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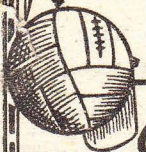
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*Four School
Tales This
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**"TROUBLE FOR
COKER!"**

Fine Story of Greyfriars,
By FRANK RICHARDS.

**"THE AERIAL
ADVENTURERS!"**

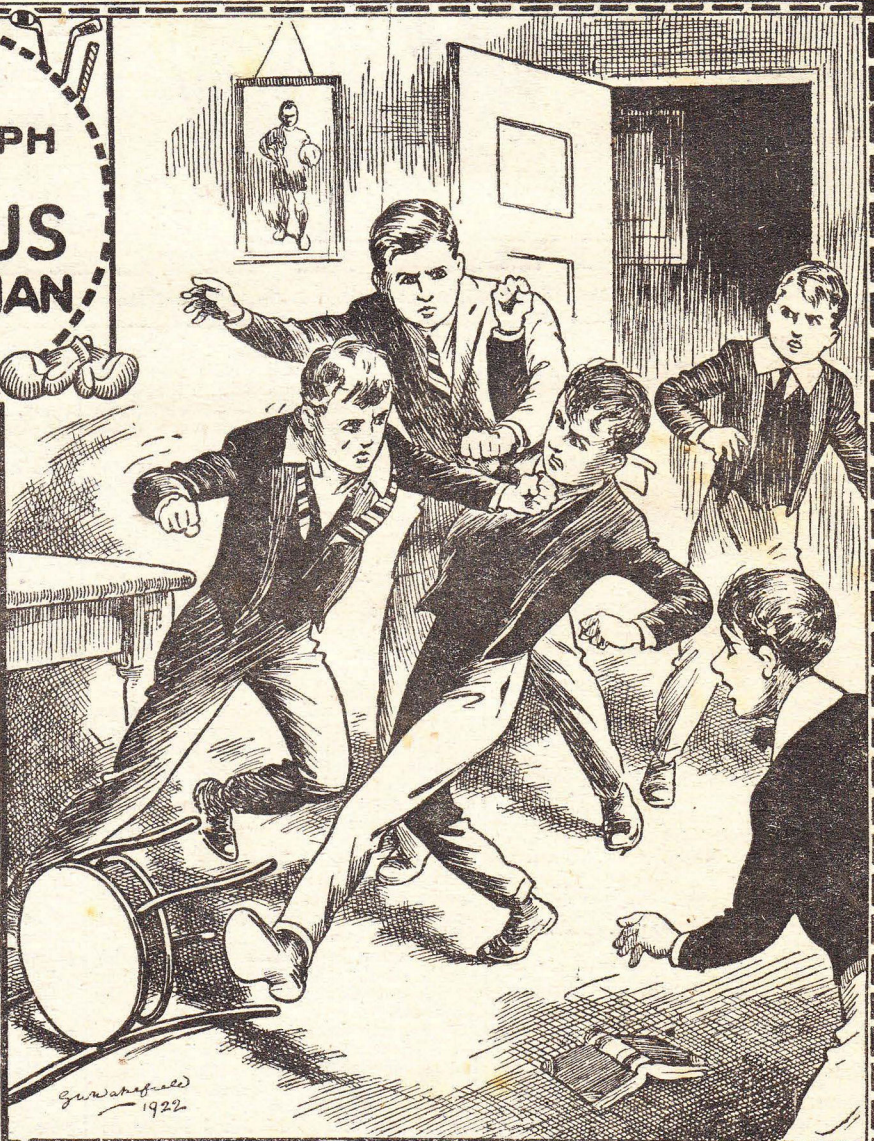
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HIS FRIEND!"**

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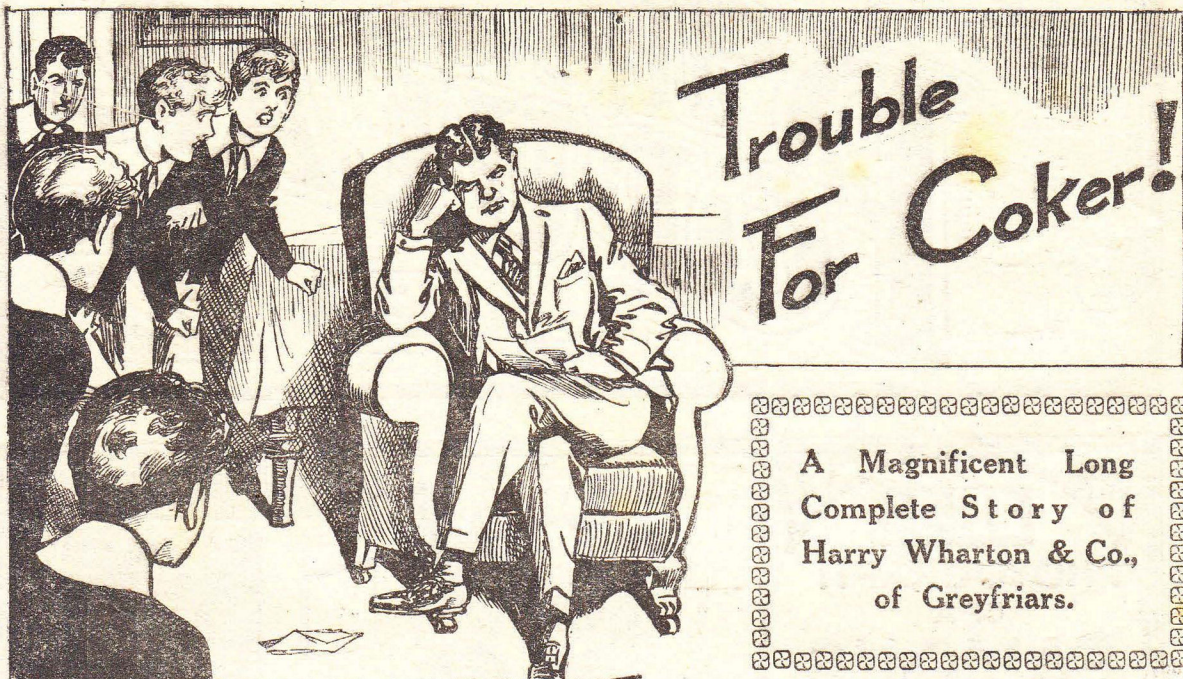
*Guinness
1922*

WHEN FRIENDS FALL OUT!

(A stirring Story of the Famous Chums of Rookwood inside.)

FINE SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE TALES—GREAT FOOTBALL COMPETITION!

TROUBLE COMES TO HORACE COKER FROM A VERY UNEXPECTED QUARTER, BUT HE FINDS FRIENDS TO STAND BY HIM IN HARRY WHARTON & CO.



BY FRANK RICHARDS

(Author of the Famous School Tales of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—appearing in The "Magnet" Library.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Bad News!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER, of the Greyfriars Remove, blinked up at the letter-rack and grunted. There was only one letter there, and it was plainly addressed to Horace Coker, of the Fifth.

Bunter blinked at that letter several times—perhaps in the hope that the name and address would change. But that being impossible, and there was no hope of a remittance for William George, the next best thing to do was to take the letter to Horace Coker and borrow something on the strength of a postal-order which ought to have arrived by that post; Billy expected a postal-order by every post.

Horace Coker was expecting that letter. Already his chums, Potter and Green, had grown tired waiting for it. For Coker's Aunt Judy, a dear old lady to whom Coker was much attached, and who was just as fond of the great Horace, had promised a remittance—a "tenner"—and the letter hadn't arrived by tea-time.

William George Bunter poked his head into Coker's study.

"I say, Horace, old man—" he began.

"What! You call me 'Horace,' you fat clam, and I'll biff you!" roared Horace.

"There was a letter—"

"Eh? Why didn't you say so? Hand it over!" said Coker, with a snort.

"I say, Coker, old man—" pleaded Bunter.

"Gimme my letter, you fat freak!" howled Coker, who was not in the best of tempers that afternoon. "I've been waiting two days for it. Hand it over, I tell you!"

As Bunter showed no signs of bringing the letter to him, Horace Coker rose from his chair and grabbed Bunter by the

collar, and shook him. Billy ought not to have troubled Coker that afternoon, for he must have known that Coker & Co. had raided the Remove quarters, and had suffered almost as much as the raided party as a result.

"You fat rotter! Hand over my letter!" exclaimed the exasperated Coker.

"Groogh! Will you lend me—"

"I'll lend you my boot if you don't hand that letter over at once!" said Coker angrily, and he lifted his foot ready.

Bunter threw the letter hastily on the table. There was no arguing with Coker's boot.

"But, I say, Coker, you know, I— Ah! Oh! Oh!"

Bunter went whirling into the passage, and Coker slammed the door after him.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter, through the keyhole. And then he hastily departed. There was evidently no "whack" for him in Aunt Judy's remittance; and he had taken the trouble to bring the letter up for nothing!

Coker opened the letter. It was addressed to him in his Aunt Judy's handwriting, as Bunter had said, and it was evidently the letter he had been expecting for two days.

The letter inside was written in his aunt's hand, a little more shaky than usual, but Coker looked first for the banknote.

It was not there.

Coker, puzzled, opened the letter out, but the banknote was not concealed inside it. There was no banknote at all.

"My hat!" said Coker.

"Isn't it all right?" asked Potter un- easily.

"There isn't a remittance," said Coker.

"Not a remittance! My hat! What are we going to do for tea?" exclaimed Greene, in dismay.

"Sure, and I'll be getting along," Fitzgerald remarked. "I think perhaps Blundell may not have finished tea yet,

and there may be something left. So- long, Coker!"

And Fitzgerald walked out of the study.

Coker did not even notice him go. He was reading the letter now, and as he read it a strange change came over his face.

Potter and Greene watched him curiously. They were annoyed and exasperated at the non-arrival of the remittance. It was too bad, when they had been led to pin their faith upon it. There was no tea to be had, let alone the gorgeous feed they had been anticipating. It was really too rotten, and they were annoyed with Aunt Judy, annoyed with Coker, annoyed with the universe generally.

Coker's face grew quite pale as he read on.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated.

"Bad news?" asked Potter, with as much sympathy as he could muster under the trying circumstances.

Coker did not reply; he did not even hear. He was reading intently. When he had finished, he turned back to the beginning of the letter, and read it over again from start to finish. Potter and Greene showed visible signs of im- patience.

"Look here, about tea!" hinted Potter. Coker crushed the letter in his hand.

"The poor old girl!" he said. "What a rotten shame!"

"Bad news?"

"Yes."

"Remittance coming later?"

"It's not coming at all," said Coker grimly.

"Not at all!" exclaimed Potter and Greene together, in amazement.

"No; not that remittance or any other remittance. Not that I care twopence about that. My aunt's ruined!"

"What!"

"She's lost all her money, every blessed quid!" said Coker lugubriously.

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"Her solicitor has swindled her, and bolted with the lot!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Potter stared blankly at his chum. "That's why the poor old girl hasn't written," said Coker miserably. "She didn't want to tell me. But she had to write at last. She can't send me that tenner. She hasn't a tenner left in the world, out of fifty thousand pounds!"

"Great Scott!"

"The police are looking for the scoundrel. They think he's gone to America. He's got the money on him. Bet you they won't find him," said Coker. "Oh crumbs! Poor old Aunt Judy! What a rotten shame!"

"My hat!" said Potter. "Then you'll lose all you were going to get in her will, Coker?"

"Eh? Yes; I suppose so."

"That's pretty rough, old chap."

Coker snorted.

"Do you think I'm thinking about that, you fathead? I'm thinking about poor old Aunt Judy. Oh, I wish I could get hold of that lawyer beast!" exclaimed Coker, hitting terrific blows into the air to express his feelings.

"Must have been rather soft to let a man get all her tin into his hands like that!" said Greene.

"The villain made her believe there was a safer investment, got her signature, and then raised the money, and bolted," said Coker. "Poor old Aunt Judy, she's a simple old soul, not up-to-date in dealing with a lawyer. I hope they'll catch him—we may get some of the money back. The awful rascal, to swindle a woman, and an old woman, too! Now, my aunt's ruined, I suppose she'll come to live with my people."

"Sorry," said Potter. "That means no more tenners."

"Blow the tenners!" growled Coker.

"No more tips!" said Greene.

"Hang the tips!"

"I think you may as well go and see Blundell," Potter remarked, and the two Fifth-Formers left the study, in the hope that Blundell of the Fifth had not yet finished tea.

Coker was left alone. He sat in the armchair, his aunt's letter in his hand, his brow corrugated with thought. In that hasty, shaky, trembling writing, he read the trouble that had overwhelmed the kind old lady, and he knew, too, that it was chiefly of him she had been thinking, of the disappointment her loss would be to him. He was to have been a rich man when he grew up, and now—

"Poor old Aunt Judy!" said Coker, aloud, and the tears started to his eyes. "She's been jolly good to me, and I'll be jolly good to her. She sha'n't ever want for anything while I've got anything, I jolly well know that! The poor old girl!"

And Coker knitted his brows, and tried to think the matter out. Poor Coker was not much accustomed to hard thinking, and the effort made his head ache.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Raggings are Off!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came cautiously along the Fifth Form passage.

There were six or seven of the juniors, and they were on the warpath.

They had passed Blundell's study successfully, and heard many voices in it, and now they were close upon Coker's quarters. Saving themselves, there was no one in the passage. It looked as if the return raid was to be a success.

"Quiet!" murmured Wharton. "Now

we've got to rush the study, and wreck the giddy place from top to bottom and end to end. We'll smother Coker with ink and jam and ashes and things, and pile his furniture in bits on top of him, and bunk! We sha'n't have much time to do it in, so every chap has got to pile in and do his best as quick as he can."

"What-ho!" murmured Bob.

"The what-hofulness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

And the Removites chuckled. They were quite prepared to carry out the programme mapped out by Harry Wharton.

They paused outside Coker's study door. There was no sound in the study, so if Coker was there, he was apparently alone.

"Ready?" murmured Wharton, looking round at his followers.

"What-ho!"

"Come on, then!"

Wharton suddenly turned the handle, and flung the door open. With a whoop, the juniors rushed into the study.

Horace Coker was there. He was sitting in the armchair, with a letter in his hand, his face strangely pale and troubled. And his red, healthy cheeks were wet with tears! He looked up at the juniors, and his eyes were dim.

The raiders stopped.

If they had found Coker standing on his head in his study it would have surprised them less than they were surprised now.

Coker—Horace Coker of the Fifth—the burly fellow who was the toughest fighting man at Greyfriars—Coker was blubbing!

They could not believe their eyes! Coker blubbing! Impossible!

But there it was!

The excitement of the raiders died away, their hostile intentions faded. Something was evidently very wrong—terribly wrong. And a sudden quietness fell upon Harry Wharton & Co. after the loud war-whoop with which they had rushed into the study.

"I—I say, Coker, what's the matter?"

"Something gone wrong, old chap?"

"Bad news from home?"

Coker nodded without speaking.

"I'm sorry," said Wharton sincerely. "Clear out, you chaps! No raiding now."

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry.

"The sympathisefulness is terrific, my esteemed Coker," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gently. "Pray come along, my friends."

And the raiders quitted Coker's study much more quietly than they had entered it.

Harry Wharton lingered behind a moment. He could see that Coker was very much upset, and he quite forgot Coker's raid on Study No. 1, and the reason why he was now in Coker's quarters. After all, old Coker was a good sort in his way, and Wharton was very sorry to see him in trouble. He would have been glad to help Coker if he could.

"I say, Coker, old man," he began, "is there anything a chap can do?"

Coker shook his head.

"Somebody ill?" Harry asked.

"No."

"Well, I'm sorry," said the captain of the Remove; and he moved towards the door.

"Thanks!" said Coker. "You're very good. I suppose you came here to rag me?"

Wharton coloured a little.

"Well, a Roland for an Oliver, you know," he remarked. "But that's all right. Raggings are off now, if you're in trouble."

"I'm not exactly in trouble," said Coker. "It's my Aunt Judy."

"Not ill?"

"No; ruined."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Her solicitor persuaded her to let him handle her investments, to reinvest the money," said Coker. "He turned it all into ready cash and bolted."

"The awful rotter!"

"I wish I could get near him!" he said. "I'd like to get in a good uppercut. But there's no chance of that. He's cleared off."

"I suppose the police are looking for him?" asked Harry.

"Yes. But he's been gone three days, and they can't find him yet. He's supposed to have gone to New York."

"They'll telegraph for him, and have him stopped."

"Yes, perhaps. If they catch him they'll get the money back—at least, some of it. He has embezzled part of it and lost it in speculation, my aunt says. But he's known to have more than forty thousand pounds with him in banknotes and securities."

"Great Scott! I jolly well hope he will be laid by the heels!" said Harry.

"I wish I could do something to help."

"Oh, the rotter!" said Coker, gritting his teeth again. "Poor old Aunt Judy! She's awfully cut up, of course. She was going to pay my expenses at the University, and now she won't be able to."

"Rough on you," said Harry.

"Oh, I'm not thinking of that! I'm thinking of the disappointment to her. I can stand it. I've got brains enough to make my way in the world, I hope."

Wharton sincerely hoped so, too; but he could not help having some doubts on the point. He did not, however, state his doubts on that point to Coker.

"It's knocked me over a bit," said Coker awkwardly. "Poor old Aunt Judy will be frightfully cut up. She's been very good to me. I'm going to see her. The Head will give me leave, considering what's happened, I suppose?"

"Sure to," said Wharton.

Coker nodded to him, and they left the study, going in different directions.

Horace Coker went to the Head, who, of course, immediately gave him leave to go home, after he had heard the news. Half an hour later Coker was hurrying to Courtfield to catch the express, his minor going with him to see him off.

Harry Wharton returned to his own quarters in a thoughtful mood. He was deeply sorry for Coker and for Coker's aunt. And all the Co. agreed that it was very hard indeed on poor old Coker.

And they agreed, too, that old Coker was standing it remarkably well. Lots of fellows in his position would have thought of themselves, of their disappointed hopes, and their ambitions that now would never be realised. But Horace Coker didn't look at it in that light at all. He was only thinking of the heavy blow that had fallen upon one who had always been kind and generous to him; that was what cut him up.

And the Famous Five agreed unanimously that old Coker was a real brick, although he was several sorts of an ass, and they agreed, too, that they would stand by old Coker and back him up, though exactly what form the backing-up would take, and what use it would be to Coker, did not seem quite clear.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bunter's Opinion.

"D ONE brown, and no mistake! I always thought there was something fishy about those Cokers, you know!"

Thus Billy Bunter.

THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

A SPLENDID STORY OF THE JUNIORS OF GREY-FRIARS. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"COKER'S CAPTURE!"

Billy Bunter, the Owl of the Remove, was not troubled with any deep feelings of sympathy for Coker of the Fifth Form. He regarded the bad news about Coker's aunt as an item of information of which he could make the most that was possible. There were a good many fellows who were quite indifferent about the matter—some who seemed to see something quite amusing in it. Skinner and Snoop and Bunter of the Remove were among the latter.

"As a matter of fact," went on Bunter, quite delighted at getting a dozen fellows to listen to his opinions—"as a matter of fact, you fellows, I've suspected this for some time. I fancied that Coker was gassing about his aunt's giddy wealth. You remember my saying so to you, Bolsover?"

"No, I don't!" said Bolsover.
 "Ahem! It was to you, Fishy——"
 "I guess you never said anything of the sort to me!" retorted Fisher T. Fish.
 "And I kinder reckon you never said it to anybody, you fat jay!"
 "Oh, really, Fishy——"

"I guess you're three or four kinds of an Ananias, Bunter!" remarked the American junior. "You'd better shut your silly head!"

"I knew they were fishy, those Cokers," pursued Bunter, with a scornful blink at Fisher T. Fish through his big spectacles. "Coker never had so much money as he said. Why, he was often too hard up to cash a postal-order for a chap. I know because I've asked him to do it."

"Rats!"
 "I shouldn't wonder if it's a fake about the solicitor bolting," went on Bunter—"just a yarn, you know, to cover up the fact that they've got no tin. I expect Coker's people are really poor, too. May have to leave Greyfriars, both of them."

"Shut up, you fat ass!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Here comes Coker minor."

"Blow Coker minor!" said Bunter independently. "I'm not going to shut up. I've got my reasons for believing that that yarn about an absconding solicitor is a fake."

Reggie Coker, who had just come in, paused in the passage as he heard Billy Bunter's remark.

Reggie flushed red.
 "What's that, Bunter?" he exclaimed sharply. "Are you talking about my Aunt Judy's solicitor, who's bolted with her money?"

Billy Bunter sniffed.
 "I don't take that in!" he said.
 "You don't believe it?" asked Coker minor.

"No, I don't!" said Bunter promptly. "You can't take me in, you know. I've got my eye-teeth cut. I look on that yarn as a fake."

"You lying cad!"
 "Eh?"
 "You fat beast!" said Reggie Coker furiously. "I'll jolly well make you talk a bit more civilly about us!"

And he seized Bunter's fat little nose between his finger and thumb and squeezed hard.

Bunter gave a yell of anguish.
 "Ow, ow! By dose! Led go! Grooh!"
 "Pile in, Bunter! Lick him!" encouraged Bolsover major. "You're bigger than he is, though he's in the giddy Sixth! Pile in!"

"A ring!" shouted Tom Brown.
 "Give 'em room!"

"Take your barnacles off, Bunter, and pile in!"

Reggie released Bunter's nose and stepped back and pushed back his cuffs. THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

NEXT TUESDAY! "COKER'S

His usually mild and inoffensive face was flaming with anger now.

"I'm ready!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you fat beast!"

Bunter backed away.
 "I—I say, you fellows, I—I'm not going to fight that kid!" he gasped. "I should half kill him if I started on him, you know!"

"Funk!" hooted Ogilvy.
 "Oh, really, you know——"

"Come on, you fat cad!" yelled Reggie Coker, dancing round Bunter, with his fists lashing wildly in the air. "Come on! I'll thrash you! I'll lick you! Come on!"

"Buck up, Bunter!"
 "Put your hands up, you cad!"
 "Take his gig-lamps off for him!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode jerked Bunter's glasses off, and three or four pairs of hands pushed him closer to Reggie Coker. Reggie tapped him on the nose, and then on his fat chin, eliciting a wild roar from Bunter.

"Pile in!" yelled Bolsover major.
 "I—I'm not going to! I—I——"
 "If you don't we'll lick you!"
 "Yes, rather!"

"Give him the frog's-march!"
 Billy Bunter spluttered in dismay. He had to fight Reggie Coker, or to take a licking from the Removites, and he thought it best to fight Reggie. He was taller than the little Sixth-Former, and twice as broad and heavy, and if he had been blessed with pluck he could have made short work of Reggie. But that was just the one thing that was wanting.

