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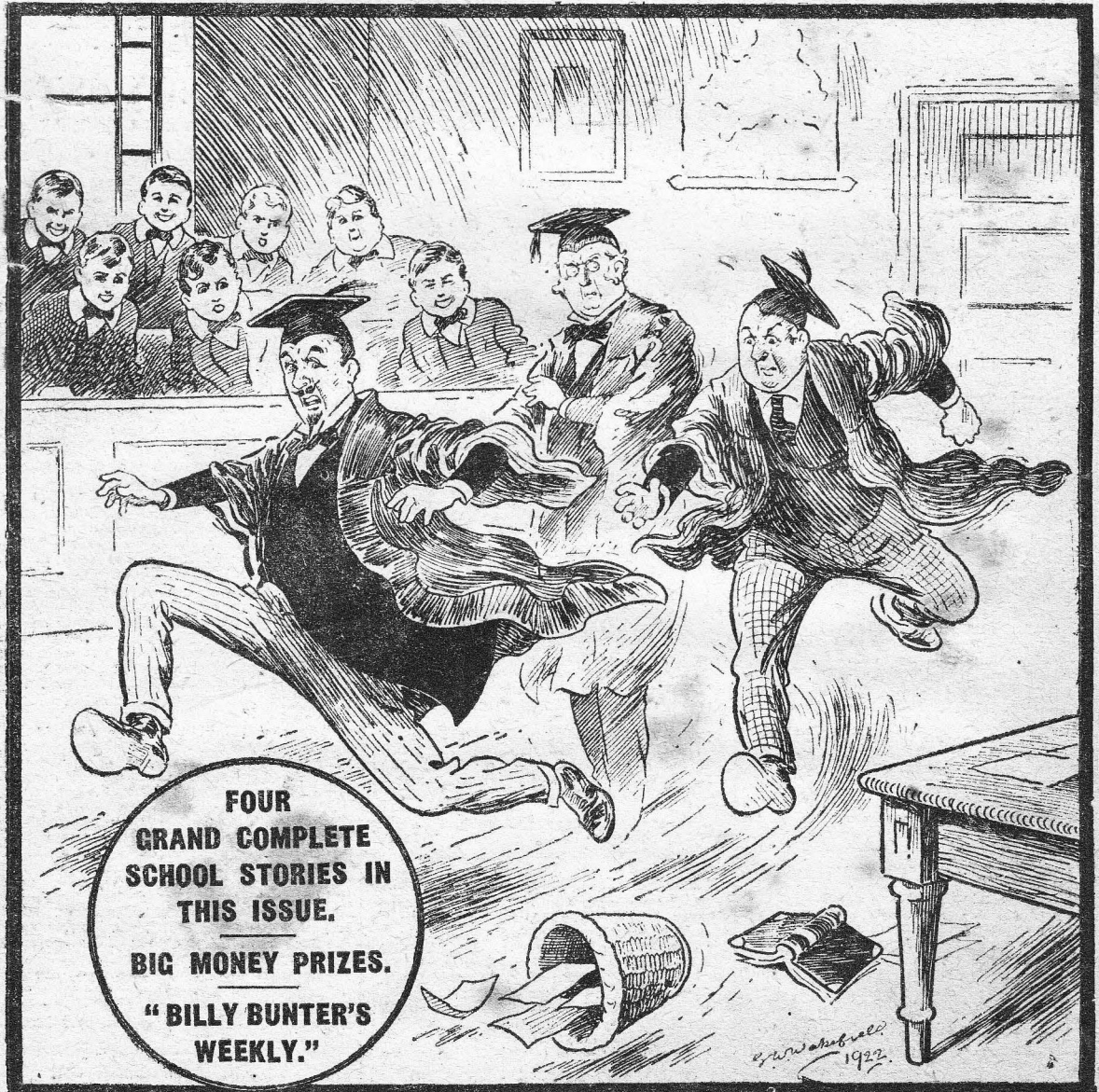
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When Masters Disagree, There's Fun in the Fourth Form!

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STORMY TIMES AT ROOKWOOD! The astounding behaviour of the new master causes matters to go from bad to worse.

FUN FOR THE FOURTH!



A Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., dealing with the Rookwood Masters' Great Strike.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Jimmy Silver & Co.

"ANOTHER new master!"
"Oh, my hat!"
Jimmy Silver & Co., of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, chuckled.

They were strolling in the quadrangle after morning lessons, which had been taken in the Form-room, with Bulkeley the prefect, in charge.

For the present the Fourth Form lacked a Form master.

That a new man was coming, in a hurry, they knew, and the sight of a stranger at the gates, speaking to Mack, the porter, interested them at once.

They guessed that this was the "new man." He was a short, plump man, with a little fat nose and a very rich complexion.

Good-nature beamed from his plump face, and in that respect he contrasted very strongly with the recent new master of the Fourth, who had come and gone since Mr. Bootles was dismissed by the Head.

"Looks rather a jolly dog," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "Not like the last man."

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful.

"Blessed if I like the idea of ragging that chap. He looks so good-tempered," he remarked. "But we've agreed to rag everybody the Head puts in Bootles' place, till he lets Mr. Bootles come back."

"Yes, rather!" said Raby.

"But, I say, that's rather hard on the new man, if he's decent" observed Newcome. "He can't help the Head being a rather obstinate mule, and he probably don't know anything about Bootles being sacked, and the other masters resigning in sympathy."

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes; perhaps we ought to give him a chance," he said. "Anyhow, we needn't be in a hurry. Hallo, here he comes!"

The stranger left Mack at his lodge, and came along across the quad, towards the four juniors.

As he evidently intended to speak to them, Jimmy Silver & Co. waited for him to come up, and "capped" him respectfully.

"Good-morning, my boys!" said the plump gentleman, in a rich, rolling voice.

"Good-morning, sir!" said the Fistical Four cheerily.

"Do you belong to the Fourth Form?"
"Yes."

"Then I am your new master," said the plump gentleman, with an expansive smile. "My name is Whibbs, my young friends."

And, somewhat to the surprise of the chums of the Fourth, Mr. Whibbs shook hands with them one after another, inquiring their names as he did so.

Mr. Whibbs seemed bubbling over with good nature. Indeed, Jimmy Silver & Co. had

never come in contact with so very expensive a gentleman before.

The juniors could not help liking him, but, at the same time, they could not help thinking that it was a little odd.

"I hope we shall be very good friends," said Mr. Whibbs. "Delightful old place—what?" he added, looking round.

"We're rather proud of Rookwood, sir," assented Jimmy Silver.

It was true that Rookwood was a delightful old place, yet the remark seemed to come oddly from the new Form-master.

"And delightful boys, I am sure," continued Mr. Whibbs.

"Oh, quite so, sir," said Lovell gravely. "And in us, sir, you behold the pick of the bunch."

"I am sure of it," said Mr. Whibbs heartily. "Delightful! Undoubtedly. So you have lost your Form master?"

"He's left, sir."

"Mistake on his part," said Mr. Whibbs, shaking his head. "Delightful place. Delightful boys. Delightful headmaster, I'm sure—eh?"

"Quite so!" stammered Jimmy, more and more surprised by the effusiveness of Mr. Whibbs.

"Why did he leave?" asked Mr. Whibbs. "Unsatisfactory—what? Drank, perhaps? Sad falling in a man."

The Fistical Four almost jumped at the bare idea of Mr. Bootles drinking.

"Not at all," said Jimmy hastily.

"No? I'm glad! It's foolish of a man to put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains," said Mr. Whibbs solemnly. "My dear boys, never look on the wine when it is red. Never touch the cup that inebriates! You will grow to be sorry for it. It may ruin your career. It may lead to infinite difficulties in securing a berth. Mark my words!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Raby.

"Why did he leave, then?" asked Mr. Whibbs. "Does the headmaster drink?"

"Eh?"

"I hope not. It's a sad falling in a man."

"I—I suppose you're joking!" gasped Jimmy Silver, while Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared at Mr. Whibbs blankly.

"Eh? Oh, yes! Of course. Ha, ha!" said Mr. Whibbs. "Let me see. You were going to tell me why your late Form master left."

Jimmy gave his chums a quick look.

This seemed an excellent opportunity for acquainting the new master with the state of affairs at Rookwood.

"Mr. Bootles didn't exactly leave, sir," said Jimmy. "He was dismissed, but he hasn't really gone. He's staying in the village."

"By gad! Is he?"

