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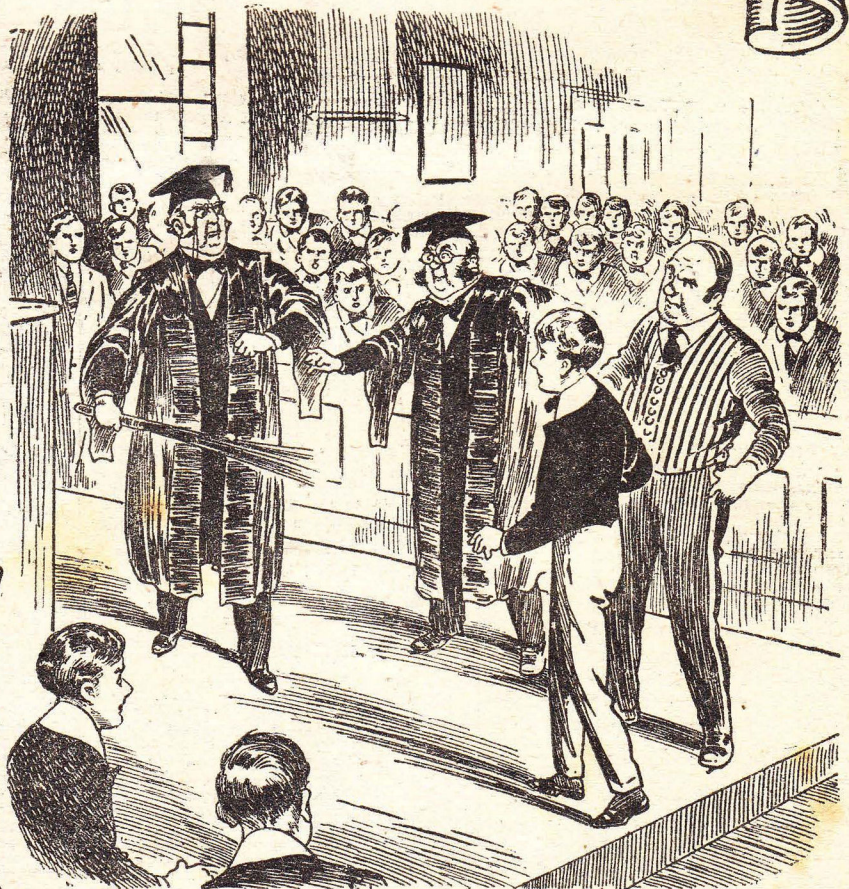
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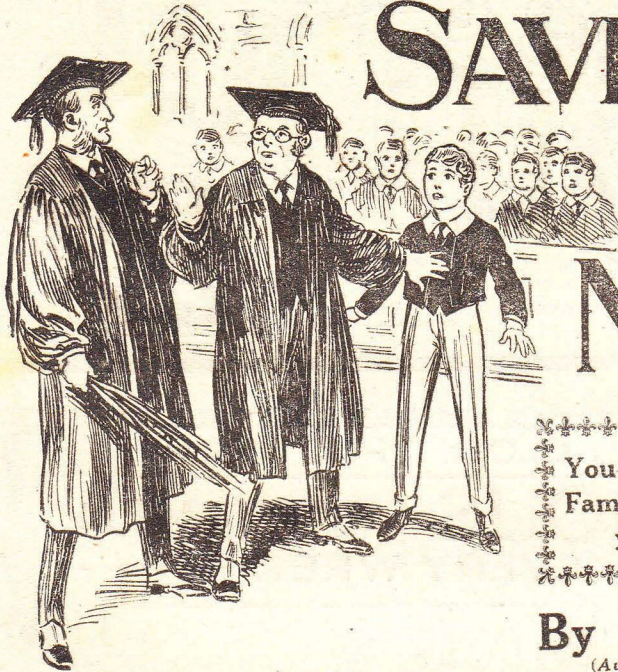


MR. BOOTLES DEFIES THE HEAD!

(A Dramatic episode from the grand story of Rookwood inside.)

Harry Lestrade, of the Wanderers, on the Ball Again—Meet Him Inside!

THE MOST AMAZING SCHOOL TALE EVER WRITTEN!—Jimmy Silver has been wrongly accused of the action of another. He is to be publicly flogged, but he is saved at the last moment by Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth. Mr. Bootles defies the Head! What happens?



SAVED BY HIS FORM-MASTER!

You know Jimmy Silver & Co., the Famous Chums of Rookwood. What do you think of this week's Story?

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Stories of Rookwood appearing in the greatly enlarged "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Under Sentence!

"I'M going to the Head!" Arthur Edward Lovell made that announcement in tones of determination. Raby and Newcome looked rather uncertainly at Jimmy Silver. Jimmy shook his head hopelessly. "It's no good, Lovell," he said. "But—" "The Head won't listen to you. He wouldn't listen to me. He's made up his mind. And—" Jimmy's voice faltered. "And I'm to be flogged in the morning." "You sha'n't, Jimmy!" exclaimed Lovell angrily. "I tell you I'll go to the Head—we'll all go! We can prove—" "He mightn't believe us," said Raby. "He won't even listen to you," said Jimmy Silver. Lovell snorted. "I'll jolly well make him!" he said. "Hallo, little ones, what's the trouble?" asked a cheery voice in the doorway of the end study. It was Conroy, the Australian junior, who was looking in. Pons, the Canadian, and Van Ryn, of South Africa, looked in over his shoulder. The Colonial Co. eyed Jimmy Silver and his chums in surprise. It was but seldom that the Fistical Four were seen looking down on their luck. But at the present moment the end study looked as if it had been gathering up all the troubles at Rookwood upon its own shoulders. "Anything wrong?" asked Van Ryn. "Yes," said Lovell shortly. "Well, don't bite a chap's head off," said the South African zood-humouredly. "What's the row? Anything about the footer?" "No, ass!" "Thanks, fathead! We came along to speak to Jimmy Silver about footer." "Oh, blow footer!" growled Lovell crossly. "Well, my hat!" The Colonials looked astonished, as well they might. It was something new to hear Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth "blow" footer. "Well," said Conroy, "if we've dropped in at the wrong moment, we'll travel along. But why not tell your Australian uncle all about it, and ask him nicely for his valuable advice?" Lovell granted.

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"There's not much to tell," said Jimmy Silver, smiling faintly. "I've got landed in a scrape." "That's nothing new." "This one is. I'm to be flogged to-morrow morning in Big Hall before all Rookwood!" said Jimmy Silver bitterly. "Ye gods! What for?" "Nothing!" The Colonial Co. became grave at once. It was a serious matter enough. Floggings were very seldom administered at Rookwood, and only for very serious offences. The disgrace of the punishment was worse in most fellows' eyes than the infliction itself—which was painful enough. And for Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form, and the most popular junior in the Lower School, to be sentenced to a flogging, was a surprise, and it needed explaining. "Tell us what's happened, Jimmy," said Conroy quietly. "I hardly know," said Jimmy. "I was called down to the Head's study, and found that a trick had been played on Dr. Chisholm. Somebody had tied a cord across his study, and he went in in the dark, and took a tumble. He looked hurt." "Phew!" "You didn't play such an idiotic trick, surely?" exclaimed Van Ryn. "No." "But the Head thinks he did," growled Lovell. "Why?" "Because he's a silly ass!" "Draw it mild, Lovell, old chap. The Head isn't a silly ass!" said Conroy. "I say he is!" roared Lovell. "Then you'd better tell him so, old scout; it's no good shouting at me. Why does the Head think you did it, Jimmy?" "They found my silver pencil-case in the study. It was dropped there as if it had slipped from my pocket when I scooped down to tie the cord. It hadn't, of course, as I never did it. But it looks as—"

Jimmy paused and coloured, as he read the expressions on the faces of the juniors. "I suppose you believe me?" he exclaimed hotly. "Yes, of course," said Conroy, rather slowly. "But you must admit that it was pretty good evidence for the Head, Jimmy. How the merry thump did your pencil-case get there if you didn't drop it there?" "I don't know." "Ahem! Not much good telling the Head that!"

"I found that out," said Jimmy Silver bitterly. "But that isn't all. I was in the study a short time before, as it happens." "Oh!" "You remember I leaped into the Head when we were playing leap-frog in the quad; it was misty. He sent me in for his cane to lick me. I fetched the cane, and took it back afterwards. He's got it into his head that while I was there I rigged up that trap for him. Of—of course, I had the chance; I had an excuse all ready for being in the study, if I was spotted there. That's how he looks at it." "Blest if anybody wouldn't, Jimmy. It does look bad." "I know it does," said Jimmy Silver savagely. "But that doesn't alter the fact that I didn't do it, and never even heard anything about it till Mr. Bootles fetched me to the Head's study." "And your pencil-case—" "I dropped it somewhere yesterday, or left it here in the study. I'm not quite clear which. I know it wasn't in my pocket when I felt for it this morning in class." "Might have been in another pocket you didn't feel in, if you don't remember dropping it." "It's possible, of course." "And you might have dropped it in the Head's study when you were there." "I don't see how I could, without stooping down—" Jimmy Silver broke off. "Oh, you needn't tell me how it looks. Perhaps I dropped the pencil-case there, and perhaps the Head biffed his foot against it when he tumbled over, and knocked it along to where it was found. I don't know. Or the chap who rigged up that trap may have found my pencil-case and left it there to fix it on me." "That's rather thick." "I know it is. But I know I had nothing to do with the jape on the Head, and it could be proved if he'd listen." "That's better," said Conroy. "How could it be proved?" Jimmy nodded to his chums. "Three witnesses," he said. Lovell broke out angrily. "Jimmy's been with us here—we've been fencing—ever since we were in the quad. He hadn't been out of our sight a minute before Bootles came to take him to the Head. We saw him take the cane back to the Head; he hadn't any blessed cord with him. He didn't stay in the study three seconds. Then he came up here with us. Isn't that proof?" "Plenty!" assented Conroy. "Then go to the Head and tell him."

"Jimmy thinks the Head won't give us a hearing," said Newcome.
"He's too wild," said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head. "I've never seen him in such a wax. He was hurt by his tumble."
"These fellows ought to go, all the same," said Conroy decidedly. "The Head's bound to listen."
"I'm jolly well going, anyhow," said Lovell angrily. "I'll make him listen. I suppose the Head isn't a dashed Russian Tsar that's got to be approached in fear and trembling! I'm going. You fellows coming?"
He looked at Raby and Newcome, who in turn looked at Jimmy Silver.
Jimmy nodded at last.
"Try it, if you like," he said. "But you're risking a licking if the Head thinks it's a put-up job!"
Snort from Arthur Edward Lovell.
"We'll chance that!" he said. "Come on!"
And Lovell & Co. left the study, the Colonial chums remaining with Jimmy Silver to await their return.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Friend in Need.

"COME in!"
The Head's voice was sharp and snappish.
Dr. Chisholm was alone in his study, seated at his writing-table, but he was not occupied.
He was feeling sore, disturbed, and angry. The sudden fall over the stretched cord in the darkness had shaken up the old gentleman badly.
He had bruises on his knees and severe abrasions on his hands, and a bump on his head where it had knocked against a chair.
Such an outrage against the majestic person of the Head was unprecedented at Rookwood, and it was no wonder that he was bitterly angry.
Indeed he was reflecting that he had been too lenient with Jimmy Silver, and that he should have expelled the culprit from the school, instead of sentencing him to a flogging, when the tap came at his door.
His tone did not make Lovell & Co. feel hopeful as they entered the study.
Neither did his look as he turned his grim brow upon them.
Seldom or never had they seen the brow of the doctor's face so thunderous.
The Head's face was severe at the best of times, but at present it was, as Lovell said afterwards, a good likeness of the fabled Gorgon.
His eyes gleamed at the juniors over his glasses.
"Well?" he rapped out.
"Please—" stammered Lovell.
"What do you want here?"
"About—about Jimmy Silver, sir—" stuttered Lovell.
"What?"
"Jimmy, sir—I mean, Silver—"
Dr. Chisholm raised his hand with a commanding gesture.
"I am aware that you boys are Silver's study-mates," he said. "Is it possible that you have had the astounding impertinence to come here to intercede for him?"
"N-no, sir; but—"
"You may go. You can have nothing to say to me on the subject. Silver will be flogged in the morning."
"But, sir—"
"And I trust," thundered the Head—"I trust it will be a warning to him and to any other boys who may have been his accomplices!"
"Oh, sir!"
"You may go!"
"But—we came to say—"
The Head pointed to the door.
"We—we happen to know, sir—we were with him—we—"
"You were with him when he fastened the cord here, over which I fell violently!" exclaimed the Head.
"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Lovell. "Not at all! I didn't mean that. I mean, we were with him when he didn't do it."
"What! Are you daring to jest with me, Lovell?"
"Nunno, sir!" gasped Lovell breathlessly.
"I mean—"
"I repeat, Lovell, that you can have nothing to say to me on the subject that I care to hear. I have bidden you leave my study!"
"But, sir—"

"One word more and I will cane you," said the Head, picking up his cane.
Raby caught Lovell's arm.
But Arthur Edward Lovell jerked himself free.
He did not mean to leave the study, if he could help it, without saying what he had come there to say.
"I want to explain, sir—" he jerked out.
Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet, and the cane swished in the air.
"I warned you, Lovell! You have chosen to disobey me. Hold out your hand!"
"Jimmy Silver never—"
"Hold out your hand, sir!" thundered the Head.
And as Lovell did not obey promptly enough, the angry headmaster took him by the collar and laid the cane across his shoulders, with a loud swish.
Lovell yelled, as much with surprise as pain.

A TREAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO!



"Now go!" exclaimed the Head. "Go, before I punish you more severely for your unheard-of impertinence, Lovell!"
He pointed with his cane to the doorway.
Still Arthur Edward hesitated; but Raby and Newcome took hold of him and fairly forced him out of the study.
The door closed on them.
In the passage Lovell shook himself free, and looked at his chums, panting, his eyes ablaze.
"The rotter!" he gasped.
"Shush!" murmured Raby. "Don't be an ass, Lovell! He's rather wild now, but he's not a rotter, and you know it! Come along!"
"I'm going to tell him—"
"You silly ass!" breathed Newcome. "Haven't you had enough yet? Do you want to be flogged in the Hall along with Jimmy? Come on, I tell you!"
"Look here, I'm going—"
"Oh rats!"

ANOTHER FREE REAL PHOTO OF A FAMOUS SPORTSMAN!

Lovell's chums seized him again, and walked him away forcibly down the passage.
The interview with the Head had been a failure, and in the opinion of Raby and Newcome it was time that Lovell "chucked" it.
Certainly he could not have re-entered the Head's study without risking the infliction of severe punishment.
On the staircase, however, Lovell halted again.
"Let me go!" he growled. "I'm going to—"
"You're not going to see the Head again, Lovell!" said Raby decidedly. "It's not good enough, old top!"
"I'm going to see Bootles. He's our Form master, and he's bound to speak up for Jimmy when he knows the facts."
"Well, that's not a bad idea," assented Raby. "We'll come with you."
And the three juniors headed for Mr. Bootles' study.
They found the master of the Fourth looking very distressed.
He was in conversation with Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell, who was also looking very grave and concerned.

The outrage on the Head had been a shock to the masters.
Mr. Bootles gave Jimmy Silver's chums a kindly glance.
"Well, what is it, Lovell?" he asked mildly.
This was a reception very different from that accorded by the Head, but it was the Head who had taken a tumble over the cord, and that accounted for the difference, perhaps.
"About Jimmy Silver, sir—" began Lovell.
"I hope, Lovell, that you had nothing to do with the outrage perpetrated in the Head's study by Silver," said Mr. Bootles gravely.
"Jimmy Silver didn't do it, sir!"
"Lovell!"
"And we can prove it, sir, if you'll listen to us!" said Lovell eagerly.
"Nonsense, Lovell! The case is quite clear."
"We can prove it, sir!" said Raby and Newcome together.
"I will hear what you have to say," said Mr. Bootles, with a troubled frown. "You may proceed."
Lovell & Co. proceeded, and the details were laid before Mr. Bootles, the Shell master also listening very intently.
It was scarcely possible to doubt that the three earnest juniors were speaking the truth.
Mr. Bootles' brow became more and more troubled as they proceeded.
Perhaps he realised that, though the conviction of Jimmy Silver's innocence was stealing upon his own mind, it would not be easy to convince the angry headmaster.
"Let us have this quite clear, Lovell," Mr. Bootles said, at last. "You saw Silver when he took the Head's cane back to his study?"
"Yes, sir."
"You saw him come out of the study again?"
"We did, sir."
"And you are sure he was not long in the room?"
"Only a few seconds, sir!" said Lovell earnestly. "Just long enough to take the cane in and lay it on the desk."
Mr. Bootles coughed.
"The cord in the study was attached to two screws driven into the wainscot," he said. "It must have taken some time—many minutes, at least. If you are sure of what you say, my boys, Silver could not have done this."
"We are quite sure, sir!"
"And afterwards—"
"Afterwards Jimmy came to the end study with us, and he was there all the time till you came for him, sir!"
"Bless my soul!"
"Somebody else did it, sir!" said Lovell.
"But Silver's pencil-case—"
"He may have dropped it there, sir, or the other fellow may have put it there on purpose."
"That is a very serious statement to make, Lovell!"
"Well, sir, I know Jimmy Silver didn't put the cord there. He couldn't have, as he was only a few seconds in the study."
Mr. Bootles glanced at Mr. Mooney.
That gentleman coughed.
"I will think over this, Lovell," said the master of the Fourth, at last. "You may go now. I will speak to the Head this evening—ahem, to-morrow morning! To-morrow morning would perhaps be best."
Mr. Bootles did not say that he hoped to find the Head in a more reasonable frame of mind in the morning; but the juniors guessed that much.
"You may go now," added Mr. Bootles abruptly.
The three juniors left the study, their hearts lighter.
They could see that Mr. Bootles believed their story.
Indeed, it was scarcely possible for him to doubt it; he knew them far too well to suspect that they had concocted the tale to shield Jimmy Silver.
After the door had closed, Mr. Bootles blinked at Mr. Mooney over his glasses, and the master of the Shell coughed expressively.
"Your opinion, Mr. Mooney?" asked the master of the Fourth.
"The same as yours, I think," answered the master of the Shell. "Silver is evidently innocent. Those boys were speaking the truth."
"And if they are speaking the truth, it is impossible that Silver can be guilty." THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

"Precisely!"
Mr. Bootles took off his glasses, and wiped them, and put them back again.
He was in a very agitated frame of mind. "Under these circumstances, it is undoubtedly my duty to explain the matter to Dr. Chisholm," he said.
"Undoubtedly!"
"But—but—" murmured Mr. Bootles.
"It will not be a pleasant task," said the master of the Shell. "I respect Dr. Chisholm highly, as we all do, but I have not failed to recognise a strain of undue firmness in him—I might call it even, obstinacy. If I may make a suggestion, I should certainly not raise the matter this evening. In the morning Dr. Chisholm will be—ahem!—somewhat calmer."
"My own opinion exactly," said Mr. Bootles. "It is my duty to protect a boy in my Form from an act of injustice."
"I should certainly do so if it were a boy in the Shell who was concerned," said Mr. Mooney. "After all, the Head is bound to accord you a civil hearing, and the matter will be set right."
Mr. Bootles nodded assent, but he was not feeling quite so sure of that.
In fact, he was looking forward to his interview with the Head with very much the same feelings as Jimmy Silver's.
But Mr. Bootles had a strong sense of duty, and he intended to do his duty, unpleasant as it was.
It only remained to see what would come of it.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Suspense.

JIMMY SILVER was not looking happy when he came down on the following morning.
The flogging in Hall was to take place immediately before morning lessons, in the presence of all Rookwood; but it was not so certain now that it would take place.
Lovell & Co.'s visit to the Head had resulted a good deal as Jimmy had expected it to result; but the interview with the master of the Fourth had been more successful, and the Fistical Four expected Mr. Bootles to intervene.
They had noted that he was looking very troubled and clouded at breakfast.
The previous evening Jimmy Silver's sentence had been the one topic in the Lower School; and in the morning it was still being discussed with unabated interest.
The Modern juniors were as concerned as the Classics; and Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, came over specially from Mr. Manders' House to speak to Jimmy after breakfast about it.
Tommy Dodd was sympathetic.
"It looks jolly bad, Silver, old man!" he commented. "I take your word, of course. But I hardly think the Head will."
"There's witnesses!" grunted Lovell.
"And Mr. Bootles has promised to put in a word with the Head."
"But if Jimmy didn't lay that little trap for the Head," said Tommy Dodd, "who did?"
"Some rotter," said Jimmy.
"The chap ought to own up," said the Modern junior. "It's up to him, if you are going to get the flogging for it."
"I don't suppose he will. He would get the flogging."
"Well, a decent chap wouldn't have played such a rotten trick on the Head—he might have hurt him badly," said Jimmy Silver. "It was a dangerous trick, and only a rotter would play a trick like that on a middle-aged man! The Head feels a tumble more at his age than we do at ours."
"That's so. It was too thick, even if the chap had had a licking. By the way, do you know any chap who'd just had a licking from the Head? That would be a clue?"
"I had!" said Jimmy, with rather a wry face.
"Oh!"
Tommy Dodd was rather taken aback.
"The Head had just licked you?" he said.
"Yes."
"Jolly unlucky!"
"All the same, I wouldn't have played that trick on him."
"I know, Jimmy; but it does look bad, and no mistake. Still, your pals' evidence ought to pull you through, if Bootles pitches it to the Head!"

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"There he goes!" murmured Newcome.
Mr. Bootles was seen rustling away to the Head's study—where the Head was probably, just then, selecting a birch for the painful ceremony in Hall.
The master of the Fourth had a worried look.
Only his sense of duty urged him on to face what he knew would be a very disagreeable interview.
"Bootles is a good little goat," said Tommy Dodd. "He looks almost as if he was going to be flogged himself."
"He's a good sort!" said Jimmy.
And the juniors waited in considerable anxiety after the door had closed on Mr. Bootles, and he was shut up with the Head.
The Colonial Co. joined them, and Mornington and Erroll and Tubby Muffin and several other fellows; all were concerned about Jimmy.
It seemed reasonable to suppose that Jimmy's sentence would be rescinded, or at least postponed, after Mr. Bootles' explanation to the Head; but—
There was a "but."
The Rookwood fellows respected their headmaster, and were awed by him; but some of them were well aware of the streak of grim obstinacy in his character, which was rather beyond the limit of mere firmness.
"The Head looked awfully ratty this morning, Jimmy!" said Tubby Muffin, perhaps by way of comfort.
"Br-r-r!" said Jimmy.
"I saw him after he came out from brekker in his house," said the fat Classical. "He had a face like a gargoyle. There's a bump on his napper, and I saw him rub it."
"Is this what you call cheery conversation, Muffin?" asked Mornington.
Tubby blinked at him.
"The prefects have been told to assemble the whole school in Hall," he went on. "I heard Bulkeley say so to Neville and Knowles."
"Give us a rest!" grunted Lovell.
Bulkeley came along with a grave face.
"All you fags into Hall!" he said.
"I say, Bulkeley, is Jimmy Silver really going to be flogged?" sang out Tubby Muffin.
The captain of Rookwood walked on without answering.
"That looks bad," said Tubby, wagging his head sagely. "You'd better put some exercise-books in your bags, Jimmy!"
"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Jimmy.
The juniors streamed away into Big Hall, where the school was assembling for the "execution, as some of the fellows called it. Jimmy Silver received many sympathetic glances.
Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, was the only fellow who did not seem concerned about the matter at all; indeed, he looked very cheerful.
But the cad of the Fourth was on the worst of terms with Jimmy Silver, and probably he was looking forward to the entertainment.
Even Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell, said it was "hard cheese, Regad, you know!"
There was a murmur of voices in Hall, subdued but incessant.
All the Rookwood fellows were there, ranked in their Forms, with their masters and the prefects keeping order.
They waited for the arrival of the Head and Mr. Bootles.
But the hand of the big clock was creeping round, and there was still delay.
And with every minute of delay, Jimmy Silver's hopes strengthened that all would turn out well, after all.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
N. G.

