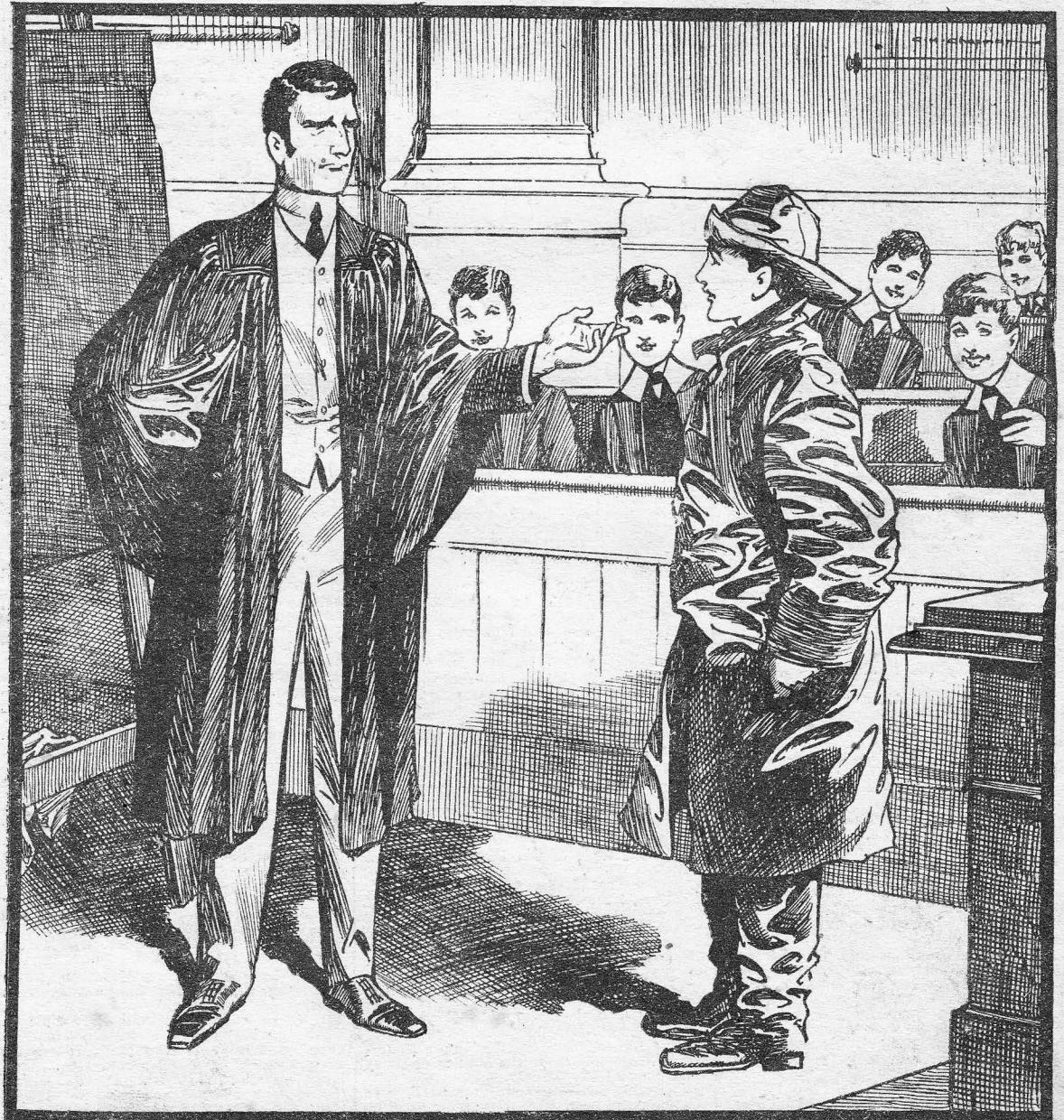
The
Penny → **1½!**
Popular

Week Ending
July 3rd. 1920.

No. 76
New Series.

20 PAGES

Four Splendid Stories of
HARRY WHARTON & CO., DICK TULLIVER—FILM ACTOR, JIMMY SILVER & CO., TOM MERRY & CO.



HARRY WHARTON'S STRANGE APPEARANCE CAUSES A SENSATION!

(An Amusing Situation in the Grand Tale of Greyfriars School in this Issue.)



Sportsman or Coward!

A MAGNIFICENT, LONG,
:: COMPLETE STORY ::
OF DENNIS CARR AND
HARRY WHARTON &
CO. AT GREYFRIARS.

... BY ...
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Dropped from the Team!

"HOWS that?"
It was not a shout; it was a howl. And eleven eager fieldsmen gave full vent to that howl simultaneously.

Dennis Carr of the Remove paused, bat in hand, and awaited the umpire's verdict.

It came in a second, though that second seemed to the batsman like several long-drawn-out moments.

"Not out!"
Dennis Carr gave a gasp of relief, and so did Harry Wharton & Co., who were looking on from the pavilion.

The Greyfriars Remove were playing against their time-honoured rivals, Temple & Co. of the Upper Fourth.

Batting first on a good wicket, the Remove had not greatly distinguished themselves.

The Famous Five had had their innings, and each had managed to scrape together a few runs; but many more were needed in order to bring the total to a respectable figure.

Dennis Carr was batting, and the hopes of the Removites were centred upon Dennis. If he failed, the outlook would be indeed black.

"That was a narrow shave, by Jove!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Carr just got to the crease in time. I made sure he'd be run out."

"Same here!" said Nugent.

Harry Wharton frowned.

"He ought not to have run," he said. "If he keeps trying to steal runs like that, he'll throw his wicket away!"

Dennis Carr was one of the Remove's best cricketers, but a stranger watching the match would not have thought so, for Dennis was shaping very badly.

Temple was bowling, and his deliveries were by no means deadly. Yet Dennis did not seem able to make head or tail of them. He was all at sea. Twice in succession he missed the ball completely, and it just skimmed the balls, and a moment later Dennis made a wretched stroke, and spooned the ball into the ready hands of Dabney at point.

"Out!"

Dennis Carr turned, and retraced his steps to the pavilion.

As a rule, Dennis' return to the pavilion was heralded with handclapping and cheer-

ing. He could generally be relied upon to make a useful score. But on this occasion he had failed lamentably, and it was amid a frozen silence that he mounted the pavilion steps.

Then, whilst Dennis was stooping to unbuckle his pads, the storm burst.

"You chump!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"You burbling duffer!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"We were counting on you to make at least fifty," said Nugent, "instead of which you made one—a single, solitary one!"

"You didn't exactly bag a century yourself, Nugent!" said Dennis, looking up.

"No; but I kept my end up for twenty minutes, and that's more than you did. Besides, I don't claim to be the Jessop of the team."

"Neither do I."

"It's hardly fair to slang Carr, you fellows," said Harry Wharton. "We all come a cropper at times, and I dare say Carr will make up for it at bowling."

"What's the score?" inquired Bob Cherry.

Johnny Bull glanced at the telegraph-board.

"Forty for eight wickets," he said.

"It'll remain at forty till the finish, then. The last two men won't do anything."

Bob Cherry was right.

The remaining batsmen were disposed of without another run being added to the score.

The Removites looked grim. It was not often that the side was skittled out so cheaply.

As for Temple & Co., they were in high feather.

"We've got the fags fairly licked this time!" said the leader of the Upper Fourth, with a grin.

"Yes, rather!"

"I don't think we ought to play the Remove again," said Fry. "These matches are too one-sided."

"Never mind," said Temple. "It's practice for us."

"You'll beat the young cubs of your own bat, old man!" said Dabney.

After a brief interval the Upper Fourth opened their innings to the bowling of Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr.

Wharton's deliveries were very puzzling to the batsmen, who were repeatedly tied up in knots, so to speak.

Dennis Carr, however, was right off the target. In his first over two of the balls

were wides, and two more were full-tosses which the batsman had no difficulty in despatching to the boundary.

There were shrill yells of protest from the Remove spectators.

"Carr's no good!"

"Take him off, Wharton!"

"He can't bowl for toffee!"

The captain of the Remove turned to Dennis Carr.

"You hear them?" he said.

"I'm not deaf!" growled Dennis.

"They're advising me to take you off. And if your second over's as bad as your first, I will!"

Wharton spoke with unusual irritation, and naturally his words did not have an encouraging effect upon Dennis Carr.

Off Dennis' second over Cecil Reginald Temple scored fourteen runs.

Hoots of derision came from the spectators, mingled with cheers for Temple.

Wharton beckoned to Vernon-Smith.

"Go on to bowl in Carr's place, Smithy," he said.

"All serene!"

Dennis Carr found himself relegated to the long field, where for a long time he was given no work to do.

The Fourth-Formers could make little headway against the bowling of Wharton and Vernon-Smith, and wickets fell with gratifying frequency—gratifying to the Remove, at any rate.

On the outskirts of the field Dennis Carr paced moodily to and fro. He realised only too well what a sorry show he had put up. His batting had been bad, and his bowling atrocious.

Why?

Dennis could not account for it. He was not ill—he had nothing on his mind. He had just struck a bad patch—that bad patch which even the finest cricketers in the country were familiar with.

This was one of those days on which everything went wrong, and nothing went right.

In the ordinary way, Dennis Carr could be relied upon to make a useful score, and to "bag" a number of wickets. To-day his score consisted of a stolen run, and he had taken no wickets at all. And his Form-fellows were annoyed and exasperated with him. The majority of them were not inclined to make any allowance for the fact that Dennis had struck a bad patch.

Glancing at length in the direction of the

telegraph-board, Dennis Carr saw that eight wickets were down.

A moment later the ninth wicket fell. There was but one more batsman to be disposed of, and the Fourth-Formers had scored thirty-nine. They needed one run to tie, and two to win.

The excitement was at fever-heat, of course, as the last man—the hope of his side—walked on to the pitch.

Harry Wharton was bowling, and he was in excellent trim. His deliveries were difficult to stop, much less hit.

But the last man in was desperate and determined. He opened his shoulders to the ball which Wharton sent down, and the leather went speeding out into the long field. It was high in the air, and Dennis Carr was standing beneath it as it dropped.

"Now, Carr!"
"He's held it!"
"He's muffed it!"
"Oh-h-h!"

A deep and prolonged groan went up from the Remove supporters.

The ball had slipped through Dennis Carr's hands; the batsmen had crossed twice, and the match was won by the Upper Fourth!

It was with a crestfallen air that Dennis came off the field. It seemed amazing, incredible, that he had missed that catch. It had not been a difficult one. In nine cases out of ten Dennis would have held it. But this was the tenth case!

As he went up the pavilion steps Dennis met with a reception of a very different kind from that to which he was accustomed.

"Yah!"
"Butter-fingers!"
"When are you going to learn to play cricket?"

"A kid in a kindergarten could have held that catch!"

Dennis made no reply to these scathing taunts. With burning cheeks and downcast eyes he passed into the pavilion. And here he had to face a fresh torrent of criticism from his fellow-players.

"I've never seen you play worse!" said Harry Wharton.

Dennis was silent.
"You were simply awful," said Bob Cherry.
"What d'you mean by putting up such a putrid show?"

Silence.
"Anybody would think," said Vernon-Smith, "that you deliberately let the side down!"

Dennis Carr was roused from his silence at last.

"That's enough, Smith!" he exclaimed, his eyes flashing. "You're trying to insinuate that I sold the match?"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.
"If the cap fits, wear it!" he said.
And he strolled out of the pavilion.

Harry Wharton & Co. refrained from saying anything further; but they were deeply disappointed at having lost the match.

Dennis Carr spent a wretched evening. He was bitterly conscious of having let the team down—unintentionally, of course. His study-mates, Lord Mauleverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian, did their best to cheer him up; but nothing could console Dennis for the sorry display he had given on the cricket-field.

When prep was finished Dennis adjourned to the junior Common-room.

Here, on the notice-board, he saw an announcement, which had but recently been posted up. It was a list of players for the Remove's forthcoming fixture with Trumper & Co., of Courtfield County Council School.

Dennis Carr scanned the list in vain for his own name.

It was not there!
There was a chuckle from the group of fellows already congregated in front of the notice-board.

"I guess this is where you get left, Carr!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Serves him jolly well right!" remarked Bolsover major. "Wharton would have been potty to play Carr after his miserable exhibition this afternoon."

"Yes, rather!"
"It's high time some of these beastly upstarts were dropped from the team!" said Skinner.

But he spoke in such a low tone that Dennis Carr did not hear what was said. Which was perhaps fortunate for Skinner!

Dennis saw that his place in the team had been assigned to Monty Newland, the Jewish junior. After scanning the list of players, he turned abruptly on his heel, and quitted the Common-room.

It was to Study No. 1 that Dennis went. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent were within, and they looked up quickly as Dennis entered. They could guess that he had come to lodge a protest against being excluded from the team. And they were right.

"I've just been looking at the notice-board—" began Dennis.
"Really!" said Nugent. "Hope it survived the shock!"

"Don't be funny! You're comedian enough, without straining after effect. I didn't see my name down to play against Courtfield!"

"I've dropped you from the team, Carr," said Wharton.

"For good?"
"That depends."
"On what?"

"Yourself, of course. If your play improves you'll come back automatically to the eleven. And if it doesn't improve—"

"Well?"
"You'll have to remain with the reserves."

"A cheerful prospect!" said Dennis bitterly.

"Well, you've only yourself to blame. Your play this afternoon was, to put it mildly, simply appalling!"

"I was below form—"
"Very much below form. I should say! I'm sorry to have to drop you, but we can't afford to take any risks against Trumper & Co."

"I shall have got back into my stride by Saturday—"

"Pr'aps—p'r'aps not! I'm not disposed to play you on the off-chance!"

Dennis Carr frowned.

"Would you have treated one of your own particular pals the same?" he said. "Nugent, here, for instance, or Bob Cherry?"

Wharton nodded.

"Personal feeling doesn't enter into it," he said. "If one of my pals played like you played this afternoon I'd fire him from the team without a second's hesitation!"

"There was a pause."
"Your decision is quite final, I suppose?" said Dennis, at length.

"Quite."
"Very well!" said Dennis.

And without another word, he strode out of the study, slamming the door behind him with rather unnecessary violence.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Voice of the Tempter.

DENNIS CARR was hurt and humiliated at having been dropped from the team. One of his faults—if it could be termed a fault—was super-sensitiveness. He was keenly alive to the cutting chaff of his schoolfellows. Every where he went the word "Butter-fingers!" seemed to be hurled at him. And although Dennis pretended to be indifferent to the taunts, they stung him to the quick.

Finally, wishing to escape from this verbal persecution, Dennis put on his cap and went for a stroll. It wanted half an hour yet to locking-up time.

In the gathering dusk of the summer evening Dennis tramped along the road in the direction of Friardale.

Although his exclusion from the team could not be regarded as a really crushing misfortune, Dennis took it to heart very much. It was characteristic of him that he could face big troubles unflinchingly; but small ones of this sort annoyed and irritated him. To have seen him tramping along the road, with his hands plunged deeply into his pockets, and looking the picture of dejection, one would have imagined that Dennis Carr was in serious trouble.

The junior halted at length beside the old stile. He rested his elbows upon it, and gazed over the silent meadows.

How long he would have remained thus, absorbed in his own gloomy reflections, was uncertain. But presently a voice hailed him—the familiar, drawing voice of Cecil Ponsonby, the leader of the Highcliffe Nuts.

"Anythin' wrong, dear boy?"
Dennis turned from the stile. He saw that Ponsonby was alone.

"No," he said shortly.

"You can't deceive your Uncle Pon!" said the Highcliffe junior, with a grin. "You were moonin' an' mopin' as if you were absolutely fed up!"

"And supposing I am?"
"Well, it's not a nice state of mind to get into. I feel like it myself sometimes, but I know a good cure for that fed-up feelin'!"

"Smoking and gamblin', I suppose?" said Dennis contemptuously.

"My young friend is fretful this evenin'," said Ponsonby. "Smokin' an' gamblin' are

ugly words. Why not call it a little flutter, an' have done with it?"

"I know what your little flutters are," said Dennis. "I've had some! And I've no desire to renew the experience!"

Ponsonby laughed.

"I can see what it is," he said. "You've been readin' namby-pamby books that point a moral at the end of each chapter. 'Perfect Percy, an' How He Became Prime Minister,' an' trash of that sort, I suppose?"

"Rats!"
"I can remember the time when you'd have jumped at the chance of havin' a flutter," said Ponsonby.

"So can I. And I want to forget it!"
"You've turned over a new leaf?"

"If you like to put it that way—yes."
"An' you'll never again tread what old Shakespeare calls the primrose-path of dalliance?"

"Never!"
"You'll never smoke a cigarette or drink anythin' stronger than lemonade until you're ninety?"

"Don't talk rot!"

"Look here!" said Ponsonby, attempting to draw his arm through that of Dennis, who promptly repulsed him. "I'm perfectly serious now. I can see that things are goin' all wrong with you. I can see that you're bored stiff with the society of Wharton an' his priggish set. An' I'm goin' to make you a sportin' suggestion."

Dennis Carr was silent. And Ponsonby put a wrong interpretation upon that silence.

He imagined that Dennis was anxious to hear what he had to say.

"My suggestion is this," continued Ponsonby. "That you join forces again with me an' my pals. Now, you needn't think I'm askin' you to break bounds every night, an' all that sort of thing. I'm not. I'm simply prescribin' an occasional flutter. It'll do you all the good in the world. It'll take you out of yourself. The life you're leadin' at Greyfriars, old top, is too narrow. Goin' straight has its drawbacks, an' one of 'em is that it's so unexcitin'—so beastly dull, you know. If you want to enjoy the fleetin' hours of youth, you simply must go on the razzle now an' again. The poet says that there's nothin' half so sweet in life as love's young dream. I beg to differ. There's nothin' half so sweet in life as a merry gatherin' of friends, an' an excitin' game of nap for sixpenny points!"

Ponsonby paused. His rather lengthy speech had left him breathless. He imagined that it had been, if not a powerful, at least a persuasive speech. And he scrutinised Dennis Carr's face in the gloaming, to ascertain, if possible, the effect of his words.

For a full minute the silence remained unbroken. Then Ponsonby said:

"Well?"
"I'm quite willing—" began Dennis.

"Oh, good!"

"I'm quite willing to believe that bounders like you can extract enjoyment from little flutters, as you call them. But that sort of thing doesn't appeal to me. And it never did. I used to try to persuade myself that it was great fun to sit and gamble. But I knew in my heart that it was the most asinine folly."

Ponsonby's jaw dropped. He had not expected this.

"As I've told you before, I'm heartily sick of you and your crew," continued Dennis. "I've washed my hands of you once and for all!"

"Then there's nothin' doing?" said Ponsonby.

"No."

The Highcliffe Nut started to walk away. He was furious at his failure, and, moved by a sudden impulse, he turned, snatched Dennis Carr's cap from his head, and sent it whirling into space.

It was the most unfortunate thing Ponsonby could have done.

"You cad!" panted Dennis.

And he was upon the Highcliffe fellow with the spring of a tiger.

Left and right, right and left, Dennis Carr's fist shot out.

Ponsonby offered plenty of resistance, but it did not avail. For Dennis' blood was up, and he was fighting with unusual fierceness.

Crash!