"The Head was down on him," pursued Jimmy. "It turned out that he was wrong, but he wouldn't change his mind, so Mr. Bootles had to go. Nearly all the other

masters went on strike, and resigned, as a protest."

"My word!" said Mr. Whibbs. "They're all staying at the inn at Coombe," pursued Jimmy Silver. "And a new lot of masters have come in. They—ahem!—they're not quite like the old masters. They seemed to have been engaged in rather a hurry."

Mr. Whibbs started.

"Oh! That accounts!" he ejaculated. "I was engaged in rather a hurry, too. But for that—ahem! Pray proceed."

"The man who came to take the Fourth had to go, and we've been taken by a prefect since," explained Jimmy Silver. "The other men are still here, but they don't get on with their Forms. All the fellows want their own Form masters back."

"Oh!" said Mr. Whibbs. "And you boys want your own Form master back—what?" Jimmy hesitated a moment.

It did not seem exactly polite to tell Mr. Whibbs that they did not want him. But he felt bound to state the fact.

"Well, yes, sir," he said frankly. "We—we don't like to see another man in Mr. Bootles' place."

"Quite natural," said Mr. Whibbs, with a nod. "Loyal, and all that. Ha, ha! I'm sorry for Mr. Bootles. Sorry for them all. Oh strike! Ha, ha! What an idea! Very worrying for the headmaster, I'm sure. But perhaps he had his reasons for clearing them all out. He may have discovered that they drank."

"Wha-a-at!"

"It's a sad falling in a man," said Mr. Whibbs, blinking at the astounded juniors. "For instance, take the case of a man with his M.A. First-class man in every respect, suitable for any position; but he drinks. No headmaster will engage him. Can't be expected to. He can't get an appointment. Can't do anything but borrow money from his friends. Live from hand to mouth. If he bags an appointment he loses it again. Can't even bag an appointment, unless somebody's in a hurry for a man, and can't stop to inquire into his antecedents. Boys, remember this! All your lives. Never touch the first drop! If you do, you'll never touch the last drop. Bear that in mind!"

And with an affable nod, Mr. Whibbs trotted off to the School House, leaving Jimmy Silver & Co. rooted to the ground, more astounded than they had ever been in their lives.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Master!

IS he potty?"

Arthur Edward Lovell was the first to recover his voice, and he gasped out that question blankly.

"My only hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"If he isn't potty, he's so near it that it makes no difference."

"Seems a good-natured chap, though," said Newcome.

"Good-natured enough! But—"
Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows in thought.

"Is it possible?" he murmured.

"Is what possible?"
"He—he seemed jolly excited!" said Jimmy. "Tain't natural for a Form master to talk like that! And—he was harping on the subject of drinking! Can it be possible that—that—"

"That he dropped into the Bird-in-Hand on his way here?" grinned Lovell.

"Well, it really looks—"
"Form masters don't do such things," said Baby.

"Well, you heard what he said. And he's been engaged in a hurry," said Jimmy Silver. "I can't help suspecting that that Johnny has had an uproarious past, and he's kept it dark; and the Head's been in too big a hurry to find it out before engaging him. If so—"

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell, almost overcome by the idea.

"Blessed if I know what to make of him!" said Jimmy Silver. "We had an idea of ragging the new man, till he was fed up, and left. But—but I don't like the idea of ragging that chap."

"Give him a chance, anyway."
The dinner-bell rang, and the Fistical Four went into the School House in a thoughtful mood.

Certainly the new Form master was the queerest customer they had ever met, and they wondered what lessons would be like in the Fourth Form-room that afternoon.

They wondered, too, what impression he would make upon the Head.

If he displayed such exuberant spirits in Dr. Chisholm's study, it was pretty certain that the grave old gentleman would be greatly scandalised.

For once the Fistical Four were rather keen to get in to lessons.

"I say, Jimmy, the new man's come," said Tubby Muffin, joining the Fistical Four as they were making for the class-room.

"Late, for once," grinned Lovell. "We had the news before you, Tubby! We've seen him."

"Seen him!" exclaimed Mornington. "What's he like?"

"Like nothing we've seen before!" said Lovell, with a chuckle. "Merry as a lark!"

"Oh, gad!" said Morny.

"Chirpy as a cricket!" grinned Baby. "I shouldn't be surprised to see him cake-walking in the Form-room!"

"Eh?"
"Something queer about the new man?" asked Conroy.

"Well, he's not cast in the usual mould of a giddy Form master," said Jimmy Silver. "Still, he mayn't be any the worse for that. Let's give him a chance."

The juniors had scarcely taken their places in the Form-room when Dr. Chisholm entered with the new master.

Jimmy Silver & Co. eyed them very curiously.

To their surprise—perhaps to their disappointment—Mr. Whibbs was as grave as a funeral mite.

Dr. Chisholm presented the new master to the Form with a few quiet words, the juniors listening very respectfully.

"In case of any difficulty with your Form, Mr. Whibbs, you will send for me," concluded the Head, with a warning glance at the Fourth.

"Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs.

"I do not anticipate any difficulty, however," said the Head. "I will leave you now to your Form."

And the Head rustled out.

Mr. Whibbs accompanied him to the door, and bowed him respectfully out, with a gravity of manner that was almost owl-like.

The moment the door had closed upon Dr. Chisholm, however, his manner changed. Evidently it cost Mr. Whibbs an effort to remain serious for long.

He turned to the juniors with an expansive smile.

"Now, my boys, we are going to work!" he said briskly.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy Silver, as the Form master seemed to expect an answer from somebody.

"Work hard, and play hard, that is my motto," said Mr. Whibbs, beaming. "Hard

work, however, has one drawback. You feel the need of a little stimulant. Let me warn you never to yield to that craving, however. It may lead to your being sacked—I should say, dismissed—and to endless difficulties in securing another post."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Mornington. The Fourth-Formers stared, and perhaps their stare recalled Mr. Whibbs to himself, and helped to fix his wandering mind on the business in hand.

At all events, he became grave again, and the Form plunged into the afternoon's work.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were again surprised at finding that Mr. Whibbs was quite equal to his work with the Fourth.

From his manner they had not expected that his scholastic attainments would be great.

But they found that he knew his work, and was evidently accustomed to the position he was in.

They could not help wondering, however, why he had left his former appointment, wherever that had been.

And it was impossible to help drawing certain conclusions from what he had said in the quadrangle.

However, they found their new Form master a very agreeable man to work with, and for an hour or so everything went well in the Fourth Form-room.

Matters were going better there, in fact, than in some of the other rooms—especially the Third, whence there came at intervals loud noises that were not quite in keeping with the pursuit of knowledge.

The new master of the Third had proved unequal to dealing with the fags, and, fag-like, the Third were taking advantage of the fact.

There was quiet pursuit of knowledge in the Fourth Form-room; but it was to be observed that as the afternoon wore on Mr.

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Whibbs became curiously downcast and thoughtful.

He moved restlessly about, and his temper began to fail him.

He snapped several times at Tubby Muffin, who was obtuse, as usual; and even rapped Higgs over the knuckles with a ruler.

He looked at his watch at last.

"Bless my soul! It is time I took my medicine!" he exclaimed. "Silver!"

"Yes, sir?"
"You are the head-boy in this Form. I believe?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"
"I shall leave you in charge for a few minutes. I have to take my medicine at this hour—doctor's orders. Pray keep quiet here while I am gone!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Whibbs left the Form-room with a hurried step.

And the moment he was gone a buzz of voices broke out in the Fourth Form-room.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
A Happy Afternoon!

WHAT price a rag?" asked Mornington.
"Hear, hear!"
"Might lock him out!" suggested Morny.
"Or put ink on his stool!" said Oswald.
"And gum his books!" suggested Tommy Dodd.
"Good egg!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I've been left in charge of the Form, to keep order, you know."

"Rats!"
"Bosh!"

"Sure, haven't we agreed to rag the baste, and make him quit, so that Bootles can come back?" exclaimed Tommy Doyle.

"I think the man ought to be given a chance," said the captain of the Fourth. "He's not a bad sort and we don't want to get him into trouble with the Head. He's done nothing to us."

"He rapped my knuckles!" growled Higgs. "He jawed me!" said Tubby Muffin.

"You're enough to make any man jaw!" answered Jimmy. "Look here you fellows, keep quiet and give the man a chance!"

"Oh, any old thing!" yawned Mornington. "I wonder what he's gone out for?"

"To take his medicine, he said," answered Jimmy.

"He's a jolly long time taking it!" grinned Mornington.

Which was true. The clock-hands were travelling round, and Mr. Whibbs did not return.