Reggie Coker knew about as much of boxing as he did of flying. His only idea of fighting was to duck his head and hit out wildly. But that method was quite good enough for dealing with Billy Bunter.

Biff, biff, biff! Reggie's fists came thudding on Bunter's fat face and chest, and the Owl of the Remove sat down violently on the floor.

Reggie Coker danced round him ferociously.

"Get up!" he shouted. "Get up! You're not licked yet!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"
 "Get up! Get up and have some more!"

"Groogh! Help!"
 "Yah! Funk!" yelled Reggie.

"Ow!" groaned Bunter. "I—I give you best! I—I wasn't really saying anything about—about you—you know. What I really meant to say was, that it was a shame for that rotten solicitor to bolt with the money, you know. That's what I was going to say when you interrupted me. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Yah!" said Reggie. "Funk!"

And he walked triumphantly away. Bunter staggered to his feet.

"I—I say, you fellows," he stammered. "I—I could have licked him, you know, only I thought I'd let him off easy, as—as——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 And Billy Bunter rolled away disconsolately, followed by a shout of laughter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker's Aunt!

"HORACE!"
 Aunt Judy sat up, trembling a little, as Horace Coker came in.

The kind old lady looked very pale and sickly, and much older than when her nephew had seen her last, at Greyfriars. On that occasion Aunt Judy had watched Horace performing some really remarkable feats at football—and it was fortunate

that she did not know anything about the great game, or she might have asked why her dear Horace kicked the ball through his own side's goal. Aunt Judy had been very happy then, under the firm conviction that her beloved nephew was distinguishing himself in the eyes of his admiring schoolfellows.

Coker was a little tired and dusty after his long journey from Greyfriars. He came over to Miss Judith and kissed her affectionately. Aunt Judy clung to him.

"I didn't quite expect to see you, Horace dear," she said.

"I came as soon as I could get ready, after getting your letter," said Coker cheerily. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

Aunt Judy cried softly.

"I hoped the police would be able to catch that wicked man, Horace. I hoped I should not have to write such bad news to you."

"And they haven't got him?"

"No. It is Mr. Rooke, you know—he has been my solicitor for ten years, and I had the greatest faith in him," said poor Aunt Judy tearfully. "He is a wicked and unscrupulous man. It turns out that he has been gambling on the Stock Exchange, and has embezzled a large sum of money—so when he was going to be found out, he determined to run away with the rest."

"The scoundrel!" said Coker, gritting his teeth. "They may find him yet."

"I—I hope so. He came to me with a story that my investments were not safe, and he advised me to sell out and invest the money in something else, and I was glad of the warning," said Miss Coker.

"And then he ran away with the money. The police have found that he booked a passage on the Ruritania for New York."

"Then they'll nail him when he gets there!" said Coker.

Miss Coker shook her head.
 "They have communicated with the Ruritania by wireless, and found that he did not take his passage, after all. It was only a blind, they say."

"Then he's still in England?" said Coker hopefully.

"Perhaps. But there is no trace of him. The police think that perhaps he had prepared some hiding-place in advance, and went there—or else he may have had all his arrangements made for leaving the country. I am afraid he will not be found, Horace dear!"

"Rotten!" said Coker.

"It isn't for myself I mind so much," said Miss Coker. "It's for you, Horace. All the money I was going to leave you——"

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Coker. "I've never thought about that, Aunt Judy. I shall be able to make my way all right, you bet."

"Yes, I know you will," said Aunt Judy, with a fond glance at her nephew. "You could become anything you chose, Horace!"

"Well, I don't know about that," said Coker modestly; though in his heart of hearts he was inclined to agree with Aunt Judy's fond belief. "But I shall be all right. It's you, you know—what are you going to do?"

"Your father has asked me to come to his house—and if the man is not caught, I shall sell my house, and go to him," said Miss Coker. "It's very kind of him, Horace. I shall be a poor relation now."

"You will always be my dear old auntie," said Coker, kissing her withered

check. "You don't think we shall forget all you've done for us, surely? If necessary, I shall work for you when I grow up. You rely on me!"

"My dear, dear boy!"
 "I jolly well wish you'd consulted me about that, or the pater," said Horace, with a frown. "By Jove! I'd like to have Rooke by the neck! I'd wring it for him! When was it he cleared out?"

"On Monday night!"
 "And nothing has been seen of him since?"

"Nothing, Horace!"
 "And he's got the rhino with him?"

"The—the what?"
 "The cash!" said Coker.
 "Yes, yes. He has it in banknotes and securities that can easily be disposed of—more than forty thousand pounds, Horace—all that was left of my fortune!" said Aunt Judy. "If he is caught it may be recovered. But I am afraid he will not be caught."

"I suppose there are descriptions of him published in the papers?" asked Coker.

"Yes. In this 'Daily Mail' his photograph is given."

Coker picked up the newspaper, which was open at the page, giving the description of the missing solicitor.

The photograph was that of a man in early middle life, with a dark beard and side-whiskers and a bald head. He looked the very picture of professional respectability. Coker shook a big fist at the photograph.

"The rotter!" he said. "I'll keep this! If I could get leave away from Greyfriars, I'd have a hunt for the scoundrel myself. I don't believe the police are much good in dealing with a really cunning scoundrel like this man Rooke!"

"I believe you could do it, dear Horace, if anyone could," said Miss Coker with a fond smile. "But I am afraid there is very little hope."

"While there's life there's hope," said Coker. "We'll have the beast somehow!"

"I—I was afraid you might reproach me, Horace dear!" faltered Aunt Judith. "You have made me very happy by taking it like this. I don't mind so much now."

"Reproach you, Aunt Judy!" ejaculated Coker in surprise. "My hat! I should be a pretty sort of a rotter if I did, shouldn't I?"

"I ought to have known you better, my dear boy! I ought to have known that you would be a comfort to me!" said Miss Coker.

"I'll try to be," said Coker. "Anyway, you've always got me, Aunt Judy. You'll be all right so long as you've got me to look after you!"

"You must be hungry after your journey," said Aunt Judy. "How selfish of me not to think of it before!"

"Yes, pretty peckish!" confessed Coker.

And in a very short time Coker was sitting down to a handsome spread, nothing in Aunt Judy's house being too good for the beloved Horace.

The shock of the bad news had evidently had no effect upon the appetite of Coker of the Fifth.

He made a remarkably good supper. He talked cheerfully while he ate, and under the influence of his talk, and his presence, the poor old lady cheered up wonderfully.

"You mustn't worry and give in, you know," Coker admonished. "You've got to keep a stiff upper lip, you know. Depend on it, we'll have that rascal somehow. I'm going to take the matter in hand myself!"



"Come on, you fat cad!" yelled Reggie Coker, dancing round Bunter, with his fists lashing wildly in the air. "I'll thrash you! I'll lick you! Come on!" (See Chapter 3).

Miss Coker smiled faintly.

"But what can you do, Horace?"

"Well, I haven't made any plans yet, of course," said Coker. "I must have time to think it over. I'm going to stop here to-night. I've got leave. Tomorrow I'll go back to Greyfriars and ask the Head for leave. I'll tell him you want me—in fact, you'd better write a letter for me to take to him."

"Very well, Horace!"

"Then I'll start on the job!" said Horace airily. "I'll think over a plan of some sort. A chap with my brains ought to be able to deal with a rascal like this fellow Rooke."

"But, my dear boy—"

"You keep your pecker up, auntie," said Horace. "You can tell me all you know about the villain after supper, and I'll think it out. When I get leave from the Head I'll start looking for him. You'll see how it'll turn out!"

"My dear, dear boy, I shouldn't wonder if you could succeed where everybody else has failed!" said Miss Coker fondly.

"You'll see," said Horace confidently.

And whether Coker of the Fifth would succeed in finding the absconding solicitor or not, there was no doubt that he succeeded in cheering up the stricken old lady, and making her feel more hopeful for the future, and that was a great deal. Indeed, Aunt Judy almost felt that she was glad that it had happened, since it had shown her the noble side of her nephew's nature. There had not been wanting envious relatives, who had hinted that the favourite nephew was "on the make," and that Coker's chief concern for his Aunt Judy was to have his name in her will. But there was no doubt now that Horace was play-

ing up like a true Briton, and the kind old lady felt that she no longer missed the fortune of which she had been robbed as she listened to him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Photograph!

THERE was a thaw the next day, and Harry Wharton & Co., when they came out of the School House after morning lessons, found the Close weeping with water.

The snow had vanished and snowballing was over; but there was no chance of football with the ground in its present state.

"Ripping weather—I don't think!" growled Bob Cherry. "We sha'n't be able to play Courtfield to-morrow. I wonder where old Coker is? I don't think he came back last night."

Harry Wharton called to Potter of the Fifth as he came down to the door.

"Heard anything of Coker?" he asked. Potter shook his head.

"He didn't come back last night," he said. "Some of the chaps say he's going to leave Greyfriars. Poor old Coker!"

And Potter went out whistling.

"That's all Potter feels about it," said Frank Nugent with a sniff. "He might try to look sorry, anyway. I believe it's a fact Aunt Judy paid Coker's fees here."

"But his people are well off," said Bob Cherry. "Coker won't have to go—that's all rot. Only he won't be rolling in money as he used to be. It will be rather a change for poor old Coker. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

Coker of the Fifth came tramping THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"COKER'S CAPTURE!"

A SPLENDID STORY OF THE JUNIORS OF GREY-FRIARS. By FRANK RICHARDS.

across the Close towards the School House.

He nodded genially to the chums of the Remove.

Coker, like many another fellow who has had bad luck, had made the painful discovery that his friends were mostly of the fair-weather variety.

Potter and Greene had expressed their sympathy, and gone about their own affairs with as much equanimity as usual. Fitzgerald had said he was sorry, and specially sorry that he couldn't settle a few pounds he owed Coker, and then dismissed the matter from his mind. The fellows who felt most about the matter, curiously enough, were Coker's old enemies of the Remove—Harry Wharton & Co. Coker was not much given to reasoning things out, but he felt instinctively that Harry Wharton and his chums were the fellows he could most depend upon just then, if he wanted help of any sort.

"What luck, Coker?" asked Wharton, as the Fifth-Former came in.

Coker might have been his eldest chum by the way he spoke.

"I've seen my aunt," said Coker, rather glumly. "It's rotten. That beast Rooke has simply cleaned her out."

"I read it all in Mr. Quelch's newspaper this morning," said Wharton.

"The police are not on the track yet."

Coker sniffed.

"And they won't ever be," he said. "They're no good. The villain has hidden himself somewhere with the money, and I suppose he's going to lie low till the bobbies give it up, and then he'll clear off with the loot. I'm going to take the matter up myself."

"You!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes; I'm going to hunt for the rascal, and jolly well find him somehow," said Coker.

"How are you going to start?" asked Nugent.

"I don't quite know yet," Coker confessed; "but I shall manage it somehow. A chap with my brains ought to be able to do something, you know."

"Ahem! Exactly!"

"I've got the beast's photograph here," said Coker. "Looks a very respectable old Johnny. Of course, that's how he came to take Aunt Judy in. If Aunt Judy gets the money back she's going to consult me in future, she's promised. That will be all right; but we've got to get it back."

"Rather a big job," suggested Johnny Bull.

"Yes, I'm going to slog at it somehow," said Coker rather vaguely.

"Let's have a look at his chivvy," said Harry.

Coker handed him the photograph. The chums of the Remove gathered round and looked at it.

A slightly puzzled expression came over Harry Wharton's face as he scanned the pictured features.

"By Jove!" he murmured.

"Looks a respectable old blighter, don't he?" said Coker.

"Yes; but it's queer," said Wharton slowly. "I know that chivvy. I'll swear I've seen it somewhere."

"Same here," said Nugent. "I'm blessed if I don't know that face somehow. I've seen him somewhere or other, I'm sure of it."

Coker looked interested.

"Sure of that?" he asked.

"I feel quite sure," said Wharton positively. "Of course, it may be a man like him that I've seen. But somehow I think it was the same."

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"Where did you see him. And when?" Wharton shook his head.

"That I can't say. But the face is familiar—I know that. I'll try to think it out. It'll come to me some time. Have you got another photograph of the rotter?"

"Yes, two or three."

"Then may I keep this" asked Harry, "for a time, I mean? I'll be able to think, sooner or later, where I've seen him."

"Keep it, certainly," said Coker. "If you could give me a clue I'd be jolly glad; but I don't see how you could have seen him. He wouldn't be likely to come anywhere near Greyfriars, of course."

"I suppose not; and yet—"

"Of course, he might have come down to Pegg to get a ship across into Holland or Germany," said Coker thoughtfully. "Do you think it was in Pegg you saw him?"

"I can't say; but I'll swear I've seen that chivvy somewhere, and lately, too. Not quite the same—there's a difference somehow—and yet it's the same face." Harry Wharton wrinkled his brows in deep thought. "I wonder where; but I'm certain of it."

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"Well, if you think of anything let me know," said Coker. "I'm going to see the Head now. I'm going to get leave of absence to look for the rotter."

And Coker went in. The Famous Five remained staring curiously at the photograph.

To four of them it seemed that they had seen that strangely marked face somewhere before. Hurree Janset Ram Singh being the only one who confessed that he had no knowledge of it. But Wharton and Nugent and Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry were certain that they had seen it somewhere before.

Where—and when? Those questions they tried in vain to answer.

"Well, it's no good cudgelling our brains about it any longer," said Wharton, slipping the photograph into his pocket. "It'll come to us sooner or later, I think. There goes the dinner-bell!"

And the juniors went in to dinner. Coker was at his place at the Fifth Form table, looking much more

thoughtful than usual. He had obtained leave of absence from the Head, and that afternoon he was leaving the school to make his wild attempt to find the missing solicitor. Now that he was face to face with his task the difficulties of it were beginning to dawn upon Coker of the Fifth, and he was feeling a little less confident.

His intentions were soon known all over Greyfriars, and a good many of the fellows chuckled at the idea of old Coker playing detective.

"Poor old Coker!" Potter murmured to Greene. "He always was funny, but I think he's funnier than ever now."

"Fairly takes the biscuit," agreed Greene. "Might as well look for a needle in a haystack, too. Poor old Coker!"

"Faith, and it'll keep him amused," Fitzgerald remarked.

Coker came to say good-bye to the Famous Five before he left.

"Haven't thought of where you've seen that chivvy—eh?" asked Coker.

"No," said Harry. "I'm still trying to think."

"Well, if you think of anything you can let me know; you know my address."

"Right-ho!"

"I hope I shall have some luck," said Coker dubiously. "It's a big job. Anyway, I shall be able to look after my Aunt Judy a bit. She's awfully cut up, and she likes to have me with her. She's been jolly good to me, and it's only fair that I should look after her a bit. Well, good-bye, kids! You might keep an eye on my minor for me while I'm away. Some of the chaps will start ragging him when I'm not here to stop 'em."

"We'll look after Reggie," Wharton promised.

"Thanks!"

And Horace Coker departed.

"Good chap!" said Bob Cherry, looking after him as he strode away. "But how he can possibly think that he's got any chance of finding that fellow Rooke beats me."

"Of course, that's all rot!" agreed Wharton. "I wish he could be found, though. It's curious that we all feel sure we've seen that face before, and yet can't think where we've seen it."

"Jolly curious," agreed Nugent. "I've been turning it over and over in my mind, and I can't get on to it."

"Must have been lately, too," said Johnny Bull rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "But when and where—that's the rub!"

The chums of the Remove thought it over, and thought it over again and again. The more they regarded the photograph, and the more they reflected upon it, the more certain they felt that they had seen the man somewhere—somehow.

But the questions when and where they could not answer. It was in vain that they tried to "place" him. They were puzzled and mystified, and considerably worried by their failure to solve the mystery. But they did not dismiss the matter from their minds. Sooner or later, Harry Wharton felt, it would flash into his mind when and where he had seen the man, and then there would be something to tell Coker, to assist him in his hopeless search.

THE END.

(There will be another grand complete story of the Greyfriars Chums next Tuesday in the POPULAR, entitled "Coker's Capture!" By Frank Richards. Order your copy early.)

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(Author of the Famous School Tales of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars—appearing in The "Magnet" Library.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. In the Clouds!

WERE in for it!" Bob Lawless broke a long silence with that remark. Frank Richards nodded, and Vere Beauclerc gave an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

There was no doubt that the chums of Cedar Creek School were "in for it." Darkness had fallen on the hills and the plains.

Through the deep gloom the runaway balloon drifted on the wind, keeping on, hour after hour, to the north-west, as the wind blew it.

Many a long mile behind lay Cedar Creek School—and somewhere in the great distance was Hiram K. Chowder, the American gentleman to whom the balloon belonged.

Whether Mr. Chowder would ever see his balloon again was a question, and whether Frank Richards & Co. would ever see their homes again was a still more serious question.

Seated in the swinging car, holding on as it rocked in the wind, they had watched plain and hill and forest glide away beneath them.

Long since they had crossed the Fraser River, the last landmark they knew.

Before them lay the boundless North-West, far away the great Cascade Mountains, and beyond them the Pacific slope and the great ocean.

"The jay!" went on Bob morosely. "What did he want to get blown away in his silly balloon for, and get landed in the Thompson Valley hay?"

Frank Richards smiled faintly. "Mr. Chowder couldn't help that, Bob." "I guess he ought to have helped it," growled Bob. "And I guess we were a set of jays to bother about catching his old balloon for him. And we were a bigger set of jays to get into the blessed car at all. And as for that villain, Gunten, who cut us adrift, I'll make his face look like a clam pie when I get back."

"When!" sighed Frank. "Oh, we'll get back," said Bob, who had the great grief of never being depressed by any kind of circumstances. "We're not dead yet. If we only had something to eat!"

"If!" "I've searched round the car," said Beauclerc. "There's nothing to eat—nothing at all in the way of food. Mr. Chowder wasn't provided for a voyage when he went up in his balloon."

"Well, I'm going to sleep," said Bob, yawning.

ing. "No good ever came of worrying and grouching. Wake me up if we fall and break our necks, will you?"

"Fathead!" said Frank, laughing. Bob Lawless rolled himself in the rugs in the bottom of the car.

It was weary work, sitting in the car and watching the blank darkness below.

The swelling mass of the great gas envelope hid the stars from their sight overhead.

It was safe enough to lie down in the car; it was swinging with a gentle motion as the balloon rolled onward.

Deep and steady breathing announced in a few minutes that the cheery Bob was fast asleep.

Frank Richards looked down on him with a smile.

"May as well do the same, Beau," he remarked.

"I was just thinking so," said Beauclerc. "Nothing to keep awake for."

"There's a rug apiece, anyway," said Frank. "It's jolly cold up here. I think I can sleep, though."

The two schoolboys joined Bob Lawless on the floor of the car.

They slept through long hours of darkness. The balloon drifted on.

When Frank Richards opened his eyes at last he blinked in dazzling sunlight.

It was morning—the bright, keen morning of Canadian spring.

Frank sat up in the car.

For a moment or two he hardly remembered where he was, and he expected to see round him the familiar walls of his room at the Lawless Ranch.

But recollection returned at once. "Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

He threw off the rug and scrambled to his feet.

It was chilly, but the sun was growing warmer.

Bob Lawless yawned and sat up. "Hallo! Where are we?" he murmured.

"Goodness knows!" answered Frank. He looked over the rim of the car.

Rocky uplands, intersected by streams, patched with dark forest, met his eyes, and in the distance, in the west, great mountains barred the horizon.

"Oh, I'm hungry!" said Bob.

"No breakfast this morning," remarked Beauclerc.

"Looks like it. There's one comfort, though," said Bob—"no school to-day!"

Evidently Bob Lawless, at least, was determined to keep an eye on the silver lining to the cloud.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Landed at Last!

FRANK RICHARDS gazed downward at the vast panorama outspread below the drifting balloon.

It was a magnificent sight, one of the wildest and most picturesque regions of British Columbia.

There was no sign of settlements. All was wild, untrodden, as if fresh from Nature's hand.

Bob Lawless jerked his thumb to the west. "The Cascade Mountains," he said. "There's no other range that size between the Fraser and the sea."

Frank whistled. "Then we're a good way from home," he said.

"We've got to get something to eat," said Bob. "I shall begin on one of you if we don't get something soon. We've got to go down somehow, Franky."

Frank knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"There don't seem to be any settlements," he said. "Not much good landing there. Bob, if we could do it. We couldn't walk home, hundreds of miles, I suppose. And there's nothing to eat."

Bob grunted.

"Put me down there, and I'll soon find something to eat," he answered. "I wish I had my gun here. But I can snare any animal that ever hopped or crawled. And there's plenty of game, at any rate. But how are we going down? That valve thing won't work."

"Suppose we wait till we come in sight of settlements?" asked Beauclerc.

"And suppose we don't sight any till we're carried into the Cascade Mountains?" answered Bob. "It's safe to land hereabouts, anyway. Besides, we can ascend again if we want to by pitching out some of those sacks of sand."

"Yes, that's so." Frank took hold of the valve-cord and pulled it. But the valve was jammed, and did not move.

"Same as before," he said. "Look here, we've got to work the dashed thing!" said Bob. "Let's all grab it and tug. Something's bound to go!"

Frank and Beauclerc looked very grave. "The whole contraption might collapse, and let us down with a rush," said Frank. "I don't want to land in a jelly."

"It's a good thousand feet to drop," said Beauclerc.

"But we can't keep in the air for the rest

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NEXT TUESDAY! "IN THE WILD NORTH-WEST!"

A MAGNIFICENT STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS & CO. BY MORTON CLIFFORD.

of our natural lives. Let's try it, and chance our luck. Don't I keep on telling you that I'm hungry?" said Bob sympathetically.

"I—I suppose we'd better," said Frank. "You bet!"

"What do you say, Bean?"

"Oh, let's try it!" said Beauclerc.

"All together, then!"

The three schoolboys grasped the valve-cord and tugged, putting all their strength into it.

This time they were successful. There was a cracking sound, and it was followed by a sudden rush down of the balloon.

"Hold on!" yelled Bob. They held on for their lives. The balloon was spinning downwards. Below them the earth seemed rushing up to meet them.

Thin silver streaks suddenly loomed into streams and creeks, dark patches into great forests.

The sudden descent made them giddy. Frank caught at the cord again.

It occurred to him that the valve could be closed to make the descent slower.

There were several cords, and which to pull he did not know.

He dragged at them all in turn while the car rushed downward.

Fortunately, the descent was arrested. Right down to within fifty feet of the solid earth she rushed, and then it slowed and steadied and floated.

Bob Lawless gasped. Even his face was white.

"I—I guess that was a close call!" he panted.

"We're still going down," said Beauclerc. "Not so fast, though!" gasped Frank. "Oh, my hat! I don't want to go through that again!"

Under the car the earth was close now. A green plain lay beneath them, dotted with clumps of trees, and they caught sight of gophers among the grass.