DR. CHISHOLM did not look pleased as Mr. Bootles entered his study.
There was a birch on the table before him, upon which Mr. Bootles' eyes rested for a moment or two.
The Head's expression was hard and uncompromising. Perhaps he guessed that the master of the Fourth had come there to intercede for the condemned junior.
As a matter of fact, the doctor was feeling very out of sorts that raw morning.
The various bumps and bruises and abrasions he had collected in his tumble the previous evening seemed to ache more in the morning than the night before.
One glance at his face was enough to show that he was in no mood to listen to a plea for leniency.

It was not leniency Mr. Bootles was about to ask for, but justice; but he had an inward foreboding that his appeal would fall upon deaf and obstinate ears.
In fact, Tubby Muffin's simile was an accurate one, Mr. Bootles felt a great deal like Daniel entering the lion's den as he rustled into the Head's study.
"Well, Mr. Bootles?" The Head's voice was sharp and incisive.
"Ahem!" began Mr. Bootles.
"You have come to inform me that the school is assembled?"
Another cough from Mr. Bootles.
This was a deliberate misunderstanding on the part of the Head, and the Form master knew it.
"Ahem! Not exactly, sir."
"I have given instructions—"
"The fact is, sir, I have something to lay before you."
Dr. Chisholm held up his hand.
"Kindly do not utter one word in favour of Silver, Mr. Bootles. I cannot listen to it."
"But, sir—"
"The subject is not one for discussion, Mr. Bootles."
The Fourth Form master drew a deep breath. His task was turning out harder than he had even anticipated.
"You will accompany me to Hall," added the Head.
"But, sir—" murmured Mr. Bootles feebly.
"There is nothing to be said, Mr. Bootles!"
And the Head walked towards the door.
Mr. Bootles gasped for breath.
Even upon the masters at Rookwood the Head had a rather terrifying effect, and Mr. Bootles was not a man of much force of character.
He was sorely tempted at that moment to hold his peace, with the feeling that he had done his best and failed.
But his heart was too good for that, and, though with great inward trepidation, Mr. Bootles dared to be a Daniel.
"Dr. Chisholm," he gasped, "I must speak! I must really request you to listen to me!"
"What?"
The Head turned back towards him majestically.
"Mr. Bootles, I think you forget yourself!"
"I do not forget myself, sir," said Mr. Bootles, with some spirit. "I have my duty to do."
"One moment, Mr. Bootles. Is it upon the subject of Silver, of your Form, that you desire to speak to me?"
"Yes."
"Then I decline to hear you. I am surprised, Mr. Bootles, that you should even think of speaking in favour of a boy who has been guilty of an unprecedented outrage upon his headmaster!"
"I am here to ask justice for Silver, sir!" said Mr. Bootles, with dignity.
"Justice!" exclaimed the Head angrily. "Strict justice requires, sir, that I should expel that boy from the school with every circumstance of ignominy. I have been lenient—too lenient—for the sake of his family. A flogging, sir, is an inadequate punishment for the action he has been guilty of!"
"You mistake me, sir. The guilty person should be most severely punished, in my opinion, but I think that Silver is not guilty."
"Nonsense!"
"Really, sir—" ejaculated Mr. Bootles, colouring.
"I repeat—nonsense! You have allowed yourself to be deceived by a concocted tale, Mr. Bootles!"
"I am not so easily deceived, sir!" retorted Mr. Bootles. "And I am sure that if you were in a calmer mood you would admit—"
The Head's brows became thunderous.
The observation was not very tactful, perhaps; but Mr. Bootles was growing heated.
"Calmer, sir! Do you imply that I am capable of punishing an innocent boy from mere irritation, sir?"
"Oh!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Certainly not! I—I merely meant—"
"Enough, sir! I am satisfied of Silver's guilt. If you hold a contrary opinion, you are at liberty to hold it. You have stated your opinion, and I have taken due note of it. The matter closes here."
With that the Head swept from the study. Mr. Bootles stood rooted to the floor.
He took off his spectacles, wiped them, and replaced them upon his agitated nose.
"Bless my soul!" he murmured.

He moved to the door, and halted again. What to do was a problem to the unhappy Mr. Bootles.

He knew that Jimmy Silver was innocent. He believed that the Head himself, in a less exasperated mood, would have admitted the evidence in favour of the unfortunate junior.

Yet the punishment was to take place—an act of crying injustice from the Form master's point of view.

His intervention had been brushed aside—he was treated as a child—and a boy of his Form, whom he was bound to protect, was to suffer an unjust and disgraceful punishment.

At that thought all Mr. Bootles' hesitation vanished, and a gleam came into his eyes.

Irresolute and hesitating as he was, Mr. Bootles had plenty of courage when it was put to the test.

"It shall not be!" he exclaimed aloud.

And with a red face Mr. Bootles rushed out of the study and hurried to Big Hall.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Bootles Dares to be a Daniel.

"HERE comes the Head!" murmured Mornington.

Jimmy Silver drew a quick breath as Dr. Chisholm entered Big Hall by the upper door.

"Silence!" called Bulkeley of the Sixth. The buzz of voices died away.

"Buck up, Jimmy!" whispered Conroy.

Then there was a dead silence.

Jimmy gave the Australian junior a nod and a faint smile; but his heart was heavy.

Why had not Mr. Bootles come in with the Head?

And what was that in Dr. Chisholm's hand, half-hidden by his gown?

It was pretty clear that the Form master's intervention had failed.

All eyes were fixed upon the Head.

His face was calm and severe, but there was an unusual flush in his cheeks and a glitter in his eyes.

His voice came sharply through the dead stillness.

"Silver of the Fourth will stand out!"

Jimmy set his lips.

"Get a move on, kid!" muttered Bulkeley. Lovell clenched his hands hard. Raby and Newcome looked utterly misprisable.

There was a slight murmur in the Classical Fourth.

"Silence!"

Jimmy Silver stepped out of the ranks of his Form, and walked up Big Hall with a crimson face but a steady step.

It was inevitable now, and he could only go through it with all the fortitude he could muster.

He halted before the Head, his glance meeting steadily the eyes that were fixed upon him.

Old Mack, the porter, was present, ready to take up the condemned junior and "hoist" him for the flogging.

Jimmy did not heed him.

His eyes never wavered as they met the Head's grim glance.

"Silver"—the Head's voice was low, but deep, and it reached every ear in the crowded Hall—"you are about to be punished for an act unprecedented in the history of Rookwood. You have committed what amounts to an assault upon your headmaster. It was in my mind to expel you from the

school; but I have spared you that extreme punishment, chiefly for the sake of your parents. Your punishment will, however, be severe, and I trust that it will be a warning to you—and to others who may have been your confederates."

He paused.

"I did not do it, sir!" said Jimmy Silver steadily. "My friends can prove—"

"Silence!"

"I protest!" said Jimmy, a little pale now, but still steady. "There is proof that I did not—"

"Take up that boy, Mack!"

"Yessir!"

The porter came towards Jimmy Silver.

At that moment there was a bustle at the lower end of the Hall.

The big door swung open, and all eyes turned in that direction.

Mr. Bootles, in a state of great flurry and excitement, bustled in.

Old Mack blinked at him, wondering what this might mean.

The Head's voice was heard at last, like the rumble of distant thunder.

"Mr. Bootles! Kindly stand back!"

"Sir!"

"You are interrupting, Mr. Bootles!"

"Sir, it is my intention to interrupt!" panted Mr. Bootles, his eyes gleaming over his spectacles.

A thrill ran through the crowded Hall. Heads were craned forward to look.

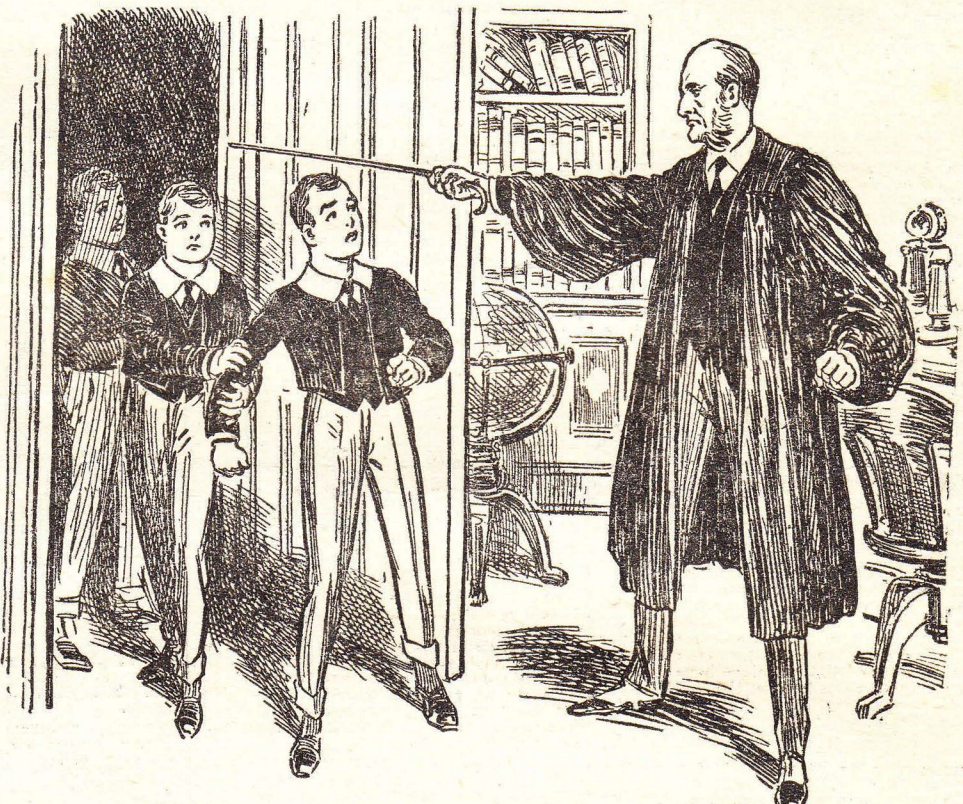
There was a sound of deep-drawn breath.

The Head looked dumbfounded.

His sway at Rookwood was unquestioned. For his lofty edicts to be disputed by any member of his staff was unheard of.

And here was the little, plump Form master, not at all heroic to look at, disputing his will, opposing his determination.

An earthquake in Big Hall could not have



NO LUCK FOR LOVELL!—"Now go!" exclaimed the Head. "Go, before I punish you more severely for your unheard-of impertinence, Lovell!" Still Arthur Lovell hesitated. But Raby and Newcome took hold of him and fairly forced him from the study. (See Chapter 2.)

A buzz rose from the crowded ranks of schoolboys.

The Head's face became thunderous as the little Form master bustled up the Hall towards the platform.

"My only hat!" murmured Conroy. "Bootles is going to chip in!"

"Great pip!"

"Give him a cheer!" muttered Lovell. "Shut up, you ass!" whispered Mornington, catching hold of Arthur Edward's arm. "You duffer! Shut up!"

"Silence!" shouted Knowles.

There was silence, broken only by the rustling of Mr. Bootles' gown as he whisked along.

The expression on the Head's face could only be described as awful.

The other masters looked thunderstruck. Mr. Mooney exchanged a helpless glance with Mr. Wiggins of the Second.

Mr. Bohun gave the Fourth Form master an approving look.

The sympathy of the staff was with Mr. Bootles, though they marvelled at his audacity.

Mr. Bootles was gasping as he came to a halt.

astounded the Head—and all Rookwood—more than that.

The silence that followed could be felt. The Head broke it.

"Mr. Bootles!" He was almost gasping. "Mr. Bootles, do I hear aright? It—it is your—your intention, sir, to—to interrupt?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you taken leave of your senses, sir?"

"No, sir, I have not! I protest in public, since you will not hear me in private! I protest, sir, against this act of injustice!"

A gasp ran through Big Hall.

"Good man, Bootles!" murmured Lovell. "Right on the wicket! Oh, good man—good man!"

"Silver belongs to my Form, sir!" pursued Mr. Bootles, gasping. "He is under his Form master's protection, sir. I am convinced of Silver's innocence. I will go further, sir, and say that Silver's innocence is perfectly clear to anyone who chooses to consider the facts calmly. In these circumstances, sir, I cannot stand idly by while a boy of my Form is subjected to a humiliating and wholly unjust punishment!"

The speech came out in gasps and jerks.

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Mr. Bootles was greatly excited, and almost lost his voice once or twice. But it came out in the end.

"The Head's face had become a little pale now, and the look in his eyes was not pleasant to see.

But he remained calm.

"This scene, Mr. Bootles—" he began.

"This scene, sir, is not to be laid to my charge. I am speaking from a sense of duty."

"Your ideas of duty differ from mine, sir, and you must be aware that after this outrageous defiance of authority your connection with Rookwood must instantly cease!"

"I am prepared for that, sir. But I will not remain silent while injustice is done to a boy entitled to my protection!"

"Bravo!" came from somewhere in the Fourth.

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

"Silence!" cried the prefects.

"Very well, Mr. Bootles," said the Head, with deadly quietness. "You have now uttered your protest. Now, sir, I beg of you to retire, and not prolong this scene, which is a disgraceful one."

"Before I retire, sir, I desire to know whether Silver is to be flogged."

"Most decidedly!"

"Then, sir," exclaimed Mr. Bootles, "I will not retire. I am aware, sir, that I shall forfeit my position in this school, and that is a serious matter for me; but so long as I remain here, sir, I am master of the Fourth Form, and I have my duty to do, which is to protect any member of my Form from injustice!"

"Mr. Bootles!" gasped the Head.

"Silver!" Mr. Bootles turned to the dismayed junior. "You belong to my Form, and you are under my orders."

"Yes, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

"I command you to leave this Hall at once!"

"Hook it, Jimmy!" came the "voice" from the Fourth once more, which sounded a great deal like Lovell's.

"Silence!"

Jimmy Silver stood rooted to the floor.

He was grateful to Mr. Bootles—more than grateful. He knew what it must cost the little gentleman to intervene like this.

But for Mr. Bootles' own sake he would have preferred to let the Head proceed.

But it was a question of now obeying his Form master, who was sacrificing so much for his sake.

He could not hesitate about that.

And the Head did not speak.

It was on his lips to order Mack to take up the junior for the flogging, regardless of Mr. Bootles, but the little Form master was quivering with angry excitement, and there was no telling what he might have done.

Bitterly angry as he was, the Head did not want a scuffle in Hall, and that was pretty clear what it might have come to.

So he was silent, biting his lip till it almost bled.

"You hear me, Silver?" said Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy quietly.

He turned and walked out of Hall.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Sacked!

ROOKWOOD was in a ferment that morning.

What had happened in Big Hall was amazing—almost incredible.

Even yet the fellows felt that they could hardly believe their eyes and ears.

In the Classical Fourth Mr. Bootles was at the zenith of popularity.

He had stood up for a Fourth-Former against the Head himself, and that required a nerve the juniors had never believed him capable of.

And he had succeeded, too. Jimmy Silver had not been flogged!

Whether the flogging was only postponed remained to be seen; but so far, at all events, it had not been administered, owing to Mr. Bootles' courageous intervention.

The Rookwooders were late in class that morning, but the prefects shepherded them into the Form-rooms at last.

In the Fourth Form-room there was keen anxiety till Mr. Bootles appeared.

That he would have to leave Rookwood School seemed certain, and the juniors wondered whether he would take the Fourth that morning.

Doubts on that point were relieved by the appearance of Mr. Bootles, very troubled and agitated, in the Form-room.

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When he came in, the Fourth, as if moved by a common instinct, rose to their feet and cheered.

It was a spontaneous outburst, and it seemed to surprise Mr. Bootles.

"The little gentleman had only done what he conceived to be his duty, and he was sorely troubled by the thought that he had perhaps gone too far.

He stood and blinked at the juniors over his spectacles as they cheered.

"What—what?" he ejaculated.

The cheers rang through the Form-room, and rolled out over Rookwood with a roar.

"Bless my soul! Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, waving his hand. "My boys, silence! I beg of you to be quiet! What will the Head think? Silence!"

The cheering died down at last.

Mr. Bootles, very flustered and red, proceeded to business, but lessons were very desultory that morning.

In the prevailing state of excitement the fellows had little attention to give to Latin grammar.

Lessons that morning, in fact, were little more than pretence, and both masters and boys were relieved when the hour of dismissal came.

He shut himself up in his study after lessons, and was pacing to and fro, with a wrinkled brow, when a tap came at his door.

It was Tupper, the page, who presented himself.

"Yes, yes; what is it—what, what?" asked Mr. Bootles, much flurried.

"The 'Bad wishes to speak to you in his study, sir,'" said Tupper, with a curious eye on the Form master.

It was known "below stairs" that something very sensational had happened in Big Hall that morning.

"Very well, Tupper! Thank you, Tupper! You may go, Tupper!" stammered Mr. Bootles.

And Tupper went.

The little Form master pulled himself together for the dreaded interview.

He whisked out of the room at last, and whisked along to the Head's study, more jerky than ever in his movements in his state of agitation.

He found the Head cold and calm.

Dr. Chisholm's eyes were like points of steel as they rested upon the plump little Form master in the doorway of his study.

"Pray step in, Mr. Bootles."

His manner was studiously polite.

But it was a steely, deadly politeness, and it told of an inflexible determination, as Mr. Bootles could see.

Very red and uncomfortable, the master of the Fourth stepped into the study.

The Head did not ask him to be seated.

"After what has happened this morning, Mr. Bootles, doubtless you realise very clearly that you cannot remain at Rookwood!" said the Head in icy tones.

"Indeed, sir!" said Mr. Bootles.

Dr. Chisholm raised his eyebrows.

"That is surely apparent to you!" he said.

"I did my duty, sir!" blurted out Mr. Bootles. "I was sorry—I am sorry now—to have acted with any apparent disrespect towards the Head of this school. But you left me no choice in the matter."

"I do not care to open a discussion, Mr. Bootles. I have only to say that I am prepared to receive your resignation, and accept it."

Mr. Bootles blew through his nose.

"My resignation, sir?" he snapped.

"Precisely!"

"Well, sir, I shall not place my resignation in your hands. To do so would be to acknowledge a fault—which I definitely refuse to acknowledge. I shall not, sir, under any circumstances whatever, resign my post in this school."

"Then it only remains for me to dismiss you, Mr. Bootles."

"You have the power in your hands, sir, to add one injustice to another," said the Form master, with dignity. "But I shall certainly not make the path of injustice, sir, easy to you. I refuse to resign, and if you care to carry injustice to the length of depriving me of my position here, I leave it to your conscience, Dr. Chisholm."

The Head set his lips hard.

"Very well"—his voice was low and incisive—"Mr. Bootles, you are dismissed!"

"So be it!" said Mr. Bootles.

And, more jerky than ever, the little gentleman whisked out of the study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. The Last Chance.

"ROTTEN!"

That was the verdict in the Fourth Form, and, indeed, in all Rookwood.

It was known that afternoon that Mr. Bootles was definitely dismissed by the Head.

He had done his duty.

He had paid the price; and it was a heavy price for the Fourth Form master to pay.

The looks of the other masters were grave and concerned.

It was not difficult for even the juniors to see that their sympathies were with Mr. Bootles.

The blow that had fallen upon him was a very heavy one.

He had been so long associated with Rookwood that it was his home, the abiding-place in which all his thoughts and feelings were centred.

In the end study that evening the Fistical Four discussed the matter in somewhat dismal tones.

There was nothing they could do, save to give Mr. Bootles a cheer when he left—if that was any use.

"It'll let him know that we back him up, anyway," Lovell remarked.

Jimmy Silver smiled faintly.

There was a tap at the door, and Conroy, the Australian, came in. His face was clouded.

"You fellows knew about Bootles, of course?" he said.

"Yes."

"He's sacked!" said Conroy.

"We know. It's rotten!"

"Well," said the Australian junior, "can't something be done? I don't see sitting down and seeing old Bootles turned out like this."

"I'd do anything," said Jimmy. "It was for my sake he's got it in the neck like this. I wish he had let the Head get on with the flogging."

"Well, I've been thinking," said Conroy quietly. "Look here, Jimmy, you didn't play that trick in the Head's study."

"No."

"If you didn't, somebody else did."

"That follows, of course."

"Well, who was it?"

"I can't even guess—if it mattered."

"It does matter," said Conroy. "That's what I've been thinking of. Suppose the fellow was found out, and made to own up?"

"Well?"

"That would prove that Mr. Bootles was in the right in backing you up, Jimmy, and then the Head couldn't push him out like this. He would have to admit that Bootles had saved him from being unjust, wouldn't he?"

"I—I suppose so," said Jimmy Silver slowly.

"The Head's ratty now," said Conroy. "But he's a good sort in the main—we know that. Suppose it was proved to him that somebody else had done that trick—he would be in honour bound to let up on Bootles."

"Yes. But—"

"Well, then," said Conroy, "Bootles isn't gone yet. He can't go for a day or two, at least. In that time the fellow may be found. It's up to us; we've got to save Bootles by finding out the guilty party, and showing him up, or making him own up. That will see Bootles clear."

"By Jove!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver's face brightened.

"But how?" said Raby.

"We've got to find out how," answered Conroy. "It's up to us, and we've got to do it, somehow. We'll all work together, and set our wits to work, and find out the truth, and save Bootles."

"I'm on!" said Jimmy Silver at once.

And the Co. heartily concurred.

It was a chance, at least, and the only chance.

And from the moment that Jimmy Silver & Co. set themselves that task they lost no time.

What would come of it—whether anything would come of it—remained to be seen.

But if they failed, it would not be for the want of striving.

THE END.

(Next week's story of Rookwood is entitled, "The Coward of Rookwood!" It is a fine dramatic story no reader of the POPULAR can afford to miss. Order your copy now.)

