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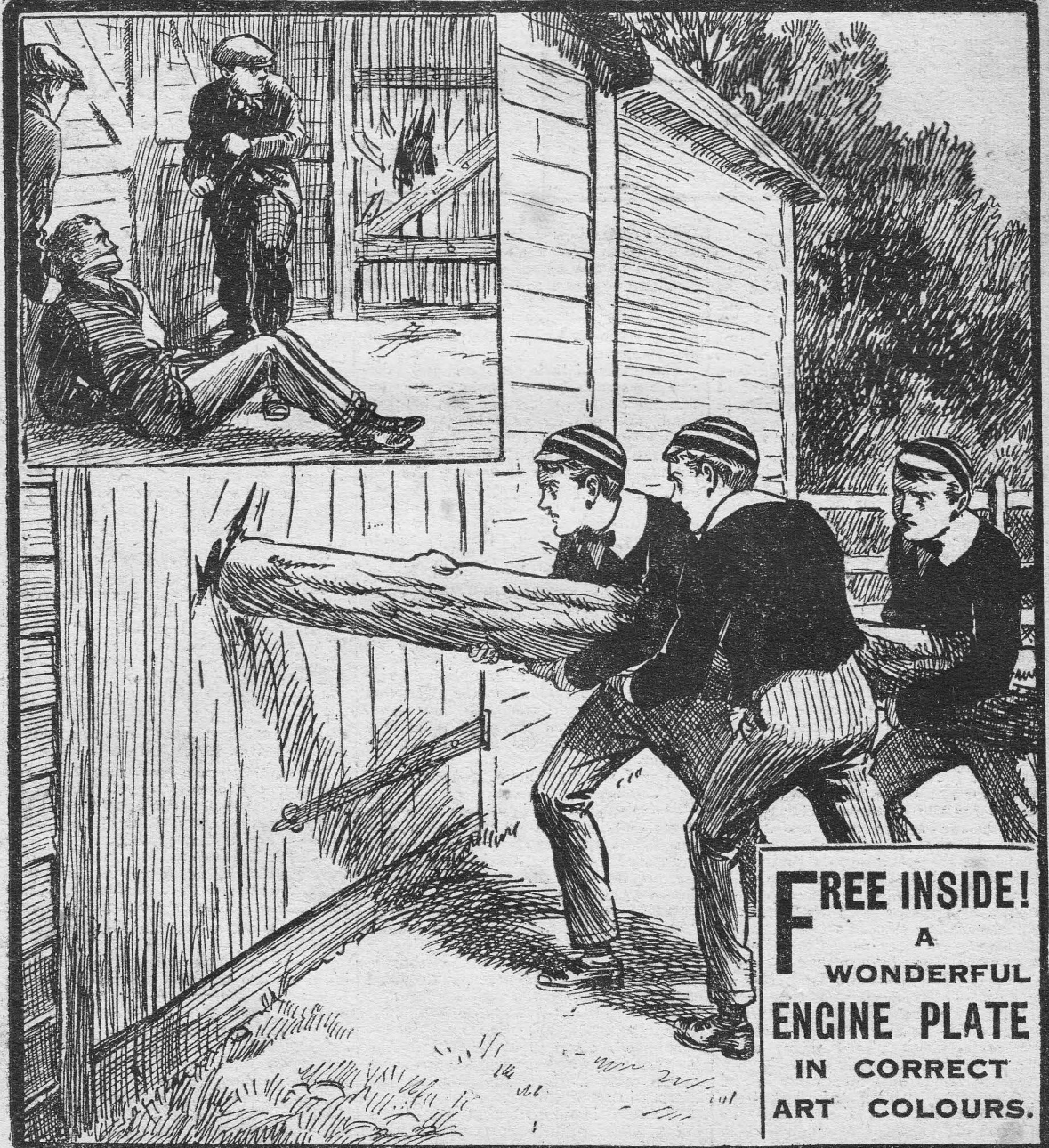
New
Series
No. 174.

28
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The POPULAR 2d

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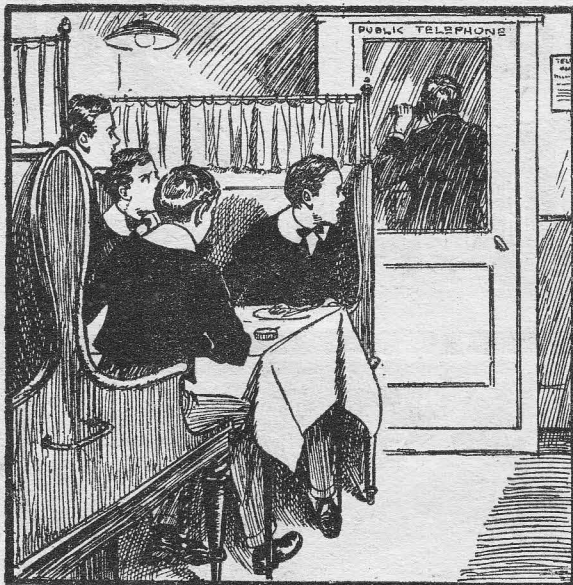
SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT
INSIDE.



TO THE RESCUE OF THEIR FORM-MASTER!

(A dramatic incident in the grand complete school story inside.)

AN EXCITING STORY OF A DARING PLOT TO ROB MR. RAILTON, AND HOW TOM MERRY & CO. GO TO THE RESCUE OF THEIR FORM-MASTER!



THE TRAP!

A Dramatic and Thrilling, Long, Complete Story of TOM MERRY & Co., the World-Famous :- Schoolboys of St. Jim's :-

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

(Author of the splendid tales of St. Jim's now appearing in The "GEM" Library.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Alarm!

"PASS the jam!"
"Coming! Finished with the buns?"

Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, passed the plate of buns across the table to Jack Blake, of the Fourth. There were seven juniors seated at the table in the restaurant at Wayland, which was the nearest town to St. Jim's.

"I think Gussy's pater ought to have a round robin of thanks," mumbled Jack Blake, as he started upon his fourth bun.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must say the patah came down at the wight moment!"

"Broke to the giddy wide, and along comes a fiver!" said Herries, of the Fourth. "H'm! Wish my pater would send me a few fivers!"

"It doesn't mattah who gets the fivahs, so long as everybody shares in the spendin' of them, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Rather not!" said Tom Merry. "Push along those puffs, Monty."

The puffs were pushed along, and for a few moments there was silence between the contented juniors from St. Jim's.

It was a lovely spring afternoon, and there had been a general searching of pockets for funds with which to take the Co. out for the afternoon. Gussy had come to the rescue, and added five pounds to the one-and-ninence collected from the remaining six juniors.

Wayland had been the first stop. It was agreed that one could not commence an afternoon better than by having a feed. Hence the stop at the restaurant.

There was no other person in the little place when the juniors had arrived. Tom Merry had selected a long table in the back of the shop, and they were hidden from sight of general customers by reason of the high wooden backs to their seats—which placed them, as it were, in a cubicle on their own.

Now and again customers came in and bought pastries or cakes or both, but the juniors did not see them, and the customers did not see the juniors—which was fortunate for Tom Merry & Co., for

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Bagley Trimble, the fattest junior at St. Jim's, and who possessed the biggest appetite in the school, dropped into the shop and bought a bag of cakes and went out again. Had he seen the juniors, they would probably have been obliged to find room for the persuasive and leech-like Baggy.

The plates of tarts and buns and cakes and rolls disappeared before the onslaughts of the juniors like mist before a wind, and one by one the juniors sat back contentedly in their seats.

"Finished, Tommy?" asked Manners, holding out a plate containing the last puff.

"Quite," said Tom Merry. "Polish it off, Manners."

"What about you, Gussy?" asked Manners.

"Finished, deah boy," said Gussy. "Pway do not leave anythin' to be taken away, Mannahs."

"Right-ho!" said Manners, and he took the last puff and was silent for a few minutes.

Then came the interruption which upset the juniors' plans for the afternoon.

They had heard the shop door open, and there followed the gruff tones of a man, speaking to the assistant at the counter.

"Can I use the 'phone, please?"

"Certainly!"

The telephone was in a box at the back of the seat in which sat the juniors, and they heard the door close upon the man. A number was given, distinctly heard by the juniors, and then a few moments' silence in the box.

"Shall we shift?" asked Tom Merry. "We don't want to listen to the conversation, you know!"

"Rats!" said Jack Blake shortly. "My dear chap, to be perfectly candid, I couldn't move just yet with comfort!"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard—"

D'Arcy broke off. The man in the telephone-box was speaking again. And his very first words caused the juniors to sit up with a start and look at one another in astonishment.

"Railton is a master at St. Jim's. Get a message through at once," they heard the man say in gruff, commanding tones.

There was a moment's silence, and then the voice was heard again:

"Telephone first, get the car, and then call at the school. Look sharp about it—the job's got to be done quickly!"

The receiver of the instrument was slammed down, and the next moment the man had left the shop and disappeared.

Tom Merry, who was sitting at the end of the table, jumped to his feet and hurried to the door without a word. He looked out into the street, and, seeing no sign of the stranger, he hurried back again to the shop.

"Look here, you chaps," he said. "I don't like the sound of that man's voice, and I don't like the nature of the words he uttered!"

"Weally, deah boy, I fail to see any cause for wowwy!" said Gussy.

"You wouldn't!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "We do!"

"If you infer, Lowthah—" began D'Arcy indignantly.

"What's the job that's got to be done quickly?" began Tom Merry, mystified.

"And why didn't the johnny put the message through to Railton himself, instead of telling somebody else to speak?" muttered Jack Blake, with a frown.

Mr. Railton was a master at St. Jim's, and probably the most popular master at that. He always had a kindly word for the juniors, and was always ready with sound advice if they needed it.

"If you think there is anythin' w'ong, deah boys," said Gussy gently, "why not wing through to Mr. Wailton and ask him if he's received a message?"

"That's not a bad idea, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"And are you going to tell Railton that it's mere idle curiosity which impels you to ask him the nature of a message he receives over the telephone?" asked Monty Lowther, with a grin.

"Ahem!"

"Pretty thick, come to think of it," said Blake thoughtfully.

"Jolly well risk it," said Herries shortly. "There might be nothing in it, and you can explain why you rang up if everything is all right."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Tom Merry.

"I'll ring him up and chance my giddy arm!"

He went into the telephone-box and gave the number of St. Jim's. In a moment came a buzzing noise, and with a gesture of disgust he slammed down the receiver again.

"Number's engaged," he said lugubriously.

"Of course, it would be, deah boy!" said Gussy. "The fellah to whom our swangah spoke would be winging up now."

"My hat! Gussy's right!" said Blake, more in amazement than admiration.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said D'Arcy, with a smile of satisfaction. "Trust me to think of those things, Blake!"

Blake grunted, but made no verbal reply. At any other time he would probably have made some disparaging remarks concerning Gussy and his brain-box; but, somehow, the present time seemed to be serious—too serious for jesting.

Tom Merry remained thoughtful and silent, evidently unable to make up his mind what to do.

"I'll try them again," said Digby.

He went into the telephone-box and again called for the St. Jim's number. For two long minutes he waited with the receiver to his ear.

"Any answer yet, Dig?" asked Tom Merry.

Digby shook his head.

"No. The operator has told me half a dozen times that she's ringing again," said Digby, turning round. "No blessed answer, though. I suppose this is another example of— Eh? What's that, miss? All right, thanks!"

He put down the receiver, and looked curiously at his chums.

"The operator says she can't get the number. No reply!" he said.

"My hat! Perhaps Railton has left! There won't be anybody in the house this afternoon—it's too jolly nice!" said Tom Merry. "All the chaps will be on the river, or playing cricket, or out for a walk. It looks to me, you chaps, as if Railton has gone out now, and there's nobody left to answer the telephone."

"Perhaps he's left the receiver of his instrument hanging off the peg?" suggested Manners thoughtfully.

"Not Railton—he's too jolly thoughtful and thorough," said Tom Merry quickly. "Look here, you chaps. If it's all the same to you, I think we'll buzz off back to St. Jim's. I don't half like it."

"Wathah takin' things for gewanted, isn't it?" said Gussy thoughtfully. "There's no weal reason why Mr. Railton shouldn't weceive a telephone message, deah boy. He's weceived them befoah!"

"Yes, but—" muttered Tom Merry.

"Exactly! There's a 'but' in this case!" said Jack Blake. "Here's one for St. Jim's, at any rate! I don't like it any more than does Tom Merry! Follow your giddy leader!"

"Vevy well, deah boy," said Gussy resignedly. "I'll pay the bill, and we'll huwvy back to St. Jim's. Aftah all, if theah's nothin' weally w'ong, we can slip out again."

Which plainly intimated that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at least, did not think there was anything suspicious about the telephone message.

Ten minutes later seven juniors, thoughtful and silent, were making tracks for the railway station at Wayland, where they were fortunate enough to board a train for St. Jim's without having to wait more than three minutes.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Where is Mr. Railton?

"HERE we are!" Jack Blake uttered those words with a sigh of relief and satisfaction. The seven juniors had arrived at St. Jim's, and quickly made their way into the School House.

"I guess the first thing to do is to go and see if Mr. Railton is in his study," said Tom Merry. "Come on, you chaps!"

They went along the passage to the master's room, and there knocked upon the door. There was no reply. Tom Merry tapped again, and the expectant juniors listened for the kindly voice of the master to bid them enter.

They waited in vain. There came no reply.

"Shall I pop inside and see if the telephone is all right?" asked Tom Merry doubtfully.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wegard that as a bweach—" began D'Arcy solemnly.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry crossly. "This strikes me as being a serious business. I don't know why. But—"

"The nature of the message is enough to arouse anybody's suspicions," grunted Blake. "Cut inside, Tommy!"

"I pwotest—"

"Shut up, Gussy! Go on, Tommy!" cut in Manners.

Tom Merry, shrugging his shoulders, turned the handle of the door and entered the master's study. Had Mr. Railton come along at that moment he might have good cause for anger at the intrusion of a suspicious junior into his study—with painful results to Tom Merry.

But Mr. Railton did not come along. There was silence in the great old School House. Silence, that is, save for the shuffling of seven pairs of feet. The juniors crowded into the doorway of the master's study, watching Tom Merry as he went to the telephone which stood upon the master's desk.

Tom Merry had asserted it was impossible for the telephone receiver not to have been replaced properly. But for once he was wrong. The receiver was resting upon a book and against the sides of the metal hook on the instrument. Hence, there being no chance of the operator ringing the bell, for to all intents and purposes, the instrument was out of order to the outsider ringing up.

"That's the reason, then, why she couldn't get an answer," said Digby with a grunt of disgust. "Some blessed people are—"

"My hat!"

It was Tom Merry who uttered that ejaculation, in tones of great excitement. He was staring at a box which rested in the centre of the master's desk, and he stared so hard that the other juniors rushed into the study.

"What is it?" demanded Blake excitedly.

"Look!" said Tom Merry, pointing to the box. "See? There's the paper in which it was wrapped—blue-marked and sealed—registered post! And there's the name on the box which was inside the paper—the name of the firm of jewellers!"

"Great pip!"

"Weally, deah boys, we are over-steppin' the limit!" said Gussy indignantly. "We have no wight whatever to intwude like this—"

"Oh, shut up, Gussy! Let somebody with brains do the thinking!" said Manners severely. "This is serious business!"

"I wefuse to wegard intwudin' upon a

master's business as sewious for anybody save ourselves!" said D'Arcy hotly. "I beg of you, deah boys—"

"Oh, clump him, somebody!" grunted Blake. "Get on with the bizz, Tommy!"

D'Arcy sniffed, held his aristocratic nose very high in the air, and turned out of the study without another word. The others hardly noticed him go. They were far more interested in the package on the master's desk.

"So Mr. Railton had a registered parcel from a firm of jewellers," resumed Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Then—what was in the box, and where is it now?"

"With Railton, undoubtedly!" said Monty Lowther, for once serious.

"Then where's Railton?" demanded Tom Merry, beginning to get excited again. "Look here, you chaps. I'll tell you what I think has happened. Railton received a jewel or some jewellery by registered post. Somebody got to know about it—that man in the shop at Wayland distinctly stated that Railton was a master at St. Jim's. Then he said, get a message through to St. Jim's, and a car. And the job's got to be done quickly! That suggests he'd only just found that out!"

"It does!" said Jack Blake warmly. "My hat, Tommy, we've tumbled on a mystery here!"

"We've jolly well got to do something!" said Herries excitedly.

"Let's go and see the Head!" suggested Manners.

"That's not a bad idea. Railton might have told him where he was going," said Tom Merry.

The six juniors rushed away to the Head's study, and on the way Arthur Augustus D'Arcy joined them again. Perhaps the swell of St. Jim's had had time to think out what had happened at Wayland, and formed some connection with the parcel on Railton's desk.

By this time Tom Merry & Co. were more excited than cautious. They forgot that the way to gain admittance to the headmaster's study was usually by a preliminary knock. Tom Merry, leading the way, simply grasped the knob of the door, turned it, and flung open the door.

"Where's Railton? I mean—do you know—" he began excitedly.

Dr. Holmes rose from his chair with amazement written in every line of his kindly old face. Never, perhaps, in all his years at St. Jim's, had juniors or anybody else entered his study in such a manner.

"Boys!" he thundered, "what is the meaning of this? How dare you burst into my study in that manner? How dare you, I say?"

Tom Merry & Co. stopped and gasped. "If—if—if you please, sir—" began Tom Merry, hesitatingly.

"And do you usually refer to one of your masters without the prefix 'Mr.'?" demanded the Head grimly.

He took up a cane from his desk, and faced the now calmed juniors with an expression which boded ill for them.

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry hastily. "We are worried, sir, about Mr. Railton."

"Worried?" repeated the Head in amazement. "Pray explain what you mean, Merry!"

Tom Merry explained, haltingly at first, and then more quickly as he went on, the words of the stranger who had used the telephone in the shop at Wayland, and their subsequent return to St. Jim's.

"So we wanted to know if Mr. Railton had suggested to you where he was going, sir," wound up Tom Merry. "You see, we think it might be a trap, especially

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A NEW LONG TALE OF ST. JIM'S.

:: BY MARTIN CLIFFORD. ::

as there—there is ample proof that Mr. Railton received something valuable by registered post."

"I don't know where Mr. Railton has gone, Merry!" said Dr. Holmes, sinking down into his chair with a face now white and haggard. "But—"

He broke off, and looked doubtfully at the juniors before him.

"But I do know that yesterday Mr. Railton received a valuable pearl necklace from his family's jewellers, and his brother was calling for it to-day!" said the Head at last.

"Pearl necklace!"

"My hat!"

"Great jumping rattlesnakes!"

Dr. Holmes scarcely heard the amazed remarks of the juniors. He was obviously much concerned by what the juniors had told him.

"There was to be a wedding, I think" he went on, more to himself than to the juniors. "A cousin was to be married, and Mr. Railton had kindly promised to lend the family pearls to the bride—"

"Oh, great pip!"

"Come on, you chaps!" said Tom Merry suddenly.

And he turned and dashed out of the study. The Head gasped with amazement.

"Merry, Blake, Manners!" he thundered. "Come back this instant!"

Merry, Manners, and Blake suddenly seemed to be stricken with deafness. They rushed on, for the first time in their lives ignoring the commands of their revered Head.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Trail!

"NO time to jaw!" muttered Tom Merry, as he led the way out of the School House towards the bicycle-shed. "The Head's a brick, but he would probably be content with informing the police, the sleepy chumps in Rylcombe and Wayland. This is a job which calls for little us!"

"Yaas, wathah!" panted D'Arcy, as he ran beside Tom Merry. "I must say I now agree that our friend Waitton has been twapped, deah boy!"

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry curtly. "Get your bikes out, chaps!"

Jack Blake & Co., and Manners and Lowther followed Tom Merry's example, and dragged out their bikes from the shed. Then, with complete disregard to every rule, they mounted their machines and rode towards the gates.

"Halt!" cried Tom Merry, as they reached the porter's lodge. "Taggy!"

Taggles, the aged porter of St. Jim's, came out of his lodge with a grunt of disgust.

"Which as 'ow I ain't goin' to be disturbed on a narf by—" he began.

"Seen a car here this afternoon, Taggy?" asked Tom Merry sharply.

"Which I've seen two, Master Merry. One was what brought the provisions from Wayland—"

"Yes?"

"And the other what came here went away with Mr. Railton," said Taggles, with almost painful slowness. "And I says that it ain't got nothin'—"

"What kind of car? Hurry up, fat-head!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "This is a matter of terrific importance. Mr. Railton's been trapped!"

"Oh crumbs! Love a chicken!" gasped Taggles. "Look here, Master Merry, are you a-pullin' of my leg agin?"

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"Chump!" howled Jack Blake. "What kind of car was it?"

"A blue 'un!" said Taggles. "One of them there what has a heagle's wings on the 'at!"

"Bonnet, you mean!" said Tom Merry, and even the juniors could not help chuckling at Taggles' little mistake, serious though was the occasion.

"Big car what come from 'Ackney!" said Taggles. "It said so at the back, 'cops I saw it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Oh, Taggy, you'll be the death of me!" gasped Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! That means it is a hired car, you chump! Which way did it go?"

"Towards Rylcombe, Master Blake, and I ain't goin' to be spoke to no more like that, neither!" said Taggles indignantly. "Wot I says is this 'ere—"

The juniors did not wait to listen to what Taggles was going to say. They followed Tom Merry's lead, jumped upon their bikes, and then Taggles lost sight of them in a cloud of dust as they rode with desperate speed towards Rylcombe.

Nobody spoke until they reached the village. They saved their breath, for it was hot riding at that speed. In the village they made inquiries, and discovered that a car answering their description had gone through the village, and had taken the road away from Wayland.

"That means they're not going far!" said Tom Merry confidently. "That road leads to the coast, and they won't take Railton all that way. Come on, we'll have to ride like the dickens! Look out for tracks, you chaps—tyre tracks! They'll be more easily seen on that road than on the main London road. Come on!"

In a moment the seven juniors had mounted their machines again, and were riding hard through the village on to the little lane which led to the main road many miles away, which, in turn, led to the coast.

"They may be armed, Tommy," said Blake, as he and Tom Merry rode in the lead.

"Can't help that!" said Tom Merry grimly. "We'll have to rescue Railton, somehow!"

"We might be wrong, after all," went on Blake. "If we are—"

"We'll get it in the neck when we get back, for disobeying the Head!" said Tom Merry, with a short laugh.

"Then we'll take it out of the chaps when we catch them!" said Blake, with a chuckle. "I'll take a licking if I can give somebody else a licking first!"

Tom Merry did not reply to that. His eyes were fixed, as it were, on the road in front of him, looking incessantly for the marks of tyres. Tom Merry suddenly thought that his training as a Boy Scout was not by any means wasted, a thought which was also in the minds of the other juniors.

Suddenly, rounding a bend, Tom Merry pulled up with a jerk.

"Halt!" he cried excitedly.

He halted so suddenly that the other juniors were unable to pull up in time, and in a moment there was a tangle of fallen cyclists and machines.