An antelope looked up from a creek where it stood drinking, stared at the balloon, and bawled.

"There's our breakfast, if I had my rifle!" said Bob Lawless regretfully.

"Nothing here but an axe," said Frank. "You'd better get after the next one with the axe, Bob."

"Oh, rats!" answered Bob. "I say, we're landing all right. We shall touch earth in a few minutes."

The balloon was drifting on slowly, and approaching the earth gradually but surely. It touched at last, but the contact gave it a fresh impetus, and from the bump on the ground it shot up to a height of fifty feet.

"Sold!" grinned Bob, holding on to the netting. "Next time does it slick!"

But the next time did not do it. The balloon bumped and rose three times in succession before the car finally touched the ground and rested there, almost on the verge of a silvery creek in a sunny woodland glade.

But it rested at last. Bob Lawless put one leg over the rim of the great wicker-basket, but Frank caught him hastily by the shoulder.

"Hold on, fathead!"

"What's the row?"

"You don't want to land alone, do you? When your weight's gone, the dashed thing will jump up, to a cert, and it mayn't land again for miles!"

Bob whistled.

"Right as rain, Frank!" he said. "I dare say that's how Chowder lost his balloon—jumping out too soon. We've got to fasten the contraption first, somehow. The grapple's lost."

"There's bound to be a spare one in the car," said Frank.

A hurried search disclosed a big iron hook with a rope attached.

Frank lowered the hook over the side of the car, and caught it in a gnarled root of a tree by the creek.

The rope was fastened to the car.

"All safe now," said Bob. "But I'll run a rope down to that root; that hook might pull loose."

The car was safely held, and Bob jumped out now, with another rope in his hand.

He ran round the big root that cropped out of the earth and knotted it securely.

Then he detached the hook, and threw it into the car.

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"Safely anchored!" he said cheerfully. "Jump out, chaps!"

Frank and Beauclerc joined him on the greensward, glad enough to stretch their legs again on solid earth.

The balloon, lightened of their weight, strained at the rope, but it firmly held.

There were loops and dents in the gas-envelope, no longer fully distended; but the valve was closed, and ample gas remained to carry the balloon into the clouds if it had broken loose.

"I guess this is better," remarked Bob. "Anybody got any idea where we are?"

"Give it up," answered Frank.

"After all, that's not the important question. Grub comes first," said Bob. "This wood is full of birds, and I know how to cook. You fellows build a fire while I look for game."

And the hungry three were soon busy.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man with the Ear-rings.

"I GUESS I feel better!"

Bob Lawless made that remark a couple of hours later.

He was lying on his back in the grass, with his hands beneath his head, staring up at the blue sky, across which a great eagle was winging its flight.

The camp-fire had died down, the sun blazed on the glade, and it was warm. The three schoolboys had eaten a hearty meal.

It was a primitive one, but they were too hungry to mind that.

Bob Lawless had snared a couple of birds in the wood, and they had been cooked over the fire. Bob was a pastmaster at that kind of thing.

"Same here!" said Frank Richards. "If it wasn't for the people at home being anxious about us, I shouldn't mind how long this lasted. It's better than school, though I like Cedar Creek."

"I've often thought of having a holiday up in the North-West," said Bob. "It's a splendid idea, hunting, fishing, shooting, canoeing—everything! What price coming this way in the summer holidays—not in a balloon, of course?"

"Ripping!" said Frank.

"Good idea!" assented Beauclerc. "I'd like to know where it is, though. It looks as if nobody has ever been here, not even an Indian!"

"Wrong!" said Bob.

"You've not seen anyone?" exclaimed Frank, sitting up.

"No; but I found a track in the wood when I was after the birds," answered Bob. "Somebody has been through these woods last night."

"A Redskin?"

"No; white man."

"How do you know?" asked Frank.

Frank Richards was not yet so well up in Western lore as he afterwards became.

Bob grunted.

"If it was a Redskin it would be a moccasin track," he answered. "It was a boot-track—a white man's boot, and a good size, too. I didn't pay much attention to it. I was after the gophers. But I guess a white man came down to the creek last night, and hoofed it off eastward in the morning. That's the way the trail went."

"I wish he'd stayed to see us," remarked Frank. "He might have given us a tip how to reach some kind of a town."

"The country mayn't be so lonely as it looks," observed Beauclerc. "If there's one white man about, there may be others."

"Likely enough; and Redskins, too!"

"I—I suppose the Redskins will be all right if we happen on them," said Frank Richards doubtfully.

"Oh, I reckon so!" replied Bob. "Canadian Indians aren't great on the warpath these days. Of course one might fall in with a plundering gang in the outlying parts. But they're mostly all right. Hallo!"

He sat up suddenly, shading his eyes with his hand, and looked away through the opening in the trees.

His chums followed his glance.

"A white man!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Not the man who made the track I saw," said Bob. "That galoot was on foot, and this pilgrim is mounted."

The schoolboys watched the stranger as he advanced.

The horseman had suddenly ridden into sight from behind a clump of timber.

He drew rein, staring blankly at the sight of the balloon, and then gave his horse a touch of the spur, and came on at a gallop.

The chums rose to their feet, waiting for his arrival.

They were glad to see a white man in that solitude, but as the horseman came closer their feelings were rather mixed.

He was a young man, with a dark, handsome face, and hair worn rather long in ringlets.

He was dressed in buckskin, with a velvet jacket and high boots, his face shaded by a wide-brimmed Stetson hat.

His face, handsome as it certainly was, was not one to inspire confidence.

There was a rifle attached to his saddle, and the butt of a revolver showed from a holster in his belt, as well as the handle of a knife.

"By gum!" murmured Bob Lawless. "I guess I'd just as soon not meet that pilgrim. He looks like one of the sports from a frontier camp—a regular dandy, by gum! What can he be doing here?"

The stranger rode up with a clatter of hoofs, and drew rein close by the schoolboys at the last moment.

"Hallo!" said the horseman, as he halted and stared at the trio.

"Hallo to you!" answered Bob.

"How did you get here?"

Bob pointed to the balloon.

"I guess that beats me," said the horseman, staring at the balloon. "I've seen them down under, but never in this hyer region. I guess I haven't seen a balloon since I lit out from Frisco three years ago."

"There's your chance, then," said Bob gravely. "No charge for looking at it."

The man stared at him.

"Not too much of your lip, youngster!" he said. "I don't take lip from a kid of your sort."

"No," said Bob, with polite inquiry.

"No, sir!"

The dusky-faced man in the ear-rings slid from his horse, and stood for some moments staring at the balloon, and then about him.

There was a peculiar watchfulness in his keen face, and his eyes were never at rest.

"Had your breakfast?" asked Frank Richards, breaking the silence. "We've got a little left, if you haven't."

The Californian smiled.

"I guess I've fed," he said. "I guess I'm looking for a galoot, and I guess you children may have seen him. A galoot about six feet high—wounded, I reckon, and on foot. Have you seen such a critter?"

"We've seen nobody," answered Beauclerc. "A friend of yours?" asked Frank.

The man grinned, showing a dazzling set of white teeth.

"I guess that's neither here nor there," he replied. "I guess I want to find Bill Lomax, alive or dead. The critter came this way. I calculate he must have struck this creek last sundown. And you've not seen him?"

"No."

The Californian knitted his brows. His restless eyes watched the boys' faces, as if to read there whether they were speaking the truth.

"Did you say the man was wounded?" asked Bob Lawless very quietly.

"I reckon!"

"How was he wounded?"

The man with the ear-rings showed his white teeth again in a smile that was not pleasant to see.

"I guess he was standing in front of a six-shooter when it went off, sonny," he answered.

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Your six-shooter, perhaps?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps," assented the Californian coolly. Frank Richards uttered an exclamation.

"You shot him?" he cried.

"I guess, sonny, that the less questions you ask, the better it may be for your health," said the newcomer. "I don't savvy where you come from, but if you've been in the camps up and down the Cascade Range, you've maybe heard my name—Alf Carson—you'd hear me spoken of as Handsome Alf."

Frank's lip curled a little. He had never heard of the man, naturally, but he could guess that "Handsome Alf" enjoyed a certain amount of notoriety, of an unpleasant kind, in his own neighbourhood, and was conceited on the subject.

He was one of those peculiar characters found on the unsettled frontier of a new

country, who rejoiced in the reputation of being a "bad" man and a "hard case."

"Never heard the name—eh?" asked the Californian.

"Never!"

"Well, if you'd heard it, you'd know that Handsome Alf is not the galoot to be fooled with," said the man with the ear-rings. "I guess you're going to tell me what you know about Bill Lomax."

"But we know nothing about him."

"He must have struck this creek about sundown. He had a Colt bullet in his carcase somewhere, and I guess he must have been almost done when he got this far. How long have you been here?"

"Two or three hours."

"Then you were here soon after sun-up?"

"Yes."

"And you've seen nary critter?"

"No."

Carson pointed to the remainder of the breakfast.

"I guess you went afield, looking for those birds," he remarked. "Didn't you see any sign in the wood?"

No answer.

The man's black eyes glittered.

"You saw sign?" he snapped.

"No good asking us questions," said Bob shortly. "You've as good as owned that you wounded the man you are looking for. Do you think we would help you find him, to finish your work, if we could?"

"I guess you'll help me, sonny, if you can," said the man with the ear-rings, with a deadly look at the Canadian schoolboy. He loosened the revolver in his belt, and drew it out. "Do you see this shootin'-iron? Do you know that Alf Carson would pot you as soon as a turkey, if his dander was riz? You've seen Bill Lomax's trail. Where?"

Bob Lawless shut his teeth, and faced the desperado calmly.

He did not answer.

"You've seen his trail?" shouted Carson.

"Yes," answered Bob. "At any rate, I've seen a trail."

"Big size in boots?"

"Yes."

"That's the galoot. Where?"

"I'm not going to tell you!" answered Bob quietly. "You can do your dirty work without any assistance from me, Mr. Handsome Alf Carson!"

The man looked at him, and turned the cylinder of his revolver with a little click, as if to ascertain that it was in good order. Then his dusky hand rose, and the deadly tube was levelled at Bob Lawless.

"You'll walk before me, sonny, and show me that trail," he said slowly and distinctly; "and if you don't get a move on I'll lay you dead in your tracks, just where you stand! Savvy?"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
"Hands Up!"

BOB LAWLESS drew a quick, hard breath.

The three schoolboys were pale now.

The hammer of the revolver rose slightly, the black eyes of the Californian gleaming behind it.

"I guess you'd better speak!" he said, showing his teeth.

Vere Beauclerc had fallen back a pace, and his right hand was behind him.

His hand was groping in his hip-pocket, where he kept his clasp-knife.

He knew that he could not get to close quarters with the ruffian to use that weapon.

The revolver was levelled at Bob, but in a twinkling the ruffian could have changed the direction of the weapon, if Beauclerc had advanced towards him.

Beau was not thinking of that.

He was thinking of using the closed knife as a missile.

It was a terrible moment, but the Cherub was as cool as ice; his nerve never faltered.

His hand came out of the hip-pocket with the clasp-knife gripped in it—still hidden behind him.

The Californian's black eyes were fastened on Bob, though the other two were within his line of vision.

"You hear me, sonny?" he said.

"I hear you," answered Bob quietly.

"I guess I'm after Bill Lomax. Why, I'll wing the three of you as soon as I look at you!" said Carson savagely. "I tell you, boy, that if you don't walk in front of me straight to that trail, I'll lay you on the ground as

dead as John Brown! Do you think I'm fooling?"

"No."

"Get a move on, then!"

Bob Lawless did not stir.

"I'll count two!" said Handsome Alf, with an oath. "And then—One—"

Whiz!

Vere Beauclerc's hand shot through the air like a bullet, and struck the Californian fairly between the eyes.

Crack!

The impact of the heavy knife on the ruffian's brow was like the crack of a whip.

With a yell of pain the startled ruffian staggered back, his arm swaying downward.

He pulled the trigger instinctively, but the bullet drove into the soil at his feet.

With the spring of a tiger, Bob Lawless bounded at him, acting on the instant.

His fist caught the staggering man well under the chin, and drove him backwards.

Alf Carson crashed on the ground, and even as he touched earth Frank Richards was trampling furiously on his right arm.

The revolver was kicked away in a twinkling.

The ruffian, yelling with pain, scrambled up, his hand dragging at the knife in his belt.

But Vere Beauclerc had pounced upon the revolver.

His hand closed on it, and he raised it, and the tube bore full upon Alf Carson's breast.

"Touch that knife, and you're a dead man!"

Beauclerc's voice rang out sharply, with a deadly ring in it.

He meant every word.

The hammer was rising under the pressure

of his finger, and in another instant the bullet would have sped.

"Hold your hand!" panted the man with the ear-rings. "Hold!"

"Put up your hands, you scoundrel!"

"I—I—"

"Up with them, I tell you!" rapped out Beauclerc. "I'll shoot you like a dog, if you don't!"

Alf Carson's hands went up quick enough. "Clasp your hands over your head," said Beauclerc. "Sharp, now!"

The ruffian, grinding his teeth, obeyed.

"Keep them like that," said Beauclerc quietly. "I will kill you, you hound, like a wild beast, if you give any trouble! Take his knife away, Frank."

"Good old Cherub!" gasped Bob.

Frank Richards advanced towards the baffled ruffian, whose eyes glittered at him like a reptile's.

But the levelled revolver was within four feet of him, and Beauclerc's look was deadly.

Handsome Alf's life hung by a thread, and he knew it.

He made no resistance as Frank Richards detached the hunting-knife, in its case, from his belt.

"Take the rifle from his saddle, Bob."

"You bet!" grinned Bob.

"Take away his cartridges, too."

"I'll see to that," said Frank. "Keep the rotter covered, Cherub!"

"Rely on me!"

The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth, but he made no move.

Life was dear to Handsome Alf, and his life was trembling in the balance.

Bob Lawless detached the rifle from the saddle, and a case of rifle-cartridges.

Bob slid a cartridge into the rifle.

"I guess I'm ready for him now," he



Bob Lawless fell headlong into the car, and Beauclerc sprang in after him. A moment later Frank Richards was slashing at the rope. Crack! crack! The rustlers were firing wildly as they galloped on, and the bullets came closer. (See Chapter 5.)

remarked. "No more of your monkey-tricks, Mr. Handsome Alf, or I'll make you look a little less handsome, by gum!"

"I'll have your lives for this!" muttered the ruffian, choking with rage.

"Your life is in our hands," said Beaulercr contemptuously. "You deserve to be shot down like a wild beast!"

Handsome Alf ground his teeth.

"You've left him no weapons?" asked Beaulercr.

"No fear!"

"Good! You can get on your horse, Mr. Carson, and ride away," said Beaulercr. "And if you're not out of range in five minutes, I'll open fire!"

"And if you want your shooting-irons you can call at the Lawless Ranch, in the Thompson Valley, and ask for them," said Bob. "Now, vamoose, you skunk, or I'll give you a hiding with your own trail-ropes before you go!"

Without another word the Californian stepped to his horse and mounted.

He gave the chums of Cedar Creek one deadly look, and rode away.

They watched him till the dip of the plain hid him from sight.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
A Narrow Escape!

"BY gum!" said Bob Lawless, with a deep breath.

The schoolboys' hearts were still beating fast after the horseman had vanished from sight.

Frank Richards glanced at the balloon.

"I fancy we'd better clear," he observed. "That rafter may not be alone here, and if he comes back with others—"

"Just what I was thinking," said Bob. "This section isn't healthy."

"Hold on!" said Beaulercr quietly. "What about the man he was speaking of—Bill Lomax? That must be the man whose trail you saw in the wood, Bob."

"I reckon so."

"If he was wounded, it is quite likely that he is still near at hand."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Ought we not to look for him?" asked Beaulercr. "He may be lying helpless in the wood, within a mile of us. If that murderous villain has friends near, as is very likely, he will soon be on the track again. The man's life is threatened; you can see that."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"Let's hustle to where you found the trail, and follow it," said Beaulercr.

"Right!"

Leaving the balloon and the camp behind, the three schoolboys started for the wood, Bob Lawless leading the way.

In the heart of the wood they came upon the trail Bob had discovered hours before. It was still fresh and easily traced.

A heavy man, with dragging feet, had passed that way; the track was deep in the soil.

And as the schoolboys followed it Bob Lawless pointed to a clot of dark blood here and there on the leaves of the thickets.

The wounded man had left traces of his passage as well as his footprints.

"Badly hurt, I should say," said Bob, in a low voice. "I guess that he can't have got far in that state!"

They pressed on.

The trail led them down to the waters of the creek, about a quarter of a mile from their camp.

There the deep tracks in the mud indicated what had happened.

The wounded man had stopped there to drink, and doubtless to wash his wounds.

In the mud the trail led away again up the stream, and turned into the wood once more, taking the schoolboys nearer to their camp.

"Hark!" exclaimed Frank suddenly.

There was a thick copse ahead of the schoolboys, and the trail ceased there.

From the thicket there came the sound of a rustle.

As the schoolboys stopped, a hoarse voice, faint with weakness, hailed them from the thicket.

"Stand back, Handsome Alf! You've found me, you hound! But if you come in front of my shooter—"

Crack!

A random bullet sang through the foliage.

"Hold on, man!" shouted Bob. "Friends!"

"What! Who are you?"

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NEXT TUESDAY! "IN THE WILD

"Friends!" called out Frank Richards. "Don't shoot!"

A bearded face, white and stained with blood, peered from the thicket, over a glimmering barrel.

Two deeply-sunken eyes scanned the schoolboys.

As the man discerned them clearly, he lowered his weapon.

"I reckon it was Handsome Alf and his gang," he muttered. "Did my bullet go near you?"

"Not within ten yards," grinned Bob. "Your hand ain't steady, old man!"

"Are you Bill Lomax?" asked Beaulercr.

"That's my name, sonny. I've never seen you before."

"Then you're the galoot Handsome Alf is after," said Bob. "And we've come to find you, uncle, and look after you. You're hurt?"

"I'm wounded."

"We've met your Handsome Alf," explained Bob. "We had a row with him, and took his shooting-irons away. You say he's got a gang with him?"

"There are four of them."

"My hat!" said Frank Richards. "The sooner we get away the better! We're not looking for a pitched battle!"

"Can you walk, Mr. Lomax?" asked Beaulercr.

"I guess I can crawl!" The man emerged from the thicket, dragging himself with an effort. "I had a bullet from Handsome Alf's

getting on your trail. What is he trailing you for, anyway?"

Lomax's eyes gleamed.

"He's after my strike in the Cascade Mountains," he said. "I'm a prospector, and I've made a rich strike. Handsome Alf got wind of it. They've been on my trail for three days. And yesterday they found me; but I got away again. I guess I should never have got back to Last Chance, though, if you hadn't met me!"

"Last Chance!" Bob repeated. "Is that far from here?"

"Two days' ride, down the range."

"No good to us, then. I reckon it will have to be the balloon," said Bob. "Come on! By gum, can you hear anything, Frank?"

"Hoofs!" said Frank.

"Hurry!"

From the plain in the distance came the echoing sound of horses' hoofs, at a gallop. The wood hid the riders from sight, but it was clear that they were not far away.

Gallop, gallop!

The schoolboys hurried across the glade towards the camp.

They knew that Alf Carson was returning with his companions, to avenge his defeat; they could guess with what intentions he was returning.

"Cut ahead, Franky, and get in the car," breathed Bob. "Get ready to cast off. Get the axe to cut the rope—there'll be no time to untie it."

Frank hesitated a moment, loth to leave the rest; but Bob was evidently right, and he obeyed.

He ran his hardest for the balloon, and reached it, clambering into the car.

He pitched out bag after bag of sand, and the balloon strained at the rope.

With Lomax's additional weight in the car, it would not have risen, and it was necessary to get rid of the ballast, and there was no time to lose.

The balloon was the one chance of escape, and Frank had to risk pitching out too much.

The car had risen a foot from the ground, as the gas-envelope struggled to escape upward, but the rope held it there.

Frank placed the axe in readiness to cut through the rope, and then stood rifle in hand, waiting, with beating heart.

Beaulercr was on Lomax's other side now, and he and Bob were helping the wounded man along.

The big miner was making great efforts, the sweat pouring down his face, white under its bronze.

They had almost reached the car when the horsemen came sweeping into sight, round the end of the wood.

Handsome Alf rode ahead, spurring savagely. He had a rifle in his hand now.

Behind him rode four rough horsemen, rifle in hand like their leader.

Carson waved his hand towards the balloon, and called out to his followers.

They spurred on.

His voice came floating to Frank.

"By thunder! Lomax—I guess we've got him! Ride like thunder!"

The rustlers had seen their victim now.

But now Lomax was at the car, and Bob and Beaulercr were helping him in.

Frank Richards slashed at the rope again, him over the rim of the great wicket basket, and he sank down, gasping, into the bottom of the car.

Crack!

Carson's rifle rang out, and the bullet sang by.

"Quick!" panted Frank.

Bob Lawless rolled headlong into the car, and Vere Beaulercr sprang in after him. Frank Richards swung up the axe

Crash!

The keen edge of the axe fell upon the rope where it is passed over the edge of the car.

The rope twanged, but did not part.

Crack, crack! The rustlers were firing wildly as they galloped on, and the bullets came closer.

Frank Richards slashed at the rope again, and it parted, with a loud twang.

The next moment he stumbled over and fell, as the car, suddenly released, was dragged upward by the soaring balloon, as if a giant hand had plucked it away from the earth.

Up, and up, swinging and rocking; while below on the earth the baffled rustlers rode to and fro, firing into the air in an impotent fury after the victims who had escaped them!

THE END.

A MAGNIFICENT STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS & CO.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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REAL COLOURED FOOTBALL PHOTOS in the "BOYS' FRIEND." FINE AUTOGRAPHED ACTION PHOTOS in the "GEM" LIBRARY. GRAND REAL PHOTOS OF FAMOUS FOOTBALL TEAMS in the "MAGNET" LIBRARY.

revolver. I got it out last night by the creek; but I've lost blood. I crawled here, and could get no farther. When I heard your steps—" He shivered. "How did you get here?" he added.

"Dropped from the sky," said Bob.

"What?"

"We were in a runaway balloon," explained Frank Richards.

"By gosh!" ejaculated Bill Lomax.

"If you'd care to trust yourself in it, we'll take you where Mr. Handsome Alf can't get after you," said Bob. "Is it a cinch?"

"Bless you!" was the big American's answer.

"Lean on me," said Bob. "Take the rifle, Franky; and if you see Handsome Alf, let fly without stopping to ask questions."

The bearded man leaned heavily upon Bob's sturdy shoulder.

Without losing a moment the schoolboys headed for their camp.

The creek was their guide, and in a quarter of an hour more they came to the edge of the wood.