The FOUR GREATEST AUTHORS in the World Write for the "Popular"! 7

LORD TODGERS!—The fat boy of the Lumber School lives to have his leg pulled! Chunky learns that he is heir to a vast fortune in England. His true identity is revealed. Lord Reginald has come into his rights at last!



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

FRANK RICHARDS

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Chunky the Romantic!

CHUNKY TODGERS gave a sigh. It was such a deep sigh that it sounded like the air escaping from a pair of bellows; and Frank Richards sat up in the grass and stared at him. Frank Richards & Co. were taking it easy on the bank of the creek while they waited for the bell for afternoon lessons. Bob Lawless was sitting at the foot of a tree, leaning lazily back, staring idly across the shining creek. Frank and Vere Beauclerc lay on their backs in the rich grass, looking at the sky. Wide and blue, dotted with fleecy white clouds, it was pleasant to look upon, stretching far away to the summits of the Rockies in the distance. Chunky Todgers had been reading. Chunky was a fat youth, with an enormous appetite, and an inordinate fancy for maple sugar. But he was also a romantic youth. He favoured the novel in his taste for reading, and he devoured the productions of the Chicago libraries that found their way as far north as the Thompson Valley. The circulating library in Thompson had no more devoted adherent than Chunky Todgers. Chunky had reached the end of his book, and he looked up and gave that huge sigh which drew the attention of the other Cedar Creek fellows. "Hallo!" murmured Bob Lawless drowsily. "What's the trouble? Been overdoing it at dinner, Chunky?" "No, you ass!" grunted Todgers. "Well, what's the matter, then?" asked Vere Beauclerc. Chunky sighed again. "There he goes, like bellows," said Bob, yawning. "It was the pie right enough." "I was thinking," said Chunky, with a third sigh, deeper than the others. "I say, this novel is topping. All about a chap who was brought up on a Californian ranch, and turned out to be the son of an English marquis, and had a birthmark, you know, that his fond father knew him by, and came in for a title and a fortune and an old castle with suits of armour in the hall." "Poor chap!" said Bob. "Eh?" "Awful thing for a chap who's lived on

a ranch to have to go home to Europe and be a marquis!" said Bob innocently. "You silly jay!" exclaimed Chunky indignantly. "I jolly well wish I could turn out to be a marquis! This chap in the book was taken away when he was a nipper by a faithful retainer—" "Good old faithful retainer!" said Todgers. "To save his life from his wicked uncle," said Todgers. "This uncle was a regular terror, you know. Lots of times he tried to poison him, and shoot him, and get him hanged on false charges, you know; but young Cholmondeley de Vere came up smiling every time, and downed him." "What a nice uncle to have in the family circle," yawned Bob. "Are marquis' uncles like that, Cherub? You ought to know, as you've got noble lords in the family." Beauclerc laughed. "I say, life is pretty dull here, ain't it?" said Chunky. "What?" "Compared with young Cholmondeley de Vere's life, I mean. Fancy turning out to be the son of a marquis, and going home to a castle in England, with suits of armour, and grey-headed, old retainers bowing to the ground, you know." "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three. "No such luck for us," said Chunky pessimistically. "We shall grow up to be blessed farmers, and never see a castle at all." "Who knows?" chuckled Bob Lawless. "Perhaps your popper may turn out to be a faithful old retainer in the family of Lord Tom Noddy de Cashbox!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Perhaps that's why he came to Canada," continued Bob. "To save you from the wiles of your wicked uncle, Lord Duke Whiskers de Bowie-Knife. Some day when you're doing lessons a man in disguise will march into Cedar Creek, perhaps, and claim you as the long-lost son of the Lord High Marquis of Thingummy, and you'll walk off to your castle—perhaps!" "Perhaps!" grinned Frank Richards. "I shouldn't be surprised," said Bob gravely. "Chunky has a rather aristocratic cut, hasn't he?" "Do you think so, Bob?" gasped Chunky, greatly flattered. "Sure! Sort of lofty!" said Bob. "Noble, in fact!" "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Frank and Beauclerc,

delighted by the expression on Chunky's podgy face. Todgers snorted, as he realised that Bob was pulling his leg. "Well, it wouldn't be so jolly surprising as you may think," he retorted. "Young Cholmondeley de Vere was working on a ranch when he first found that he was son and heir of Lord Cholmondeley de Plantagenet. The ranchers had always noticed his aristocratic ways, and had done the rough work for him, from instinctive respect for noble blood." "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob. "More likely to let some of his noble blood out at his nose, I guess, if he put on side on a ranch." "Oh, you're a blessed Philistine," said Chunky. "You never read novels, and you don't know anything about marquises and their ways." And Chunky opened his novel again at the place where the youthful De Vere was first recognised by the Marquis of Plantagenet, and his little round eyes were glued upon that fascinating page again. "Chuck that rot into the creek!" said Bob. "Br-r-r!" Bob Lawless rose and stretched his sturdy limbs. "Nuff slacking," he said. "Let's go and split some logs for Mr. Shepherd, you fellows. We said we would." "Right-ho!" said Frank. And he rose from the grass, Beauclerc following his example. The three chums walked away through the sunshine towards Cedar Creek School. Chunky Todgers, with his back against the tree on the edge of the wood, and his legs drawn up, his novel resting on his knees, devoured for the fifth or sixth time the adventures of Cholmondeley de Vere, and wished deeply and sadly that, somehow, such great fortune would come his way, and that he would "turn out" to be the Marquis of Todgers.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Dry Billy in Luck!

DRY BILLY BOWERS was tired that afternoon. He lay in the deep green thicket and rested, a good deal like an animal curled up in its lair. Mr. Bowers had had an exciting morning. THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

Do You Know Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of Cedar Creek? They're Fine Pals!

He was a "hobo from over the line," and such a character was likely to find a warm welcome in a hard-working section of the Canadian West like the Thompson Valley.

Perhaps Mr. Bowers' exploits as a hobo, or tramp, had made it judicious for him to cross the border into Canada for a time. On desperate occasions, when he was very thirsty, Dry Billy had worked.

But such occasions were rare. He had wandered into Cedar Camp, and not a single drink had come his way to quench his thirst.

A lumberman's heavy boot had finally helped him out of Cedar Camp, and Mr.

THE ANNUAL FOR YOU—

Bowers had dismally hoofed it on to Thompson.

Now he lay and rested in the green wood. Mr. Bowers was roused from his doze by the sound of voices near at hand.

He pricked up his ears, and listened, wondering whether he could "strike" the speakers for a "quarter."

A grin overspread his fat, whiskery, copper-coloured face as he heard the conversation of Frank Richards & Co. and Chunky Todgers.

Mr. Bowers was amused. He had a sense of humour, and Chunky's lofty aspirations tickled him.

He heard the receding footsteps of the three schoolboys, and heard Chunky Todgers turning page after page as he followed the thrilling adventures of Cholmondeley de Vere.

Mr. Bowers' grin increased in size. He winked at the trees.

It was really a brain-wave that smote Dry Billy, and caused him to grin and wink and chuckle noiselessly.

Mr. Bowers had had some experience in earlier days of the stage, having "walked on" as extra gentleman in barn-storming companies of the West.

Therefore, he knew as much about mysterious marquises, and their manners and customs, as any novel-reader did.

After thinking it out, Mr. Bowers rose silently to his feet.

He peered through the foliage at the fat schoolboy sitting under the tree, his eager eyes on the novel.

Mr. Bowers winked over Chunky's head and withdrew, and by a circuitous route left the wood, and came out into the path by the creek some little distance from Chunky.

Then, as if coming from Cedar Camp, he approached the schoolboy.

Chunky Todgers glanced up at the sound of footsteps.

He frowned a little at the sight of the ragged, dusty tramp, with his copper complexion, beery features, and tattered hat.

Chunky might long to be a marquis, in his idle moments, but he had all the healthy Canadian contempt for the slacker who would not work, all the same.

But Mr. William Bowers was not deterred by his frown.

He approached Chunky, treading softly.

"Cut it out!" said Chunky, before Dry Billy could speak. "Not a cent! Go and ask for a job—there's lots going at Thompson."

"Hist!"

Chunky dropped his novel in astonishment.

He had expected a request for financial assistance from the dusty gentleman, and instead of that the dusty one placed his finger on his lips and whispered:

"Hist!"

"Wha-at!" stuttered Chunky.

"Hist!"

"Look here, what the thunder are you driving at?" demanded Chunky, wondering whether the man was mad.

"I can remain but a moment," said Mr. Bowers, in a hushed tone.

"You needn't!" said Chunky. "I don't like tramps, and the sooner you sheer off the better!"

"Hist! I am in disguise."
THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

"Wha-a-at?"
"Hush! Speak lower, or my life may be in danger."
"Wha-at?"
"From your wicked uncle," whispered Mr. Bowers.
Chunky Todgers sat dumb.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Glorious News!

CHUNKY TODGERS found his voice at last.

"What are you driving at?" he gasped. "Do you mean my Uncle George? Let him hear you calling him names, that's all, you blessed hobo!"

"Do you not understand?" panted Mr. Bowers excitedly. "I am here to seek you. I have long sought you, in disguise and danger. If your uncle—your wicked uncle, I mean—should discover you, your life would pay the forfeit!"

"My word!" gasped Chunky.

"You know not the secret of your birth," breathed Mr. Bowers.

Chunky palpitated.

He had not the faintest idea that Mr. Bowers had overheard his conversation with Frank Richards & Co., and the man was a total stranger to him.

Chunky was getting both excited and interested.

Was it possible—
The bare possibility dazzled him.

"The—secret of my birth!" stammered Chunky.

"What have you always believed your name to be?" asked Mr. Bowers.

"Todgers."

"Ha, ha! Have you the look of a Todgers? Have you the cut of a Todgers? Did not some secret feeling within your breast warn you that your name was not Todgers—that, if the truth were known, you came of an ancient and noble race?"

"Yes!" gasped Chunky. "I—I've often thought—"

"That brow—those flashing eyes!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, gazing in awed admiration at Chunky.

—IS THE

tion at Chunky. "That face! Those features! The heir of Monteaige is no longer lost!"

"Mum-mum-Monteaige!" stuttered Chunky.

"Lord Reginald de Monteaige," said Mr. Bowers. "That is your rightful name and title, son and heir of the Marquis of—of Monteaige Towers."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Chunky.

"Noble youth!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers. "Step into the wood! We may be observed! Your wicked uncle is on the track!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Chunky fairly jumped into the wood after Mr. Bowers.

Certainly he did not want to be spotted by his wicked uncle, if that gentleman was anything like the wicked uncle of Cholmondeley de Vere in the novel.

"But—but—" he gasped.

"Listen!" breathed Mr. Bowers. "I can remain but a few moments, or both our lives may be sacrificed. You are the heir of the Marquis of Monteaige, who has wept for years for his missing heir. In the dead of night—"

"Oh!"

"In the dead of night a child was placed in the arms of Mr. Todgers, with a purse of gold—"

"Wa-a-was it?"

"He was bidden to take the child to Canada, and bring him up as his own son," pursued Mr. Bowers. "He did not suspect that the child was the son of the wronged marquis, and that the man who handed him over was Lord Horace, the wicked uncle of the unhappy boy. For fourteen years you have been sought in vain."

"Great Scott!"

"Now at last you are found!" gasped Mr. Bowers. "Information was received—I came to Canada at the marquis' orders—but Lord Horace was on my track. I was attacked—robbed. I became penniless. Disguised as a hobo, I came hither—and now by chance I have found you."

"How did you know me?" gasped Chunky. "By your resemblance to the ancient knights of the Monteaige race, whose portraits hang in the hall at the Towers."
"Oh, by gum, did you?"

"But hist!" continued Mr. Bowers. "Not a word, not a whisper! Your fate may yet hang in the balance. Lord Horace is on the track. I have been robbed! I am penniless! Listen! Two horses must be obtained, so that we can ride together to Kamloops, where I have money in abundance in the—the bank. A small sum will be required to pay for the horses. Have you ten dollars?"

"I—I guess I've only got one dollar!" said Chunky, in dismay.

Dry Billy's eyes glistened.

Even one dollar was enough to quench his thirst for a few minutes.

"Have they kept the heir of Monteaige short of money?" he exclaimed. "But doubtless such were the instructions of Lord Horace. Lord Reginald, money must be obtained! Once aboard the lugger and the girl is ours!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, once at Kamloops we are safe from Lord Horace and his myrmidons. Can you raise the money?"

"I—I guess so," gasped Chunky. "Or I could borrow a horse for you. I've got my pony at school, you know."

Mr. Bowers started.

He had not known that.

"You have a pony, and you could borrow a horse?" he gasped. "Good! Excellent! But a few dollars would be—be useful, also. Come to the haunted oak."

"The what?"

"I mean, come to this spot with the horses and the money, and all is well. From Kamloops a message shall be sent to Mr. Todgers, acquainting him that you are starting for England to join your real father."

"Phew!"

"Thus will the machinations of Lord Horace be baffled."

"I'll do it!" gasped Chunky. "Oh, my hat! There's the school bell!"

"What is school at such a time as this?" exclaimed Mr. Bowers. "Not a moment must be lost!"

"But—but Miss Meadows will spot me when I go for my pony; and I couldn't get it out of the corral till after lessons," said Chunky. "Perhaps I'd better tell Miss Meadows all you've told me."

"On your life, not a word!" gasped Mr. Bowers. "Better to attend lessons and come afterwards here, with the horses and the money."

"Good!"

"I will await you, still in disguise. Not a word, not a whisper, or all may be lost, and Lord Horace may triumph, and your noble father's heart may be broken amid the lonely splendours of Monteaige Towers!" said Mr. Bowers impressively.

"I'll be jolly careful!" gasped Chunky.

"But stay. You said you have one dollar."

"Only one," said Chunky.

"Leave it with me. I will obtain food for the journey, and meet you here with it ready."

"All right!"

Chunky Todgers' dollar passed into Mr. Bowers' hand, and the fat schoolboy ran

through the wood towards Cedar Creek School, his heart thumping.

Mr. Bowers gazed after him, and gazed at the dollar.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he ejaculated. "Billy, my boy, you're in luck! You've kenowed for once, I guess. I calculate I never thought my old experience on the boards would come in so pesky useful, and I never reckoned I'd strike a born idiot in this section! My luck's in!"

And Mr. Bowers started for Thompson town, where the dollar was very quickly passed over the bar at the Red Dog saloon.

"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

His Lordship.

CHUNKY TODGERS was a little late for lessons. All the Cedar Creek boys and girls were in their places in the big school-room where Todgers arrived breathless.

There were three classes at work in the big school-room, presided over by Miss Meadows, Mr. Shepherd, and Mr. Slimmey. Chunky belonged to Miss Meadows' class, and the schoolmistress gave him a severe look as he came in.

"You are late, Todgers!" she exclaimed. Chunky Todgers was about to say "Sorry, ma'am!" when he remembered that he was the son of a marquis.

That made a great difference. Cedar Creek School appeared inexpressibly commonplace in his eyes in comparison with Monteaige Towers.

Chunky was swelling already, like the frog in the fable.

He gave Miss Meadows a lofty look. "Did you address me, madam?" he asked. "What?"

"I regret that I am somewhat late," said Chunky in a stately way.

Half unconsciously he imitated the accent of Mr. Shepherd, the new master at the lumber school, whose accent was a never-ending joy to the Cedar Creek fellows.

Chunky Todgers had chuckled over it as much as anyone, but now that he was the son of a marquis it was a different matter. He thought it a good idea to cultivate that accent, ready for the time when he was presented to the old nobleman at Monteaige Towers.

Mr. Shepherd himself glanced round as Chunky spoke in a high-pitched and drawing tone.

"Todgers!" exclaimed Miss Meadows in astonishment.

"I was lingerin' in the wood, madam," said Chunky, deliberately dropping his final "g," as Mr. Shepherd did with his.

"Go to your place at once, Todgers!" said Miss Meadows, very much puzzled.

"With pleasuah, madam!" Miss Meadows started, thinking that Chunky was imitating Mr. Shepherd's weird accent from a spirit of mockery.

But she allowed the incident to pass, and the fat schoolboy sat down in his place.

Many glances were turned on Chunky Todgers that afternoon.

He was not his usual self.

He generally lounged in his seat, and Miss Meadows had often told him to sit up straighter, but now he sat bolt upright, upheld doubtless by the consciousness of the noble blood that flowed in his veins.

He kept his fat chin well up, and when he looked round it was with a lofty glance. In fact, Chunky's expression was growing supercilious.

The sense of his immense superiority was turning his head a little.

He was Lord Reginald in his own right! It was an intoxicating thought.

Chunky was a good fellow at heart, but his head was not quite so good as his heart.

He was falling a victim to an uncontrollable desire to "swank."

When afternoon lessons were over Chunky walked out of the school-room as if he were treading on air.

Tom Lawrence clapped him on the shoulder in the playground.

"What's the matter, Chunky?" he inquired. Todgers gave him a stony stare.

"Unhand me, please!" he said. "Wha-at!" stammered Lawrence.

"Unhand me! I object to this familiarity of mannah!"

"Begad!" murmured Frank Richards.

"He must be potty!" said Vere Beauclerc, in wonder. "Or is this a joke, Chunky?"

"Pray do not address me as Chunky!" answered the fat youth. "My name is Reginald!"

"What?" yelled Bob. "Your name's Joe, you silly jay! Blessed if he hasn't forgotten his own name now!"

"My name," said Chunky, with stately dignity, "is Reginald! Hitherto—"

"Where did you pick up that word?" gasped Bob.

"Ha, ha!" roared Frank. "In the novel, of course. People use those words in novels." "Hitherto," said Chunky, with calm disdain, "I have been known as Joe Todgers. The secret of my birth has not been known."

"Ye gods!" "I am bound to secrecy at present," continued Chunky, as wandering eyes turned on him from all sides. "My wicked uncle—" "Your whatter?" gasped Frank Richards. "My wicked uncle—" "Better let your Uncle George hear you saying that!" exclaimed Lawrence. "I am not referring to my Uncle George. George Todgers is not really my uncle at all, as it turns out."

"He's wandering in his mind," said Hopkins. "I'm not wandering in my mind," said Chunky calmly. "I am statin' the facts revealed to me. You common fellows—"

"What-at?" "You common fellahs don't know how to treat a fellah of noble birth! You may be surprised to hear that I am goin' to England shortly."

"What for?" "To be restored to my rightful parent—my long-lost father!"

"Eh! Your father's in Canada, isn't he?" yelled Bob. "He was yesterday, anyway."

"My father is at Monteaige Towers," answered Chunky. "Mr. Todgers was a faithful old retainer—"

"Great Scott!" "Mad!" said Eben Haecke. "Some of us had better see him home, I reckon! He may want tying up if he gets worse!"

"Bah!" With that ejaculation of disdainful scorn Chunky Todgers walked away—or, rather, strutted.

And the podgy schoolboy looked so supremely absurd as he strutted that a yell of irresistible laughter followed him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Dread Secret!

FRANK RICHARDS and his chums had taken out their horses to ride home when Chunky Todgers bore down upon them.

Chunky, in his new-found greatness, had treated the chums with lofty superciliousness, like the rest.

But it had dawned upon his somewhat obtuse brain that he was in want of aid.

As yet he was not the recognised heir of the noble line of Monteaige, and before that could take place he had to get to Kamloops, where the disguised Mr. Bowers had plenty of money in the bank and there was protection from the wiles of the wicked Lord Horace.

To do that he had to borrow a horse, and, if possible, some money.

Certainly, he ought to have found no difficulty in raising a loan on the strength of his splendid prospects.

But he knew that he was more likely to find doubting Thomases than believers among the Cedar Creek fellows.

He selected Frank Richards & Co. as the most likely to accede to his demands.

"Hold on, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

"Vamoose!" answered Bob Lawless, with a chuckle. "I object to this familiar mannah, Todgahs! Don't start calling me a chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I—I didn't mean to—to be down on you chaps," said Chunky. "Of course, there's a difference in social station. But I still look upon you as friends—humble friends, I might say."

"Humble friends!" repeated Frank Richards dazedly.

"You silly, fat, conceited, potty lump of train-grease!" shouted Bob Lawless wrathfully. "What do you mean?"

"I—I say, will you lend me ten dollars?" "No."

"And your horse?" "My horse? I guess not!"

"I—I must have a horse and some cash!" said Chunky Todgers earnestly. "My life's in danger!"

"Over-eating?" asked Frank. "No!" yelled Todgers. "My wicked uncle's after me!"

"My hat!"

Bob Lawless let go his horse, and took Chunky Todgers by the collar, and shook him forcibly.

"Look here, you dotty gopher," he said,



A ROPING FOR DRY BILLY!—Mr. Bowers' foot caught in a trailing root and he went over in the grass. He roared and wriggled as the rope rose and fell upon him there. "Let up! Oh, jumping gophers! Don't I keep on telling you it was only a joke?" he roared. (See Chapter 6.)

"if you're not mad, tell us what you mean! Shrap, now!"

"Ow! Yow!"
 "Will you explain yourself, you silly jay?"
 "Groogh! Leggo! Look here, I'll tell you fellows!" gasped Chunky. "I rely on your keepin' the dread secret!"
 "Don't give us novel language, you fat-head! Tell us what you mean in plain Canadian!" howled Bob.

"I—I've found out the secret of my birth!"
 "There wasn't any secret about it, you chump! You're registered at Thompson, like every other kid born in this section."
 "That's only what's supposed," said Chunky mysteriously. "In the dead of night a hand was placed in the hands of Mr. Todgers!"
 "What?"

"He was bidden to take the boy to Canada, and bring him up as his own son!"
 "Great Christopher Columbus!"
 "My rightful father is the Marquis of Monteaige Towers!"

"Which?"
 "And I," said Chunky impressively—"I am Lord Reginald de Monteaige."
 "Lord Reginald de Monteaige!" moaned Bob Lawless.

"Yep—I—I mean, yaas. The man who searched for me recognised me by my likeness to the portraits of the ancient knights of Monteaige that hang in the castle of my noble race!"

Frank Richards & Co. stared at Chunky dumbfounded.

For a moment the heir of Monteaige thought that they were properly impressed. But that was a mistake; he had only taken their breath away.

A yell of laughter from the three apprised him of the fact that they were not impressed with the importance of the dread secret.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, carry me home to die!" yelled Bob Lawless. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here, you silly jays—" exclaimed Chunky indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "The man's searchin' for me. He knew me at once—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "He's in disguise, too!" exclaimed Chunky. "And I'm goin' to meet him this evenin'—now, in fact—to go to Kamloops, where I shall be safe from Lord Horace—"

"Lord which?"
 "Lord Horace—my wicked uncle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here, you rotters, 'tain't a laughin' matter, when a chap's in danger of being laid out by his wicked uncle!" exclaimed Chunky. "I want you to lend me a horse and some money, so that I can go to Kamloops."