Tommy Dodd jumped up at last. "Time we got off," he said. "We're due at chemistry with Manders."

And the Modern juniors left the Form-room, to head for Mr. Manders' House.

The Classics remained, to await the return of Mr. Whibbs.

Footsteps were heard outside at last. The buzz died away as Mr. Whibbs came in. All eyes were fixed upon him.

There was a flush in his face, and his eyes had a glitter in them.

Even the most unsuspecting member of the Classical Fourth could not help having a suspicion as to the nature of the "medicine" Mr. Whibbs had been taking.

As if the medicine had "bucked" him, he was quite good-humoured again, and his flushed face wore an expansive smile.

"I am glad to see," said Mr. Whibbs, "that you have kept good order during my absence. You are a good little boy, Silver!"

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Jimmy. Mr. Whibbs blinked over the class.

"Are not some of the boys absent?" he asked.

"Only the Moderns, sir."

"The what?"
"The Moderns."

"I do not understand you, Silver," said Mr. Whibbs gravely. "You do not mean to imply that some of my class are more modern than the others? Do you mean younger?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy. "What did you say, Silver?"

"Ahem! I mean, some of the Fourth belong to the Modern side, sir," explained Jimmy Silver. "They've gone to stinks—I mean, chemistry—in Mr. Manders' House, sir."

Mr. Whibbs was silent for a few moments, as if weighing that explanation, and the juniors watched him.

"Have they the headmaster's permission to do this?" he asked at length.

"Yes, sir. It—its usual."

"In that case," said Mr. Whibbs, "I raise no objection. I have not yet made the acquaintance of Mr. Manders. Does he drink?"

"Wha-at?"

"I sincerely hope not," said Mr. Whibbs. "It's a sad falling in a man. It may lead to a painful scene with one's headmaster, and the loss of a valuable appointment."

"Indeed, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"It is true, my boy," said Mr. Whibbs, blinking at him. "Shakespeare—I trust you boys read Shakespeare—"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"I am glad that. A great man, Silver—a very great man—though I have a suspicion that he drank."

"Oh!"

"A sad falling in so great a man, Silver!" said Mr. Whibbs, while the Fourth sat breathless. "Very sad, indeed! However, as I was saying, Shakespeare remarked, with his usual per-per-perspicacity: 'Oh, that men should put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains!'"

"D-d-did he, sir?" stammered Jimmy.

"He did, Silver! Doubtless he was speaking from experience, for I have a strong suspicion that he drank."

"Oh!"

"Oh!"

"Oh!"

"Oh!"

4 Four More Stunning School Tales next week—Tell your Pals!

The Form-room door opened at this point, and a little dark French gentleman entered. It was Monsieur Blanc, a new master, who had taken the place of Mossoo Monceau, who was "on strike" with the rest of the Rookwood staff.

The time that should have been devoted to geography was past, and it was time for the new French master to take the class. Monsieur Blanc bowed to the Form master and came in. The juniors sat breathless.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. On His Neck!

MR. WHIBBS turned to the French master. He returned the foreign gentleman's bow with great politeness. "Good-afternoon, sir!" he said. "Bon jour, monsieur!" answered Monsieur Blanc.

"Very kind indeed of you to give me a look-in!" said Mr. Whibbs politely. "Pray take a seat."

The Frenchman looked puzzled. "I have come to take ze class, monsieur," he replied. "It is ze hour."

"You have come to take my class?"

"Mais oui, monsieur."
"I fail to comprehend you, sir," said Mr. Whibbs coldly. "Do you imply that the Head is dissatisfied with my method of conducting my class?"

Monsieur Blanc raised his eyebrows.

"It is trois heures et demi," he exclaimed. "I am quite aware, sir, that it is half-past three. You wander from the point. Is the Head dissatisfied with my methods of conducting my class, or is the Head not dissatisfied with my methods of conducting my class?" demanded Mr. Whibbs.

"Je n'en sais rien—I know nozing of zat," answered the surprised Frenchman. "I take ze class in French."

"You will do nothing of the sort, sir!"

"Comment!"
"If the Head is dissatisfied with my methods," said Mr. Whibbs, "the Head can come and tell me so. I refuse to have my class taken out of my hands in this surreptitious way!"

"Mon Dieu!"
"I do not regard it, sir, as playing the game!" said Mr. Whibbs severely. "The only explanation I can think of is that the Head drinks."

"Vat!"
"Retire, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs, waving his hand.

"Mais—mais—"
"There, sir, is the door!"

"Mais—but I have come to take zis class!" ejaculated the astonished Frenchman. "It is trois heures et demi!"

"We have French at half-past three today, sir," ventured Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Whibbs spun round.
"Did you speak, Silver?"

"Yes, sir. It's time for the French lesson."

Mr. Whibbs seemed to be considering that statement with deep gravity, but evidently the sense of it did not penetrate his confused mind.

He turned to Monsieur Blanc, who had gone to the master's desk.
"What! Are you still here?" he exclaimed.

"Mais oui, monsieur."
"You persist in your intention to take my class?"

"Mais oui."
"Then, sir, I shall allow you to do nothing of the kind!" said Mr. Whibbs. "My belief, sir, is that you are intoxicated."

"Mon Dieu!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors involuntarily.

"You are exciting the boys to merriment, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs. "Retire from zis Form-room at once!"

"Mais—je dois—"
"Retire, sir!—Otherwise," exclaimed Mr. Whibbs wrathfully, "I shall be compelled to eject you!"

"Mais, vous etes fou, je crois!" exclaimed the amazed French master. "I come, here to give ze lesson!"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Whibbs, advancing towards him. "There, sir, is the door. Return to the headmaster, sir, and tell him

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from me that I refuse to have my class taken out of my hands!"

"But—but—"
"You will not go?" shouted Mr. Whibbs. "Non, certainement!" gasped Monsieur Blanc. "Absolument, non! I come here—je suis ici, Mon Dieu!"

The French gentleman was interrupted by a powerful grasp upon his shoulders.

The Fourth Form sat stupefied as Mr. Whibbs whirled the Frenchman to the doorway.

Monsieur Blanc resisted, as was natural, and there was a struggle, but the plump Form master was too weighty for the little foreign gentleman.

The latter went whirling into the passage. Bump!

Mr. Whibbs stood gasping in the doorway, and the horrified juniors, looking past him, had a view of the French master sitting in the corridor.

He remained there only a few seconds, however.

Then he picked himself up, and bolted along the corridor like a scared rabbit.

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another. After that it seemed time for the skies to fall.

Mr. Whibbs came back towards the silent Form; whose gaze was glued upon him in wonder and alarm.

"My young friends," he said, "you have observed what has happened. That man was under the influence of drink. I have been compelled to eject him."

"Ye-es, sir," stuttered Jimmy Silver. Mr. Whibbs looked at his watch.

"It is now time for me to take my medicine again," he observed. "Gold? Is your name Gold, or Silver?"

"Silver, sir."
"Very good. Silver, I leave you in charge of the class. I shall return in a few minutes—a very few minutes. If that foreigner should return, be very careful with him. The unfortunate man drinks."

And with that Mr. Whibbs quitted the Form-room.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed Lovell. "How is zis going to end, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

He had no idea how it was going to end. "Somebody ought to tell the Head," said Rawson.

"I fancy Mossoo will do that!" grinned Mornington.

"Poor old Mossoo!" chuckled Lovell. "What a surprise for him! No wonder he thought Whibbs was 'fou.'"

"We're jolly lucky in our Form masters, and no mistake!" remarked Newcome. "If there's much more of this I should think the Head would be glad to let Bootles come back."

"Shush! Here comes the Head!"

There was a rustle outside, and Dr. Chisholm swept into the room, with Monsieur Blanc at his heels, quivering with excitement and wrath.

"Mr. Whibbs!" exclaimed the Head. Then he looked round in surprise, noting that the new Form master was not there.

"Silver! Where is your Form master?"
"He—he's gone to his study, I think, sir," stammered Jimmy.

"Indeed! Have you any idea why he left you?"

"To—to take his medicine, sir."
"His what?"

"He said it was to take his medicine, sir."
"Bless my soul!"

"I have been zrow out of room!" spluttered Monsieur Blanc. "Zat man, who is quite mad, he take me by shoulder and zrow me in passage—bump! I am hurt! I am injure! I do not suffer zis, sir. Is it zat at zis school a gentleman he is zrow out of room—bump?"