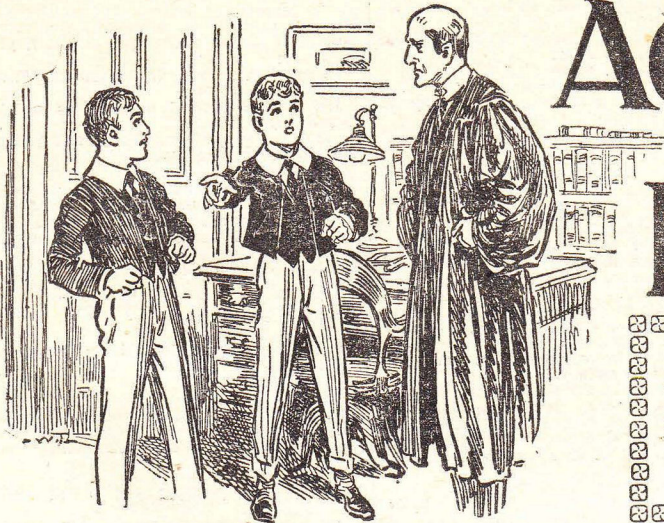
Bill Lomax's eyes opened wide as he caught sight of the balloon in the distance.

It was evidently the first time his eyes had rested upon such a thing.

"By gosh!" he repeated.

"There it is," said Frank Richards, with a smile. "Once in that, Mr. Lomax, Handsome Alf will not have much chance of

JIMMY SILVER & CO. ARE PUZZLED BY THE CURIOUS BEHAVIOUR OF TOMMY DODD, AND DECIDE TO DROP HIS ACQUAINTANCE!



ACCUSED BY HIS FRIEND!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST

(Stories of Rookwood appear every Monday in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver is too Good!

JIMMY SILVER halted suddenly. He seemed transfixed. His chums—Lovell and Raby and Newcome—stopped, too, in surprise. They stared at Jimmy, but Jimmy was not looking at them; he was staring at the window of the building the juniors were passing.

That window seemed to fascinate the captain of the Rookwood Fourth.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood had just turned out of Coombe High Street into the lane, on their way back to the school from the village.

On the outskirts of Coombe was the Bird-in-Hand inn, lying well back from the road.

It was a place with a most unsavoury reputation, and taboo to Rookwood fellows.

But Jimmy Silver seemed to be interested in it all of a sudden.

"What are you stopping for?" demanded Lovell. "There's old Manders coming up the street. Don't let him see us hanging about here!"

But Jimmy did not move or answer. "Jimmy, you ass!"

"The utter idiot!" said Jimmy Silver at last.

"Eh? Who?"

"Tommy Dodd! Look!"

"What are you looking at?"

"That window—on the ground-floor."

Lovell & Co followed his gaze in wonder. Then they all jumped.

At the open window, in front of the public-house, a youth was standing, with a cigarette between his lips, looking out into the street.

The Fistical Four were well aware that some Rookwood fellows occasionally dropped in at the Bird-in-Hand for a game of billiards—in strict secrecy, of course.

But they had never expected to see Tommy Dodd of the Fourth there.

The youth at the window glanced at the four juniors carefully.

He did not seem perturbed. As they gazed at him in astonishment he blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"My only hat!" stammered Lovell.

"Tommy Dodd!" murmured Raby. "In that den! I'd never have thought it of him!"

"And here's old Manders coming up the street!" muttered Newcome. "He will see him! Has Dodd gone off his chump?"

Jimmy Silver glanced over his shoulder. The angular figure of Mr. Manders, the senior Modern master at Rookwood, could be seen in the distance, coming towards them from the village.

If Mr. Manders spotted one of his boys in a place like the Bird-in-Hand, it was certain that something like an earthquake would happen.

Jimmy compressed his lips. Never for a moment had he suspected Tommy Dodd of "pub-haunting," like Peele and Gower, and the other nuts of the Fourth.

Tommy was a bright and healthy youth, and he seemed to live chiefly for outdoor games and for ragging the Classical juniors.

It was evident that his schoolfellows had been mistaken in him.

At least, that was the only conclusion the Fistical Four could come to.

"The utter idiot!" muttered Jimmy. "If he must play the goat, he needn't give himself away like that to any passer by smoking at the window! Why, the Head himself might pass!"

"Manders will spot him!" said Lovell. "Serve him right, too! What's he doing there, playing the goat?"

Jimmy Silver waved his hand to the youth at the window.

Surprised and disgusted as he was by this unexpected discovery, Jimmy did not like the idea of Mr. Manders catching Dodd in the very act of disregarding the strictest rules of the school.

The boy at the window stared at him, as if not understanding.

"Look out, Jimmy!" muttered Lovell. "Manders has got his eye on you! He'll think you've got acquaintances in that den!"

"I've got to warn that idiot!" said Jimmy. "This means a flogging—it might mean the boot for him!"

"Stop!" yelled Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver was already running towards the inn.

He reached the open window, breathless. "Get out of sight, you fool!" he panted.

The boy with the cigarette looked down at him.

"Are you talkin' to me?" he asked. "Yes, you ass! Manders is coming?"

"Eh?"

"Are you mad, Dodd?" shouted Jimmy, in wrath and amazement.

"Hallo! You know my name, do you?"

Jimmy Silver blinked at him.

That question made him doubt whether Tommy Dodd really was in his right senses.

"Know your name?" stammered Jimmy. "Of course I know your name, as well as you know mine! Get out of sight, you dummy! I tell you Mr. Manders is coming along the street! When he gets past those trees he'll see you!"

"If you're not potty, perhaps you'll explain what you're talking about," said the boy in the window calmly.

"You silly idiot—"

"Oh, draw it, mild! Do you want me to come out, and a voice called from within the room. "Your shot, Doddy!"

"All serene, Joey!"

The youth turned back from the window and disappeared.

Jimmy ran back to the road.

Dodd was gone from the window now, and was safe from discovery by the Modern master, at all events.

Jimmy Silver was not so lucky. "Come on!" he said hurriedly, as he rejoined his chums.

But the sharp, acid voice of Mr. Manders rapped out from behind.

"Stop! Stop at once!"

The Classical chums stopped reluctantly. Mr. Manders came up, his thin, acid face more acid than ever now.

Mr. Manders did not like the cheery four, and he was under the impression now that he had caught them in grave defection of duty.

"Yes, sir."

"You have just spoken to someone in that public-house!"

"I—I—" stammered Jimmy.

"Do not deny it, Silver. I saw you go up to that window, though I did not see to whom you were speaking."

Jimmy flushed red.

"I wasn't going to deny it!" he answered hotly.

"Very well. You admit it?" said Mr. Manders.

"Yes," granted the captain of the Fourth. "Whom were you speaking with?"

"A—a chap."

"Someone you know in that place?" asked Mr. Manders grimly.

"A—a fellow I know, certainly," said Jimmy. "I never expected to see him in a place like that, though."

"Then why did you speak to him?"

No answer.

"This is a very serious matter, Silver. If you were in my House I should deal with you very severely."

Jimmy was thankful that he was not in Mr. Manders' House.

"As it is," added Mr. Manders, "I shall report your conduct to your Form master. Return to Rookwood at once!"

The Classical chums looked rebellious for a moment.

A Modern master had no right to interfere with Classicals, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were sticklers for their rights.

But it was evidently more judicious to obey the command, and the Fistical Four turned and walked off to Rookwood.

Mr. Manders followed them, frowning.

"Buck up!" muttered Lovell. "Let's get out of sight of that blessed old gargoyle, at any rate!"

The juniors hurried, leaving Mr. Manders behind.

Jimmy Silver was not looking happy as

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they approached the gates of Rookwood School.

He had acted in a good-natured way to do Tommy Dodd a good turn, and he seemed likely to have to pay dearly for it.

"What on earth will you say to Bootles when that old Hun reports you, Jimmy?" asked Newcome.

"Blest if I know!"
"It means trouble."

"I know it does," growled Jimmy. "Bless Manders! Isn't it queer that his long nose is always where it is not wanted!"

"I—I suppose you can't explain about Tommy Dodd to Mr. Bootles," said Lovell hesitatingly.

"No, I can't give the silly idiot away, can I? It wouldn't do any good, either. Bootles wouldn't think it was my bizney to warn a silly blackguard that he was going to be spotted."

"I suppose he wouldn't!" grinned Lovell. "You're in for it, Jimmy!"

"Say something else nice and cheerful!" grunted Jimmy.

And the Fistical Four went in at the gates in a troubled mood.

It was quite certain that the captain of the Fourth was booked for trouble, and perhaps Jimmy Silver wished that he had not been quite so good-natured.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Called Over the Coals!

"SEEN Tommy?"

Two Modern juniors asked that question together as the Classical chums came in at the gates.

They were Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle of the Modern Fourth.

They were waiting at the gates for Tommy Dodd rather impatiently, as it was tea-time.

"Yes, we've seen him!" grunted Lovell.

"Did he have the eggs?" asked Doyle.

"The what?"

"Eggs! I suppose you know what eggs are?" said Doyle, surprised by Lovell's surprise.

"You learn that much on the Classical side, don't you?"

"Well, he didn't have any eggs when we saw him," said Lovell. "He wasn't at a place where you buy eggs, that's a cert."

"Oh, the gossoon!" said Doyle. "Sure, he was going to bring in the eggs for tea! Chap said they could be got, new laid and cheap, at Giles' farm, and Tommy went out on his bike to bag them. Where did you see him?"

"Not at Giles' farm, certainly!" said Jimmy Silver dryly.

"We saw him at the Bird-in-Hand pub, smoking a cigarette at the window of the billiard-room!" snorted Lovell.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" said Cook.

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Lovell.

Mr. Manders came in sight behind; and the Fistical Four went on towards the School House, leaving the two Tommies staring.

Certainly, if Tommy Dodd had gone on the "razzle" that afternoon, he had deceived his chums on the subject.

Their belief was that he had gone to Giles' farm to purchase the harmless and necessary eggs.

Mr. Manders, instead of going to his own House, followed Jimmy Silver & Co. to the School House.

Apparently the report to their Form master was to be made at once.

It was probably a gratifying task to the acid Mr. Manders, and he did not want to put it off.

"Silver!" he rapped out, as he followed them in.

"Yes, sir?"

"Follow me to Mr. Bootles' study!"

The Modern master whisked on ahead, and the juniors followed him into the presence of the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Bootles blinked at them over his spectacles.

He was not unaccustomed to receiving complaints from Mr. Manders, and he did not look specially agreeable as the Modern master whisked in.

"I have to report these boys—at least, Silver—for a very serious act!" said Mr. Manders pompously. "Silver, under my very eyes, was speaking to some acquaintance at a low public-house in the village, Mr. Bootles!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles.

"The other boys waited in the road while he did so," said Mr. Manders. "I leave the matter in your hands, Mr. Bootles."

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"Thank you, Mr. Manders!"

Mr. Manders ought to have departed with that, but he did not.

He remained, as if loth to lose sight of his prey.

"Silver, what have you to say?" asked the mild little Form master.

"I was doing no harm, sir."

"You spoke to some person in a—ah—ahem!—public-house?" asked Mr. Bootles, in his most magisterial manner.

"The place known as the Bird-in-Hand," put in Mr. Manders.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "This is very serious! You are well aware, Silver, that that exceedingly disreputable place is strictly out of bounds! To whom, pray, were you speaking?"

Jimmy Silver reddened, and hesitated.

He could not mention Tommy Dodd. All the unwritten laws of the Lower School were against sneaking.

Moreover, he had chipped in to save Tommy Dodd from punishment, not in order to wind up by giving him away.

Mr. Bootles' frown grew more severe as Jimmy failed to answer.

The Modern master broke in in acid tones.

"Doubtless some low acquaintance—probably a billiard-sharper!" he said bitterly.

"It was at the window of the billiard-room. Silver appears to be on a familiar footing at the place."

"Is that the case, Silver?"

"Certainly not, sir!" answered Jimmy hotly.

"Yet you have an acquaintance there."

"No, sir. I—I saw a chap at the window, and spoke to him—a fellow I knew," said Jimmy, colouring again. "I was surprised to see him there. I never thought he was that kind of chap. That's all."

"Ah, this puts a different complexion on the matter!" said Mr. Bootles, his brow clearing. "You were simply going to advise the person to leave such a place—is that it, Silver?"

"Well, yes, sir. And I was going to tell him not to show himself off at the window, if he was ass enough to be there at all," confessed Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"You have acted injudiciously, Silver, but, I think, without bad intentions. You must be more careful!"

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Manders' thin lips set in a tight line.

He did not want the matter to end like this.

"Silver has not given the person's name," he interposed. "Unless he does so, Mr. Bootles, surely it is clear that he is not speaking the truth?"

Jimmy crimsoned.

"I am speaking the truth!" he said. "My Form master knows that I am not a liar!"

"I am sure of that!" said Mr. Bootles. "But, please, give me the name of your acquaintance, Silver. It is scarcely judicious for you to keep up such acquaintances. In fact, I feel bound to forbid you to do so!"

Jimmy veiled his eyes nearly grinned at that.

Mr. Bootles did not know that he was forbidding the captain of the Fourth to keep up the acquaintance of a junior in his own Form at Rookwood.

"His name, boy!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Jimmy did not answer."

"Come, Silver," said Mr. Bootles gently. "You must give me the boy's name, and I must see that such an acquaintance is dropped. You must see that you cannot be allowed to keep up a friendship with a person who frequents such a place as the Bird-in-Hand—a very low resort!"

"Yes, sir; but—but—" Jimmy stammered.

"Well, Silver?"

Jimmy looked at his chums, and they looked at him.

The Fistical Four felt extremely uncomfortable; they certainly could not give the name.

"Silver refuses!" said Mr. Manders, with a curling lip. "He cannot reply! His statement is false!"

"It is not false!" said Jimmy.

"Don't contradict me, boy!"

"I will contradict anybody who says that I am a liar!" retorted Jimmy Silver. "Even the Head has no right to say that!"

Mr. Manders' eyes glinted.

"Mr. Bootles, is this the language—" he began.

"Pray leave the matter to me, sir!" said Mr. Bootles, with some asperity. "As Silver is in my Form, this matter falls within my province."

Even Mr. Manders was not proof against a

snub as plain as that, and, with a sniff, he quitted the study.

"Now, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, blinking at the junior very gravely, "I must have an answer. There is no reason why you cannot give the name of your acquaintance, if your statement is true."

"There is a reason, sir," muttered Jimmy, in great discomfort.

Mr. Bootles started a little, as a light dawned upon him.

"Is it possible, Silver, that it was a Rookwood boy?" he exclaimed.

"Ye-es sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Bootles slowly. "I understand. This is more serious than I had supposed. Silver, I must ask you for a fuller explanation. I require the name of the boy!"

"It—it was a Modern, sir!" muttered Jimmy.

"It was a boy of Mr. Manders' House?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"Ye-es."

"Then you must give his name, to be reported to Mr. Manders."

"I can't, sir!"

"Silver!"

"I can't, sir!" repeated Jimmy doggedly.

"If I have the chap away nobody at Rookwood would speak to me again, and serve me right, too!"

"Ahem!"

Mr. Bootles hummed and hawed for a minute or two.

He was a sympathetic and kind-hearted gentleman, and he understood.

Jimmy Silver stood with a crimson face, and his chums had their eyes on the floor.

Mr. Bootles spoke at last.

"Silver, I must conclude that you were warning the boy you speak of that Mr. Manders was at hand. Is that the case?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy quietly.

"That was very wrong of you, Silver."

No reply.

"You will see yourself, Silver, that you must be punished for doing such a thing. You have prevented Mr. Manders from enforcing discipline in his own House. I shall cane you, Silver!"

Jimmy rubbed his hands in painful anticipation.

The Form master rose to his feet and selected a cane.

He said nothing more about the name of the "pub-haurter."

Perhaps he knew that Jimmy would not utter the name under any circumstances, and did not wish to be forced to inflict severe punishment with no result.

The cane swished thrice.

Then the four juniors left the study, Jimmy rubbing his hands hard.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd Loses His Temper.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. did some thinking over tea in the end study.

Mornington and Eroll came in to tea with them, and the matter was confided to the two.

They were surprised at the news about Tommy Dodd, and rather inclined to be incredulous.

"If you actually saw him, of course, he—" said Eroll slowly.

"We did—all four of us!" said Raby.

"I suppose that settles it; but it's jolly queer. I never thought Tommy Dodd would go playing the giddy goat, like Peele and Gower and Towny, or Smythe of the Shell."

"But we saw him, I tell you!" grunted Lovell.

"Well, if you saw him, of course, that settles it!" said Eroll. "But it's jolly queer."

"You'll hear more of it, I fancy," remarked Mornington. "Bootles is bound to tell Manders that one of his bright specimens has been seen at that delectable resort. Mandy will be wild, and he will want to know the kid's name. Mandy doesn't allow for a fellow's sense of honour. He will go to the Head."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, I can't give Dodd's name."

"Not if the Head orders you?"

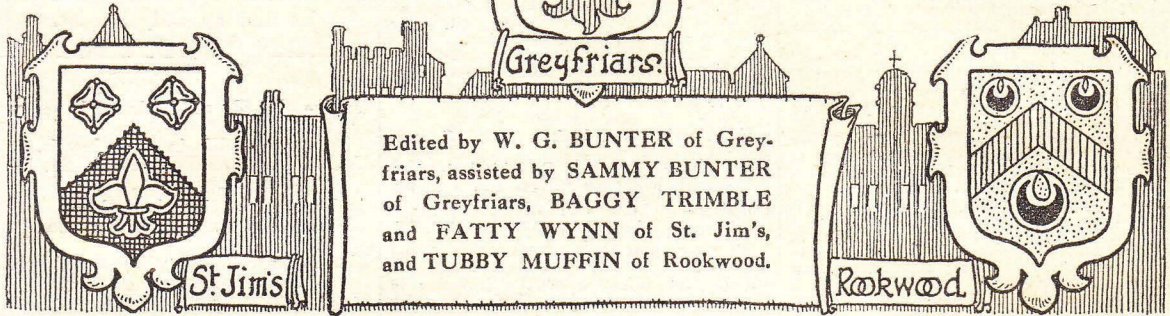
"I can't."

"Bit of a twist, arguin' with the Head," said Mornington. "It's up to Tommy Dodd to own up."

"That would see me clear, of course; but he won't do it."

(Continued on page 17.)

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Week Ending November 11th, 1922.

THE PLOT AGAINST PENFOLD!

By H. Vernon-Smith.

"**H**A, ha, ha!" Skinner of the Remove laughed uproariously.

There could be no doubt that Harold Skinner was "tickled." He lay back in the armchair in his study, and kicked up his heels in a paroxysm of mirth.

Snoop and Stott set down their teacups and stared at Skinner. They could see nothing whatever to laugh at—unless it was Skinner's hatchet-like face.

"Would you mind telling us the joke, Skinney?" said Stott.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Don't keep the merry jest to yourself," said Snoop. "That's awfully mean!"

Skinner continued to laugh until he was nearly exhausted. Not until then did he deign to let his companions into the joke.

"It's a plot I've just hatched," he explained. "A plot against Penfold."

Snoop and Stott nodded approvingly. Dick Penfold, the poet of the Remove, was not popular with the Skinner tribe. He was too transparently honest and straight-spoken for their liking. Any plot for making Penfold sit up, therefore, was bound to be hailed with delight.

"Tell us all about it, old man!" said Stott. Skinner chuckled.

"Get your bikes and come with me." Snoop and Stott obeyed, greatly wondering. The trio set off on their bicycles, Skinner leading the way towards Friardale.

Skinner dismounted at the public telephone-box in the village. He was grinning as he stepped into the box.

"There's only room for one inside," he said. "You fellows stand in the doorway, and listen."

Skinner picked up the telephone-receiver, and asked to be put through to Greyfriars.

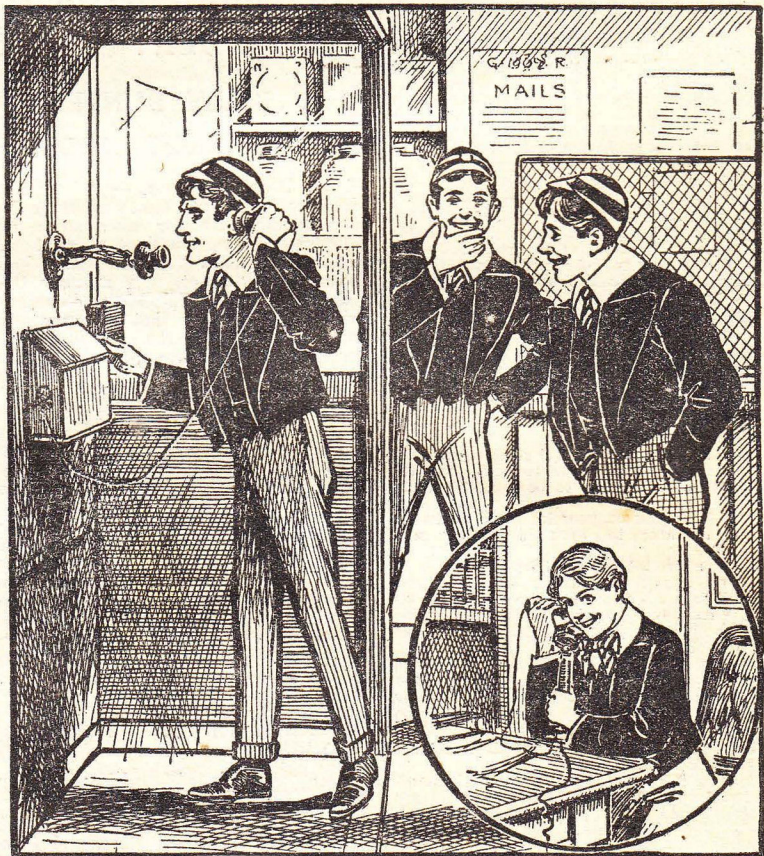
After a moment's delay the familiar voice of Mr. Quelch sounded over the wires.

"Is that Greyfriars?" asked Skinner, cleverly disguising his voice.

"Yes." "I wish to speak to Master Penfold of the Remove Form, please," Skinner went on.

"Will you be good enough to call him to the telephone?" "Be good enough to hold the line for a moment," said Mr. Quelch. "I will send for Penfold at once."

"Thank you!"



"Hullo! Is that Master Penfold?" asked Skinner. "I am Mr. Shirley Scott, the Editor of 'British Youth.' I should be glad if you would write me a series of poems!"

Skinner turned to Snoop and Stott with a chuckle.

"It's working like a charm!" he exclaimed. Shortly afterwards, the voice of Dick Penfold made itself audible.

"Hullo! Is that Master Penfold?" asked Skinner.

"Yes. Who are you?"

"I am Mr. Shirley Scott, the editor of 'British Youth.' You have probably heard of that periodical?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Your name has been mentioned to me as a writer of light, humorous verse," went on Skinner, in deep, gruff tones. "I have seen specimens of your work, and it struck me as being very clever."