"Ow! Bai Jove! My clobber—" began D'Arcy, in tones of great distress.

"Hang your clobber!" growled Blake.

"Why the dickens don't you look where you are going?"

"Well, of all the neck!" growled Manners. "Why the dickens didn't you hold out your hand? You know the signs, I suppose?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "Look over there!"

For the first time the juniors sought a reason for Tom Merry's sudden stop. They picked themselves up from the road, disentangling themselves, so to speak, from their machines, and they looked in the direction of Tom Merry's outstretched hands.

A blue car could be seen in a little by-lane, a big car which, as could be seen even at that distance, bore a little sign at the back—"Hackney Carriage."

"Miles away from anywhere!" said Tom Merry grimly. "An ideal spot to rob anybody!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, no spot is ideal for wobbin'" began D'Arcy.

Six juniors turned and looked at Gussy, and he broke off. The looks were expressive of trouble. And D'Arcy, taking the warning, did not finish his sentence.

"Chuck your bikes in the hedge and follow your leader!" said Tom Merry grimly. "If anybody sees a hefty stick pick it up. It might come in handy."

The juniors followed the Shell leader along the lane to the car, and they peeped inside the tonneau. There they saw the mat had been kicked out of its position, the cushions of the seat were torn, and the near-side window had been broken.

"Railton's been fighting them!" said Tom Merry. "He's evidently given them something to do, whoever 'them' might be."

"There's a shed over there," said Monty Lowther, pointing across the hedge to where a barnlike structure stood in the centre of a field. "They might be there!"

"My hat! We'll jollay soon see, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly. "Pway follow me!"

The juniors did not argue on the question of leadership. They pushed their way through the hedge, and walked across the field. And suddenly Tom Merry left the party, and dashed a few yards to his right. He stooped, and when he rose he had a glittering string of pearls in his hand.

"The necklace!" said Blake, with a gasp.

"My hat! He must have chucked it away, somehow," said Manners. "I say, you chaps, it looks as if—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry grimly.

He thrust the necklace into his pocket, and, without another word, he rushed away towards the shed. Their feet made no sound upon the soft, tilted ground. In absolute silence the seven juniors dashed to the shed.

They reached it, and at a sign from Tom Merry they stopped, and remained perfectly still.

"Hand 'em over, you blithering—" they heard a hoarse, angry voice command.

"Don't sir!" roared Tom Merry. "We're here. Hang on!"

The man or men inside the shed with Mr. Railton did not speak again. Tom Merry & Co. wasted no time. They tried the door. It was locked.

They grasped a long, fairly thin tree, which had been recently cut, and although no word was spoken, they acted in concert with their leader. Tom Merry took the front of the tree, and the others, grasping it on both sides, rushed it towards the door of the shed.

Crash! Bang! Crash!

Another string of curses rose even above the deafening noise of the crashing of the tree on the door of the shed.

"Let it rip!" gasped Tom Merry, drawing back a couple of paces. Crash! Crash!
 "It's giving!" shouted Tom Merry. "Look out, sir!"
 "Merry! Round the back! Quick!"
 The cry came almost in a shriek from inside the shed.

The tree was dropped almost on the instant, and the seven juniors dashed round to the back of the shed. They were just in time. One man was already out of the window, and running across the field. Another was pushing his way through the window, his face flaming with fear and rage.

"Collar the rotters!" shouted Tom Merry excitedly.

"Stop, you wottah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of St. Jim's might be a dandy and a fop, but he had courage unlimited. In a moment he was pelting full speed after the man who was half-way across the field, and Tom Merry and Blake followed close upon his heels, leaving the other four juniors to attend to the other man.

The running man turned, white and terror-stricken, and his right hand went into his pocket.

Tom Merry never stopped, and neither did D'Arcy. But Blake stopped for a second to grasp a heavy stone. He flung it, with unerring aim, straight at the man; and it caught him full on the head, sending him tottering to the ground, face foremost.

The next instant D'Arcy was upon him, and Tom Merry, with a promptness which did him credit, kicked the fallen man's hand into the soft ground, thus successfully plugging up the barrel of the short, ugly-looking revolver which the man had dragged from his pocket.

The three juniors piled on top of the thief, and against three of the finest athletes in the junior school at St. Jim's, the man had no more chance than a rat has with a terrier.

In less than a minute he was tied with handkerchiefs, hand and foot, and the panting juniors turned to see how Blake & Co. were progressing in their fight with the other miscreant.

They had him on the ground—four to one was too much for any man. Like his fellow, his hands and feet were tied with handkerchiefs, and Manners, Lowther, Herries, and Digby were wiping their perspiring foreheads with their sleeves, as they had no handkerchiefs with which to perform that operation.

"Lug him along!" said Tom Merry curtly.

They dragged the man across the field to the shed, and by the time they reached it, Manners had already climbed in through the window.

Mr. Railton was bound with ropes, with only one hand free. Doubtless that had been done in order to give him a chance to hand over the necklace.

"Bless you, my boys!" said Mr. Railton, as Tom Merry & Co. climbed in through the window. "They wouldn't have got the pearls; I threw them away



WHERE IS MR. RAILTON?—Tom Merry, leading the way, simply grasped the knob of the door of the Head's study, turned it, and flung open the door. "Where's Railton? I mean—do you know!" he began excitedly. Dr. Holmes rose to his feet in amazement. "Boys, how dare you enter my study in this disrespectful manner!" he thundered. (See Chapter 2.)

as I struggled with them across the field."

"I have them, sir," said Tom Merry, taking them from out of his pocket.

He handed them to Mr. Railton, who accepted them with a sigh of relief.

"We will get the men along to the nearest lock-up, my boys," he said kindly. "I will not attempt to thank you now. When we have got the miscreants under lock and key, perhaps you would be good enough to accompany me back to St. Jim's. I—ahem—I feel rather groggy, as you would say."

"My hat!"
 "Bai Jove, sir! I sincerely hope—" began D'Arcy anxiously.

"No; you've saved me from the worst of the handling," said Mr. Railton, with a faint smile. "Come on, my dear boys! Let us hurry these men to the lock-up!"

And they did.

An hour later the seven juniors and Mr. Railton were sitting in the latter's study, having tea. It was a great honour to be invited to take tea with the master, and for a time the juniors felt distinctly uncomfortable. But they soon felt at ease, and it was left to Tom

Merry to explain how they had got on to the track of the thieves.

"Yes; I was expecting a message from my brother," said Mr. Railton, when the junior captain had finished. "I got it, over the telephone, and I was told that a car would come and fetch me almost instantly. It did, and I had no sooner got in it, than one of the men hit me over the head with something hard. I lost consciousness, I fear, until the car had been driven through Rylcombe. Then I fought again, and they stopped the car, and brought me to the shed. But I managed to get rid of the necklace, and they got the impression that I had some secret hiding-place for it about my clothes. I hadn't, of course. However, thanks to you, they were foiled. Have some tea, boys; there are, I believe, two baskets of—or—pastries coming from the tuckshop!"

"Good for you, sir!" said Manners heartily. "I mean—"

Manners flushed, but Mr. Railton merely smiled gently, and waved the remark aside.

So, as Tom Merry afterwards remarked, the "bust-up" started with a feed and ended with a better one—no offence to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

THE END.

THERE WILL BE ANOTHER SPLENDID, LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY & CO. OF ST. JIM'S, ENTITLED:

"THE FRENCH MASTER'S GUESTS!"

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!

YOU SIMPLY MUST NOT MISS IT!

NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE FRENCH-MASTER'S GUESTS!"

A NEW LONG TALE OF ST. JIM'S. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

A THRILLING AND DRAMATIC TALE, TELLING HOW VERE BEAUCLERC SAVES HIS FATHER FROM A CRIME!



Held up on the Trail!

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale, dealing with the early Schooldays in the Backwoods of Canada of

FRANK RICHARDS

(Author of the Famous School Tales of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Man Who Watched the Trail.

LESSONS were over for the day at the lumber-school at Cedar Creek. Frank Richards and his cousin Bob Lawless walked their ponies down the trail with Vere Beauclerc to the fork, where he left them to follow the path through the timber to his lonely home near Cedar Camp.

"Good-bye, you fellows!" said Beauclerc, as they stopped at the fork of the trail. "No more school till Monday."

"We shall see you again before that," said Bob. "You're coming to the ranch to-morrow, Cherub?"

Beauclerc shook his head.

"Thanks, Bob; but I can't come."

"Your pater doesn't want you?" asked Frank.

"Oh, no! But I've got work to do," said Beauclerc, with a smile. "There's plenty to be done before the winter's fairly on. You haven't been through a Canadian winter yet, Frank?"

"I'm looking forward to it," said Frank Richards. "But if the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed will go to the mountain, you know. We'll come over and help you work."

"It's splitting logs for the winter," said Beauclerc. "Jolly hard work!"

"Not so hard for three as for one," said Bob. "We'll come."

"Well, I shall be glad if you do, of course," said Beauclerc. "But—"

"Nuff said! Expect us in the morning."

"Right-ho!"

Beauclerc went up the trail through the timber, and the cousins mounted their ponies.

Bob Lawless glanced round quickly at the sound of a rustle among the larches. "Hallo! Who's there?" he called out.

There was no reply, but another rustle came from the timber. Frank Richards checked his pony.

"What is it, Bob?"

Bob was staring into the dusky timber. THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

"There's somebody in the timber," he said. "Somebody was watching us when we said good-bye to Beau."

"What on earth for?"

"Blessed if I know! I'm going to see!"

Bob jumped down and ran among the trees, followed by Frank Richards.

"Look here, Frank!"

In the grass there were plain traces of boots, but there was no one to be seen.

Whoever had been lurking in the timber at the fork of the trail had vanished.

Bob Lawless looked perplexed. "That's dashed queer, Frank!" he exclaimed. "There's been a man standing here waiting for a jolly long time before we came up, and now he's cleared off without letting us see him."

"How do you know he's been waiting a long time?" asked Frank Richards, in astonishment.

Bob laughed. "That's easy enough to tell," he answered. Bob was scanning a rough old tree-trunk, and the earth about the roots.

"When you've been a bit longer in the Canadian West, Franky, you'll learn some woodcraft. I dare say it would make you open your eyes if I told you all I can read here about the pilgrim who's been on this spot."

"Well, go ahead!" said Frank, with a smile.

Vere Beauclerc had vanished from sight, and the wood lay quiet and lonely round the two schoolboys in the thickening dusk.

To Frank Richards' eyes there was no "sign" beyond the fact that the grass was marked with vague traces of footsteps.

But it was evident that to the Canadian schoolboy's keen eyes, trained in woodcraft, the surroundings told a different tale.

Bob wrinkled his brows, evidently perplexed.

"There's been a man standing here, under this tree, watching the fork of

the trail, for an hour at least," he said. "A man about five-feet-seven high, in a rough grey coat, and pretty flush with money, too."

"Bob!"

Frank Richards' eyes opened wide.

"My dear kid, if you weren't a tenderfoot, fresh from the Old Country, you'd see all that at a glance, and think nothing of it!" said Bob Lawless good-humouredly.

"Well, I'm blessed if I see how you make it out!" said Frank incredulously. "I suppose somebody has been here, as there are fresh footprints. But for the rest, you're trying to pull my leg, Bob!"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "It's as plain as your face, which is saying a lot! What was he doing it for? That's the puzzle. Some rustler looking for somebody to rob, I wonder?"

"How do you know he was watching the trail at all, and that he was here for an hour?" demanded Frank.

"Oh, rats! Look!" Bob pointed to the earth under the tree. "Look at those heel-marks—how they're sunk into the soil. The man was standing there, leaning on the trunk, for a good long time, or the heels would never have driven into the soil like that. And from the position of the marks you can see that he was facing the trail, with only a thin screen of bushes between that he could see through. If he wasn't watching the trail, what was he doing?"

Frank Richards nodded.

"Right on the wicket!" he said. "I—I hadn't thought that out. But how the merry dickens do you know that he was wearing a grey coat?"

"Use your eyes, old chap!"

"Well, I'm using them. But as I never saw the man I can't see what kind of a coat he was wearing, can I?"

"No need to see the man. Look at this tree-trunk!"

"The—the trunk?"

"Yes, ass!" said Bob, laughing. "Can't you see that his coat's rubbed on the bark as he was leaning on it

such a time, and the bark's rough? You'll find a dozen traces of a rough grey cloth there, if you look."

"Good egg!" said Frank admiringly.

"It's simple enough—"

"When you know it!" grinned Bob. "And how do you know he was five-foot-seven?"

"About that," said Bob. "Look where his shoulders rested—"

"How do you know where his shoulders rested?"

Bob gave his cousin quite a pitying look.

"My dear ass, those threads of grey stop at the place where the top of the man's coat rested. There isn't a fragment more than five feet from the ground—rather under that. Add the height of the man's head to that, and there you are! Roughly, a man of five-foot-seven."

"Bravo!" said Frank. "It is like a detective story I used to read at home. But how, in the name of thunder, do you know that he's flush with money? That's a joke, I suppose?"

"Not at all! He's flush with money, because only a pretty well-off chap could afford to smoke cigars which cost a dollar each at Thompson. And here are three cigar-stumps in the grass, if you'll take the trouble to look. The man smoked three dollars in cigars while he was waiting here."

"My hat!"

"Only a pretty well-off chap would do that, I guess," said Bob, laughing.

"Not a cattleman. We haven't any millionaires in this section. I should guess that the man who's been here was one of the 'sports' of Thompson—those rotters who live by playing poker and euchre with the cattlemen. They're flush of money when they're in luck, and easy come, easy go with that kind of jay."

"But what on earth should he have been here watching the trail for?"

"I give that up." Bob Lawless returned to his pony, and the cousins rode away to the Lawless Ranch.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Old Man Beauclerc.

BRIGHT and early in the morning Frank Richards and Bob Lawless mounted their ponies to ride over to the remittance man's shack near Cedar Camp.

There was a keen breath of winter in the air, and they enjoyed the ride thoroughly.

The shack came in sight at last, under the trees close by the side of the creek. It was a lonely habitation, out of sight of Cedar Camp, and with no other building within view of it.

There was the steady sound of an axe at work in the timber as the cousins rode up. Vere Beauclerc was already at work.

"Hallo!" shouted Bob Lawless, as he jumped from his pony. "Hallo! Where are you, Cherub?"

Beauclerc came out from the trees, axe in hand.

He greeted his chums cheerily.

"Popper about?" asked Bob.

"No; he's gone over to Thompson," said Beauclerc, a shade crossing his face.

The ringing of the axes sounded merrily through the timber and along the creek.

Far off, in the distance, the summits of the Rockies loomed against the sky, capped with snow. The air was sharp from the snowy mountain-tops. But the hard labour made the schoolboy chums warm enough.

The pile of fuel grew largely by the time they knocked off for lunch.

Lunch was of the plainest description, but quite good enough for fellows whose appetites had been sharpened by hard work in the open air.

And in the afternoon work was resumed. Log after log was split, and the fuel stacked round the shack for the coming winter.

It was strange enough that the foresight and the labour should be left, as a matter of course, to the remittance man's son. But for the boy the winter would have found the dwellers in the lonely shack totally unprepared.

The remittance man had other occupations of a much less laborious and honourable nature.

But of the remittance man the chums did not speak. Frank and Bob were there to help Beauclerc, and they helped him with hearty good will.

It was when labour was over, and coffee was brewed over a fire of chips under the dusky sky, where the stars were coming out like points of fire, that Bob Lawless related the incident of the previous evening.

Vere Beauclerc started, and gave the rancher's son a strange look, as Bob spoke of the man who had waited and watched the trail.

He fell very silent.

"Bob's worked out a description of the man, like a detective in a book," said Frank Richards, laughing. "The only thing he can't work out is, what was the man doing there?"

"Watching the trail, of course!" said Beauclerc, in a constrained tone.

"But why?"

Beauclerc shook his head.

There was a step on the path by the creek. Lascelles Beauclerc, dimly seen in the gloom, passed into the shack without a glance at the schoolboys.

Vere rose to his feet, and the chums followed his example.

A few minutes later Vere Beauclerc went into the shack, and Frank and Bob were riding homeward under the stars.

There was a strange expression on Bob Lawless' face. He broke the silence at last.

"Frank, old chap—"

"Hallo!"

"Kick me, will you?"

"Yes, if you dismount," said Frank Richards, laughing. "What's the matter?"

"I'm a howling chump from Chumpville!" said Bob Lawless. "Did you see old man Beauclerc when he went in?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice his coat?"

Frank Richards started.

"My hat! Yes; a grey coat!"

"And he's about five-foot-seven or eight," said Bob.

"Bob! You don't mean—"

"And he smokes expensive cigars, so long as his remittance lasts," said Bob grimly. "Flush of money, till it's gone in drink and draw-poker!"

"Bob!"

"That's what I want you to kick me for!" said Bob. "I—I was describing the Cherub's own father to him. Luckily, he didn't see it."

"Bob"—Frank Richards drew a deep breath—"Bob, you think it was Beauclerc's father who was watching the fork of the trail last night?"

"Well, doesn't it look like it?"

"I—I suppose it does."

"Luckily, Beauclerc didn't see the connection, but as soon as I saw the old galoot's grey coat it came into my head," said Bob. "It was old man Beauclerc

right enough. Of—of course, he wasn't doing any harm there; very likely came to meet his son coming home, and—and didn't care to meet us, or—something!"

The chums rode on in silence.

But Bob Lawless had made one mistake. Vere Beauclerc knew who was the man who had watched the trail in the timber.

That night, for long hours, the son of the remittance man lay, troubled and sleepless—thinking, thinking.

Back into his mind had come fragments of talk he had heard between his father and Poker Pete of Thompson.

Old man Beauclerc was the man who had watched the trail—the trail by which the rich rancher's son rode home from school.

Why?

To learn where the chums of Cedar Creek parted on the trail? To know where Bob Lawless could be found after he had parted with Beauclerc on the way home?

What did it mean? What meant the fragments of whispered talk that had come to his ears, in which the name of Bob Lawless, and the wealth of Bob's father, had been covertly referred to?

Was it the shadow of a crime that hung over the boy's reckless father? If it was not that, what did it mean?

And if it was that—

The unhappy boy groaned aloud as he turned upon his sleepless couch.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Danger!

FRANK RICHARDS gave Beauclerc a quick, searching look when they met at Cedar Creek School on Monday morning.

In spite of Bob's assurance, Frank was uneasy lest Vere should have guessed from the description the identity of the man who had watched the forked trail.

But the Cherub gave no sign.

He was a little more quiet and subdued than usual, and that was all. And that was fully accounted for by trouble at home. By this time Lascelles Beauclerc had dissipated his last remittance from England. It never lasted him long, and he wasted the money in reckless profusion, without a thought of the future.

True, the wretched man always had a hope of luck turning his way at cards, and enabling him to make a handsome "stake."

But even a turn of luck was useless to the inveterate gambler. If he lost he played on to retrieve his losses, so long as he had any money left. If he won he played on to increase his winnings while he was in the "vein." And in the end it came to the same thing.

With grim poverty at the door, and his father weak and irritable after his latest outbreak, Vere's young life was troubled enough, and Frank did not expect to find him looking cheerful.

He was not cheerful, but he had quiet composure. Whatever cross Fate chose to impose upon his young shoulders he had the courage to bear it without flinching.

Frank and Bob had not talked again of the man in the timber. But they could not help wondering.

What had old man Beauclerc been there for? Why had he watched the trail? Why had he eluded the schoolboys' eyes?

It was possible, of course, that the wastrel had come along to meet his son, and had not cared to meet his friends. It was possible.

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A MAGNIFICENT STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS & CO. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT TUESDAY: "ROPING IN THE

BAD-MAN!"

Frank Richards strove to think that there was nothing more in it than that. It was too terrible to suspect that Vere Beauclerc's father, in his desperate need of money, had formed some desperate scheme for obtaining lawless gains.

After school that day, the three chums left Cedar Creek together as usual, and walked down the fork in the trail, where they were accustomed to part. As Frank and Bob stopped, a brief hesitation came into Beauclerc's manner.

"I think I'll walk on a bit farther with you chaps," he remarked carelessly.

"You'll be late home," said Bob.

"That doesn't matter. I shall get in by my usual bedtime. Evening indoors isn't specially entertaining at the shack, you know."

"You ought to have a gee-gee, Cherub," said Bob. "Look here, my popper's offered to give you a horse; why don't you let him?"

"Mr. Lawless is very kind," said Beauclerc, colouring.

"Well, then why don't you let him have his way?"

"I'd rather not, Bob. But if you fellows don't mind walking a bit—"

"Right you are! We're good for a tramp, as far as you like."

And with Frank and Bob leading their ponies, the three schoolboys tramped on down the dusky trail under the trees.

The early night of autumn had fallen, but the moon was rising high over the hills, and the light filtered through the thick branches overhead. Bob Lawless chatted cheerily as they walked on through the wood, but only Frank answered him. Vere Beauclerc had fallen into silence.

It was half a mile from the forked trail that a sudden rustle was heard in the larches, and a dim figure appeared for a moment.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

Vere Beauclerc halted.

"Who is that?" he called out loudly and clearly.

A rustle—and silence.

"Better get on," said Beauclerc quietly. "Somebody is lurking in the timber."

The schoolboys hurried on.

No sound came to their ears again. Whoever it was that had been lurking by the trail was silent.

It was not till they reached the plain beyond the belt of timber that Vere Beauclerc said good-night to his chums.

"You'll be a bit late," he said. "Better put on speed."

"Oh, we'll be home in a brace of jiffies!" said Bob cheerily. "You'll be jolly late, though, Cherrub."

"All serene. Good-night!"

"Good-night, old chap!"

Frank and Bob mounted, and dashed off at a gallop for the ranch.

Beauclerc stood watching them till they disappeared in the gloom, and then he turned and started upon the long tramp to the creek.

His face was troubled, his lips set and hard, as he tramped on in the dim moonlight.

Hardy as he was, inured to exertion by the rough life of the frontier, he was fatigued by the time he reached the shack.

A red point of light greeted his eyes as he came up to the tumbledown building. It was the glowing end of a cigar.

"Is that you, Vere?"

It was his father's voice.

"Yes, father."

"You are late."

"Yes, father. Does it matter?" said the boy wearily.

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NEXT TUESDAY:

"ROPING IN THE BAD-MAN!"

A MAGNIFICENT

STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS & CO. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Lascalles Beauclerc peered at his son in the gloom.

"You are quite pale," he said.

"I am tired."

"Why are you so late?" asked the remittance man harshly.

"I walked a bit farther than usual with my friends."

"You should not have done so. You cannot stay out till this hour. Don't let it happen again, Vere. I shall expect you to-morrow night at the usual time. Keep that in mind."

"Father!"

"It is your bed-time now," said the remittance man. "Get into the house. Don't be as late as this to-morrow."

"Will you be home to-morrow evening, father?"

"No. Go in!"

Beauclerc went into the shack without another word. His father grunted angrily, and replaced the cigar in his mouth.

It was much later that night, when Beauclerc woke from a troubled sleep to hear the murmur of voices in the adjoining room. His father was not alone.