"Calm yourself Monsieur Blanc."
"Zat is ferry well, sir; ferry well indeed!" exclaimed Monsieur Blanc, gesticulating wildly. "But I am injure! I sit down on floor zis bump! I do not come to zis school, sir, to be zrow out of room by one madman, and sit down on floor zis bump. If it is zat to give you resignation."

"Really monsieur—"
There was a heavy step in the passage, and monsieur jumped.

"Zat madman, he come back!" he shouted. Mr. Whibbs appeared in the doorway.

The silence of stupefaction lay on the Fourth Form.

What was going to happen now was past their guessing, but it was evidently going to be something of an alarming nature.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Nice for the Head!

DR. CHISHOLM fixed a cold, stern glance upon Mr. Whibbs.

That gentleman, however, did not heed him; he seemed not to see him. His eyes rested upon Monsieur Blanc with a deadly look.

He had recognised his supposed enemy, and the new dose of "medicue" he had just taken rendered him less likely than ever to listen to the voice of reason.

"So you are here!" he exclaimed. Monsieur Blanc dodged behind the Head for protection as Mr. Whibbs strode towards him.

"Zat you keep off!" he howled. "I will not vance more be zrow out of zis room bump!"

"Mr. Whibbs!" thundered the Head. "Sir!"

"What does zis conduct mean?" Mr. Whibbs blinked at the scandalised doctor.

"Conduct, sir! What do you mean by conduct?"

"I am alluding to your astounding conduct. Mr. Whibbs, I demand to know at once what you mean by it!"

Mr. Whibbs pointed a fat and shaky forefinger at the French master.

"I have removed that man from the room once," he said. "As he has returned, I shall remove him again. He is under the influence of drink."

"Mon Dieu! Have I not said zat he is one madman?" wailed the French master. "Keep zat madman away!"

"Stand back, sir!" thundered the Head. "With all respects for you, sir, I cannot allow that man to remain in the room," said Mr. Whibbs. "He drinks! As master of zis Form, sir, I am bound to consider the effect upon my boys of zis shocking spectacle! I must remove him from their sight, lest by his example he should teach them to put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains."

"The man is mad!" gasped the Head.

"Not at all, sir—simply under the influence of liquor," said Mr. Whibbs, apparently supposing that the Head was referring to the French master. "However, I will remove him!"

"Mr. Whibbs, I command you—"
"Pray leave him to me, sir."

Mr. Whibbs dodged round the Head towards the French master, who dodged round on the opposite tack, so to speak, to escape him.

Dr. Chisholm stood rooted to the floor. He was wondering whether he was awake, or whether zis was some dreadful dream.

"Here we go round the mulberry bush!" murmured Lovell, and there was a subdued chuckle in the Fourth.

Twice Mr. Whibbs chased the elusive Frenchman round the petrified Head, and then he caught him.

"A moi!" shrieked Monsieur Blanc, as Mr. Whibbs' grasp closed on him. "Help! I will not be zrow out! I am injure! I leave zis school! Monsieur, I resign me! I goes away toute suite! Help!"

Bump!

Monsieur Blanc landed in the passage, with a concussion and a terrific yell.

As he sprawled there Mr. Mobsby came running out of the Third Form-room in alarm.

"What ever is the matter?" he exclaimed. He looked in, and Mr. Whibbs strode to meet him.

"Have you any opinion to offer with regard to my conduct in zis Form-room, sir?" he thundered.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Perhaps, sir, you have come to take zis class out of my hands?"

"N-n-not at all!" gasped the astounded Mr. Mobsby. "I—I assure you—"

"Then retire, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs. "Your interference is totally uncalled for. I am capable of managing my class, sir, without outside interference. My firm opinion is that you are under the influence of drink."

"Eh?"

"A shocking spectacle!" said Mr. Whibbs severely. "Had you belonged to my former school, sir, you would have been subjected

to a very unpleasant scene with your headmaster, in which a policeman, probably, would have been involved. Take warning, sir, and do not put an enemy in your mouth to steal away your brains—that is, if you have any, which, judging by your countenance, I consider very doubtful."

"Bless my soul!" stammered Mr. Mobsby. He beat a rapid retreat to his own Form-room.

Mr. Whibbs, with a snort of contempt, turned away from the door and came towards the dazed headmaster.

A red and breathless French gentleman looked in for a moment.

"Monsieur le docteur! I resign me!" he shouted. "I stay not in zis school one ozzer moment! I go—I fly! I am injure! I will not stay in ze house wiz one madman!"

"Are you still there?" roared Mr. Whibbs, turning round.

But the French gentleman was no longer there. He was fleeing for his life.

"Mr. Whibbs!" gasped the Head, finding his voice at last. "This conduct—this violence—"

"This is the second time, sir, that you have mentioned the word conduct," said Mr. Whibbs sternly. "Am I to understand, sir, that you find anything in my conduct to which you have reason to take exception?"

"Bless my soul! Most certainly!"

"And upon what point, sir," said Mr. Whibbs, with elaborate politeness, "do you take exception? I am, I think, entitled to a full explanation. Have I not done my duty?"

"Oh!" gasped the Head.

"If anyone, sir, has cause for complaint, it is I," pursued Mr. Whibbs warmly. "In the execution of my duties, I am interrupted by men the worse for drink. Is that the manner, sir, in which a public school should be conducted? My firm belief, sir, is that you yourself are under the influence of drink."

"Sir! Man! How dare you!"

"I am bound, sir, to speak my mind. I am sorry to see this—in a gentleman of your years, too! A shocking spectacle, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs, wagging his head seriously at the doctor. "In my earlier days, sir, I regret to confess that I have been addicted to a similar indulgence, and in such cases I found it advisable to sleep it off. I recommend you, sir, to go to bed."

"Wha-a-ah!"

"Come, sir," said Mr. Whibbs kindly, taking the dazed headmaster by the arm. "Let me assist you! It is somewhat difficult to walk in this room, owing to the state of the floor. You may have observed, sir, that the floor is endowed with a curious wobbly motion—a very remarkable circumstance. Pray be careful how you step."

"Mr. Whibbs! Unhand me at once! I insist—I command you! Bless my soul! I—I—I will send for the police!" stammered the Head.

"In that, sir, you will simply imitate the utterly indefensible conduct of my former headmaster. But I warn you, sir, that no minion of the law shall remove me from the place of my duty. I shall show fight, sir!" thundered Mr. Whibbs, so suddenly that the Head jumped away in alarm. "I shall fell him, sir! I will not be dictated to, sir!"

"Bless my soul! Mr. Whibbs," almost groaned the Head, "pray calm yourself, I beg of you!"

Mr. Whibbs waved his hand.

"Say no more, sir," he said, his expansive mood returning. "If you apologise, that is sufficient, from one gentleman to another. I forgive you; I overlook any little unpleasantness there may have been."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Whibbs took out his watch, and looked at it solemnly, if a little uncertainly.

"Bless my soul, it is time I took my medicine!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps, sir, you will be good enough to take charge of my class for a few minutes. I dare not neglect my medicine; my health depends on it."

"Pray—pray go!" gasped the Head.

"Thank you very much, sir!" said Mr. Whibbs, shaking him warmly by the hand. "You are a gentleman, sir. I am very much obliged to you. I shall be gone a few minutes, that is all."

"Yes, yes, please go!"

Mr. Whibbs went a little uncertainly into the passage, and the Head breathed more freely, with relief at having got him out of the Form-room.



THROWN OUT! Mr. Whibbs grasped the French master by the shoulders and whirled him to the doorway. With a heave he sent Monsieur Blanc spinning through into the passage. (See Chapter 4.)

But Mr. Whibbs looked in again the next moment.

"I am much obliged to you, sir," he said. "I wish there to be no misapprehension at that point. I am very much obliged to you."

"Yes, yes."

"The lesson now in progress, sir, is geology. You are equal, I trust, to taking my Form in that somewhat abstruse subject?"

"Yes, yes. Pray go!"

Mr. Whibbs went, and the Head wiped his perspiring brow.

But once more the plump, red face looked in at the doorway.

"One word more, sir," said Mr. Whibbs.

"In case you should be compelled to leave the Form-room, in order to take your medicine—strictly by doctor's orders—I recommend you to leave Silver in charge. Silver is a very good boy."

"Yes, yes."

"His knowledge of geology, sir, is quite astounding," said Mr. Whibbs. "His metallurgical acquirements are also very great."

"Yes, yes. Please go."

"I am going, sir," said Mr. Whibbs, clinging to the doorpost. "I am simply waiting a moment for the floor to steady itself. There is a very unusual commotion, sir, proceeding in the passage, and the floor appears to be decidedly wobbly. The foundations, I think, are unsafe. However, I will risk it."