"Spare my blushes, sir!" said Penfold.

"I never give praise unless praise is due, Master Penfold. I have long been on the look-out for someone who can contribute light verse to my paper. I am satisfied that

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Supplement I.]

NEXT WEEK BAGGY TRIMBLE TAKES THE EDITORIAL CHAIR!

you can deliver the goods, and I hereby commission you to write me a series of poems."

"My hat!"
 "A series of twelve," went on Skinner. "Each poem to contain ten verses. They will be paid for at our usual liberal rates. How soon could you let me have them?"

"Just a moment, sir!" said Dick Penfold. "This—this has almost taken my breath away! Are you quite sure, sir, that my work will be good enough for a paper like 'British Youth'?"

"Of course! If I thought otherwise, I should not have taken the trouble to get in touch with you. Do you think you could let me have the complete series of poems by Friday?"

"That's rather short notice, sir," said Dick Penfold. "It's only giving me three days to write a hundred and twenty verses. As a rule, I'm a slow worker. I can't turn out poems like sausages out of a machine. But as you are in a hurry for the stuff, I'll put my back into it, and work day and night to get it done."

"Excellent! Then I may expect the poems on Friday morning?"

"Yes, sir. If I find I can't get them done in time, I'll send you a telegram."

"No, no! Don't trouble to do that. I will ring off now, and leave you to your labours. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir, and thanks awfully!"
 Skinner was convulsed with merriment as he staggered out of the telephone-box.

"This is the jape of the term!" he chortled. "For the next three days—and nights—Penfold will be in the toils. He'll have to work like a nigger to get those poems done. And then, after he's sent them to the editor of 'British Youth,' they'll come back to him with a rejection-slip. The editor regrets that he cannot make use of Master Penfold's contributions, for the kind offer of which he is much obliged." Ha, ha, ha!

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Snoop and Stott. That it was caddish and a cruel plot which Skinner had devised did not seem to trouble the cad of the Remove in the least. His one object was to take a rise out of Dick Penfold. And it seemed only too likely that he would succeed.

Skinner and Snoop and Stott chuckled incessantly as they cycled back to Greyfriars.

Meanwhile, Dick Penfold got busy. He was tremendously elated at having been asked to contribute to "British Youth."

"They pay at the rate of half-a-guinea a poem, I believe," he remarked, to Dick Russell.

"Which means that you'll get six guineas?"
 "Exactly! I shall have to work hard for it, though. It's going to be a fight against time."

"I'll leave you on your lonesome, and then you'll be able to work in peace," said Russell.

And he strolled out of the study. When Russell had gone, Penfold threw himself into his task with renewed zest. He had a couple of poems finished by bed-time, and he obtained permission from Mr. Quelch to work late.

It was a formidable task that confronted the bard of the Remove. His brain was in a whirl by the time he had packed up for the night. The effort of thinking out rhymes had set his head buzzing.

But he was at it again next day, and the next night, too.

On the third day Penfold was exhausted, and suffering from brain-fag. But by dogged determination he forced himself to complete his gigantic task.

The twelve poems were duly written, and Dick Penfold lay back in the armchair, and read them through, to see if he could improve upon them in any way.

The verses ran smoothly enough, and there was plenty of humour in them. They were despatched to the editor of "British Youth," whose verdict was eagerly awaited.

Two mornings later Skinner and Snoop and Stott waylaid Dick Penfold in the Close.

"Here's a letter for you, Pen!" said Skinner.

"Good! Hand it over!"

Skinner & Co. fully expected that the envelope, which was of foolscap size, would contain the twelve poems, sent back with the editor's regrets.

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They looked on with covert grins while Penfold opened the envelope.

Instead of producing a dozen rejected poems, however, Penfold extracted from the envelope a letter and a cheque!

Skinner peered over Penfold's shoulder so that he could read the letter. It ran as follows:

"The Editor of 'British Youth' acknowledges, with many thanks, the twelve poems by Master Penfold, which he will have pleasure in publishing in his paper.

"A cheque for six guineas is enclosed; and the Editor will be pleased to consider any further work that Master Penfold may care to submit."

Skinner staggered back a pace. He was fairly overcome.

His plot against Dick Penfold, instead of doing that junior an injury, had rendered him a great service! The poems, instead of being "turned down," as Skinner had anticipated, had actually been accepted!

With a gasp of dismay Skinner turned, and tottered away. And Snoop and Stott followed. The dejection of the trio was in marked contrast to the elation of Dick Penfold!

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!
 By **BILLY BUNTER.**

My Dear Readers, — A Special Literary Number! That's what you've been klammering for ever since my WEEKLY first saw the light of day! A number that deals with literature, both ancient and currant. A number that will give you useful hints on story-writing. A number that is out of the usual commonplace rut. In short, the finest number I have published for a whole week!

Of course, a number like this wouldn't appeal to the ignerent and uneducated classes. But then, there are no ignerent or uneducated persons among my large army of readers; so I need not be afraid that this number will be "over your heads."

Most literary people, with large, dome-like foreheads, are known as "eyebrows." I belong to this category myself. I am a man of letters (the postman brings me one a month, on an avveridge.) I first started to write at the age of three, and from that time to the present day my output of literary work has been as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Short Stories | 5,000. |
| Serial Stories | 2,000. |
| Articles | 10,000. |
| Lirricks | 3,000. |
| Editorials | 120. |
| Plays | 1. |

I've only written one Play, and I got mixed up with a firm of theatrical sharks, so Mr. Quelch wouldn't let me write any more. But I shall have another shot later on, bekwase I'm a born playwright.

It's a grate pity the Editor of the "Greyfriars Herald" isn't an "eyebrow," like me. Wharton's taste in literature is shocking. He reads trash, and he writes trash; whereas I only read the classical stuff, and everything I write is in the very best literary taste. There is no great literary genius living than

Yours sinserely,
 YOUR EDITOR.

A LITERARY GENIUS!
 Written by Dick Penfold.
 Recited by Billy Bunter.

You've heard of Dickens, have you not?

He wrote of life in dingy hovels. You've also read the works of Scott—Grand novels!

And when digesting classic lore I do not doubt you've dug your tusk in

The works of Shelley, Byron, Moore, And Ruskin.

You've heard of Mrs. Beeton's book, There's very few can whack her, eh? And I suppose you've had a look At Thackeray.

All over England, Scotland, Wales, There's scarce an infant, man, or stripling

Who has not read those thrilling tales By Kipling.

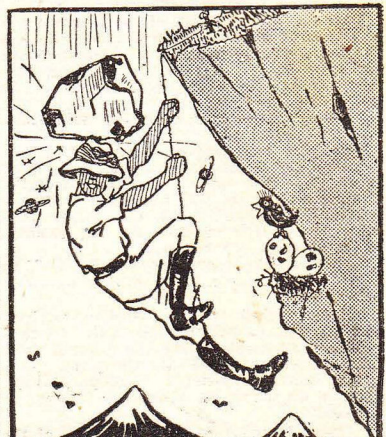
But nowadays, one often sees In libraries, a novel-hunter, Who says, "I want a novel, please, By Bunter!"

I write good stuff, I tell you flat. I'm neither dunce nor ignoramus. Though not yet forty, I am fat And famous.

Ask at the bookshops in the Strand, (Or Ludgate Hill, or Piccadilly), For the new novel, great and grand, By Billy!

It's called "A Porpoise and a Jay!" You'll simply shriek when you begin it; So get a copy right away, This minute!

PEEPS INTO THE FUTURE!
 By George Kerr.



Jimmy Silver (Famous explorer). Known as "The Man With the Everlasting Grin."

YOU KNOW WHAT "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY" IS LIKE. WELL—

[Supplement II.

HOW TO WRITE A FOOTBALL STORY!

By FATTY WYNN. (The Famous St. Jim's Goalkeeper.)

The first essential is to know your subject. An attempt to describe a football-match, when you have never seen one in your life, will prove disastrous.

"Frank Fisher, the famous footballer, was looking very thoughtful as he led his team on to the field, on a glorious afternoon in June.

"We shall have all our work cut out to beat the Blue Rovers, you fellows," he said. "Last season, if you remember, they licked us by an innings and twenty goals. We must put our backs into it, and score as many boundary hits as we can without getting offside. I will keep goal, as usual, and you, Smith, will play at short slip. Ah! I see the umpires are coming out to kick off."

Skimpole asked me what was wrong with his story, and I told him that he had got cricket and football hopelessly mixed up.

"To begin with," I said, "football matches aren't played in June. Secondly, you can't win by an innings in football. Thirdly, you can't score boundary hits. Fourthly, there's no such position on the field as short slip. And, lastly, they have referees in football—not umpires."

"But those are only trifling errors, my dear Wynn," protested Skimpy. "The readers would not notice them."

"Wouldn't they, by Jove? If an editor were to publish a yarn like that, bristling with inaccuracies, he'd be publicly pulverised. The golden rule, in story-writing, is to know your subject inside-out. I should imagine you could write a good story about Determinism, or any other 'ism,' but you're all at sea when it comes to describing a football-match."

I was unable to convince Skimpy, but I knew I was right.

Now, we will assume that you are going to write a football story, and that you have first-hand knowledge of the game.

You must create a set of characters for your story. There will be the dashing young hero, who plays at centre-forward, and kicks the winning goal on the very stroke of time. There will be the wonderful goalkeeper, who turns himself into a catherine-wheel every time he saves a shot. And, of course, there will be the villain of the piece—the unspeakable cad who worms his way into the team by unfair influence, and perpetrates bad fouls all through the match, being finally sent off the field and suspended for life.

The plot, which is the very life blood of most stories, is not so vitally important when writing a football story. A thrilling description of an exciting match will atone for the lack of plot. Of course, if you can manage to work in a

clever plot without much difficulty, so much the better.

One of the chief things to remember is to make your story brisk and snappy. A football yarn should never be dull. Instead of hefty chunks of prose, split your story up into crisp dialogue. This is the way to commence a football story:

- "Pass!"
"Dribble!"
"Kick!"
"Shoot!"
"On the ball!"
"Well shot!"
"Well saved!"
"Try again!"
"Dribble!"
"Kick!"
"Shoot!"
"On the ball!"
"Well shot!"
"Goal!"

The great charm about this style of writing is that you get your story finished ever so much quicker, and the rate of payment is exactly the same as if you had crowded it out with chunks of prose. It is "money for jam." Many great authors, who have reduced slacking to a fine art, favour this short, snappy, machine-gun style.

Of course, you cannot keep up that sort of dialogue right through the story. You've got to introduce your characters to the readers. But even this need not take up much time or space. You can proceed something like this:

- "It was Jack Brown who scored."
"Jack was the skipper of the Pink Crusaders."
"Jack played centre-forward."
"Jack was a deadly shot."
"Jack was a fine fellow."
"Jack had an enemy."
"Jack's enemy was Joe Jagers."
"Joe was the inside-right of the Pink Crusaders."
"Joe was a rotten shot."
"Joe was a beast."
"Joe was a bounder."
"Joe was a brute."
And so on, ad lib.

From the reader's point of view, it is far more pleasant to read a clear, concise story like this than to wade through endless paragraphs of solid prose.

When your football story is written, you must be sure to send it to a suitable periodical. Don't send it to the "Cricketing World," or the "Boxing Times," or it will be returned without thanks. Send it to a football paper, and it will stand a sporting chance of being accepted—provided you have followed the instructions contained in this article.

LITERARY NOTES!

By Jimmy Silver.

(Captain of the Fourth, Rookwood.)

Tubby Muffin is at work on a novel. He tells us it will be a very novel novel. But I'll wager Tubby a dish of doughnuts that he won't find anybody who will undertake to publish it!

Bulkeley of the Sixth will shortly publish his football memoirs. These should make interesting reading. There is no finer footballer at Rookwood than the big-hearted skipper of the school, and his many admirers will be thrilled by the accounts of the tussles in which he has taken part.

Teddy Grace has been busy for weeks on a book of humorous verse, which will shortly be produced by a Latham publisher. The proceeds of the sales will be devoted to charity. Teddy Grace is the Dick Penfold of Rookwood. He juggles with rhymes in an amazing manner, and he gets plenty of humour into his poems. There will be a great rush for Teddy's book on the day of publication.

Adolphus Smythe has declared that when he grows up he will become the editor of a paper called "Fashions for Men." What Adolphus doesn't know about male attire isn't worth knowing, and he ought to make a really good Fashions Editor.

Sergeant Kettle is engaged upon writing his reminiscences, which will be entitled "Fifty Years Behind a Tuckshop Counter." We hope the worthy sergeant will devote yet another fifty years to the task of dispensing tuck to hungry schoolboys!

Hansom of the Fifth tells us he is writing a story entitled "Across the Spanish Mane." Is this a pirate story, we wonder, or does it deal with horses?

My minor, Algy Silver, is busily engaged in writing a play. He is already beginning to get fed-up with the task. Methinks it will be a case of all work and no play!

At a general meeting of the Rookwood Literary Association the proposal to publish a paper in opposition to "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY" and the "GREY-FRIARS HERALD" was "turned down" by a majority of fifteen votes.

(I should jolly well think so, too! We don't want any more rivals in the field!—Ed.)

EXTRACTS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE!

By **DICK RUSSELL.**
(Remove Form, Greyfriars.)

"Peter Todd was struck by a brilliant idea."

We are glad to say he was not seriously injured, and will soon recover!

* * *

"Sammy Bunter regarded the juniors with a stony stare."

We knew that Sammy himself was "stony," but we had no idea that his stare was similarly afflicted!

* * *

"Skinner received a good blowing-up."

We presume he got in the way of a sky-rocket on Bonfire Night!

* * *

"Dicky Nugent's heart was in his mouth."

Then that accounts for Dicky's swollen cheeks. We thought it was tooth-ache!

* * *

"Johnny Bull gave a grunt."

It would have been more correct for a Bull to bellow!

* * *

"Loder of the Sixth took his cue from Wingate."

First time we knew that old Wingate played billiards!

* * *

"Lord Mauleverer slept like a top."
Until my boot sent him "spinning" next morning!

* * *

"Mr. Quelch lifted his voice."
But finding it rather heavy, he lowered it again!

* * *

"In the excitement of the moment, Bolsover major lost his head."
And somebody brought it in on a charger!

* * *

"Coker of the Fifth made a dash."
Learning semaphore, evidently!

* * *

"A loud cry fell upon Tom Dutton's ears."

With the result that he's permanently deaf!

* * *

"Skinner cast his eyes on the floor of the Form-room."

And narrowly missed having them trampled on as the class dismissed after lessons.

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HOW TO WRITE POETRY!

By **Tubby Muffin.**
(Sub-Editor.)

Some people say that poets are born. Of course they are born. Everybody has to be born.

These same people assert that poetry is a gift, and that it cannot be learnt like a trade.

That is all Tommy-rott. Take the case of myself. I wasn't born with a gift for poetry, yet I am recognised as the finest poet at Rookwood.

Practtiss makes perfect. And this motto applies to poetry the same as to everything else. By konstant practtiss and Percy Verance, anybody can become a poet.

There are two things that reelly matter in poetry. They are rime and meter. If a poem duzzent rime, it isn't a poem at all. It's blank verse—and very blank verse at that!

Hear is a sample of blank verse:—
"Ride a cock horse to Bambury Cross
To see a fine lady ride on a white steed.

Rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she rides."

If you cross out the word "steed," and put "hoss," and if you substitute the word "goes" for "rides," you make real poetry of it.

The meter of the verse I have quoted is perfect. It goes with a swing, and the measure of it is just right.

Hear is an eggsample of faulty meter:—
"Ride a cock horse to Bambury Cross
To see a fine lady perching herself on the back of a white hoss."

The second line, you will observe, is about a yard too long.

When you first start writing poetry, there is a tendency to introduce bad rimes. Even the grate poets are sometimes guilty of this. Take Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark":—

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art."

Now, you can't rime "spirit" with "near it," any more than you can rime "muffin" with "crumpet." Neither can you take the liberty of riming "wert" with "heart." If Shelley were alive to-day, I'd offer to give him a few lessons in versification.

Once you have got over the difficulties of rime and meter, you can go merrily ahead. You can choose any toppick you like, and weeve a poem round it. I have known a fellow to write an Ode to a Boiled Pudding, and an Ode to a Shrivelled Sossidge. There is no limmit to what you can do, if you set about it in the proper stile.

As to poets being born and not maid, I repeat, that's all Tommy-rott. There isn't a better bard breathing than me. And I'm a self-made poet!

Some of my poetry will appear later on in **BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY.** Look out for it!

BOOKS OF THE WEEK!

By **Monty Lowther.**

"WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A MILLIONAIRE," by Aubrey Racke. (Messrs. Splosh & Blewitt, 7s. 6d. net.)

Mr. Racke has given us a very entertaining book, though it will have the effect of making people's mouth water. A good many of us don't know what it feels like to have a fiver in our possession, let alone being millionaires! Mr. Racke, who writes from personal experience, was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. The amount of pocket-money he receives is truly staggering! We can only say that it is a great pity he does not spend it more wisely.

"FRANK FORWARD—FOOTBALLER," by Walter D'Arcy. (Messrs. Dribbell, Pass, & Shute, 3s. 6d. net.)

The minor of the immortal Arthur Augustus has given us a dashing story of the football field, with thrills in every line, and "pep" in every paragraph. We read how Frank Forward, the hero, was discovered kicking a rag ball about in Paradise Court by a director of Aston Villa, who promptly gave him an introduction to first-class football. Having served the Villa faithfully for half a season, Frank was transferred to Tottenham Hotspur, at a record fee of half a million sterling. The story goes on to describe how he played in the English Cup Final, and scored the winning goal with the last kick of the game. In the end he married his trainer's daughter. There is no fault to find with this thrilling story, except that every other word is wrongly spelt. We are sending the author a spelling-book.

"TWENTY YEARS A HOUSEMASTER," by Horace Ratcliff, M.A. (Messrs. Lickham & Lambam, 5s. net.)

If Mr. Ratcliff has been a Housemaster all these years, we can only say it is high time he was pensioned off, and given a cottage in the country, where he can practise his tyranny on cows and pigs instead of on schoolboys! Mr. Ratcliff's book is written in a harsh, sneerin' manner, and is typical of the author. The book is priced at five shillings, and we advise the reading public to find a better use for their money!

"THE WHITE HOPE," by Richard Redfern. (Messrs. Power & Punch, 2s. 6d. net.)

A really rousing boxing story, full of thrills and excitement. Dick Redfern is completely master of his subject, being by no means a bad boxer himself. The adventures of his hero in the ring are well worth following, and we venture to predict that those who take up this book will not put it aside until it is finished, chime the midnight clocks never so loudly.

[Supplement IV.]

A SPLENDID PROGRAMME OF FUNNY STORIES AND ARTICLES EVERY WEEK!

Accused by His Friend.

(Continued from page 12.)

"He ought to. I'd put it to him plain, if I were you. After all, he's a decent chap, even if he has made a bad break for once. He won't want to see you flogged for refusing to answer the Head, if it comes to that."

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows in troubled thought.

After Mornington and Erroll had gone he made up his mind.

"It won't do any harm to see the chap," he said. "I'll cut across to Manders' House and see Tommy Dodd, you fellows."

"Tell him we'll smash him if he doesn't do the right thing!" snorted Lovell.

"I don't think that would make him do it," said Jimmy. "I don't think I shall ask him, either. I'll simply tell him how the matter stands, and leave it to his sense of honour. He's always played the game up to now, so far as I know."

Jimmy Silver left the end study and made his way to the Modern side.

Three cheery voices could be heard in Tommy Dodd's study, when Jimmy approached the door of that apartment.

The three Tommies were at tea, and they looked very cheerful as Jimmy opened the door and glanced in upon them.

"Trot in!" said Tommy Dodd heartily.

"Heard of the eggs—what!"

"The eggs!" repeated Jimmy.

"Look!" said the Modern junior, with an air of pride. "I bagged a dozen at Giles' farm. New-laid! Cheap! Giles is a Briton! I'll tell you what, Silver. If you'll own up that Modern side is top side of Rookwood, I'll stand you four of them, free, gratis, and for nothing!"

Jimmy Silver simply stared at him.

To judge by Tommy's manner, he had completely forgotten the meeting at the Bird-in-Hand.

"Anything up?" asked Tommy, struck by his look.

"Yes."

"And you've come here for advice from your Uncle Thomas? Sit down, and get it off your chest, dear boy! You don't mind if I go on with my feed, do you? I've had a bike-ride, and I'm famished!"

Jimmy Silver did not sit down.

The Modern junior's manner puzzled him, and angered him a little.

It looked like bravado on Tommy Dodd's part.

"It's about Manders," said Jimmy Silver abruptly.

"Manders been ragging you?" asked Tommy sympathetically. "Never mind; he's always ragging us, and we bear it. When I'm an Old Boy, I'm coming back to give Manders a hiding!"

"Look here, Dodd, it's a serious matter. Manders saw me speaking to you at the window of the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon, though he didn't see you. He took me to Bootles, and Bootles got it out of me that I was speaking to a Modern chap, warning him that Manders was coming. I haven't mentioned your name, and I don't intend to. But I think Manders will go nosing into the thing, and put it to the Head to make me give the name. I sha'n't do it; but if—"

Jimmy Silver paused.

He had not finished, but the extraordinary expression on Tommy Dodd's face fairly made him stop.

Tommy was blinking at him with such utter amazement that Jimmy almost doubted whether he had only dreamed that he had seen the Modern junior on that unfortunate occasion.

"Are you potty?" gasped Tommy Dodd at last.

"Eh?"

"Sure, the silly gossoons said something of the sort to us when they came in!" said Tommy Doyle disdainfully. "I took it as a silly joke."

Jimmy's eyes flashed.

"You don't deny that you were at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon, Dodd, when I saw you there?" he exclaimed.

"Deny it!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd hotly. "I should jolly well say I do deny it! If you're not gone potty, what on earth do you mean, Jimmy Silver?"

"You—you deny it?" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Of course I do!"

"You say you weren't there?"

"How could I be there when I was at Giles' farm, buying eggs?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "Do you think I'm the kind of fellow to go there, anyway?"

"I never thought so till now," answered Jimmy.

"You seem to be making some idiotic mistake," said Tommy Dodd, more quietly.

"You've seen some fellow you took for me, I suppose."

"I saw you!"

"Fathead!"

"You've changed your clothes since you came in," said Jimmy, noting Tommy Dodd's Etons. "You were wearing a lounge-jacket there."

"Sure he hasn't changed his clothes, you gossoon," said Doyle. "We met Tommy at the gate, and he came straight to the study."

"Then he changed them before leaving the Bird-in-Hand. I suppose he keeps clothes there, then," said Jimmy Silver contemptuously.