The voices were cautious and subdued. He did not hear the words; but he recognised the tones of Dave Dunn, the "bad man" of Cedar Camp, and the more silky voice of Poker Pete of Thompson.

He closed his eyes again, and tried to sleep.

But it was long before sleep would come, long after the murmur of the words had died away in the shack by the murmuring creek.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Held Up on the Trail.

"CHERUB, old scout—what the thunder—"

"Beau!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

It was after morning lessons at Cedar Creek the next day. Frank and Bob had stayed to speak to Mr. Slimmey, but a few minutes afterwards they looked for their chum.

They found Vere Beauclerc under the trees by the creek. He was seated on a log on the bank, too busily occupied to notice their approach.

It was his occupation that struck them with astonishment.

Beauclerc had a six-chambered revolver upon his knees, and was carefully cleaning it, and as the chums came up he began slipping cartridges into the chambers.

His face was flooded with crimson as he looked up, and caught their surprised glances upon him.

He made a hasty movement, as if to put the weapon out of sight; but it was too late for that.

"What on earth are you doing with a shooting-iron, Cherub?" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

"I have a very lonely way to go home," said Beauclerc, his manner less frank than usual. "And—and you remember that Mexican rustler who was round this part once. Don't say anything about this, you fellows. Miss Meadows would be angry if she knew I had a revolver."

"By gum, she would!" said Bob, with a whistle. "Better keep it dark, old chap. Mind it doesn't go off in your pocket."

"That's all right. I—I mean to carry this for a night or two," said Beauclerc in a low voice. "You remember there was somebody lurking on the trail last night. I feel safer with it."

Beauclerc changed the subject at once,

and nothing more was said about the revolver.

After school the three chums left Cedar Creek as usual. Vere Beauclerc halted at the fork of the trail.

"Not coming on this evening?" asked Bob.

"No. Father did not like my being so late home."

"Well, it isn't really safe to be out in the woods so late. There was a grizzly bear loose in this section once, you know. Good-night, old scout!"

The cousins mounted, as Beauclerc disappeared into the timber, and rode on down the dusky trail.

The ponies' hoofs thudded softly on the grass of the forest trail as the chums rode on at a trot.

As they neared the spot where the lurking figure had been seen the previous night, they looked about them sharply.

Neither of them was nervous, but they remembered their adventure with a Mexican rustler on that trail a few weeks before, and they were on their guard.

From the darkness of the larches there came a sudden, deep voice.

"Halt!"

"By gum!"

"Halt! There's a rope across the trail!"

The schoolboys drew in their ponies at once. Across the trail, in the dimness, a rope stretched from tree to tree. They had almost ridden into it. As they halted there was a trampling of feet under the shadows of the trees, and three dim figures rushed out into the trail. Hands caught at the bridles of the horses.

"Hands off!" shouted Bob Lawless angrily. "What's your game? Rustlers, by gad!"

"No harm is intended you," came the deep voice again. "But you must dismount. Only one of you is wanted!"

"Which one?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment.

"You, Bob Lawless!"

"Holy smoke!"

The cousins, sitting their panting horses, looked down at the three dim figures. Each of the three had a cloth mask tied across his face, completely hiding his features.

Only their eyes could be seen, gleaming through slits cut in the cloth, strange and eerie as they caught the moonlight and glittered.

"No harm is intended," repeated the masked man. "But you must come with us, Bob Lawless. Your friend can ride on."

Bob clenched his teeth.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he demanded.

"That need not concern you now. You are wanted, and you are in our hands. If you resist, you will be handled!"

Bob's pony was drawn to the side of the trail. The masked man turned to Frank Richards, and pointed down the path.

"Ride on!" he said.

"I'm not going without Bob," said Frank, between his teeth.

"Fool! Ride on while you are safe! And carry a message to Rancher Lawless from me. Tell him that when he wishes to see his son again it will cost him a thousand dollars. He will hear from me later where and when to pay the money."

"Kidnappers!" muttered Bob.

"Ride on!"

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"I will not go!" he said.

"Start him!" rapped out the leader harshly.

One of the ruffians struck Frank's pony a sharp blow on the flank, at the same

time jerking away the rope across the trail. The pony started forward. Frank performed down the trail, but only for a few yards.

He swung his pony round, and drove him on at a gallop, right at the three rascals gathered round Bob Lawless.

The manoeuvre was entirely unexpected.

The charging pony crashed into the three, and sent them spinning in various directions.

There was a roar of surprise and pain and loud curses from the ruffians, as they reeled right and left.

"Now, Bob!" panted Frank.

"Ride for it, Franky!" yelled Bob, urging on his pony.

But a hand gripped the bridle, and swung the animal round in time. The leader of the rustlers struck furiously at Frank Richards, and the schoolboy reeled from the saddle and crashed into the grass.

"Hold that young fool!"

The three ruffians, startled, stared at him. The revolver-muzzle bore upon all three from where the schoolboy stood, and a pressure of the finger was enough to send one, at least, into eternity in the twinkling of an eye.

The masked men stood irresolute. "Boy!" The deep voice of the leader was husky with rage. "Boy! Fool! Go at once! Leave this spot!"

"It is you who will go," said Vere Beauclerc quietly and steadily. "Mark my words, this revolver is loaded in every chamber, and I am a good shot. I shall shoot if you raise a hand!"

There was a muttered curse. "Go!" said Beauclerc. "Go! I swear, by all that is sacred, that if you are not gone in one minute, I shall shoot, if you raise a hand!"

There was no mistaking the grim earnestness of the boy. The hands that held Bob Lawless fell away from him.

There was still a brief hesitation. But Vere Beauclerc's steady eyes were

"No, no!"

"Then we'll come home with you."

"No, no! Good-night! Good-night!"

"Beau!" shouted Frank.

But the remittance man's son had already plunged into the wood and disappeared. The chums shouted to him, but no answer came. Frank caught his pony.

"I guess we'd better be moving," said Bob at last. "Come on, Franky! The Cherub doesn't want us."

Frank Richards nodded silently, and the cousins mounted and rode off. They lost no time in getting to the ranch.

Through the dusky wood Vere Beauclerc was tramping homeward. He reached the shack and entered. A candle burned on the plank table. By it sat Lascelles Beauclerc, with a black brow. He looked up, frowning, as his son entered.

"You are late again!" he said, in a grinding voice.



FRANK'S UNEXPECTED MOVE! Frank Richards swung his pony round and charged down upon the three rustlers, sending them spinning in all directions. "Now, Bob!" he panted. "Ride for it, Franky!" yelled Bob Lawless, urging his pony forward. (See Chapter 4.)

An iron grip was laid on Bob Lawless. Frank lay dazed in the grass. In a few moments more Bob would have been led away into the timber.

But at that moment a figure sprang out from the dusky thickets into the clear moonlight on the trail.

"Stop!"

"Beau!" panted Frank Richards.

It was Vere Beauclerc.

With a face white as marble, his eyes gleaming from it like stars, the handsome son of the remittance man stood, with the revolver in his hand, the barrel levelled at the rustlers, his fingers on the trigger.

"Stop!" His voice rang out sharp and clear. "Stop! Let them go, or I will shoot!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Father and Son.

VERE BEAUCLERC'S voice rang and echoed on the trail.

The weapon in his hand was level. His hand did not falter for a second.

gleaming along the levelled barrel. The trigger was already rising under the pressure of his finger.

With muttered curses, the three masked men plunged into the timber.

"Beau, old chap!" said Frank. "Oh, would you—would you have fired?"

"I should have fired," said Beauclerc quietly. "Heaven forgive me! I should have fired, if the next bullet had been for myself." He shuddered. "Ride home now—ride home, and remember in future that there is danger on the trail."

"But how did you get here, Cherub?" exclaimed the astonished Bob.

"I did not go home. I followed you through the timber—out of sight."

"Then you expected this?"

"I feared it."
"Jolly good luck that you did!" said Bob. "But you're not going home alone, after this, Cherub. Those scoundrels are still in the wood. Come home with us. We can send word to your father."

Beauclerc shivered.

"Yes, father," said Beauclerc dully. "Where is my revolver? I have missed it from its place."

Beauclerc laid the revolver on the table in silence.

The remittance man looked at him, and their eyes met. As he read what was written in Vere's face, the remittance man paled, and his breath came thickly.

"Vere!" he muttered.

"I should have fired, father!" said Beauclerc, in a low, shaking voice. "Better death than crime! Better death, a thousand times, than dishonour and disgrace! Father!"

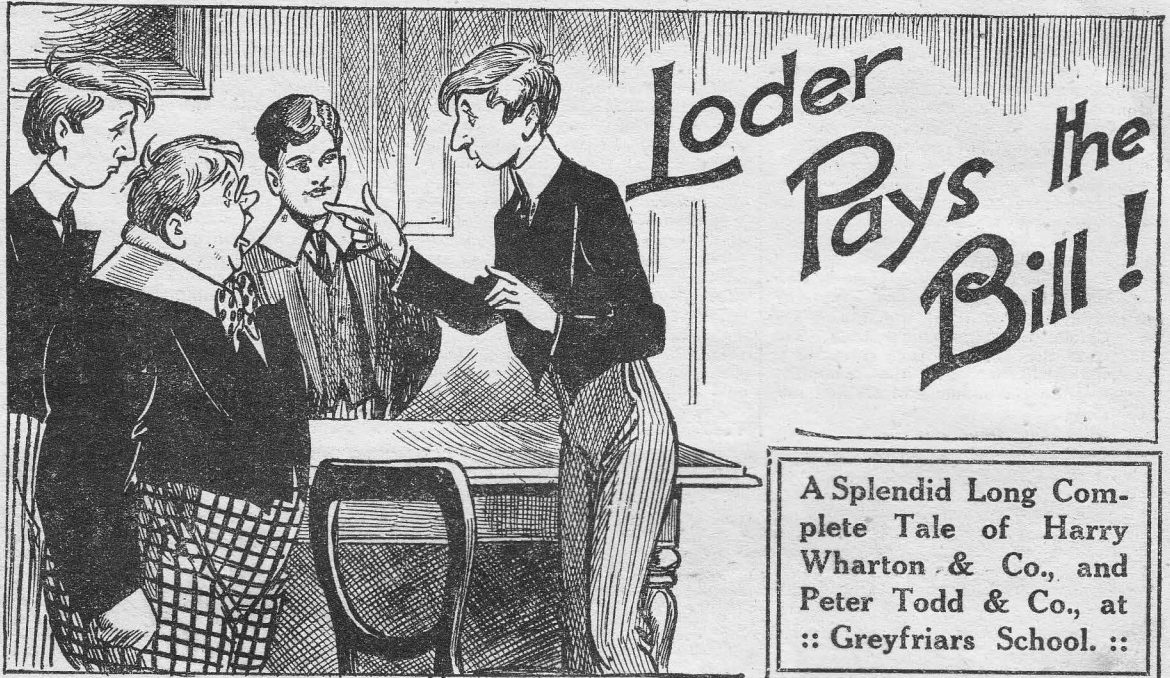
The remittance man's eyes sank before his son's. Vere Beauclerc gave him one look—one look of haggard misery, and passed into his room. And no word came from the man whom his son had saved from crime.

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete Backwoods story next Tuesday.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

A SCREAMINGLY FUNNY STORY, TELLING HOW PETER TODD & CO. PLAN TO GET THEIR OWN BACK ON LODER OF THE SIXTH!



A Splendid Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., and Peter Todd & Co., at :: Greyfriars School. ::

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the Famous Stories of Greyfriars appearing in the "Magnet.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Peter Takes It On!

"**B**LOW, Loder! Blow the bill!" Peter Todd of the Remove Form at Greyfriars climbed into his bed in the dormitory and grunted. Harry Wharton & Co. and several other juniors who had heard what Loder, the bullying prefect of the Sixth, had said to Peter Todd but a few minutes before lights were turned out, grinned.

Loder had just informed the usually cheerful Peter that the damage recently done to his study, when Peter had painted it rather too well for Loder's liking, amounted to three pounds. And that bill, Loder pointed out, was to be paid by Peter—or Peter's pater.

Loder really shouldn't have made Peter fag for him. The Head had said that much. And just because Peter, in an obliging way, had painted Loder's study a vivid green, Peter had to face the bill for cleaning the study!

"After the feast comes the reckoning," grinned Vernon-Smith, "and I fancy Loder will make a little bit out of that three quid himself."

"Loder ought to pay it himself!" said Peter Todd, with a grunt. "He was in the wrong all along the line, and I don't believe cleaning the study cost three quid, either! The school provides wall-paper for studies, and his pictures weren't worth anything—rotten oleographs at a bob a time! Loder ought to pay!"

"He ought," said Harry Wharton. "But I don't think wild horses would make him do it."

"It's up to you to make him pay, Toddy!" grinned Frank Nugent. "As top study in the Remove, you know, it's up to you to make Loder toe the line!" "Insist upon it!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Peter Todd sat up in bed.

"Chuck cackling!" he said. "Do you mean I couldn't make him do it if I set my mind to it?"

"Of course you couldn't, Todd!" said Harry Wharton. "I don't believe for a moment it's cost three quid; but Loder will have a bill from the cleaner for that amount, you can bet, and work it with him, somehow, to pocket the difference. And if you can make Loder pay, I'll admit you're top study in the Remove for the rest of the term."

"That's a bargain!" Peter exclaimed at once.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it a bargain?" demanded Peter. "If Study No. 7 can make Loder foot that bill, it is admitted that Study No. 7 is top study in the Remove for the rest of the term?"

"Speak up, Wharton!" chuckled Skinner. "It's up to you now!"

"I stand by what I said!" exclaimed Wharton immediately. "But you can't do it!"

"It's a bargain?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Right-ho!" said Peter Todd. "Done! If Loder foots that bill, Study No. 7 is top study for the rest of the term. And all you fellows are witnesses."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"Sure, and you can't do it, Toddy!" said Micky Desmond.

"You'll see!" said Todd cheerfully. "It's up to Study No. 7 now, and Study No. 7 sticks at nothing! Bye-bye!"

And Peter Todd settled down into his pillows again. The juniors chuckled. Study No. 7 was likely to find that it was up against a very, very big order this time—that was the general opinion—and Peter Todd would have to climb down.

The next morning Peter Todd was presented with the bill for cleaning the study. Loder presented it to him.

"That's got to be paid on Saturday," he said. "Are you going to pay it, or shall I hand it to the Head to send to your father?"

Peter Todd took the bill, and looked at it.

"I think you ought to pay this, Loder," he said.

Loder sneered.

"You can think what you like, my boy," he said. "You're going to pay it, or it will be sent to your father. You can take your choice."

"All right," said Peter. "I'll see it's paid by Saturday, anyway."

"Mind you do!" said the prefect. "If the man comes here asking for his money, you will be reported to the Head!"

And Loder strode away, feeling satisfied. The painting of his study had been a great joke, but if Peter Todd had to sacrifice a term's pocket-money to pay the bill for cleaning it, the laugh was not exactly on his side at the finish. But Peter had his own ideas about that. He had undertaken to make Loder pay the bill, and the Remove waited very curiously to see how he was going to do it. But Peter said no word on the subject. Towards all curious inquirers he maintained a non-committal silence.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Council of War!

BILLY BUNTER was making for the tuckshop that day after lessons, when Peter Todd tapped him on the shoulder. Bunter halted im-

patiently. Billy Bunter had succeeded in raising a loan that afternoon. There was a new boy in the Fourth, and Bunter had extracted a loan from him to be repaid out of a postal-order he was expecting. All Bunter's cash went in the same direction. Money burned a hole in his pocket until it had been expended at the tuckshop. He blinked at Peter im-

patiently as the head of Study No. 7 stopped him.

"Oh, really, Todd!" he expostulated. "I'm in rather a hurry!"

"Study meeting!" said Peter briefly.

"But I've got an appointment."

"You can leave the tuckshop alone for a bit," said Peter. "Besides, you're stony—you told me so this morning. I suppose your postal-order hasn't come?"

"Some fellows have confidence in me," said Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "There are some fellows who will trust me with a small loan, even if chaps in my own study won't!"

"Not fellows who know you," said Peter promptly.

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Who's been lending you money?" demanded Peter sternly.

"Dawson, of the Fourth," said Bunter. "I'm going to let him have it back out of my postal-order to-morrow morning."

"You're going to let him have it back now!" said Peter Todd grimly. "Dawson's a new kid, or he wouldn't have been taken in. You're going to hand him back his money. You know very well you won't pay him."

"I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Yes, I know that; but Dawson's not going to wait for his money till your postal-order comes. He will be qualified for an old-age pension by that time, and he won't need it. How much has he lent you?"

"Look here, Todd—"

Peter Todd fastened a grip like a vice upon Billy Bunter's collar, and shook him.

"How much?" he demanded.

"Gro-o-o-oh! Three bob!" spluttered Bunter.

"Good! You're going to hand it back to him! Come on!"

"Look here, Todd! I'm not going to gro-oh!—I'm not going—yow, yow! Don't shake me like that, you beast, or my glasses will fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to—yah-ah, yah!—pay for them—grooh!"

"This way!" said Peter cheerfully.

Dawson, the new boy in the Fourth, was in the Close, looking rather lost—like most new boys. Peter bore down on him with the unwilling Bunter.

"You lent Bunter three bob?" demanded Peter.

"Ye-es," stammered Dawson.

"Did you know that Bunter never pays?"

"N-n-no."

"Hand him back his three bob, Bunt!"

"Look here, Todd!" roared Bunter. "Dawson can lend me three bob if he likes!"

"But he doesn't like," said Peter calmly. "You didn't explain to him that you were a spoofer, and never pay your debts. Shell out!"

"Gro-oh! Ho—ho-o-oh!"

"Shell out!"

Bunter, in imminent danger of suffocating with Peter's iron grip on his collar, shelled out reluctantly. Dawson, in a state of great surprise, pocketed his three shillings, and Peter marched Billy Bunter away to Study No. 7. The Owl of the Remove was in a state of suppressed fury. Peter pushed him into the armchair, and shook a warning forefinger at him.

"I've told you I'm going to make a man of you, Bunter," he said. "I've told you you've got to stop cadging. I shall wallop you next time."

"You—you—you—"

"Dry up!"

Bunter dried up. He looked at Peter Todd as if he would like to eat him; but he had a wholesome terror of his study

leader. Peter Todd's word was law in Study No. 7.

Alonzo and Dutton came in to the study meeting. Peter closed the door.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" he said. "I've called this study meeting to discuss the plans against the enemy. You are aware that Loder has presented me with a bill for three quidlets for cleaning the paint off his study, and this firm has undertaken to make Loder pay the bill."

Alonzo blinked mildly at his cousin.

"Perhaps if the matter were explained to Loder, his better feelings would arise, and he would express his regret for having acted badly, and would pay the bill, regarding it as a penance for his unpleasant conduct," he suggested. "I would willingly undertake the task of talking gently but firmly to Loder."

"The trouble is that Loder hasn't any better feelings," explained Peter, with a grin. "He is a rotter all through."

"What do you think, Bunter?"

"I think it's time for tea!" growled the Owl of the Remove. "I'm hungry!"

"What do you think, Dutton?"

"That depends," said Dutton. "If you mean mutton-chops, I dare say we could cook them here, and they would be ripping for tea. But—"

"I wasn't talking about mutton!" groaned his leader. "Have you got any ideas for making Loder pay the bill?" he yelled in Dutton's ear.

"No, I haven't," said Dutton. "How suddenly you change the subject, Peter. You were talking about mutton only a minute ago, and about Loder getting his feet muddy. Blessed if I don't think you're wandering in your mind."

"Then it's up to me to think of a wheeze, as it generally is!" growled Peter. "Luckily I've got some brains—enough for the whole study, I fancy. The study would be in a bad way if I hadn't; I know that. I've got a wheeze all ready, and you're the chap who's going to help me, Bunter. I've heard about your being a clever ventriloquist, and able to imitate voices, and so on. Blessed if I see how a chump like you can be good at anything, but I suppose it's a gift, and doesn't require brains. That's the only way to account for it."

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Give me a specimen of your giddy ventriloquism, so that I can judge for myself," said Peter. "I've heard you before, but I want to see whether you can imitate the Head's giddy warble. Pile in!"

"Todd! How dare you allude to my voice in those terms!"

Todd jumped, and spun round to the door as the voice of Dr. Locke fell upon his ears.

"I—I'm very sorry, sir—" he stammered.

Then he broke off.

The door of the study was still closed, and there was no sign of Dr. Locke. Peter Todd gazed blankly at the door in sheer astonishment. Bunter gave a fat chuckle, and Peter turned upon him.

"Do you mean to say that it was you?" he demanded.

"He, he, he! Of course it was! I'm a jolly good ventriloquist," said Bunter.

"I can tell you that I—"

"You gave me a start, you fat bouncer!" said Peter. "I could have sworn it was the Head. My hat! I could almost swear now—"

"My dear Peter, I trust you will do nothing of the sort," said Alonzo, in a tone of mild reproach. "My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked, nay, disgusted, if he heard you swear."

"Ass!" said Peter politely. "Bunter,

my fat tulip, you'll do. If you can take me in, you can take Loder in."

Bunter looked dismayed.

"Loder!" he exclaimed. "Look here, I'm jolly well not going to play tricks on Loder. Loder's too tough! He'd skin me if he found me out."

"You've got to risk that," said Peter. "But he won't find you out. If he does, you can take your medicine. No. 7 Study never climbs down!"

"I'm not going to tackle Loder!" roared Bunter.

"Yes, you are; orders have to be obeyed in this study, or something will be heard to drop," said Peter. "I'm going to make a man of you, Bunter. You ought to be grateful. See how I'm curing you of cadging already!"

"You—you rotter!"

"I'm going to cure you of funking as well. Whenever I see you funk anything, I'm going to make you tackle it—see?"

"Look here—"

"If you're afraid of a licking, the more lickings you get the better. So if Loder bowls you out ventriloquising on him, it will be all for the good. It will teach you to stand lickings without whining."

Bunter glared at Peter Todd speechlessly. Whether the process of making a man succeeded or not, it was quite certain that Bunter would not enjoy it.

"You—you—you—" stuttered Bunter, at last.

"That's settled, then," said Peter Todd. "Mind, not a word outside this study. You won't be wanted in this act, Dutton, and you can go back to 'The Story of a Potato,' Lonzy. Bunter and I are going to make Loder wriggle."

"Oh, really, Todd!"

"If Bunter objects, I'm going to give him an awful whacking with a cricket-stump. I don't mind if I break one of my mumps on him, as it's all for his good. But I hope Bunter won't object; cricket-stumps cost money, after all. Do you object, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him feebly.

"N-n-nunno," he said; "I—I'm willing to—to back you up, Toddy."

"Good!" said Peter heartily. "Think what a triumph it will be for this study, Bunter, if we turn you into something better than a cadging, cowardly worm! Think of that!"

"You—you—you—"

"So that's settled," said Peter Todd. "Now we'll have tea. Look cheerful, Bunter."

And at the prospect of having tea Bunter did succeed in looking cheerful.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter Obliges!