Ponsonby was down. He landed in a sprawling heap in the roadway, and his opponent stood over him, urging him to get up and have some more.

But Ponsonby had had enough.

"Hang you!" he snarled. "I'm done!"

Dennis Carr's lip curled contemptuously.

"You haven't the backbone of a mouse!" he said. "Pick up my cap!"

Ponsonby hesitated.

"At once!" said Dennis. "Or—"

Ponsonby lurched to his feet, and rescued the cap from the puddle into which it had fallen. He handed the drenched article of headgear to Dennis Carr, who turned on his heel without another word, and strode away.

For a moment Ponsonby remained where he was in the roadway, glaring after the fellow who had thrashed him.

"All right, my beauty!" he muttered. "You've had the best of the argument so far, but it won't be long before I succeed in turnin' the tables!"

So saying, Ponsonby stooped and picked up a handkerchief which lay in the roadway.

The handkerchief was Dennis Carr's. Dennis had dropped it during the fight.

"This," murmured Ponsonby, "will come in useful!"

And, putting the handkerchief in his pocket, he limped away in the direction of Highcliffe—a rascal well liked.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Dilemma.

"HERE he comes!"

"Here's the merchant who let his side down!"

"Yah!"

"Call yourself a cricketer?"

These amiable comments greeted Dennis Carr as he entered the Remove dormitory.

Dennis paid no heed to them. He walked straight to his bed and started to undress.

"I say, Wharton," said Billy Bunter, "I think you ought to hand over Carr's place in the team to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, on Carr's present showing Wharton might do worse!" said Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!" said Johnny Bull. "A kid in the Second could have put up a better show than Carr did this afternoon!"

Dennis Carr was heartily weary of listening to this sort of discussion. But he knew that if he joined in and protested against the taunts of his schoolfellows the discussion would only be prolonged.

Besides, what the fellows were saying was quite correct. No fog in the Second would have muffled such a simple catch as Dennis had muffed that afternoon, and no fog in the Second would have batted and bowled so atrociously.

To plead that he had been off-colour would be useless. Dennis had already explained to Wharton that he had struck a bad patch, but that explanation had not helped him at all. His only resource was silence.

And silent he remained until Wingate of the Sixth came in and extinguished the lights.

The usual buzz of conversation followed Wingate's departure, and Dennis Carr's feeble display in the match with the Upper Fourth was still the chief topic.

Occasionally Dennis was called upon to answer a question, but he preserved his silence.

"Sulky beast!" growled Bolsover major.

"Keep an eye on him, Wharton," said Skinner. "He'll try and get his own back for being left out of the team!"

"That's enough, Skinner!" said the captain of the Remove sharply.

He knew that Dennis Carr was not by nature revengeful, and he hoped that Dennis would soon win back his place in the eleven.

One by one the juniors dropped off to sleep, Dennis Carr being the last to close his eyes.

The sun was streaming in at the high windows when Harry Wharton awoke. Glancing at his watch, he saw that it was half an hour to rising-bell.

"Time for an early dip!" he murmured.

And, springing out of bed, he aroused Bob Cherry by the simple expedient of tweaking his nose.

"Yarooooogh!" roared Bob. "What's the little game?"

"Tumble out!" said Wharton briefly.

"Eh?"

"We're going for a bathe!"

"Speak for yourself!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I'm not coming. I don't see the fun of bathing in the middle of the night!"

"Why, you ass, it's half-past six!"

"I'm not coming!" repeated Bob, composing himself afresh in his bed.

"Why not?"

"Too much fog."

It was very unusual for Bob Cherry to emulate the example of Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove. Bob was anything but a slacker as a rule. He was generally up with the lark, especially in summer. But on this particular morning

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an early dip did not appeal to him. As a matter of fact, he was not properly awake.

Harry Wharton's efforts to persuade his chum having proved futile, the captain of the Remove visited the beds of Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, and roused the respective occupants.

"What's up?" asked Nugent.

"Early morning dip!" said Wharton briskly.

"Groo!"

Nugent turned over in his bed and went to sleep again.

As for Johnny Bull, he replied that wild horses wouldn't succeed in dragging him from his bed. And Hurree Singh said that the drowsiness of his esteemed self was terrific, and that he didn't feel like taking part in the early morning dipfulness.

"You lazy slackers!" growled Wharton. "If you won't come I'll go on my own!"

"Do!" cried Bob Cherry. "Hope it keeps fine for you!"

Harry Wharton proceeded to dress, and as he did so he hurled expletives at his unusually slothful chums.

As Wharton was in the act of leaving the dormitory he saw that Dennis Carr was up and dressing.

After a moment's hesitation Wharton called to him.

"Coming along, Carr?"

Dennis shook his head.

"I'm going for a stroll," he said curtly.

"Oh, all right! Don't get huffy."

A few moments later Harry Wharton, armed with towel and costume, was walking with rapid strides in the direction of Pegg Bay. He had been divided in his mind whether to bathe in the river or the sea, and he had eventually decided upon the latter.

As he strode on in the glory of the summer morning he reflected on what his chums were missing by remaining in bed.

"The silly asses!" he muttered. "I've never known them to be so abominably lazy!"

Wharton soon reached his destination.

The placid sea lay gleaming in the sunshine. The incoming tide lapped gently upon the sand and rocks at the base of the Great Shoulder.

The junior undressed on the shore and sprinted into the water until it was up to his waist. Then he struck out strongly, revelling in the delightful exercise.

Wharton was a fine long-distance swimmer. Contemptuous of the possibility of an attack of cramp, he swam far out to sea.

On and on he went, with strong, sweeping strokes. And when at last he turned the shore seemed far distant, and the boatman's cottages, dotted hither and thither, appeared like tiny specks.

"I must put my beef into it," murmured Wharton. "or I shall be late for brekker."

It was a long swim to shore, but the junior, favoured by the tide, covered the distance in record time. And it was with a feeling of fitness and freshness that he stepped ashore.

And then Wharton made a startling discovery.

He looked round for his towel, but it was not there. He looked for his clothes, but they were not there either.

"What the thump—" he began.

There was only one explanation so far as Wharton could see. His clothes must have been removed by some practical joker.

And if that was the case, the sooner the practical joker restored the garments the better.

Wharton glanced around him, with a frown. He did not resent a harmless jape, but the removal of his clothes was a jape which was hardly in the best of taste.

There was not a soul in sight. Wharton raised a shout.

"Hi!"

But the only answer he received was the mocking echo of his own voice.

"Come back, whoever you are!" shouted Wharton. "I want my togs!"

Again there was no reply, save for the echo of the junior's voice and the screeching of the seagulls overhead.

Harry Wharton was utterly at a loss. He could not, in his present condition, carry out a search for the unknown marauder. He could do nothing but wait until his clothes were returned to him.

But would they be returned?

Perhaps this was something more than a jape. Perhaps it was a deliberate plot to place the captain of the Remove in an awkward fix. The individual who had removed Wharton's clothing had evidently no intention of bringing it back.

Wharton clenched his hands hard.

"The rotter!" he exclaimed. "The cowardly rotter!"

And then, again scanning the stretch of sand around him, Harry Wharton discovered something.

It was a handkerchief. And Wharton could tell at a glance that it did not belong to him.

The pale blue border seemed familiar, somehow. And in one of the corners of the handkerchief were the initials "D. C."

Wharton realised in a flash that the handkerchief was the property of Dennis Carr.

"So this is Carr's doing!" he muttered.

There wasn't a shadow of doubt in Wharton's mind that the fellow who had made off with his clothes was Dennis Carr.

It was only too obvious that Dennis had come on the scene whilst Wharton was swimming far out to sea, and that he had removed his schoolfellow's clothing. In his hurried flight he must have dropped his handkerchief.

And then Wharton remembered that he had seen Dennis Carr in the act of dressing whilst he—Wharton—was quitting the Remove dormitory.

Carr had said that he was going for a stroll. And his stroll had apparently taken him to Pegg Bay, in the wake of Harry Wharton.

Yes, Wharton was convinced that he had Carr to thank for his present predicament.

But why had Dennis done this thing?

In revenge for being left out of the eleven!

It was not a pleasant sort of revenge; but, then, few acts of revenge were ever pleasant.

Wharton had supposed Dennis Carr to be above doing this sort of thing; but he told himself that he had entertained too high an opinion of Dennis.

"The cad!" he muttered savagely. "I'll make him sit up for this as soon as I get back to Greyfriars!"

But how was he to get back?

A bathing-costume, although adequate raiment for the seashore, was not good enough for the public highway.

The only thing to be done, in the circumstances, was to borrow some clothes. But Harry Wharton hardly cared to present himself at one of the boatman's cottages in that condition. It would be too humiliating.

"I must wait until somebody turns up, I suppose!" grunted the captain of the Remove.

And he seated himself on the warm sand, and waited.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Late for Lessons.

HELP did not arrive for an hour.

Then an ancient fisherman came in sight, and Harry Wharton hailed him.

"Lovely mornin', sir!" said the fisherman.

"Which it's goin' to be werry 'ot later on."

"Never mind the climatic conditions just now," said Wharton. "Somebody's pinched my togs!"

"Eh?"

"My clothes have been taken away!"

"My heye! 'Oo took 'em?"

"One of the other fellows from the school. It was his queer idea of a lark, I suppose. I've been here an hour waiting for somebody to turn up. I'm late for brekker, and it looks as if I shall be late for lessons in the bargain! Can you help me?"

The fisherman reflected a moment.

"I could lend 'ee a blanket," he said presently.

"Thanks! But I don't fancy tramping all the way to Greyfriars in a blanket! Got a suit of clothes you could lend me?"

"Only oilskins," was the reply.

"They'll be better than nothing. Trot them out!"

"If you'll jest step along to my cottage, sir—"

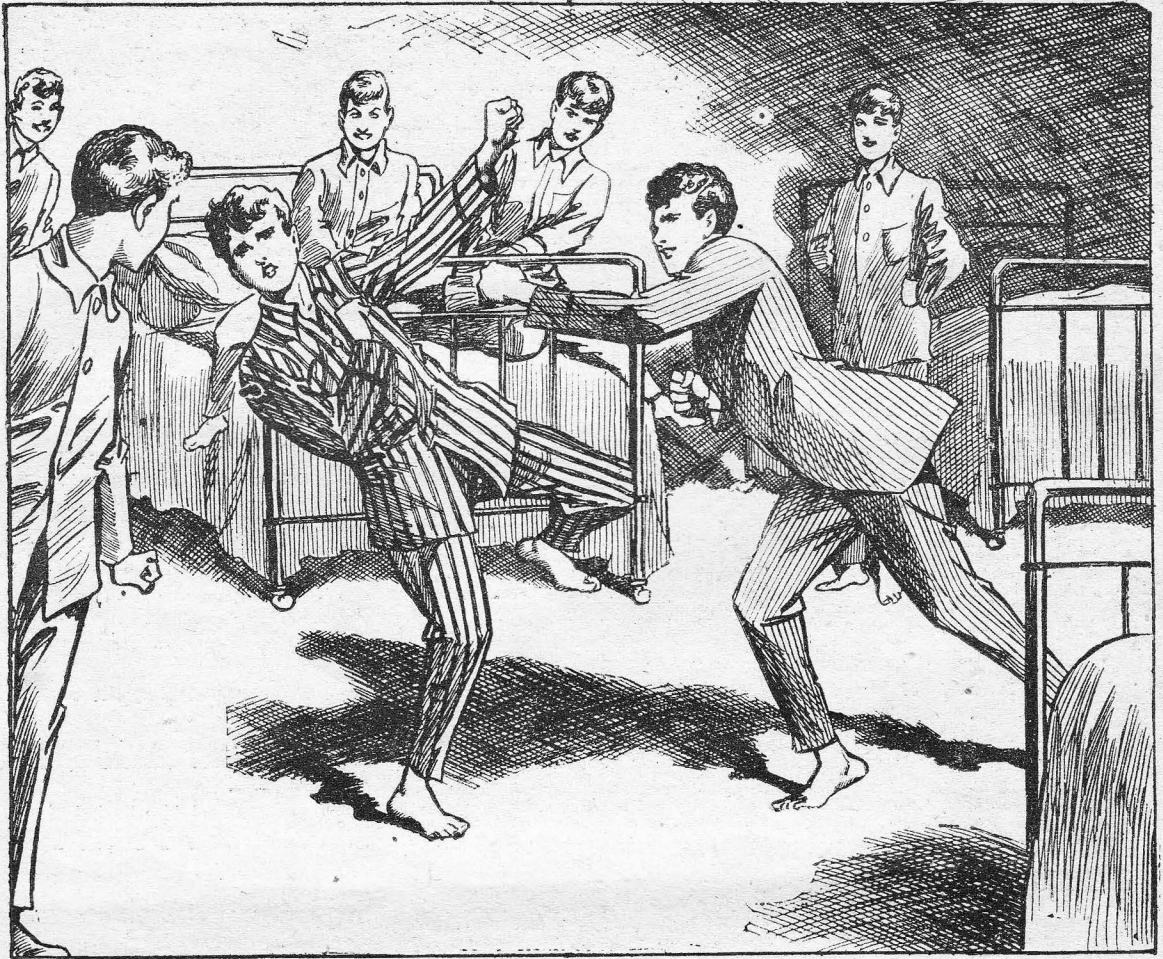
"No, thanks!" said Wharton hastily. "I'd rather you brought them here, if you don't mind."

The fisherman nodded, and walked away in the direction of one of the cottages. He reappeared in a few moments, carrying a suit of oilskins and a pair of gigantic sea-boots.

Harry Wharton made a wry face. He didn't fancy getting into those oilskins. But he had no alternative. He couldn't possibly remain on the shore all day.

And so, after some hesitation, the captain of the Remove donned the oilskins and the sea-boots. He looked a ridiculous figure, and even the stolid fisherman could not repress a grin of amusement.

"Thanks very much!" said Wharton. "I'll



Towards the end of the round Dennis Carr's strength began to peter out, and his guard became so feeble that a powerful uppercut from his opponent lifted him clean off his feet, and sent him crashing to the floor. There was a shout. "Hurrah! Licked, by Jove!" (See Chapter 6.)

let you have these things back this afternoon."

"Quite welcome, sir!" said the fisherman. Harry Wharton started on his journey to Greyfriars. He fervently hoped that he would meet nobody who knew him. But he was disappointed.

As he passed the gates of Cliff House school he saw a crowd of fair pupils peering at him.

The girls failed to recognise him at first, but as soon as they did they burst into a peal of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It—it's Wharton!" gasped Marjorie Hazeldene.

"Oh dear!"

"What a freak!"

With flaming cheeks Harry Wharton hurried past the precincts of the girls' school as rapidly as possible.

Then the hysterical laughter of the girls became too much for him, and he broke into a trot. And a renewed peal of laughter was borne to him on the wind.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is awful!" panted Wharton, as he floundered along in his oilskins. "I'll make that bouncer Carr feel sorry he ever thought of pinching my togs!"

Not until the gates of Greyfriars came in sight did Wharton slacken his pace. Then he dropped into a walk.

As he passed through the school gateway Gosling, the porter, shuffled out of his lodge. He nearly fell down when he caught sight of the captain of the Remove in his unfamiliar garb.

"My heve!" ejaculated Gosling. "If this ain't the werry latest! Wot I says is this 'ere ain't—"

Harry Wharton didn't wait to hear what Gosling had to say. He again broke into a trot, and as he crossed the Close he was fear-

ful lest the Head should observe him from his study window.

But fortune favoured him. Only for a time, though.

Before he could proceed to the Remove Form-room it was necessary for Wharton to discard the oilskins, and change into his Sunday best. And in order to get to the dormitory it was necessary to pass the Form-room.

The door was ajar. Owing to the heat Mr. Quelch had decreed that both door and windows should be kept open.

Wharton could hear Billy Bunter's voice blundering through a sentence of Latin prose.

The captain of the Remove lost no time in getting past the doorway. But before he had proceeded many yards a stern voice hailed him.

"Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch, on hearing hurried footsteps, had come out into the passage to investigate. His amazement on seeing Harry Wharton clad in a suit of oilskins could be better imagined than described.

Harry Wharton turned, colouring to the roots of his hair.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"Come into the Form-room at once, that I may interrogate you!" commanded Mr. Quelch.

Very reluctantly, the unhappy junior followed the Remove-master into the room.

Wharton's appearance was greeted by an amazed gasp from the class. His absence from the breakfast-table had given rise to much discussion; but nobody had expected him to make such a startling appearance.

As he stood there, fully conscious of the ludicrous spectacle he presented, Harry Wharton fervently wished that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"Now, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, in sulphurous tones, "perhaps you will kindly

explain why you are late for lessons, and why you are clad in that preposterous apparel!"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"I do not regard that stuttering outburst as a satisfactory explanation, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove, vainly endeavouring to hide his seaboots from the view of the grinning class, described what had happened.

"I went for an early morning dip, sir," he said, "and my togs were bagged!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, my clothes were pinched, sir!"

"Bagged! Pinched!" echoed Mr. Quelch.

"I confess I am not familiar with such terms! Do you mean to say that your clothes were stolen?"

"Either that, sir, or they were taken for a joke."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch was amazed, and his amazement was shared by the class.

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed the Form-master. "Where did you leave your clothes, Wharton?"

"On the shore at Pegg Bay, sir."

"Did you notice anyone in the vicinity?"

"Not a soul, sir."

"Then you are quite unaware of the identity of the person who purloined your clothes?"

Wharton was silent.

"I have asked you a question, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch sharply.

"I—I'd rather not answer, sir."

"Then you know who it was who played this despicable trick upon you?"

"I've a pretty good notion, sir."

"Who was it?"

The class hung upon Harry Wharton's answer.

"If you don't mind, sir," said the captain

of the Remove. "I should like to deal with the fellow myself. I—I don't like the idea of sneaking—"

"It is not sneaking, Wharton, to expose the person who has so far forgotten himself as to play a trick of this sort," said Mr. Quelch. "However, I will not press you to divulge the name of the culprit. You will doubtless know how to deal with him in your own way and in your own time. In the circumstances, your lateness is excusable, and I shall not punish you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You will go and change into more conventional attire, and then obtain some breakfast from the kitchen," said Mr. Quelch. "And do not be longer than necessary."

Harry Wharton was only too glad to vacate the Remove Form-room. The smiles of his schoolfellows were most disconcerting.

As he quitted the room Wharton glanced towards the place which was usually occupied by Dennis Carr. And he noticed that Dennis was absent.

Half an hour later, after he had changed and breakfasted, he returned to the Form-room.

Dennis Carr was still absent.

"Have you seen anything of Carr this morning, Wharton?" inquired Mr. Quelch.

"He got up about the same time as I did, sir," said Harry. "I haven't seen him since."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips. He was the soul of punctuality, and the fact that there had been two absentees from the Form-room that morning had not improved his temper.

Scarcely had Wharton taken his seat than the door opened, and Dennis Carr came in.

Mr. Quelch directed the glare of a basilisk towards the newcomer.

"Carr," he thundered, "you are late—excessively late!"

Dennis halted in front of the Form-master's desk.

"I—I'm sorry, sir—"

"Your sorrow," snapped Mr. Quelch, "does not impress me in the least. I await your explanation."

"I went for a stroll, sir, and my watch had stopped. I thought it was an hour earlier than it actually was."