"It isn't just a fool trick he's played once; he's in the habit of going to the place."

Tommy Dodd rose to his feet.

"I've already said that I wasn't there, Silver," he said. "You may have made a mistake, taking another fellow for me."

"Have you got a twin-brother at that pub?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Of course I haven't, ass!"

"Then it was you."

"It was not me, if you saw anybody at all!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"It was you!"

"Then I'm a liar?" shouted Tommy.

"Yes, you are!" answered Jimmy Silver at once; "and about the most barefaced one I've ever come across."

Tommy Dodd whipped round the table.

"Put up your hands, you Classical cad!" he shouted. "Keep away, you fellows; leave him to me!"

Jimmy Silver put up his hands willingly enough.

It was clear now that Tommy Dodd did not intend to get him out of the scrape he had landed in.

The Modern junior's line was apparently to deny the whole occurrence, through thick and thin.

Naturally enough, that made Jimmy Silver angry.

Tommy Dodd was angry, too; whether he was lying or not, there was no doubt that his anger was genuine enough.

Cook and Doyle hastily dragged the table out of the way as the two juniors closed in strife.

There was a trampling of feet, and a gasping of breath and the sound of heavy blows in Tommy Dodd's study.

It was as fierce a fight as had ever taken place in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Difficult Position!**

"STOP that row, you young sweeps!" Knowles of the Sixth hurried open the study door and gazed in.

The Modern prefect was "waxy," not without cause.

Dodd and Jimmy, in their excitement, were not aware that they were making a terrific din.

Fist fights were not supposed to take place in junior studies at Rookwood.

Knowles was head prefect on the Modern side, and there his word was law, but for once his command passed unheeded.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd had closed, and they were pommelling one another furiously, both giving much more attention to attack than to defence.

Knowles stared at them.

"Do you hear me?" he roared.

"Stop it, ye silly spalpeens!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Can't ye hear Knowles?"

"Tommy," shouted Cook, "chuck it, you ass! Stop it, Silver, you cad!"

But the fight went on.

Cecil Knowles strode into the study, with a black brow, and grasped both the combatants by the collars.

With a powerful wrench he dragged them apart.

"Stop it!" he thundered.

"Oh!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Jimmy Silver jerked his collar away from Knowles and stood panting.

Both the juniors were very dishevelled, both crimson and breathless, and both boiling with anger.

"You cheeky young rascals!" exclaimed Knowles. "I'll warn you for this! You seem to be the cause of it, Silver. I suppose you came here for a row."

"Let me go for the cad!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "He accuses me—"

"Shut up, you idiot!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

Angry and resentful as he was, Jimmy did not want the matter blurted out before a prefect.

That meant that Tommy Dodd's delinquency would come to light with a vengeance.

But the Modern junior did not heed.

"He accuses me of pub-haunting, and lying about it!" panted Tommy Dodd. "He says he saw me at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon."

"What!" ejaculated Knowles.

"If rumour in the lower Forms spoke truth, Cecil Knowles himself was not quite a stranger in the delectable precincts of the Bird-in-Hand."

But if Knowles allowed himself relaxations of that kind, he certainly did not believe in allowing anything of the kind to juniors.

He says he saw me there!" howled Tommy. "It's a lie!"

"Do you say so, Silver?"

Jimmy did not answer.

Tommy Dodd had betrayed himself out of sheer bravado, so far as Jimmy Silver could see, but Jimmy did not want to confirm it.

He was the stern, severe prefect at once.

"He daren't say it again!" shouted Tommy. "He said it before; these fellows heard him! He knows it's a lie!"

Jimmy's eyes blazed.

"If you want me to speak out, Dodd—"

he exclaimed.

"I want you to own up that you lied!" snorted Tommy. "You dare not repeat before Knowles what you said to me!"

"If you put it like that, I'm bound to speak out!" said Jimmy. "I did see you at the window of the Bird-in-Hand billiard-room this afternoon. You were standing there smoking a cigarette, and I warned you that Manders was coming."

"My hat!" exclaimed Knowles, in astonishment.

"It's a loie intirely!" exclaimed Doyle hotly. "Tommy wint to Giles' farm for eggs, Knowles."

"And there's the eggs on the table!" exclaimed Cook.

"I've no doubt he went to the farm afterwards, as he intended to tell lies about where he'd been!" said Jimmy Silver scornfully.

"Come with me to Mr. Manders, both of you!" said Knowles sharply. "One of you is lying, that's plain enough!"

"It's that Classical cad!"

"It's that Modern worm!"

"Shut up, and come along!" snapped Knowles.

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NEXT TUESDAY! "TOMMY DODD'S DOUBLE!"

He strode from the study, and Jimmy and Dodd, exchanging glares of mutual scorn and defiance, followed him to Mr. Manders' quarters.

Mr. Manders fixed a grim look on Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Bootles was in the study with him, and the Form master had just informed him of what he had learned from the Classical junior.

The information did not please Mr. Manders; he was not at all willing to find that the real delinquent was in his own House.

"Well, Knowles, why have you brought these juniors to me?" he asked snappishly.

The prefect explained.

Mr. Manders set his lips tightly.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Then it was Dodd whose name Silver refused to give me!"

"Dodd denies it, sir," said Knowles, at once. "It was Dodd who told me Silver accused him. Silver tried to keep him from speaking, but Dodd insisted upon having it out. It looks as if Silver has invented the story."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Not at all!" snapped Mr. Manders. "That is my own impression exactly."

"Really, Mr. Manders—"

"Really, Mr. Bootles—"

Knowles left the study.

The two masters looked at one another very sharply, but they restrained their acrimony.

Both were in a state of great annoyance, but they felt that a dispute in the presence of junior boys would not do.

"Now, Silver!" ground out Mr. Manders, "you accuse Dodd of having been present in the public-house billiard-room this afternoon?"

"I don't accuse him," answered Jimmy steadily. "I never meant to give his name, even if the Head flogged me for refusing! Dodd brought it all out himself, and so I'm bound to speak out. I did see him there, and spoke to him there."

"You deny it, Dodd?"

"Every word, sir!" answered Tommy instantly.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles, in great perplexity.

Both the juniors looked so indignant that it was difficult to decide between the two, but it was very evident that both could not be stating the facts.

"Where were you this afternoon, Dodd?" asked Mr. Manders, as kindly as he could speak.

"I biked over to Giles' farm for eggs, sir." "Did you go anywhere near the Bird-in-Hand?"

"Not within half a mile of it, sir."

"That settles the matter to my mind!" said Mr. Manders acidly. "Silver has sought to throw this imputation upon Dodd, in order to cover up his own disgraceful connections!"

"That's not true!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, sir!" thundered the Modern master.

"Kindly be more careful how you speak, Silver," murmured Mr. Bootles. "Dodd, could you prove, if necessary, that you were at Giles' farm?"

"Mr. Giles would tell you so, sir, and so would Mrs. Giles."

"What do you say to that, Silver?"

"I suppose Dodd went there, sir, after I'd seen him, or before."

"How long were you absent, Dodd?"

"I think about two hours, sir. I stayed about the farm a bit; there was no hurry to get back," answered Dodd.

"And you are positive, Silver, that you saw Dodd at the place you mention?"

"Quite, sir!"

"Dear me! It is really a most difficult matter to decide," said the Form master. "What is your opinion Mr. Manders?"

"I have already stated it, sir, and I do not depart from it one iota!" answered Mr. Manders. "Silver is guilty of falsehood."

"I cannot think so."

"Then you judge Dodd to be guilty?"

"That follows," answered Mr. Bootles quietly.

"Dodd has my support," said Mr. Manders. "I will defend him against this unjust imputation in the presence of the Head."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Not at all, Dodd. You are under your

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Housemaster's protection," said Mr. Manders. "As for that wicked and unscrupulous boy—"

"Mr. Bootles, am I to listen to that?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver passionately. "I have told the truth, because Dodd forced me to!"

"I believe you, Silver," said Mr. Bootles. "Come with me. Mr. Manders, it is clear that we differ on this matter, and it had better be left to Dr. Chisholm to judge."

"I agree with you, Mr. Bootles."

"Very well! Come with me, Silver."

And Mr. Bootles whisked away, followed by the Classical junior, who exchanged a final glance of defiance with the Modern as he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not Proven!

THE Lower School was in a buzz of excitement that evening.

The affair of Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver was on every tongue.

Every fellow knew that there had been quite a scene in the Head's study, with Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd face to face, and Mr. Bootles and Mr. Manders present.

There had been no decision.

Between the two juniors it was difficult for the Headmaster to decide.

Lovell and Baby and Newcome had been called in to support Jimmy Silver, and they had corroborated his statement.

That was evidence enough for the Classical side.

But the Head had telephoned to Giles' farm, and obtained Mr. Giles' evidence that Tommy Dodd assuredly had been there that afternoon, and had been about the farm for some time, at least.

True, Tommy could have squeezed the time for a visit to the Bird-in-Hand as well; but, in that case, he must have cycled very fast to cover the distance in the time he had left.

Then it came out that Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood while out that afternoon, had passed Dodd on the road, and he bore witness that when he saw him Dodd was pedalling along in a leisurely way.

Altogether, the whole affair was very perplexing.

That the Fistical Four were speaking falsely was incredible.

Moreover, there was the self-evident fact that they had not wanted the story to be known at all, and gave their evidence before the Head very reluctantly.

If they were wrong it was because they were mistaken—honestly mistaken, as even Tommy Dodd had to admit when he was cool.

There hardly seemed room for a mistake, and the weight of evidence was against Tommy Dodd; but the Head did not find him guilty.

The junior's denials were so strenuous, his indignation seemed so sincere, that the Head could not help giving him the benefit of the doubt—such doubt as there was. The matter ended, therefore, in a sort of verdict of "Not proven," which was unsatisfactory to all parties concerned.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were glad enough that Tommy had escaped the "chopper," so far as that went.

They would have been very sorry to have been instrumental in getting him flogged.

But it was not pleasant to be set down as either false witnesses or reckless accusers.

Naturally, the Moderns backed Tommy as one man.

The Classics were equally assured that Jimmy Silver was in the right.

There was endless arguing on the subject, and a good many scraps.

By the next day a new bitterness had crept into the old rivalry between Classical and Modern in the Lower School.

When Jimmy Silver & Co. came in after football practice they met Tubby Muffin in the doorway.

The fat Classical was grinning.

"I've spotted him, Jimmy!" he announced. And two or three fellows looked round.

"Eh! What's that?" asked Jimmy, not very good-humouredly.

"I've spotted that Modern cad!" grinned Tubby. "I'm a witness!"

"What's that?" chimed in Dick Oswald. "Whom have you spotted, Tubby?"

"Tommy Dodd, at the Bird-in-Hand!" chortled Tubby.

There was a buzz at once, and the Classical juniors gathered round Tubby, who swelled with importance.

"Where did you see him?" exclaimed Conroy.

"I was down in Coombe after lessons," explained Tubby, with another chortle. "So I thought to myself, if he was there yesterday, he might be there to-day, so I went down the lane beside the pub, you know, to look for him. And there he was, sitting on the veranda at the back."

"Dodd was?" exclaimed Van Ryn.

"Tommy Dodd, as large as a life!" grinned Tubby Muffin. "He was smoking cigarettes and drinking lemonade."

"Great Scott!"

"And he was playing cards with Joey Hook, the bookie," added Tubby Muffin. "I wasn't six yards from him. He looked round suddenly, and saw me, and pitched something at me, and I cleared."

"Well, that settles it, if it wanted settlin'!" remarked Mornington.

"Shall I go to Bootles, Jimmy?" asked Tubby.

"No, you young ass! Of course not!"

"But Dodd says you've been lying about him."

"Let him!" said Jimmy. "You don't want to have a hand in getting a chap sacked from Rookwood. Keep a still tongue, Tubby."

"That's right enough," said Oswald. "But we shall know what to think of the cad now, anyway!"

It was not long before Tubby Muffin's story spread to the Modern side.

But it did not find much credence there.

Tommy Dodd denied it point-blank—as the Classics fully expected he would.

His chums took his word without question, and agreed that Tubby had been put up to it by Classical plotters.

But some of the Modern fellows looked rather queerly at Tommy Dodd afterwards—they knew very well that Jimmy Silver was not the fellow to put anybody up to making false statements.

Tommy Dodd was rather under a cloud on his own side of Rookwood now.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

ON Saturday afternoon Bulkeley of the Sixth crossed over to Mr. Manders' House with a thoughtful frown on his brow.

He proceeded to Knowles' study, and found the Modern prefect there.

Knowles met him with a look of cold surprise.

But Bulkeley smiled good-naturedly as he entered the room.

"Have you some time to spare this afternoon, Knowles?" he asked.

"I'm going to play footer. But what is it?"

"About that affair of Silver and Dodd."

"Well?"

"I was going to suggest that we should go together, and make sure," said Bulkeley.

"If he goes there, we can catch him in the act, and make an end of the matter."

"And if he doesn't?"

"That will leave us where we are, of course. But it's up to the prefects to take some trouble to settle the wretched affair; in fact, the Head has asked me to do what I can to find out the truth."

"Mr. Manders has said the same to me," said Knowles, with a nod.

"Well, the only way I can think of is to keep an eye on the place," said Bulkeley. "Will you come?"

"No," said Knowles coolly. "I won't come, thanks!"

Bulkeley flushed.

"Very well; I'll go alone," he said shortly. And he went.

Knowles strolled away to Big Side. He was very pleased to have administered a snub to Bulkeley; but, to do Knowles justice, he believed that Tommy Dodd was quite innocent. His dislike of Jimmy Silver & Co. made him ready to believe any ill of those lively young gentlemen.

Bulkeley was not looking happy as he walked down the lane towards Coombe.

He was giving up an afternoon when he would have preferred to be on the footer-ground, and the task he had set himself was a distasteful one.

But he had his duty to do. Bulkeley glanced at the Bird-in-Hand as he came in sight of the place. He had intended to take a seat somewhere in the fields, with a book, and keep an eye on the place.

As it happened, that was not necessary. For, even as he glanced at the inn, he caught sight of a man and a boy at the window of the billiard-room.

Bulkeley stopped, and stared. The boy was not in Etons, certainly. He was wearing a rather elegant lounge-jacket of light grey.

But in every other respect he was Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth.

He had his hands in his pockets, and a cigarette between his lips, as he stood by the open window, chatting with Mr. Joey Hook, bookmaker and sharper.

"My only hat!" muttered Bulkeley, in astonishment.

The utter recklessness of the junior astonished him.

Bulkeley knitted his brows, and strode towards the inn.

Tommy Dodd would be marched back to Rookwood by the scruff of his neck, and straight into the presence of the Head, that was Bulkeley's intention.

But as he came striding up to the window, the boy within caught sight of him, and disappeared from view in a moment.

When Bulkeley reached the window he found Mr. Hook leaning on the sill, gazing out over his cigar with a placid face.

"Arternoon, sir!" said Mr. Hook affably.

"There is a boy named Dodd in this house, who belongs to Rookwood School," said Bulkeley. "I have come to take him away."

"No feller belonging to Rookwood School is 'ere, sir."

"I saw him at the window."

"You're dreaming, sir."

"Will you tell him I am here and waiting for him?"

"Ow can I when there ain't sich a person on the premises?"

Bulkeley's eyes gleamed. He turned away.

It came into his mind that while he was kept in talk there Tommy Dodd was probably cutting across the fields at top-speed for Rookwood, with the intention of establishing an "alibi" there.

With a grim brow, Bulkeley strode away towards the school.

He strode fast enough, but he was well aware that if Dodd had fled across the fields he was at the school before this.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the quad when he came in, and he stopped to speak to them.

"Has Dodd come in, Silver?" he called out. "Haven't seen him, Bulkeley," answered Jimmy Silver. "Not since dinner, anyway."

"I am sorry, Silver, that I doubted your statement about Dodd," said the Rookwood captain. "I have just discovered him myself at the public-house."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy.

Bulkeley walked on towards Mr. Manders' House, leaving the Fistical Four with very serious faces.

Bulkeley went into Mr. Manders' House, and met Knowles in the hall.

Knowles gave him a sarcastic look.

"Hallo, you're back early!" he said. "Made any discoveries?"

"Yes." "Good!" Knowles closed one eye at his chum Frampton. "You ought to be a detective, Bulkeley."

"Never mind that. Have you seen Dodd?"

"Yes; he's fagging in my study. Do you want him?"

"I want to take him to the Head."

"What on earth for?" exclaimed Knowles.

"I found him at the public-house."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Knowles. "Is that a joke?"

"It's hardly a matter for joking," said Bulkeley, with a frown. "It means expulsion for Dodd."

"I hardly think so," yawned Knowles. "Dash it all, Bulkeley, if you're serious, this is too thick. I can understand a fellow, even a prefect, backing up his own House, but this won't do. Think again."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily. "But never mind what you mean; it's Dodd I want."

He strode on to Knowles' study.

The Modern prefect followed him there with a sardonic grin on his face.

Tommy Dodd was in the study, kneeling at the fire and making toast



CAUGHT IN THE ACT! Bulkeley glanced at the Bird-in-Hand, and he caught sight of a man and a boy at the window of the billiards-room. He stopped and stared. Although the boy was not in Etons, the captain saw at once it was Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth! (See Chapter 6.)

He turned a ruddy face round at the sound of footsteps.

"Nearly ready, Knowles— Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"You will follow me to the Head, Dodd," said Bulkeley sternly.

"Certainly, if you like," said Tommy Dodd, with a look of wonder. "Is anything up, Bulkeley?"

"Hold on," said Knowles grimly. "Let's have this out. Are you going to tell the Head, Bulkeley, that you've seen Dodd at the Bird-in-Hand this afternoon?"

"Naturally."

"What!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Dodd, do you deny having been out of gates this afternoon?"

"Yes, rather," answered the junior. "You uphold him in denying it, Knowles?"

"Certainly!"

"Be careful, Knowles! I repeat that I saw Dodd at the Bird-in-Hand, with my own eyes, less than half an hour ago."

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"Tell that to the Head," he answered. "I will swear that half an hour ago I sent Dodd to my study to get my tea ready, and that he's been here ever since."

"You will tell the Head a barefaced falsehood rather than allow a fellow in your House to be punished for his rascality!" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"No. I'll tell him that you've plotted with a gang of juniors to disgrace a Modern kid because you're up against our side of Rookwood!" said Knowles venomously.

"Bulkeley—" began Tommy Dodd.

"Hold your tongue!" said Bulkeley roughly. His eyes gleamed at Knowles. "Knowles, I shall not enter into bandying words with you before the Head; to Dr. Chisholm your word is as good as mine. If you hold to

what you have just said, I will not see a Rookwood prefect perjuring himself. I shall not make the report at present, at any rate."

And with a clouded brow Bulkeley strode away into the quadrangle.

He passed Jimmy Silver & Co. without glancing at them.

"Dodd's not with him," murmured Lovell. "But if Bulkeley actually saw him, Dodd can't wriggle out of it this time."

But apparently Dodd had "wriggled" out of it, for he was not taken before the Head.

There was much speculation on the Classical side, and on the Modern side, too.

What Bulkeley had said to the Fistical Four was known, and even on the Modern side Bulkeley's word was known to be as good as gold, and taken without question.

Knowles was rather liked for standing up for a Modern junior, but even the Moderus' opinion of his truthfulness was not a flattering one.

As for Tommy Dodd, he found himself looked at oddly and coldly on all sides.

His denial counted for nothing against Bulkeley's word.

His nearest chums, Cook and Doyle, stood by him loyally, though perhaps with much inward uneasiness.

But the rest of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, Classical and Modern, gave Tommy Dodd the "marble eye" in the grimmest way.

Tommy Dodd was under a cloud, and even in the faces of his own chums he could read the dark doubts which they vainly tried to hide.

THE END.
(See page 24 for particulars of next week's fine stories.)

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A GRAND TALE OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL.
By OWEN CONQUEST.

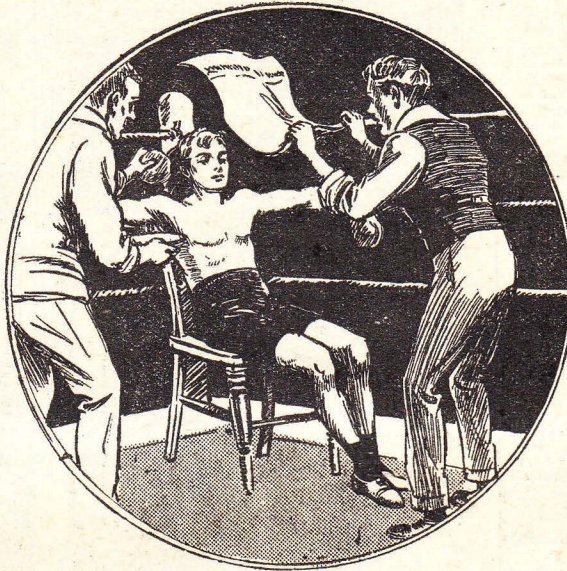
NEXT TUESDAY: "TOMMY DODD'S DOUBLE!"

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Fall of the Mighty.

THIS is a nice, cheery tea-party, I must say!" said Lawrence of the New House, in disgust. "About as cheerful as a funeral!" growled Owen. "I don't think anybody's spoken a giddy word—until now!"

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, the three scholarship boys of the New House, were at tea in their study.

Tea was usually a merry meal, but on this occasion scarcely a word had been uttered.

The cause of this unusual silence was Dick Redfern. The other two always took their cue from Reddy. When he was lively and talkative, so were they; when he was gloomy and out of humour—which was not often—his study-mates became gloomy also. And they were gloomy now.

Redfern had eaten little, and said less. His usually sunny face was clouded over. He looked as if he had trouble on his mind. But whatever the nature of the trouble, Reddy said nothing of it to his chums. He confided in them quickly enough as a rule, but he felt that they could not help him now.

"You're a Dismal Jimmy this afternoon, Reddy, and no mistake!" growled Lawrence.

"Rats!" "You've a face as long as a fiddle," said Owen. "Cheer up, for goodness' sake! Have some more tea?"

No answer. "Another muffin?" asked Lawrence, passing the plate.

Redfern merely grunted. He rested his head between his hands, and sat as if deep in thought.

Lawrence and Owen exchanged glances. There was a rather strained atmosphere in the study.

"I'm fed-up!" said Lawrence, rising.

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to his feet. "I'll go for a spin over to Wayland, I think. There's a boxing tournament on at the public-hall."

He moved to the door. "By the time I get back," he said, glancing at Redfern, "I shall expect you to have recovered from your fit of the blues."

Lawrence left the study, and Owen followed suit. They felt that Redfern would prefer to be left alone. As a matter of fact, Reddy did prefer it. When his chums had gone, he remained in exactly the same position, with his head resting between his hands.