L ODER the prefect was in great spirits.

The seniors with whom he exchanged cheery greetings, and the juniors whom he forgot to cuff, could not help noticing it.

Loder was, in fact, in high feather just now. He had written a most humble letter of explanation to his terrible uncle, pointing out that the painting of the study was not a jape of his own, but had been played upon him by a wicked junior, and the major had seen reason. He had accepted his nephew's explanations and apologies, and he had written to Loder to say so; and, what was more important, he had enclosed a substantial tip. It was not the five Loder had hoped for, when he invited his uncle to Greyfriars. But it was a couple of pounds, and that was something, after Loder had really given up hope of

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getting anything at all. And Loder confided to Walker that, taking it all in all, he'd rather have two quid without his uncle than five quid with him. It was worth the other three quid not to have to listen once more to the story of that adventure in the Ghoolybooly Pass, on tenterhooks lest the touchy old gentleman might take offence at something or other all the time.

In addition to this, the honourable and scrupulous Loder was making a little profit of a pound out of the cleaner's bill, by a private arrangement with the cleaner. That little profit would not be his till the bill was paid, certainly, but it would come in very useful the following week, when Loder would want a little ready cash for some dealings with Mr. Banks, the bookmaker. The little party in Loder's study was to come off, after all, without the uncle—a great advantage. And without an elder present, the worthy "dogs" of the Sixth would be able to make the little meeting much more enjoyable. They would be able to put whisky in their tea, with a solemn pretence of liking it, and to smoke cigarettes and cigars—with the study door locked, of course. And after tea they would have a little game of nap, with penny points. Altogether, it was going to be very enjoyable—from Loder & Co.'s point of view.

"Only not a giddy whisper about it," Loder said to his friends. "Wingate has been rotten and interfering lately; he's quite likely to take it upon himself to meddle if he knew what we'd get on. Just drop in quietly, and keep mum."

And Carne and Walker agreed that they would.

Loder's fag had a good deal to do preparing for the party. Loder did not make the mistake again of impressing the services of a Remove fellow. Tubb, of the Third, was his fag, and Tubb, of the Third, was not likely to venture to paint his study green. But there was one fellow in the Remove who frequently fagged for the seniors of his own accord, with a business eye upon the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. That fellow was Billy Bunter, and Bunter had a most marvellous nose for discovering a coming feed. If any fellow laid in unusual supplies at any time, Bunter always knew all about it, and if the fellow happened to be a senior boy, Bunter was generally on the spot with a smirking smile and an offer to fag.

Loder was not surprised, therefore, to find Bunter in his study after lessons on Friday, the day the feed was to come off. Billy Bunter was reclining gracefully in Loder's armchair when the prefect came in, and he jumped up in a great hurry. Loder gave him a grim look.

"If—if you please, Loder," said Bunter, keeping the table between him and the prefect in case of trouble, "I—I want to fag for you, please, as you're going to have a feed this evening, you know."

"How do you know I'm going to have a feed?" demanded Loder.

"Todd said—I—I mean, I saw you getting some things in the tuckshop, Loder. If you want any cooking done, you know what a jolly good cook I am, Loder. You can't trust that fathead Tubb to cook for you. He'll burn the toast, and scorch the eggs, and spoil everything.

You'd better let me do it, Loder. And—and I should like to fag for you, Loder. It's an honour, you know."

Loder grinned. "You mean you want some pickings from the feed, you fat rotter?" he asked. "Ahem! I—I shouldn't mind just a little snack," he said. "I know what a generous fellow you are, Loder." "Oh, ring off, you silly ass!" said Loder. "Do you think you can soft-sawder me?"

"Oh, no, Loder! I wouldn't think of it. I—I meant to say that I know you're not a generous fellow—"

"What!" roared Loder. "I—I—I mean—that is—you see—"

Loder burst into a laugh. "You can fag for me, if you like, you fat oyster!" he said. "Mind, I shall expect the toast to be perfect, and the eggs done to a turn. You can make omelettes, can't you?"

"What-ho!" said Bunter, who was very proud of his powers as a cook. "I can make jolly ripping omelettes, I can tell you! You rely on me, Loder, and I'll turn you out a feed that will do you proud."

"Mind you do!" said Loder. "It will be rather late in the evening—after the juniors have gone to bed. But as I see lights out for the Remove this week, that will be all right. You can stay down and look after the feed."

"Good!" said Billy Bunter.

And that evening Billy Bunter was very busy in Loder's study. Tubb of the Third was surprised and relieved to find that he was not wanted. And certainly Billy Bunter was a first-class fag when he chose to be. Towards junior bed-time, Bunter had Loder's study in first-class order. Spotless tablecloth and gleaming crockery, and a feed fit for the gods. What Loder's study lacked in necessities, Bunter had borrowed from other studies—with or without permission, according to circumstances, like a dutiful fag. When Loder & Co. came in to the feed they could not help looking pleased.

"Time that fag was in bed!" said Walker.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. "I haven't finished the omelettes yet," he said.

"That's all right," said Loder. "I've seen the lights out for the Remove. Bunter can go up later. You needn't let Wingate see you, Bunter."

"What-ho!" said Bunter.

And Billy Bunter finished his labours as ten o'clock struck. Then Loder pointed to the door.

"Good-night!" he said.

The Owl of the Remove lingered.

"I—I say, Loder—"

"You can take some of the tarts," said Loder. "Take half a dozen!"

"And the—the cake—"

"You let that cake alone, you porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Loder!"

"I said half a dozen!" roared Loder, as Bunter slipped a bag containing a dozen tarts under his arm. "Put that bag down!"

"I—I didn't count them," said Bunter feebly. "You—you see—"

"He's got something in his pockets!" said Carne. "See how they're bulging!"

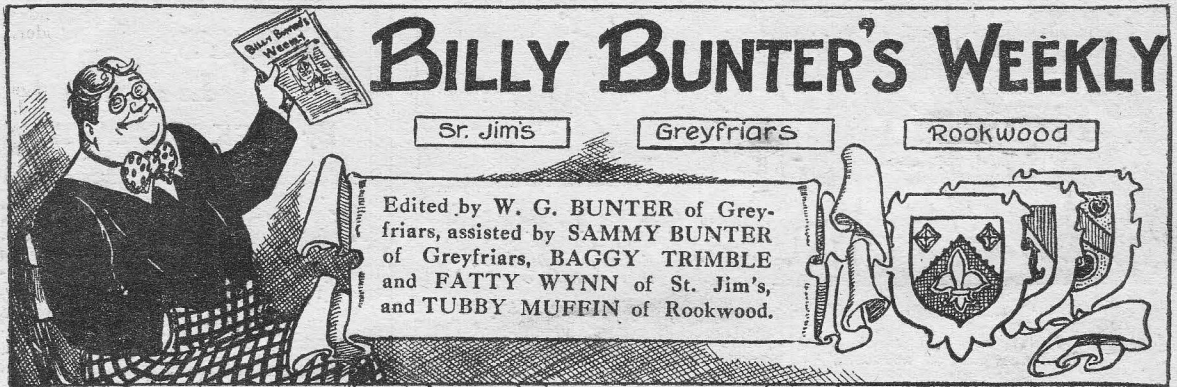
"I—I say— Oh!"

Loder pounced upon the fat junior and turned out his jacket-pockets. Quite a little store of eatables rolled out on the table. Loder shook the fat junior angrily, and several oranges and apples rolled out of various receptacles in

(Continued on page 17.)



BUNTER'S TAKING WAYS! "He's got something in his pockets!" said Carne. "See how they're bulging!" Loder shook Billy Bunter angrily, and several oranges and apples rolled out of various receptacles in the fat junior's clothes, and dropped on the floor. (See Chapter 3.)



IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By BILLY BUNTER.

My Dear Readers,—When I ran away from Greyfriars a few weeks ago—owing to Mr. Quelch being after my scalp—I still managed to keep my WEEKLY going. A good many readers have written to ask how it was done.

Well, I wrote one of my Editorials in an old barn, and posted it direct to the printers. Another Editorial was written at St. Jim's, and another at Rookwood.

You see, I am one of those brilliant jernalists who can write anywhere, under any konditions. I can write in a railway-karridge, or under a haystack, or in the dormitory by candle-light. But the best plaice for inspiration is the tuck-shopp. I usually perch myself on one of the high stools at the counter, and write my stuff—until Mrs. Mimble gets egg-saperated, and chucks me out.

Grubb is a fine insentiff to inspiration. I believe Sir Walter Scott must have written most of the Waverley Novels in a bunshop. And I don't believe for one moment that Gray wrote his famous Elegy in a country churchyard. He wrote it in a soop-kitchen!

And I am certain that when Shakespeare rote "The Three Muskateers," he was enjoying a little snack in a French coffee in Paris. That's how he got his French local colour in the story.

Of course, the whole art of jernalism lies in the ability to write at any time, and in any plaice. Why, I wrote one of my Editorials in a dentist's waiting-room!

I am back at Greyfriars now, and the paper is being kondukted from Studdy No. 7, as usual. I must say that while I was away my four fat subbs backed me up wonderfully, and I owe them my greatfull thanks.

Some of you have been asking for more Speshul Numbers. Certainly, my friends—serrainly! I am always only too pleased to carry out your wishes, and I've got some splendid Speshul Numbers in corse of preparation. Order your POPULAR every week in advance, for there are some wonderful treats in store. And they must on no account be mist.

Trusting you are all in the pink,

Your sinseer pal,

YOUR EDITOR.

ODE ON A DISTANTFUL PROSPECT OF GREY-FRIARS SCHOOL!

By HURREE SINGH.

Magnificent and stately pile,
Mighty and towering spirefulness,
I'll sing thy praises for awhile
With the divine inspirefulness.
Oh, how I love thy noble sights,
Thy Closefulness and cryptfulness;
Thy passages, where on dark nights
Our feet perform the slipfulness!

Thy cricket-field, on which we play,
Is covered with the greenfulness;
We flock to it on summer day,
Terrific is our keenfulness.

Thy box-room, from whose window wide
The fellows slip out nightfully,
Claims my affection and my pride,
I worship it delightfully!

Thy hall, it is a mighty place,
So also is thy gymfulness,
Where boxers oft stand face to face
And exercise their limbffulness.
Thy tuckshop is an oasis
Where thirsty souls halt stopfully,
To masticate the bun of bliss
And gurgle ginger-popfully!

Thy praises I will neatly tell
In smart and skilful rhymefulness,
Sweet school, that I admire so well,
And where I spend my timefulness.
The time for prep has now arrived,
So I must finish tersefully;
I'm proud to think that I've contrived
To sing thy praises versefully!

PEEPS INTO THE FUTURE

By George Kerr.



KIT WILDRAKE of St. Jim's.

POPULAR PERSONALITIES!

No. 4.—TOM MERRY.

I'm Merry, I'm Merry,
A mighty man, very,
In Form-room and playground and gym.
I skipper the Shell,
And I skipper it well,
With energy, courage, and vim.
I'm Merry, I'm Merry,
A mighty man, very,
Good-looking, and graceful, and slim!

Few schoolboys have been before the public for so many years as your humble servant. Jack Blake is one of the few. His exploits appeared in a paper called "Pluck," before the "Gem" Library came on the scene.

I suppose most of you have read how I came to St. Jim's, in a gorgeous velvetene knickerbocker suit. How everybody roared! And my dear old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, insisted on my wearing chest-protectors!

Those days seem very far off now. It didn't take me long to shake off the shyness and silliness that the average new kid displays. I entered into lessons and sports and japes with enthusiasm, and eventually found myself captain of the Shell.

Ahly backed up by Harry Manners and Monty Lowther, I rule the destinies of the Form, besides being skipper of the cricket and footer elevens. I have a great affection for sport in all its branches—though I consider footer the finest game of any.

I suppose I have pulled off some very good performances, from time to time, in the athletic world. But I have many rivals at St. Jim's, and have not infrequently been beaten by them. My chief rivals—and chums, of course—are Jack Blake, Talbot, Figgins, and Redfern. These four are well up in every branch of athletics, and I have all my work cut out to hold my own with them.

I am very fond of a jape—provided it is a clean and not a cruel one—and I also love cycling tours and camping out. I also have one or two interesting indoor hobbies—though I don't go mad over them, like Manners does over his blessed photography.

I am fifteen years of age, have a cheery disposition—as my name suggests—and I enjoy life at St. Jim's immensely.

I won't say I have no enemies. Aubrey Racke and Gerald Crooke don't exactly love me like a brother. But I can well afford to ignore the hostility of cads of this type.

And now for the final chorus!

I'm Merry, I'm Merry,
A mighty man, very,
At footer and boxing and cricket.
I'm a straightforward chap
Who delights in a scrap,
My motto's "Keep smiling—and stick it!"
I'm Merry, I'm Merry,
A mighty man, very,
Outspoken, and right on the wicket!
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By FATTY WYNN.

(Sub-Editor and St. Jim's representative.)

"MAN in!" said Figgins. "Who's next?"

And then a still small voice from the pavilion answered, "I am!"

We turned to gaze at the speaker. It was French of the New House. French was buckling on his pads with trembling fingers. He seemed to have the "jumps." His face was pale and tense. When he picked up his bat, he handled it as if it were a red-hot poker—very gingerly, as if the blessed thing would bite him.

"Pull yourself together, man!" said Figgins impatiently. "Why, you're as nervous as a kitten!"

"It's only a practice match," said Kerr. "You're not performing before crowned heads."

French smiled a sickly smile. "I—I can't help it," he muttered. "I feel sort of wobbly at the knees."

"That's funk!" said Pratt disdainfully. "There's no other word for it. Fancy showing the white feather in a cricket match—and a paltry practice match at that."

Meanwhile, the fieldsmen were growing impatient.

"Send in your next man, Figgy!" yelled Dick Redfern.

Bat in hand, French walked unsteadily down the pavilion steps. He was like a chap going to his execution.

Now, if only French had confidence in himself, he'd be one of the finest bats in the New House. When there's nobody looking on, he can play cricket like a "Ranji." He is a master of style, and his leg-glides are as graceful as any I've seen. But when there's a crowd watching him, French is hopeless.

He was hopeless on this occasion. He asked the umpire to give him his guard, then he scraped and scratched nervously at the turf with his bat, after which he prepared to face Koumi Rao, the Indian junior, who was bowling.

"Out first ball!" grunted Figgins, looking on from the pavilion.

And so it proved.

French scooped miserably at a full-toss which he ought to have banged to the boundary.

Up went the ball, to an altitude of about twenty feet. Then it came down—plop!—into the gloved hands of the wicket-keeper.

"Another man out!" said Redfern. "Good-bye, Bluebell!" he added, as French started on the long, long trail back to the pavilion.

"Chump!" growled Figgins, when French returned. "You ought to have flogged that ball to the boundary. It simply asked to be punished! Yet you go and spoon it into the air."

"Sorry," said French.

"Bless your sorrow! You're a bundle of nerves, that's what you are! If you play the fool like this in a practice match, what will you do in a real one?"

"Swoon with shock, I expect!" said Pratt. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, French," said Kerr, "you should never think about yourself when you're going in to bat. Don't imagine that everybody's staring at you."

It was all very well for Kerr to talk like that, French reflected. But how could he help being self-conscious? Whenever he went in to bat, it was like some ghastly nightmare. The fieldsmen seemed to be huge ogres, leering at him as he passed. The bowlers appeared like monsters who were waiting to devour him.

"Next time you play," said Kerr, "you want to imagine that you're somebody else—Kildare of the Sixth, for instance. Get the impression firmly wedged into your mind that you're Kildare. Swing your bat carelessly as you walk to the wicket, and say

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bantering to the fieldsmen, 'Awfully sorry, you fellows, but I'm going to give you an hour's leather-hunting.' If you do that, your nervousness will disappear."

"Sounds like auto-suggestion," said Figgins. "That's what it is, really," said Kerr. "There's a lot to be said for auto-suggestion."

The next time French played it was a House match. He was chosen at the last moment, to take the place of a fellow who was on the sick list.

It was to be a single innings match.

The School House batted first, and put together the rather poor total of 44. They hadn't been able to get going against the deadly bowling of Koumi Rao.

It looked a good thing for the New House, but when our turn came the wickets fell like ninepins.

Figgins was clean bowled by Talbot before



French lashed out at the ball and sent it flying to the boundary.

he had time to settle down. Redfern got a "duck." Kerr was smartly caught in the slips. I was run out. (I had eaten rather a big dinner, and, consequently, I was a bit slow between the wickets.)

The situation was serious when French went in.

Thirty for nine wickets. We still required 15 runs to give us the victory.

Figgins was in despair. But he brightened up a little when he saw French walking on to the pitch.

For French was no longer the nervy subject of a few days before. He swung his bat carelessly as he walked; he gazed at the bowlers and fieldsmen with impudent defiance. It was obvious that he had forgotten he was French of the New House. He was acting on Kerr's advice, and imagining he was Kildare.

Imagination is a wonderful thing. On this occasion it won us the match.

French slashed the first ball back to the bowler. The second was a half-volley. French clumped it to the boundary. He continued to treat the School House bowling with contempt, and, to cut a long story short, the New House won an exciting match by four runs.

Of course, we carried French off, and made a great fuss of him. He had conquered his nerves, and he will be a jolly useful man in future—if he can continue to forget himself, and hug the belief that he is somebody else.

Anyway, French won us the match that day. So there is something to be said for auto-suggestion, after all!

TWIGG'S LATEST! By JACK WINGATE.

There aren't many flies on Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second. Like Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, he has eyes like gimlets, and he doesn't miss anything that goes on in the Form-room.

Twigg's latest stunt was to have a speaking-tube installed in the Form-room, connecting with his study. You see, Twigg often has occasion to visit his study during lessons; and it's very handy for him to be able to speak through the tube to Dicky Nugent, and ask him if the class is behaving itself properly.

In the middle of the history lesson this morning, Twigg turned to us with a frown, and said:

"I shall be absent in my study for a few moments. Let there be no horse-play in my absence. If anything goes wrong, I shall expect you, Nugent minor, to call my attention to it through the speaking-tube."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Dicky.

Twigg swept out of the room. And directly his back was turned we started playing a glorious game of leap-frog. We made enough row to awaken the Seven Sleepers.

Presently, amid the uproar, there was a buzzing sound.

"I say, Nugent," said Gatty, "Twigg's trying to get through on the speaking-tube!"

Dicky Nugent grinned, and went to the tube.

"Is that you, Nugent minor?" came a voice.

"Yes, sir."

"I trust everything is quiet and orderly in the Form-room?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

The game of leap-frog was at its height, and we were having no end of a time.

Dicky Nugent, having satisfied Twigg that peace, perfect peace reigned in the Form-room, came and joined in the fun.

When we grew tired of leap-frog, we opened fire on Sammy Bunter with our peashooters.

Sammy yelled and squirmed as a shower of peas smote him in various parts of his anatomy.

"Give over!" he exclaimed wildly. "Drop it, you rotters, or I'll tell Twigg!"

And what do you think the fat little cad did? He rushed to the speaking-tube, and got through to Mr. Twigg.

"Bunter minor speaking, sir," he said. "Come quickly! I'm being murdered by inches!"

"What!"

"There's ten, twenty, thirty of them on to me, sir, with their peashooters! I'm being peppered all over! I—"

Bunter got no further, for many hands seized him from behind, and he was dragged away from the speaking-tube.

A moment later, in came old Twigg, armed with one of his most formidable canes. And he picked out the fellows he thought were the ringleaders, and gave them a couple of stingers on each paw.

Of course, we simply slaughtered Sammy after lessons. And we no longer refer to Twigg's instrument as a speaking-tube. We call it the sneaking-tube!



By DICK RAKE.

(Of Greyfriars.)

WHERE is the bully? Where is the bully of the Form? "Let me get at him!"

All eyes were turned towards the speaker. And when the fellows in the Remove dormitory saw that the speaker was Alonzo Todd, they nearly fell down. At all events, they gaped, and gasped, and rubbed their eyes.

Here was Alonzo Todd, the duffer and weakling of the Form, calling in strident tones for the official bully!

Alonzo had just come into the dorm. His bony hands were clenched, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

"What the thump—" began Bob Cherry. "Where is the school bully?" repeated Alonzo, in a louder key. "Let him show himself!"

Vernon-Smith grinned. "Seems to be Bolsover major you're looking for," he said. "What are you going to do with him?"

"I shall request him to remove his coat—if he is not already in his pyjamas—and I shall give him a public thrashing, here and now!"

There was a loud murmur of astonishment. Peter Todd was at his cousin's side in a moment.

"What's the game, Lonzy?" he inquired. "Have you suddenly gone potty, or what?" "He seems to be after Bolsover's scalp," said Harry Wharton. "Has Bolsover upset you in some way, Lonzy?"

"He hasn't upset me personally," said Alonzo. "But he has proved himself a terror to the community at large. He is a bully—a heavy-handed, beetle-browed bully! I will smite him hip and thigh!"

There was a loud chorus of laughter, in which Bolsover major joined.

The idea of Alonzo Todd standing up to the bully of the Remove in fistic combat was certainly ludicrous. Bolsover would have eaten him.

The sight of Bolsover's face, contorted into a leering grin, seemed to goad the usually placid Alonzo to fury. Before Peter could prevent him, he sprang towards Bolsover major, and dealt him a blow in the chest.

It was not the type of blow which would have felled an ox. It was a puny blow, and a painless one, so far as the recipient was concerned. It glanced off Bolsover's broad chest like water off a duck's back.

Alonzo dealt a further blow, nearly overbalancing in doing so. And Bolsover just stood still and grinned at him.

"What are you tickling me for?" he inquired.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I am thrashing you!", panted Alonzo. "Carry on with the good work!" chuckled Bolsover. "I can stand quite a lot of that. In fact, it's the pleasantest thrashing I've ever had!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo continued to hit. Bolsover continued to grin. Alonzo might as well have been beating his fists vainly against a brick wall, for all the effect his blows had.

Harry Wharton and Peter Todd, doubled up with merriment, went forward, and dragged Alonzo away. They feared that Bolsover might presently lose his temper, and retaliate. In which case the consequences would have been painful for Alonzo. When Bolsover smote, he smote hard.

Alonzo was with difficulty persuaded to undress and get into bed. Before drawing the bedclothes over his spare form, he sat up and glared at Bolsover major.

"Bully and coward!" he exclaimed. "I have thrashed you, and I hope it will be a lesson to you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You frabjous chump!" said Bolsover. "Why, I could lick you with my little finger!"

"Be silent! I have thrashed you, and I hope we have heard the last of your bullying ways!"

Bolsover was beginning to get rather nettled. So it was a good thing that Wingate of the Sixth came in at that moment, to extinguish the light.

Everybody marvelled at Alonzo Todd's strange behaviour.

In the ordinary way, Alonzo was, if anything, a pacifist. He held to the doctrine that little children should love one another. Yet he had actually "squared up" to Bolsover major!

But Alonzo's amazing conduct didn't stop there.

Next morning, white crowds of fellows were walking in the Close, getting an appetite for brekker, Alonzo did an astounding thing—



Alonzo Todd dealt Bolsover a blow in the chest, nearly overbalancing in doing so. "What are you tickling me for?" asked Bolsover.

an incredible thing. It makes me chuckle, even as I record it.