"You fat idiot!" gasped Bob. "Who's been pulling your silly leg?"

"It's honest Injun, I tell you!" said Chunky, almost tearfully. "He knew me at once. He's in disguise, too."

"Who is?" shrieked Frank Richards. "The man who found me. He's been attacked by Lord Horace's what-do-ye-call-ums—" Chunky hesitated. "Something or other—myrmidons, that's the word!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's the word used in novels, too!" grinned Bob.

"He was robbed, and so he's disguised himself as a hobo," said Chunky. "But he's got lots of money in the bank at Kamloops."

"How do you know?"
 "He said so."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, will you lend me a horse and ten dollars?" demanded Chunky angrily.

"Ha, ha! No jolly fear!" yelled Bob Lawless. "Not to give to a hobo!"

"He's not really a hobo—he's in disguise, because Lord Horace is after him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The chums of Cedar Creek yelled, while Chunky blinked at them in great indignation and wrath.

"Look here, it's as straight as a string!" he protested. "How could the man know anything about me, if it wasn't straight?"

"Perhaps he's heard that you're a silly, novel-reading idiot!" answered Vere. "He's some spoofer who's found out what a born fool you are, Chunky!"

"But we'll make it a trade," chuckled Bob. "You say you're going to meet the man, with a horse and ten dollars?"

"That's it."
 "Well, we'll come with you," said Bob. "If he's genuine, and you're a real nobleman, Chunky, you shall have my boss and all the dollars we've got in our rags. If he's a

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hobo and a hoss-thief, we'll give him a taste of the trail-robe. Is it a cinch?"

"I'd rather take the horse and the money."
 "Not for Joseph!" answered Bob emphatically.

"Well, I agree, then," said Chunky. "He told me to keep the dread secret—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Still, I can trust you fellows. Come on," said Chunky, making up his mind. "He's waiting for me already."

And the four rode off together to keep the appointment with the seeker of long-lost sons, three of them chortling all the way.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Dry Billy Remains Dry.

MR. WILLIAM BOWERS was waiting. He was reclining, not to say sprawling, in the grass at the foot of a tree, while he waited for his dupe to appear. Mr. Bowers was in a happy mood.

A dollar's worth of fire-water had not quite quenched his thirst, but it had given him a happy glow, and he had a cheery anticipation of more to come.

Two horses would sell for a good price down the valley at a safe distance, and any dollars Chunky brought along with him would come in useful, too.

As for Chunky's feelings when he saw Mr. Bowers ride away with the horses, leaving him stranded, Dry Billy did not bother about that.

He was accustomed to thinking only of William Bowers.

The vagrant raised himself on his elbow as he heard the sound of horses being led through the wood.

He grinned complacently, and winked into space.

The jingling of horses came nearer, and the vagrant jumped up.

But he did not look pleased when four fellows, leading their horses, came through the thickets.

He had expected to see only Chunky Todgers, and at a glance he could see that the other three were not to be fooled like poor Chunky.

He cast a quick glance behind him, as if meditating flight.

But they were close upon him at once. "Here I am!" announced Chunky Todgers. "And—and hyer I am!" faltered Mr. Bowers.

Frank Richards & Co. scanned him keenly. If he was only "disguised" as a tramp, Mr. Bowers was certainly a past-master in the art of disguises, for he looked the part to the very life.

"These chaps are goin' to lend me a horse and some money," said Chunky Todgers. "They wanted to see you first, to see that it was all square."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Bowers. Bob Lawless grinned.

"Only just to see that it's square, my man," he remarked. "So you're the galoot that's going to save Chunky from his wicked uncle?"

"Ye-es!" stammered Mr. Bowers. "Lord Horace—eh?"
 "Ye-es."

"And you recognised Chunky by his likeness to the portraits in Monteaige Towers?" yelled Frank Richards.

Mr. Bowers cast a hurried look round. But the three had gathered round him, and there was no escape.

The hobo cast a very uneasy look at the coiled trail-robe in Bob Lawless' hands.

He had an instinctive feeling that he was going to feel the weight of that trail-robe shortly.

The fickle goddess Fortune was not standing his friend, after all, and once more he wished that his straying footsteps had not led him into the Thompson Valley.

"Has this galoot had any money from you already, Chunky?" asked Bob.

"Only a dollar, to get some grub for the journey," answered Todgers.

"Oh! Where's the grub?" asked Bob. "The—the grub!" stammered Dry Billy. "Yep! Where is it?"

"Let's see it," said Vere Beauclerc, laughing. "I—I guess—"

Mr. Bowers stammered and stopped. "Haven't you got it?" exclaimed Chunky. "Nunno!" stammered Dry Billy. "Then where's the dollar?" demanded Bob Lawless. "You spoofer, swindling hobo,

hand Chunky his dollar at once! That's worth a good bit more to him than Monteaige Towers and the portraits of his ancestors."

"I can guess where the dollar's gone," grinned Frank Richards. "Chunky will have to go to the Red Dog after that."

"I—I say—" began Chunky. "You silly ass, can't you see that the man's a spoofer?" exclaimed Frank. "He don't dare to keep up the silly rot with us."

Mr. Bowers grinned feebly, with one eye on the trail-robe.

"Young gents, I own up!" he exclaimed. "I guess it was a leetle joke on Mister Todgers. No harm don. I heard him talking to you this afternoon, and that put it into my head. I guess this lets me out."

Chunky Todgers' face was a stud. "Then—then—it's not true!" he howled.

Mr. Bowers chuckled; he could not help it.

"You said you knew me by my likeness to my ancestors at Monteaige Towers," yelled Chunky.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You rotter!" roared Chunky, shaking a fat fist at Mr. Bowers' grinning face. "You hobo! You rascal! Gimme back my dollar!"

"You awful rascal!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You were going to steal the horses, if Chunky had come here alone. That was your game!"

"Gents," murmured Mr. Bowers, "a man must live. I'm lookin' for work. I've had jots on the stage, and I've had jobs on the railway, and I've had jobs on the ranches, but I always got the boot—I'm an unfortunate man."

"A beastly waster, you mean!" grunted Bob Lawless.

"Luck's been agin me," said Dry Billy pathetically. "I've always been thirsty. Drink's been my enemy Young gentlemen, if you could stand a man a few dollars to help him on his way—"

"I'll stand you a taste of this trail-robe, as a warning not to start as a horse-thief in this section!" answered Bob Lawless.

"I guess— Yaroooh!" roared Mr. Bowers, as the trail-robe curled round him. "I say—I guess—yoop!—stoppit! Let up! Oh, let up! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Give it to him!" yelled the wrathful Chunky. "Give it to the beast, Bob! He's swindled me out of a dollar! Give it to him!"

Bob Lawless was giving it to him.

The unhappy Mr. Bowers hopped and danced and jumped as the trail-robe played round his tattered legs, and made a rush to escape.

His foot caught in a trailing root, and he went over in the grass.

He roared and wriggled as the rope rose and fell upon him there.

"Let up!" he roared. "Oh, jumping gophers! Oh, Jerusalem! Don't I keep on telling you it was only a joke? Only taking a rise out of that born idiot! Yaroooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!
 Mr. Bowers squirmed away, and gained his feet at last, and ran for his life.

He fled through the bushes, gasping and yelling, and his crashing footsteps died away in the distance.

"Now we'll get off home," said Frank, laughing. "You won't want to go to Kamloops now, Chunky. You can leave Monteaige Towers to take care of itself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Chunky Todgers, a sadder if not a wiser youth, climbed on his fat pony and went his way, and Frank Richards & Co rode homeward chuckling.

The next day all Cedar Creek was yelling over Chunky's adventures, and the fat youth was addressed as "Lord Todgers" on all hands.

Chunky gave up his new accent, and ceased dropping his final "g's."

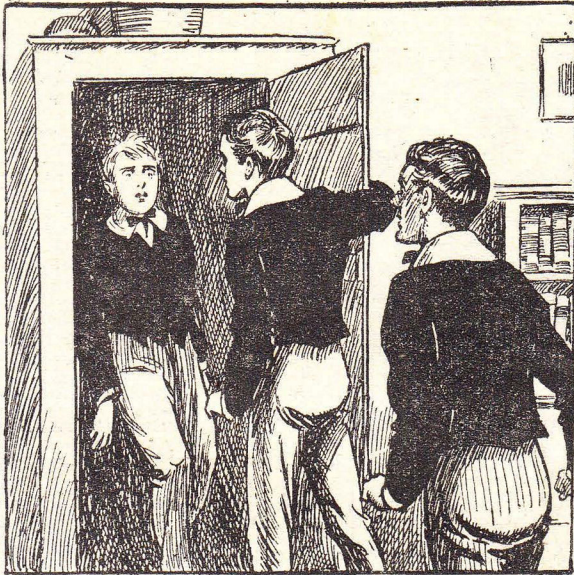
Once more he was plain Joe Todgers, but to his schoolfellows, at least, he was, for a long time after that, Lord Todgers or Marquis Chunky.

THE END.

(There will be an exciting story of the Backwoods next Tuesday in the POPULAR, entitled, "The Ghost of Bailey's Bonanza.")

Don't miss it!

BILL BARKER FINDS THAT HIS BOUNCING, HIGH-HANDED, BULLYING METHODS ARE NOT THOSE TO GET HIM TO THE TOP OF THE FORM, BUT HE FINDS IT OUT TOO LATE.



THE FORM AGAINST HIM!

The Days of cousin Bill at St. Jim's are numbered! Slowly but surely he loses his power, until he is as friendless as when he first burst upon St. Jim's.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Enemy.

"HURRAH!"
 "Well played, the Saints!"
 "Bravo, Barker!"
 Barker of the Shell looked very pleased with himself as he came off the football field, covered with mud and glory.

Barker absorbed flattery like a blotting-pad absorbs ink, and those shouts of congratulation rang in his ears like merry music.

Bill Barker, Grundy's cousin from Borneo, was captain of the junior football eleven, in place of Tom Merry. He would have liked to be Form captain as well, for cousin Bill was nothing if not ambitious. But at the recent election he had been defeated, and Tom Merry had retained his place.

Barker, however, had the consolation of still being captain of football. No one could oust him from that important office. And he had just led his team to victory against Highcliffe.

It had been a hard and gruelling game, and there had been quite a glut of goals. Highcliffe had scored four, but St. Jim's had run up a total of six. And Barker, although playing at full-back, had actually scored a couple of goals himself, with powerful long shots. No wonder he was looking pleased, and no wonder the plaudits of the crowd rang pleasantly in his ears!

Plastered with mud from head to foot, Barker looked far from beautiful as he squelched off the field. He seemed to have just emerged from a mud-bath. But there was a broad grin on his face as he thrust his way through the crowd and strode away in the direction of the school building.

"Six to four!" he muttered, mentally reviewing the game. "And we were a goal down at half-time. If it hadn't been for my example and generalship in the second half, we'd have been walloped. But I kept my men up to the mark, and they scored goals as easy as shelling peas. A good skipper like me makes all the difference to a side."

From which it will be inferred that cousin Bill thought no small beer of himself.

"I'm dirty, and I'm hungry," he murmured, as he strode along. "Better have a bath first, I think, and then a feed."

Barker headed for the nearest bath-room. He found his cousin Grundy inside, about to disrobe.

"Out of it, cousin George!" he said pleasantly.

Grundy glared at his burly cousin.

"First come, first served," he said. "If you want a bath—and you look as if you could do with a dozen of 'em—you'd better go along to the next bath-room."

Cousin Bill laughed.

"It's you that's going to do that," he said. "Out you get!"

"Rats!"
 Cousin Bill did not stand on ceremony. He seized Grundy by the collar, and sent him whirling through the doorway.

Grundy was no light weight, but his cousin's powerful grasp swept him clean off his feet. He went spinning out into the passage, and the door of the bath-room was slammed in his face.

Cousin Bill calmly turned on the hot-water tap; then he proceeded, in a leisurely manner, to remove his footer togs.

Grundy, wrathful and fuming, hurled himself against the door.

"Let me come in, you rotter!"

"Not this evening," said cousin Bill. "Some other evening!"

"Look here—"

"You'll find another bath-room on the next floor."

"But I want this one!" hooted Grundy. "I got here first!"

"Oh, run away and pick flowers!"

Grundy continued to batter on the door for a few minutes. Then he gave it up as a bad job.

Threats and entreaties were alike wasted on cousin Bill. The boy from Borneo always wanted his own way, and he invariably got it. Scowling fiercely, Grundy made tracks for the next bath-room.

Bill Barker tubbed himself thoroughly,

humming a merry tune the while. Then he wrapped himself in a bath-robe, and sprinted up to the Shell dormitory, where he changed into his ordinary attire.

"Now for tea!" he muttered. "Beastly fag, having to prepare it myself. I wonder—"

Barker broke off suddenly. As he descended the broad staircase, Manners minor ascended it.

"Just the kid I'm looking for!" said Barker. "You might come along to my study and do some fagging."

"I might," agreed Reggie Manners, "but I'm not going to. I'm Darrel's fag, and, anyway, I wouldn't fag for a Shell bouncer. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Come, come!" said Barker soothingly; but there was an unpleasant glint in his eye. "I hate employing force against a pigmy like you, but I shall have to if you don't do my bidding. Come and lay my table, there's a sensible kid!"

Manners minor tried to continue his ascent of the staircase, but the burly Shell fellow barred his progress.

"You're a bullying beast. Barker!" said the fag shrilly. "And I wouldn't fag for you if you went down on your bended knees!"

"I'm not likely to do that," said Barker, with a chuckle. "Come along! You don't want me to use force, do you?"

"I shall sing out for help if you do!"

"Sing away, then!" said Barker.

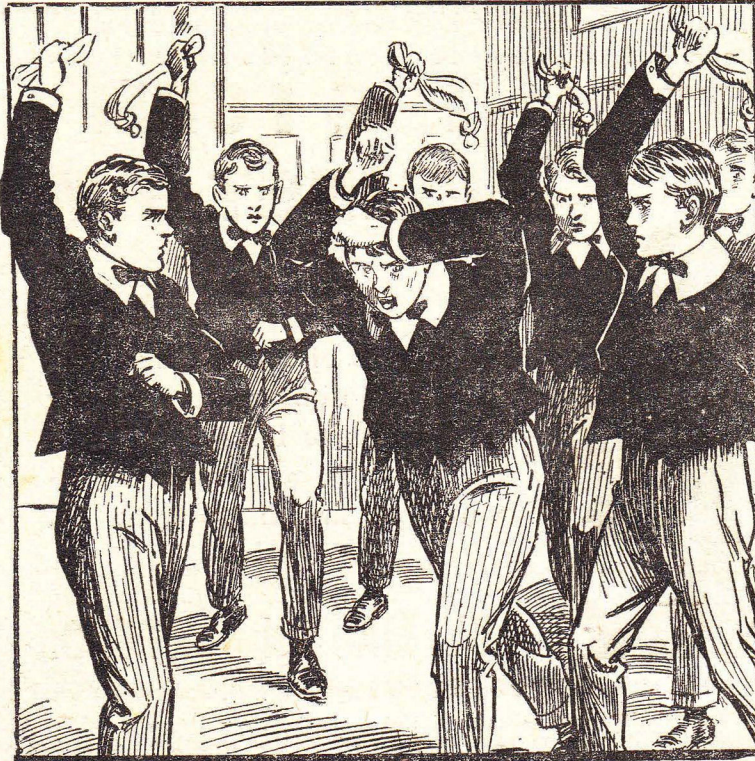
He stooped suddenly, and gathered Manners minor bodily into his arms. The fag kicked and struggled, but he had no chance of freeing himself. Barker bore him away to his study.

"Help! Rescue!" yelled Reggie.

A few fellows heard the cry, but they didn't interfere. They knew Barker, and they were aware that he had a habit of thumping people with painful vigour on the noise. They faded away when they heard Manners minor's cry for help.

Had Tom Merry & Co. been at hand, they would have chipped in. But the Terrible Three were at tea in their study.

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RUNNING THE GAUNTLET!—Barker stumbled between the two lines of juniors. Swish! Whack! An avalanche of blows rained upon Barker as he passed through the lines. They were not gentle blows, and he was soon dancing with anguish. (See Chapter 3.)

There was no help for Reggie Manners. Fighting and struggling and screaming, he was eventually carried into Barker's study and dumped upon his feet. Barker took the precaution of locking the door.

"Now," he said grimly, "are you going to obey my orders?"

"No!"

"You know what will happen if you don't?"

"You'll lam me, I expect!" said the fag bitterly.

Barker shook his head.

"I lammed you once before, and you went squealing round the school as if you had been half killed," he said. "I shall try other measures this time. Now, this is your last chance. Are you going to obey me?"

"No!"

Barker's next action was peculiar. And it scared the fag almost out of his wits.

Manners minor was seized in a grip of iron, and dragged towards the cupboard.

With his disengaged hand, Barker opened the door and thrust his victim inside.

Crash!

The door was slammed to and locked. There was a muffled yell from inside the cupboard.

"Lemme out, you beast!"

"I'll let you out as soon as you promise to fag for me," said Barker, "not before."

"I—I shall be suffocated in this hole!"

"That's your funeral."

Manners minor beat his hands frantically against the cupboard door. He was a prisoner, and his prison was anything but comfortable.

It was pitch dark inside the cupboard, and space was limited. The fag had to

crouch low to avoid his head hitting the shelf above him. There was scarcely any ventilation, and Reggie Manners longed for release.

But he would not give in to Barker. On that point he was determined. He could not fag for a Shell fellow, on principle. Once he started that sort of thing, he would land all his fellow-fags in an awkward situation. If one fag were to serve the Shell, the others would have to follow suit.

No; that was unthinkable. Terrifying though this ordeal was, Reggie realised that he would have to go through with it. He would not, he could not, do Barker's bidding.

"I'm waiting for your promise, kid," said Barker.

"Then you'll have to wait a jolly long time!" came the muffled retort. "I refuse to fag for you, Barker. That's flat and final!"

Barker had grown quite angry by this time. So angry was he that he didn't stop to think how cruel it was to confine a helpless fag in a cupboard.

"I'm going along to the tuckshop to get some cakes," he announced. "I shall take my time over it. And I expect you'll change your tune when I come back. You'll have plenty of time to think it over."

So saying, Barker quitted the study. He did not know that his prisoner was already fighting for his breath in the stuffy cupboard, or he would have returned at once and liberated him.

Reggie Manners heard Barker's retreating footsteps, and he grew dizzy with fear. Perspiration broke out on his forehead. He wondered how long Barker would be gone, and he felt he would not be able to hold out much longer.

Already he was gasping painfully in his close confinement.

With a great effort he pulled himself together and shouted at the top of his voice.

"Help! Help!"

There was no response.

The imprisoned fag pitted his whole weight against the door of the cupboard in the hope of bursting it open. But it refused to budge.

How long would it be before Barker returned? That was the question that Reggie Manners asked himself in a fever of apprehension.

Barker might be gone five minutes. On the other hand, he might be absent half an hour. And Manners minor knew he could not hold out all that time.

The fag was plucky enough in the ordinary way. But his nerve failed him now. He beat his clenched fists frantically against the door of the cupboard. Then he uttered a piercing scream and sank down in a huddled heap in his prison in a state of semi-consciousness.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tried by the Form.

"LISTEN!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry and Manners set down their teacups and pricked up their ears.

"Didn't hear anything!" said the former.

"Well, you must be deaf, Tommy! I distinctly heard a kid scream."

Tom Merry reached out his hand for another muffin.

"Somebody fooling about in the quad, I expect," he said carelessly.

"No, it wasn't!" said Lowther, looking unusually grave. "It was a muffled sort of scream. Seemed to come from one of the studies in this corridor. Didn't you hear it, Manners?"

"Yes, I fancy I heard the tail end of it."

"Then we'd better go and investigate," said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three rose to their feet and left the study. The scream was not repeated, and they had no idea which study it had come from. They looked into each apartment in turn, and it was not until they came to Barker's study—which, strictly speaking, belonged to George Alfred Grundy—that they became suspicious.

The study showed signs of a recent struggle. In dragging Manners minor to the cupboard Barker had overturned a chair, and had not troubled to right it again. He had also disarranged the carpet.

"Hallo! Our friend Barker's been up to something," said Manners. "Wonder if that scream came from here?"

"Help!"

It was not a cry; it was little more than a faint whisper. But the juniors heard it. And it came from the interior of the cupboard.

In an instant Tom Merry sprang in that direction.

Barker had left the key in the lock. Tom Merry turned it and wrenched open the door. Then he started back with a cry of astonishment.

"My hat! Your minor's here, Manners!"

Manners turned pale. He did not stop to reason whether Barker had done this for a jape, or whether it had been a deliberate act of cruelty. All he realised was that his minor was in danger.

Manners dashed forward and promptly hauled the fag out of the cupboard.

Reggie was white to the lips, and he was gasping like a newly-landed fish.

(Continued on page 17.)

BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY

Greyfriars

Edited by W. G. BUNTER of Greyfriars, assisted by SAMMY BUNTER of Greyfriars, BAGGY TRIMBLE and FATTY WYNN of St. Jim's, and TUBBY MUFFIN of Rookwood.

St. Jim's

Rookwood

Supplement No. 100.

Week Ending December 9th, 1922.

SHAKESPEARE AT ST. JIM'S!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

(Author's Note).—I ought to explain that this story is the outcome of a dream. The other night, after supping not wisely but too well, I dreamed that Shakespeare came to life again, and that he was sent to St. Jim's as a scholar. I rather wish the dream had been true, and that there was a genuine "Shakespeare of the Shell."—Monty Lowther).

"HERE she comes!" said Tom Merry. He was referring neither to a fair maiden nor an old hag, but to the train which came crawling into Rylecombe Station.

The Terrible Three—Tommy, Manners, and your obedient servant—had been sent to the station to meet a new boy. We didn't know his name, or anything about him.

The train rumbled to a halt, and out of a third-class carriage stepped a long-haired youth, attired in a velveteen suit of Elizabethan period, and a flowing tie.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Manners, in amazement. "Where did this curiosity spring from?"

The new boy—for it was he—approached us with a smile.

"Verily, 'tis pleased I am to meet ye!" he exclaimed. "I would fain take thine hands in the clasp of friendship."

"Who—who are you?" gasped Tom Merry, as he shook hands.

"Will Shakespeare!"

"The great playwright?"

"Yea! I am having a seconds innings on this terrestrial sphere."

"My hat!" "Wilt escort me to St. Jim's, my comrades?"

"Yes, verily!" I said with a chuckle.

"Fancy Will Shakespeare coming to life again," said Tom Merry. "Wonders will never cease!"

"Got any luggage, Shakespeare?" asked Manners.

"Yea! A porter hath just conveyed my knapsack to the station hack."

"Feeling hungry, Bill?" I inquired. Shakespeare grinned.

"Mine inner man hath not yet been nourished this day," he said.

"Then we'll take you along to the bunshop

(Continued on page 14.)