Mr. Whibbs risked it, and disappeared at last.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Exit Mr. Whibbs!

DR. CHISHOLM mopped his brow, while the Fourth Form sat silent.

It was some minutes before the headmaster recovered himself.

His glance swept over the Form, and the juniors were very careful to keep their faces serious.

"Boys," said the Head at last, "a most scandalous scene has taken place in this Form-room. I have been deceived in that man. Doubtless he deceived the agents who recommended him to me. I am sorry that you should have witnessed such a scene. Needless to say, the man will be removed from Rookwood at once."

Jimmy Silver stood up.

"May I speak, sir?" he asked.

"You may speak, Silver."

"Might I—ahem—suggest, sir—ahem—that

our Form-master, Mr. Bootles, should be allowed to return to Rookwood?"

Jimmy Silver had been wondering whether it was a favourable opportunity for making that suggestion.

He soon learned that it was not.

A thunderous look came over Dr. Chisholm's face.

"Silver, you are impertinent!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, sir!"

"Upon such a point, Silver, I am not likely to consult a junior boy in the Fourth Form. A new master will be appointed to the Fourth Form in due course. Hold out your hand, Silver."

Dr. Chisholm picked up the Form master's cane.

Swish!

"I shall send a prefect to take this class," he went on, frowning at the juniors. "Do not let this scene be made the excuse for any unruliness. Anything of the kind will be severely punished."

And with that the Head swept from the Form-room.

He went directly to his study to telephone to the police-station at Coombe.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his hands.

"Poor old Jimmy!" said Lovell. "The Head ain't in a reasonable temper just now. He might do worse than let Bootles come back." "He has done worse!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"That's the second new master we've had this week!" grinned Mornington. "I wonder what number three will be like."

"This one isn't gone yet," said Erroll.

"Goin', though," grinned Morny. "Two to one the Head's gone to phone for a bobby."

"Phew!"

"Poor wretch!" said Rawson compassionately. "What an awful come-down for a man who's been in a good position. No wonder he was pushed out of his last school. He must have kept that awfully dark, somehow."

"It was bound to come out, though," remarked Lovell. "The Head would have sacked him as soon as he knew. My only hat! Here he comes!"

The juniors became silent as Mr. Whibbs stepped in unsteadily.

The wretched man blinked dizzily at the class.

"Is this the Fourth Form-room?" he asked.

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"No, sir," said Townsend; "this is the Sixth."

"Bless my soul! I am looking for the Fourth Form-room, but owing to the uncertain state of the floor. I appear to have wandered into the wrong quarter," said Mr. Whibbs. "Perhaps you can direct me to the Fourth Form-room."

Townsend jumped up, grinning.

"Certainly, sir," he answered. "Come with me."

He took Mr. Whibbs' arm, and led him from the Form-room.

"What the dickens is Towny up to?" muttered Topham.

The juniors waited. Townsend came back in about five minutes, chuckling.

"What have you done with him?" asked Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"I've taken him to his study," grinned Towny. "Bootles' old study, you know. He went like a lamb."

"He won't stay there," said Lovell.

"I think he will. I put the key in the outside of the door, and locked it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We've had enough of him here," said Townsend. "The beast might start on us next."

"Hark!"

There was a sound of loud hammering from the distance.

"He's found out he's locked in," said Townsend coolly. "I shouldn't wonder if he wrecks Bootles' study."

Crash! Bang! Crash!

The juniors left their places, and crowded to the doorway.

From the direction of the Form-master's study came incessant crashing.

Mr. Whibbs, locked in the study, was hammering on the door, apparently with a chair.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was on his way to the Fourth Form-room, by order of the Head, but he stopped as he heard the uproar, and changed his direction for the Form-master's study.

Bang! Bang! Crash!

The prefect tapped on the door.

"What's the matter?" he called out.

"Let me out!" came the sulphurous voice of Mr. Whibbs from within. "I was brought here, sir under the impression that this was the Fourth Form-room. I find that it is a study—my own study, in fact!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bulkeley.

"I refuse to remain here for one moment longer, sir!" bawled Mr. Whibbs.

"Please be quiet, sir."

"I refuse to be quiet, when I am locked in a room, with an earthquake in progress. I demand to be released at once!"

Crash! Bang!

"What is it, Bulkeley?" exclaimed the Head, arriving on the scene.

"That—that man, sir. He's locked in—"

"Thank goodness! That was a very proper step to take. Do not release him on any account."

Bang!

"I have telephoned for a policeman," said the Head. "This is a most—most unhappy occurrence, Bulkeley. I have been very unfortunate, owing to the pressing need for engaging new masters without loss of time."

"Some of the fellows, sir think that if an accommodation was made with the old masters—"

said Bulkeley resolutely.

The Head's manner froze at once.

"I cannot listen to your opinion on that subject, Bulkeley," he said.

"Very well, sir," said Bulkeley quietly.

"Pray go to the Fourth Form-room at once, Bulkeley. For the present I must ask you to take charge of that Form."

"I am willing to do so, sir; but I felt it my duty to tell you my opinion," said the captain of Rookwood. And he walked away.

Bang!—Crash!

"Pray be quiet Mr. Whibbs!" called out the Head, in utter distress. "I beg of you, sir, to be quiet."

"Ha! You are there, are you?" replied Mr. Whibbs. "Wait till I get at you, sir! I will alter the shape of your features."

"Bless my soul!"

Bang! Crash!

Dr. Chisholm hurried to the door in the hope of seeing Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe, approaching.

But there was no sign of Mr. Boggs so far.

Like Sister Anne, the Head waited and watched, in a state of anxiety and distress such as he had never experienced before.

The crashing continued in the study.

At last, to the Head's intense relief, a fat figure in blue was seen approaching.

Police-constable Boggs came up the steps, and saluted the Head respectfully, but with a very queer expression on his fat face.

The Head's appeal for succour, on the telephone, had caused quite a flutter in the village police-station.

Certainly Mr. Boggs, in his wildest dreams, had never expected to be summoned to Rookwood School to take charge of a master in a state of intoxication.

"Thank goodness you have come, Mr. Boggs!" exclaimed the Head. "There is a—a person here—"

"Orrid conduct, sir, for a schoolmaster!" said Mr. Boggs sympathetically. "I'm s'prised, sir! But you never knows 'em! Is it Mr. Greely, sir?"

"No, no, no!"

"Mr. Bootles, p'raps, sir?"

"No, no!" exclaimed the Head. "A new master—he arrived only to-day. I have been deceived regarding him. Not really a Rookwood master at all, Mr. Boggs. Simply a—a person who succeeded in concealing his antecedents—a most ruffianly person—"

Crash!

"Is that 'im, sir?"

"Yes, yes! Pray come with me!"

"Is he violent, sir?"

"I—I fear so, Mr. Boggs. This way!"

The Head led the way, Mr. Boggs following rather slowly.

The fat officer was not, perhaps, anxious to tackle a violent gentleman armed with a chair.

They arrived at the door of the study.

Crash!

"I will unlock the door," said the Head, "and you will secure him, Mr. Boggs."

"Old on, sir!" said Mr. Boggs cautiously.

"P'raps it would be better to wait till he's a bit calmer, sir. This 'ere state of mind he's in, sir, will pass off, as I dessay you know from hexperience, sir."

"What—what!" gasped the Head. "Certainly I have had no experience of such things, Mr. Boggs! What ever do you mean?"

Crash!

"Werry violent, sir!" said Mr. Boggs. "I don't want to 'ave to use my truncheon if it can be 'elped. Course, sir, if I 'ave to take 'im in charge, it will be in the papers arter, and that ain't pleasant for you, sir, if I may make so bold. When he's quiet he'll go quietly, sir, you take my word."

The Head started.

The thought of a "case" in the papers, and Rookwood School and its good name dragged in the mire of police-court reports, made him shudder.

He had not thought of that.

"Quite—quite so, Mr. Boggs!" he gasped.

"I certainly do not wish to give the man into custody, if he will only depart quietly from the school. That is certainly all I wish. Perhaps, as you suggest, it would be better to—to wait until he is calmer."

"You take my word for it, sir," said Mr. Boggs. "I'll wait 'ere, sir, with pleasure, till he cools down. The 'ot fit is always

follored by the cold fit, sir. Bless yer, I knows 'em!"

"Thank you very much," stammered the Head.

He pressed a pound-note into Mr. Boggs' fat hand, and left the police-constable on guard.