Gosling, the porter, was employed in the perpetual task of sweeping the leaves from the doorstep of his lodge.

It was a sunny morning, but Gosling was not in a sunny humour. He had awakened with what is known as "a liver."

Alonzo Todd waited until he was sure he had a good audience. Then he deliberately walked up to Gosling, threw his arms round the neck of the astonished porter, and hugged him! Some fellows say he actually kissed him on the cheek, but I can't say with certainty that this was the case. I was too staggered and bewildered to note all the details.

"Hellup!" gasped Gosling. "Wot you up to, Master Todd?"

Alonzo withdrew his arms from Gosling's neck. Then he confronted the amazed on-lookers.

"I am not ashamed of my father!" he exclaimed, in ringing tones.

"What!"

"I am not afraid to embrace my male parent in public!"

Skinner of the Remove tapped his forehead significantly.

"Mad!" he ejaculated.

"Mad as a March hare!" agreed Bolsover major.

As for Gosling, he was in such a state of frenzy that I believe he would have be-

laboured Alonzo with his broom had not Peter Todd and Harry Wharton again intervened. They dragged Alonzo away towards the school building, and Peter Todd was looking very worried.

"I believe Lonzy ought to see a mental specialist," he confided to Wharton.

The captain of the Remove nodded.

"There's certainly a kink somewhere," he said.

It was not until morning lessons were in progress that Alonzo's strange actions were explained.

Alonzo is usually a diligent and attentive scholar. But on this particular morning he paid no heed to the lesson. A book was lying open on his knees, and he was perusing it under the desk.

"Todd!"

Mr. Quelch's voice boomed through the Form-room like thunder.

Alonzo sat up with a start.

"D-d-did you address me, sir?" he stammered.

"I did!" roared Mr. Quelch. "What have you got under the desk?"

"A book, sir."

"Bring it to me at once!"

"Ahem! I—I—"

"Do not parley with me, Todd! Obey me instantly!"

Very reluctantly, Alonzo Todd advanced towards the Form-master's desk. He handed over the book, upon which Mr. Quelch bestowed a contemptuous scrutiny.

The book was entitled "Frank Fearnought's Schooldays." The first chapter described how the gallant young hero arrived at St. Martin's School, inquired for the school bully, and soundly thrashed him.

The second chapter told of the visit of the hero's father to the school. The majority of boys, said the author, are ashamed to acknowledge their parents in public. But Frank Fearnought walked boldly up to his father, and embraced him. Then, turning defiantly to his schoolfellows, he exclaimed: "I am not ashamed of my father!"

Of course, we understood it all now. The book had fired Alonzo's imagination, and he had set out to emulate the dashing young hero. Hence his aggressiveness towards Bolsover major, and the scene in the Close with Gosling.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"So you have been wasting your time reading this trumpery trash, Todd!" he exclaimed. "I shall confiscate this book, and give you a caning!"

"Oh!"

Alonzo received a couple of stinging cuts on each hand. And the punishment served its purpose. For the Duffer of the Remove reverted to his usual meek and mild ways, and the exploits of Frank Fearnought no longer stimulated him to follow in the footsteps of that gallant hero of fiction!

FREE—REAL PHOTOS OF FAMOUS BOXERS AND FOOTBALLERS.

(See page 19.)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH £1,000?

(This query has been put to a number of Rookwood celebrities, whose answers are recorded below.)

JIMMY SILVER:

Invest it, of course! Although not a miser, I believe in putting something aside for the proverbial rainy day. After all, a thousand pounds is far too big a sum for a schoolboy to play with. In later life, it can be expended wisely and well.

VAL MORNINGTON:

If the skies were suddenly to open, and disgorge a thousand pounds, and I had the good fortune to be waiting underneath to pick it up, I should pat myself on the back and say, "Mornny, old man, you are in clover! Here is a small fortune; mind you make good use of it. Don't stick it under your pillow, or smuggle it in a sock. Spend it, man—spend it! Induce the Head to give you a month's leave of absence, and go to the South of France. It's ripping on the shores of the Mediterranean. There's bathing, and dancing, and everything the heart can desire!" And, believe me, if I didn't get through that merry old thousand in a month, I'd eat my Sunday topper!

TUBBY MUFFIN:

What would I do with a thousand pounds? Buy up the school tuckshop, of course! And then proceed to live on the fat of the land for the remainder of my schooldays. One thousand pounds' worth of tempting tuck! By Jove, it fairly makes a fellow's mouth water! If only one of my rich uncles would send me a fat remittance. But alas! There is not much likelihood of him doing that.

ALGY SILVER:

If I had a thousand pounds I'd buy an aeroplane and a motor-car and cut a rare dash. I should spend munney like water, and life would never be dry. I should have a high old time, and be the envy of Rookwood. But what's the use of wishing?

THE HEAD:

If I were to receive the sum of one thousand pounds, over and above my income, I should place two-thirds of it in the bank, and distribute the remainder among the deserving poor.

MACK (the porter):

Which if somebody give me a thousand pounds I shouldn't do another day's work in my life, as ever was! I should spend the evening of my days in peace, and I should spend the thousand pounds in—ahem!—little drops of comfort.

DON'T MISS NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER NUMBER!

W. G. B.

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.



By JIMMY SILVER
(Of Rookwood School.)

HANSOM of the Fifth had a camera. He gave it to Tubby Muffin, in much the same way as a person might give a cast-off garment to a tramp.

"Here you are, kid," he said. "A present for you."

"Thanks awfully, Hansom!" said Tubby. Now, if the fat idiot had had a grain of sense, he would have known that Hansom wouldn't be likely to give a camera away unless it was absolutely worthless.

But Tubby Muffin has no sense, and he imagined he had got hold of a real good thing.

At the earliest opportunity the Falstaff of the Fourth purchased a roll of films and set



Four photos were exhibited on the door of Tubby's study, and they were the most atrocious things I've ever seen.

up in business as a photographer. He stuck up a notice outside his study door to this effect:

YOUR PHOTOGRAPH FOR SIXPENCE!

Don't Delay! Be Taken To-day!
Sittings can be booked at the konklusion of afternoon lessons.

(Signed) R. MUFFIN,
The Rookwood Photographer.

The announcement created a good deal of comment.

"Let's go and have our mugs taken, kids," said Lovell.

"I'm game," I replied. "But Tubby will only make a hash of it."

"If he does, we'll jolly well make a hash of Tubby!" said Raby.

We marched into Tubby Muffin's study—he now called it his studio—and after paying over our tanners, we posed before Tubby's camera, one at a time.

The light in the study was not very good. Newcome pointed this out to the photographer.

Tubby Muffin frowned. "I know what I'm doing," he said. "You mind your own bizney, Newcome. When you see your photo, you'll vote it the best you've ever had done. All your ugly features will be glossed over—"

"What!" shouted Newcome. "Your nose—which is unstapely—will appear quite normal in the finished photograph," said Tubby. "Your eyes—which have a sort of squint—will be made to look quite natural."

"You—you—" spluttered Newcome. "Your ears—which are inclined to overlap—will seem quite small. And your forehead—which is shaped like that of a criminal—"

Newcome couldn't stand any more. He flourished his fist perilously close to the photographer's face.

"Say another word," he hissed, "and I'll knock you out!"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Look here, Tubby," I said. "If those photographs don't do us justice, we'll give you a jolly good bumping!"

"Yes, rather!"

"When will they be ready?" asked Lovell.

"I'll have 'em developed by to-morrow," said Tubby. "You can have the finished prints to-morrow evening."

"You're going to do your own develop- ing?"

"Of course! I've borrowed all the paraphernalia from Hansom."

"Does Hansom know you've borrowed it?"

"I hope not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We left Tubby Muffin to his photographic devices, and went on our way. And we forgot all about the photographs until the following evening, when Raby suggested we should go and collect them.

On approaching Tubby Muffin's study, we found a crowd of fellows collected outside the door. They were cackling with merriment. Four photographs, of postcard size, were exhibited on the door. And underneath the photographs was written:

"SAMPLES OF MY WUNDERFUL WORK!"

"R. MUFFIN."

The "samples" were the most atrocious things you ever saw. There was a photograph of myself, horribly out of focus. My head was altogether out of proportion to my body. It was more like a comic cartoon than a photograph.

No wonder the fellows were roaring! I tore the dreadful atrocity down from the door.

Meanwhile yells of wrath emanated from Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

"Look at my dial!" howled Raby. "It— it's terrible!"

It truly was. Tarzan of the Apes was an Adonis by comparison with Raby as portrayed by that photograph.

As a matter of fact, the print was not properly developed, and Tubby Muffin had put in finishing touches with pen and ink. You never saw anything so ghastly in your natural.

As for Lovell, he seemed to be all feet. Tremendous boots loomed out in the photograph. The body seemed small and shrunken, and the head—well, it was a mere pin-head. The onlookers rocked with laughter when they gazed at Lovell's photograph.

"Going to send it home to your mater, Lovell?" inquired Mornington. "She'll be awfully bucked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where—where's that fat boulder Muffin?" hooted Lovell. "I—I'll slay him!"

Newcome was also on the warpath—in fact, we all were.

When we discovered Tubby Muffin, lurking behind the screen in his study, we didn't spare him. We gave him the bumping of his life. Moreover, we demanded our money back. But that was futile, Tubby having spent it long since in the school tuckshop.

The firm of Reginald Muffin, photographer, has now gone into liquidation!

LODER PAYS THE BILL!

(Continued from page 12.)

Bunter's clothes, and dropped on the floor.

"You—you blessed young burglar!" exclaimed Loder savagely. "Get out!"

"I—I say, I haven't got any tarts!"

"And you're jolly well not going to have them now!" said Loder. "Get out!"

"Look here——"

"Outside!"

Loder swung the fat junior into the passage, and closed the door on him. Bunter simply panted with fury, but he did not venture into the study again.

"Serve him right!" said Carne.

"Rather risky to trust that young rotter among eatables at all. But I must say he's turned out a nobby feed!"

"Ripping!" said Walker.

"Lock the door, Loder, old boy!"

Loder turned the key in the lock. Then he uttered an angry exclamation.

"It doesn't lock! Some of those young rotters have been playing tricks with my lock!"

"Bunter, perhaps!"

"I'll skin somebody for this! The door won't lock, and we don't want any silly ass poking his nose in here this evening, especially when we're playing nap!"

"You can shove a chair against it," said Carne. "Put the top of a chair under the lock; that will stick it shut."

"I suppose that's all we can do," said Loder. "After all, nobody can shove his way in. It's my study."

And Loder & Co. sat down to the feast.

Billy Bunter crawled upstairs, feeling very shaken and very furious. As he came into the Remove dormitory several voices greeted him. The dormitory was in darkness, and the Removites were all in bed, with the exception of Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Where have you been, Bunt? In the larder?"

"I've been fagging for Loder!" growled Bunter.

"Fagging for Loder!" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"You know that's not allowed, Bunter," said Harry Wharton.

"Captain's orders!" said Peter Todd, sitting up in bed. "Are they enjoying the giddy festival now, Bunter?"

"Yes, the beasts! They wouldn't let me have any."

"You oughtn't to have wanted any," said Peter severely. "It's not honourable to break bread with an enemy."

"I didn't want any bread," grunted Bunter. "I wanted some of the tarts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" said Peter Todd. "Is it all right? You saw to the lock?"

"Yes; the beasts won't be able to fasten the door!"

"Good!" Peter Todd slipped out of bed, and began to dress himself in the darkness. Bunter sat on a bed, and munched a fragment of cake which had escaped Loder's search. Harry Wharton sat up.

"Are you getting up, Todd?" he exclaimed.

"What ho!"

"You've got something on?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"My trousers. I shall have my boots on in a minute."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "I didn't mean that. Have you got something on—some jape?"

"My dear chap, don't ask any questions, and I won't tell you any terminological inexactitudes," said Peter Todd. "Loder's going to enjoy a feed and a flutter—he thinks. I think he won't. It's going to be seen which of us think correctly. See?"

"What's the little game?" demanded Nugent.

"A secret," said Todd calmly. "You fellows stay in your little beds and go to sleep. You will see what you will see."

And with that statement, which was undeniable, Peter Todd finished lacing his boots, and rose from the bed.

"Come on, Bunter!"

"I—I say, Toddy, after all, don't you think we'd—we'd better—ahem—better go to bed, and—and you—Ow! Leggo my ear!"

"Are you coming?" asked Todd pleasantly.

"Ow! Yes."

And the two juniors left the dormitory, leaving the rest of the Remove in a state of great wonder.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Peter Todd's Chance!

THE little party in Loder's study was going strong.

Full justice had been done to the feed, and the table had been cleared, the tea-things being shoved aside for Loder's fag to wash up the next day. The back of a chair had been jammed under the lock of the door, keeping it shut. No one could open it from the outside, unless by shoving very hard indeed. And no one, of course, had any right to force himself into Loder's study, unless the Head himself should have a suspicion of what was going on there, and insist upon coming in. But that was not likely to happen. If the Head had had the least suspicion of Gerald Loder's real character, the Sixth-Former would certainly not have been allowed to remain a prefect. And if the Head had known what was going on in the study, Loder would certainly not have been allowed to remain at Greyfriars at all.

It was rather "thick," even for Loder, the blackguard of the Sixth. Cards, which were not allowed in the school at all, even for a game of whist, were on the table. There was a bottle of whisky and a box of cigarettes, and a box of cigars, and glasses. There were lemons and sugar, and the kettle was steaming away in the grate to supply hot water. Loder, who was a blackguard to the finger-tips, and was accustomed to all sorts of excesses, was really enjoying himself. The others kept up a solemn pretence of enjoying it, putting more water in their whisky when they thought they were not observed, and throwing away cigarettes half-smoked.

There were little piles of money beside the players. Carne, who was in funds, had several notes before him, the others had mostly silver. All three were flushed and mostly excited, and feeling decidedly "doggyish."

Loder dealt out the cards with a hand that was growing shaky.

"Three!" said Walker, who was on his left.

"Nap!" said Carne recklessly. He had been winning, and he felt the gambler's greedy desire to win more, and in bigger quantities.

"All right," said Loder, "get your nap. I say, it's rather slow playing for penny points."

"Make it tanners!" said Carne.

"You fellows agree?"

"Oh, yes!" said Walker. "Go the whole hog!"

"Here you are, old fellow!"

The study was thick with the smell of tobacco and the fumes of whisky. Carne was lighting his fresh cigarette when he suddenly started, and the match burnt his finger. A step had come down the passage and stopped at the door. Carne threw the match and the cigarette into the fire together.

"Who's that?" he muttered.

"Only Wingate going to bed. I expect," said Loder carelessly. "He can't come in here. The door's fastened."

"He's stopped."

Tap!

The three seniors looked at one another in silence. If it was Wingate, or some other Sixth Form fellow, they had only to refuse to admit him. But if it was a master——

"Are you here, Loder?"

Loder turned almost green as he heard the voice from the passage.

"The Head!"

Carne and Walker seemed paralysed. "The Head!" muttered Carne. "Oh, my hat!"

The Head!

The cards, the whisky, the cigars, and cigarettes all seemed to dance for a moment before the eyes of the "dogs" of the Sixth Form! If the Head saw them—and he must—and even if they were hidden in time, the smell of tobacco, the smell of spirits—Oh, what fools they had been! They could not keep the Head out of the study! What was to happen? Carne and Walker seemed stupefied.

Tap, tap!

"Are you there, Loder? If you are there, open the door! I understand that something is going on in this study that I desire to see. Open the door if you are there!"

"He doesn't know we're here!" murmured Loder, under his breath. "Quiet! He may think there's no one here, and go!"

"The light under the door!" breathed Carne.

"He can't see that; there's a light in the passage."

"True! The keyhole—if he looks through—he might——"

"Quiet!"

Loder reached up and turned out the gas. The study was plunged into darkness. The fire had burnt very low, and was almost out; the evening was warm. Loder, rising silently to his feet, pulled the screen round before the fire to shut off the last glimmer. If the Head should suspect that they were in the study, and should peer through the keyhole, only blackness would meet his gaze. Then he would surely go.

Would he? The doubt racked the wretched seniors like torture. Oh, if they only got safely out of this scrape, they would never try to be doggyish again. If the Head came in—if he saw it all—instant expulsion and disgrace for them all. They knew that. There could be no pardon for this. Instant expulsion from Greyfriars—that was the least they could expect. If they had been juniors, a flogging as well. As they were in the Sixth, they might get off with being simply expelled from the school. Oh, what fools they had been!

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

Knock, knock!

The knocking was growing impatient. Loder trembled. At that hour the Sixth had all gone to bed, unless some belated student was sitting up late over his work—which was not likely—or unless someone else was "keeping it up," as Loder had been doing—which was less likely still. Loder thanked his stars that it was past bedtime, otherwise fellows would have gathered round to know what the Head wanted, and there would soon have been plenty of evidence that he was in the study. As it was, there was a chance. But was there? Why didn't the Head go, as he received no reply? Hang him, why didn't he go? The four seniors listened with beating hearts.

Knock, knock!

"I see that you have extinguished the light, Loder. However, I insist upon coming in." It was the unmistakable voice of the Head.

There was a rattle at the handle of the door, and a steady pressure on the jammed chair that kept it shut. The chair began to slide back. The door opened an inch or two. The light in the passage was indeed out. Loder knew that the door was opening, but he could see nothing.

Crash! A sharp jam of the door against the chair, and it flew over. The noise was not really very loud, but it fell like thunder on the startled ears of the wretched seniors. They started to their feet. There was another crash as Carne knocked his glass over in the darkness, and the whisky and water ran over the table and dripped upon the floor.

The door swung open. The seniors could see nothing. But they could hear. They did not hear the swish of a gown, as they might have expected. But they heard footsteps—the footsteps of two persons.

"Pray remain in the passage, Mr. Quelch." It was the Head's voice again. "You may stumble over something in the dark. Loder, you are here, I presume?"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Loder.

"Have you a match, Loder?"

"No, sir!" said Loder promptly.

"That is unfortunate. Have any of your companions matches?"

"No, sir," said Carne and Walker together.

"Bless my soul, that is very singular! Why did you turn your gas out, Loder?"

"I—I—I thought you might be angry with me for sitting up so late, sir," mumbled Loder, vainly trying to pierce the darkness with his eyes. "Carne and I have been talking about the—the examination next week, sir, and—and we didn't notice how the time was passing. Weren't we, Carne?"

"Yes, sir," said Carne. "You see, sir, as we were wondering what would be in the—the Latin paper for the exam, sir, we—we—"

"If that is true, very good. But there is a peculiar smell in the study—a very peculiar smell—the smell of spirits. Have you had any spirits here, Loder?"

"Oh, no, sir!" groaned Loder, thanking his stars for the darkness which concealed the bottles and glasses and spilt liquor on the table. "How could you imagine such a thing, sir? I—I—I've been cleaning my acetylene lamp, sir, and the carbide smells a bit—perhaps that's it?"

"Does carbide smell like whisky, Loder?"

"Almost exactly like it, sir."

"There seems also a smell of tobacco."

"That—that—that comes from a packet of cigarettes I burnt, sir. I took them away from a fag, sir, and—and I thought THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

I'd better destroy them. Of course, I could not think of smoking such disgusting things myself."

"I hope not, Loder! I trust not! Loder, I hope your explanation is truthful. Are you quite sure that you have no matches in the study?"

"Quite sure, sir!"

"Perhaps I have some myself. I will see."

Loder listened in agony to the sound of fumbling in pockets. If the Head succeeded in discovering a match—the bottle, the glasses, the cards, the money, the cigars would be revealed!

"Dear me, it is very singular that I have no match, and that you have no matches!" said the Head, after what seemed to be an age of agony to the wretched seniors. "However, it cannot be helped. Loder, the smell of tobacco and spirits in this study is very strong."

"It's the paint, sir," groaned the unhappy prefect. "You remember that young rascal Todd painted my study."

"That has been cleaned, Loder."

"But—but it still smells, sir. That, and the bike lamp, and the packet of cigarettes I burnt, sir. I—I hope you don't doubt my word, sir?"

"I should be sorry to doubt a prefect's word, Loder. Yet I cannot help being uneasy, especially as you have no matches, which is so very singular. But I came to see you to speak about that very matter of the painting of your study. Under the circumstances, as you provoked Todd, of the Remove by acting as a bully, Loder, I think you should pay the bill for cleaning the study. In fact, I order you to do so."

"Certainly, sir," said Loder, who would have paid that bill, and fifty more bills, to get the Head out of his study.

"I—I will, with pleasure, sir."

"Well, mind that the bill for the painting is paid to-morrow, Loder. If I hear anything further about it, you will hear from me."

"Yes, sir."

"And take care, take care! I shall keep a very special eye on you after this, Loder!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Loder & Co. began to breathe again. The Head was gone. It seemed almost too good to be true, but he was gone! Mr. Quelch, apparently, had gone with him, and the footsteps died away.

Loder gasped.

"Oh, my hat, I wouldn't go through that again for something!"

"You idiot!" hissed Carne. "You've nearly ruined the lot of us. Catch me coming to any of your smoking-parties after this. I'm going!"

"Same here," said Walker.

And Carne and Walker hurried out. Loder gritted his teeth as he was left alone. In the dark—for he dared not strike a light in case the Head should return—he cleared away the bottle and the glasses, and the cigars and the cigarettes and the cards, concealing them in safe places. He went to bed in a state of nerves and perspiration, feeling thankful for his narrow escape.

He would not have felt so thankful if he had been able to see the two visitors to the study, the supposed Head and Mr. Quelch, when they arrived upstairs in the Remove dormitory. For in the starlight from the dormitory window, the terrible two were revealed—not as the Head and Mr. Quelch—but as Peter Todd and Billy Bunter. They were chuckling gleefully, and as they closed the dormitory door, Peter gave Bunter a sounding slap on the back.

"Good for you, Bunter!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Have you two bounders come back? What have you been up to?"

"Scaring Loder out of his wits!" grinned Peter Todd.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.

"Bunter, old fatty, you're a giddy marvel!" gurgled Peter Todd, wiping away his tears. "I was nearly killing myself in the passage as I listened to you. Blessed if I didn't think it was the Head talking myself, really. Bunter, you're not half such an idiot as you look!"

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"But what have you done?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Loder!"

"He, he, he!"

"Tell us the giddy history, before we get up and slaughter you!" said Johnny Bull.

And Peter Todd told them. The whole Remove were awake now, and they listened to the tale with suppressed shrieks of laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, with tears of merriment running down his cheeks. "What a time for Loder! Poor old Loder! Poor old Champagne Charley! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle the roof off, and bring the prefects here, my infants," said Peter Todd. "It's all right. Loder's going to pay that bill to-morrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Remove chuckled themselves to sleep.

And the next day Loder paid the bill! He was glad enough to get off so cheaply as that. It rather puzzled Loder that the Head never made any reference to that peculiar scene in the study afterwards. The Head seemed to have forgotten all about it. And Loder was not likely to bring it to his mind. Loder was only too glad to let the matter drop.