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE ARRIVES AT ST. JIM'S!

Supplement 1.]

THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

Another Special Number Next Week! Keep Your Eyes Open!

in the village and stand you a feed," said Tom Merry.

"Of a surety, thou art passing kind." Having given instructions for Shakespeare's luggage to be taken up to the school, we adjourned to the bunshop.

Shakespeare was soon charming us with his witty discourse. On catching sight of the waitress, he burst into poetry:

"Maiden fair, come hither!
Bring us tarts and cakes.
Succulent and pleasing;
The sort that mother makes!

"Bring us all the dainties,
That thou hast in store;
That we may devour them,
And cry out for more!

"Hustle thee, fair maiden!
Bring the cakes right quickly!
Mind thou bringest nothing;
That's too rich and sickly!"

"Did you make that up on the spur of the moment, Shakespeare?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yea, good my comrade!"

"Are you going to write some more plays when you grow up?"

"Egad, yea! I will compose plays that will put 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth' in the shade."

"Oh, good! I always have thought that 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth' were very much overrated," said Manners.

Shakespeare frowned.

"By my halidom, there is nothing wrong with the plays!" he said. "Tis the poor acting that spoileth them. Thou hast few really good Shakespearean actors at the present time. We want more Trees."

"But there are millions of trees all over the country," I protested.

"Thou foolish wight I did not mean trees of the field. We want more actors of the quality of Sir Herbert Tree."

"Oh!"

At this juncture, the waitress came on the scene with a laden tray.

Shakespeare piled in with a good appetite. It is said that some poets have souls which rise above eating and drinking. But this was not so with Shakespeare. Baggy Trimble could not have eaten more ravenously.

We began to think the new boy was never going to stop. But at last he pushed his plate away with a sigh of contentment, and Tom Merry paid the bill. It made a big hole in his pocket-money.

"Let us now proceed to yonder seat of learning, known as St. Jim's," said Shakespeare. "Methinks thou wilt have to charter a taxi, for I am too full to walk."

"Then we shall have to carry you," said Tom Merry. "Sorry, Will, but funds won't run to a taxi."

Shakespeare had no objection to being carried. Tom Merry supported his head and shoulders, and Manners and I attended to his legs. In this manner we conveyed the new boy to St. Jim's and set him down in the school gateway.

Taggles, the porter, fairly gasped when he saw Shakespeare.

"My heve!" he ejaculated. "Wot I says is this 'ere—this ain't no noo boy; he's a freak, as ever was!"

Shakespeare then addressed himself to Taggles, frowning sternly while

"I love thee not, thou Beaver!

Thou art a scurvy knave.

Towards a famous new boy.

Thou shouldst not thus behave.

"Go to, and learn thy manners.

Refrain from gibes and jeers,

Lest I should step towards thee

And soundly box thine ears!"

Taggles nearly fell down. He had been the keeper of the gate for more years than he cared to remember; but never in his long experience had he been addressed so quaintly by a new boy.

"I—I must be dreamin'!" muttered the astonished porter.

We laughingly escorted Shakespeare to the school building. Needless to state, his arrival made a tremendous sensation.

An inquisitive crowd of fellows hemmed us in, asking us questions, but we fought our way through them, and piloted Will Shakespeare to Mr. Ralston's study.

THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

What took place inside the study we did not know. But Shakespeare came out smiling after a few moments.

"Which Form are you going into?" asked Manners. "I suppose a fellow of your mighty intellect will be shoved into the Sixth?"

"Nay!" said Shakespeare. "The House-master hath consigned me unto the Shell. And I am to share thy study."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry.

We took Shakespeare along to our study and made him comfortable.

Having rested a few moments, he expressed a desire to play footer.

So we led him away to Little Side.

On reaching the field, Shakespeare again burst into poetry.

"Big ball, that rollest in the mire,
To boot thee is my ken desire.
To kick thee into yonder goal,
And hear the shouts excite' roll;

"Bravo, Bill Shakespeare! You have scored!
By all St. Jim's you'll be adored.
Big, bouncing, mud-bespattered ball,
I'll boot thee—"

Crash!

I awoke from my slumbers with a yell of anguish. Tom Merry informed me that I had been shouting in my sleep, and he had therefore thrown a football at me, to wake me up.

So "Shakespeare of the Shell" was only a dream-creation, after all!

THE END.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By Baggy Trimble.

My Dear Readers.—I have just had a tellygram to say that Billy Bunter is back at Greyfriars. I tell you, it's quite a bombshell!

I wish Bunter had decided to take up his permanent abode in the Congo. He's neither use nor ornament to this country.

Billy's tellygram was worded as follows:

"Trimble, St. James' School, Rylcombe.—Have returned. Hand over my WEEKLY to me at once.—BUNTER."

I suppose I shall have to obey, although it goes sorely against the grain to do so.

After carrying on the paper so well, it seems an awful shame that I should be kicked out to make way for Bunter. I wrote to the Editor of the Companion Papers, and begged to be allowed to remain in office. But my appeal was treated with silence.

Dear readers, my departure from the editorial chair will be a grate blow to you, I know. But you must try and bear it with fortitude. I eggpect many of you will give up reading the WEEKLY now that I am no longer editor. I am such a popular fellow, you see—not a despised worm like Bunter!

I don't think Billy's eggperiences in the Congo have improved his karracter. He will be as bumptious and domineering as ever, I eggpect.

Will he be satisfied with the way the paper has been run in his absence, I wonder? Weather he is or not, I don't care. I can only smite my breast and say: "I have done my duty!"

And now, dear readers, I must bid you a touching farewell.

"A lew!" as we sumtimes say when we get up in the morning!

Yours sinseerly,
BAGGY TRIMBLE.

BUNTER'S LAST LETTER FROM THE CONGO!

(Sent to Baggy Trimble shortly before his Homecoming.)

"Dear Baggy,—Many moons have passed

Since I beheld your vizzage last. Many advencers I have had Out in the Congo, Baggy lad. When kidnapped by a native cheef I very nearly came to greef. But Harry Wharton and the others Found me, and treeted me like brothers.

The life out here is rather ruff. We get no doenutts, tarts, or duff. Sumtimes we go for many a day And not a square meal comes our way. I'm getting very lean and thin. (I'll bear it, though 'tis hard to grin.) A Bunter's always brave and bold In hunger, famm'n, heat, or cold. He never grambles or complains When scorched with heat or swamped with rains.

When perils hedge him round about He keeps his pecker up throughout. Eggsploing is a dangerous game— I'm glad I came here, all the same.

I trussed my WEEKLY's going strong, And that you're doing nothing wrong. I often wake up in the night Shivering and shuddering with fright

For fear you're making sad mistakes. (I hope you're not, for both our sakes.) Is Sammy keeping up to scratch, Or has he gone to Colney Hatch? Are Fatty Wynn and Tubby Muffin Working, at intervals from stuffin'? Please send to me at once, old sport, A detailed and complete report Of how my glorious WEEKLY's faring. Write quickly, for I am despairing! I now remain, eggspectantly, Yours trooly—BUNTER, W. G."

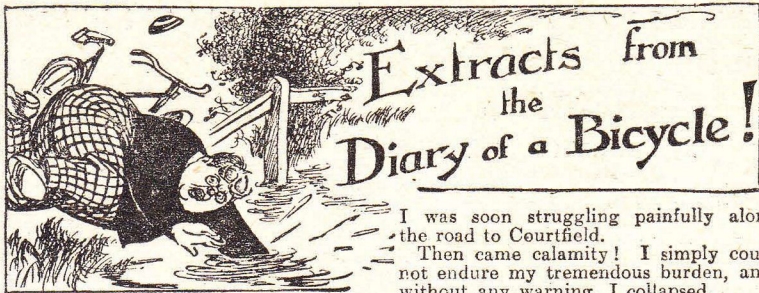
An Important Message from FATTY WYNN.

"Don't forget to buy this year's edition of the famous "Holiday Annual" story book. It's crammed full of topping stories, articles and wonderful coloured plates. The finest feast of fiction on the market. I know because I've got a copy—have you?"

Yours, F. W.

[Supplement II.]

Show this Supplement to Your Pals! Next Week's Number will be Better than Ever!



Extracts from
the
Diary of a Bicycle!

MONDAY.

I am a lady's bicycle, small size. Consequently, I felt very much annoyed at being bought by a Greyfriars fellow—Lord Mauleverer, to wit. What Mauly wants with a lady's bike I can't understand. I was priced at fifteen guineas—a pretty tall price—but his lordship paid up without a murmur. He wheeled me out of the cycle-shop in Courtfield, and ran his eye admiringly over my handsome frame. "You're just the bike for me, begad!" he exclaimed. "Cyclin' is a fearful fag, but I'll endeavour to ride you to Greyfriars." So saying, Mauly mounted me, and set off at a leisurely pace through Courtfield High Street. Every eye was upon me as I glided down the street. In truth, I was a handsome bike, and my handlebars glinted in the sunlight. Lord Mauleverer rode me very gracefully, too, and I made a sort of purring noise as I went along. I enjoyed the ride immensely; but on reaching Greyfriars I was bundled into the bicycle-shed with a lot of sick-and-sorry-looking machines which were not nearly so handsome as myself.

TUESDAY.

Everybody taunted Lord Mauleverer with having bought a lady's bike. As a result, his lordship became rather nervous of riding me in public, and he left me severely alone. I was simply dying for a spin, but there was nothing doing. Other bikes were taken out of the shed, but I was left, lonely and forsaken.

WEDNESDAY.

My owner looked in to see me after dinner. "I should like to take you out this afternoon, bike o' mine," he said, "but it's too much fag. I think I'll take forty winks on the study sofa instead." I rattled my chain with annoyance. It was a glorious afternoon, yet Mauly had no use for me.

Presently a fat junior crept stealthily into the bike-shed. It was Billy Bunter. His eyes glistened behind his big spectacles as he looked me up and down. "This is Mauly's new bike," he murmured. "I'm sure Mauly won't mind me borrowing it to run over to Courtfield. I'm an old pal of Mauly's. All that he possesses is mine, and vice versa. I'm sure it will be quite all right."

I began to shake with alarm as Billy Bunter pushed me out into the Close. For you must remember that I had been constructed for a slim lady, not for a fat porpoise weighing fourteen stone. I had fears for my personal safety, and those fears proved to be justified. When Billy Bunter swung himself on to my saddle, I wobbled and groaned and creaked. But Bunter hadn't the sense to see that he was putting too great a strain upon me. He rode me down to the school gates, and

I was soon struggling painfully along the road to Courtfield.

Then came calamity! I simply could not endure my tremendous burden, and, without any warning, I collapsed.

My rider was projected over the handlebars, and he alighted in the nearest ditch, with a splash and a yell. As for me, I lay flattened out in the roadway. Both my tyres were punctured, my frame was broken, and my handlebars were twisted out of shape. I was a very complete wreck.

Billy Bunter crawled out of the ditch, and he surveyed me with a jaundiced eye. "Call yourself a bike?" he growled. "Fancy coming a cropper like that! Dashed if I know what to do with you now." You're neither use nor ornament."

Then along came the Famous Five of the Remove. They looked at Bunter, and they looked at me. Then they laughed grimly.

"That's Mauly's bike!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Did you have permission to use it, Bunter?"

"Certainly!" said Billy. "There's a sort of fixed understanding between Mauly and me that I can always borrow his property whenever I want to."

"You awful fibber!" said Harry Wharton. "I don't believe Mauly knows anything about this. But we'll soon see."

The juniors carried me back to Greyfriars between them. Billy Bunter also came, looking very uneasy.

Poor old Mauly had a pink fit when he saw the state I was in. He is not a warlike fellow in the ordinary way, but on this occasion he flew into a paddy, and rushed at Billy Bunter, hitting out right and left.

"I'll teach you to smash up my property, begad!" shouted Mauly. "Take that—an' that—an' that!" And Billy Bunter was flattened out to an even worse extent than I had been!

THURSDAY.

Mauly decided to get rid of me. It was the only thing he could do, in the circumstances. It would be beneath the dignity of a noble lord to be seen riding such a battered specimen of a bike as myself. Mauly sold me to Wibley of the Remove for a modest ten bob; and Wib, who is by way of being a mechanic, took me along to the workshop and made valiant efforts to patch me up.

FRIDAY.

I am now fit for active service again. Wibley repaired me in a masterly manner. But I am not nearly such a wonderful machine as when I was brand-new. My glories are of the past.

SATURDAY.

This is my busy day, so I haven't time to tell you anything more about myself. Wibley is riding me over to St. Jim's. It's a long journey, and I doubt whether I shall survive the strain. But we must hope for the best!

BILLY COMES
MARCHING HOME!

By Sammy Bunter.

Week after week I have been kept out of the WEEKLY by that jellus beast Baggly Trimble. I have wanted to air my views—in fact, I have written many thrilling articles on different subjects—but Baggly has consigned them to the yorning depths of the waist-paper basket.

Feeling in a mewical mood, I wrote an article on "How to Play the Vile Inn," and another on "How to Master the Mouth-organ in One Lesson," but Baggly Trimble refused to print them. The beast! I konsider he ought never to have been aloud to take the editorial chair. That was a job for me. It would have sooted me down to the ground.

Now that my big brother Billy is back from the Congo, however, I can once more blossom into print.

"I'll give you a kollum a week, Sammy," said Billy, "and you can fill it how you like, either with prose or rime. I sha'n't interfere. And I'll pay you fourpense a kollum, free of income-tacks."

Billy is jenny rossity itself kompared with that beast Trimble!

As soon as I heard the news that the Congo party had returned, I dashed off to meet them, and I rung Billy's hand warmly.

"I'm overjoyed to see that you are still alive and kicking, Billy!" I said.

Billy took out his handkerchief and mopped his streaming eyes, which were leaking with emotion.

"Dear Sammy, this is a drammatik moment!" he cried. "There have been times when I thought I might never see you agam."

"Have you been in tight corners, Billy?"

"Yes, rather! I was kidnapped a dozen times—"

"My hat!"

"And I got lost in the jungle about twenty times—"

"Grate Scott!"

"I have been attacked by lions and bares and tigers and wild ellyfants and kangarooz and other monsters of the mighty deep. And Wharton & Co. always mannidged to reskew me in the nick or time."

"Have you brought me back a soovenir of your trip, Billy?"

"Yes. Here's a small ivory tusk."

I would have preferred sumthing eatable in the shape of cokernuts or bananas. You can't chew an ivory tusk! All the same, I shall guard that tusk jellusly, among my trezzured possessions, as a permanent relic of big brother Billy's trip to the Congo.

I'm jolly glad Billy's back, and that Baggly Trimble—the jellus beast!—is being kompelled to hand over the rains of offis. We shall get along famusly now! I shall be writing a kollum a week, and the serkulation of the WEEKLY will sore higher than ever!

NEXT WEEK:—
SPECIAL THEATRICAL NUMBER!

THE POPULAR.—No. 203.

ST. JIM'S SPORT!

By **SIDNEY CLIVE.**

THERE have been many heated debates recently as to which is the best junior eleven St. Jim's can turn out. Of course, on a question like this you are bound to get a wide divergence of opinion. A team which appears strong to one fellow appears weak to another.

If I were asked to select the ideal eleven, my choice would be as follows: Goal, D. L. Wynn; Backs, Figgins and Kerr; Half-backs, Noble, Redfern, and Lowther; Forwards, D'Arcy, Blake, Merry, Talbot, and Levison.

I can picture quite a lot of fellows rising up in wrath and saying, "What about Cardew?" "Where does Lumley-Lumley come in?" "You've left out Manners, Dick Brooke, and Koumi Rao!" The fact is, there is enough junior talent at St. Jim's to form two very strong elevens. And many good footballers must of necessity fail to get places in the first team.

The eleven I have quoted in the first paragraph did duty on Wednesday against Rookwood, on the latter's ground. They were beaten in a hard-fought game by three goals to two. "And yet you call it the best team St. Jim's can produce!" I can imagine certain fellows saying. Certainly! I stick to my original statement. It must be remembered that Rookwood have a fast, dashing team, and that they were bang on top of their form. I guarantee that if we had sent over any other eleven, Rookwood would have trounced it by a big margin. As it was, Jimmy Silver & Co. had to fight hard for their victory, and it was not until the last minute of the game that the winning goal was scored.

Fatty Wynn played his usual resourceful game in the St. Jim's goal. I don't know what we should do without our wonderful Fatty! They talk of the wonderful goalkeeping abilities of Harry Hammond and Lawrence, but, by Jove, Fatty Wynn puts them both in the shade! Some of his saves bordered on the miraculous. His anticipation was wonderful, and he could not be blamed for any of the shots which beat him.

Figgins and Kerr were a cool-headed pair of backs, and the halves worked like Trojans. There was no better player on the field than Dick Redfern, who broke up lots of dangerous rushes on the part of the Rookwood forwards. The St. Jim's front line worked well together, and Tom Merry and Talbot got the goals. They generally do! They owed a good deal, though, to the fine work of D'Arcy and Levison on the wings.

Rookwood deserved their victory, but it was only obtained by the skin of their teeth. And if St. Jim's persevere with the team that did duty on this occasion, they ought to show a fine record at the end of the season.

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ODE TO A BLUNT PENKNIFE!

By **TEDDY GRACE.**
(Of Rookwood.)

Corkscrew, chisel, and blade combined,
I thought you were a lucky find.
In Sheffield you were first designed,
My Penknife!

I bought you for a trifling sum.
You told me you'd be pleased to come
And be a sort of lifelong chum,
My Penknife!

"I'll cut your currant cake for you.
I'll sharpen all your pencils, too."
These words you spake have not proved
true,
My Penknife!

You're beastly blunt, and no mistake!
Much, much too blunt to carve a cake.
Sharpen your wits, for goodness' sake,
My Penknife!

When gazing at your blunted blade,
With the inscription "Sheffield made,"
I see no sharp edge, I'm afraid,
My Penknife!

You can't cut cake—no, not a crumb.
Then is it not both strange and rum?
That you can always cut my thumb,
My Penknife!

The knives that other chaps possess
Are very keen and bright, I guess.
But you're a "dud," I must confess,
My Penknife!

You stupid, blunt, and useless thing!
You could not cut a piece of string!
A hymn of hate you make me sing,
My Penknife!

I'll swop you for a humming-top,
Or else some doughnuts from the shop.
Or at the pawnshop I shall "pop"
My Penknife!

Do you want a big
Story Book of Thrilling
Long Tales of School
and Adventure?—

BUY THE

"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

The Famous Story Book
for Boys and Girls—
known everywhere as
THE BEST! All you
fellows should read it!

W.G.B.

OUR ADVERTISEMENT COLUMN!

(NOTES!—Advertisements are charged for at the rate of a penny a line. Checks and postal orders should now be sent to W. G. BUNTER, at Greyfriars, and not to Baggy Trimble, as previously.)

PERSONAL.

SALLY SAWYER (at the bunshop in Friar-dale).—Will call on you Wednesday afternoon and take you to the matinee at Courtfield Theatre. Put on your best bib and tucker. Keenly looking forward to the occasion, dear lady.—**MAULY, Greyfriars.**

GEORGE TUBB!—Come back at once to your sorrowing fag-master. I won't bluff, bump, bash, or bruise you any more. Neither will I belabour you with a cricket-stump when you burn the toast or smash the crockeryware.—**GERALD LODER, Greyfriars.**
The Treasurer of the Remove Football Club begs to acknowledge the receipt of ten shillings, being conscience-money paid by an anonymous person who borrowed and punctured one of the club's footballs.

BOYS! BUY MY NEW BOOK, "WILD ADVENTURERS ON THE CONGO!" Published by Messrs. Shutem & Snarem, at 2s. 6d. net. Koppies may be obtained at all bookstalls, or direct from the author, W. G. BUNTER, at Studly No. 7, Remove Passage, Greyfriars School.

uoy esirevup lliw I dna, tsaeb gnitluh uoy, myg eht ni em teem.—This is a message from Bob Cherry to Bolsover major, and if he reads it backwards he will get my meaning.

SITUATIONS VACANT.

FAG WANTED!—I have had a whole procession of the inky-fingered rascals this term, and they have had to be sacked for various misdemeanours. I want a youngster I can thoroughly rely on, to call me in the morning, black my boots, brush my straggling locks, and perform a thousand and one other duties in a satisfactory manner. Good wages and stunning prospects. No bullying or belting.—Apply, with references from last twenty situations, to TOM NORTH, Prefect, Greyfriars School.

SCAVENGER WANTED to pick up the stray fivers that are scattered on the floor of my study. No dishonest persons need apply.—**LORD MAULEVERER, Remove Passage, Greyfriars School.**

CHIMNEY-SWEEP wanted at once to cure my "flu." I've been sneezing for six solid days, and the beastly germs refuse to be conquered.—**TOMMY DODD, Modern Side, Rookwood School.**

PIANO-TUNER WANTED to tune the piano in Hoskins' study. At present it sounds like somebody filing steel, and my nerves are shattered. Being Hoskins' study-mate, I am nearly distracted.—**JAMES HOBSON, Shell Passage, Greyfriars School.**

LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED!

LOST, somewhere between England and the Congo, a double-bladed, tortoiseshell penknife. Unable to say whether it was lost on land or in the bed of the ocean. Finder, on returning knife to **BOB CHERRY,** will be suitably rewarded. I've got the soot ready in a sack!

LOST OR STRAYED!—A black-haired, pink-eyed, purple-nosed Aberdeen Manchester Irish terrier. Answers to the name of Nebuchadnezzar. Owner's name on collar. Anyone returning same to **JACK BLAKE,** of St. Jim's, will receive five bob reward.

LOST, either on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, either in the Close, the crypt, the box-room, the tuckshop, the Common-room, or the gym, a brace of white mice, answering to the names of Pip and Squeak. Finder should first of all feed them on best Cheddar cheese, and then bring them along to **OLIVER KIPPS,** Remove Passage, Greyfriars.

[Supplement IV.]

Billy Bunter Takes the Editorial Chair Next Week!

THE FORM AGAINST HIM!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Take him to the window—quick!" muttered Lowther. "He wants air." Manners hurried his minor to the open window, and Reggie thrust his head through and took in great gulps of the fresh, pure air.

In less than a minute he had completely revived, and was his old self again.

The Terrible Three were looking very stern and grim. And Manners, in particular, looked almost ferocious.

"Who locked you in that cupboard, Reggie?" he asked, knowing quite well what the answer would be.

"That beast Barker!" said Reggie.

"Ah! I thought as much!"

"What did he do it for?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I refused to fag for him."

"Oh, he's up to his old games again, is he?"

Reggie Manners nodded.

"This is a serious business," said Tom Merry gravely. "If you hadn't happened to hear that scream, Monty, we might have got here too late."

Manners major clenched his hands and paced to and fro in a state of great excitement. The things he said about Bill Barker would have made that worthy's ears tingle.

"The bullying cad deserves to be kicked out of the school for this!" he said savagely.