Mr. Quelch frowned. It was obvious that he regarded Dennis Carr's explanation as very unsatisfactory. And so did the class.

"Of all the feeble excuses—" murmured Skinner.

"Silence, Skinner! Do you seriously mean to tell me, Carr, that you had no conception of the right time?"

Dennis flushed.

"I'm not telling lies, sir, if that's what you mean!" he said heatedly.

Mr. Quelch's frown deepened.

"I regret I cannot accept your explanation, Carr. It is inconceivable that you could have misjudged the time to such an extent. But for the fact that you are usually a punctual and truthful boy, I should take you before Dr. Locke. As it is, I shall cane you. Hold out your hand!"

For an instant it looked as if Dennis would refuse to obey the command. He had not yet fully conquered the spirit of defiance which had brought him into so much trouble during his early days at Greyfriars. But after a brief hesitation he submitted, and held out his hand.

Swish, swish, swish!

Dennis endured the three stinging cuts without a murmur.

"Now go to your place," said Mr. Quelch. "One moment! Did your morning stroll lead you anywhere in the vicinity of Pegg Bay?"

"No, sir."

"You are quite sure you are telling me the truth?"

"Quite, sir!" said Dennis indignantly. "I went in exactly the opposite direction to Pegg."

"Very well, Carr."

Dennis went to his place and sat down. He wondered why the fellows were looking at him so queerly. He wondered why Wharton's eyes were flashing, and why Wharton's lip was curling contemptuously.

He was soon to learn!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Condemned!

"WHO was it, Harry?"

"Who was the cad who bagged your togs?"

"Give him a name!" said Fisher T. Fish.

Quite a crowd of fellows congregated round THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

Harry Wharton in the Close when morning lessons were over.

Wharton looked grim.

"Can't you guess?" he said.

"Yes, we can guess all right," said Bob Cherry, "but we want your word for it. Was it Carr?"

"Yes."

"Thought as much!" growled Johnny Bull. "It doesn't need a Sexton Blake to deduce that it was Carr who made off with your togs. In the first place, he got up just after you did this morning, and followed you; and in the second place, he came in late for lessons."

"And his excuse that his watch had stopped was all moonshine!" said Frank Nugent.

"Of course!"

"It was a rotten, shabby trick to play!" said Bolsover major. "It's all right to hide a fellow's togs for a jape, and return 'em again within a few minutes; but it seems that Carr had no intention of returning 'em."

"That's so," said Vernon-Smith. "He wanted to get Wharton into hot water."

"The fellow's a downright cad!" declared Skinner. "He deserves to be hounded out of the school!"

Skinner was very far from being a plaster saint himself, but he seldom refrained from putting in an unfavourable word for Dennis Carr. The fact that Dennis had been very decent to him in the past didn't count. Decency was wasted on Skinner. He was only too ready to return evil for good.

"I suppose Carr did this in revenge for being left out of the eleven?" said Bob Cherry.

"That's about it," said Wharton.

"The mean-souled cad!" Bob Cherry was hot with indignation. "I'll go and give him the licking of his life!"

Wharton shook his head.

"That's my job," he said.

"Well, mind you do it thoroughly!"

"I'm not likely to spare him!" replied Wharton grimly.

The Famous Five's feelings towards Dennis Carr had completely changed in the light of recent events. Hitherto they had been warmly attached to Dennis, but that warm attachment had now given place to the fiercest hostility. They had no patience with a fellow who acted spitefully simply because he had been excluded from the eleven.

Harry Wharton & Co. were astonished, as well as indignant. They had not expected such caddish conduct from Dennis Carr. They had regarded him as being too high-minded to resort to such a low-down trick. Evidently they had been deceived in him.

"Where's the cad got to?" asked Nugent, looking round.

"He's found a nice quiet funk-hole, you bet!" sneered Bolsover major. "He knows what's in store for him."

"We'll jolly soon hunt him out!" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, rather!"

"Half a jiffy!" It was Mark Linley who spoke. "Are you quite sure, Wharton, that you're not jumping to conclusions?"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Are you positive it was Carr who bagged your clothes?"

"Of course!"

"But you didn't see him do it."

"There's ample evidence to prove that he did it!" said Wharton warmly.

"Yes; but evidence isn't proof."

There was a chorus of protest against the Lancashire lad.

"Dry up, Linley!"

"You're always backing up that cad!"

"Pr'aps Linley had a hand in the business?" suggested Skinner. "I feel—"

What Skinner felt was a back-hander which made his teeth rattle.

"Say another word, you cad," exclaimed Mark Linley, "and I'll knock you down!"

Skinner pressed his hand to his mouth, and subsided.

"Look here, Marky," said Bob Cherry. "I shouldn't blame you for backing up Carr if there was a shred of evidence to show that he didn't play this trick on Wharton. But the evidence is all the other way. It shows clearly enough that he did! I'm the last fellow to condemn a chap without cause. But Carr's guilty—"

"And here's proof of his guilt!"

So saying, Harry Wharton produced the handkerchief which he had found on the shore, and he told the others where he had picked it up. He indicated the initials "D. C." in the corner, and there was a loud murmur from the others.

"That's proof!"

"Absolutely!"

"What have you got to say to that, Linley?"

Mark Linley was certainly staggered by the sudden production of the handkerchief. But his faith in Dennis Carr's innocence held firm.

"The mere finding of a handkerchief isn't proof," he said. "Carr might have dropped that handkerchief yesterday, or a week ago. He often goes down to Pegg to bathe."

But Linley's voice was drowned in the uproar which followed.

"It was Carr right enough!"

"Come on, Wharton!"

"Put the boulder through the hoop!"

The juniors set off in search of Dennis Carr.

Their quest did not last long. They ran Dennis to earth in his study.

"What the merry dickens—" began Dennis Carr, as a swarm of excited juniors invaded the apartment.

"Now, you cad," said Harry Wharton, pushing his way to the fore. "I want you to know what you mean by pinching my togs this morning! And I want to know where you've hidden them. You might also tell me why you went out of your way to play such a caddish trick!"

Dennis Carr looked thunderstruck.

"Dashed if I know what you're jabbering about!" he said. "I haven't laid a finger on your beastly togs!"

"You stole them this morning, while I was bathing—removed them, at any rate!"

"I did nothing of the sort!"

Dennis had risen from the armchair in which he had been seated. His face was flushed, his hands tightly clenched.

"It's not a scrap of evidence, it's Carr," said Bob Cherry. "We've got enough evidence to convict you a dozen times over! You were nettled at being left out of the cricket eleven—"

"That's true enough!"

"And you planned to pinch Wharton's togs and leave him stranded by way of revenge!"

"That's a lie!"

Bob Cherry raised his clenched fist, and it looked as if he would dash it into Dennis Carr's face. But with a great effort he restrained himself.

"I knew you'd try and brazen it out," he said; "but you can't kid us into believing that you're innocent. The evidence—"

"Let's hear the evidence."

"In the first place, you got up this morning just after Wharton, and you followed him to Pegg Bay—"

"Liar!" said Dennis Carr, with more emphasis than politeness.

Bob Cherry could hold himself in check no longer. He made a sudden bound towards Dennis Carr, but Harry Wharton, who didn't want anybody else to fight his battles for him, seized Bob by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Steady on, Bob—"

"Lemme get at him!" roared Bob Cherry. "I don't allow anybody to call me a liar—"

"I'll remember what the cad called you when I come to deal with him!" said the captain of the Remove. "Meanwhile, we'll let him hear the rest of the evidence. You followed me to Pegg Bay, Carr, and while I was swimming out to sea you collared my clothes, and hid them somewhere. You came in late for lessons, and your yarn about your watch having stopped was an obvious whopper."

"Hear, hear!" chimed in the crowd in the doorway.

Harry Wharton produced Dennis Carr's handkerchief.

"Perhaps you recognise this?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dennis. "It's mine."

"My hat!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "He's actually admitting something at last!"

"Considering that the handkerchief's got his initials in the corner, he can't very well deny that it's his property," said Nugent.

"I picked this up on the shore this morning," said Wharton. "You evidently dropped it, Carr, when you were bunking with my clothes."

Dennis Carr's face was very pale. If he were innocent of the charge which had been brought against him he certainly didn't look it.

"If, as you say, you didn't touch my togs, how do you account for your handkerchief being found at that particular spot?" demanded Wharton.

"I—I simply can't account for it," said Dennis Carr, who was quite taken aback by the production of his handkerchief. "All I know is that I haven't been within a mile

of Pegg Bay this morning, and I haven't taken your togs!"

"Look here, Carr," said Dick Penfold, who was more sympathetically inclined towards Dennis than the majority of his accusers. "I, for one, am willing to believe that you didn't do this in a spirit of revenge, but merely as a practical joke. And if that's the case, why don't you own up?"

"I've nothing to own up to, I tell you!" shouted Dennis, his face growing whiter still with fury. "You're a set of cads to tax me with this! You ought to know me well enough by now to know that I'm not in the habit of playing low-down tricks of this sort. On my word of honour, I know nothing about it!"

"Your word of honour is quite good enough for me, Dennis," said Mark Linley.

"Thank you, Marky!"

"But it's not good enough for us!" roared Bolsover major. "Honour? Why, he doesn't know the meaning of the word! Pulverise him, Wharton, for goodness' sake! No use arguing with the beastly outsider. The only way you can talk to him is with your fists. And if you don't pile in soon I'll lick the cad myself!"

Harry Wharton moved a step nearer to Dennis Carr.

"I'm going to lick you!" he said grimly.

Dennis laughed. It was what the novelists call a mirthless laugh.

"Hadn't you better say you'll try to lick me?" he said. "Because I can assure you you won't succeed!"

"We'll see!"

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull moved the table out of the way, and Harry Wharton was about to take off his coat, when the dinner-bell rang.

"That puts the kybosh on it," said Frank Nugent. "The scrap will have to be postponed."

"I shall be ready whenever Wharton chooses!" said Dennis Carr.

And he strode out of the study, accompanied by his one loyal chum—Mark Linley. The remainder of his friends had turned to foes. They believed him guilty. And even Dennis had to admit that the evidence was overwhelming.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
The Dormitory Fight!

GREAT excitement prevailed in the Remove during dinner.

Everybody was looking forward to the forthcoming fight between Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr. And the two fellows most intimately concerned were looking forward to it more than anybody.

Harry Wharton, still furious and indignant at the trick which had been played upon him, felt that he would not be easy in his mind until he had thrashed Carr. And Dennis, who was even more furious at the unjust accusation which had been levelled against him, was determined to make Wharton suffer.

But it seemed as if Fate had decreed that the fight should not take place.

An attempt was made, immediately after dinner, to form a ring behind the chapel. But just before hostilities were about to commence, Loder of the Sixth came into view, and the crowd reluctantly dispersed. They knew that Loder would forbid the fight, if only to make himself officious.

"Another postponement!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Never mind, Harry! You'll be able to settle with the bouncer after lessons!"

Wharton nodded.

"I'll lick him, if I have to wait a whole term," he exclaimed.

During afternoon lessons, Dennis Carr was awarded an imposition by Mr. Quelch, who ordered him to remain under detention in the Form-room until the impot was finished.

This precluded the possibility of the fight taking place after lessons. And Bolsover major declared that Dennis Carr had deliberately contrived to be detained, because he was funky of meeting Wharton.

"Postponed again!" growled Johnny Bull. "Is this blessed scrap ever going to come off?"

"Yes—after tea," said Frank Nugent.

But a party of Cliff House girls came over to Greyfriars to tea, and they stayed the evening.

Harry Wharton had to act as host, and therefore the fight was still "off." It was now impossible for it to take place until after "Lights Out."

That evening, in the Remove dormitory, a dramatic discovery was made.

Dennis Carr had occasion to go to his locker, and as he opened it there was a sharp exclamation from Vernon-Smith.

"Hallo! What's that brown-paper parcel doing in your locker, Carr?"

"Dashed if I know!" said Dennis, in puzzled tones. "It isn't mine!"

"Out with it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Eh?"

"Drag it out, and we'll make investigations!"

"Good old Sherlock Holmes!" said Bob Cherry. "What do you suppose is in that parcel, Smithy?"

"Wharton's togs."

"What?"

Startled exclamations arose from every side. And the Removites glanced in turn at the brown-paper parcel, and at Dennis Carr's face, which still wore an expression of bewilderment.

"If that parcel really contains Wharton's togs, even Linley will be satisfied that Carr's guilty," said Frank Nugent. "Open it, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith severed the string with his penknife, and unfolded the brown-paper covering.

Then he produced, and held up for inspection, the coat, waistcoat, and trousers which were the property of Harry Wharton.

"They're mine!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"And these?" said Vernon-Smith, holding up a pair of boots and a quantity of under-clothing.

"They're mine, too!"

Then followed a grim period of silence in the Remove dormitory.

Looking around him, Dennis Carr met glances of scorn, indignation, and contempt. The finding of the brown-paper parcel in his locker was regarded as overwhelming evidence of his guilt.

It was Dennis himself who broke the silence.

"I—I don't know how those clothes came to be in my locker—" he began.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Bolsover major. "Even after this fresh discovery the cad's still trying to brazen it out!"

"He's guilty—and he's making his guilt a thousand times worse by denying it!" said Peter Todd.

"The cad!"

"The awful rotter!"

"The rank outsider!"

Dennis Carr's face was very pale, but he held his head erect.

"You are the cads!" he cried, his eyes flashing. "You are the rank outsiders! I've given you my word of honour that I know nothing about this business—and my word of honour ought to be good enough. I repeat. I don't know how those clothes came to be in my locker—unless some scheming rotter planted them there, to get me into trouble!"

"Rats!"

"Dry up!"

"I tell you—" shouted Dennis.

But the others stopped their ears, and refused to listen.

Shortly afterwards, Wingate of the Sixth came into the dormitory to extinguish the lights.

For once in a way the keen-eyed captain of Greyfriars failed to notice that the Remove were in a state of seething excitement. His suspicions were not aroused, and after exchanging "Good-night!" with the juniors, and putting out the lights, Wingate withdrew.

For a quarter of an hour after the captain's departure no one stirred.

Then, at a command from Harry Wharton, candles were lighted up and down the dormitory, and the juniors—with the exception of Billy Bunter, who was already sound asleep—turned out.

There was ample space in the centre of the dormitory for the fight to take place.

Harry Wharton and Dennis Carr, clad in their pyjamas, advanced into the improvised ring.

The remainder of the fellows were standing—some on their beds, and others on the floor.

"I'm your second, Harry!" said Bob Cherry.

There was a pause. And then—

"I'm yours, Dennis!" said Mark Linley.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Frank Nugent.

"Are you still backing up that cad, Linley?"

"I'm still backing up my friend!" amended the Lancashire lad.

"In spite of the discovery that Smithy made just now?"

"In spite of everything!"

Dennis Carr turned towards his solitary supporter. The tears welled into his eyes.

"Thank you for this, Marky!" he said rather huskily. "I'll never forget it!"

Mark smiled.

"Keep your pecker up!" he said. "These fellows will realise before long that they've misjudged you."

There was no further conversation, save for Vernon-Smith's terse remark:

"Pile in, you two!"

The fight began, and the spectators looked on breathlessly.

Such a fierce pace was set at the commencement that it was obvious that the contest would be of brief duration.

Of the two combatants, Wharton was the more cool and calculating. He was not nearly so cool as usual, however.

As for Dennis Carr, he was fighting in an utterly reckless manner. He seemed entirely to forget the need for defence; and consequently every blow of Wharton's found a billet, either on his opponent's face or body.

In the first round, Dennis Carr took heavy punishment. He was really not in a fit state to go on; but nobody raised a protest.

Dennis rallied during the interval, and in the second round he had much the better of the fighting.

Harry Wharton was actually knocked off his feet twice, unable to withstand Dennis's powerful drives.

But on each occasion that Wharton was felled he was up again in a twinkling. And towards the end of the round, when Dennis Carr was spent, and his blows had lost their force, the captain of the Remove came into his own. He sent his opponent reeling with a smashing blow on the chest; and this was followed up by an upper-cut which lifted Dennis off his feet and felled him.

"Hurrah!"

"Licked, by Jove!"

Dennis Carr was dazed. The back of his head had struck the floor with great violence as he fell, and it was humanly impossible for him to continue.

Harry Wharton's victory was hailed with shouts of approval.

"You've taught the cad a lesson, Harry!" said Bob Cherry. "It'll be a long time before he thinks of playing another low-down trick of this sort!"

Mark Linley assisted Dennis to rise, and escorted him to his bed. He whispered a few friendly words in Dennis's ear—the only words of encouragement which the defeated junior received in his dark hour, when all were against him save one—the loyal lad from Lancashire.

Mark Linley declared that the clouds would soon lift, and that Dennis Carr would be vindicated.

And whether Mark proved a true prophet or otherwise, it must be left to another narrative to tell.

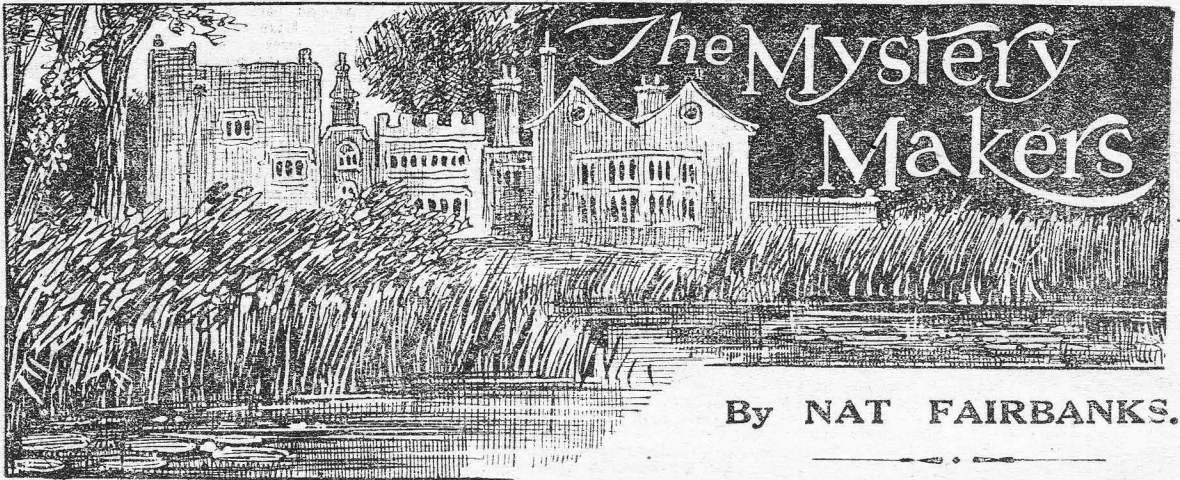
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By **NAT FAIRBANKS.**

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. Dick is returning from a secret visit to Harrowsfield when he meets Grimshaw in Hangman's Wood in the company of a suspicious-looking stranger. On reaching the Grange he relates this incident to his friends, but is informed that the hunchback had been locked in his room by two of the company's comedians, and could not have got out. Harry goes to investigate.

(Now read on.)

In the Lion's Den.