The Remove fellows could have explained to him, but they didn't. And Harry Wharton & Co., as soon as they knew that Loder had paid the bill, loyally kept their bargain with Peter Todd. For the time being, at least, it was admitted on all hands in the Remove that No. 7 was top study!

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.)

TALE OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

GIVEN FREE



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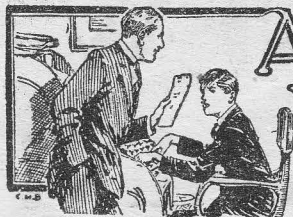
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A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. Address: EDITOR, THE "POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4.

OUR FREE GIFTS.

On page 27 of this issue you will find particulars of the magnificent gifts which are being made to all readers of the famous Companion Papers, of which this periodical is one. There is not, therefore, any need for me to write about this week's gifts, but I think I might devote a little space to the splendid photos and plate which will form the gifts for next week.

On Monday morning next, in the "Magnet" Library there will be given a really top-hole photo of "Dick" Dorrell in action on the field of play. This paper, you know, contains a wonderful, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, and the centre pages of the "Magnet" Library are devoted to Harry Wharton & Co.'s own paper, the "Greyfriars' Herald." Altogether, I am very proud of the "Magnet" Library, which, as I have been informed by my chums, starts the week very well indeed.

Monday is also a prominent day in the week by virtue of the fact that the "Boys' Friend," the stirring Companion Paper of ours, which gives its readers wonderful adventure, school, and sport stories, appears on sale. That paper is presenting its readers with a series of splendid real photos of "Rising Boxing Stars," issued with a little character sketch by no less famous an author and critic than T. C. Wignall. Ex-Guardsman Penwill is the next photo.

Tuesday, of course, is a great day in the week. The POPULAR comes along then with its wonderful Coloured Engine Plate. Certainly no plates which have been presented to my readers have received a more cordial welcome; indeed, I am constrained to say that these engine plates have eclipsed every other kind of plate. If you could only see my blushes when I read all the nice, complimentary letters I have had about these plates—

Next Tuesday's plate is of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway.

Now we come to the popular "Gem" Library. This is the paper which relates the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. Every week there appears a splendid, extra-long, complete story of these famous schoolboys, and in addition there is a grand serial, and other fine features. The "Gem" Library is yet another of the famous Companion Papers which is presenting its readers with a grand Free Real Photo; in fact, in next week's issue there will be presented TWO real photos of Campbell and Grimsdell, both of whom are too well-known for me to write about!

Take my advice, then, and place an order with your newsagent for the above-mentioned papers to be saved for you. Then you are certain to secure all the gifts which are being offered you!

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES.

There will be four more splendid, complete school stories in next week's issue of the POPULAR. The first will

NEXT TUESDAY! "THE BOUNDER'S

concern Harry Wharton & Co.'s early days at Greyfriars, and is entitled:

"THE BOUNDER'S ACCUSATION!"
By Frank Richards.

H. Vernon-Smith, whom most of the Greyfriars' fellows call "The Bounder," makes an accusation against a new boy which fairly staggers the Removites. It would be unfair if I told you the nature of the accusation the Bounder makes, so I will leave it at that.

The second long complete school story will concern the dramatic events which followed the election of Cecil Knowles as captain of Rookwood. The story is entitled:

"HIS TRUE COLOURS!"
By Owen Conquest.

and in it we read how Jimmy Silver & Co. give Knowles the impression that

EX-CROWN PRINCE'S MEMOIRS!

Amazing Revelations!

The most sensational book of the year is undoubtedly the Memoirs of the Ex-Crown Prince, "Little Willie's" own Life Story.

Every word of this amazing series of self-revelations has been written personally by the Ex-Crown Prince, in his Dutch exile; in them the writer lays bare his whole soul and throws new and vivid lights on many aspects of the Great War—Germany's part in it, and the downfall of the Royal House of Hohenzollern.

No reader of THE POPULAR should miss this startling work, which appears exclusively in this week's "ANSWERS," on sale at all news-agents TO-DAY.

being captain of Rookwood is not all honey!

The third complete school story is entitled:

"THE FRENCH MASTER'S QUESTS!"
By Martin Clifford.

This is a screamingly funny story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and a number of French schoolboys who come to see St. Jim's, and Monsieur Morny. You must not miss this on any account.

The fourth complete story is of Frank Richards & Co.'s schooldays in the Backwoods of Canada, and is entitled:

"ROPING IN THE BAD-MAN!"
By Martin Clifford.

This dramatic and thrilling story is one of the best which has yet appeared in the POPULAR! Frank Richards has

not been long at the school in the backwoods, but he has experienced some stirring times—and the one which Mr. Clifford relates to you in next week's number is the most stirring of them all!

In addition, there will be a splendid NEW COMPETITION FOR BIG MONEY PRIZES, "Billy Bunter's Weekly," a magnificent instalment of our serial, and still another GRAND FREE COLOURED ENGINE PLATE NEXT WEEK!

NOTICES.

CORRESPONDENCE.

G. Dean, 27, Holyrood Street, West Leederville, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader of the Companion Papers living in the United States, age 14-16.

Miss Joan Dumaresq Edles, Berry House, Duckenfield Park, Morpeth, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to hear from amateur writers with a view to contributing to a monthly magazine. All letters answered.

Bona fide questions about the films will be answered by writing to Ausieroo, c.o. Post Office, Morpeth, N.S.W., Australia.

The Empire Correspondence Club, M. Straus, 15, Russell Street, Linwood, Christchurch, New Zealand, wants new members. Readers of the Companion Papers are invited to communicate with the Secretary. Subjects, all hobbies, such as collecting, chemistry, electricity, as well as sports.

Chas. C. Suijder, 12a, Cornelius Street, Marshalls Township, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15-17.

Norman Burton, 67, Harrington Street, Cape Town, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

Wilfred J. Read, 103, Nicander Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 12-15. All letters answered.

T. Buff, 27, Norcott Road, London, N. 16, wishes urgently to hear from a reader in Colombo, Ceylon.

Atip Te Puni, c.o. F. Jordan, Mangorei, New Plymouth, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers about fourteen years old, in South Africa, Canada, or England; interested in stamps and sports.

Charles Rose, 144, St. Mary's Road, Plaistow, E. 13, wishes to correspond with readers interested in pigeons, stamps, and postcards.

C. B. Thio, 114-1, Bencoolen Street, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wishes to correspond with readers in the U.K. and Dominions; interested in stamps.

Dave H. Hastie, 45, Charles Street, Brunswick, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in England, ages 15-16; interested in sports.

G. E. Mason, 9, Birkley Road, Manly, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; interested in stamps.

D. J. Thomas, 3, Afan Terrace, Cwmavon, nr. Port Talbot, Glam., wishes to hear from readers within twenty miles of his home.

Reginald Collin Wordly, 27, St. Paul's Road, Luton, Beds, wishes to correspond with readers of the Companion Papers.

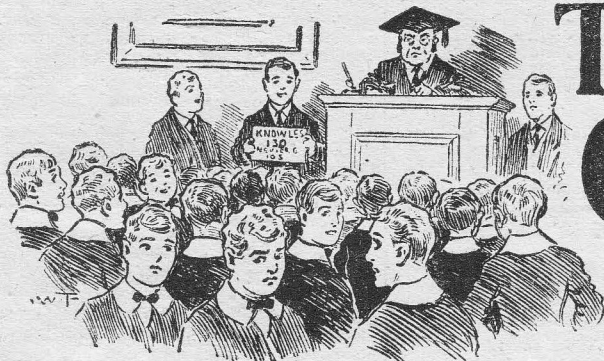
Leslie A. Ware, 457, Kingsland Road, Dalston, E. 8, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15-17, anywhere. All letters answered.

Your Editor.

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

A SPLENDID TALE OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

A SPLENDID STORY OF THE SENSATIONAL FIGHT FOR THE CAPTAINCY OF ROOKWOOD!



THE NEW CAPTAIN!

A magnificent, long, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the Famous Rookwood Yarns appearing in The "Boys' Friend.")

O:O

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Eve of the Election!

"GIVE him a yell!" said Lovell. Jimmy Silver shook his head. "Shurrup, old chap! Mustn't yell at a prefect, even if he's only a Modern!"

Lovell grunted. Jimmy Silver & Co. did not "give him a yell," but they looked grim as Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth came into the School House.

They had never liked Knowles, and they liked him less than ever now.

It was no secret that Knowles hoped to step into the shoes of Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, now that Rookwood's old captain was gone.

A change from Bulkeley to Knowles would be, as Jimmy had expressed it, a step from the sublime to the ridiculous.

However, Knowles was a Modern; and the Classics, at least, did not want a captain of Rookwood selected from the Modern side.

But it could not be denied that Cecil Knowles had an excellent chance of success in the election which was shortly to take place.

The Moderns were certain to vote for him as one man; and a great many of the Classical seniors looked on Knowles as the best man to succeed Bulkeley.

With grim looks, the Fistical Four of the Fourth fixed their eyes upon Knowles as he came in.

They wanted to express their scornful aversion, with due regard to the limits within which juniors were allowed to express their personal feelings towards the high and mighty Sixth.

To their astonishment, Knowles did not bestow on them the scowl with which he usually greeted the Fistical Four when he came across them.

He nodded quite genially. Jimmy Silver & Co. were so surprised that they left off looking grim, and stared at Knowles open-mouthed.

Knowles was in a good temper—and with them!

It was amazing. And that was not all!

Knowles paused, and spoke to the astounded juniors in a cheery, chatty tone.

"Neville in his quarters, do you know, Silver?" he asked.

"I think so," answered Jimmy.

"Thanks! I hear you've got the cricket match coming off soon with the juniors on my side," said Knowles.

"Yes; we're beating Tommy Dodd's lot next week."

Knowles smiled.

"Well, good luck to the best team!" he said. "I shall come and see how you shape."

"Will you?" gasped Jimmy.

"Yes. I think the Rookwood Second Eleven ought to get a bit more of the limelight this season," said Knowles. "If I become Head of the Games, I shall see to that. My idea is that junior cricket ought to come more to the fore."

"My hat!"

"Rookwood First has made a pretty good

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reputation," said Knowles. "But I'd like to see Rookwood Juniors going great guns, too. I want the school to be heard of in cricket this season. I'm glad to see you youngsters so keen about it!"

And with another genial nod, Knowles walked on to Neville's study.

He left the Fistical Four almost gasping.

Was this Knowles—the bully of the Sixth—the fellow who had always had a "down" on them, partly because they were Classics, partly because they were themselves?

"Well, my hat!" said George Raby, in wonder.

"This is another change, isn't it?" murmured Newcome.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose.

Either he had very seriously misjudged Cecil Knowles in the past, or the bully of the Sixth had changed very considerably in a few days.

"I say, if that's Knowles' tack, he won't be such a rotten failure as captain of the school," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell thoughtfully. "Bulkeley always used to back up junior cricket; but Knowles seems to want to go the whole hog. No reason why junior cricket shouldn't make a show this season."

"Blessed if I ever expected to see Knowles keen about junior cricket!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, of course, he'll have more responsibility on his hands if he becomes captain of the school and Head of the Games. He will have to act for Rookwood, not only for the Modern side."

"That's so!"

"I must say he's showing up better than I expected," conceded Lovell.

"Charmin' chap, Knowles?" said a voice at their elbow.

Mornington of the Fourth had been lounging near at hand, and he had listened to them, with a smile on his handsome, somewhat cynical face.

"I don't know about charming," said Jimmy Silver, looking at the dandy of the Fourth. "But he seems to have become a lot more civilised all of a sudden."

"Charmin, I call him!" answered Mornington, with a grin. "I don't think he's parted with his dose of original sin, though. I can't help suspectin' that he's got an eye on th' election."

"Oh!" said Jimmy Silver slowly.

Mornington chuckled.

"You see, you four merchants are workin' your hardest to keep him out, and to get Neville into Bulkeley's place," he remarked. "Knowles seems to have hit on soft-sawder as a dodge. Disarmin' the enemy with sweet words, you know!"

"Oh!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

He had not suspected it. He was not, perhaps, so keen as Valentine Mornington, and certainly he was not so suspicious.

But now that Morny pointed it out, it was plain enough.

"I can't help feelin'," chuckled Morny, "that affe, he's elected captain, if ever he is, dear old Knowles will drop his charmin' ways an' proceed to make his old enemies sit up."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

"So don't be bamboozled, dear boys," yawned Mornington. "We want a Classical captain of Rookwood, en' Neville's the man I don't say he a patch on Bulkeley, but he's the next best; and we don't want a Modern cad in the job at any price."

"No fear!"

On that point Jimmy Silver & Co. were in hearty agreement with Valentine Mornington. Their resolve to back up Neville in the fight for the captaincy was now stronger than ever.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Rival Candidates.

"COME in!" said Neville of the Sixth. Knowles stepped into the study. Jones major of the Classical Sixth was there with Neville.

The two seniors had been discussing the election when Knowles arrived.

They did not give the Modern prefect welcoming looks.

Bulkeley had left Rookwood under a cloud, much to the dismay of his friends.

Knowles had not very successfully concealed his satisfaction at the fall, and the departure, of his old rival.

His keenness to step into Bulkeley's shoes did not endear him to Bulkeley's friends.

However, the Classical seniors were civil.

"I've just looked in," remarked Knowles. "I hear that you've put in your name as a candidate, Neville."

"I'm standing at the election," assented Neville.

"Some of the fellows expected that the election would be a formal matter," observed Knowles. "They didn't suppose that anyone would seriously dispute my claim to succeed Bulkeley."

"What rot!" said Jones major warmly. "We don't feel inclined to select the new captain from the Modern side, I can tell you!"

Knowles looked unpleasant.

"Bulkeley used to say that the two Houses ought to pull together for the good of the school," he said. "In such a question, the matter of Classical or Modern ought to be dropped out of sight."

"Well, yes! But—"

"But you fellows don't mean to give the Modern side fair play on any account—is that it?"

"That's not it!" said Neville. "I think I should make a pretty good skipper, Knowles. I wasn't keen on coming forward, but the fellows asked me."

"Simply to keep a Modern out?"

Neville coloured a little.

"Not exactly that, either," he answered. "If you want it plain, it was to keep you out, personally, Knowles. On this side, we don't think you would make a good captain of the school."

"Thanks! So you are going to wedge in, in the hope of dishin' the Modern side, without caring a rap whether you're fit for the job or not?"

NEXT
TUESDAY!

"HIS TRUE COLOURS!"

A SPLENDID STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO.
By OWEN CONQUEST.

"Oh, rot!" said Neville sharply. "Anyway, I'm standing! If Rookwood wants you, Rookwood can elect you, I suppose."
"As head prefect, now Bulkeley's gone, as vice-captain, and as captain of the Modern side, I have a natural claim to take the top place," said Knowles. "This putting up a Classical candidate is simply a trick!"
"You're welcome to think so!" grunted Jones major.

Knowles' eyes gleamed.
"I came to tell you, Neville, that if it's true that you've put in your name you ought to withdraw," he said.

"I call that cheek!" answered Neville.
"You're going to start a contest between Classic and Modern by putting up, and a lot of fellows will vote according to sides, without thinking about the merits of the candidate," said Knowles. "As there are a good many more Classics than Moderns, you may wedge in, by splitting the school, and causing bad blood. I call it a rotten trick!"
"You won't call it that here, Knowles!" said Neville, rising to his feet. "I don't take that sort of talk from anyone. You'd better go!"

The candidates measured one another with their eyes, and for a moment or two it looked as if there would be trouble in Neville's study.

But both of them felt that it would not do; and Knowles, with a shrug of the shoulders, turned on his heel and walked out of the study.

His brow was clouded as he crossed back to Mr. Manders' House.

He had looked upon his election as a certainty, but he feared Neville's popularity on his own side, and he knew that it would be a struggle now.

His feelings were bitter.
His chums, Frampton and Catesby, were waiting for him in his study.

They gave him inquiring looks as he came in.

"It's true!" said Knowles. "Neville is standing!"

"That ass!" said Catesby.

"It's a trick, of course, to keep the captaincy in their hands!" said Knowles savagely. "They know jolly well that Neville is no good as captain of Rookwood!"
"It may be his idea to keep the place warm for Bulkeley," remarked Frampton. "They hope Bulkeley will come back, some of them."

"That's not likely. But if he comes back, and I'm in the post, Bulkeley won't find it easy to get the captaincy back!" said Knowles grimly. "I've got to get in, you fellows, by hook or by crook! It can't be done without some of the Classical vote on my side, and we've got to nobble the Classical vote."

"Not so jolly easy," said Catesby.
"It's got to be done. I think we can depend on Smythe and his friends in the Shell," said Knowles. "Some of the Fourth, too—Townsend and Peele, and some others. I'm rather afraid of Silver and his gang. Mind how you treat those young sweeps for a bit. Be civil to them."

"Civil to those cheeky little cads!" exclaimed Catesby.
"Yes, till after the election."

"Oh!"
"When I'm captain of Rookwood I'll make Jimmy Silver sorry for some of his cheek!" said Knowles, setting his lips. "I'll see that he's kicked out of junior cricket, and some things. I've got a long score against him. But for the present be civil. Every vote counts."

Catesby laughed.
"I'll ask him to tea, if you like!" he said.
"That would be a bit too palpable," said Knowles, laughing. "Mustn't be too sudden. But I fancy, all things considered, that I shall get in all right. I've got a list here of the Classics I can depend on for votes, and we can do some electioneering. Luckily, I've plenty of money."

"Money!" said Frampton.
"Money talks!" said Knowles. "Any fellow who's hard up, and in want of a loan, can have it—if he votes the right way. There's a good many fellows in that way. You fellows will keep your eyes open. And a few bets wouldn't hurt."

"How do you mean?"
"You may lay bets, two to one, among the sporting fellows, that I shan't get in," said Knowles coolly. "I'll find the tin to pay up if you lose. I hope you'll lose. A fellow who's betted on my winning will vote for me."

"My hat! You've got a head on you, Knowles!" said Catesby.

"I flatter myself that I have!" said Knowles complacently.

And the three Moderns settled down to a discussion of the pros and cons of the case. And if the Head of Rookwood could have heard their discussion of election methods, Knowles would never have become captain of Rookwood, if he had remained at Rookwood at all!

Fortunately for Knowles the Head could not hear.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver Means Business!

ELECTIONEERING was the order of the day at Rookwood now.

Even the fags of the Second Form took a keen interest in the great question.

To the Sixth and the Fifth it was a very serious matter.

But the Fourth seemed keenest of all. Jimmy Silver and his friends were men of push and go, and when they took up anything they took it up in a strenuous way.

Everybody, nearly, was counting votes in advance, making calculations as to how the election would go.

The Classics being numerically the stronger side, the election ought to have been a sure thing for the Classical candidate.

But there was a division in the ranks. Neville was popular, he was good at games, and he was old Bulkeley's best pal.

All this told in his favour. It was more than enough to make Jimmy Silver & Co. enthusiastic.

But among the more thoughtful of the seniors there were doubts.

Knowles was not liked personally as Neville was, even on his own side, but popularity was not everything in a school captain.

More important than that was the show Rookwood was likely to make in the coming cricket season.

Knowles, perhaps, would unduly favour his own side in that connection.

But as a cricket captain he was far and away ahead of Neville, who was by no means one of those fellows who are born to command.

Knowles could be very unpleasant sometimes, but he was a good skipper in the main.

Under his lead, the Moderns had kept their end up fairly well against the Classical side, and under his lead there was no doubt that Rookwood would go ahead.

So, in spite of their natural desire to have a Classical as skipper, many of the Classical seniors meant to vote for Knowles, as evidently the best man for the job.

There was division among the juniors, too. Townsend and Peele & Co. of the Fourth were supporters of Knowles, simply because Jimmy Silver & Co. backed Neville.

In the Classical Shell, the Knowles party was strong.

Adolphus Smythe, who gave the law to the Shell, openly announced that he was for Knowles.

Smythe's motives were not very creditable. Adolphus was a "blade," and blades had found no encouragement under Bulkeley's rule—quite the reverse.

But it was more than suspected that Knowles himself was given to "going the pace," strictly under the rose.

Under Knowles' reign, the Classical nuts expected a much easier time.

"Knowles is our man!" Adolphus Smythe told his friends. "You see, Knowles himself isn't above puttin' a sov. on a gegee occasionally—on the Q.T., of course; but fellows know it. Leggett says they have bridge-parties in Knowles' study—an I believe it. It stands to reason that Knowles, as skipper, can't be down on such games as Bulkeley was. Neville would follow Bulkeley's example. Knowles is our man!"

And Tracy and Howard and Selwyn and the rest heartily concurred.

In the end study that evening Jimmy Silver made an anxious calculation, with the aid of a sheet of impot paper and a stump of pencil.

The result was not encouraging.
"It won't be a walk-over for Neville," Jimmy announced.

"Do you mean that he'll be licked?" asked Raby.

"Well, it looks doubtful. I've got a list of all the fellows in the lower Forms who have promised to vote for Neville."

"What's the figure?" asked Lovell.

"Sixty."

"All Classics?"

"Yes, of course."

"The Moderns are sticking together like a lot of thieves!" growled Lovell. "They've got the cheek to think that Knowles is the man for the job! Lacy—the Modern Lacy, I mean—actually told me he liked Neville as a prefect, but was going to vote for Knowles because Neville's an ass!"

"Neville isn't an ass," said Jimmy. "He's very easy-going and good-tempered—everybody likes him."

"I don't say he's a first-class skipper," said Lovell thoughtfully. "Knowles would be the better man actually for the job, if he wasn't such a beast."

"And if he wasn't a Modern!" said Raby.

"Yes, that's the great point."

"Well, we can't expect the Moderns to look at it in that light," said Jimmy. "They back their man, same as we back ours. The worry is that a lot of Classics are backing him, too."

"Traitors!" snorted Lovell.

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"I'm afraid the Classical vote is split about equal," he said; "and then the Modern vote will turn the scale. Knowles has talked over Ledbury of the Sixth. I hear that he's going to write to Bulkeley, asking his advice about making up the First Eleven."

"Well, that's good, if he does it!"

"He won't do it!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "It's camouflage. Just an election dodge, because most of the Classics are backing up old Bulkeley. Bet you that if he gets in as captain Knowles will be a regular Tsar!"

"It's a rotten look-out!"

"It's up to us," said Jimmy firmly. "We can't do anything but vote for Neville."

"We can, and we must."

"What else, fathead?"

"It comes to this, that it's a tussle between Classical and Modern," said Jimmy Silver. "The Classical man's got to get in. He's Bulkeley's pal, and Bulkeley would like it, and that's enough for us."

"It's enough for Smythe and Townsend and that lot—only the other way round!" growled Lovell.

"Smythe & Co. are not going to be allowed to back up against their own side. We've got to persuade them to vote Classical."

"You'll only make 'em cackle if you ask them."

"I'll ask them, all the same. And if they won't agree, we've got to keep the cads out of the election."

"Pshaw!"