"I don't think he knew how stuffy it was in that cupboard," said Reggie, defending his tormentor. "I think he only did it to scare me. He said he'd let me out as soon as I promised to fag for him."

"Where is he now?" asked Monty Lowther.

"He's gone along to the tuckshop."

"The callous beast!" said Tom Merry indignantly. "He might have come back and found you suffocated!"

"We shall have to deal with the cad right away," said Manners major. "I vote we report this to the Head. It wouldn't be sneaking. It's only right that the Head should know of this. That fellow Barker is a dangerous madman! Nobody in his right senses would lock a kid in a cupboard."

"He was in a fearful wax at the time," said Reggie Manners. "He'd never have done it in cold blood."

"Don't make excuses for the rotter!" said Tom Merry sharply. "I agree that he deserves to be reported to the Head. But if that happens he'll get off with a public flogging."

"And to a fellow, with a hide like Barker's, a flogging is like being tickled!" said Lowther.

"Exactly! This is really a matter for the Form to deal with. We'll give Barker a proper trial, and if he's found guilty—as, of course, he will be—we'll teach him a lesson he'll never forget! He's been a jolly sight too big for his shoes since he came to St. Jim's, and this is the first real chance we've had of putting him in his place. We'll summon a Form meeting right away—"

Tom Merry broke off abruptly.

There was a heavy tread in the passage, and Bill Barker loomed up in the doorway. He was laden with a number of bulging paper bags, and he looked surprised on seeing the Terrible Three in the study. Then he caught sight of Reggie Manners, and the truth began to dawn upon him.

"Did you fellows let this kid loose?" demanded Barker.

"Yes. And you can thank your lucky stars that we turned up in the nick of time!" said Tom Merry. "Young Manners was nearly at his last gasp when he was fished out!"

Barker's face changed colour.

"You—you must be joking!" he stammered.

"You'll soon see whether we're joking or not!" exclaimed Manners major. "This is about the worst case of bullying we've ever struck! And we're going to make you sit up!"

Barker saw that the Terrible Three were in grim earnest. Already they had begun to advance towards him, with menacing expressions.

Instantly Barker relieved himself of the paper bags by throwing them on to the table. Then he rushed at Tom Merry & Co., hitting out right and left.

A wild and whirling battle was in progress.

Barker found the Terrible Three a very tough proposition. On one occasion he had tackled another trio—Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn—and had got the better of them. But he soon found that Tom Merry & Co. were made of sterner stuff.

Manners major, with his minor's

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ferings vividly before his mind, rushed at Barker like a tiger. He shot out his left with terrific force, and his fist caught Barker on the point of the chin.

With a roar like that of a wounded bull, Barker toppled backwards and crashed into the table.

It was at this stage of the fight that Reggie Manners came forward with a length of rope, which he had discovered lying in the corner.

"P'raps you'd like to truss him up?" he suggested.

"Happy thought!" panted Monty Lowther. "We'll tie his arms behind his back, at any rate. Then he won't give us any more trouble."

Barker pulled himself together, and he fought with almost maniacal fury during the next two minutes. But he was only prolonging the inevitable. His arms were pinioned with the rope, which was securely fastened behind his back.

The prisoner lashed out with his legs like an infuriated whale. But the Terrible Three kept at a safe distance, and Barker soon exhausted himself.

"Now we'll take him along to the Common-room," said Tom Merry.

"What on earth for?" demanded Barker.

"You're going to be tried and punished by the Form."

"What rot!"

"You'll soon see whether it's rot or not!" growled Manners major. "Bring him along!"

Barker was hustled away in the direction of the junior Common-room, not exactly as a sheep going to the slaughter, but as a rebellious bull being driven to market.

Study doors were opened up and down the passage, and there was great excitement.

"What's going on?" asked Bernard Glyn.

Tom Merry explained matters in a few words.

"Barker's been up to his bullying stunts again," he said. "There's to be a Form meeting right away, and he's going to be tried and sentenced."

"My hat!"

"Let me go!" hooted Barker.

But he might as well have appealed to the empty air, for all the effect his words had on the Terrible Three. They hustled him along to the Common-room, and Shell fellows began to arrive in twos and threes until the whole Form was present.

It was Tom Merry's intention to conduct a sort of police-court trial. The only drawback to this was that he could not find anybody who was willing to act as counsel for the defence.

At least a dozen fellows were anxious to fill the role of counsel for the prosecution. But nobody wanted to defend Barker. Indeed, his conduct had been indefensible.

Angry hoots and hisses arose when the facts had been explained to the crowd.

"The cad!"

"The awful bully!"

"He might have suffocated young Manners!"

"Boo-oo-oo!"

Barker, who had been dumped into a chair, with a warder standing on each side of him, glared at his accusers.

"Dry up, you fools!" he shouted.

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill. I didn't mean to harm the kid. I bundled him into the cupboard because he refused to fag for me. I'm not used to being defied!"

"Silence!" commanded Tom Merry.

"Prisoner at the bar, we have been unable to secure a counsel for the defence, so you will have to conduct your own. Let the counsel for the prosecution kick off, and you can have your say later."

"That's fair enough," said Harry Noble.

And Barker relapsed into a sullen silence.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Downfall of Barker.

MANNERS MAJOR was the counsel for the prosecution. He was looking red and wrathful as he rose to his feet.

Manners was no great shakes as a barrister, but there was no doubt he would succeed in making the case look very black against Barker.

"Gentlemen—" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"On the ball!"

"We have been summoned here for the purpose—"

"You didn't suppose we blew in by accident, did you?" said Racke. And there was a laugh.

"Dry up, Racke!" growled Manners.

"We have been summoned here for the purpose of punishing a brute and a bully. It's hardly necessary for me to repeat what this rotter Barker has done, but in case anybody is ignorant of the facts, I'll run through them again."

"Don't make it a six-hour speech!" said Crooke wearily.

Manners scowled the interrupter into silence.

"This brute Barker has been asking for trouble ever since he came here," he said. "He seems to imagine he's a sort of Lord High Everything, and he throws of

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his weight about accordingly. But when it comes to ill-treating a fag, it's high time the bouncer was put in his place. This afternoon he tried to get my minor to fag for him. Reggie naturally refused. So Barker locked him in a cupboard, where there wasn't room to breathe."

"Shame!"
"He deserves to be lynched!"
"Make him run the gauntlet!"

Tom Merry raised his hand for silence. "Hold on!" he said. "We'll have the trial first, and the punishment afterwards. Go ahead, Manners!"

"It was only by a lucky chance that my minor was saved from suffocation," Manners went on. "Lowther happened to hear him yell, and we rushed to the rescue. This isn't the first time, by the way, that Barker has bullied my minor. He laid into him with an ashplant only the other day."

It was not necessary for Manners to say much more.

Feeling run high against Barker of the Shell. Not one sympathetic or friendly glance was turned in his direction. Most of the fellows had been ordered about by him at some time or other, and they resented it. Barker had his good points; but heavy-handed, domineering fellows were seldom popular at St. Jim's.

After Manners had made his speech Barker was given a chance to defend himself.

"You're a lot of silly asses!" he broke out. "If I had known that Manners minor was in any danger of suffocating I'd have let him out at once. Personally, I think he did a bit of play-acting, and pretended to be much worse than he really was."

At this there was an outcry.

"Cad!"

"Outsider!"

"Don't try to whitewash yourself!"

Barker shrugged his shoulders.

"Not much use a fellow trying to defend himself," he said. "You won't listen. And this is supposed to be a fair trial!" he added bitterly.

"You can go ahead with your defence, Barker," said Tom Merry. "Nobody's stopping you."

"I've nothing more to say," growled Barker. "You're making a terrific fuss about nothing at all. I advise you to let me go, and put an end to this tommyrot."

Needless to state, Barker's advice was not taken. He was in bad odour with his

Form-fellows, and they were eager to punish him.

Tom Merry's summing-up was brief and to the point.

"There's no doubt that the prisoner at the bar is guilty," he said. "If any fellow thinks otherwise, let him get up and say so."

Nobody stirred.

"Barker has gone too far this time," Tom Merry went on, "and we shall have to teach him a sharp lesson. I've not quite decided how to punish him—"

Tom Merry was interrupted by a chorus of suggestions.

"Lam him with a cricket stump!"

"Toss him in a blanket!"

"Make him run the gauntlet!"

"Boil him in oil!"

"Why not give him a dose of all the lot?" suggested one bloodthirsty youth. Tom Merry chuckled.

"There wouldn't be much of Barker left if we did that," he said. "Personally, I think the fellow ought to be made to run the gauntlet."

"And what about making him give me back my study?" shouted George Alfred Grundy.

"And making him resign from the footer captaincy?" added Wilkins.

These suggestions met with almost unanimous approval.

It was decided that Barker's punishment should be threefold. He would have to run the gauntlet there and then, he would have to give up Grundy's study and go back into No. 4 with Buck Finn and Lennox, and he would also have to give up the footer captaincy. It was no light punishment, but the juniors felt that it was just.

The meeting broke up, and the fellows went off in quest of knotted towels and scarves, with which they proposed to belabour Barker.

Running the gauntlet had no terrors for the condemned junior. He even thought it would be rather a lark.

But when the ordeal actually arrived Barker found that it was one of the worst ordeals a schoolboy can undergo.

The fellows lined up in two rows; and Barker's arms, which had been pinned behind his back during the proceedings, were now released.

"Run!" said Tom Merry curtly. "You've got to pass the whole length of the lines!"

Barker laughed harshly. Then he sud-

denly rushed at the would-be avengers, hitting out fiercely.

It was a mad thing to do. Burly fellow though he was, Barker stood no chance against the entire Form. His sledge-hammer blows sent Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn flying; but that was as far as he got. He was speedily overpowered, and he realised the futility of further resistance.

"You've got to go through with it, Barker!" said Tom Merry. And he gave the burly Shell fellow a push which sent him stumbling between the two lines of juniors.

Swish! Whack! Thud!

An avalanche of blows rained upon Barker as he passed through the lines. They were not gentle blows either, and the recipient was soon dancing with anguish. He had never imagined that towels and scarves could inflict so much pain.

By the time he reached the end of the lines Barker felt as if he had been passed through a mangle. He was smarting from head to foot. And when he heard somebody suggest that he should be made to run back again, he nearly collapsed.

Tom Merry saw that Barker had fallen.

"Let him go," he said quietly.

Sobbing with rage and pain, Barker staggered towards the door. A hiss followed him. He was far and away the most unpopular fellow at St. Jim's at that moment, and he realised the fact. His treatment of Manners minor had turned everybody against him.

And only that very afternoon he had led the St. Jim's team to victory on the football field, and been cheered to the echo! In the space of one afternoon he had changed from a public idol to an out-cast. And all through shutting a fag in a cupboard!

Barker's thoughts were very bitter as he stumbled out of the junior Common-room. He was furious with Manners minor for having sneaked on him. He was furious with Tom Merry & Co. He was particularly furious with his former friends for having turned on him now. In short, Barker was furious with everybody.

After what had just happened his spirit was crushed. He could not fight the Form single-handed. He would have to toe the line now, and do what was required of him. And the first thing he did was to go back to his proper study, leaving the way clear for Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn to return to theirs.

"I'm a back number now!" he muttered to himself. "I've lost my study, I've lost the footer captaincy, and I've lost my prestige in the Form. Most of the fellows were a bit afraid of me before. They'll simply sneer at me now. And I owe all this to young Manners!"

To do Barker justice, he wasn't a revengeful sort of fellow as a rule. But he gave way to revengeful thoughts now, and he determined to "get his own back" on the fag who had exposed him.

The future boded ill for Reggie Manners. But Reggie, fortunately for his peace of mind, was blissfully ignorant of the fact that Barker at that very moment was harbouring thoughts of revenge!

THE END.

(Surely the most extraordinary action of a boy at school is to ask for "the Sack." Amazing though it seems, that is what Bill Barker does. You must read next Tuesday's wonderful story of St. Jim's, entitled "Expelled At His Own Request!" By Martin Clifford.)

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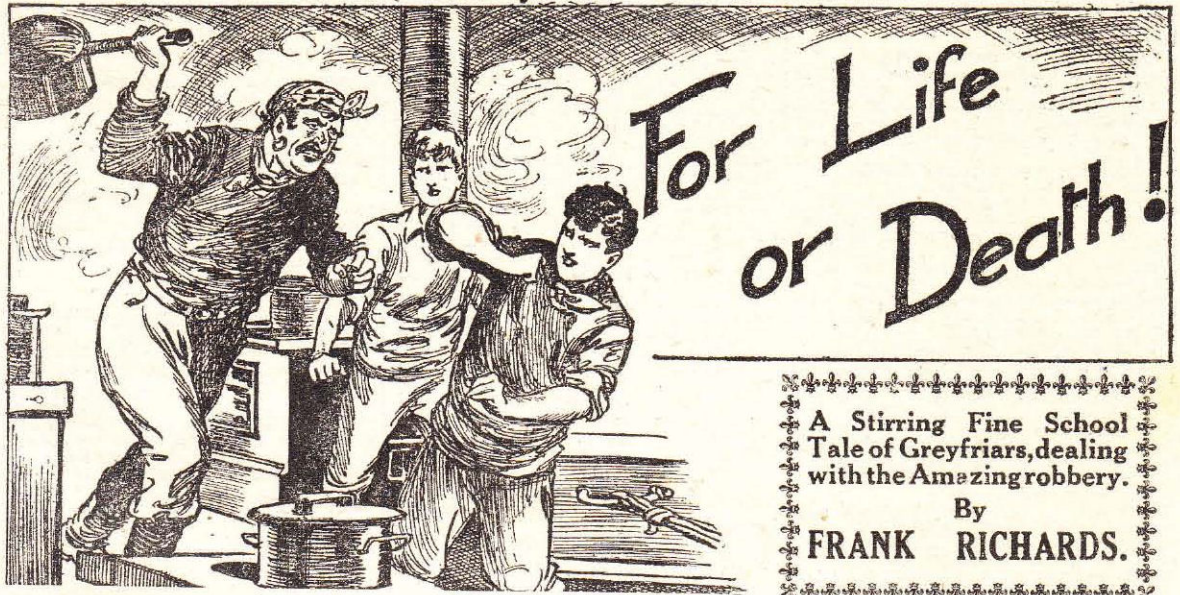
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**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Hunted!**

HARRY WHARTON and Bob Cherry, the chums of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, looked at each other and shivered.

They should have been at Greyfriars; but they were not. They were at sea, in a dirty old tramp-steamer, whither they had been taken by a Captain Markoff, and the ship was enveloped in a thick fog.

The juniors knew that Captain Markoff and his gang had raided Greyfriars, and they had seen Markoff's men carrying bundles aboard, which seemed to show that the raid had been successful. The juniors knew, too, that Markoff was afraid of being caught, and was thanking his lucky stars that the thick fog had enveloped his ship. But the crew were not so glad.

"I'm still glad we refused to lead the raiders to Greyfriars, Harry," said Bob Cherry suddenly.

Wharton nodded.

"So am I!" he said grimly. "We could have been safe and sound at Greyfriars now if we had done what Markoff wanted when he caught us in the village!"

"Like his blessed cudek to expect us to help him—help him raid our own school, by gosh!" snorted Bob Cherry. "I'm glad we told him to go and eat coke!"

Wharton laughed mirthlessly.

"We are glad now; but shall we be glad before we get out of this—if we do get out of it?" he asked. "The Seamew is getting along despite the fog—there might be collision!"

"There's one consolation," said Bob Cherry complacently—"somebody would have seen the raiders were sailors, someone would have spotted this ship, and there'll be a hue and cry—Great pip! What's that?"

The juniors scanned the sea anxiously. The same anxiety was visible in the faces of all the raiders. There was danger of collision so long as the Seamew kept in motion in the fog. Even half-speed was dangerous, and Captain Markoff was evidently feeling his way along cautiously, doubtful of the position of his ship.

The fog enveloped the steamer like a blanket. The sky and the sea were shut out from view, and another vessel might have passed within a biscuit's throw without being seen.

Suddenly, from the depths of the mist, came a sound. Wharton grasped Bob by the arm.

"That's another steamer, Bob!"

The throb of engines could be heard. Captain Markoff had evidently heard it, too. Dim and indistinct, lights glimmered through the fog, and the captain was staring away anxiously towards them. The steamer fell off a little from her course. A long, moving arm of light came through the mist, and Wharton uttered a suppressed exclamation:

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"Searchlight!"

"By Jove!"

The juniors' eyes gleamed. They knew what that meant. It was some ship of war that was close to the tramp-steamer, hidden by the fog save for that searching bar of light.

There was a muttering in strange tongues among the cosmopolitan crew of the Seamew. They all knew what the searchlight meant.

The Seamew had been heard, if not seen. Through the fog came looming a dark shape—looming up into dim sight, and gliding past the counter of the Seamew. A deep voice hailed through a megaphone:

"What ship is that?"

"Osprey, Plymouth to Hull!" Captain Markoff answered through his megaphone, with instant coolness.

He had signalled "Full speed ahead" to the engine-room, and the steamer was gathering speed. Another hail came from the unseen ship but it was indistinct in the fog and the growing distance. It was repeated, more faintly still. The dim shape was lost in the mist again. But though the hail could not be distinguished in words, its import was plain enough. It was an order to lay to—another order which Captain Markoff had not the slightest intention of obeying.

The fog wrapped the steamer again like a blanket. Faintly from out of the unseen came the throbbing sound of engines. The searchlight could still be seen, moving blindly like a ray of light lost in the fog. Then suddenly there came a heavy, booming sound, that filled the fog-blanket with booming echoes.

Boom!

Bob Cherry caught his breath.

"That's a gun!"

Boom!

But the Seamew was tearing through the water now. The glimmer of the searchlight died away, and all sounds were swallowed up in the fog. Reckless of danger, the tramp-steamer rushed on at full speed over the hidden sea.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Neck or Nothing!**

IT had been a moment of intense anxiety for the raiders.

Equal was the anxiety of the juniors, though from a different cause. They were anxious for the steamer to be captured, while Markoff and his men were thinking only of escape.

It had been a narrow escape; but for the fog on the North Sea, capture would have been inevitable.

Even now the steamer was easily within range of a gun, if she could have been seen by the vessel that was seeking her.

The excitement on board the tramp-steamer died down; but the anxiety remained, heavy and wearing, in every face.

The danger of going at full speed ahead through a foggy sea was terrible, but it was no worse to the raiders than the danger they were leaving behind. At any moment they might crash into some vessel hidden by the fog; but if they paused they might be overhauled by the gunboat they had so narrowly eluded.

There was danger for them either way; they had taken their lives in their hands now.

"That was a gunboat—a patrol on the North Sea!" Bob Cherry said, in a whisper. "It's pretty plain that this ship is being hunted for high and low, Harry!"

"Yes. They've had the wireless telegraphy at work, I should say. There'll be a description of this steamer known in every corner of the world by this time," said Harry. "When the fog clears, I don't see how they are to get away!"

"Unless they run ashore somewhere, and take to their heels," Bob remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"That may be their game, of course; but they may run ashore without wanting to, if they keep on like this. It's simply madness! Captain Markoff can't know what's ahead of him; there may be a crash any minute!"

"Neck or nothing!" said Bob, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I suppose they'd rather risk going to Davy Jones than to Portland Prison!"

"And we've got to take the same risk," said Wharton grimly.

"That's our rotten luck!"

Darkness had descended upon the sea now, making the fog thicker and blacker. There was no sight or sound of the gunboat now, and again Captain Markoff slackened to half-speed.

He peered into the fog anxiously from the bridge; but he knew no more than the juniors what lay ahead of him behind those heavy, yellow-black banks. For all he could tell, he might be miles out of the course he intended to follow.

The look-out in the bows could not see a cable's length ahead. If a collision should come, it would come so suddenly that there could be no guarding against it. Some of the crew had placed lifebelts in readiness, showing that they realised how imminent the danger was.

Not that lifebelts were likely to be of much use if a collision came. A plunge into the icy water, and all would be over. In the heavy, overwhelming fog, swimmers were not likely to be seen and picked up.

"It's touch and go!" said Bob, as he peered into the fog. "If we meet anybody, it's all up, Harry!"

There was a sudden yell from the bows. Black and grim, a great shape loomed up out of the fog, and twinkling lights danced in the mist.

It was a ship—a huge steamer—and it

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glided by so closely that Wharton could have tossed a biscuit across the rail.

There was a wild hooting of a siren in the fog, but the danger was past as soon as it had arisen.

The big steamer glided by, and vanished. Every face on the Seamew was white as chalk.

The whole crew had been within six feet of destruction. The two steamers had almost touched as they glided past one another in the fog.

Bob Cherry drew a gasping breath.

"Oh, that was a close thing!"

"A bit more to starboard, and they'd have been into us!" said Wharton, through his set lips. "How long is this going to last?"

The shadow of death had passed by them. The Seamew glided on.

"That was a passenger steamer, making for the Thames, I should say," Bob Cherry remarked, after a long pause.

Wharton nodded.

"We're not so very far away from home, in that case. My hat! I wish the fog would lift, whatever happens!"

As if answering the junior's wish, the steamer glided out of the fog a few minutes later. The mist became less thick, and then rolled away, and the tramp steamer emerged into a clear sea, with a steely sky sparkling with tears overhead.

"Like getting out of a blanket," said Bob, with a breath of relief.

It was, indeed, like it. Behind them they could see the bank of fog, close down on the sea, grim and heavy, waves of it curling like smoke away over the waters; but where the steamer now throbbed the sea was clear.

Ahead of them, a mile or more away, the fog reappeared, heavy and dense, waiting to engulf them. It was like a lane that opened through the heart of the sea fog.

The juniors eagerly scanned the sea. If the steamer was sighted now by the vessel that was in search of her, Captain Markoff's escape would be extremely doubtful.

Markoff evidently realised it, for he was scanning the sea anxiously. Away in the distance lights twinkled over the water—a long, dark shape loomed up. From above it came a blinding, sudden glare of light, turning slowly round upon the sea.

It was the searchlight again.

Bob clutched his companion's arm.

"They're close on us, Harry!"

Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"This time they'll have us!" he muttered. "Good luck!"

There was a wild commotion on the deck of the Seamew. The searching gunboat, as if by fate, had emerged from the fog-bank within half a mile of the fleeing tramp; and the searchlight, turning like a long, white arm over the sea, fell full upon the tramp steamer, showing up every line of her. The ghostly, white light lit up every face on board, and every face was haggard and desperate in the white glare.

Boom!

It was a gun again.

The juniors saw the projectile strike the water within a hundred feet of the tramp steamer, and ricochet from the waves, and plunge in again under the rail.

"One shot in the engines," muttered Bob—"that would be the finish!"

The Seamew was leaping forward like a wild thing in full flight. The shot was a stern signal to heave to; but the raiders had no intention of obeying. The steamer headed for the fog-bank, less than a mile ahead. Once in the enveloping fog again, she would be safe. But could she reach it? The gunboat was steaming full speed in pursuit.