"I'm fairly up against it!" he muttered. "It's the old, old story—shortage of cash. The exchequer has been in low water for a long time, but things are desperate now."

View the situation as he would, Redfern could not see a ray of hope.

For weeks and weeks he had struggled along on an inadequate supply of pocket-money. And now the crisis had come. He could go on no longer without money.

Reddy's people were in humble circumstances. They could afford him but a scant supply of pocket-money. Fellows like Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Aubrey Racke received more money in a month than Redfern received in a whole term.

So long as he could manage to jog along, and keep his head above water, Reddy didn't mind. But he was now in a very tight corner. His football subscription was overdue, and so were several other subscriptions to various organisations at St. Jim's.

Reddy also required a new footer jersey—his present one being woefully torn and tattered—and a new pair of footer boots. Those he now possessed were unfit for active service in the field, and would have to be pensioned off, so to speak.

There were lots of other little necessi-

ties that Reddy needed. And he couldn't for the life of him see how he was to raise the money wherewith to get them.

"I won't ask the pater to help me out," murmured the junior. "It's as much as he can do to keep the home going. I shall have to raise the money off my own bat, somehow."

But that was easier said than done. When money is wanted in a hurry, it is often very hard to get.

There were fellows at St. Jim's who had made money in queer ways. Dick Brooke, the day-boy, had written lyrics for songs, and had them published. It was rumoured that Baggy Trimble had earned an honest shilling by carrying a master's golf-clubs. Others, again, had sacrificed their dignity and acted as errand-boys for the local tradesmen. But the few shillings that could be picked up in this way would be of little use to Dick Redfern. He wanted pounds, not shillings.

Reddy was trying hard to think of ways and means of raising the wind, when there was a tramping of feet in the passage.

The study door was burst open without ceremony, and four juniors presented themselves. They were the Terrible Three and Talbot of the School House.

Redfern looked up. His expression was not amiable.

"What do you fellows want?" he inquired.

"We've come along to rout you out," said Tom Merry. "We met Lawrence and Owen in the quad, and they told us you had the hump."

"So we're going to cure it for you," said Monty Lowther, smiling blandly.

"Yes, rather!"

"I'd prefer to be left alone, if you don't mind," said Redfern.

"Rats!" growled Manners. "You're coming over to Wayland with us, to see the fun."

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

NEXT TUESDAY! "THE BOY FROM BORNEO!"

"What fun?"

"Haven't you heard? There's a boxing tournament in progress—"

"Yes, I know all about that," said Redfern impatiently.

"But you don't know about Johnnie Jackson, the boy boxing marvel," said Tom Merry. "He's a kid who has never been licked by anybody of his own weight. There's a fiver going begging for the fellow who does it. And Grundy's going to take it on."

"Grundy!" gasped Redfern. "The one and only Grundy!" chortled Monty Lowther. "Grundy declares that he can wipe up the ground with this fellow Jack Johnson—I mean, John Jackson. And he's going over to Wayland this evening to try to do it. I say 'try.' That's about as far as he'll get."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It will be a sight for the gods," said Talbot. "You mustn't miss it on any account, Reddy."

Redfern gave a grunt. "I'm not particularly anxious to see Grundy make a prize ass of himself," he said.

"It will be great fun," said Tom Merry.

"And you're coming over to see it, whether you like it or not," said Monty Lowther. "If you don't come quietly, we'll haul you forth by the scruff of your neck!"

In spite of Lowther's jesting manner, Dick Redfern saw that Tom Merry & Co. meant to have his company. It was a question of going quietly, or being taken over to Wayland by force.

Reddy rose to his feet. "I'm not wildly excited about this Grundy stunt," he said. "Still, I'll come along!"

"Wise fellow!" said Manners. The party started off for Wayland, the School House unions doing their best to drive away Dick Redfern's depression, but without much success.

Lots of St. Jim's fellows were making tracks for Wayland.

The juniors were ushered into the was going to accept the challenge of John Jackson, the boy boxing marvel, caused a big sensation.

Grundy of the Shell was a hefty fellow, and he possessed a powerful punch. But he was a prizefighter rather than a boxer. He had no science, and precious little skill. It was agreed on all sides that John Jackson would make mince-meat of him.

The public hall, where the boxing tournament was taking place, was packed.

Tom Merry & Co. were greeted at the entrance by a commissionaire, who kept repeating the hoarse cry: "Standin' room only!"

"That'll do for little us," said Monty Lowther. "Lead on, Macduff!"

The juniors were ushered into the crowded hall, and they stood up at the back.

A boxing bout was in progress between a couple of heavy-weights, who seemed to be doing their utmost to reduce each other to pulp. The bout was supposed to be a friendly one, but judging by the battered appearance of the men's faces, the exchanges had been of a distinctly unfriendly nature.

Nobody was surprised when the referee stopped the contest before it had run its full course.

There was a brief interval, and then Johnnie Jackson appeared on the platform. He was introduced to the audience by his manager, a plump, good-natured man named Dan Stokes.

"Gentlemen," announced Mr. Stokes,

"here we 'ave Johnnie Jackson, one of the 'ardest-ittin' boy boxers in the South of England! Johnnie's only fifteen, but 'e's yet to meet 'is master. A reward of five pounds is offered to any youngster of 'is own weight who succeeds in knockin' 'im out in six rounds."

The glances of the audience were directed towards Johnnie Jackson's alert, well-knit figure, and there was a buzz of excitement.

"On be'alf of Johnnie Jackson, I throw out the challenge!" exclaimed Mr. Stokes, flinging out his arms dramatically. "Now, then! Any takers? Don't all speak at once!"

Only one voice rang out in reply. It was the voice of Grundy of the Shell.

Grundy came striding along the gangway towards the raised platform. He was in boxing attire, with a macintosh thrown over it.

"I accept that challenge!" exclaimed Grundy, in tones which could be heard all over the hall.

Dan Stokes bent down, and assisted Grundy to clamber up on to the platform.

"What's your weight, kid?" he inquired.

Grundy told him. "H'm! You're nearly 'alf a stone 'eavier than Johnnie—"

"That won't matter, Mr. Stokes," said Johnnie Jackson, with an amused smile. "I'll take him on!"

"Good!" said Grundy. He removed his macintosh, and placed it on the back of a chair. Then he stepped into the ring.

Cheers, ironical and otherwise, greeted Grundy as he prepared to square up to the boy boxing marvel.

Those who happened to know Grundy knew that he hadn't a hope. Those who didn't know him were impressed by his sturdy frame.

Dan Stokes seated himself in a chair by the ringside. And the referee stepped into the ring.

"Ready, you two?" he inquired.

"Yes, rather!" said Grundy eagerly. John Jackson merely nodded his head. He was still smiling.

"Time!"

Now, Grundy's plans had been cut and dried at the outset. At the call of "Time!" he would lower his head and rush at his opponent, at the same time getting in a terrific blow with his left.

It was to be no ordinary blow, but a real crashing, smashing affair that would put the boy boxing marvel on his back.

Alas for George Alfred Grundy! In laying his own plans, he had overlooked the fact that Johnnie Jackson would have something to say in the matter.

Grundy tried to carry out his pre-arranged programme, and he succeeded—up to a point. He lowered his head, and he rushed at his opponent; but that terrific blow with his left somehow failed to come off.

Grundy's fist smote the empty air, causing him to topple forward. And as he toppled, it seemed as if an earthquake suddenly struck him.

Everything seemed to go black; there was a roaring in his ears; and the next thing Grundy realised was that he was lying on his back, with the referee standing over him chanting, "One, two, three—" and so on.

"What—what's happened?" murmured Grundy, passing his hand over his forehead in a dazed sort of way.

A mighty roar from the audience gave Grundy the answer to his question. He had been knocked out by Johnnie

Jackson in the first minute. A well-timed blow on the side of the head, just above the right ear, had sent him down for the count.

"Sorry," murmured Johnnie Jackson, assisting Grundy to his feet. "But it had to be done, you know."

"That's all right," muttered Grundy thickly.

It was some time before George Alfred was sufficiently recovered to go back to St. Jim's. Wilkins and Gunn, his trusty henchmen, helped him home. And Grundy, when he reached the school, was heard to declare that he wasn't going to tackle any more boy boxing marvels—not for a long time, at all events!

Thus were the mighty fallen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Redfern's Rash Resolve!

"POOR old Grundy!" said Monty Lowther. "He asked for trouble, and he got it."

"The poor beggar didn't have a chance," said Tom Merry. "He's plucky enough, dashed if he isn't; but, of course, he hadn't an earthly against Johnnie Jackson."

"Wilkins and Gunn have taken him back to the school—what's left of him, at any rate!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It was a short fight, and a gay one," said Talbot.

During this conversation, Dick Redfern had stood silent. An idea was slowly forming in his mind.

Tom Merry tapped the New House junior on the shoulder.

"Penny for 'em!" he said. Reddy looked round with a start.

"Eh? Did you speak, Merry?"

"Yes, I did! What on earth's the matter with you? You've been mooning and moping all the evening. I've never known you to have the blues so badly."

"I—I was just wondering—" began Redfern.

"Well?"

"Whether I should stand any chance against that chap." Redfern indicated Johnnie Jackson, standing triumphant on the platform.

The juniors gasped.

"Why, you duffer!" said Manners, "he'd lick you with one hand!" Redfern flushed.

"I'm not such a dud boxer as all that," he said.

"Of course, you're not a dud," said Manners hastily, anxious to remove the sting his words had caused. "You're a jolly good boxer, Reddy, in your own class. But this kid Jackson is a wizard—an absolute masterpiece! Isn't that so, Tommy?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"If Reddy were to tackle him," he said, "he'd put up a vastly different show from Grundy. But there would be no question about the ultimate result. Reddy would be licked."

Redfern scarcely seemed to hear the remark. A gleam had come into his eyes. He threw off his depression, and became alert—almost cheerful.

Here was a chance to raise the money he so badly needed. An outside chance, perhaps; but a chance, nevertheless.

"I've had a lot of practice lately with the gloves," said Redfern, "and I think I could hold my own. I'm going to have a shot, anyway. Nothing venture, nothing win."

"You—you're going to take up Jackson's challenge?" gasped Talbot.

"Yes."

"Don't be a chump! It's madness!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

A NEW LONG TALE OF ST. JIM'S.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE BOY FROM BORNEO!"

"You won't get a look in," said Tom Merry.

But Dick Redfern was not to be turned from his purpose. His mind was quite made up.

The voice of Dan Stokes boomed through the hall.

"Any more young gents prepared to stand up to Johnnie Jackson? Don't be backward in comin' forward!"

Redfern shook off Tom Merry's detaining grasp, and strode down the gangway until he reached the platform. Dan Stokes surveyed him with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Allo! Another from the same school, what?" he said.

Redfern nodded. "I haven't got my boxing kit with me," he said.

"That's all right, kid. Come into the dressin'-room, an' we'll fix you up."

Redfern retired behind the scenes. He was back on the platform inside five minutes.

In changing his clothes, Redfern's pocket diary happened to fall out of his breast-pocket on to the floor. Reddy was too pre-occupied to notice it. But Mr. Stokes noticed it. He picked up the diary and slipped it into his pocket, intending to hand it back to Redfern after the fight. Time was precious now.

A loud cheer greeted Dick Redfern when he stepped into the ring.

The St. Jim's fellows joined in the cheer, but they felt ill at ease.

Lawrence and Owen, who had been lucky enough to secure seats in the front of the hall, shook their heads gravely when they saw that Reddy had taken up the challenge.

"He must be clean off his rocker!" muttered Lawrence.

"He'll be knocked out, for a cert!" said Owen. "He'll last longer than Grundy did, but the result will be the same."

"Afraid so," said Lawrence.

And Tom Merry & Co. were afraid so, too.

Dan Stokes resumed his seat by the ringside, and the referee took charge of the proceedings.

At the call of "Time!" Redfern exchanged a swift handshake with Johnnie Jackson, and the fight began.

Redfern did not rush in with lowered head, as Grundy had done. He was cool and self-possessed, and he boxed

carelessly at first. But he quickly changed his tactics when he saw what he was up against. This was no blind slogger that he had to contend with, but a clever and scientific boxer.

Redfern's footwork was so clever that for fully a minute he more than held his own. Then Jackson seemed to wake up. His right came crashing past Redfern's guard, and his left followed almost at once.

The first blow took Redfern in the chest, and the second on the jaw. The junior staggered against the ropes, and it looked as if he was fairly cornered. But he pulled himself together, and came out into the open, and stood up manfully to his opponent.

An exchange of hard blows followed. Jackson's blows were harder than Redfern's. There was more ginger in them.

The St. Jim's junior took heavy punishment, and he was fortunate to be still on his feet when the end of the round came.

The spectators were quick to recognise that Redfern had fought a very plucky round, and the hall rang with cheering.

Amid the applause, Redfern recognised Tom Merry's "Bravo!" and Lawrence's "Good old Reddy!"

During the interval Redfern lay back in his corner and had his face sponged. He was then fanned with a towel.

Whilst these operations were in progress Dan Stokes took Redfern's diary from his pocket and idly turned over the pages.

To do the boxing manager justice, he had no intention of being inquisitive. He was merely glancing through the diary in a fit of abstraction.

When he came to the final entry in the book, however, Mr. Stokes began to sit up and take notice. He found himself reading the entry almost before he realised he was prying.

"Desperately hard up," were the words which first caught Mr. Stokes' eye. And then he read on:

"The situation is simply appalling. Something will have to be done. There are several subscriptions overdue, and new footer togs are badly wanted. Unless I get them by Saturday, shall not be able to turn out for St. Jim's. Goodness knows how I'm goin' to raise the wind. A fiver would be a perfect god-

send to me just now, and I shall have to think of ways and means of getting it."

Having digested this entry, Mr. Stokes shut the diary with a snap, and returned it to his pocket. He was looking very thoughtful.

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it?" he murmured. "The kid's bang up against it, an' 'is only chance of raisin' the wind is by beatin' Johnnie Jackson!"

Mr. Dan Stokes was a man of many faults, but lack of generosity was not one of them. Many a kind heart beats beneath a shabby sweater, and this was particularly so in the case of Dan Stokes.

The boxing manager rose to his feet and crossed over to Johnnie Jackson, who sat in his corner looking as fresh as paint.

"Look 'ere, Johnnie boy," whispered Mr. Stokes, "I've just made a discovery. The kid you're fightin' now is 'ard up—desp'rately 'ard up, it I might say so."

"Well, what about it, boss?"

"I feel I should like to 'elp 'im," said Mr. Stokes, still in a stage whisper. "He's a rare plucked 'un. Now it's a big thing I'm goin' to ask of you, Johnnie, an' if you don't care about it, say so. I want you to sham that you're licked, so's he can win the fiver."

Johnnie Jackson made a grimace. He appeared reluctant at first to fall in with his manager's suggestion. His reputation would suffer if Redfern licked him, even though the licking would not really be genuine.

The boy boxer wavered. Then he glanced towards his opponent, and noted the careworn expression on Dick Redfern's face. Yes, the fellow was certainly "up against it." He would have to be helped, and Johnnie Jackson decided to help him.

"All right, boss," he said, "I'm game."

And then the gong sounded for the second round.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Fight to a Finish!

"BUCK up, Reddy!"

"Stick it out, old man!" Encouraged by the cheering shouts of his schoolfellows, Dick Redfern stepped up for the second round. After the sponging and fanning he was like a giant refreshed.

It was Redfern who started the attacking, and he was surprised at the success he gained.

In the first round Johnnie Jackson's defence had been as sound as a rock. It had been very difficult to get past it. But now the boy boxer was repeatedly leaving his body unprotected, at the mercy of Redfern's blows.

"It's a trick," thought Redfern. "He's trying to make me think I've got the upper hand, and he hopes I'll get reckless and do some wild slogging. Then he'll rush in and finish me."

Whether Johnnie Jackson was playing a trick or not, Dick Redfern certainly had the better of the second round. He dealt his opponent a terrific blow in the ribs; then he sailed in with a smart uppercut, which nearly sent Jackson to the boards.

Redfern was still attacking when the round ended. He went to his corner looking rather puzzled. He could not understand his opponent's behaviour. The Johnnie Jackson of the first round had been a human whirlwind—a dashing, smashing, fighting man. The Johnnie Jackson of the second round had been feeble and impotent. His attack had lacked sting, and his defence had been woefully weak.

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

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NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE BOY FROM BORNEO!"

Meanwhile, Johnnie Jackson was exchanging whispered remarks with Dan Stokes.

"I'm going to crumple up in the next round," he confided to his manager. "I'll give him an opening that he can't fail to take advantage of."

"Good lad!"

The third round was packed with thrills. It was hammer-and-tongs all the time.

Johnnie Jackson attacked furiously, and he simply showered blows upon his opponent.

But Jackson, although he appeared to be doing a lot of damage, was merely indulging in a sham fight. To the onlookers his blows seemed to be full of vim and vigour. To Dick Redfern they were mere taps.

Towards the end of the round Johnnie Jackson suddenly dropped his guard. It was only for a brief instant, but it gave Redfern the opportunity he sought.

"Now, Reddy!" yelled Lawrence and Owen in chorus.

"Go in and win!" rang out Tom Merry's voice from the back of the hall.

Redfern needed no incentive. Dashing in, he shot out his left straight from the shoulder.

The blow took Johnnie Jackson fairly between the eyes, and the spectators shouted their applause.

Redfern, however, was not altogether satisfied with that blow. There had not been enough "ginger" in it. It was a fairly good blow, but by no means a knock-out one.

Nevertheless, to Redfern's astonishment, his opponent toppled backwards and went crashing to the boards.

The referee, watch in hand, started to count.

Redfern expected Johnnie Jackson to be on his feet again in a twinkling. But Jackson lay perfectly still. His eyes were closed as if he was dazed; but Redfern, watching him closely, fancied he saw the suspicion of a smile hovering on the fallen boxer's lips.

Instantly Redfern sprang forward. "You're shamming!" he exclaimed. "Goodness knows why you're doing it, but you are! Get up and fight properly, man!"

There was a buzz of excitement in the crowded hall.

The referee had counted up to seven. Johnnie Jackson raised his head and glanced at Dan Stokes, as if for instructions.

The boxing-manager shrugged his shoulders.

"That kid doesn't know when he's well off!" he muttered. "'E'd 'ave been wiser to 'ave kept 'is mouth shut. Get up an' fight him properly, Johnnie, seein' as 'ow 'e insists on it."

Jackson rose to his feet with a grim expression on his face.

Redfern had not been content with the gifts the gods had given him. He had been presented with a victory, and he had declined to take it. Very well, then. As the fellow was such a fool, he would give him a licking instead, and see how he liked that. Such were the reflections that passed through Johnnie Jackson's mind.

As for Redfern, he badly wanted to win. But he wanted to win fairly and squarely. No cheap victories for him. Either he would win on his merits, or he would lose.

The third round was over as soon as Jackson had risen, and the two boxers sat silently in their corners until the gong sounded them again.

The fourth round resembled the third. It was hammer-and-tongs, and no quarter was asked or given.

The fifth round was the most thrilling affair of all.

Dick Redfern attacked in irresistible style, and it looked as if he would carry everything before him. But Johnnie Jackson stood his ground, and he took any amount of gruelling punishment without flinching.

But the boy boxing marvel could not withstand that hurricane attack for ever. The end had to come, and it came in the last half-minute of the round.

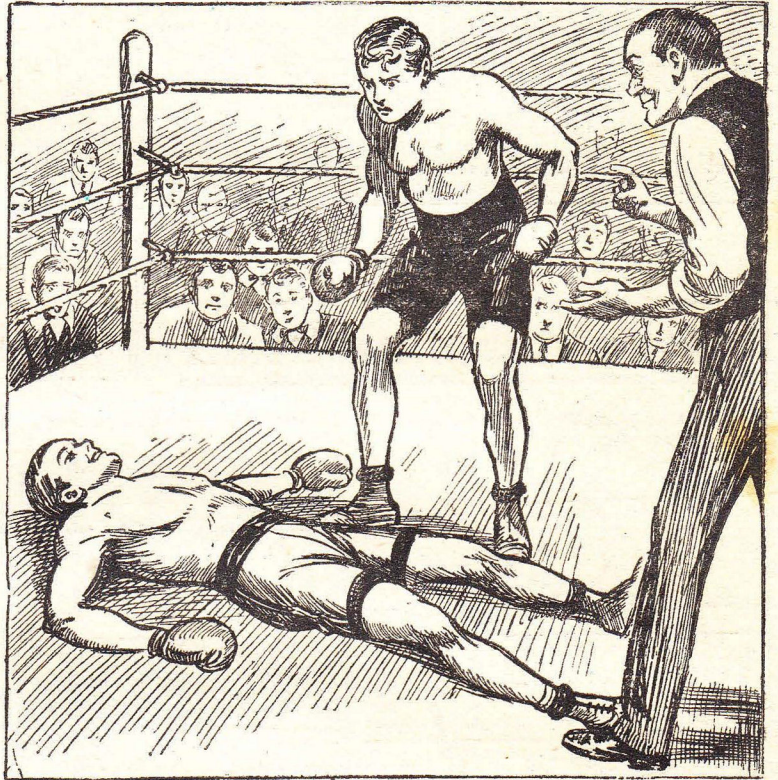
Dick Redfern crowded all his energy into one mighty blow—a blow which caught Johnnie Jackson full in the chest, and bowled him over like a skittle.

It was a genuine knock-out this time. Jackson strove manfully to struggle to his feet, but he had at last met his master in ringcraft. The referee solemnly counted him out, and Dick Redfern was declared the victor.

"Well played, kid!" said the boxing-manager. "You put up a capital show. This is your property, I believe!" he added, handing Redfern the diary. "You dropped it just before the fight, an' I've been lookin' after it for you. I 'ope you'll forgive 'im for bein' a Nosy Parker, but I 'appened to read your latest entry, an' I saw that you were badly up against it. So I gave Johnnie Jackson the tip, an' asked him to pretend that he was licked. He didn't need to pretend it at the finish, though. The way you knocked 'im out was perfectly stunnin'!"

Having delivered himself of this speech—an unusually long one for him—Mr. Stokes produced a crisp and rustling banknote, which he handed to the victorious boxer.

Redfern thanked the kindly manager and passed out into the street. His



A SENSATION OF THE RING! Redfern sprang forward to the fallen boxer's side. "You're shamming!" he exclaimed. "Goodness knows why you're doing it, but you are! Get up and fight properly, man!" There was a buzz of excitement in the crowded hall. (See Chapter 3.)

Something akin to pandemonium broke out in the hall.

Cheer upon cheer rang out for Dick Redfern's benefit, and the junior was called upon to make a speech. He muttered a few words of acknowledgment. Then he crossed over to Johnnie Jackson, who had been assisted to his corner, and shook hands with him.

"Bravo!" said Jackson. "There was no wangling about that. You licked me fairly and squarely. By Jove, you've earned that fiver!"