"All voters have got to be in the Big Hall at seven sharp to-morrow. Chaps who are not there when the doors are closed can't vote."

"But—but—"

"Smythe & Co. won't be there," said Jimmy Silver.

"Jimmy! I say—"

"Isn't it justifiable?" demanded Jimmy. "They're practically pro-Germans—backing up the enemy as they're doing!"

"Yes. But there'll be a row."

"That don't matter—after the election."

"That's so, if we get our man in," said Lovell. "But what's the game?"

"Call in the fellows, and I'll put it to them," said Jimmy.

"Right-ho!"

And a meeting was held forthwith in the end study.

Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn, the three Colonials, came in; and Morningson and Erroll and Oswald, Flynn, and Jones minor, Hooker and Rawson, and several more—all fellows who were devoted to the Classical cause, and could be relied upon.

Jimmy Silver expounded his little scheme

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

A SPLENDID STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. By OWEN CONQUEST.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

NEXT TUESDAY: "HIS TRUE COLOURS!"

to his faithful followers, and there was complete agreement.

To the Classics it seemed that anything was justifiable to keep Classics from voting for the enemy—Knowles being the enemy.

Moreover, they knew quite well that the three Tommies would use any dodge to keep Neville's votes away from the poll.

It was quite probable that Tommy Dodd was scheming something of the kind at that very moment.

As Jimmy Silver put it, the result of the election—and the future of Rookwood School—depended on the Classical Fourth.

And the Classical Fourth rose to the occasion!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Drastic Measures!

CECIL KNOWLES the next day was observed to be displaying a considerable amount of confidence, not to say swank.

Things were looking up for the Modern candidate.

For one reason or another many Classics were on his side—with bad motives or good, according to the kind of fellows they were.

And the Modern vote was solid behind him. Knowles was calculating on getting in with a majority of at least a dozen—possibly twenty, thirty, or forty.

But for the rivalry between Classical and Modern, there was no doubt that he would have polled three-quarters of the votes.

Classical loyalty influenced many fellows who would otherwise have agreed that Knowles was the best man for the job.

Knowles' election methods were not very creditable, but they seemed successful enough.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were more than suspicious of Knowles' methods, and they felt that they were fully justified in counterplotting.

They were well aware that Townsend, Topham, Peele, Gower, and others had been betting with Leggett.

Why was Leggett laying money against his own man?

"Plain enough!" said Jimmy Silver scornfully. "They'll vote for Knowles to win their measly bets. Where is Leggett getting the money he will have to pay out?"

"Knowles!" said Mornington.

"That's it—simply bribery and corruption." "It ought to be shown up!" exclaimed Erroll.

"Well, we can't sneak about the cads to Bootles, that's certain—and there's no proof, anyway."

"Proof enough for us!" said Lovell.

"Quite. And we're going to put a spoke in their wheel," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "Knowles can spend his money on votes, and we'll jolly well see that the voters don't turn up! That's a Roland for an Oliver!"

Lessons that day were generally considered an unnecessary evil. All thoughts were upon the election.

All Rookwood was glad when the day's work was over, and they could turn all their thoughts to the great question that was to be decided at seven o'clock.

Over tea, in the end study, the Fistical Four arranged the final details of their little scheme.

After tea Jimmy Silver & Co. visited Townsend and Topham in their study.

The two nuts had finished tea, and as Tom Rawson was not there just then they had put on cigarettes afterwards.

Jimmy Silver took no heed of the cigarettes.

"Shall I put your names down on my list?" he asked.

"For Knowles?" grinned Towny.

"No; for Neville."

"Thanks, no."

"You're voting Modern?"

"You know we are," said Topham.

"Yes, we know it," said Jimmy. "Come for a walk with us, will you?"

"No fear! We're goin' down to Hall."

"I asked you to come for a walk, Towny."

"Well, I won't come."

"Your mistake—you will. Collar them!" said Jimmy tersely.

Townsend and Topham jumped up furiously.

But they were collared in a moment, and, in spite of their fierce protests, they were marched away to the box-room at the end of the passage.

"What are you up to?" shrieked Townsend, as he was hustled into the box-room. "I suppose you don't think you can keep us here?"

"I rather think so," assented Jimmy Silver. "We're going to hold a meeting of the junior debating society this evening. You're welcome to speak."

"You mean you're going to keep us out of the election, and pretend afterwards that it was a meeting of the debating society?" hissed Topham.

"Topsy, old man, you're getting to be quite bright!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep them quiet here," said Jimmy Silver. "If they try to get out before the—ahem!—debate, knock them on the head."

"You bet!" said Conroy.

The three Colonials were left in charge of the prisoners, and the rest of the party left the box-room.

Townsend and Topham eyed one another and their guardians in fury and dismay. They did not make any attempt to get out of the room.

They knew that that was useless.

Ten minutes later the door was opened, and Peele and Gower were marched in, squirming and protesting.

Five minutes more, and there was an uproar in the passage.

Conroy opened the door, grinning.

Through the doorway came hurtling the elegant figure of Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, not looking quite so elegant now as usual.

Adolphus landed with a bump and a roar.

After him came Tracy, spinning.

He collapsed on Smythe, eliciting another roar from the unhappy Adolphus.

Selwyn, Chesney, and Howard followed them in, helped by a liberal application of Fourth Form boots behind.

There was a chorus of protests, howls, and fierce denunciations in the box-room. Jimmy Silver did not heed.

He led his followers away in search of further victims.

Conroy & Co. remained within the box-room on guard.

The door was locked, and the key was in the Australian junior's pocket.

And, though the odds against the three were heavy, Smythe & Co. made no attempt to get hold of the key.

The three sturdy Colonials were dreadfully hard hitters, and the Classical nuts were not fond of hard hitting.

Moreover, each of them had a bat in his hand, and those bats were not to be argued with.

There was a knock at the door soon afterwards, and Conroy opened it.

Tubby Muffin was hurled in, grunting.

He collided with Adolphus Smythe, and threw his arms round Smythe's neck to save himself from falling.

Smythe shoved him off angrily, and the fat Classical rolled on the floor, and yelled dismally.

Tracy minor of the Second was "chucked" in after him, and several more fags of the Third and Second Forms followed.

The box-room was growing quite crowded.

"Better keep guard outside now," said Jimmy Silver. "If they make a row, open the door, and lay into them!"

"Do you think we're goin' to stand this?" shrieked Smythe, in helpless wrath.

"You can sit down if you like, dear boy!"

The door was closed on them.

Outside, the Colonial Co. remained on guard.

There was really danger of a revolt if they had stayed inside, the crowd of prisoners were growing so numerous.

During the next half-hour the door was opened again, and junior after junior, fag after fag, was pitched into the room.

All the nuts of the Classical side, all the fellows who, for one reason or another, good or bad, had determined to vote Modern, came hurtling into the box-room in twos or threes.

Large as the room was, it was getting swarmed.

There were nearly thirty fellows there when the door was finally closed and locked on the outside.

And it was half-past six.

"That's about the lot," said Jimmy Silver, in the passage. "I'd have liked a few more, but some of the cads are out of doors, but we can't collar them in the quad; might attract attention."

"Ha, ha! It might!" chortled Mornington.

"And some have gone into Hall already, and we can't noggle them under the noses of the prefects," said Jimmy Silver regretfully. "I suppose Neville wouldn't really approve of this."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But as we're not going to tell him, that doesn't matter. One of us had better stay here."

"It's losing a vote," said Lovell. "We can't afford to chuck votes away, even now."

"Up to the last moment," said Jimmy. "You stick here, Conroy, and cut down to Hall at the last minute."

"Right you are!"

And as seven o'clock drew near, Jimmy Silver & Co. marched into Hall, in good time for the election.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Election.

"**W** E'VE got to keep our eyes peeled!" remarked Tommy Dodd oracularly, as he and his chums left Mr. Manders' House on that fateful evening.

"It's all serene!" answered Cook. "Every fellow will come up to the scratch. They know what they'd get if they didn't!"

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THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"HIS TRUE COLOURS!"

A SPLENDID STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. By OWEN CONQUEST.

"Bedad, an' they do!" said Doyle emphatically.

Big Hall was getting crowded. The candidates had not yet appeared, but a large number of seniors of the Fifth and Sixth were present, and Mr. Bootles had just come in.

Mr. Bootles and Mr. Wiggins were the tellers in the election.

Tommy Dodd looked round him keenly, to make sure that all the Modern supporters were present.

Catesby and Frampton were looking after senior voters very sharply, but the junior element was under Tommy's special eye.

Cecil Knowles had been rather surprised by Tommy Dodd's keenness.

He had had many rubs with Tommy, and there was no love lost between them.

In point of fact, if Knowles was successful he was likely to owe it in great part to Tommy Dodd's faithful backing.

Tommy's word was law among the Modern juniors, and the fags who might have remembered cuffs and canings from Knowles at an awkward moment for him were all following Tommy's loyal lead.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came in, and sheered from the quarter where Tommy Dodd was looking about him.

They did not want anything to say to Tommy just then.

But Tommy joined them, with knitted brow.

He had noted the absence of the Classical nuts, and of Tubby Muffin, and some of the fags who had gone over to the Modern party.

"Don't your blessed Classics know it's ten to seven?" asked Tommy, with sarcasm. "Or are they going to hop in at the last minute?"

"Oh, we're turning up in pretty good force!" said Jimmy carelessly.

"Hallo! Here comes the merry candidates," said Oswald.

Knowles come in with Stephen Catesby.

A few moments later Neville entered, with Jones major and Lonsdale.

Their entrance was the signal for a burst of cheering, in which Modern vied with Classical in apparently attempting to raise the ancient roof from its rafters.

Other fellows crowded in after them.

Big Hall was filling. It was close on seven.

Mr. Wiggins came in, and joined Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled at one another.

They took up a strategic position close to the big door. That door would be closed at seven o'clock, and all who were not within the Hall at that hour would be shut out of the election.

Jimmy Silver meant to see that the door was closed as soon as Conroy had darted in at the last moment.

Knowles' majority, largely gained by shady methods, would remain shut up in the box-room, out of the proceedings.

Meanwhile, Tommy Dodd was getting anxious.

He compared notes with Cook and Doyle, who shared his anxiety.

"The silly idiots will miss the vote if they don't come in!" said Dodd. "Cut out and warn them, Cook! They must be in their studies."

"Don't let those Classical cads shut me out, then!"

"We'll watch 'em!"

Cook hurried out of the Hall, but he came back in a few minutes.

He was alone.

"Can't find 'em!" he announced. "All the studies are empty, and I can't see a soul in the quad!"

Conroy of the Fourth came quietly into the Hall, and joined the Classical group just inside the door.

It wanted one minute to seven.

Tommy Dodd was wild with impatience.

There was no sign of Smythe & Co., or Tubby Muffin, or the rest, and the last minute was slipping away in rapid seconds.

"I'm going out!" whispered Tommy.

"You'll miss the voting!"

"I tell you our men are being kept away somehow. If that's so, we'll make 'em open the door if I can find 'em. If you hear me at the door, tell Knowles I've fetched 'em along, and he'll make 'em open the door!"

Tommy Dodd slipped out of the Hall, and Jimmy Silver grinned as he went.

It was another voter gone.

The clock indicated seven, and the Classical juniors shut the big door with a bang.

"Our game!" grinned Lovell.

And the Fistical Four smiled with satisfaction.

But for Tommy Dodd's wariness Smythe would have hoped in vain.

But Tommy was there to hear.

Tommy Dodd knocked at the door.

"Who's in there?" he called out.

"By gad! Is that you, Dodd?"

"Yes. That you, Smythe?"

"You bet! That cad Silver's shut us up here to keep us out of the election!" yelled Smythe, through the keyhole. "Unlock the door!"

"There's no key here."

"Oh, gad, then we're done, after all! Get a key from somewhere, Dodd—there's nearly thirty fellows here."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

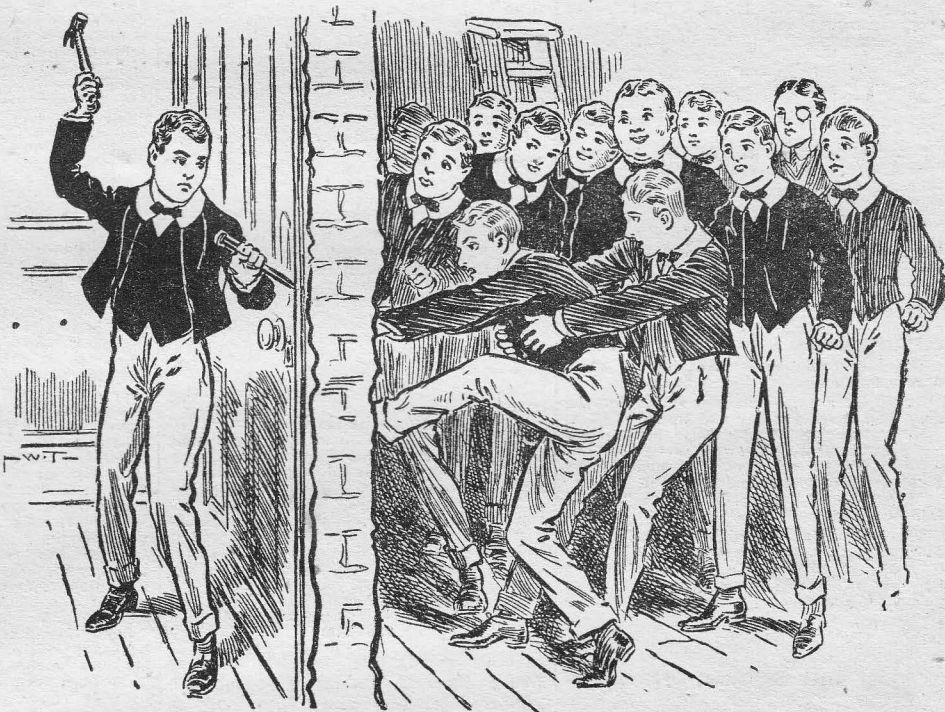
Tommy was desperate.

The election trembled in the balance.

He knew that the Modern candidate could not win on a count without those thirty votes.

He rushed into the nearest study, in search of an instrument for breaking the lock, leaving the consequences of such a reckless proceeding to take care of themselves.

He dragged open Lovell's tool-chest in the end study, and seized a hammer and a cold chisel.



RESCUING THE VOTERS! Tommy Dodd jammed the chisel between the door and hammered it fiercely. "Pull at the door!" he called out to the imprisoned juniors. With a rain of blows he drove the chisel in, and the lock strained and groaned under the steady pressure. (See Chapter 7.)

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Captain of Rookwood!

TOMMY DODD hurried up the staircase, deserted now.

No one was in sight in the passages.

It was certain enough that voters were being kept away, and Tommy Dodd did not grumble at the "dodge."

It was no more than just retaliation for Knowles' many dodges.

But he did not mean to let it succeed if he could help it.

He hurried along, and looked into some of the Classical studies. But they were empty.

Bang, bang, bang!

Tommy Dodd jumped as he heard that sudden commotion from the direction of the box-room.

He fairly raced towards it.

Thump, thump!

Smythe had started thumping, in the hope that someone might hear, and let the prisoners out.

In a twinkling he was back at the door of the box-room.

"Pull at the door!" he called out.

"Right-ho!"

Clang, clang! Bang!

Tommy jammed the chisel between the door and jamb, and hammered it fiercely.

With a rain of blows he drove it in, and the lock strained and creaked and groaned under the steady pressure.

Then, with three or four fellows dragging at the handle of the door within, and Tommy Dodd wrenching at the embedded chisel without, the lock parted.

There was a loud crack, and the door flew open.

"Hurrah!" gasped Townsend.

"Come on!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

He threw down the chisel, and ran for the staircase; and after him ran Adolphus Smythe and Peele and Tubby Muffin and the rest.

They were only too keen on avenging their imprisonment by defeating Jimmy Silver at the last moment.

THE POPULAR.—No. 174.

A SPLENDID STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"HIS TRUE COLOURS!"

In a breathless crowd, they arrived at the door of Big Hall.

It was closed and locked. Inside, Jimmy Silver & Co. had their backs against it.

The election in the Hall was proceeding. Catesby had proposed Knowles, seconded by Frampton, and Jones major and Lonsdale had done the same for Neville.

Tommy Dodd hammered fiercely outside, but the roar of cheering that greeted the nominations drowned the noise.

"Too late!" chuckled Jimmy Silver, through the keyhole. "You can keep out now, Duddy."

"Let us in, blow you!" shouted Smythe.

Jimmy Silver jumped at that voice.

"My hat!" They've got out!" he whispered to his comrades. "Dodd's got the whole gang there!"

"They're not coming in!" said Lovell grimly. The shut-out voters kicked and hammered and thumped.

Within, the cheering had died down, and the uproar outside was quite audible.

"Cheer!" whispered Jimmy. "Kick up a row, or—"

"Hurrah!" roared Lovell. "Neville for ever! Hurrah!"

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Bootles, looking round.

"Hurrah! Hip-pip—"

"Silence!" shouted Knowles.

"Order!"

"They're keeping out our voters!" yelled Cook.

"Silence! Anyone not in Hall by seven cannot come in," said Mr. Bootles. "The time of the election was perfectly well known."

Tommy Cook did not heed.

He called on his comrades to the attack, and there was a terrific charge of the Moderns.

The election could not proceed while that uproar was going on.

Three or four prefects strode among the pommelling juniors, laying about them right and left to restore order.

The belligerents were scattered by those drastic measures.

But Tommy Doyle made a spring for the door, and seized the key and turned it back.

He was caught by the collar by Carthew the next moment, and swung away.

But the door was open now, and Tommy Dodd and his merry men swarmed in.

"Keep them out!" roared Lovell. "Tain't fair—it's past seven!"

"Turn those cads out—it's too late!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"We've been locked in a box-room!" howled Smythe. "Stand by us, Knowles; we're voting for you, and we've been kept away by force."

"Sneak!" yelled Lovell.

But Knowles had heard enough, and he strode on the scene.

"What's that? Kept away by force?" he exclaimed.

"Yaas!" gasped Adolphus.

"Then you can come in. Mr. Bootles, these

juniors were kept away by force. Under the circumstances, they must be allowed in."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Yes, certainly. I am shocked at such a thing. I trust it was only a joke. Let them enter, by all means!"

The door clanged shut again.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another with sickly expressions.

A few minutes more, and Neville would have been elected captain of Rookwood, but it was not to be.

There was nothing else to be done.

The counting proceeded.

Jimmy Silver & Co. held up their hands for Neville, and yelled applause; but their hopes were not high.

They howled with derision when the vote was taken for Knowles, but that, though it was a personal satisfaction, did not affect the result.

There was a breathless hush when Mr. Bootles, after comparing notes with Mr. Wiggins, announced the result of the count.

"Cecil Knowles, one hundred and thirty votes."

"Oh!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Lawrence Neville, one hundred and five votes."

"Oh!"

"Cecil Knowles is duly elected captain of Rookwood!"

There was a roar of cheering from the Knowles' faction, and deep groans from the Classical.

Knowles' face was smiling.

It was the realisation of his long ambition.

Fate had removed Bulkeley from his path, and he had won what he had long schemed for.

Jimmy Silver groaned.

"Majority twenty-five!" he murmured. "We should have done it if that beast Dodd hadn't got those rotters out of the box-room! It's the limit!"

"Sickening!" growled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had done their best, but Cecil Knowles walked out of Big Hall captain of the school, and he walked as if he were treading on air.

That evening there were great rejoicings on the Modern side.

On the Classical side there was less satisfaction; though the Fistic Four found some solace in visiting Smythe's study, and ragging the rejoicing nuts till they felt like anything but rejoicing.

"It can't be helped," Jimmy Silver remarked, later. "Keep smiling! We did our best, and a fellow can't do more! And if Knowles tries any of his games now he's captain of Rookwood, he will find himself up against this study; and this study never says die! Keep smiling!"

THE END.

(Another grand, long, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood will appear in our next week's issue. Out on Tuesday.)

THE MET'S HAND-SOME AND POWERFUL LOCOS.

By a RAILWAY EXPERT.

Not many readers have vivid recollections of the Metropolitan Railway when the portions of it in London were worked by steam locomotives instead of electric motors. The sturdy "Met" engines of those days are to be found at the present time in various parts of the country doing good service.

They were hard workers—always at it. Their year's work was about 40,000 miles apiece—33 per cent more than the average on most English railways.

The Metropolitan Railway still has a section that is worked by steam locomotives, and very fine engines they are that are engaged on this portion of the system. It is that part of the Metropolitan Extension Line, north-west of Harrow to Verney Junction, providing a run of 41 miles for the steam locomotives. There are also the Chesham and Brill branches, which make an additional 10 miles to be worked by steam engines. The district served by the Metropolitan Extension line is a favourite residential one, and the coaches run in the trains are of a high character and extremely comfortable. Pullman-cars are to be found in some of the trains, and in them City men can breakfast on the way to business.

As the Extension Line continues to increase in popularity the trains become heavier, and although a new powerful type of engine was produced about six years ago, it was soon found necessary to have still more powerful locomotives; and eighteen months ago the first of the fine, powerful engines illustrated by the colour plate presented with this issue were put in service. These are of the 4-4-4 tank type.

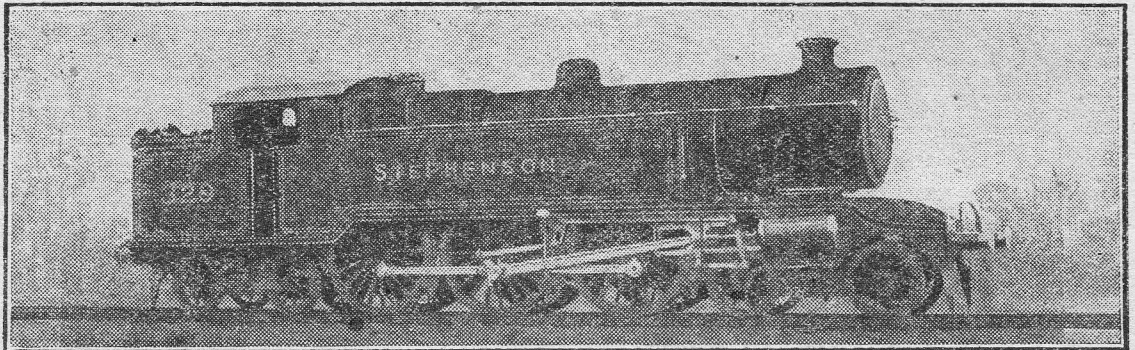
Between Harrow-on-the-Hill and Baker Street, in both directions, the trains are hauled by electric locomotives, so that all trains stop at Harrow to change engines.

On the 41 miles north-west of the town of the famous school the line has many curves and severe gradients, and the engines similar to No. 103 have been specially designed for working over this section of railway. The wheel arrangement and wheel base provide considerable flexibility, allowing a high speed to be attained.

With a total length of 41ft. 10ins., the rigid wheel base is only 7ft. 9ins.