For some time the uproar continued in the study, but it died away at last.

Then Mr. Whibbs voice was heard from within, in plaintive tones, and finally he was heard weeping pathetically.

Mr. Boggs listened with stolid composure. As he had told the Head, he "knew them," his experience having been very different from that of Dr. Chisholm, who certainly did not know them at all.

Meanwhile, lessons finished in the Rookwood Form-rooms, and the Rookwooders came out from classes.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were going out into the quad when Tubby Muffin came up, his fat face ablaze with excitement.

"He's going!" announced Tubby.

"Who's going?"

"Poor old Whibbs! Boggs is taking him!"

"Poor wretch!" said Jimmy.

"He's not going to be locked up, I think," grinned Tubby Muffin. "I heard Boggs say something to Bulkeley about seeing him off the premises. Somebody else has packed his things, and the box's corded up in the hall. Poor old Whibby's weeping!"

"Here they come!" murmured Raby.

Mr. Boggs appeared in the doorway, with a firm grip upon the arm of Mr. Whibbs.

The latter was evidently sobered now, and he looked pale and ill.

A hot flush suffused his face as he caught the looks of the juniors turned upon him.

The sight of his shame touched Jimmy Silver's heart, and he turned away at once.

Without a word, with bowed head, the unhappy man accompanied the police-constable to the gates.

Probably he was as glad to get out of the sight of the Rookwooders as the latter could possibly be to see him go.

Mr. Boggs and his charge disappeared together, and old Mack closed the school gates after them.

"Blessed if I ain't sorry to see him go!" remarked Tubby Muffin reflectively. "He jawed me, but it was much better than lessons this afternoon. I say, Froggy's cleared off! We haven't a French master now. Fancy that!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. went up to the end study to tea in a thoughtful mood.

"I fancy," remarked Jimmy Silver, "that the Head won't engage another master in a hurry. I fancy he's had enough of that!"

"I should jolly well think so!" grinned Lovell. "That means that we shall be left to the tender mercies of the prefects."

"We'll soon make them tired of us!" grinned Raby.

"What-ho!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"There's been enough of this game!" he declared. "The Head's in the wrong, and he ought to make it up with the masters. They ought to come back. Everybody's fed up with the new lot. They know they've bagged other men's jobs, and they ought not to stay. I think we ought to set to work to make them tired of Rookwood."

"School without masters again!" chuckled Lovell.

"No. School with the old masters again!" said Jimmy. "Bootles and the rest! We'll call a meeting of all the Lower School—and the Fifth, too, if they'll come—and make up a plan of campaign. I believe the Head would be glad to get out of the scrape if he could. Well, we'll help him."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. heartily.

And that evening there was much discussion among the juniors of Rookwood, and many mysterious whisperings, of which the result was shortly to be seen.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK! "THE MYSTERY MASTER!" NEXT WEEK!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

There will be joy in the ranks of "Popular" readers when they read this extra-grand Story of Rookwood, next Tuesday.

TO SAVE THEIR CHUM! Braving many perils, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc set out together to track down and rescue Frank Richards from the hands of the Rustlers!



Chums to the Rescue!

Here's another great story of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of the Backwoods School:

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Two on the Trail.

THE full, round moon was high in the sky, and the light fell in a silvery flood upon the Lawless Ranch and the wide green grasslands.

It wanted only a couple of hours to dawn. But there was one at least in the silent ranch-house who was not sleeping.

Bob Lawless stood at his open window, looking out upon the moonlit plain, and the dim mountains in the distance, and the dark, silent patches of timber.

Bob could not sleep. He was thinking of his chum, Frank Richards, and his anxiety for his missing chum was too keen to allow him to close his eyes.

Where was Frank? He had ridden away from Cedar Creek School the previous day, and ridden into the unknown.

From that hour nothing had been seen or heard of him.

The shadowy forest had swallowed him up, and hid his fate from all human eyes.

"Bob!"

The rancher's son turned from the window as Vere Beauclerc's voice spoke in the dim room behind him.

Beauclerc had thrown himself on Frank's bed; he had come home with Bob that night. But he, too, had not slept.

"Yes, Cherub?" said Bob, in a low voice. "You're awake, then?"

"I haven't slept," answered Beauclerc quietly. "Can you hear anything, Bob?"

"Only the wind in the larches."

"I thought I heard a horse."

"Only the horses in the corral, then, old chap."

"I don't think so."

Vere Beauclerc slipped from the bed and joined his chum at the window.

His eyes swept the moonlit plain without. "Listen!" he muttered.

He held up his hand. Bob strained his ears to hear.

Faintly, from afar, came a low sound, and, as it drew nearer, it could be recognised as the tattoo of a horse's hoofs.

"By gum, you weren't mistaken, Cherub!" muttered Bob, his eyes gleaming. "It—if it can't be Frank, surely!"

The two schoolboys watched eagerly from the window.

Closer and closer came the tattoo on the plain, and at last a dim form loomed up in the moonlight.

It was a riderless horse, heading for the ranch-house, as if well knowing its way.

Bob caught Vere Beauclerc by the arm.

"Frank's pony!" he muttered.

"It's Brownie," said Beauclerc, with a nod, "and without Frank!"

"I guess I'm going down!"

"Quiet!" said Beauclerc. "No need to wake the house, Bob."

The chums of Cedar Creek quitted the room silently, and crept down the stairs.

Cautiously Bob Lawless removed bolt and chain on the massive door of the ranch-house.

The fresh night wind blew in as he drew back the door.

Outside, the pony was whinnying softly. "Brownie!" called Beauclerc.

He ran out and caught the horse. Brownie rubbed his soft muzzle on the arm of his master's chum.

Beauclerc stroked the pony's glossy neck. "It's Frank's pony right enough," muttered Bob Lawless. "But where's Frank? If the brute could only speak!"

Beauclerc was examining the pony attentively.

"If Frank's been thrown, and hurt, Bean, it's curious that the hoss didn't get home before this," said Bob.

"It's not that, Bob," said Beauclerc quietly. "Frank's being kept away."

"How do you know that, Cherub?"

"Look at Brownie. His bridle's been taken off; he's been roped up. There's the trail-ropes loose round his neck," said Beauclerc. "He's been tied up, and he's gnawed through the rope. Look at it!"

"By gum! You're right, Cherub."

"Whoever roped in Brownie knows what's become of Frank," said Beauclerc. "Brownie was captured, and Frank was with him then. Brownie's got away, and Frank hasn't."

"But who? Why?"

"Goodness knows. But that man, Mr. Smith, with whom Frank rode away from Cedar Creek, must be at the bottom of it," said Beauclerc.

Bob knitted his brows.

"He looked a harmless galoot enough, Cherub. He came into the school to ask after a chap who could speak French to interpret for him, because he'd found a French-Canadian hurt on the trail." Bob shook his head. "It was sheer chance that Frank went with him. Miss Meadows called him out from the class. Smith couldn't have known Frank would come with him, Cherub. So it couldn't have been a trick by somebody who had it up against Frank."

Beauclerc nodded. "No, it couldn't," he agreed.

"Well, then, if the man was a stranger to Frank, why should he hurt him?"

"I don't know," admitted Beauclerc. "But I know that Frank rode away from school with this man Smith, and that he's not been seen since. I believe that if we found Smith we should find Frank."

"We're going to find Frank," said Bob, setting his teeth. "If Brownie was taken along with him, and it looks like it, Brownie's come from where Frank is now. And he's left a trail, Cherub."

"I was thinking of that."

"The dew's thick on the prairie," said Bob, his eyes glistening, "and this light is as good

as daylight. If I can't pick up the trail, you can call me a Chinaman. We'll leave Brownie with Billy Cook, and take the trail, Cherub. What do you say?"

"Good man," said Beauclerc. "That's my idea, too. We'll borrow a gun from Billy Cook."

Bob Lawless led the pony away towards the ranch foreman's cabin, Beauclerc following.

He knocked lightly at Billy Cook's door.

The chums did not want to awaken Mr. Lawless, who might very possibly have demurred when he learned of Bob's scheme; in fact, it was very probable that he would.

"Hullo!" came from within the cabin. "Wake up, Billy!"

"You, Bob! Has Franky come home?"

"No; but his pony has."

The door opened, and Billy Cook looked out, rubbing his eyes.

"Here's the pony, Billy," said Bob Lawless. "We're going to try to pick up his trail. Tell popper, will you, and you can come after us. I believe Frank's in bad hands."