"What beats me," said Redfern, "is why you pretended to be knocked out in the third round."

"Dan Stokes will explain that," was the reply.

Redfern went into the dressing-room to change. He was thus engaged when Mr. Stokes came in.

chums were waiting for him. Knowing that Reddy would be fagged with his exertions, they had chartered a taxi, and they went speeding back to St. Jim's in great style.

Dick Redfern lay back in the vehicle with a happy smile, listening to the congratulations of his schoolfellows.

His troubles were over now, and the sun was shining again. With the money he had earned he would be able to satisfy all his present needs.

Redfern, like the modest fellow he was, said very little on the subject of his famous victory. But he will always regard that thrilling contest with Johnnie Jackson as the fight of his life.

THE END.

(Do not miss next week's splendid story of the Chums of St. Jim's.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 199.

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

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: The Editor, "The Popular," The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C. 4.

I find myself this week with but little room in which to write about our next week's stories, for I need all the space possible to keep you informed of the progress of this and others of the group known throughout the world as the Companion Papers.

However, we shall again put before you another splendid batch of stories, one of which will concern the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, entitled, "Coker's Capture!" by Frank Richards. This story deals with Horace Coker's fight against the man who stole his Aunt Judy's money.

Then we shall have stories of Rookwood and St. Jim's, bearing the titles, "Tommy Dodd's Double!" by Owen Conquest, and "The Boy from Borneo!" by Martin Clifford. "In the Wild North-West" is a story of the adventures of Frank-Richards & Co. in the backwoods of Canada.

Baggy Trimble takes charge of "Billy Bunter's Weekly" for a time, and Victor

Nelson's brilliant sporting serial will also be continued in our next issue. Thus, with the Competition for Money Prizes, we can honestly say that the "Popular" will again be a very splendid number next Tuesday.

Now to mention our Companion Papers.

The "Magnet" Library, now on sale, contains twenty-eight pages of closely-packed stories, articles, and poems. There is a thrilling, long complete story by Frank Richards, entitled, "Harry Wharton & Co. in Africa!" which concerns Harry Wharton & Co.'s trip with Captain Corkran in Africa. There is also a splendid complete detective story of Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake, entitled, "The Baker Street Mystery!" an extra-special number of the "Greyfriars Herald," and a special report of the "Greyfriars Parliament." To crown everything there is a MAGNIFICENT FREE REAL PHOTO OF PRESTON NORTH END FOOTBALL TEAM GIVEN FREE WITH THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY! Get your copy now—to-morrow may be too late!

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J. Harris, junior, 57, Cambridge Street, Atherton, Lancs., wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, ages 17-21.

N. Gold, 60, Byron Street, North Street, Leeds, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in his new amateur magazine.

R. G. Barr, 345, Barbadoes Street, Christchurch, New Zealand, wants school stories and sketches for his amateur magazine. He also wishes to become an agent for amateur magazines.

Charles R. Maxwell, Corbieetree, Helensburgh, Scotland, wishes to correspond with readers keen on Scout work, ages 11-14.

H. A. Penle, 56, Copley Street, Stepney, E. 1, wishes to correspond with a reader who possesses a small hand-printing machine.

J. Guyon de la Berge, 36, Rue Saint Louis, Versailles, Seine-et-Oise, France, requires correspondents (stamp collectors) in Borneo, Sierra Nevada, Malta, Cyprus, the Indies, and the French Colonies.

Samuel G. Inglis, 508, Hay Street, Perth, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially in North and South America.

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The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with "Gem," "Magnet," and "Boys' Friend," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

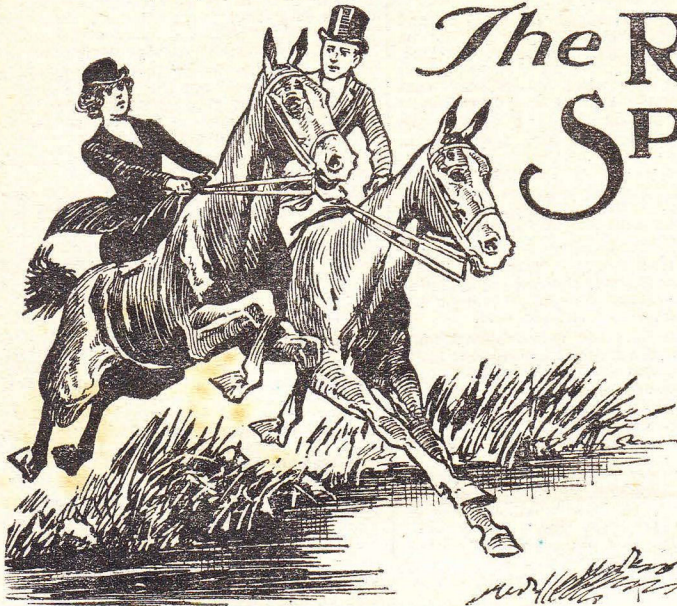


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The RIVAL SPORTSMEN!

A Grand New Story, full of excitement and thrill, introducing HARRY LESTRADE and AUSTIN COURTNEY, and dealing with their extraordinary fight, on the field of sport, for the Lestrade Fortune.

By VICTOR NELSON.

(Author of "By Nero's Command!" and "The Boy With Fifty Millions!" etc.)

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

By the terms of the late Sir Charles Lestrade's will, Harry Lestrade and his cousin, Austin Courtney, must fight for possession of the Lestrade fortune on the field of sport. The one who distinguishes himself most becomes owner of a vast amount of wealth. Harry Lestrade receives the first opportunity to distinguish himself in a local football match, for which club he is "signed on."

The next sporting event in which the cousins meet is a steeplechase at Kempton Park. Harry Lestrade rides his horse home after a stern struggle. To better his chances in the strange sporting struggle, Courtney has Harry shanghaied and imprisoned on board an Argentine-bound vessel.

Harry returns to consciousness to find himself in the hold of the Mustapha.

Later in the day Harry is taken on to the deck. He is told that the vessel is bound for the Argentine, and will be away from England for over a month. On hearing this, Lestrade makes a bold leap for liberty, and knocking down the captain of the Mustapha, leaps over the side of the vessel into the sea.

A few days later he causes a great sensation by appearing on the football-field where the Wessex Wanderers are waiting to play the Romford Rovers. Austin Courtney stares at his cousin in great surprise. How had he contrived to escape from the clutches of Captain Seth Jones?

(Now read on.)

How Harry Lestrade Returned:
"THERE'S Lestrade!" shouted hundreds of Wessex supporters. "Hurrah! Let's hear from you, Lestrade, lad!"

And Austin Courtney still stood staring towards his cousin in wide-eyed and open-mouthed astonishment. How had he escaped from the Mustapha? Could Captain Seth Jones have played him false?

A blind rage seized Courtney at the thought.

He pictured the captain as having laughed up his sleeve after taking his money. Little dreaming of the thrilling adventures that had been Harry's, Austin Courtney decided that Captain Jones must have taken the boy for but a short trip and then landed him, reluctant to take the risks attaching to keeping him a prisoner aboard the tramp until the Argentine was reached.

And what of the real truth?

There had not been another vessel in sight when Harry Lestrade had dived from the Mustapha and swum away under the surface, and the boy had known that his position was no enviable one, when the lights of the tramp had disappeared in the distance and he had trod water to keep himself afloat.

Adopting a steady breast-stroke, Harry had started to swim in the direction in which he believed lay land.

He had made no mistake in this, but he had greatly underestimated the distance separating him from the Irish Coast, which had been a hundred miles or more.

He was a good and powerful swimmer, and the athletic life he had been leading of late had hardened his muscles and given him fine powers of endurance. But he began to grow tired after, with occasional rests, he had been striking out for some three hours.

It was almost double as long before he glimpsed any sign hopeful of rescue, and by that time he was well-nigh exhausted, and, with white, set face, swimming listlessly and mechanically.

Then, from out of the darkness that on all sides hemmed him in, he heard the discordant note of a siren, and, shaking off the dazed lethargy that had been gripping him, he raised himself in the water and scanned the sea.

To his joy, he saw a glimmer of light in the distance, and, as he watched it eagerly, he became certain that it was growing nearer.

The light proved to emanate from an incoming mail-steamer bound for Queenstown, and, fortunately, its course brought it within sixty yards of the lad, as he began to swim towards it, and the cries for help he uttered were heard.

The vessel slowed down, a boat was quickly lowered, and, limp, and feeling as though his limbs were weighted with lead, Harry Lestrade was helped into it.

When the steamer landed him at Queenstown, he found another vessel bound for Fishguard, which was on the point of leaving.

Harry Lestrade was lucky. When he told the captain his story the latter was impressed with his frank manner and obvious education. He carried the boy to Fishguard, trusting in his promise to wire for money and pay him for the passage on arrival there.

This Harry Lestrade did, obtaining a supply of cash from the solicitor who had drawn up his father's strange will. The boy then travelled with all speed by Great Western express to London, where he had arrived that morning.

He had telegraphed to Tony Wagg, the trainer of his football team, that he would be able to play, and Tony had had his football rig waiting for him in the dressing-room. The trainer had listened to Harry's story with amazement, and now, watching from the stand through a pair of field-glasses, Tony Wagg was deriving huge enjoyment from Austin Courtney's obvious fury and surprise at the sight of his cousin.

It was a grand afternoon for football, with barely sufficient breeze to shake the goal-nets, a fine, dry ground and a sun that peeped now and then through rifts in the white clouds overhead.

To the accompaniment of an encouraging cheer, Codling kicked off for the Wanderers, touching the ball to Harry Lestrade, at inside-left, who did some tricky work with his feet and transferred the leather to Thurston on the wing.

The outside-left knew how to travel, but Austin Courtney, at right-half on the opposing side, stuck to him, and the ball went into touch.

From the throw-in the Romford outside-right headed across to his partner, who trapped it and then lifted it up the wing, so that the Rovers' forwards thundered down in a line.

Their right-winger centred, but, after some strenuous tackling, Arthur Richards, the Wessex left-back, robbed the Romford centre-forward and cleared.

The ball was returned a moment later only for Richards to volley it away once more. The back took the ball at an awkward angle, and his fine performance was loudly applauded.

Harry Lestrade and Codling then began to show what they could do.

They seemed to know exactly where to find each other. With a fine piece of combined play, they took the ball down the field, dodging, twisting, and doubling, and giving it to each other at precisely the right moment.

So the play went on until half-time, always fast, always exciting and gruelling, yet with neither team succeeding in scoring. Marjorie Randall, who was in the stand with her father, drew a deep breath, as the ref's whistle called a halt.

Harry Lestrade, the boy who by her words when they had met on that fateful day on the hunting-field she had made see was developing into a slacker, could not be called that now.

Though he had not notched a goal so far, he had come within an ace of doing so again and again, and he had played to-day with the skill, dash, and finish of an experienced pro in a First Division team.

As for Austin Courtney, though he had not shaped badly, Harry had by his speed and clever play caused his cousin's efforts to look almost puny, and, as he walked after his team towards their dressing-room, Courtney was, scowling darkly and tugging at his slight moustache as though he had developed a sudden desire to pull it out by the roots.

The men of both teams had looked a little breathless and weary when they had left the field. On their return, however, they all seemed to have brightened up, and Eomford

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NEXT
TUESDAY!

"THE RIVAL SPORTSMEN!"

ANOTHER
:: INSTALMENT OF VICTOR NELSON'S
BRILLIANT SERIAL. ::

gained possession and made a determined attack within a few seconds of the game being re-started.

And by this time, quick and alert as he was, Wills, the Wessex goalie, could not stop the shot the inside-left slammed in as the play was carried to close quarters.

The ball found the net, much to the delight of those who had followed the Romford team here. Their clapping, cheering, the whirring of rattles and other manifestations of joy were simply deafening.

"We have got to get our own back for that, Harry," Codling said, as he and the boy trotted together towards the centre for the kick-off. "Do a bit of that individual stuff of yours, and sling it to me at the last moment. We have been relying on combination more or less up till now, and a change of tactics will get them guessing."

Harry Lestrade nodded, and was prompt to fasten on to the leather when, a few moments later, Codling kicked off, and, after it had rebounded from the foot of a Romford forward, with a lightning-like second kick, passed to him.

With a feint and a smart sidestep, Harry Lestrade whipped the ball past the opposing forward, who leapt to tackle. Then, with it glued to his toes, he made one of the individual dashes Skipper Codling had advised.

Austin Courtney waited on him, and tackled him viciously as Harry reached him. The terrific shoulder charge Courtney aimed at his cousin was rendered abortive, however, by Harry suddenly pulling up in his stride. Courtney missed him, and went staggering past, narrowly escaping a stumble to his hands and knees.

Harry made a ring round him, and was off again before the centre-half, who had started to bear down upon him, could come within attacking distance. Austin Courtney's face was livid with rage as he regained his balance and sprinted after his cousin.

He was in the mood to throw rules to the winds, and to stop Harry in his dash by hook or by crook.

Sheer anger caused Courtney to run as he had not run before that day, and, as Harry Lestrade neared the penalty-area, Courtney came almost abreast of him. Then, finding he could not actually overtake the boy, he committed an act that brought a storm of protest from every side of the packed enclosure.

Deliberately, Austin Courtney thrust his foot out, and, tripping over it, Harry Lestrade fell awkwardly and heavily to the grass, to lay motionless where he had fallen. "Foul!"

From hundreds of throats the cry rang out, but it was really unnecessary, for the referee had seen, and his whistle beeped to award a free-kick, as the cousins had still been just outside the penalty-area when the unquestionably foul play had happened.

Harry Lestrade was helped up by a couple of his team mates. He was a little dazed and breathless, but he quickly shook off the effects of the fall, and gave his cousin a look of quiet contempt that caused him to drop his eyes.

The Romford goalie crouched in the goal-mouth as Tom Austin, the Wessex left-half, prepared to take the free-kick. It was a regular piledriver, but the goalie stopped it with his chest, and made an attempt to clear. But Harry Lestrade was on the alert, and, leaping in, he whipped it from off the Romford goalkeeper's very toes.

He scooped it to one side, then put in a shot that simply gave the goalie no chance. The ball entered the goal at the top left-hand corner missing the custodian's out-flung hands by inches.

The scores were level!

From that moment play was fast and furious, with either side straining every nerve to gain the mastery. Time slipped away, and at length the referee glanced at his watch.

With only a trifle over a minute to go, Codling passed to Harry, and, with Austin Courtney again pressing him hard, the boy tore goalwards. He gave the defence the impression that he intended attempting another individual dash. Courtney dared not risk questionable play again, and, to his chagrin, Harry left him behind. Then, as

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both backs converged upon him, unexpectedly the lad centred.

Codling neatly trapped the leather, and whirled with it behind the backs. As he paused for a moment almost in the goal-mouth, the custodian lost his head, and came rushing out, which was exactly what the Wessex captain had been hoping for.

He cleverly dodged, tapping the ball to one side, and, next moment it was spinning in the net.

The referee's whistle sounded long and shrilly; and, mainly through the magnificent play of Harry Lestrade, the Wanderers had yet another hard-fought game to their credit.

"Bravo, the Wanderers!"

"Good old Codling! Bravo, Lestrade! Bravo, Master Harry!" shouted the delighted villagers and other adherents amongst the crowd, as both teams left the field.

And Austin Courtney glared almost murderously after the stalwart and upright figure of his cousin, and ground his teeth.

He was bitterly disappointed. He had anticipated that his superiority in age and weight would tell, and that he would be able to lower the colours of the boy on the footer-field!

But it had been the other way round, and it was he who had got the worst of matters, in spite of the ugly foul he had indulged in.

Ugly thoughts still ran through and through Courtney's brain as he ate a solitary tea in a small room on the first story of the castle which he was wont to call his "den."

He resolved that, at all risks, he had got to put his cousin out of the struggle, and he was even more determined upon this now than when similar thoughts had come to him on the Wanderers' ground.

Quite by chance, Austin Courtney was to be given a chance to set about his evil aims even more speedily than he had hoped.

Deciding to go for a tramp with his pipe, to try to form some plan of action, he quitted his study-like room, and passed down the oak-panelled and gloomy corridor without, and, in making his way towards the main staircase, he approached the door of another room which Harry always used when he preferred privacy.

The sound of voices fell upon Courtney's ears, and he advanced nearer the door on tiptoe. Then, standing just outside the room, he listened intently.

"I came to show you this newspaper, Master Harry," one voice was saying, and Courtney recognised it as belonging to Williams, the private trainer of his late uncle's racehorses. "As I knew you have recently bought an Imperial motor-cycle, I felt sure you'd be interested."

"What's it all about, Williams?" came the query in Harry's tones, followed by the rustling of paper, as the news-sheet changed hands.

Then there was a short silence, as the lad apparently read whatever it was the racehorse trainer had wanted to show him.

"By jingo, Williams, I'm indebted to you for bringing this to my notice!" came Harry's voice again. Then: "It would be another stride forward if I could win the race these people are arranging in the Isle of Man. I shall certainly enter, and have a cut at it, anyway!"

Austin Courtney turned swiftly, and noiselessly returned along the corridor, as there came sounds that told him the trainer was about to quit the room. As he stepped back into his own study, Courtney's eyes were narrowed unpleasantly, and he was looking decidedly thoughtful.

"So my cousin is going to try to win the Grand National on Tearing Haste, is he?" he muttered to himself. "He must have meant that, for that is the only race at Liverpool for which he is entered. Confound the cub! He has the energy and enterprise of the very dickens, and Williams is no fool when it comes to giving an opinion, so that the horse will be a danger to the best of the other runners. Thank goodness I have an entry in the big Aintree event, and can have a cut in, whatever happens!"

He was thinking of a horse allotted him by Sir Charles Lestrade's strange will, a five-year-old named Fast and Free, which had been given 11 st 3 lbs. by the Grand National handicapper.

Austin Courtney had been of two minds whether or no to ride or even run the animal in the important Liverpool race, though it was a good horse, a stayer, and a clean jumper, and was not without a chance.

Now, however, he made up his mind to have it removed from the Lestrade stables to some other training quarters, and to have it specially prepared to face the starter at Aintree at the end of March.

He was without honour or scruples himself, and he did not trust Williams.

As a matter of fact, the latter suspected that Austin Courtney had been behind the nobbling of Tearing Haste II., and had since only thinly veiled his contempt and dislike for him, and Courtney thought the trainer might be capable of spoiling Fast and Free's chances if he was left in his hands.

Courtney had remained standing in the doorway of his own room, listening, and he heard Williams leave Harry's room and take his departure. Soon afterwards, the boy himself also came out and moved towards the staircase; and Courtney, who was curious to know what had been meant by reference to a new motor-cycle Harry had bought, and some race to take place in the Isle of Man, wondered if the newspaper Williams had shown his cousin had been left in the study.

He waited until Harry's footfalls had died away, then walked swiftly down the corridor and slipped into his cousin's room.

He uttered a soft exclamation of satisfaction as he saw a copy of the "Daily Mail" lying upon the table. This was the paper without much doubt, he thought, and, as he took it up and his eyes fell upon an advertisement marked in blue pencil, he knew that his impression had been right.

It was headed in bold, black type with the name of the well-known "Imperial" Motor Company, Limited, of London, makers of the "Imperial" cars and motor-cycles, who had recently put on the market a cycle reputed to be faster and more efficient than any other make yet produced.

To advertise this new pattern motor-bike, one of which Harry Lestrade had recently bought, the company had arranged a road race, to take place in a fortnight's time in the Isle of Man, with a first prize of a thousand guineas.

As he scanned the announcement, Austin Courtney saw that anyone possessing a latest pattern Imperial motor-cycle was eligible to enter, and that there was still several days to the closing date for such entries, which had to be sent to the London office, or made at the time of purchasing one of the cycles at any of the firm's branches.

Courtney scribbled a note of the address of the nearest branch on his cuff, returned to his den, and, seating himself, lit a cigarette.

"I'll kill two birds with one stone," he mused, suddenly bringing his fist thudding down upon the table. "To-morrow I will buy one of these motor-bikes and enter for the race, and then—"

He broke off, biting at his nails.

"Just to think of what would happen, if anything suddenly got in the way when he was tearing along at fifty or sixty miles an hour," he continued presently. "It might be possible, and there would be no fear, either, of his beating me again on the football-field, or of his even riding in the Grand National. Yes, it's a big risk, and I should have to make sure that it could never be brought home to me. If it were, it might mean a charge of murder."

His face had whitened, and beads of perspiration had broken out upon his brow. But as he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, there was no waning of the grim determination that was in his eyes.

He drew towards him a sheaf of telegraph-forms and slowly wrote a message, which he addressed to his old hiring and confederate, Jerry Murker.

"Meet me usual place in town midday to-morrow," it ran.

And that telegram was a very fateful message indeed for Harry Lestrade.

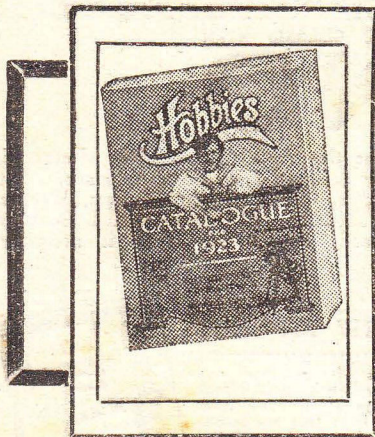
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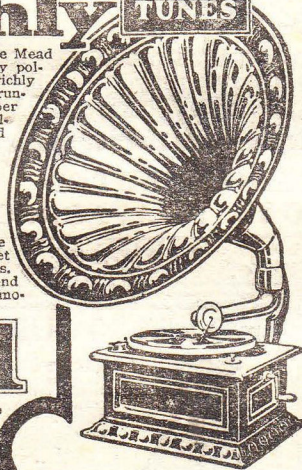
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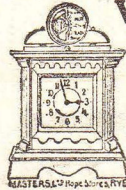
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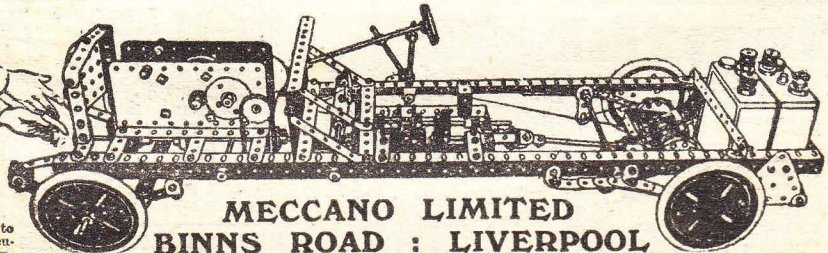
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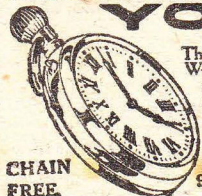
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