DICK TULLIVER awaited Trent's return with a good deal of curiosity. If it was a fact that the dwarf was in his room at the time the key was turned on him, two things only could explain his presence in Hangman's Wood. Either he possessed a duplicate key, or there was another way of getting out of his room other than by the door.

Wildfell Grange was very old, and old mansions, more often than not, contain secret passages. It was possible that the dwarf's knowledge of the place was far greater than anybody else's, and that by some chance or other he had discovered some exit which allowed him to come and go without anyone being any the wiser.

Dick was full of these conjectures when Harry Trent returned.

"His door's locked, and he isn't inside," he announced. "I knocked loudly to make sure."

Dick immediately advanced his theory of the secret passage.

Harry shook his head doubtfully, but Biglow was greatly impressed.

"This adds a new terror to the beastly place!" he groaned. "I dare say if the house were pulled down it would be found to be honeycombed with such contrivances. Monks' holes, and all that sort of thing. Once let this idea get round, and old Halibut can say good-bye to his company. The whole blessed lot will clear out, and I, for one, don't blame them."

"I wish I could get that key!" mused Dick. "Why, what would you do with it?" asked Trent.

"Explore his room," said Dick. "Do you think Bobbin and Waddell would give it up if I asked them?"

"They might. There's no harm in trying. Then I'll try. Where do they hang out?"

"I'll show you," said Biglow.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

"And while you're gone I'll keep a sharp look-out for Grimshaw," said Harry.

Under Biglow's guidance, Dick arrived at the quarters of Bobbin and Waddell, the two comedians.

Biglow turned the handle of the door, and then became aware there was an obstruction in his way.

"Half a minute!" they heard a voice say from the other side. "I'll shift him in a second!"

Shift whom? Was this another mysterious outrage?

When Dick and Biglow eventually got inside the room the sight that met their gaze seemed to confirm this.

A fellow was sitting doubled-up on the floor, with some sort of an instrument twisted all over him. His companion was kneeling at his side, either trying to free or tighten his bonds—Dick couldn't decide which.

"What on earth has happened to you, Bobbin?" said Biglow.

"It's this ass Waddell!" said Bobbin testily. "He's brought one of these home-exercisers for a new stunt we're on, and he didn't fix it up properly. He kidded me to try it, and then the whole bag of tricks fell off the hooks, and here I am wrapped up in it. It's a mercy I wasn't strangled."

Waddell indignantly denied this. He said that if Bobbin had contented himself with doing the first exercises in the book instead of trying the most intricate ones he could find, which he didn't understand, and tying himself and the exerciser into knots, it would have been all right. It was entirely his own fault.

Bobbin, finding it difficult to argue in his present position, said nothing. When, however, with the aid of Biglow and Dick, he was released, he gave the exerciser a savage kick.

"Rotten thing!" he growled. "The only thing it's any good for is to torture some of our enemies!"

"Enemies!" echoed Biglow. "What enemies?"

Waddell looked at Bobbin, and Bobbin looked back at Waddell. The two had always worked together in what is known as a "double turn," and consequently everything they did was in the form of a duet. Indeed, one was incapable of doing anything without the other. Waddell was short and stout, Bobbin was tall and thin—in fact, a sort of Weary Willy and Tired Tim combination.

"It's like this," began Waddell. "There's a conspiracy on foot—"

"Against the company," cut in Bobbin. "And we're not—"

"Going to stand it!" continued Waddell. "All the games that have been going on here—the alarms at night—"

"The disappearance of Deen—"

"And this, that, and the other, is a deep-laid scheme on the part of some enemies—"

"Yes, yes!" cut in Biglow. "But who are the enemies?"

"That's what we're going to find out," said Waddell.

"We've started with that dwarf chap," went on Bobbin. "I believe he's one of the conspirators. Anyway, when you saw us lock him in his room, Biglow—"

"Have you got the key?" interrupted Dick.

"Of course we've got the key!" said Waddell and Bobbin in unison. "Do you want it?"

"I'd like to borrow it for a few minutes," said Dick.

"What for?" demanded Waddell, eyeing Dick suspiciously. "You can't go in there. We left Grimshaw locked up in the place. He's there now."

For the moment Dick was nonplussed. He didn't want to let these chaps know what had happened. He was sufficient judge of character to see that they were of the type who couldn't keep anything to themselves.

Suddenly he had an inspiration. "Trent wants to get an impression made of that key," he said.

"Jove! What a wheeze!" exclaimed Bobbin. "Then we shall be able to go into his place when we like—"

"What-ho, the apple-pie beds!" chuckled Waddell. "The booby-traps—"

"Exactly!" said Dick. "We can do all sorts of things like that."

"It's a good notion!" said Bobbin approvingly. "Hand him over the key, Waddell!"

Waddell produced the key. Highly elated, Dick and Biglow returned to their quarters.

They discovered Harry Trent pacing up and down outside the dwarf's door.

"He hasn't come back yet," he whispered. "Did you get the key?"

Dick nodded. "Good man! I'll just knock again to be on the safe side."

Harry rapped smartly on the panels of the door.

There was no answer. "Here goes!" said Dick, inserting the key in the lock. He turned it, the bolt shot back, and they cautiously opened the door.

The room was empty.

"Panel walls," said Harry, looking around. "Any of them might be the secret entrance." He went up to one of them and tapped. "That doesn't sound very hollow," he observed. "It would take hours to properly examine the place. I don't see that we are much forrarder now that we are here."

"No-o!" muttered Dick thoughtfully. "Of course, if we could stop here and see which way he comes back—that would be interesting."

"Awfully interesting!" said Biglow hurriedly. "But as we can't very well do that I vote we clear out. You see," he explained, "it's all right for you chaps; but I don't want to offend Grimshaw. Remember, in the last scene but one in the show he has to strangle me. Well, if he suddenly returned and found me—"

"Half a minute, Biglow!" said Trent. "I want to listen!"

Biglow backed hurriedly towards the door.

Dick strained his ears. What was it Harry had heard? As far as he could tell there was no noise—stay. What was that sound that echoed faintly from behind the wainscoting? A rat. Perhaps, and yet—it was growing louder now. In other words, it seemed as if it was coming nearer.

"You're right, Dick!" muttered Harry. "There's some secret passage. Someone's

coming. Grimshaw, no doubt. We'll shift. Quick, out you get!"

Biglow lost no time in obeying this injunction. He scuttled back to his quarters like a streak of lightning.

A minute or so later Harry Trent joined him.

"Where's young Tulliver?" asked Biglow.

"Under the dwarf's bed!" said Harry savagely. "The young idiot! He dived underneath there before I knew what he was up to. I tried to pull him out, but I had no time to do anything. Grimshaw will half-murder him if he finds him there!"

Biglow jumped up.

"I say," he cried, "we must rescue him!"

"How can we!" retorted Harry impatiently. "We had no business in Grimshaw's room. Do you fancy explaining things to the dwarf. I frankly confess I don't. No; young Dick will have to put up with the consequences of his mad action. All we can do is to hang about and listen for any rumpus that arises."

"What about the key?" asked Biglow.

"I left it in the door," returned Harry. "It struck me that the sooner Grimshaw was able to get out of the room the better."

For the next half-hour, at intervals of a few minutes, one or the other of them crept along the passage to listen. Not a sound broke the stillness.

Presently—it was about six o'clock—the dwarf's door opened, and he came out. They heard him turn the key in the lock, and saw him depart downstairs.

They let a few minutes go by so as to allow the dwarf to get out of earshot. Then Harry went up to the door, and knocked.

"Dick, Dick!" he called out softly. "Are you all right?"

There was no answer.

Harry knocked again. This time louder.

But there was no reply. All was as silent as the grave.

"You don't think he's m-m-murdered him, do you?" stammered Biglow.

"Young Dick's not one to be murdered quietly," said Harry. "No. Two to one he's got some stunt on, and he wants to have the credit of carrying it through by himself. That was always his way at school, I remember. It used to be just he and a chap called O'Flatherty. I tell you, Biglow, they were a fearsome pair. There's no need to worry. Dick Tulliver knows how to take care of himself."

Secret Ground.

IT was, as Harry Trent said, a mad action.

A similar thought occurred to Dick as he crouched under the dwarf's bedstead and awaited developments. But then, Dick had always had the habit of doing things first, and reckoning up the costs afterwards. This propensity had landed him in many a scrape in the past, and no doubt would continue to do so right down to the end of the chapter.

Still, coolness and audacity had usually pulled him through, and he relied upon these qualities in the present instance.

After the door had shut on Harry Trent's rapid exit, a couple of minutes' interval elapsed before the enactment of the next scene in the little drama. During that time the mysterious sounds grew more audible. They were never very loud—just a slight tapping and faint shuffling of feet from somewhere behind the wall facing the bed.

Then came a sharp click. The bottom of the bed cut off most of the view, and the first intimation Dick had that someone had entered the room were two feet that suddenly obtruded into his line of sight. That these two feet belonged to Bernard Grimshaw Dick had no doubt. The fellow had emerged from the wall opposite!

Another sharp click echoed through the room. This meant that the dwarf had closed the secret entrance. Dick carefully noted the position of these feet, for that gave him pretty well the exact spot where the movable panel was situated.

Grimshaw came over to the bed, and lay down. He proceeded to take off his boots. As he placed each one on the floor, Dick saw they were thickly coated with mud and clay.

"Relics of Hangman's Wood!" he muttered. "He dared not stir an inch. He hardly dare breathe. Fortunately, the dwarf, who was evidently somewhat fatigued, stretched himself out at full-length, and the creaking of the bed under his weight effectively drowned all other noises.

So there they were—the dwarf on the top of the bed and Dick underneath.

In relating his experiences afterwards, Dick confessed that the next half-hour was about the most uncomfortable he had ever spent. Pins and needles, cramp, the desire to sneeze and cough—all these things he suffered. The minutes went by like hours. Would Grimshaw never move? What was he doing now? Asleep? No; evidently reading. At regular intervals Dick caught the sound of a page being flicked over.

As we know, the dwarf only rested for half an hour, but to Dick it seemed ages. He was just wondering how much longer he could keep in this one position when the bed creaked violently, and two stocking feet dangled into view. The dwarf was on the move at last.

The next thing that happened was a hand groping under the bed. He was searching for another pair of boots. The boots he wanted were within six inches of where Dick lay!

Dick gave himself up for lost. Grimshaw

Dick at once turned his attention to the panels of the wall.

Around each panel ran a faded Oriental border. Mixed up with this border the spring to the secret panel would probably be found.

Dick passed his hand down each side and along the top and bottom. For some minutes he met with no success. The surface was smooth all over. There was no nick or knob that might reasonably be supposed to be part of the mechanism.

He tapped the panel. It seemed solid.

He tried the next panel. He ran his fingers all round. As he did so his right foot pressed heavily on one of the floorboards. He felt it give slightly. Was this a clue?

Continuing to press with his foot, he moved his hand along every inch of the panel.

To his intense delight, his efforts were crowned with success. Something moved under his finger, and slowly the panel swung open. It was apparently suspended on pivots placed half-way up on each side. The top of the panel was slightly heavier on one side than the other, and, the restraint of the



Carefully picking his way along the dark passage on his hands and knees, Dick arrived at the entrance of a fairly spacious cave. He peered round the corner, then gave a start. By the dim light of a lantern, he saw at the far end of the cave a roughly-constructed couch, on which lay someone—silent and still.

(See page 10.)

had only to lift the end of the counterpane to discover him.

The hand groped about for a second. It went nowhere near the boots.

Quick as lightning Dick caught hold of one boot, and lifted it so that it was well within Grimshaw's reach. The dwarf's fingers touched it, and immediately Dick heard him give a grunt of satisfaction. While he was drawing it out, Dick lifted forward the other one.

The dwarf put them on, laced them up, and then rose to his feet, and quitted the room. As we know, he locked the door.

But that did not trouble Dick. The relief of being able to move and stretch himself once more was too good to worry about anything else.

He was on the point of starting his investigations when he heard Harry Trent's voice at the door.

"All right, old bean!" chuckled Dick to himself. "I'll attend to you presently!"

Eventually Harry Trent gave it up as a bad job, and Dick heard his footsteps retreating along the passage.

spring being removed, the top opened outwards, swinging on the pivots, and the panel remained poised, so carefully was it hung, when it had got nearly at right-angles to the wall.

The opening at the under part was about two feet by twenty inches, and through this Dick easily crept.

Dick took the precaution to close the swinging panel behind him. Then he boldly plunged into the unknown passage which led goodness knew where.

Of course it was pitch dark. Dick had a box of matches, but he felt it was too risky to strike them. The dwarf might have all sorts of accomplices lurking about. So he groped his way cautiously and very, very slowly, for, indeed, the greatest care was required not only to make no noise, but to avoid the many pitfalls in the shape of sudden flights of steps that dotted his path. And then the ghostly atmosphere!

If ever a place deserved to be haunted this did. It spoke well for Grimshaw's nerves that he had the courage to come here.

Of course, Dick soon lost all sense of

direction. Only one thing he knew, and that was that he was gradually descending. Probably by this time he was on a level with the ground. He pressed forward for another fifty yards or so, and then he came to a short flight of stone steps, very roughly constructed, and worn in the centre. At some time in the history of the old building there must have been a considerable amount of traffic up and down those steps to have made the hollows.

At the bottom Dick found himself standing upon a hard stone floor. Deciding to risk it, he struck a match.

He found he was in a low circular apartment, with a groined roof, and supported by four stout pillars. Opposite where he stood was a doorway.

The match flickered and went out. He went forward half a dozen steps. The alteration in his position brought him close to the doorway. He could feel a slight draught, but, what was more interesting, there was a feeble glimmer of light in the distance.

But it was not daylight; it was artificial light of some sort.

Keeping the light in view, Dick crept stealthily along. He noticed that at times the passages widened out, at others was very narrow, as though the old excavators had taken advantage of caverns they had found in their way.

The light became brighter, and the need for caution grew greater.

To make assurance doubly sure, Dick went down on his hands and knees and crawled the last twenty yards.

Finally he arrived at the entrance of a fairly spacious cave.

Dick looked round. In the centre was a large packing-case, on the top of which stood an old-fashioned lantern. Its flickering light showed up one or two details which proved the place was inhabited.

Just near where Dick crouched he caught a glimpse of a pile of rugs on the ground, of a cooking-lamp, of tin plates, and drinking vessels. At the far end was a roughly constructed couch, on which someone was apparently sleeping.

Dick waited a few minutes before venturing across to the other side. There was an entrance which probably led out into the open air. Indeed, he could already feel a change in the atmosphere. It was decidedly fresher.

With cat-like tread Dick reached this opening. He rested for a minute, and then proceeded to examine the place. It was a passage wide enough to allow a couple of men of ordinary size to march abreast. The ground sloped up and kept ascending, but almost imperceptibly, so gentle was the gradient.

Dick walked for probably a quarter of an hour, climbing here and there over masses of earth which had fallen from the roof and sides, and at last the increasing freshness of the air told him that he was near the end of his journey.

Flooded Out.

WHEN Dick eventually emerged into the open air it was to find himself not a hundred yards away from the lake that had been the scene of his sensational introduction to the Western Super-Film Company. He glanced back at the entrance to the secret passage, and could not help admiring the wonderful way in which it was screened from observation. The opening was covered with bushes and trees of a straggly growth. Dick, in fact, had his face and hands severely scratched in forcing his way through.

This was a trifle. He was free, which was the main point.

But what purpose was this passage put to? In bygone days—in the time of conspiracies and political plots—its uses could easily be understood, but now it was a puzzle.

All sorts of wild theories coursed through Dick's mind, but it was neither the time nor place to consider them. He must get back and talk it over with Harry Trent.

The sun had now set, and it was almost dark. It was not so dark, though, to prevent Dick seeing a couple of figures approaching the spot where he stood.

In view of what he had just experienced Dick was suspicious of everybody. There was a ditch close handy, and into this he crawled and curled himself into as small a space as possible.

Shortly afterwards he heard their voices. Risky though it was, Dick could not forbear peeping over the top of the ditch to catch a glance at the newcomers.

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

It was the dwarf. His companion was a complete stranger to Dick. They halted within a few yards of where Dick lay.

"And when is it to be, Joe?" he heard the dwarf ask.

"Next Monday—that is, if all goes right."

"Precious short notice!" grumbled the dwarf. "This job isn't at all easy. The place gives us all the creeps. I tell you I'm fed up with it. Funny things have been happening."

The man addressed as Joe said something that Dick was not able to catch.

"Oh, well," said the dwarf presently, "if we could only tackle old Halibut—"

"Can't you get him to change his quarters?"

"Hang it, Joe, I've tried; but the fact is I'm not popular."

"I don't wonder at that," chuckled the other. "Then you're not loved?"

"I'll be shot if I am! And, what's more, I don't love them. In fact, I hate them—particularly one. I tell you this, Joe, that, whether this business turns out good or bad, I'll have a go at this youngster."

"Well, that's your affair, not mine."



Continuing to press with his foot, Dick moved his hand along the border. Something moved under his finger, and then the panel slowly swung out, revealing a dark cavity. (See page 9.)

After this their voices sank into a whisper, and Dick could only catch a word here and there. Then they moved off, but it was too dark for him to see where they disappeared to. Probably they went to the secret passage. Anyway, it was safe for Dick to come out from his hiding-place now.

He sped back to the house as quickly as his legs could carry him. Arriving there, he met Maisie Hope in the hall.

"Dick!" she cried. "Poor Mr. Halibut has been half-drowned!"

"What ever do you mean?" cried Dick in astonishment. "Drowned!"

"Well, not exactly drowned," said Maisie. "But he's wet through. A water-pipe or something burst and flooded his room. You ought to see it!"

"By Jove, I think I will!" Dick bounded upstairs.

Maisie's description, although somewhat exaggerated, was somewhere near the mark.

Water was descending the stairs in streams, and up in the room Dick could hear the swish of it dropping on the floor.

When he reached the room he discovered Harry Trent, Biglow, and one or two others attempting to render first-aid to Mr. Halibut's belongings. Mr. Halibut himself was making the apartment like a caged lion. A stream of water was spurting out from a pipe that ran along the wall.

"Look at that pair of patent leathers," Mr. Halibut was roaring. "Utterly spoilt! I only bought them last week! Be careful, Biglow; that's my best hat floating by the table. It's scandalous! Just before you people came up I picked up a tangled mass. At first I thought it was a dishcloth, but it was my white waistcoat. You remember it, Trent, don't you? Yes, sir, my white waistcoat! Inside were my socks—that new pair with the red clocks—"

At that moment Waddell and Bobbin appeared.

"Hallo! Having a spring-clean?" they asked.

"Yes," murmured Mr. Halibut, still dwelling on his ruined belongings. "They cost twelve-and-six a pair. That white waistcoat was the only one in the shop that fitted me. And it did fit me—not a crease anywhere. It fitted like a glove. In fact, it was me—"

Mr. Halibut, growing incoherent, and being quite incapable of doing anything practical at the moment, Harry Trent took over the supervision of affairs. He first of all induced the manager to retire to drier quarters, then, assisted by Dick and Biglow, he investigated the pipe, and managed to stop the leak.

"It's a rotten old pipe," he said. "Still, I can't understand why it burst. Upon my word, it looks as if someone had been tampering with it."

"Was Mr. Halibut here when it burst?" asked Dick.