"You get back to bed," advised Billy Cook. "Leave this hyer business to your elders, Bob Lawless."

"Take the pony," answered Bob.

"I guess I'll wake your popper, and put it to him," said the ranch foreman. "And I reckon he won't let you go bumping on any trail before morning, and on your own, you young scallywag!"

Billy Cook led the pony away, and Bob slipped into the cabin.

He knew where the ranchman kept his rifle and cartridges, and in a few seconds he emerged with the rifle under his arm and the cartridge-belt slung over his shoulder.

"Come on, Cherub!"

"I'm with you, Bob!"

The two schoolboys started at a run.

Where the pony's hoofs had trampled the dewy grass the trail was plain and glistening in the moonlight, and they were able to proceed at a trot and keep it under observation.

For a mile or more the trail led them without a pause, and they did not stop.

Then a patch of stony ground brought them to a pause.

Beauclerc scanned the ground in vain.

Bob Lawless was deeply learned in the lore of the woods and the prairie, and he was not long at fault.

In a few minutes the young Canadian was following the trail again, but it was at a snail's pace now.

For some distance they proceeded slowly and cautiously, till the stony patch was passed.

"Here we are again!" said Beauclerc. Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Lucky we started at once, Cherub! It will be sun-up in an hour, and then the dew will dry. I guess this trail won't be easy

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to follow then. Put it on, kid! We can run here!"

And they ran on, without a pause or a fault, till the sombre shadows of the timber received them.

Then Bob Lawless halted again. "Sign" was difficult to find amid the tangled undergrowths of the wood.

But here and there the snapped twigs and trampled herbage showed where the pony had forced his way, and even so slight a sign as the dew shaken from a bush was enough for the keen-eyed Canadian.

Even when the moon had set Bob Lawless still pushed on, though slowly now, and with hesitation.

But as the early rays of the rising sun penetrated the shadows of the wood his task was easier.

Slowly but steadily the chums of Cedar Creek School pushed on into the sombre depths of the almost untrodden forest.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Last Hope.

FRANK RICHARDS stirred and awoke. Towards dawn the schoolboy prisoner had fallen into an uneasy slumber, rolled in the blanket on the grass.

The sound of movements awakened him. He sat up in the grass.

For a moment or two Frank expected to see about him the familiar walls of his room at his uncle's ranch.

But recollection came quickly of the strange adventure of the preceding day.

Before his eyes was the log-cabin, in which the French-Canadian miner, Jules Clement, lay bound a prisoner.

"Mr. Smith" and his companion, Bocus Bill, were talking in low tones near him, taking no heed of the schoolboy.

Frank glanced at them, and then looked away towards the sombre woods that surrounded the lonely cabin.

He thought of Brownie, and wondered whether he had reached the ranch, and whether the trail he had left would help his friends to find him.

Upon that faint hope everything depended, even life itself.

Bocus Bill left his companion and went round the cabin.

A minute later there was a loud exclamation, and the ruffian came hurrying back.

"The pony's gone, boss!"

"The pony?" repeated Smith.

"The kid's pony."

"You fool! Didn't you tether him?" growled Smith.

"I guess I put the trail-rope on the critter!" snarled Bocus Bill. "The brute's bitten it through and vamoosed!"

Smith strode over to where Frank Richards lay in the grass.

Quickly he examined the rope that shackled the schoolboy to the trunk of the big tree close at hand.

"The kid had no hand in it," he said. "He's safe enough. He hasn't moved."

"Don't I tell you the critter gnawed through the rope?" answered Bocus Bill. "I guess he's fur enough off by this time."

"Well, it matters little. We're after bigger game than a horse," said Smith.

As the sunlight strengthened Smith and Bocus Bill sat down to a hurried breakfast outside the cabin.

They did not heed Frank Richards.

When the hasty meal was finished Bocus Bill untied the rope that fastened Frank Richards to the tree.

The door of the cabin was opened, and Smith strode in.

The French-Canadian miner was lying on the earthen floor, bound securely. His pale face, turned towards the adventurer when he entered.

"Bring the boy here, Bill."

"Yes."

Frank Richards was brought in. "I guess I want you to talk to the galoot again, sonny," said Smith. "Last night the critter agreed to lead us to the place where he hid the bag of dollars. We're taking him along with us now. Tell him in his lingo that if he tries any gum-game on us it will be the last gum-game he will ever play on this earth!"

"Quest que c'est?" asked the Frenchman. Frank Richards translated the threat.

Clement shrugged his shoulders. "On verra," he said.

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"What does he say?" growled Smith.

"He says you will see."

"I guess we will, and I guess he will wish he'd never been born if he tries to pull the wool over our eyes!"

At a sign from the adventurer Bocus Bill unbound the Canadian and led him from the cabin, with his arms, however, still secured behind his back.

Smith proceeded to bind Frank Richards to the log-bench in the cabin.

Evidently the schoolboy was to be left there while Clement was taken away by the two rascals.

Bocus Bill looked in at the doorway, his hand resting on the butt of the revolver in his belt.

Frank shivered as he caught the expression on the face of the ruffian.

"What's the good, boss?" muttered Bocus Bill. "I reckon we're through with the younker."

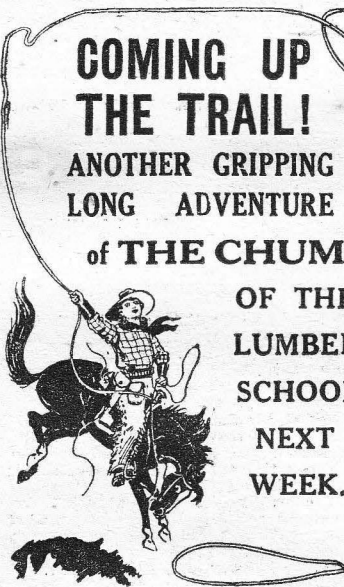
"We may want him again," answered Smith.

"He's done the talking for us, I guess."

Smith shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "The Frenchman may be fooling us," he answered. "Haven't you any sense? If we don't find the dollars we shall want the kid to talk again."

"Correct!" assented Bocus Bill.

Smith followed him from the cabin, and the door was closed, and wedged fast with a chip of wood outside.



Frank Richards sat on the bench, shivering.

His life hung on a thread in the hands of the two desperadoes from the mines.

Only the fact that he might still be wanted to translate between them and their victim had saved him so far.

When he had served his turn, and was wanted no longer, he knew what to expect. The life of a schoolboy would not stand between the thieves and safety.

Ten years in prison waited for them, if Frank Richards could help in bringing them to justice, and they did not mean to run that risk.

How was this to end?

Frank listened to the sound of reeding footsteps and the rustling of the underwood as the two rascals departed with their prisoner.

Then silence fell.

Dimly through the interstices in the rough walls of the cabin the sunlight penetrated.

From without came the chirping of birds, the sounds of the awakening of life of the new day.

Frank Richards thought of Cedar Creek School, of the boys and girls who would soon be arriving there for lessons, little dreaming of the terrible peril in which their schoolfellow lay.

He thought of his chums, too—his chums

who would not have shrunk from any danger, however great, to save him.

What were they doing?

Had Brownie arrived at the ranch—had the gnawed trail-rope told them the tale? And were they even then seeking to pick up the trail of the pony in the grassy plain and the tangled woods?

The hope was slight, but it was all he had, and it did not leave him.

Suddenly he started.

Outside the cabin there was a sound—a low, faint sound—but he knew that it was a cautious footfall.

His heart beat almost to suffocation. Was it the footstep of friend or foe?

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tracked Down.

"HANG it!" Bob Lawless muttered the words savagely.

Beaulerc did not speak; he watched his chum in silence.

To him the woods told nothing. He was not so skilled as the Canadian lad in woodcraft.

And even Bob seemed beaten at last.

Twice he had lost the trail and found it again, but now, for the third time, he was at a loss.

Right and left he tried, but no "sign" met his penetrating gaze.

"By thunder, we're going to find it!" said Bob, between his teeth. "Hallo, what's that?"

He started forward, as his eyes fell upon a tiny object in the herbage.

It was a small green lizard, wriggling painfully on the ground.

"Poor thing!" said Beaulerc compassionately. "It's hurt."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"I guess I'm sorry for Mr. Lizard," he said. "But here's luck. Put him out of his pain, Cherub."

Bob's face was brighter.

"That poor little beast was hurt," he said. "He'd been trodden on, Cherub. What was it trod on him?"

Beaulerc started.