Some dimensions of these powerful superheated 4-4-4 engines are: Coupled wheels 5ft. 9ins. diameter, with an adhesive weight of 39 tons, cylinders (outside) 19ins. diameter by 26ins. stroke, heating surface 1,178 sq. ft., grate area 21.4 sq. ft., weight in working order 77 tons.

LOOK OUT FOR THIS SPLENDID COLOURED ENGINE PLATE!



Subject: A Famous Express Locomotive of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF THE "POPULAR"!

MAROONED ON A DRIFTING ICE-FIELD IN THE STRANGE ANTIARCTIC SEAS!



A Magnificent New Serial of Adventure, introducing Ferrers Lord & Co., and Gan Waga, the Eskimo.

By SIDNEY DREW.

Author of "The Invisible Raider."

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

FERRERS LORD, having cleared up the mystery of the great German treasure trove, decides to make tracks south for an island he has bought from the Portuguese Government. The island is named Desolatia, and the millionaire adventurer puts it up for sale between his friends, PRINCE CHING LUNG, RUPERT THURSTON, HAL HONOUR (his engineer), and GAN WAGA, a fat Eskimo attached to the crew of the Lord of the Deep.

The money from the four friends is given to Rupert Thurston's little hospital, and they agree to play "Put and Take" for the ownership of Desolatia. After once trying with Ching Lung, Gan Waga has the great luck to win the island.

On the way south the yacht is overtaken by a terrific storm. They are swept far out of their course, and the yacht runs foul of a gigantic iceberg in the intense darkness. The ship crashes through the side of the hollow berg, and the entrance freezes up, imprisoning them. They discover a small tunnel leading out of the iceberg, and they find themselves on the shore of Gan Waga's Island. Ferrers Lord, Ching Lung, and Gan Waga are scouting on the island when they are held up by a Mexican millionaire, who tells them he has taken possession of the island, and orders them off. Ferrers Lord & Co. leave the island and return to the camp, which is being built on the ice-foe, Castaro sends Dan Gova with a letter to Ferrers Lord, telling him to surrender while he has the chance; but the millionaire refuses the Mexican's offer, and decides to fight for possession of the island.

During the next few days the weather becomes milder, and causes the ice-foe to break away from the rest of the island. "The foe is breaking up into small pieces!" says Ching Lung. "We're in a giddy mess!"

(Now read on.)

The Glaciograph's Warning!

THOUGH the prince spoke lightly, calamity was the proper word for it. The foe was still of great size, but if it had split like this in perfectly calm and frosty weather, it was plain that the ice was shaky and rotten. A violent storm or another shock of earthquake might smash it to atoms.

"There's something moving over there, unless the curious light is tricking me," said the millionaire. "On the other foe, Ching—down to the left, between the two weed dunes." He tugged at his glove to remove it and obtain his field-glasses. "Don't you see it now, moving towards the edge of the water?"

Ching Lung fancied he saw something shapeless and shadowy on the other foe. A weird, hoarse bellow drifted across the gap, and before Ferrers Lord could undo the stubborn buckle the light failed for an instant, and then came streaming up again. The creature had taken to the water, for they could see the ripples it had made washing against the ice. They waited in silence, but it did not show itself again, so they turned back.

"I don't like these mysterious neighbours of ours, Chief, for they're too elusive to please me," said the prince. "Could you make out what the brute was?"

"No, for it was in the shadow of the two dunes, and I lost the light before I could use my binoculars. It certainly wasn't an octopus, but something more of the lizard shape. Whatever it was, it is not of much importance at the present moment, Ching. Those brutes are a minor matter."

"I don't want to interfere with them, I assure you, Chief," said Ching Lung. "Of course, I'd like to bag one, out of curiosity, to see what they really are; but if they'll only be satisfied with the other half of the foe, and leave our half to us, I'm quite willing to let them live in peace and quiet."

As they neared the camp the rays of Gan Waga's lamps were streaming upwards from the skylight, and they reminded Ching Lung of his missing cigars. The engineer was waiting for them just outside the camp. Honour had been examining the glaciograph. He followed the millionaire, and, seeing that the

blinds of the igloo were drawn, Ching Lung approached the tunnel that formed the only entrance.

The tunnel was very dark. Ching Lung called Gan Waga several times, but the only answer was a muffled sound of snoring, so he proceeded to crawl through. His hand came in contact with a skin rug. And then a bell clanged, something exploded with a tremendous report, and a weighty object descended between the prince's shoulder-blades and pinned him down with his nose in the snow. A hand jerked the curtain aside, and Gan Waga, with a walrus spear in his hand, gazed open-mouthed at his prisoner.

"Why, it my butterful Chingy!" he gasped, digging the walrus spear into the wall of the igloo, and dragging aside the sack of flour that held the prince spread-eagled to the floor. "Dears, dears! Oh, I so sorrieness, Chingy! It a booby-trap old Ellery fix up to catch Maddocks and O'Rooney, or one of those ruffians, Chingy. Yo' note hurted, hunk, old dear? I did it to keep the burglars out, Chingy. I never thought I'd go and catch yo' old ducky!"

Ching Lung cleared the snow out of his mouth, and got up. Gan Waga wore such an expression of woe and consternation that it was hard to look serious.

"Oh, no, I'm not hurt at all! I rather like it!" said the prince. "It's quite delightful to have such a welcome when you call on a friend! You do live in sumptuous style, Gan! What did you give your pal the electrician for fixing you up in this gorgeous manner, may I ask?"

"Not muchness, Chingy. Only a few cigars," said Gan Waga. "Ellery a nice chap, and very fondness of me. He gotted loveful ideas, Chingy."

"And he's also got my cigars!" said Ching Lung. "If there are any left out of the wreckage, hand them over! Don't you know you are ruining me?"

The prince caught sight of the box which Barry O'Rooney had merely grasped and then let go, and reached over to take it. The Eskimo, just in time, clutched him in a frantic embrace and forced him back.

"Don't touch him, Chingy—don't touch him! He alls red hotness!" he shouted. "He

full of 'tricity, Chingy! Ooh dears, dears, dears! There's nothing in the old box but 'tricity, Chingy, and yo' dance and holler like Barry O'Rooney did ifs yo' get hold of him! Ha, ha, haah! Yo' laugh in a minutes, Chingy! That another booby-traps. That's why we putted it closeness to the windows. And I caught Barry O'Rooney! Ho, hoo, hoooh!"

"My cigars seem to be rather popular," said Ching Lung. "So you caught Barry O'Rooney, did you? Was he nice and pleasant about it?"

"I not sureness, Chingy," answered the Eskimo doubtfully. "He, he, hee! He squeal horriblefuls about murders and gridirons. It not a gridirons, neither; only a cigar-box. He said he was going homes to kill the bo'sun; but I hope he didn't, fo' I wants to kill Maddock myself, Chingy. I only use about two hundred cigars, Chingy, so I give yo' back the rests. Yo' not angry, hunk, old dears?"

"I'll tell you after I see what you mean by only about two hundred, blubberbiter," said Ching Lung. "Show me the ruins."

Gan Waga brought a second cigar-box from a hiding-place behind the mirror. The Eskimo had queer ideas with regard to numbers. Only about a dozen cigars were missing. After warning him solemnly to keep his hands from picking and stealing in future unless he wished to come to a sad and sickly end, Ching Lung crawled out of the igloo, after helping Gan Waga to hang up the sack of flour again. The prince gave a gasp.

Once more the bell of the glaciograph was ringing, and the electric bulb was in full glow. The pencil was making another record of disaster. The indicator was not working so violently as before. It quivered in the centre of the sheet, and then the bell ceased to ring and the lamp faded out.

"Another slice gone!" muttered Ching Lung, as he detached the sheet. "Another chunk carved off the loaf. She's breaking up in fine style."

Ferrers Lord and the engineer exchanged glances as Ching Lung brought in the fresh record. Then, shrugging his shoulders, the engineer picked up a rifle and went out. Ferrers Lord lighted a cigarette and sat down.

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NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE FRENCH-MASTER'S GUESTS!"

A NEW LONG TALE OF ST. JIM'S. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD. !!



THE MYSTERY OF THE LAGOON! "There's something moving over there!" said Ferrers Lord. "Over on the floe, do you see it Ching?" Before the prince could reply a hoarse weird bellow came floating across the gap. (See page 25.)

on the edge of his bed as the clear notes of a bugle sounded lights out.

"That will be the part where the ice-peaks are, Ching," he said, after a pause. "I wonder it did not go first with the weight of those big hummocks. It must have been badly shaken there when Esteban Castaro blew up his end of it. That means that we have lost at least another square mile."

"We seem to be going altogether to pieces, Chief," said Ching Lung, "and in a dead calm, too. What are our chances if we get a blizzard?"

"Not enviable ones. We can only push on with the launch and build something she can take in tow, for we cannot build a launch to carry us all and the necessary stores." He sprang to his feet. "A shot," he said quickly. "Didn't you hear it? There's another. Honour must have found big game."

The millionaire made a dash for the door, snatching up an automatic pistol from the table as he went. Crisply through the frosty air came the report of a rifle, and then a faint cry.

"Help, help!" It was the engineer's voice, but it faded into silence, and they heard it no more. Ferrers Lord darted forward like a hare across the snow, the prince racing at his heels, and, except for the crunch of their footfalls and their hoarse breathing, the floe lay as still as death under the cold southern stars.

Under the Lagoon

THE silence did not last for long. It was shattered by sounds that surely had not been heard by human ears since primitive man, shuddering in his cave, had heard similar noises echoing around him in the darkness of those far-off nights of the old-time world when vast monsters battled with each other over their prey. From the direction of the lagoon some monster was roaring and also bellowing and coughing. Great thuds came also as if a giant was using a tremendous tail and beating the earth with

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it. A last roar came that shrilled into a piercing scream that set Ching Lung's heart thumping against his ribs as he ran. The noise of a splash followed, and a hiss of lashing water and a shower of half-frozen spray fell on the snow. Then it was comparatively still again, and the two men stopped and peered ahead.

"That brute was hard hit," said the millionaire. "That last scream sounded like a dying one. Whatever may have happened to Honour he has avenged himself. Perhaps I am to blame for having a keen presence of this creature too lightly, but I never dreamed that they would leave the water and attack a man even after hearing O'Rooney's story. Keep back Ching, if you have no weapon. The brute may have a mate."

"Hal Hal!" cried Ching Lung. "Where are you, Hal?"

The uproar had reached the camp. Prout had ordered the men to remain where they were. Followed by Rupert Thurston and Maddock, who, like himself, had not yet undressed, Prout with a flash-lamp in his hand made for the lagoon at full speed. In their haste Ching Lung and the millionaire had forgotten lamps, but the prince struck a wax vesta, and in the breathless air it burnt clearly and steadily. At his very feet he saw the tracks of the engineer's boots. Farther on the snow was stained with blood, and beaten and trampled. There Ferrers Lord picked up a rifle with a broken stock. The match went out, and Ching Lung's hands shook so much that he dropped his little gold matchbox and could not find it. The millionaire came to the rescue. A trail of blood and a broad patch that revealed the brown weed showed where the monster had dragged itself back to the edge of the bank and rolled down the steep incline into the lagoon.

"Where is he?" asked Ching Lung hoarsely. The dark water was still agitated and covered with ripples. Striking another match he went down into a hollow to the right of the lagoon.

"He's here, Ching," he said. "I have found him. Come and turn him over please, while I hold the light."

The engineer was lying prone on his face. Ching Lung turned him over. The vulcanite mouthpiece of his broken pipe was still between his teeth. His clothes and beard were thick with snow. His blue eyes were closed, but he was still breathing, for little wisps of vapour came from his lips. Ching Lung gave a shout that brought Prout up to them as Ferrers Lord knelt down beside the engineer and unscrewed the top of his pocket-flask.

"Send back for one of the sledges, Prout," said the millionaire, "and put plenty of pillows in it. Lift his head a little, Ching, please, and take that pipe stem away."

The brandy had no effect. Honour was in his bed in the camp with two broken fingers in splints and a bandage round his head before he opened his eyes. Rupert Thurston was sitting beside him. Honour uttered a grunt and glanced about him to discover where he was.

"I got him?" he asked briefly.

"I don't know, old man," said Rupert Thurston. "The Chief thinks you did, but we couldn't see anything in the lagoon. There was a lot of blood about, so it must have been hit. Don't think about it just now, but see if you can swallow some of this beef tea. Don't worry about anything else."

The engineer asked a question by lifting his bushy eyebrows.

"No, you're not very badly damaged," said Thurston. "You've smashed a couple of fingers on your right hand, and you've got a nasty bruise on the temple from the blow that knocked you out. Keep quiet and you'll be well in no time. I know what a shifty customer you are, so do keep still."

Honour drank the beef tea, and then raised his damaged hand. He was always a man of few words, and he told how he had come to be hurt very briefly.

"Trigger," he said, and then pointing to his head, he added, "barrel."

After this short explanation he turned over on his side and went to sleep. From these two words Thurston gathered that he must have been at perilously close quarters with the strange monster that haunted the lagoon. He must have had his finger on the trigger of the rifle when the brute struck it, breaking his fingers against the trigger-guard and driving the barrel round to strike him on the temple and hurl him down the incline. No doubt that was the shot at close range that had told and crippled the brute or Hal Honour might not have been there.

In the morning Ferrers Lord had left the camp before anyone was stirring. At his whistle Gan Waga crawled out of his igloo, gave his little eyes a rub, and was promptly wide awake. At a word from the millionaire the Eskimo dived back into his igloo and returned with a heavy harpoon, a large pear-shaped fishing-weight, and a coil of line. As they neared the lagoon Ferrers Lord took the rifle from his shoulder.

"See if there is anything there," he said, pointing down at the dark, still water. "You will need the weight, for it looks deep."

Gan Waga uncoiled the line and made it fast to the weighted harpoon. The harpoon flashed downwards and sank like a stone. He went round the whole lagoon testing every yard of the water and making magnificent casts into the centre, but the harpoon found nothing to take hold of.

"That will do, Gan, thank you," said Ferrers Lord. "I shall not need you any more, so you may go back and have your breakfast."

Ferrers Lord went on. He soon discovered the second fissure. The peaks and the peninsula of ice that had joined the floe to Desolatia had broken away from the floe. Looking through his glasses in the opposite direction as the light grew stronger, he could still make out Gan Waga's island. The second split had robbed the floe of considerably more than a square mile of ice; probably it was nearly twice that area that was drifting away. The round sun came up like a disc of burnished copper as Ferrers Lord made his way back to the camp. He paused to glance at the curtain of weed that closed one end of the lagoon. It did not mean because Gan Waga's harpoon had impaled nothing that the monster was not lying dead at the bottom. Its body might be protected

by plates or horny scales too tough for the harpoon to penetrate. The millionaire was confident that it was either dead or mortally wounded. Perhaps it had just strength enough left to reach its hiding-place beneath the ice and die there.

He was not surprised to find Hal Honour up and about, for it required something more serious than a blow on the head and a couple of broken fingers to keep the energetic engineer between the blankets. He carried his injured hand in a sling, and his head was bandaged, but he was as agile as ever superintending the erection of the wooden cradle in which he intended to build his launch.

"I'd forgive the beggar for disobeying my orders and getting up, Chief, if he'd only tell us what the beast he shot at was like," said Thurston. "All I can get out of him is that it looked like a crocodile with a long neck. He had a couple of shots at it when it was in the water, and then it came ashore after him, open-mouthed, and just as he fired down into its open jaws it jerked out its neck another yard and hit the butt of his rifle with its snout. Some snout-what? I've seen what the blow did to the rifle."

"Tell it to the marines, my lad," said Ching Lung with a laugh. "You never pulled all that out of Honour, not even with a corkscrew."

"Of course I didn't, but I got a few jerks out of him and strung them together for your benefit. That's all I can make of it, so go and tackle him yourself."

"I'd just as soon think of trying to make an oyster talk," said the prince. "What with hard-snouted monsters, dumb engineers, thieving Eskimos, and breaking ice-floes, I'm getting fed up to the teeth with this trip. But I'd like to see the Johnny with the rifle-smashing nose. It would be a change."

"Why not?" asked the millionaire. "The brute is down there, not far away, and dead enough, too, if you think it is worth looking at. Send the carpenter to fix a ladder, and ask Prout to get out our diving-suits. If that is the way they come ashore we had better look how we can block the passage up, for the lagoon is unpleasantly near the camp. Until last night I did not think they were dangerous visitors, only noisy, but Honour's adventure has made me alter my mind on that point. Ellery had better look over the rifles and charge them. Will you attend to that, Rupert? I shall be ready in a couple of hours."

Prout reported that one of the four diving-

suits were not quite perfect, and in nothing is perfection more absolutely essential as in a diving-suit. It happened to be Ching Lung's outfit in which the steersman had discovered the defects. As the prince was slight and small of build, and the repairs needed time and expert skill, the prince was left out, for the other suits were far too large for him. He heaved a sigh.

"That leaves me clean out of the minnow-hunt," he said. "I've never had a bit of decent luck since I set foot on this silly old floe. Thank you very kindly for nothing at all Prout. You're neither useful nor ornamental. If you were worth your salt you'd mend the thing."

"By honey, I would if I could, sir, but the job is too tricky for me," said Prout. "There's nobody who could tackle it properly except Mr. Honour, and he's crooked. I'd lend you my own rig only I'm afraid you'd get lost in it. Joe and Maddock have gone with the ladder, and Ellery has nearly finished."

Maddock and the carpenter had taken a rifle with them as well as the ladder and a bag of tools. They knew their work. Near the bottom of the ladder a jutting spar was fixed, and to this a rope with a sinker attached was tied. Above the sinker an electric lamp was fastened.

The ladder was in its place, the bottom rung clear of the bank and six feet below the water when Barry O'Rooney, Prout, and Gan Waga arrived. They smoked and chatted while they waited for the millionaire and Rupert Thurston, and, of course, Mr. Barry O'Rooney knew all about it.

"Bedad, there's no doubt winged the baste," he said, "and he's sulking down there with a bad pain in his stomach, trying to digest a lead pill. He'll get worse than lead pills when the Chafe fiends him. Phwat he'll get will be—"

"The same as yo' gotted last night, when yo' tried to pinch the cigars, Barry," grinned the Eskimo. "How yo' did laughs, old dear."

"Souse me, he did laugh and all, fat 'un," grinned the bo'sun, "just like a stuck pig. You nobbled him, fine, the old thief. First of all he wanted to dance a jig on the roof of your dug-out, but I wouldn't let him do that. Then he spotted the cigar, Tom, and thought he was on an easy job. There's no cure for it, souse me, as I've always said. Born a thief, always a thief. If you was to stuff Barry O'Rooney's pockets with gold and banknotes, and cover his fingers and toes with diamond rings he'd sneak out the back

way next minute and pinch the fishbone from a starving cat."

"Ben seems to have your number, Barry," said Prout. "I think he must have met you somewhere before. Liven up, by honey, for here they come."

Ferrers Lord, resembling some grotesque giant in his helmet and goggles and inflated dress was the first to descend the ladder. He caught the spar, hung to it for a second, let go, and sank gently to the bottom where the lamp was shining. He waited there until Prout and Thurston sank like shadows beside him. Each carried a curious-looking gun on his shoulder and a glowing electric lamp at his belt. The necessary air was fed to them from cylinders strapped to their shoulders and delicately adjusted while the exhausted air streamed upwards in shining bubbles from a valve in their helmets. A touch on the arm caused telephonic contact instantly between one man and another. They moved across the icy bottom of the lagoon in a line, the lamps shooting bright beams of light ahead. The millionaire spoke to Rupert Thurston, and Thurston passed the message on to Prout.

"Be ready and shoot straight."
(Another thrilling instalment of our wonderful serial in next week's issue! Look out for announcements concerning our grand new Sidney Drew serial starting shortly in THE POPULAR.)

NOTICES.

CORRESPONDENCE.

G. Perry, 7, Caroline Buildings, Pulteney Road, Bath, wishes to correspond with German readers, aged 12-16, interested in languages.

Percival Firth, Rose Cottage, Attimore Hall, near Hatfield, Herts, wishes to hear from readers interested in his amateur magazine, the "Britannia," which is just being re-started after the summer holidays.

D. Kitchener, Littlecot, Station Road, Hornchurch, Essex, wishes to correspond with readers in the United States, Bavaria, New Zealand, and the Far East interested in stamps.

Frank Le Boutillier, 257, Bleury Street, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers who are interested in the Beaver Correspondence Club, which he is just starting.

F. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, London, N 15, would like to hear from readers interested in his amateur advertisement magazine; also with readers, ages 16-17, interested in games and amateur journalism, living in North London.

J. de Gruchy Market Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, wishes to correspond with readers in England and overseas, the latter preferable, interested in amateur magazines.

R. D. Barnhill, 23, Shoal Bay Road, Devonport, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, ages 14-18.

J. E. Philips, 92, Ste Genevieve Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in England.

Fred P. Callum, 29, Duke Street, Huddersfield, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere in England.

Cecil Read, 54, Uphill Park Road, Weston-super-Mare, wishes to hear from readers, ages 11-12, interested in post-cards.

Miss Mary Berman, 9, Rose Hill Street, Derby, would like to correspond with readers anywhere, ages 14-16.

Miss Nellie Allen, 31, Middleton Street, Bethnal Green, E. 2, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, ages 17-20.

J. Porter, 12, Latimer Road, Godalming, Surrey, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 14-16.

(Continued on next page.)
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NOTICES.

(Continued from previous page.)

H. Percival, 15, Orchard Place, Southampton, desires to communicate with readers, ages 16-17. He wishes specially to hear from correspondents living in or near Southampton, or residents in Guernsey. Interested in swimming and photography.

Morris M. Malitz, 1,549, St. Lawrence Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to hear from readers interested in his correspondence club.

Miss Gladys Rulton, 7, Halstead Road, Enfield, Middlesex, wishes to correspond with readers of the "Magnet."

Miss Violet Crouch, 67, Cornwallis Road, Lower Edmonton, London, N., wishes to correspond with readers in the United Kingdom interested in cinematography.

T. Palmer, 69, Ysgol Street, St. Thomas, Swansea, wishes for readers and contributors for his amateur pass round magazine, the "Boys' Gazette."

J. N. Thomson, White Gates, Chislehurst Road, Sidcup, Kent, wishes to correspond with readers in England, ages 12-15.

William Pennell, 59, Main Avenue, De-Aar, Cape Province, South Africa, intends to start an amateur magazine called the "Springbok," and wishes to hear from South African readers of the Companion Papers who would like to contribute.

S. Nock, 4, Adrian Street, Moston, Manchester, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

Clifford Pass, 150, Park Street, Oldham, wishes to correspond with readers interested in photography.

Leslie Oakey, 34, Hereward House, Back Hill, Ely, Cambs, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, U.S.A. preferred. Ages 14-16.

John G. Corse, 72, New Bank Street, Longsight, Manchester, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15-17, in South Africa.

D. Corcoran, 22, Church Square, Cwmavon, Glam, South Wales, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Isles. All letters answered. Ages 14-16.

George Stone, P.O. Box 189, Kimberley, South Africa, is secretary of the Diamond Fields Correspondence Club, and wishes to hear from readers of the Companion Papers overseas.

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