"No, I don't think so. As far as I can make out, he came in and discovered it. But there, I'm not sure. The gov'nor was in such a frantic state that none of us could quite understand what had really happened."

"At any rate," said Biglow, "he'll have to sleep somewhere else to-night. The bed's sopping wet!"

"Oh, of course!" agreed Harry. Suddenly he turned to Dick.

"Well?" he said.

"Well?" answered Dick.

"You're a nice young man, aren't you?" Dick grinned.

"I hope I am, Harry," he said.

"I suppose you've been having adventures galore?" chimed in Biglow. "How did you get out of Grim—"

Harry Trent kicked him, and silently indicated the presence of Bobbin and Waddell.

"We'll have the yarn presently," he whispered. "Let's try and get the place mopped up," he added aloud. "We'd better carry the wet things down to Mrs. Scotton, and then take the dry ones to wherever old Halibut's going to pitch his tent for the night."

Dick suddenly recollected the conversation he had overheard between the dwarf and the man Joe—or, rather, he recollected more especially that part of the conversation where the dwarf had hinted at the difficulty of getting Mr. Halibut to change his quarters. This seemed to prove that Harry Trent's theory of the water-pipe being deliberately cut was probably right.

In other words, it looked as if it were a plot to get Mr. Halibut out of this room for to-night, at any rate.

"Now, why should the dwarf be so keen on having this room vacant?" thought Dick. "Perhaps Harry may have a notion?"

But when Harry heard of Dick's experiences, he could offer no explanation either.

"It's certainly something more than a coincidence that pipe bursting," he remarked. "Anyway, it might be worth while going there to-night. We might find the answer to this riddle. What d'you say, Biglow?"

Biglow did not show much enthusiasm over the idea. In fact, at first he refused point-blank to have anything to do with such an expedition.

Harry, however, took no notice of this.

"It will be quite easy to slip out without disturbing the rest of the company," he said. "Say we start about twelve?"

"Really, I'd rather not go!" protested Biglow.

"We'll wake you up at ten minutes to," said Harry firmly.

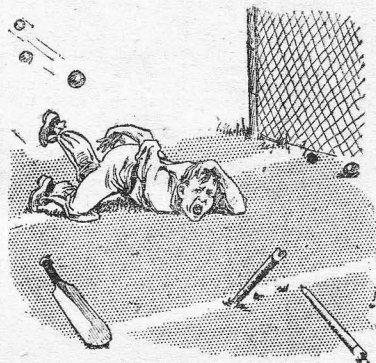
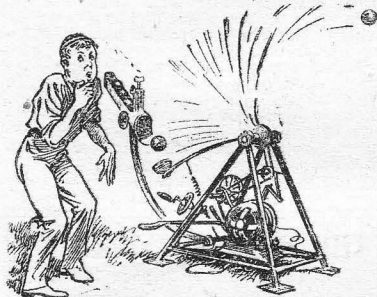
(Continued on page 12.)

BOWLED OUT!

A Complete Story of St. Jim's.

.. By ..

Martin Clifford.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"George Hirst" at St. Jim's!

"MY hat!" said Tom Merry. "You haven't dragged that thing out again, Glyn?"

The captain of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, and his chums, Manners and Lowther, had stopped on their way down to cricket practice to look into the study occupied by Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor of St. Jim's. They found Glyn fussing round an upright construction of steel and wire and springs, which they recognised at once as Glyn's famous mechanical bowler.

This device had been produced by the mechanical genius of the School House several seasons before, thanks to the fact that his father, the millionaire, allowed his son ample funds for the prosecution of his hobby. The mechanical bowler had proved by no means an unqualified success, and little had been heard about it by the juniors lately. Now, apparently, Glyn's interest in the contrivance had revived, to judge by the tender care with which he was adjusting the two delicate wires which led from an electric battery secured in the lower part of the frame of the machine.

At Tom Merry's remark Bernard Glyn looked up and nodded.

"I had a topping idea for improving this old thing," he remarked. "I've just finished fixing it up. Like to see it?"

"Yes, if it's safe to go near it!" said Tom Merry cautiously. "We know what your blessed inventions are, as a rule, Glyn. They usually blow up, or something!"

"Rats! This is a jolly good wheeze!" said Glyn warmly, as Tom Merry & Co. advanced into the study, with curious looks at Glyn's machine. "You see, instead of pulling back the spring by hand, and dropping a ball into the bowling-cup every time, I do all that by electricity now."

"My hat!"

"This little electric motor, driven from the battery here, does the trick. You put six balls in this sloping trough, switch on, and 'George Hirst' here bowls a whole over—six balls—without being touched again!"

"By Jove!"

"That's a stunning wheeze, old man!"

The chums of the Shell were interested now, in spite of themselves.

Glyn looked very pleased at the impression he was making upon them.

"You can control the speed of the ball by this little screw here."

"Yes."

"And the speed at which the machine works by this regulator here."

"Top-hole!" said Tom Merry, looking at the wonderful machine with something like awe. "You're a blessed marvel, young Bernard! Have you tried it yet?"

"No; I have only just fixed up the battery. I want to try it right away. If you chaps will give me a hand, we'll take it down to the junior nets now," said Glyn, with enthusiasm.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry, a little doubtfully.

"Then catch hold!"

"Hold on!" said Monty Lowther, hanging back. Monty seemed to have an inherent distrust of Bernard Glyn's inventions, and not altogether without reason. "Where's

your pals Dane and Noble, Glyn? Why can't they give you a hand with your blessed 'George Hirst'?"

"Oh, those dummies!" said Glyn off-handedly, bending down and fiddling about with some part of his precious invention. "They cleared off out of the study a few minutes before you came in."

"Why?" said Tom Merry curiously.

"Blessed if I know!" said Glyn. "I was showing 'em how this patent spring arm worked, when the spring slipped and cracked Clifton Dane over the head."

"Oh!"

"Of course, he jumped back, and bumped Noble under the chin."

"I see!"

"And then they left! But blessed if know why!"

"Echo answers why!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Manners burst into a laugh. Glyn looked up in surprise.

"What are you chaps cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to grin at!" grunted Glyn.

"You wouldn't, old man!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "But don't mind us! Get on with the washing!"

"Well, catch hold, then!" said Glyn. "Here—and here!"

Tom Merry and Manners, grinning, laid hands on the mechanical bowler, but Monty Lowther stood off, with an obstinate expression on his face.

"Catch hold, Lowther!" said Glyn impatiently.

Monty shook his head.

"No fear!"

Glyn stared.

"Why not, you chump?"

"I don't want a crack on the head from that blessed contraption!"

Glyn snorted.

"You silly ass! It's quite safe now!"

"Glad to hear it!" said Lowther heartily. "Anyway, I'm off down to the cricket!"

"You—you silly chump!" roared Glyn, exasperated.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Monty isn't having any, Glyn!" he said. "Never mind! We three can get the blessed thing down all right."

Glyn snorted again. His feelings towards Lowther were evidently too deep for words. He grasped hold of the mechanical bowler.

"Be careful now!" he warned. "When I say lift—"

"We all lifts!" said Tom Merry.

"Lift!"

"What-ho!"

"Careful now, you duffers!"

Amidst a volley of instructions from the anxious inventor, the precious mechanical bowler was at last deposited at the bowling end of one of the junior practice-nets.

A curious crowd of juniors collected round it at once.

"Stand back!" said Glyn, wiping his brow. "Now I'll show you chaps some real bowling!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Knocks for Knox!

TOM MERRY went to the wicket, bat in hand, while Glyn did something to the mechanism of 'George Hirst', as he had christened his machine after the famous Yorkshire bowler.

The juniors looked on with eager expectation. Tom Merry was a good bat, and it would be interesting to see what impression, if any, the bowling-machine would make upon his wicket.

"I'll send 'em down one at a time unt'!

I get the right length," called out Glyn. "Are you ready?"

"Yes."

Click!

The long arm of the machine shot out, and the ball went hurtling through the air with the speed of an express train, straight at the batsman's head!

There was a roar from the onlookers.

"Look out, Tom!"

"Mind your eye!"

"Heads!"

Tom Merry dropped his bat and ducked—just in time. The ball crashed against the net behind the wicket.

Glyn stood looking down the pitch with an expression of surprise on his face.

"That's funny!" he remarked.

"Funny!" roared Tom Merry, with a red face, picking up his bat. "You silly chump! You might have brained me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the crowd.

"Sorry!" said Glyn. "The spring wants adjusting, that's all! I'll send you another one."

"Well, for goodness' sake, be careful!" grumbled Tom.

Glyn adjusted several nuts and screws, while the crowd looked on interestedly, grinning.

"Ready?" called Glyn again.

Click!

The ball left the machine more slowly this time, and curled towards the batsman. Tom Merry stepped out, and hit it full pitch, straight out of the net.

Away over the top of the mechanical bowler it soared, and there was a shout of approval from the onlookers.

"Well hit, sir!"

"That's a sixer!"

"Better take 'George Hirst' off, Glyn! He's no good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn adjusted something again, and sent down another ball. This time it pitched a bit short, and Tom Merry put it away to leg with ease.

The next ball was a shade better, and Tom played it carefully.

The fifth ball from the machine shattered the batsman's wicket.

"How's that?" exclaimed Glyn triumphantly, as the crowd of juniors looked at the machine with growing respect.

"Out!" said Tom Merry, with a rueful laugh. "It was a topping ball. I couldn't play it!"

"Try it again," said Glyn.

"Right-ho!"

Without making any adjustments this time, Glyn "fired" another ball from his machine.

Click! Crash!

It was the crash of falling wickets again. Tom Merry's wicket was shattered a second time!

There were exclamations of surprise from all sides.

"My hat!" said Manners. "'George Hirst' can bowl, after all, Glyn! If he can take Tommy's wicket twice in two balls—"

Glyn grinned in high glee.

"That's just it!" he said. "If I don't touch the machine now it will bowl every ball exactly the same until further orders. That's why it's such a fine thing for cricket-practice. Now, let's collect all the balls, and

put them in this trough. I want to try my new electric 'repeater' wheeze."

"Oh, good!"

The six balls were collected, and Bernard Glyn, with an anxious expression on his face, tinkered about with the electrical apparatus which formed the latest improvement to his great invention.

"There!" he said at last. "It's all ready now! I have only to press this switch and stand back, and 'Georgie' will bowl six balls, one after another, and all pitching in exactly the same place. Now, who's going in to try it?"

"Look out!" said Manners quickly. "Here's Knox!"

Gerald Knox, the most unpopular prefect at St. Jim's, was approaching the group of juniors which surrounded Glyn's famous invention.

Knox was in cricketering-flannels, and had a bat under his arm. It was evident that he was on his way to the senior nets when he noticed that something unusual was going on at the junior ground.

As Lowther remarked, sotto voce, Knox was always sticking his nose in where it wasn't wanted.

Knox strode up.

"Now, then!" he exclaimed, in his unpleasant voice. "What's going on here? What are you kids up to?"

The juniors fell back—all except Glyn, who stood protectively by his beloved machine.

"It's my bowling-machine, Knox," he said mildly. "I—I've been improving it, you know. We've just been trying it."

Knox looked at the machine, and gave a sneering laugh.

"Oh, that rotten thing!" he exclaimed. "That's no good! Why don't you smash the thing up?"

"It's a jolly good machine!" said Glyn warmly. "It's just bowled Tom Merry out!"

"Has it really?" said Knox mockingly. "Well, I'm not surprised. It wouldn't take much to do that!"

Tom Merry turned red. He was a keen cricketer, and spent much of his time at the nets, whereas Knox was well-known to be a slacker, who was more interested in poker or nap than cricket. It was probable that, on present form, Tom Merry was quite as good at batting as Knox.

"Perhaps you'd like to have a go against the bowling-machine, Knox?" said Tom warmly. "It might surprise you a bit, I think!"

"Oh, rot!" said Knox. "I should knock its blessed balls all over the place, of course!"

"Perhaps!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"What's that, Lowther?" exclaimed Knox sharply.

"Ahem! I was wondering if you'd give us an exhibition over, just to show us, Knox," said Monty hastily. "The—the machine bowls a whole over without being wound up, you know."

Knox gazed at the junior suspiciously; but Monty Lowther's expression was one of perfect innocence. And all the juniors round looked exceptionally grave.

"Well, so I will!" growled Knox. "I'll show you how to knock the bowling of that rotten machine off the earth!"

Knox strode to the wickets, knocked them in with the handle of his bat, and adjusted the balls, while the juniors winked at one another delightedly.

"Ready Knox?" sang out Bernard Glyn sweetly.

"Yes; let the blessed thing go!" said the prefect contemptuously.

Glyn gave a few quick turns to the screw which regulated the swiftness of the bowling. If Knox was so confident, he doubtless would not mind the bowling being pretty fast.

There was a whir from the electric motor, as Glyn pressed the switch and stood well back. Then—

Click!

The first ball flew from the machine, and Knox made a terrific swipe at it. But there was no merry clack of bat meeting ball. Instead, there was the crash of the falling wicket. Knox had been bowled first ball!

There was a shout from the juniors.

"How's that, umpire?"

"You're out, Knoxe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox turned a red and wrathful face towards the hilarious juniors.

"It was a blessed fluke!" he gasped. "I—I wasn't ready—"

"Look out, Knox!" shouted Glyn. "Here's another one coming!"

Click!

The machine bowled its second ball, and

Knox made a frantic attempt to knock it out of the ground—but in vain!

Crash!

The ball crashed on the already wrecked wicket, and there was another derisive shout from the juniors.

"Another wicket for 'Georgie Hirst'!"

"Why didn't you hit it, Knoxe?"

"Now for the hat-trick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox gritted his teeth, and his face was dark with fury.

"I tell you—"

"Look out!"

The warning came from Bernard Glyn.

Click!

Another express delivery from "Georgie," the mechanical bowler, came hurtling towards the unlucky batsman.

Almost desperately, Knox set his teeth and stood his ground.

He played the uncanny bowler's delivery with all the skill he was master of. But, to the unhappy Knox, the ball seemed bewitched. It curled underneath his bat, just as he thought he had got it, and again there was a crash! He had been bowled by the third ball in succession!

A perfect roar went up from the watching juniors. Knox hurled down his bat in a fury.

"It's a rotten trick!" he raved, taking a stride up the pitch. "I'm hanged if I'm going to—"

The prefect did not get any further. Bernard Glyn's warning shout was lost in the laughter that was going on all round. For quite a crowd had collected by this time, which included Kildare, the popular captain of St. Jim's. And Kildare was laughing as much as anybody.

The machine was bowling again, and this time something had evidently gone wrong with the regulating mechanism. For instead of a single click, there were several in quick succession.

Click, click, click!

The wretched Knox was just at the spot where the balls would pitch, and he had no bat with which to ward off the shower of balls hurling down upon him.

He saw his danger, and, with a gasp of alarm, ducked desperately, missed his footing, and sprawled upon the pitch, face downwards.

Thud, thud, thud!

The rapid deliveries clumped one after another upon Knox's person. Fortunately, they struck him upon that portion of his anatomy where they would do the least harm, but the blows were none the less painful.

With a succession of fiendish yells, the unfortunate prefect rolled upon the ground, clasping his bruised back. It was perhaps fortunate that the great roar of laughter that went up drowned the remarks he was making, which were decidedly more forcible than polite.

Tom Merry & Co. were simply doubled up with laughter, and so was Eric Kildare and the high and mighty seniors who had strolled up with him.

"Take me away, Tommy!" moaned Monty Lowther, who had fallen into Tom Merry's arms, almost weeping with laughter. "I—I withdraw all the rude things I have said about the machine! It—it's simply priceless!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Georgie Hirst, the prefect-tamer!" stutted Manners. "Oh, carry me home to die!"

Livid with rage, Knox picked himself up, and limped painfully up the pitch, shaking his fist furiously at the almost hysterical juniors.

"You young hounds!" he hooted, making for Glyn, who was anxiously inspecting his precious machine. "You did this on purpose! It's a trick! I—I'll—"

"Hold on, Knox!" said Glyn, in alarm. "It was quite an accident! The machine—"

"You young hound, I'll smash you!" roared Knox.

He made a rush at the St. Jim's inventor, but Eric Kildare, burly and smiling, stepped into his path.

"Steady, Knox!" he said quietly. "I don't think it was done on purpose—and you were trying to show off, anyway! Don't lose your temper!"

"I tell you, I'm going to smash that infernal machine—and those young hounds, too!" howled Knox.

"I think not!" said Kildare firmly, but still smiling. "It was rough luck on you—but it was funny, you know!"

Knox glared at him furiously. But, enraged as he was, he was not quite so foolish as to tackle the burly captain of St. Jim's. And he saw that Kildare did not intend to allow the juniors, or the machine, to be smashed.

Growling savagely, he turned away, and limped towards the School House. He was conscious that he had made a complete and sorry exhibition of himself. But what he could not see was that it was principally owing to his own boastfulness and his bullying propensities.

"Lucky for us that you were here, Kildare!" chuckled Glyn, as the captain of St. Jim's examined the machine with interest. "Knox doesn't like being made a fool of—even by 'Georgie Hirst'! But my machine fairly bowled him out—in more senses than one!"

THE END.

THE MYSTERY MAKERS!

(Continued from page 10.)

"But—"

"Mind you keep it dark, or the other fellows will want to come," added Dick.

Biglow thought it hardly likely. He offered, however, to give Bobbin and Waddell the chance of taking his place, but neither Harry nor Dick would hear of it. No, Biglow would have to go, and as usual Biglow finally gave in, and promised to accompany them.

Biglow, in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, routed out an old dark-lantern, and spent the rest of the evening in cleaning it, and generally getting it ready for active service.

So, when the witching hour of midnight was about to strike, three shadowy figures would have been seen—if anyone had chanced to be about—issuing from Trent's quarters. Cautiously they crept along the passage, and, hurrying downstairs, vanished into the room lately occupied by Mr. Halibut.

"I say," whispered Harry Trent to Biglow, "that lantern of yours smells a bit. Can't you put it out, or switch it off, or something?"

"I'll try," answered Biglow.

Now, this lantern was very much like the first cannon used in warfare. In those by-gone days the army that possessed cannon usually got beaten through the unfortunate habit the shot had of coming out the wrong end. In the same way, the possession of Biglow's lantern had its drawbacks. It looked well, and gave a touch of romance to the proceedings. Unfortunately, however, it got so unpleasantly hot, and the odour of heated metal was so strong, that an enemy getting to windward would smell the expedition long before they sighted them.

All at once Dick and Harry got a shock. What was that light that suddenly sprang up?

False alarm. It was only Biglow switching on his lantern by mistake.

"Silly chump!" grunted Harry. "That precious lantern of yours will be our ruin!"

Biglow blew vigorously over the top—so vigorously that his breath made quite a noise as it whistled through the ventilation-holes. Dick and Harry implored him to stop. Of the two evils, they said they preferred the lantern alight to Biglow's efforts to put it out.

Harry was in despair.

"It's smelling worse than ever!" he groaned. "I tell you what—put it inside the water-jug!"

"But that'll spoil it!" objected Biglow.

However, he was induced to do so. He wrapped it round in a towel, carried it swiftly to the water-jug, popped it inside, where it went out with a loud hiss of protest.