With throbbing engines, that shook the vessel at every pulsation, the Seamew raced across the lane between the heavy fog-banks.

Like a tiger the gunboat came racing in pursuit.

The juniors almost held their breath with the excitement of the chase.

Nearer and nearer loomed the fog-bank, like a great, yellow wall rising from the sea. Already the mist was floating in curling waves like smoke round the Seamew. Another couple of minutes, and she would be swallowed up from pursuit.

But the pursuer was very close now.

Throb! Throb! Throb!

The throbbing of the engines was echoed in the hearts of the raiders and of the two prisoners on the Seamew.

Wharton and Bob Cherry watched with a

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tense gaze the gunboat growing larger and clearer in pursuit, gaining at every revolution of the engines.

But the fog-bank was close now.

Right into it the Seamew dashed; and, as if blotted out under a heavy blanket, sea and sky and gunboat disappeared from view.

Thick fog swallowed up the tramp steamer, shutting off even the captain on the bridge from the eyes of the juniors.

They looked back with haggard eyes. Fog—nothing but fog—the gunboat had vanished. A triumphant smile lit up for a moment the dark and savage face of Captain Markoff. Once more he had eluded his pursuer. There was a gasp of relief from the raiders. The fog had saved them, and the gunboat, thrown hopelessly off the track in the mist, was feeling her way to and fro, searching for them in vain.

The Seamew throbbed on.

"What rotten luck!" groaned Bob Cherry. "That was the last chance, Harry. What's going to happen now?"

"A collision, if we keep on like this!" said Wharton grimly.

"That rascal has amazing luck!"

Crash, crash, crash!

Bob Cherry, broke off with a yell.

"It's come!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Abandoned!

CRASH!

The tramp steamer shook and trembled from stem to stern with the shock of the concussion.

It had come at last!

KEEP A LOOK-OUT

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ON THE WAY!

Captain Markoff had trusted too much to his luck.

Dimly through the fog the shape of a ship was seen—the racing tramp steamer had struck her almost amidships.

Grinding against the vessel's side, the Seamew scraped on, and passed, and the stranger disappeared like a sceptre in the fog.

The Seamew shut off steam immediately.

The vessel was reeling drunkenly from the shock. From all the cosmopolitan crew had risen a yell of alarm in many languages.

"Mein Gott!"

"Cospetto!"

"Sapristi!"

"Tout est perdu!"

The juniors held on the rail as the steamer rocked and reeled. There was a sound of bubbling water below. It was evident at once and to all that the collision had terribly damaged the Seamew below water-mark.

In the midst of the confusion, Captain Markoff remained cool and steady, though his face was white.

He muttered a few words to the mate, who dashed down from the bridge and disappeared below. He came back in a few minutes, his face ghastly.

The juniors were watching him, but they could not understand what he said. But his face told them that his report was serious.

The Seamew, with steam shut off, lay like a log on the sea; and ever from below came that ominous sound of bubbling water.

Whole plates must have been ripped off by the crash on the strange vessel; and the water was streaming into the gash.

All was lost!

There was no doubt on that point. Even if the Seamew floated, there was no possibility of escape. She could not keep the sea in her present condition. The luck of the raiders had abandoned them. All had succeeded so far; but the fog on the sea

had been their undoing. The collision was the finish.

The juniors understood that clearly enough, and their own anxiety was keen and intense. If the raiders took to the boats, what was to become of them? It was more than likely that they would be left on the sinking ship. In a fight in the boats the rascals were not likely to burden themselves with two prisoners.

"We've got to look after ourselves, Bob!" Harry Wharton said, between his teeth.

Bob nodded.

"It looks bad, old man; but while there's life there's hope!"

"They're getting the boats ready now. They're going to leave the ship."

"And we—"

"They won't take us."

"The rotters! I'm afraid not."

Captain Markoff's stern voice, rapping out orders, had calmed the wild confusion on board the Seamew that had followed the collision.

The seamen set to work rapidly. There were two boats on the steamer, and both were hurriedly prepared to take the sea. Provisions were handed up and stacked away, and two or three large chests were brought up from below and placed in the larger boat. The juniors knew what those chests contained—the plunder from Greyfriars. Captain Markoff did not intend to abandon his loot.

The falls were loosed, and one of the boats swung down into the water. The steamer was already deep down by the head. The water could be heard washing to and fro in the hold, as it poured in through the gap below.

The second boat plumped into the water. Captain Markoff, with perfect coolness, saw the men into the boats before he prepared to leave the sinking ship. The juniors ran towards him.

Markoff started as they came up; he had evidently forgotten them. A grim and deadly smile came over his bearded face.

"You!" he exclaimed.

"You do not mean to leave us here?" exclaimed Wharton hotly. "The ship is sinking. It will not float a quarter of an hour. You do not want to murder us."

Markoff shrugged his shoulders.

"Why should I burden myself with you in the boat?" he said coldly. "If you had done as I demanded of you, this might not have happened. I should have saved time, and escaped sooner. I might have been safe at a distance before this accursed fog came on to ruin me. Stay where you are!"

"It is murder!" said Bob Cherry, between his teeth.

"Take your chance! The Seamew may not sink!" said the adventurer ironically.

"Bah! I cannot take you in the boats. If we are picked up, we have to tell some tale—not the truth, you understand, or we shall be arrested instantly. Do you think I can take you with me to contradict what tale I tell!"

The juniors understood, and they were silent.

It was impossible that they should go in the boats.

Their lives had been spared so far, because it was for the safety of the adventurer to spare them; but now their presence would constitute a deadly danger for him. If the boats were picked up at sea, the rascals would have to invent some falsehood to satisfy their rescuers; and the juniors, of course, would have disproved it at once. They could not go in the boats, and the ship was sinking under their feet.

"But—but it is murder!" Wharton muttered.

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"I am sorry for you," he said. "You may not believe it, but it is true. I am sorry. I would have spared you if I could. But even if I allowed you to step into the boats, my men understand what is for their safety, and they would throw you instantly into the sea. You may put it to the proof if you like."

But the juniors knew that it was true. They drew back.

The mate shouted from the boat rocking below. Captain Markoff started.

"One man on board!" he muttered. "The fool! Let him stay, then." Then he shouted: "Cook! Cook! To the boats!"

There was no reply. With a shrug of the shoulders, and without another glance at the Greyfriars juniors, Captain Markoff

descended into the boat. The oars were shoved out, and the seamen pulled; and Wharton and Bob, with despair in their hearts, watched the boats disappear into the blanket of fog.

There was a long silence between the two juniors.

They had no hope left.

Louder and more threatening the bubbling of the water sounded below; the steamer was settling down heavily by the bows.

At any minute almost might come the final plunge, and they would be dragged down to death in the depths of the North Sea.

The boats had disappeared. The raiders were in haste to escape from the vortex that would be made by the sinking ship.

"Oh, the rotters!" said Bob Cherry at last. "To leave us here like this!"

"They've left one of their own fellows, too," said Harry bitterly. "You heard what Markoff said. Cooky is still on board."

"He was guzzling rum when I looked into the galley," said Bob. "The poor wretch was scared out of his wits. He's drunk, I suppose?"

"It's all up with us, Bob."

Bob cast a wild glance over the sloping, reeling deck.

"We might be able to make a raft or something!" he muttered.

"We can try; it's a bare chance. After all, the gunboat can't be many miles away, and the fog may lift in the morning."

"Buck up, then!" said Bob briskly.

It was with little hope that they set to work. But there was a bare chance, and that chance was better than resigning themselves to despair. They ran into the galley for axes, and almost stumbled over the cook. He was lying on the floor, a rum bottle robbing by his side with the motion of the ship. The miserable wretch had evidently drunk himself into a state of insensibility. And in that state he had been abandoned by his comrades. It was every man for himself with the sea-thieves.

Axe in hand, the juniors hurried out of the galley, and started to work. They ripped and hacked at the woodwork to get the materials for a raft. On the slanting deck the raft grew under their hands, the fragments lashed or nailed together. In the hurry and excitement of the work, upon which they felt that their lives depended, they did not notice the passage of time. They were only anxious to have the raft solid enough to support them when the ship should sink away under their feet.

A hoarse, husky voice broke in upon them, and they turned, and saw the cook staggering towards them, lurching heavily as he came. His face was inflamed, and his eyes bleared and blinking.

"Vat is all dat? Vere are de ozzers?" he muttered thickly.

"They're gone," said Bob Cherry curtly; "and they've taken the boats!"

"Ach!"

The half-sobered ruffian gazed round him blankly. The grey light of dawn was glimmering through the heavy fog.

Bob Cherry noted it for the first time, and he gave a sudden cry.

"Harry! It's the dawn, and the ship's still floating!"

Wharton started up.

It was true enough. They had not noted the passage of time in their hot haste, but hours had passed since the steamer was abandoned by the crew, and she still floated.

Deep as the Seamew had settled in the water, she had settled no deeper for some hours. For some unexplained reason, the water had ceased to pour in below. The Seamew was water-logged, but she floated still.

The juniors' faces lighted up.

"The leak's stopped somehow, Bob. Perhaps some of the cargo has shifted and stopped it. Goodness knows—"

Bob grinned gleefully.

"It's ripping good luck! 'Tain't an uncommon thing. They often find a derelict floating, weeks after it's been deserted by the crew in a sinking state. Why, the giddy old tub may float for days—or weeks! Hurrah!"

"So long as the sea's calm, very likely," said Wharton, wonderfully cheered up by the discovery. "We're in luck! So long as she keeps afloat, I'd rather be here than in the boats with those scoundrels."

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll have time for the raft—and for brekker now. I'm famished!"



THE LAST STAND!—The two juniors hurried into the boat every missile that came to their hands—billets of wood, axes, and tools. Yells of pain came from the rascals in the boat below as the missiles came crashing among them. (See Chapter 4.)

"Same here," said Bob. "And we've got the run of the captain's stores, if we like. What price hot coffee—eh?"

And the juniors, greatly cheered by the knowledge that the Seamew was in no immediate danger of sinking, went into the galley to prepare a meal.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

THE cook was in the galley, with a tin pannikin in his hand, and a fresh bottle of rum open. He turned his bleared eyes savagely on the juniors.

"You get out of my galley, you hear?" he muttered.

Harry Wharton looked at him steadily.

"The other rascals have all gone," he said quietly. "We're two to one, cooky, if you give us any trouble. We are not going to stand any nonsense. If you trouble us in any way we'll tie you up, and have done with you."

The half-intoxicated ruffian staggered to his feet, and the rum-bottle went with a crash to the floor, and smashed there. The cook snatched up a saucepan by the handle, and started towards the juniors.

Wharton and Bob backed away, keeping their eyes warily upon him. The ruffian meant mischief, but they felt themselves a match for him.

He made a savage blow at Wharton with the saucepan, and missed, and lurched forward heavily, and fell on his knees, the saucepan clattering on the deck.

Before he could rise, Wharton's fist caught him full in the face, and he rolled over, yelling.

"Collar him, Bob!"

"You bet!"

The two juniors piled on the cook instantly.

The rascal struggled furiously and broke loose, and rolled out of the galley, and leaped to his feet. He clutched at his clasp-knife, and dragged it open, and faced the juniors again, panting.

"Ach! I'll kill you!" he hissed between his teeth.

"Look out!"

Bob Cherry made a rush for the axe he

had been using in making the raft. Harry Wharton caught up the saucepan the cook had dropped.

The cook was dashing after Bob, the clasp-knife gripped in his hand, and murderous fury in his eyes.

Bob seized the axe, and swung round, facing him. Heedless of the axe, the ruffian sprang at him, the knife rising in his hand.

Whiz!

The heavy iron saucepan flew through the air, and it caught the cook in the small of the back as he sprang upon Bob.

He gave a yell of agony and pitched forward, and rolled at Bob's feet.

"Good egg!" roared Bob.

He sprang at the rolling man, caught at the knife, tore it away, and pitched it into the sea. Then he planted his knee on the ruffian.

"Got you, you beauty!"

"Ach! I—I—"

"Get a rope, Harry!"

The cook was struggling furiously, but Bob had him down, and kept him there. Wharton ran up with the rope, and a noose was slipped over the ruffian's arms, and they were drawn together, and Harry knotted the rope fast.

The man was pouring out savage curses, but they did not heed. Another turn of the rope was taken about his legs, and then he lay on the deck, helpless.

"Finished with that merchant," panted Bob, as he staggered up. "I don't fancy he will give us any more trouble."

"It would serve the brute right to pitch him over the side," growled Wharton.

Bob chuckled.

"Yes; but we won't do it. He'll keep. If we get picked up, there's a prison waiting for that johnny. Now for brekker."

And they returned to the galley. They were masters of the situation now. The only one of their foes who remained on board was a bound prisoner, and they had taken care that he should not get loose again.

The juniors' hopes were rising.

With the dawn, the fog showed signs of

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clearing off, and the water-logged ship had settled no deeper in the sea. The steamer lay rolling heavily in the waves, at the mercy of wind and tide, but there seemed no immediate danger of its sinking.

In the galley, the juniors brewed hot coffee, and it put new life into them as they swallowed it. They were ravenously hungry; but the ship's stores were at their command, and they helped themselves to what they wanted.

"This is something like," said Bob Cherry, with his mouth full of salt beef. "I don't know that I'm sorry, after all, that we came on this giddy voyage."

"We're not out of the wood yet," said Harry.

"We shall be picked up," said Bob confidently. "The fog's clearing. There are plenty of ships in this sea. I don't know where we are, but we're in the North Sea somehow—I'm sure of that. And even if this old tub goes down, we shall have time to finish the raft." He looked at his watch. "It's rising-bell at Greyfriars now. The fellows are just turning out. I wonder if they guess what's become of us?"

"Not likely. But if we get back—"

"Oh, we'll get back all right!" said Bob cheerily. "I tell you, the luck's turning. Now let's get to work on the raft again."

The mist was rising as they came out of the galley. Already they could see to a distance of a hundred yards from the rolling derelict. The sun-rays glistened down through the fog with a cheering warmth.

The cook still lay on the deck where they had left him, watching them with baleful eyes.

The juniors did not heed him. They recommenced work upon the raft. Bob had found the carpenter's chest, and they nailed together the planks and doors of which they were making the raft, and it grew rapidly under their hands.

Higher rose the sun, and the mist grew clearer and clearer.

The juniors worked away cheerfully. Every few minutes they scanned the sea in search of a sail or the smoke of a steamer. But the morning passed, and nothing came in sight. The disabled steamer was drifting slowly, rolling helplessly in the trough of the sea, they did not know whither.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob suddenly, as he looked out over the sea.

"Look at that, Harry! Isn't that a sail?"

Wharton sprang to his feet.

In the clearing mist a patch on the sea was visible, and it was coming nearer. It was a sail, but it was close down on the water, and was evidently not a ship.

"It's a boat!" said Harry at last.

"May be a fishing-smack," said Bob hopefully. "We may be near the land for all we know."

"Possibly. But"—Wharton's face had grown dark and anxious—"but—"

"But what?"

"Suppose it should be those rotters again?"

"Oh, my hat! But they must be far from here by this time."

"I don't know. It looks to me—"

"There's the binoculars on the bridge," said Bob.

He ran up to the bridge, and turned the glasses upon the sail. Instantly the boat rushed into view.

It was the boat of the Seamew—one of them. Only one could be seen; evidently the two boats had parted company in the fog. With the glasses, Bob could recognise Captain Markoff and the mate.

Wharton was looking up anxiously towards him.

"Well, Bob?"

"It's Markoff's boat!"

"I was afraid so," said Wharton, setting his teeth. "And as we've seen them, they must have seen us, Bob."

Bob came down from the bridge. His face was pale now.

"They're making for us," he said. "They've seen us, and they know the Seamew hasn't gone down, as they expected."

"The ship's no good to them now," said Harry. "They couldn't think of getting her to any port in this state—even if they dared to go into port."

"They're not coming back for that, Harry."

The juniors' eyes met. They knew very well what Captain Markoff was making for the derelict for. By sheer ill-luck, the boat and the disabled steamer, drifting in the fog, had come into neighborhood again, and the raiders had discovered that the Seamew

was still afloat, and knew, therefore, that the two juniors were still living on board her.

"They daren't let us live to tell about them!" Wharton said, in a low voice. "They intend to tell some tale of shipwreck when they're picked up, and if we are picked up, too, they'll have no chance. We can give descriptions of all of them, and—"

"I know!" said Bob gloomily. "If they get on board—"

"We're done for! If they had thought for a moment that the ship would float, they wouldn't have left us alive here!"

"They're not going to get on board," said Bob desperately; "we've got to keep the villains off somehow!"

"I've got to try," said Harry.

"I'm game!" said Bob. "We'll do our best, anyway. What rotten luck that the scoundrels should come in sight of the ship again! And I was thinking all was clear now. It's rotten luck!"

The juniors anxiously watched the approaching boat.

With the sail drawing, it drew quickly nearer the derelict rolling in the trough of the sea. The mist was clearing off fast in the morning sunshine. As the boat drew closer, the juniors could see a dozen dark and savage faces glaring towards them from the boat.

Captain Markoff was standing up, and there was a revolver in his hand. His eyes were fixed upon the ship.

Harry Wharton held on to the rail, and waved his hand to the boat. A grim smile came over Markoff's face as he saw him.

"Keep your distance!" shouted Wharton. The adventurer made no reply, but he raised the revolver, and took aim.

Crack!

Wharton sprang back as the bullet sang through the air, and it pinged upon the charthouse door.

"That shows what they mean!" said Harry hoarsely. "We've got to fight for our lives, Bob! And—there's no help!"

Bob turned a despairing glance round over the waste of misty waters.

Then his eyes gleamed, and he caught Wharton's arm almost convulsively.

"Look!"

He raised his hand, and pointed.

In the opposite direction from the boat, on the other side of the rolling derelict, a black trail of smoke blotted the mist.

Wharton uttered a cry.

"It's the gunboat!"

"Good luck! They've seen the derelict—they're heading this way!" panted Bob. "If they get here in time—"

"If!" said Harry, between his teeth.

The boat was very close now. The ruffians had evidently not seen the smoke beyond the steamer. They were so close to the derelict now that the mass of the Seamew shut out from their sight what was beyond.

The sail was dropped, and the rascals were using their oars to bring the boat alongside.

The juniors' hearts were beating fast. They had little chance of keeping the rascals from boarding, but they meant to do their best.

Captain Markoff was still standing up in the boat, looking for a chance to use his revolver.

As the boat glided up Bob Cherry took aim with a heavy billet of wood, and hurled it with all the strength of his arm.

Whiz!

The missile crashed fairly upon Markoff's chest, and, with a yell, he fell heavily back into the boat.

The boat rocked on the water, and a moment or two later bumped against the side of the derelict steamer.

The Seamew was low in the water, but it was not easy to climb the side, and the juniors had already taken care that there was nothing left to aid the rascals in boarding.

The mate made a spring, and caught hold of the rail, and hung there, climbing on board. Wharton struck at him with the axe fiercely, and the rascal let go just in time to escape the blow, and dropped back, missing the boat and plunging into the sea.

He disappeared from the juniors' sight, but they heard him yelling to his comrades to help him into the boat.

Markoff had scrambled to his feet, his face dark with rage. He groped in the boat for the revolver he had dropped.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

The juniors, with desperate hurry, hurled into the boat every missile that came to their hands—billets of wood, utensils from the galley, axes, and tools. And the missiles

were not without effect. There were yells of pain from the rascals in the boat rocking below as the missiles came among them.

Crack, crack, crack!

But the juniors were careful to keep back from the line of fire.

"We'll keep them off yet!" panted Bob.

"I can hear the gunboat now!" muttered Harry, as the throbbing of the engines came across the misty water to his ear. "They're very close!"

A head rose by the rail again, and Wharton hurled a hammer. He saw it crash into the dark, bearded face, and the climber disappeared.

But the gunboat was close now. The throbbing of the engines must have reached the ears of the raiders, though the derelict hid the oncoming vessel from their sight. And the dark smoke rising above the derelict told of the coming of a steamer.

The juniors heard a hubbub of voices in the boat, and the attack was not renewed. They were in momentary expectation of a rush—and a rush would have overwhelmed them—but it did not come. The raiders had seen the gunboat at last. The sail glided up on the sea, and the boat glided away from the side of the derelict, in a wild effort to escape.

"They're running!" yelled Bob.

Wharton waved his hand to the gunboat.

"Help! Help!"

"They're passing us; they're after the boat!" grinned Bob. "It's all serene! We can wait! They'll have the boat, Harry! Good luck to them!"

The boat was fleeing fast. There was a keen breeze behind the sail, and the raiders were making desperately for the fog-bank in the distance. But they had no chance. Like a beast of prey, the gunboat was swooping down after them, and they were still in plain sight of the juniors on the derelict when the pursuer ran them down.

With dancing eyes they watched bluejackets springing into the boat, and saw the whole gang of rascals secured. Markoff and his men did not resist; they knew it was useless. And then, with the captured boat in tow, the gunboat came swooping back towards the derelict.

The chums of Greyfriars were saved.

All Greyfriars seemed to be joyful over the news of Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry's safe return. Coker of the Fifth said that he was jolly glad; even Loder, the prefect, said it was good news. Wharton's chums were in a state of exuberant delight. The Head's kind old face was beaming. He had had other good news, too. All the loot taken from Greyfriars by the raiders had been recovered when they were captured, and ere long it would be on its way back to the school.

And the raiders, who had carried out so bold and desperate a venture, were booked for long terms in prison, which would keep their peculiar activities in check for a very long time to come.

Quite a little army of juniors marched down to the station to meet the train by which Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were to arrive.

When the train came in, the platform in Friardale Station was crammed with Greyfriars fellows, cheering.

As soon as Wharton and Bob descended from the train there was a rush for them, and they were seized by their enthusiastic chums and carried away shoulder-high out of the station and into the street.

"Hurrah!"

And the merry party started for Greyfriars, and on the way Wharton had to relate, with much amplitude, their adventures in the hands of the raiders.

Arrived at the school, they were called in at once to the Head, to whom the tale had to be repeated.

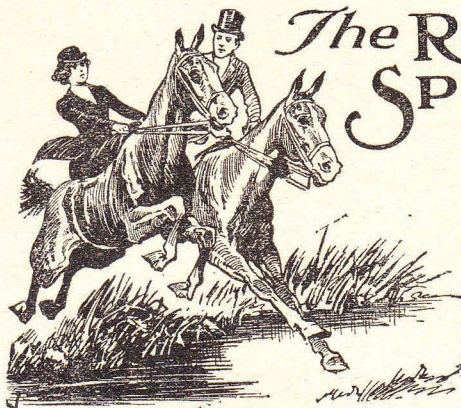
"You have had a very, very fortunate escape!" said the Head, as he shook hands with the juniors with emotion. "Thank Providence that you have returned safely! Now you may go; your friends are waiting for you!"