For an hour they remained in hiding, and at the end of that time they had had about enough of it. They were cold and stiff and cramped, and generally felt extremely uncomfortable. After all said and done, this was pretty poor sport.

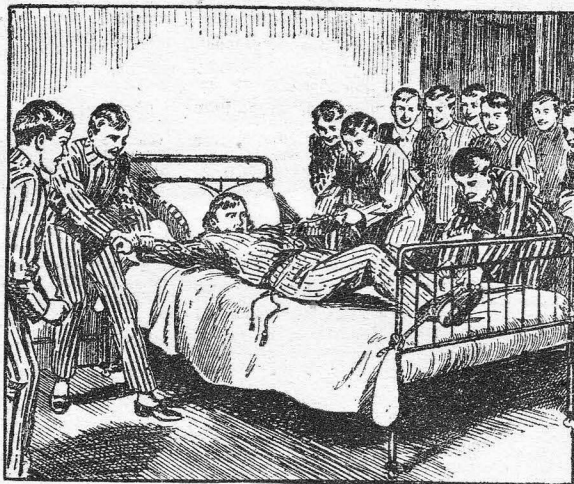
All at once their attention was directed to a sound. It began as a murmur, but quickly grew into a yell—a yell of terror.

"What's up now?" gasped Biglow.

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

TAMING A TARTAR!

A MAGNIFICENT,
LONG, COMPLETE
SCHOOL TALE OF
JIMMY SILVER &
CO., THE
POPULAR CHUMS
OF ROOKWOOD.



By
**OWEN
CONQUEST.**

THE ONLY WAY!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"Thanks for the Tip!"

"JIMMY SILVER, you ass, we're waiting for you!"

"Come on, fathead!"

"Buck up!"

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were ready to go down to the cricket-ground. Jimmy Silver wasn't ready. Jimmy was in the end study, talking to Leggett of the Modern side, when his three chums looked in, and made those remarks.

Jimmy glanced round at his chums.

"Hold on a minute!" he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell. "Never mind that Modern worm! Come on!"

"Leggett's just told me something—"

"Blow Leggett!"

"Look here, you can't keep us waiting while you jaw to a Modern cad," said Raby. "Leggett can go and eat coke. Come on!"

"We'll chuck him out if you like," suggested Newcome. There was always warfare between Classicals and Moderns at Rookwood. The three Classicals were anxious to get down to the cricket-ground, but they were willing to waste a few minutes "chucking out" a Modern fellow.

Leggett backed round the table in alarm.

"You don't want to talk to that worm," said Lovell. "I suppose you're not borrowing money of him?"

"No, fathead!"

"Well, we'll chuck him out—"

"Hold on, I tell you, fathead!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats!" growled Lovell.

Lovell was wrathful. He did not like Moderns anyway; and Leggett was the least likeable of the Moderns.

He was not liked even on his own side. Tommy Dodd & Co. had "scragged" him many a time for his sneaking proclivities. And Leggett, who was a very deep youth, turned a more or less honest penny sometimes by moneylending among the juniors. He was the last fellow in the world to be welcome in the end study.

Lovell came into the study with a business-like expression. Leggett backed farther round the table. He did not like Lovell's looks.

"Look here, I came here to speak to Jimmy Silver—" he began.

"Like your cheek!" said Lovell. "You're going out on your neck! Don't dodge behind Silver, you worm—come and take your medicine!"

"Hold on, you ass!" said Jimmy, pushing his chum back. "Leggett came here to give me a tip."

"Rats!"

"There's a new chap coming to Rookwood this afternoon—a Classical—"

"Blow the new chap!"

"Chap named Higgs," said Leggett.

"Blow his name!"

"And those Modern bounders have gone to meet him at the station," said Jimmy Silver.

"Leggett says so," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, let 'em meet him, and be blowed!"

"They're going to rag him," said Leggett.

"Let 'em rag him!"

"Look here," said Jimmy Silver. "I don't know the new kid, but he's a Classical.

We're not going to let the Moderns rag a Classical. It's up to us to chip in."

"What about the cricket?" demanded Raby.

"Well, it's only practice, and it can stand over for a bit," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, the new kid doesn't matter twopence, as far as that goes, but we can't have Modern worms ragging Classical chaps."

"Something in that," agreed Lovell. "But what is that cad doing, giving his own side away?"

"I thought I'd come and give you the tip," said Leggett. "Of course, you needn't mention it to Tommy Dodd."

Lovell snorted.

"You mean that you've had a row with Tommy Dodd, and you want to get even with him, and you've come over here for a catspaw!" he growled.

"Well, you can do as you like!" snapped Leggett. "I thought Jimmy Silver would chip in as the new kid's a Classical."

"And Jimmy Silver will," said the captain of the Fourth. "We can let the cricket slide for a bit, you chaps. A walk to the station won't hurt us. If the Modern bounders are ragging a Classical chap, we'll jolly well rag them. It will make them put their ears down, anyway."

"Well, that's all right!" agreed Lovell. "But Leggett's a cad to come and tell us, all the same. Where did you get that nose, Leggett?"

Leggett's nose was a little swollen, and of a fiery hue. It looked as if it had come into violent contact with a set of knuckles.

"Find out!" growled Leggett, rubbing his nose.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Tommy Dodd's punched his nose, and he wants us to punch Tommy Dodd," he said.

"Well, we're on. We're going to the rescue; but before we go we'll bump Leggett for sneaking against his own side."

"Good egg!" said Lovell. "Now, you're talking!"

Leggett was collared.

He wriggled in the grasp of the Fistical Four as he was swept off the floor.

Then he came down on the carpet—bump!

Leggett's yell ran the length of the Fourth Form passage.

"Yoooop!"

"Give him another!" said Jimmy Silver.

"He only gave us one tip, but we'll give him two bumps. That's cent. per cent.—Leggett likes that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Leggett. "Oh, yah—oh! Leggo! Yoooop!"

"Now all jump on him together," said Jimmy Silver, as Leggett sprawled on the carpet. "Now, one, two—"

Leggett did not wait for "three."

He was on his feet in a twinkling, and speeding down the passage to the stairs.

A yell of laughter from the end study followed him.

"Now we'll trot down to the station," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I don't think we shall ever get any more friendly tips from Leggett. But we'll put a spoke in Tommy Dodd's wheel. Come on!"

And the Fistical Four of the Fourth took their straw hats, and started for Coombe, to "chip in" very forcibly in the little game the humorous Moderns had planned for the afternoon.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Slight Surprise.

"HERE'S the giddy train," said Tommy Dodd.

The three Tommies—Dodd and Doyle and Cook—were on the platform in Coombe Station.

They were looking very merry and bright that afternoon.

Tommy Dodd had heard that a new Classical fellow was coming into the Fourth Form at Rookwood, and it had been his idea to pass an hour in polite attentions to him. Not that Tommy Dodd knew anything about the new fellow, or had any dislike for him, or anything of that kind. But the new boy was a Classical, and Classicals were born to be ragged by Moderns, and a half-holiday could not possibly be better spent than in ragging a Classical. That was how Tommy Dodd looked at it; and Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook heartily agreed with their great leader.

So the three Modern juniors were waiting on the platform, ready to pounce upon the new junior as soon as he alighted from the train.

"Nail him as soon as he shows up!" said Tommy Dodd. "Don't hurt the poor little beast, of course. We'll pull his leg, and stuff him up—Hallo! Here he is!"

The train had stopped, and among the passengers

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

sengers who alighted from it was a lad in Etons. He was the only boy there, so there was no doubt that he was the new fellow for Rookwood.

The three Tommies stared at him in astonishment.

He was not quite like their expectations. They had expected to see a small, quiet, somewhat sheepish fellow, somewhat nervous in his ways—in fact, an ordinary new kid.

The newcomer was nothing at all like that.

In the first place, he was older than the Fourth-Formers, and considerably bigger. He was as big as any fellow in the Shell at Rookwood. He was powerfully-built, with a breadth of chest and shoulder remarkable for his age. His face was rugged, and curiously like that of a bulldog in expression. His jaw was square, and his look very determined.

The three Tommies exchanged a queer glance.

The new boy did not look like a fellow who could be ragged, stuffed up, and have his leg pulled with impunity.

"H'm!" remarked Tommy Cook. "That isn't quite the merchant I expected to see. He's too old for the Fourth, I should say."

"Must be the chap!" said Tommy Dodd. "I heard Bootles say he was coming by this train, and he's the only kid here!"

"Doesn't look an easy customer," murmured Doyle. "Faith, he looks like a young prizefighter, if you ask me!"

"Hallo! He's coming to speak to us!"

The three Tommies had intended to introduce themselves. But they were staring at the newcomer instead. The new arrival came across the platform, returning their stare with interest, and addressed them.

"You fellows belong to Rookwood?" he asked.

"Yes. Are you Higgs?"

"Yes; I'm Higgs. I'm going into the Fourth. One of you kids can carry this bag."

"Wha-at!"

"Deaf?" asked Higgs unpleasantly.

"Carry your bag!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd, his breath quite taken away. "Are you going into the Sixth, by any chance?"

"Eh? No!"

"And you're not a new headmaster, or anything of that kind?"

"Of course not!"

"Then you can carry your bag yourself," said Tommy Dodd, "and you can be thankful that I don't bash it over your silly cocoa-nut!"

The new junior stared at him for a moment, then burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We came here to—to meet you!" exclaimed Dodd angrily. "We thought we'd put you through your paces to begin with. I think we can't do better than take some of the cheek out of you to start with. Higgs! Collar him, you chaps! We'll teach him to cackle at us!"

"Burrp the cheeky baste!" said Doyle. "We might give him the frogmarch to Rookwood afterwards. It would do him good!"

"Hear, hear!" said Cook. "Now, all together, and bump him hard!"

The three Tommies collared the new junior without ceremony.

They had intended to rag him gently, and "pull his leg," and generally extract a little harmless and necessary amusement from him. But the new boy's manner had changed all that. They felt that sterner measures were required, and they were prepared to take them.

But there was a surprise in store for Tommy Dodd & Co.

As they seized the new junior he ceased laughing, dropped his bag, and hit out. Tommy Dodd felt as if a mule had kicked him on the chin, and he went over on his back with a yell.

Then Cook and Doyle, much to their astonishment, found themselves grasped by their collars.

They were swung to and fro helplessly, and then their heads came together with a resounding concussion.

"Crack!"

"Oh! Ah! Ow!" gasped Cook.

"Tare an' ounds! Yaroooh!" yelled Doyle.

"Crack!"

Tommy Dodd sat up. His chin felt as if it wasn't there, and he put both hands to it, and blinked.

It seemed like a dream to Tommy Dodd. He was sitting on the platform, knocked out, and the new fellow was grasping Cook and Doyle, and knocking their heads together!

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The three Tommies were three of the most redoubtable fighting-men in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And the new fellow was handling them as if they were infants in the Second Form.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"This is a giddy nightmare! Oh, my chin! Oh crickey!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!" roared Cook.

"Howly Moses! Hands off!" shrieked Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a swing of his remarkably muscular arms, the new junior sent the two Moderns spinning. They reeled across Tommy Dodd, and sat down on the platform. The new boy grinned down at them.

"Want any more?" he asked.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs. "There's a lot more where that came from. Ha, ha, ha!"

He picked up his bag and walked away, to look after his box.

The three Tommies sat up. They blinked at one another in a very uncertain way.

"We—we came here to rag that chap!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Oh, my hat! It—it looks to me as if we've woke up the wrong passerger."

"He's a blessed prizefighter in disguise!" groaned Cook. "Oh, my napper!"

"Thank goodness he's going on the Classical side!" mumbled Doyle. "Sure, they're welcome to him!"

"Oh, my chin!"

"Wow! My napper!"

"Oh dear!"

The three Tommies picked themselves up, and limped out of the station. They had come there to rag the new Classical. But they kindly decided to let him get to Rookwood unragged. They really did not feel equal to any more ragging that afternoon.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Looking for Trouble.

"HERE they are!"

The Fistical Four had arrived. They met the three Tommies as the latter came out of the station. And they lined up in the path of the Moderns, with war-like looks.

Tommy Dodd gave them a feeble grin.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Pax, ye spalpeens!" mumbled Doyle.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Pax, be blowed! We're on the war-path! What have you done with the new kid? We've come to look after him!"

"You needn't have troubled!" growled Tommy Cook. "He doesn't want looking after. He can look after himself!"

"What has he done with us, you mean?" groaned Doyle. "Sure I'm bumps and lumps from me head to me feet!"

"Look at my chin!" mumbled Tommy Dodd.

The Fistical Four looked astonished.

"He's handled you?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Ye-e-s!"

"And you let him?" howled Raby.

"We—we couldn't help it!"

"But—but the three of you!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "What the merry thunder is the new merchant like, then?"

"He's loike a blessed prizefighter, bedad! I'll lick him to-morrow," said Doyle. "But 'nuff as good as a feast for one afternoon!"

"Well, my hat!"

The three Tommies went on their weary way, the Classics gazing after them in amazement.

"Well, this beats the band!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The new kid must be rather a prize-packet. Doesn't seem to need much looking after. I suppose that's the merchant!"

Higgs had come out of the station, after giving directions about his box. He had his bag in his hand, and was looking round him. The Rookwood fellows looked at him with interest. The fellow who had handled the three Tommies single-handed was an object of great interest to them.

"Looks like a blessed mixture of bull and bulldog," commented Newcome. "He wouldn't handle us so easily, though!"

"No jolly fear!"

"Well, we'd better speak to him," said Jimmy. "I can't say I like his looks very much, but we came here to be civil. After all, it's one up for our side, a Classical handling the Modern bounders like that!"

The Fistical Four approached the new junior, who stared at them.

"New chap for Rookwood?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Higgs nodded.

"You're Higgs?"

"Yes—Alfred Higgs."

"Glad to meet you, Alfred Higgs," said Jimmy Silver affably. "We came to see that those Modern bounders didn't bother you; We're Classics."

Higgs grinned.

"Thanks; but I can look after myself. They won't handle me again in a hurry, I expect. I dare say I could lick any fellow at Rookwood!"

"Oh, could you?" said Lovell, nettled.

Higgs stared at him.

"Yes. F'rinstance, I could lick you!"

"Why, you cheeky worm—" began Lovell hotly.

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "We didn't come here to rag. Higgs, my pippin', you've got a good deal to learn, I think. I suppose you haven't come to Rookwood to start rowing with everybody you meet?"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Higgs. "If I don't get on with a chap I give him my left!"

"Your—your what?"

"My left," said Higgs—"like that!"

His left shot out suddenly, crashed on Jimmy Silver's chest, and sent him spinning along the pavement. The captain of the Fourth sat down violently. Higgs burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver was up in a twinkling.

"You silly ass!" he shouted. "What do you mean by bowling me over like that? I've a jolly good mind to mop up the ground with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs. "I'd knock you across the street as soon as look at you!"

"Then you can jolly well try it!" exclaimed Jimmy, blazing out. "Come along to a bit quieter place, and I'll give you a chance!"

"I'm your man!"

Jimmy Silver led the way. As a matter of fact, even the redoubtable Jimmy had his doubts about being able to lick the new junior. But the chief of the Fistical Four, the champion fighting-man of the Lower School at Rookwood, was bound to think of his prestige. He was going to lick this bullying "bounder," or else be licked by him.

They passed out of the old High Street of Coombe, and stopped in the lane that led to Rookwood.

"This will do!" said Jimmy, stopping on a grassy patch by the wayside, under the trees. Higgs threw down his bag.

"Go ahead!" he said carelessly.

"I'll tell you what I think of you first!" said Jimmy. "You're a rotten, snarling, quarrelsome cad and bounder! Now, come on!"

Jimmy threw his hat and jacket on the ground, and stood up to his enemy. Higgs was half a head taller, much broader and longer in the reach, and it could be seen that he was a mass of muscle. If he knew anything about boxing, it looked as if Jimmy had little chance.

But Jimmy was hard as nails, and in perfect condition, and he was a boxer of renown in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And his pluck was unlimited.

"Fair play, you know!" said Higgs, looking round.

"Do you think we won't give you fair play, you rotter?" snorted Lovell.

"I'll lick you all one after another, if you like," said Higgs. "For the matter of that, I'll take you two together, if you like!"

"Oh, shut up, you swanking cad!" growled Raby.

"Ready?" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Oh, come on!"

Jimmy Silver came on, and the next moment they were fighting hammer-and-tongs.

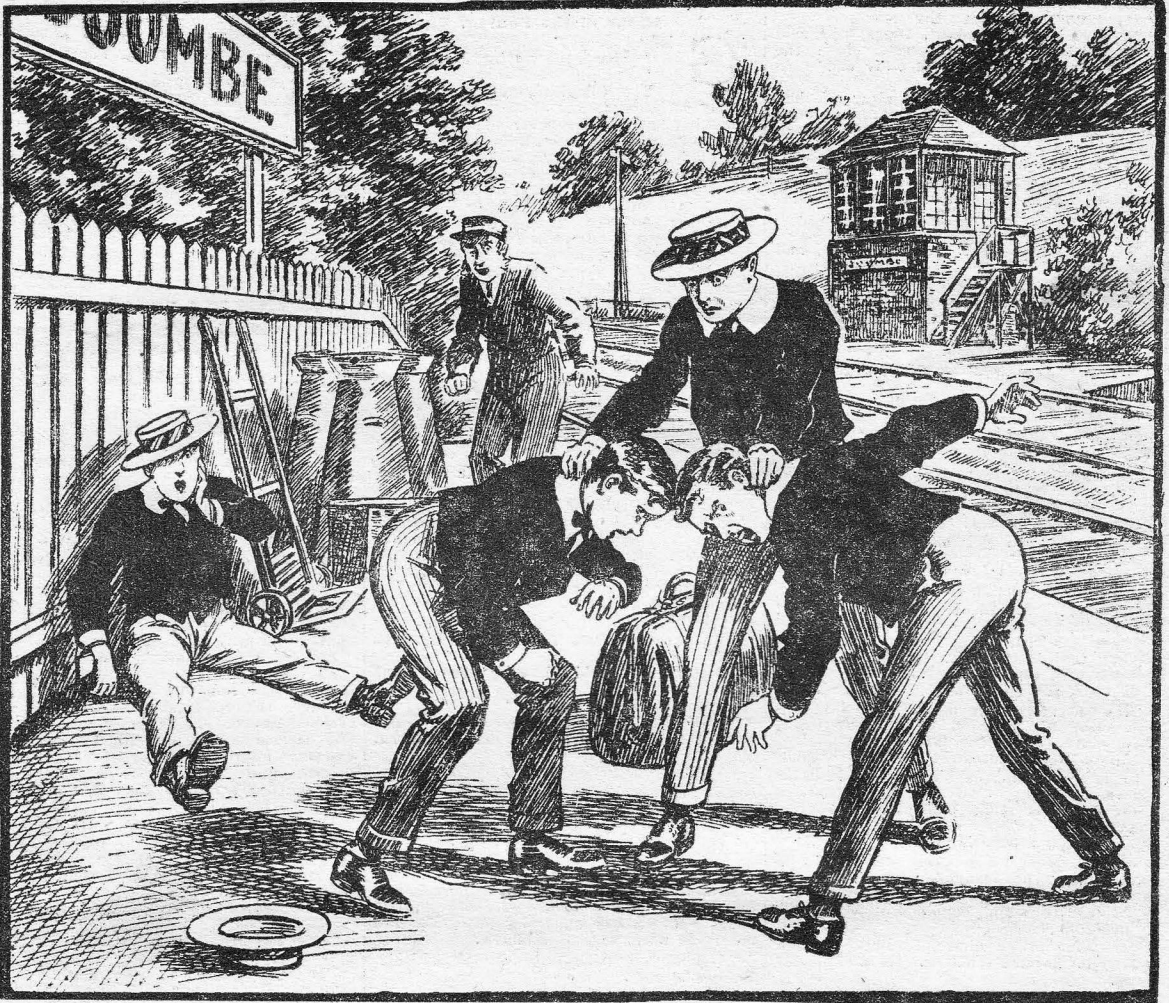
THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Fight to a Finish.

LOVELL and Raby and Newcome looked on anxiously.

They would each have given a term's pocket-money to see Jimmy Silver knock out this bullying, swanking newcomer.

But, great as was their faith in their redoubtable leader, they could not help having their doubts. They could not help acknowledging that even Jimmy Silver looked as if he had met his match at last.



Cook and Doyle, much to their astonishment, found themselves grasped by their collars. They were swung to and fro helplessly by the new boy, and then their heads came together with a resounding concussion. Crack!
 "Oh! Ah! Ow!" (See page 14.)

And their doubts were soon justified. If Higgs had had only his strength and weight to depend upon, the captain of the Fourth could have beaten him by science. But Alfred Higgs quickly showed that he knew something of boxing as well. Jimmy's attack was hard and fast, and his blows came home on Higgs' rugged face with effect; but the new junior did not seem to mind his punishment. He drove home heavy blows in return, and he had a way of using his left that was a new thing in Jimmy Silver's experience, varied as that was. That heavy left came on Jimmy Silver's chin before the contest had lasted two minutes, and the captain of the Fourth went to grass. Higgs grinned down at him. "Had enough?" he chuckled. Jimmy Silver panted. Every tooth in his head seemed to have been jarred by that terrific drive. "I'll show you whether I've had enough!" he gasped. Lovell ran to help him up, but Jimmy did not need assistance. He bounded to his feet, and rushed on again. He was very careful of Higgs' left after that. His teeth were set, and his eyes were gleaming. Jimmy put into that fight all the strength and skill he was possessed of. And the Co. gave a chirrup of joy and satisfaction as a drive fairly between the eyes sent Higgs spinning into the road. The burly junior crashed down, fairly rolling in the dust, and gasping. "Hurrah!" "Man down!" chuckled Lovell. "Good old Jimmy! You'll lick him!" Higgs staggered to his feet. Burly and

powerful as he was, that blow told on him. He blinked rather uncertainly at Jimmy for a moment or two. Then he came on like a bull. His rugged face was crimson now with anger and exertion, and he put all his "beef" into it. Jimmy Silver fought hard, but he was driven back by a rain of blows. His guard seemed helpless against the force of the driving, and blow after blow came home on his face and chest. Down went Jimmy again with a bump. This time he was not in such a hurry to rise. He lay gasping, almost exhausted by his own efforts, and the hammering he had received. Higgs glared down at him. He was not grinning now. Jimmy Silver, though apparently not a match for his burly antagonist, was a hard nut to crack, and Higgs had paid dearly for his success, so far. "Well, have you had enough?" growled Higgs. Jimmy panted for breath. "Wait a tick, and I'll come on!" he said. "The next time I tackle you we'll have rounds." "There won't be any next time!" said Higgs. "I'm going to make you sick of it this time! Get up, or I'll stir you with my boot!" Lovell & Co. made a movement forward, their faces grim and savage. But Jimmy Silver scrambled up, and waved them back. "I'm ready!" he said between his teeth. And they closed again, hammer-and-tongs. Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked on with bitter feelings. The new fellow, buli-

as he was, was entitled to fair play, and they could not interfere. But it was bitter to them to see their leader being knocked out before their eyes by a brutal and ungenerous opponent. Jimmy Silver stood up gamely to his enemy, giving as well as receiving punishment. But it was only too clear now that he was outclassed. Again he went down, under Higgs' terrific left, and this time he struggled in vain to get on his feet. "I fancy that's the finish!" grinned Higgs. Jimmy made another effort to rise, but he rolled on his side. Both his eyes were closed, his nose was streaming red, and his face was cut and bruised. He was aching in every limb, and his strength was gone. "I'm done!" he gasped. "I give you best!" "I thought you would," said Higgs grimly. "Any of you fellows want a turn?" He glared at the Co. "No," said Lovell quietly. "You've licked Jimmy, and that means that you could lick any chap in the Fourth or the Shell. Now you can clear off!" "One of you pick up that bag!" "What!" "And carry it to Rockwood for me," said Higgs. "My hat!" said Raby. "Are you off your rocker?" said Lovell, his voice trembling with rage. "Do you think you can fag us?" "You're going to carry my bag," said Higgs, in a bullying tone; "and sharp's the word!" Jimmy Silver strove to rise again, but he seemed glued to the ground. It was as much as he could do to suppress a groan. THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

Lovell & Co. exchanged glances. Lovell pointed up the road to the school. "You've been given best, Higgs," he said very quietly. "That's enough. Now, the best thing you can do is to clear off!"

"Take up that bag!" "I give you one minute to clear off, bag and all," said Lovell. "If you're not gone then, we'll rag you till you can't crawl, and be glad of the chance!"

"I give you one minute to take up that bag," said Higgs; "and if you've not started by then, I'll mop up the road with the lot of you!"

"Then here goes!" The three rushed at the new junior, and collared him.

Higgs hit out furiously, and Raby dropped in the grass as if he had been shot.

But Lovell and Newcome swept the new junior off his feet, and he came down on the ground with a crash.

Raby was up in a second, his grasp on the new boy.

"Bump him!" shouted Lovell. "Bump—bump—bump!"

Higgs roared as he came into violent contact with the hard road.

He struggled furiously; but, powerful as he was, he could not quite deal with the three, though he gave them a tussle.

"Bump—bump—bump!"

"Now will you get off quietly?" asked Lovell, panting.

"I'll smash you!"

"Bump—bump—bump!"

"Yow-ow!" roared Higgs. "Leave off! I'll go!"

The trio released him, leaving him sprawling in the dusty road. Higgs' face was crimson with rage as he struggled up.

"I'll lick you all for that!" he gasped.

"Do you want some more?" asked Lovell. "If you're not gone before I count three, we'll shove you in the ditch!"

"Shove him in, anyway!" said Newcome.

Higgs picked up the bag, and started for Rookwood. He paused only a moment to shake a big fist at the chums of the Fourth, and tramped away.

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"Of all the 'unspeakable rotters!" he muttered. "The frabjous beast thinks he can bully us—us!"

"Lend me a hand," mumbled Jimmy Silver. "Poor old Jimmy!"

The three raised him up. Jimmy leaned heavily on Lovell's shoulder. He was utterly spent.

"You put up a jolly good fight, Jimmy," said Raby comfortingly.

Jimmy Silver grinned a twisted grin.

"I did my best," he said. "I'll go into training, and tackle him again as soon as I can. The thing can't stop here. We shall have a merry time in the Fourth until somebody has licked that beast!"

"I—I say, you do look a picture!" said Lovell, in dismay. "There'll be a row about this, Jimmy. Bootles will spot your chivvy at once!"

"Can't be helped!"

"Come and bathe it in the pond."

For the next quarter of an hour Jimmy and his chums were busy removing the marks of combat, as far as they could.

But they had little success. Both Jimmy's eyes were darkening rapidly, and his nose was swollen and crimson, and there were half a dozen blue bruises on his face.

"The chap's a giddy prizefighter!" said Newcome. "It was jolly plucky to stand up to him, Jimmy; but—"

"I'm not sorry I did it. Better luck next time!" said Jimmy, with determined cheerfulness.

The Fistical Four took their walk slowly to Rookwood in a grim humour. The defeat was bitter enough. And they had the future to think of.

The Fistical Four had been cock of the walk in the Classical Fourth, though they had never dreamed of using their fistical prowess for swanking or bullying. They had fallen from their high estate now.

Bitterest of all was the knowledge that they had not been beaten by a fellow like themselves, who knew how to play the game.

Higgs was evidently determined to use his personal prowess in a way the Classical chums would never have dreamed of—for bullying, overbearing, and hectoring—and they did not quite see how he was to be stopped.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Higgs of the Fourth.

"GREAT Scott!"

"What's the matter, Jimmy?"

"Had an accident?"

The Classical juniors stared at Jimmy as he came in. Jimmy's face burned under his bruises. He never thought of trying to conceal his defeat, if it had been possible; but this was not pleasant.

"What on earth's happened, old chap?" asked Dick Oswald, with real concern. "Been scrapping with a barge?"

"Or wrestlin' with a motor-car?" grinned Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth.

"By gad, that face is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever!" simpered Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

"I've been in a fight, and I've been licked!" growled Jimmy. "That's all!"

"We could guess that!" chuckled Topham. "By gad! The great one-and-only has been licked at last!"

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Lovell.

"Licked!" exclaimed Oswald. "But—but who did it, Jimmy? Not one of the Bagshot chaps, surely?"

"No; a new fellow here."

"Oh, my hat! That chap in Bootles' study?" exclaimed Rawson.

"Chap named Higgs."

"You must have been off yer form intoirely," said Flynn. "But phwat did ye quarrel wid a new kid for, Jimmy? Twasn't polite, me boy!"

"I didn't quarrel with him—he quarrelled with me," said Jimmy.

"The baste! I'll look for him and give him a tanning when Bootles is done with him!"

"Better not," said Jimmy, with a faint grin.

"Look out, here's Bootles!"

Mr. Bootles' study-door opened, and Higgs came out. The Fourth Form master glanced out into the passage.

Jimmy was hurrying for the stairs, anxious to get his face out of sight; but Mr. Bootles saw it.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

"Come here!"

Jimmy Silver reluctantly went up. Mr. Bootles scanned his face with horror and indignation. Higgs looked on with a grin. Higgs' face showed signs of combat, but not nearly so noticeably as Jimmy's.

"You have been fighting, Silver?" said Mr. Bootles sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"Without gloves, I presume, to judge by the state of your face?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You have done wrong, Silver, and you are well aware of it!" said Mr. Bootles severely. "You are in a disgraceful state! Bless my soul, your eyes are quite black! Is that a proper state for a boy belonging to a respectable school, Silver?"

"Nunno, sir."

"You will be a disgraceful sight for a week or more. I am inexpressibly shocked, Silver!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir!"

"As you apparently spend your half-holiday in disgracing your school, Silver, you will be detained for the next two half-holidays!" said Mr. Bootles angrily. "I am ashamed of you! You may go!"

"Yes, sir," groaned Jimmy.

His chums glared at Higgs. Higgs had been the aggressor, and if he had owned up to it, Mr. Bootles would have taken a more lenient view of the case; but Higgs did not speak.

Mr. Bootles went back to his study, and the Fistical Four went upstairs. Jimmy Silver threw himself into the armchair in the end study.

"Gated for two half-holidays because of that cad!" snorted Lovell.

"Can't be helped! Keep smiling!"

"The rotter ought to have spoken up!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"He's a rotter all through," he said. "Never mind! Gating doesn't matter much. I don't feel inclined to take two black eyes for a walk."

"Well, that's so," agreed Lovell. "You'll have to lie low for a bit. You do look a picture, and no mistake!"

"Coming down to the cricket, Jimmy?" asked Jones minor, putting his head in at the door. Then he jumped. "Great Kitchener! What's wrong with your face?"

"Oh, clear off, and don't worry me!"

But Jimmy Silver was not to be left in peace.

He had to pay the penalty of being a prominent personage in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

The news spread like wildfire that Jimmy Silver had been licked, and fellows came from far and near to look at him, and pass remarks.

His friends were quite concerned; but there were a good many fellows who were distinctly pleased.

Smythe & Co., the Nuts of Rookwood, rejoiced.

Their old enemy was down at last, and that was a cause of great rejoicing among the Nuts. Townsend and Topham and Peele came in to sympathise sarcastically, till Lovell caught up a cricket-stump and drove them out.

Towny and his friends dodged the stump, and went chuckling down the passage.

"This is a giddy stroke of luck—what!" chortled Towny. "Jimmy Silver's down off his perch at last. He won't be quite so ready to chip in and worry a chap now when he's havin' a smoke or a game of banker. But, I say, that new chap must be a holy terror if he can handle Jimmy Silver like that!"

"Better pal with him!" said Topham sagely. "I don't want a face like Jimmy Silver's!"

"Must be a regular prizefighter," said Peele. "Let's ask him to tea in the study, and butter him up a bit."

"Good! May be able to set him right against the end study, and keep those cheeky rotters in their place for good!" chuckled Towny.

And the cheery Nuts looked for Higgs. They soon found him.

Higgs had come up to the Fourth Form passage, the recipient of a good many curious glances. Flynn had looked at him, and decided not to give him the tanning he had mentioned. Higgs swaggered along the passage, quite conscious of the sensation he had made. There was none of the sheepishness of a new boy about Master Higgs.

"Hallo!" said Townsend, with great affability. "I've been lookin' for a chance to speak to you, Higgs. Glad to see you here!"

"Jolly glad!" chimed in Topham. "How do you do, dear boy?"

"Got your study yet?" asked Peele. Higgs shook his head.

"No; I'm looking for one. Which is the best study in the Fourth?"

"Oh, the end study!" said Peele.

"Then that's going to be mine!"

"Oh!"

The Nuts were a little taken aback. They wanted to get on the best of terms with the terrible new junior; but his insolence had the effect of putting their backs up in spite of themselves. But they had no intention of quarrelling with him, if he put their backs up to any extent.

"Been to school before?" asked Peele.

"Of course I have! I was at St. Wode's before I came here."

"Oh, you know all the ropes, then?"

"Of course I do! You won't find any green in my eye!" said Higgs. "I did what I liked in the Fourth at St. Wode's. I'm going to do the same here!"

"Oh!"

"Got anything to say against it?" asked Higgs truculently.

Peele changed his mind about asking the new junior to share his study. Higgs was not likely to be a pleasant study-mate.

"Where's that study you were speaking of?" asked Higgs. "The Form-master told me he would find me a study, but he said I could go into any of them if the fellows there asked me to—I asked him that, you see. The chaps in the best study are going to ask me—see?"

And Higgs grinned at his own astuteness.

"The chaps in the end study won't," said Townsend.

"Won't they? We'll see about that! Who are they?"

"The chap you licked, and his pals."

Higgs chuckled.

"I don't suppose that chap wants any more," he remarked. "I'll look at the study, and decide whether I want it. That'll settle the point."

"Well, there it is," said Townsend.

Higgs strode along the passage to the end study. Townsend & Co. grinned at one another, and followed him. There was more trouble for Jimmy Silver, and that was a prospect at which the Nuts of Rookwood rejoiced.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Warm Reception.**

CRASH!
The door of the end study flew open, propelled by Alfred Higgs' heavy boot.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sitting down to tea. Jimmy did not feel equal to any cricket after his terrific combat with the new junior.

The Fistical Four started up as the door flew violently open. Higgs of the Fourth strode in.

Outside, Townsend & Co. watched, grinning, and a good many more fellows gathered to watch. There was much curiosity in the Fourth as to how the captain of the Form would deal with the truculent intruder.

The Fistical Four fixed their eyes upon Higgs with a deadly glare.

"Is that how you usually come into a study, you pig?" asked Lovell, in a sulphurous tone.

Higgs did not reply. He looked round the study, scanning it, and evidently calculating upon the advantages it offered.

The end study was certainly the best room in the passage. It was larger than the others, and had two windows, one of which commanded a view of the playing-fields.

Higgs nodded with satisfaction.

"This will suit me," he said.
"Do you mean to say that Bootles has sent you here?" exclaimed Raby. "Why, he can't! We're four, and there's never more than four to a study!"

"There's only two in Peele's study," said Newcome. "You'd better go along and dig with Peele, Higgs!"

"Bootles hasn't sent me here," said Higgs coolly. "I've come on my own. I can go into any study where the fellows ask for me to come!"

"Well, we're jolly well not likely to ask you!" growled Lovell.

"No jolly fear!"
"Clear out!"

"I take it for granted that you ask me!" said Higgs. "That's near enough for Bootles. But we can't have five in a study; there's no room!"

"Exactly! So you can clear out!"

"Three in a study is quite enough," said Higgs. "Two of you fellows will have to clear out!"

"What!"
"My hat!"

"You can suit yourselves about the two, but two will have to go! I can't be crowded out by a gang like you!"

"Look here!" bawled Lovell. "Do you think you're coming into this study when we don't want you?"

"I know I am!"

"You can't do it, Higgs!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I recommend you to go along the passage and look for other quarters!"

"I'm staying here! I'll have tea with you as it's ready! You can all stay till after tea!" said Higgs magnanimously. "After tea two of you will have to go, and you can take your traps with you!"

The Fistical Four could scarcely believe their ears. The egregious Higgs evidently regarded himself as monarch of all he surveyed by right of the strong hand. But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not exactly the kind of fellows to be bullied out of their study.

"You won't have tea with us!" said Jimmy calmly. "And you won't stay here! Clear off, and close the door after you, please!"

"Do you want another licking?"
"It isn't a question of that. I'm going to tackle you again when I feel fit. At present I don't feel fit."

"Then you'd better dry up!" said Higgs. "Fit or not, you'll get another hiding if I have any of your cheek!"

"Are you going out of this study?" asked Jimmy.

"No fear!"
"Then pile in, you fellows!"

The Fistical Four piled in.
"Here, one at a time!" roared Higgs.

"Two at a time, if you like!"
The chums of the Fourth did not heed.

They grasped Higgs on all sides, and, struggling desperately and hitting out, he was borne to the floor.

Lovell held him with an arm round his neck, and Raby grasped his wrists and imprisoned them, and Newcome stood on his legs.

Higgs struggled in vain.
Jimmy Silver picked up the bowl of treacle that adorned the table.

"Are you going out quietly?" he asked.
"I'll smash you!" roared Higgs, struggling furiously.

Jimmy upended the bowl over his face. The treacle came swamping down in a sticky stream.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, crumbs! Grooooooogh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the passage.

Higgs' rugged, furious face disappeared under a flood of treacle. Jimmy Silver calmly rubbed it into his hair and neck.

Higgs gasped and stuttered and spluttered.
"Yurrggh! Gurggh! Yow-ow-ooogh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, give the spalpeen beans!"
"Rub it in!"

"Are you going now?" asked Jimmy Silver, with cheery calmness.

"Groogh! Gerrooogh! Yah! I'll smash you!"

"Obstinate beast!" said Lovell. "That would have satisfied anybody else. The hog doesn't know when he's had enough!"

"Roll him over," said Jimmy.

Higgs, struggling frantically, was rolled over, his nose grinding into the study carpet. Lovell sat on the back of his head, to an accompaniment of horrid gurgles from Higgs.

Jimmy Silver wielded the shovel.
The flat part of the weapon of punishment descended upon Higgs, who was beautifully placed to receive it.

Whack, whack, whack!
Gurgle, gurgle!

Whack, whack, whack, whack!
Jimmy Silver was putting his beef into it.