They were! As soon as Wharton and Bob came out of the Head's study they were seized and rushed off to the Rag, where a gorgeous feast was spread. Wharton and Bob were the heroes of the hour, and they enjoyed themselves exceedingly.

And thus cheerfully closed the exciting adventure of the great raid on Greyfriars!

THE END.

(Another thrilling long complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars in next week's Bumper Number.)



The RIVAL SPORTSMEN!

A Gripping New Sporting Serial, dealing with an amazing struggle for a great fortune.

By VICTOR NELSON.

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 the 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, and he is "signed on" to play for the Wessex Wanderers permanently.

Several other sporting events, in which both the cousins compete, are won by young Harry Lestrade. Furious at his non-success, Courtney tries underhand methods

of getting Harry out of the struggle.

The last event in which the two cousins met was at Douglas, in a motor-cycle race. Courtney hires a man to drag a tree across the track as Harry is passing on his cycle. There is a crash, and Lestrade is unable to complete the race. His cousin wins.

In the fourth round of the English Cup, Courtney's team is drawn to meet the Wanderers. Courtney arranges with a reserve of the Wanderers, Jem Newbold, who is up against Harry, to administer a drug to his team at half-time.

(Now read on.)

The Great Cuptie—Jem Newbold's Villainy.

A CLAMOURING, surging throng was besieging the several entrances of Romford Rovers' ground.

It was Saturday, and the afternoon of the much-discussed Cuptie between the local team and the Wessex Wanderers, and the gate looked like being a record one. All around the spacious enclosure the roads were blocked, and the special drafts of police sent to the vicinity had all their work cut out to keep any semblance of order.

The turnstiles clicked ceaselessly, as they had been doing for the past hour or more. It wanted but ten minutes to the kick-off, the ground was already packed with would-be spectators, yet more and more still almost fought for admittance, whilst along the roads leading to the enclosure a steady pilgrimage of men, women, youths, and boys still streamed.

Hawkers, selling rosettes of red-and-white for the home team, and blue-and-white for the visitors, were doing a roaring trade. The blue-and-white favours were bought almost as freely as the colours of Romford, for Wessex Wanderers were attracting a huge following.

Over all hung an atmosphere of suppressed excitement and expectancy, for the winners to-day would appear in the semi-final in roughly a couple of weeks' time, and perhaps contest the great struggle for the English Cup itself in April.

With crowds still squeezing into the already congested stands, and elbowing a path on to the packed terraces and embankments, the referee and linesmen made their appearance, and the brass band that had been playing in the centre of the pitch brought to a close a stirring march, and took its departure.

"Hurrah, here's the Wanderers!" "Bravo the Wanderers! Show 'em what you're made of, lads!"

These and other encouraging cries rang out defiantly as the visitors made their appearance, with their captain, Codling, at their head.

They were accompanied by a terrific clapping and cheering, to say nothing of a whirling of rattles and a dimming of hand-bells. It was a typical Cuptie crowd.

Almost at once Romford Rovers followed the men from Wessex on to the pitch. In the stand, where they sat with Sir Travers, Marjorie Randall and Specs leant eagerly

forward in their seats. There was much that gripped the imagination of both, as they picked out the figures of Harry Lestrade and his cousin Austin Courtney, and realised that they would soon be hurled together in conflict in the important game that lay ahead.

No time was lost in preliminaries. The players of both teams were a little late in taking the pitch.

The referee summoned the two captains to the centre, they gripped, and then the coin was spun.

Romford won, and chose the goal slightly favoured by the breeze that was beginning to sweep the ground. Codling kicked off to the tune of a last encouraging cheer, and the game had commenced.

Austin Courtney was again playing at right-half, and he had determined to mark his cousin, though, if the conspiracy he had hatched with Jem Newbold materialised, as he confidently expected it would, the result of the Cuptie was a foregone conclusion.

Newbold had travelled to Romford with the team as reserve, and was in the dressing-room now. Tony Wagg looked in and pointed to some lemons that lay on a plate.

"You might slice those up at some time before half-time, Newbold," he said. And the referee nodded, then permitted himself an evil leer as Tony turned his back.

Out on the pitch, the play was already growing fast and furious. In a Cuptie hard knocks are given and taken without a murmur, and Codling, the Wessex centre-forward, had quickly found that an especial set was being made at him by his opponents. His reputation for fast and clever individual play had been remembered by the Romford team, and the defence took no risks with him.

Finding himself marked, Codling at no time kept the ball very long. Once he gained possession of it, he waited only long enough to draw the attack of his adversaries, then slung it out to one or the other of his wings.

When play had been in progress some twenty minutes, Codling ballooned the leather out to Jack Thurston, at outside-left. Just inside the touchline the latter executed a lightning dribble that carried him well up the wing. Arstin Courtney made a dash for him, and Thurston passed to Harry Lestrade.

Quick as a flash, Courtney wheeled, and attempted to tackle his cousin. There was a hard little smile on Harry's lips, as he adroitly eluded him, and, with Courtney

sprinting after him, the boy tore on goalwards.

Ah! Unexpectedly, Harry Lestrade centred to Codling, and just as unexpectedly Codling passed back to Harry as the backs bore down upon him. Harry Lestrade had out-paced his cousin and shaken off his attentions. He whipped the leather past the two full-backs, and, with a deadly dash, dribbled it into the very goalmouth.

The custodian was jumping about like a cat on hot bricks. Harry steadied himself, his eyes on the left-hand corner of the net. The goalie would have been ready to vow that the boy intended to kick for that point, and jumped sideways to guard it. But the fraction of a moment before both backs hurried themselves at him, and grassed him heavily. Harry Lestrade shot for the opposite side of the goal, and the ball thudded against the meshes.

"Goal!" The great army of Wessex followers cheered themselves hoarse. It was brainy football, and they were not slow to show their appreciation.

Harry's team-mates slapped him on the back and wrung his hand as they ran back to the centre. The ball was quickly set in motion once more, and the play became ding-dong and grueling. Romford strove desperately to equalise before half-time, but the Wessex defenders kept them at a safe distance, and the Wanderers remained one up when the whistle sounded for the interval.

Harry glanced at his cousin as he was about to leave the pitch. He had expected to find Austin Courtney wearing a furious look on account of his team's success; but, to his surprise, he saw that there was a curious smile on his cousin's lips.

This puzzled Harry not a little. He would have understood it, however, could he have witnessed that which had happened away in the dressing-room shortly before the interval had come.

Jem Newbold had cut the lemons intended to refresh the players, and arranged the slices on a plate. He had then taken from his pocket a small packet which he had received from Austin Courtney when he had met him in accordance with their appointment on the preceding night. This contained a whitish powder, and, forgetting a caution Courtney had given him to use it sparingly, with a soft chuckle, Newbold dusted it over four of the lemon slices. Their moisture dissolved it almost instantly, and rendered it invisible.

When the players reached the dressing-room, Newbold began to hand round the plate. Wills, the goalkeeper, Arthur Richards, the left-back, and Steve Freeman, the centre-half, each took a slice that had been sprinkled with the powder and commenced to suck at them. Then there happened an accident that was to prove fortunate for the Wanderers.

Newbold had tried to manoeuvre matters so that the fourth and last "doctored" slice of lemon was left for Harry Lestrade, who had paused outside to adjust a refractory bootlace.

He came dashing into the dressing-room, and, in flinging open the door, knocked the plate and its contents from Newbold's hand. As the floor was muddy and the plate was smashed, another lemon was secured and sliced for those players who had not had an opportunity of refreshing themselves.

No one noticed how Newbold bit his lips, or saw the look of baffled fury he flung at Harry.

The short interval was soon over, and the referee's whistle called the players back to the pitch.

The game had scarcely recommenced, however, when it was noticed that Freeman, the centre-half, seemed to be moving heavily and unsteadily; and, suddenly, he collapsed in a heap. The referee blew his whistle and brought the play to a check; and he ran towards the fallen player.

Freeman spoke thickly, like one intoxicated, as he was helped to his feet.

"I'll—I'll have to go off!" he muttered drowsily, as the referee beckoned and Tony Wagg came running on to the pitch. "I—I feel mighty queer, and—the whole ground is spinning round me!"

Tony Wagg knew that he must be really ill to decide to give up, and he helped him from the pitch. But, before the play could even be restarted, cries of amazement broke from both the referee and the players of

A Real Fine Sporting Tale that is Making a Great Sensation! Are You Reading It?

both sides; and they began to be echoed by the spectators.

Arthur Richards was reeling dizzily towards the referee, making signs that he, too, was ill. Then, to cap everything Wills, the Wessex goalie, began to stagger in his place. He stood swaying for a moment, the back of his hand pressed to his forehead. The next, his knees gave way under him, and fell prone between the posts.

Tony Wagg came running back on to the pitch.

At first he seemed mystified, bewildered. Then, as he began to gain an inkling of the truth, a fierce anger mingled with the anxiety that was in his eyes.

"Good heavens, trainer, what does this mean?" demanded the referee. He was utterly puzzled, and staring blankly from Wills to Arthur Richards, who was being supported between Codling and Harry Lestrade.

Tony's suspicions had become certainties now.

"It means that there has been black treachery at work!" he snapped, his hands clenching and his square jaw setting harshly. "These men have been 'got at'—drugged to lose us the Cup!"

Harry Lestrade's Gallant Fight—the End of the Cup!

"YOU say that they have been drugged?" the referee gasped. "It's impossible, man!"

Tony Wagg shrugged his shoulders, his battered face still dark with anger.

"It's the only explanation, ref." he answered, again looking from the prostrate

Wills to Arthur Richards, the left-back, who was now hanging limply between Codling and Harry Lestrade. "They were all right in the dressing-room a few minutes ago."

"But have they eaten or drunk anything?" the referee asked. "They could not have been doped otherwise."

"I have a suspicion of the truth," answered the trainer. "After the Cup is over, I'll ask you to come to the dressing-room, when I mean to investigate this dirty business."

"Then you intend to carry on?" the referee asked. "If what you think could be proved, I think I should be within my rights to stop the match and declare it void."

"What do you say, Codling?" Tony Wagg asked, glancing at the skipper of the team.

"Carry on, Tony," Codling said, between his teeth. "We'll show whatever contemptible scoundrel is responsible, that, in spite of having three of our men crooked, we can still win! By shots, I'll play like three men, and I know the rest of the team will do likewise!"

The other players cheered, though their voices were almost drowned by the ever-increasing buzz of excitement that was now rising from the spectators from every part of the crowded enclosure.

What was wrong? What had happened to the players who had suddenly collapsed? What was all the excitement amongst the players grouped about the referee and the Wessex trainer? Had the men who had fallen been "got at"?

These, and a host of other questions were being asked by every second onlooker of his neighbour, until the medley of voices welled into a sound like an angry sea beating on a reefbound shore. Unable to contain their

curiosity, some of the crowd began to break on to the field, but the police in attendance ordered them back. And, in the centre of the pitch, arrangements were quickly being made for the play to continue.

"What about a fresh goalkeeper, Codling?" Tony asked.

The captain looked from one fit player to another in some doubt, and Harry Lestrade suddenly spoke:

"Let me go between the sticks, Codling," Harry said eagerly. "I have been told I used to shape pretty well at school, and I'll do my utmost not to let anything through."

"Right-ho, youngster!" the captain snapped, coming to a quick decision. "I want to formally notify you that this player, Lestrade, will play in goal during the remainder of the game, ref."

The referee nodded, and quickly discussed with Tony the problem arising out of the three players who had "crooked." He suggested some of the others of the team should help the trainer to take them from the pitch and then return as soon as possible, and voiced an opinion that Tony should seek medical aid for the sufferers.

Codling and Harry Lestrade led the dazed and heavy-eyed Arthur Richards off between them, leaving him in the dressing-room, where Steve Freeman now lay in a heavy sleep. Wills, the goalkeeper, was quite unconscious, his eyes tightly closed, and his breath coming laboriously through his parted lips.

Heavily-built though he was, Tony Wagg hoisted him bodily in his arms and swayed him over his shoulder, and thus the hefty ex-boxer trainer of the Wanderers carried the ill-fated custodian from the ground.

Harry Lestrade and Codling came trotting back on to the field. The lad sprinted to the goal and took his place between the posts, and after blowing his whistle to gather the players about him, the referee picked up the ball.

Austin Courtney was biting his lip to suppress an evil smile, as he fell into place ready for the recommencement of play.

Jem Newbold had more than earned the bribe he had given him, though he had been far too heavy-handed with the drug.

Courtney had told him he must use it very, very sparingly, so that it would make the players who partook of it drowsy and heavy in their movements and spoil their game.

Harry Lestrade's cousin had not expected Newbold to use enough of the powder to lay his victims out, as he had done. But, after all, it did not matter as the play had not been stopped and the match abandoned.

The Wanderers had but eight men left on the field. Courtney could have laughed aloud in his triumph. It was impossible for them to win the Cup, even though at the moment they were one up, he assured himself.

The end of the game would see them beaten; his cousin's team would be out of the struggle for the Cup, and, with a little luck, his club would fight its way victoriously through the semi-final and figure in the last great game for the coveted trophy itself.

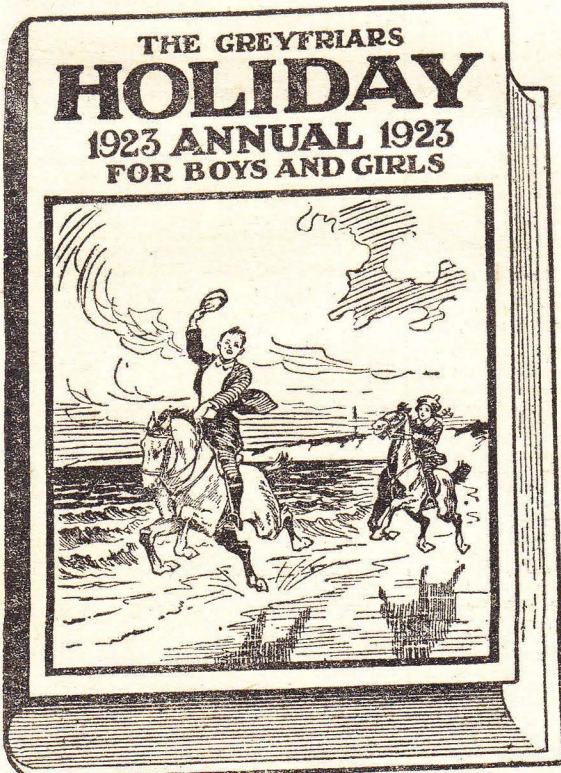
What a stride forward for him in the great sporting contest between himself and his cousin Harry, if that came about!

Courtney's hopes were again soaring high. Once more he began to speculate how he would spend the half a million of money winning would bring him under the late Sir Charles Lestrade's will!

Ah! The excited spectators became suddenly quiet, as it was seen that the referee had bounced the leather and that play was once again beginning.

(Don't miss next week's extra long instalment of our amazing sporting story. It's full of big thrills and unusual incidents. Tell all your chums about this sensational tale.)

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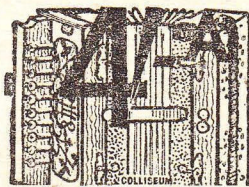
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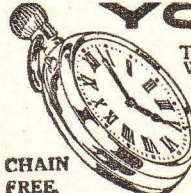
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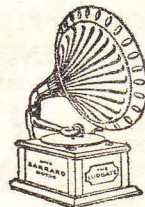
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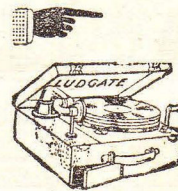
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A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Address: The Editor, The "Popular," The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.

A BRILLIANT BUMPER NUMBER.

There is always such a rare lot that I want to chat about with my chums that I feel a large-sized regret that space is so short. Of course, I should want at least a couple of pages if I were to give you a proper account of the next week's extra-bumper number.

Now, the programme for the issue of the "Popular" which you will find waiting for you next Tuesday, is just second to none. There is a splendid yarn of Greyfriars next week. It is called:

"A CAD BOWLED OUT!"

In this tale you see the chums of Greyfriars on their mettle, and the story presents a rather pleasing little drama, with, as the wind up, a complete downfall for the black sheep.

OUR BACKWOODS FEATURE.

This department of the "Popular" gets more and more popular each week. It was a positively brilliant notion to introduce those early days of Frank Richards. You will like next week's yarn in this captivating series.

"THE GHOST OF BAILEY'S BONANZA!"

is full of thrills. It makes you sit up and

take notice, and, what is more, it shows the jolly spirit of the fellows who find themselves in the wild places of the world. To my mind, there is nothing much better than a peep into the wild life of the settlers of the great North-West of Canada. You get the breath of the plains and the deep valleys in these topping yarns. And, please mark this, there is a grip in them. You never find your attention wandering, once you pick up a story about the back of beyond.

THE BOY FROM BORNEO.

There is an astounding happening in the St. Jim's tale next week. It is called "Expelled at His Own Request!" and though this sounds pretty well an impossible state of things, it is not so really. Mr. Martin Clifford has scored even more than usual with these yarns in which the Borneo Boy figures. The culmination is as dramatic as it is surprising, and Dr. Holmes must have had the shock of his life when he heard the strange request.

"THE COWARD OF ROOKWOOD!"

By Owen Conquest.

We all know Rookwood pretty thoroughly, and it is a bit of a surprise to hear that there could be a coward within the precincts of the whole school. I am leaving Mr. Muffin out of count. But this story of Rookwood is a real winner, and it introduces Jimmy Silver and his chums in a specially interesting way.

BUNTER & CO.

Next Tuesday the "Popular" comes out with its usual merry supplement—no, that's wrong—not as usual. The new supplement

is more dashing and sparkling than ever. Baggy Trimble has been doing his best in the editorial chair during the absence of Bunter in foreign parts, but the Owl of Greyfriars has flopped back to this country, and resumed the reins of his high office as Editor of the "Weekly."

I am not going to say that Bunter is entirely responsible for the management of this mighty number. He has hardly had time. But he has thrown himself into the work. Before he had unpacked his bag he was off to the printer's. The new supplement is theatrical in tone. It tells of the magnificent entertainment which was organised to celebrate the return of the Congo travellers. The porpoise contributes an editorial marked by his well-known sprightliness. It shows him to be a live wire—if a thick one. The supplement is packed with piquant features. Don't miss it!

FREE Real PHOTOS FOR YOU!

In this paragraph I want to tell you that "The Rival Sportsmen!" will be well represented next week; also that next week's number the "Popular" will give away one of our Free Real PHOTOGRAPHS OF SPORTSMEN. Look out for this. Also keep your eye on the grand WONDERFUL FREE REAL FOOTBALL PHOTOS I am giving in the "Magnet," the "Gem," and the "Boys' Friend." And don't forget that the "Holiday Annual" is the staunchest Christmas present anybody could wish for. This is a useful hint for the benefit of those who give and those who receive presents about this time of the year.

Your Editor.

BIG MONEY PRIZES. A GRAND ONE-WEEK FOOTBALL COMPETITION.

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- Top Left:** A hat, a bottle, and the text "W HA HA a more".
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- Top Right:** The text "TH AN".
- Middle Left:** A house, a question mark, and the text "AS 20 CWT. T".
- Middle Middle:** A man's face, a woman's face, and the text "S A THR P".
- Middle Right:** A chess board, a billiard table, and a polo player, with the text "Chess Billiards Polo".
- Bottom Left:** A man in a suit, a woman, and the text "3 R very Sir John Jones H".
- Bottom Middle:** A man and a woman, and the text "THE Villa H S produced H W".
- Bottom Right:** A building and the text "of THE".
- Bottom Left (New Section):** A bee, a clock, and the text "NEV ER 4 G 10. T iii NOT".
- Bottom Middle (New Section):** A man's face, a clock, and the text "The present time their RESOURCE R".
- Bottom Right (New Section):** A man's face, a clock, and the text "PRE-WAR 24 hours 24 hours".

What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid Footer competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Aston Villa Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears underneath, pin it to your solution, and post it to "ASTON VILLA" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14th.

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.

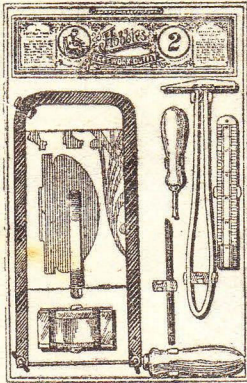
This competition is run in conjunction with "Gem," "Magnet," and "Boys' Friend," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

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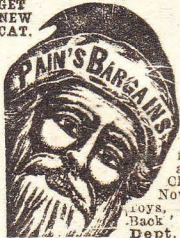
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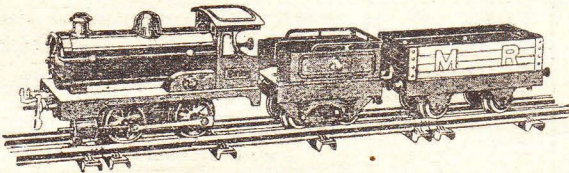
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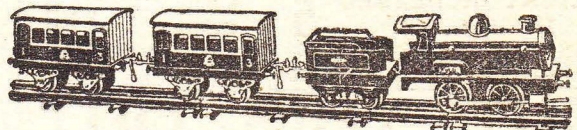
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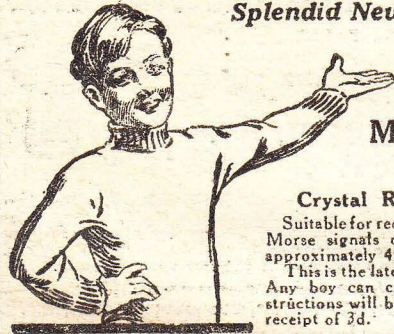
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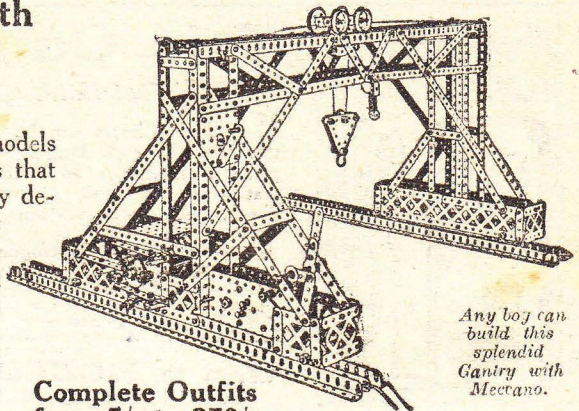


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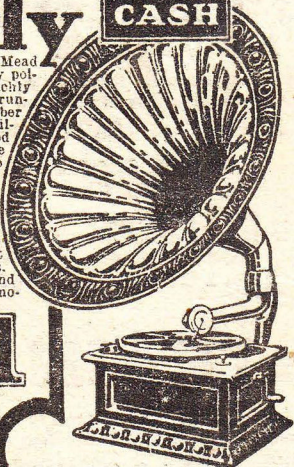


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