"Have you had enough now, Higgs?" he asked, when his arm tired.

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"He can't speak while I'm sitting on his head," said Lovell. "Give him some more, anyway."

"No, let him speak. I'm tired."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell removed himself from Higgs' head, grasping his ears. He turned Higgs' crimson and dusty face up into view.

"Are you going quietly now, Higgs, or do you want some more?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Wow, wow, wow! I'll go!" stuttered Higgs.

"Good! Kick him out!" said Jimmy.

Higgs was dragged to his feet and whirled to the door. Four boots were planted behind him at the same moment, and he fairly flew into the passage. The juniors crowded back to give him room to fall, and he went to the floor with a crash.

"You can come back when you want some more," said Jimmy Silver, as he closed the door of the study.

Alfred Higgs did not come back. Truculent as he was, he had had enough, and he did not come back for more.

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Drastic Measures.**

JIMMY SILVER was feeling decidedly "groggy" when he came into the Fourth Form dormitory that night. His head was aching, and he had half a dozen aches all over him. His eyes were

a beautiful black by this time, and his nose looked twice its natural size. The Fourth-Formers could not help grinning when they looked at him. Even his own chums smiled. Jimmy did not feel like smiling himself.

Higgs of the Fourth came into the dormitory with a swagger. Apparently he had quite recovered from his rough handling in the end study.

The other fellows had not tackled Higgs in the manner of the Fistical Four. Higgs had decided on Peele's study, after all, and Peele and Gower, to whom it belonged, had not ventured to say him nay. Peele & Co. had been willing, in fact, to pal with the newcomer, and to rejoice in his success if he downed Jimmy Silver & Co. But Higgs was not an agreeable fellow to pal with. He was ready to receive the friendly advances of the Nuts, and tolerate them, but nothing could prevent him from bullying and over-bearing.

He burst into a laugh as he looked at Jimmy Silver's disfigured face. Jimmy's ears burned, but he took no notice. Jimmy could have taken a licking as cheerily as he would have given one—from a decent fellow. But to be crowded over was not pleasant, and to be bullied was not to be thought of.

"Well, you'll be a beauty for a week or two, you cheery cad!" remarked Higgs. "You'll know better next time—what!"

"Next time I'll try to lick you," said Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, shut up, you swanking rotter!" growled Rawson. "Yaroo!"

A back-hander from Higgs sent Rawson spinning. He rolled over a bed with a roar.

"Got any more to say?" asked Higgs, grinning at him.

Rawson was up in a flash, and rushing at him.

He knew that he had no chance, but that made no difference. He attacked hotly, and Higgs received a blow fairly on the nose; but poor Rawson went to the floor the next moment. He lay quite dazed.

"Up you get!" grinned Higgs. "You haven't had enough yet!"

"Let him alone!" said Jimmy Silver, as the bully stirred Rawson with his boot—not too gently.

Higgs glared round.

"Do you want some more?" he demanded.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came into the dormitory to see lights out. Rawson was staggering up.

The captain of Rookwood frowned.

"Hallo, fighting in the dormitory!" he exclaimed. "A hundred lines to each! Now get into bed."

Rawson went to bed without a word. Higgs gave the Rookwood captain a rather truculent look.

"Do you hear me?" said Bulkeley quietly.

"All right," said Higgs.

And he turned in.

Lights were put out, and the captain of Rookwood left the dormitory. His footsteps had scarcely died away when Higgs was out of bed again.

"Up with you, Rawson, if that's your name!" he called out.

Rawson did not reply.

"Do you hear me?"
"I'm not getting up," said Rawson quietly.

"You jolly well are!" said Higgs, with a chuckle. "I haven't half licked you yet. You called me a rotter!"

"You are a rotter!" said Rawson.

There was a bump on the floor. Rawson, bedclothes and all, landed out of bed in Higgs' powerful grasp.

A match glimmered out.

"Anybody got a candle?" asked Higgs, as Rawson struggled in his tangled bedclothes.

"Now, then, buck up, some of you!"

Tubby Muffin squirmed out of bed as Higgs' eye rested on him, and brought a candle-end. Higgs lighted it, and stuck it on a washstand. Rawson was on his feet now, his eyes gleaming.

"You can all sit up and watch," said Higgs. "Now, my pippin, you're going through it!"

Jimmy Silver sat up in bed.

"Go back to bed, Rawson," he said very quietly. "You can't stand up to that fellow. Higgs, if you touch Rawson, you're booked for trouble."

Higgs chuckled.

"I'll show you how I used to run things in the Fourth at St. Wode's!" he said. "I used to make 'em toe the line, you can bet your hat! This chap has called me a rotter. I'm going to lay into him with a slipper. Get across that bed, Rawson!"

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Higgs picked up a slipper. Rawson's reply was a rush at him. They closed, and Rawson went across the bed with a crash, and then the slipper rose and fell. Jimmy Silver was out of bed with a bound. "Back up, Fourth!" he shouted. The juniors hardly needed the bidding.

Whatever Higgs had done in the Fourth Form at St. Wode's, he was not likely to "run things" quite as he wished in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, so long as Jimmy Silver & Co. were members of that Form.

Jimmy was upon him with a spring. The bully of the Fourth turned and grappled with him. Lovell and Raby and Newcome collared him at the same moment. Flynn and Oswald and Gower fastened on him, and he went down with a crash, with the juniors sprawling over him.

"Pin him!" gasped Jimmy. Higgs struggled furiously. "Leggo!" he gasped. "I'll lick any chap here—any two of you—three, if you like!" "This isn't a fight—this is a ragging," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "Lay him face down on the bed."

Higgs crashed on the bed. "Give me that slipper, Jones." Jones minor grinned and handed over the slipper.

Then Jimmy repeated the performance of the fire-shovel in the end study, but considerably harder; and as Higgs was protected only by his pyjamas, his sufferings were considerably greater.

With half a dozen angry fellows pinning him down on the bed, he struggled and wriggled in vain, while the slipper rose and fell.

For a few minutes he bore it with gritted teeth, and then his yells rang out. "You'll have the prefects here," said Townsend.

"Shove his jaws into a pillow."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Muffled yells came from the pillow that was jammed over Higgs' extensive mouth. Jimmy Silver lashed with the slipper till his arm ached.

Then he tossed it aside. "Let him get up!"

Higgs squirmed off the bed, breathless with pain and fury. He choked, unable to find his voice for the moment.

"That's a beginning," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "You're a rotten bully, Higgs. You can lick any chap in the Fourth, and that's admitted. But you won't be allowed to bully any chap in the Fourth—that's a dead cert! Bullying isn't allowed in the Fourth Form at Rookwood!"

"I'll—I'll—"
"Are you going to bed quietly?"
"I'm going to smash you!" roared Higgs, and he made a furious rush at Jimmy Silver.

"Collar him!"
"Down him!"
And the Fourth-Formers closed on Higgs again. He was hitting out savagely, and two or three juniors rolled on the floor. But he went down.

"Put him on the bed, spread-eagled, and hold him there, facing up this time," said Jimmy Silver. "Whacking's no good for the brute. He's going to stay quietly in bed."
"I won't!" roared Higgs.
"We shall see!"

A dozen pairs of hands jammed Higgs on his back on the bed. Jimmy Silver went to his box and took out a coil of cord. He cut off four lengths with his penknife, the other fellows watching him curiously.

With cheerful coolness, Jimmy Silver knotted a cord round Higgs' ankles and wrists, and tied them to the bedposts.

Then he was released. He wriggled convulsively in his bonds. But Jimmy had done his work well, and he had no chance of getting loose.

"Bed!" said Jimmy.
"You're going to leave him like that?" chortled Lovell.

"Yes."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors turned in, and Jimmy Silver blew out the candle, and followed their example. Higgs wriggled and gasped on his bed. Jimmy had thrown the bedclothes over him. But he was far from comfortable. "Come and let me loose!" hissed Higgs sulphurously.

"You're staying like that till morning," said Jimmy calmly. "That's the only way to keep you quiet."

"Till morning!" yelled Higgs. "Do you think I can sleep like this, you idiot?"
"I don't care twopence whether you can sleep or not!"

"I'll yell and wake the house!" spluttered Higgs.

Jimmy yawned.
"You can suit yourself about that. If you bring a master here, he will want to know why you're tied up. It will mean a licking for you from Bootles, and another licking from us after Bootles is gone, and another tying up with a gag in your mouth. I mean business. You can yell if you like."
Higgs did not yell.

He had already learned that Jimmy Silver was a fellow of his word.

"Look here, I—I'm not going to stay like this!" he growled.

"Good-night!"
"Come and let me loose, and—I'll go to sleep quietly," mumbled the bully of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver did not answer. He settled down to sleep.

"Will you let me loose?" hissed Higgs.

"No!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"
No reply.

"Beee, come and let me loose, or I'll lick you to-morrow!"

Silence.
"Muffin—Muffin, you fat beast, come here!"

Snore.
The bully of the Fourth had to make the best of it. The Classical Fourth, chuckling, settled themselves to sleep. But it was a long time before Higgs could sleep.

Jimmy Silver turned out of bed as the rising-bell clanged out over Rookwood in the summer morning. An imploring look was cast at him from Alfred Higgs' bed.

"Come and loosen me!" Higgs' voice was pleading. "I'm stiff—I'm cramped—I've hardly slept a wink. Let a chap loose!"

Jimmy Silver cheerfully cut the cords. Higgs rolled off the bed stiffly and painfully. He was quite subdued. He did not speak a word till he left the dormitory, followed by the chuckles of the Fourth-Formers. For the present, at least, they had succeeded in Taming the Tartar.

(Another grand long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week, entitled: "THE SCHOOL-BOY REDSKINS!" Order your copy early.)

GOOD STORIES.

STRIKING A BARGAIN.

The English visitor to a famous Scottish golfing resort was in high glee. He had managed to secure the services of a caddy who knew the game thoroughly.

"Now, Donald," he said, as they started off on the first morning, "I expect to get some good tips from you, my man."

Donald settled the bag more easily on his shoulder, and eyed his patron.

"An' I," he replied calmly, "expect the like frae you!"

PROVING HIS GREATNESS.

"See that man over there?" whispered the native of the place to a visitor he was showing round. "He's one of the greatest poets in the country."

"Is he?" replied the surprised stranger. "But I've never seen anything of his in print."

"No; that's where he's great. He is always so anxious to keep everybody else happy that he burns all his poems as soon as they are written."

A MATCH FOR HER.

A certain suburban theatre was very full when a young man came into the pit. Presently he stopped beside a somewhat stout lady who was trying to occupy enough room for two.

"Is this seat engaged?" he asked politely. The stout woman looked up angrily.

"Yes, it is!" she snapped. "I'm keeping it for a gentleman!"

"That's me, right enough!" smiled the witty youth, as he slid into the seat; "but how did you know I was coming?"

DUE TO HARD WORK.

At last the house painter had finished, and the place shone fresh and clean in new paint. "Could you find time to scrape off the paint?"

THE PENNY POPULAR.—No. 76.

from the window-panes?" asked the mistress of the house.

"Certainly, ma'am, if you could lend me a coin," was the reply.

Having nothing less than half-a-crown, the mistress lent that. Half an hour later the man returned her a worn and thin sixpenny-piece.

"But—er—I—er— Wasn't it half-a-crown I gave you?" stammered the lady.

"It was," said the man, with emphasis; "but it's worn down a bit!"

A BIT OF A FEAT.

The squire of the village had presented the local "Terriers" with instruments for a full band, and they were diligently rehearsing some pieces to play on the village green.

The practice was taking place in a large barn, and the bandmaster was so pleased with their efforts that he suggested that he should go outside and listen while they played again.

On his return to the barn one of the bandmen asked:

"How did it sound, Jack?"

"Fine!" replied the master enthusiastically.

"All of you put your instruments down and go outside and listen!"

DOING HIS BEST.

"Silence!" roared the judge to a small and terrified man who stood with the end of his nose resting on the rail of the dock. "I will not have the proceedings of this court continually interrupted. For the last half-hour you have persistently wasted my time and the time of these gentlemen. Do you understand me? You are wasting the time of the court! Let me have no more of it!"

"And how can I help wasting your time?" squeaked the little man. "Can't you see that I have no lawyer to do it for me?"

TRACES OBLITERATED.

Into Mr. Toddles' study marched the detective.

"You sent for me, I understand," said he gravely, "to investigate a burglary that was committed here last night?"

"Of course I did! Of course—of course!" fussed Mr. Toddles.

"What is missing?"

"Several odds and ends, and three complete sets of harness—brand new, too!"

"Ah!" murmured the detective, making a note in his little book. "And have you any idea how many thieves were in this robbery? Did the thief or thieves leave any clue—any traces behind them?"

"Traces—traces!" said Mr. Toddles. "No; they took those, too!"

Knicker: "She sings with a good deal of expression, doesn't she?"

Bocker: "Yes, she does; but it's the kind of expression you must close your eyes to appreciate."

NO BACKING OUT.

It was truly in a terrible state that little Johnny presented himself at the doorway.

"Why, what ever have you been doing?" exclaimed his mother.

"Couldn't help it!" sullenly replied Johnny. "We had a free fight."

"What ever for?"

"Well, you see, there's seventeen fighting nationalities in our school, and only one remained neutral!"

HIS ROADSIDE PAL.

Jones' opportunity at last had come. He had been offered a really good job in Australia. So he forthwith threw up his thirty bob a week clerkship in London, and made arrangements to leave for the island of the kangaroos.

While passing through Liverpool, on his way to the docks, he was suddenly and unexpectedly hailed by a friend from Manchester, who inquired:

"Hallo, old man, where are you off to?"

"Australia!" was Jones' blunt reply.

"Right-ho, then!" said his friend. "I'll walk a bit of the way with you!"

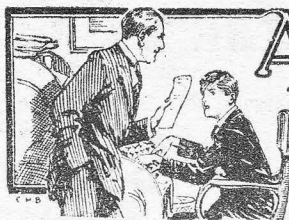
Fond Mamma: "Now, Charlie, don't you admire my new dress?"

Charlie: "Yes, mamma; it's beautiful!"

Mamma: "And, Charlie, all the silk is provided by a poor little worm."

Charlie: "Do you mean dad?"

WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR ABOUT IT.



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.

NEXT WEEK'S ATTRACTIONS!

The issue of the PENNY POPULAR due to appear next week will, I can confidently say, be one of the best so far published. The first of the good things on the line programme will be a rollicking story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, entitled:

'CLEARING HIS NAME!'

By Frank Richards,

which deals with the sensational way in which Dennis Carr and his loyal chum, Mark Linley, contrive to win back the friendship of Harry Wharton and his friends. In this splendid school tale Mr. Frank Richards quite excels himself, and I strongly advise my chums not to miss

'CLEARING HIS NAME!'

There will also be another thrilling instalment of our wonderful serial of the cinema, entitled:

'THE MYSTERY MAKERS!'

By Nat Fairbanks.

This fine tale has received a grand reception at the hands of my chums. Nat Fairbanks tells me that he has plenty more material in his bag of surprises, as will be seen in the forthcoming instalments. I shall not give the game away for Mr. Fairbanks, but I will say this, that our friend Dick Tulliver will prove in decisive fashion the kind of stuff he is made of.

The third of the stories is a magnificent long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled:

'THE SCHOOLBOY REDSKINS!'

By Owen Conquest.

This is a story full of exciting and laughable incidents. All those of my readers who admire the popular chums of Lookwood should make a special point of reading this grand story, which is one of the best Owen Conquest has given us for a long time.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

The second volume appears September 1st. I want those of my readers who feel in doubt about getting it locally to make a note and ask to have it sent direct by the publisher.

THE WALKING NOMADS' CLUB.

Stan. W. Diaper, 128, Fortune Green Road, West Hampstead, N.W. 6, is secretary. Ages of members are eighteen to twenty-one. The idea is to revive the walking tour. The entrance fee is 1s. The idea is good, for by walking a fellow keeps his health and sees a host of useful things. Write to the secretary if you feel you could put your heart into the notion.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Sincere thanks to W. Jan Jaarsveld, Box 126, Cape Town, for his letter—he wants to hear from readers.—Also to Reg Murray, 70, Toxteth Road, Glebe Park, Sydney, Australia. He asks for another Australian. I hope he is reading "Cooco" in the "Gem."—I am grateful to A. Carney, 173, Jones Street, Ultimo, Sydney, for his fine letter. He thinks I have a swamp of cheery missives. I have; but his own will beat the band for sympathy.—Len Keely, Merton Street, Boggabri, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from friends.—So does Frank Ingham, Euston Avenue, S. Australia; his sister Edna also sends me a capital line.—Miss Ailsa Hay, Blackwood Road, Bunbury, W. Australia, has good news. I am glad of it. She deserves it. She is a dancer, and the Leap Year Ball was great. Her description was so vivid that one could almost hear the band tuning up for the Destiny Valse! I shall let it go at that.

HUSTLE.

We all know the dear old yarn of the two frogs who tumbled into two buckets of milk. "Oh, I am drowning!" wailed one of the victims.—"You just hustle!" cried the other. "I'm hustling, see!" Well, the frog which was unenterprising did get drowned, but the other frog was found later sitting on the top of a pound of butter. It just shows what energy will do. Thought is all very well in its way, but this is a world for action as well as thinking.

PRaise INDEED!

"Please do not think I am getting at you in any way, but perhaps it might flatter you to know that I consider your Chat is almost

more interesting than the yarns. I have cut out all your Chats since last November, and I frequently spend quite a pleasant evening reading them over." Thanks! I do not know about flattery. A friendly word is more. But Chat should be just a bit of the world and of what is doing. It is life which should be complimented, life and thought, for being there, ready material for Chat. That's all there is to it. By the way, my friend is S. W. Lindsey, 36, Chestnut Avenue, London, E. 17, and he would like to hear from readers in U.S.A., Egypt, and India.—ages eighteen to twenty-one. He is sighing for more worlds to conquer. I half fancy he will get them.

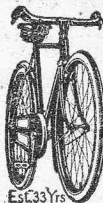
THE DUMPS.

Don't we all know them! They come in bag and baggage, and take possession of the mind. There may be nothing special to grumble about, but if you have the support of the whole Dump Family—the long-faced grandfather, the worrying-minded Mrs. Dumps, and the querulous little Dumps—it is easy enough to be unhappy. They make you feel that life is a failure. You were feeling as bright as raindrops in the sun only yesterday, but now you seem to realise that you are so ignorant that any minor could plough you. You remember all the dismal happenings, nary one gay, inspiring event. You recall the day when you were snubbed. That's what the Dumps do! The only way is to evict them, to grab the head of the family, and throw him out on his neck, then do ditto with the rest.

FUSS ABOUT NOTHING.

It is the fashion to laugh at the philosopher. He is regarded as a grumbly kind of a general nuisance and spoilsport, with a long beard and flowing whiskers. And this age hates whiskers! From the hard things said about whiskerage, one might think everybody was a barber, and afraid of losing custom. But the philosopher has uses. I am sure he has. You can very seldom see him. As a rule, he is busy in his own world, and in that world of his there is far less noise, and the folks who live there never make an absurd fuss about nothing. Now, it really is the tendency these days to exaggerate things—the bad things—and worry over the exaggerations no end. That's the pity o't!

Your Editor



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