"I guess," said Bob, "that we're on the track again. I guess, old Cherub, that it was a boss put his hoof on that poor old lizard—Brownie, in fact. He's passed this way, though the ground's too hard just here to keep a trace of him. Brownie was heading for the ranch—that's west of here. So I reckon, Cherub, that if we look east of here we shall pick up Brownie's trail again."

"Let's try," said Beaulerc hopefully.

Bob Lawless glanced up at the sky and started. One glance was enough to give him his direction.

Slowly and carefully he searched through the wood, eastward of the spot where the unfortunate lizard had been found.

A sudden exclamation of satisfaction escaped him.

"Look here, Cherub!"

He had reached a spot where the underwoods were thicker, and he triumphantly pointed out a broken twig.

"Something's passed," he said.

He pushed on.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he exclaimed, a few minutes later.

In a soft hollow of the ground a hoof-mark showed up clearly.

"That's Brownie's size, hay?" grinned Bob. "Come on, Cherub, this is where we rake in the stakes."

Thicker and thicker the wood lay before them, and they had to push their way through, but that was all to the good, for in the thick underwoods there were ample traces where a horse had forced its way.

Bob Lawless halted suddenly.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

Beaulerc looked at him.

The rancher's son raised his hand and pointed.

Through the openings of the trees they made out part of the outline of a log-cabin in a little glade ahead.

"A cabin!" muttered Beaulerc breathlessly.

Bob nodded, his eyes gleaming.

"I guess that shebang belonged to some trapper in the old days," he whispered. "But I reckon somebody else is using it now—eh? This looks like the end of the trail, Cherub. Quite— If Frank's there,

Do You Like the Chums of the Lumber School? See Them Next Week!

I reckon somebody else is there with him, and it's the shooter we shall want now."

Bob Lawless hurriedly examined the rifle, and held it ready, as he pushed on silently and cautiously, Beauclerc at his heels.

They came to the clearing, their eyes looking keenly about them.

There was no sign of life, save a sound of horses moving at the back of the cabin.

Bob scanned the locality carefully before venturing out into the open.

Two horses were tethered behind the cabin, but there was no sign of a human being.

"Two of them, then!" muttered Beauclerc. "They must be in the cabin, Bob."

Bob shook his head.

"Look at it!" he whispered. "There's a wedge jammed under the door outside. Somebody's shut up there, but whoever it is, is a prisoner."

Beauclerc's eyes glistened.

"Frank!" he muttered breathlessly. "We're going to see. There's nobody about excepting the hosses, that's a cert."

The two schoolboys ventured out into the glade at last, and approached the door of the cabin.

Bob's finger was on the trigger of the rifle now; he was prepared for danger.

But it was pretty clear that the place was deserted, save by the prisoner in the log-cabin.

The wedged door showed plainly enough that someone was confined within.

Bob Lawless drew away the wedge.

"Open the door while I keep the shooter handy, Cherub. We ain't taking chances," he whispered.

Beauclerc threw open the door, and the barrel of the rifle was levelled in at the little doorway.

There was a shout within.

"Bob! Beau, old man!"

"Frank!"

The two schoolboys rushed in.

Frank Richards' eyes danced.

"Bob!" he panted. "Oh, but I'm glad to see you! Get me loose—get me loose, quick. They may come back!"

Beauclerc's knife was already at work on his bonds.

The rope fell in fragments round him, and Frank Richards sprang to his feet, rubbing his numbed limbs.

"Thank Heaven you've found me!" he panted. "How—how did you—Was it Brownie's trail that led you here, Bob?"

"Correct!" grinned Bob Lawless.

"Bless him!" said Frank. "I—I hoped—but it seemed such a slim chance! Oh, you chaps, it's a treat to see you, and no mistake!"

"Same here, Franky!" said Bob.

Frank Richards looked hastily out of the cabin.

The forest lay silent and deserted round the clearing.

"They're not back yet!" he breathed.

"When they come—"

"I don't know who 'they' are," said Beauclerc. "But hadn't we better clear before they come?"

"No. There's another chap in this fix," said Frank. "A French-Canadian named Clement. We can't leave him to be murdered!"

Bob Lawless whistled.

"So bad as that, Frank?"

Frank Richards shivered.

"You've saved my life," he said. "We've got to save his. You remember that villain Smith, who came to the school to ask for somebody who could speak French to interpret for him. He told Miss Meadows it was a French traveller injured on the road. That was a lie!"

"I guessed it!" muttered Beauclerc.

"There are two of the rotters," said Frank hurriedly. "They had a French-Canadian miner here—a chap who couldn't speak English. They made me translate for them. They wanted to rob him. As they didn't understand French, I asked him other things besides what they told me to ask him, and found out all about him."

"That was cute," said Bob.

"He was at the Cascade mines, and had a claim there," explained Frank. "He got news that his father was ill in the East, and sold his claim and started home with the money on him. Those two villains followed him from the mines, and laid for him in the forest. He got away wounded, and hid the bag of dollars in the timber some-

where, and when they ran him down and captured him, they did not know where to look for the money. So they wanted an interpreter to get the information out of him."

"I see."

"They would have tortured him to make him speak," said Frank, with a shudder.

"But we worked it between us—speaking in French—that he should pretend to be willing to guide them to where the money was hidden, to gain time. It had to be left till morning. Soon after dawn they started, taking Clement with them. That was hours ago. When—when I heard you, I thought perhaps it was those villains coming back. That would have been the finish."

Bob knitted his brows.

"Then the Frenchy isn't going to let them bag the dollars?" he asked.

"No, he's fooling them."

"When they find that out—"

"I don't think they will hurt him till they've got their hands on the money," said Frank.

"Smith told Bocus Bill that I might be wanted again, so they kept me a prisoner here. If they find the dollars, I believe they will shoot him dead, to save their dirty skins; but if they don't find them, they'll bring him back here to torture him."

"My hat!" said Beauclerc, with a deep breath.

"This is where we take a hand in the game, then," said Bob quietly. "It's up to us, you fellows. You're game?"

"Yes," said Beauclerc.

"You bet!" exclaimed Frank. "I'm glad you've got a rifle, Bob. Mind, those rotters will shoot."

"So shall I," answered Bob laconically.

"It will be a fight," said Vere Beauclerc coolly. "We'd better get hold of something, Frank."

Frank Richards nodded.

In a few minutes the two had cut themselves cudgels from the wood.

It was the best they could do, and then, with beating hearts, but cool heads, the chums of Cedar Creek waited for the return of the rustlers.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

BOB LAWLESS closed the door of the log-cabin and jammed the wedge into place again.

"I guess we'd better let those galoots think it's all as they left it," he said. "They won't know anybody's been here till they see us—and my rifle is the first thing they'll see of us."

"Good!" said Frank Richards.

The three chums, keeping their eyes on the woods about them, moved away from the cabin to a clump of trees within a dozen yards of the door.

Taking cover in the underwoods, they waited, out of sight, and watching the cabin.

Bob Lawless held the rifle in readiness.

They hardly spoke as they waited.

An hour had passed, when a rustling in the wood came faintly to their ears.

Bob gave his comrades a glance.

"I guess they're on hand," he whispered.

He lifted the rifle, and the muzzle looked out from the foliage, directed towards the cabin, the butt resting firmly at his shoulder.

His hand did not tremble.

Frank Richards drew a deep breath, and his hand tightened in its grip upon his cudgel.

The moment was at hand now.

From the wood, at a little distance, three forms emerged into sight.

Bob Lawless and Beauclerc recognised one of them, "Mr. Smith," who had come to the lumber school the day before with his lying tale in quest of an interpreter.

They could guess who the other two were—Bocus Bill and the French-Canadian.

"That's the crowd?" whispered Bob.

"Yes."

"I guess I've got a bead on them."

The French-Canadian was walking between the two rustlers.

He tottered a little as he walked, and his face was deadly pale.

His pallor, and the blood-stained bandage about his head, gave him a ghastly look.

Bob's eyes glistened as he looked at him.

Bocus Bill was helping, or rather dragging, the miner along by one arm.

The ruffian was evidently in a savage mood, and Smith was scowling furiously.



DESPERATE MEASURES! Frank Richards hurled his cudgel. The heavy billet of wood crashed into Smith's face, and he rolled over, his revolver exploding harmlessly as he fell. "Look out for the other!" yelled Beauclerc, springing forward. (See Chapter 4.)

The search for the hidden bag of dollars had been unsuccessful; probably the two ruffians realised that Clement had been leading them only on a wild-goose chase.

"Come on, you critter, gold-darn you!" growled Bocus Bill, as Clement tottered over a trailing root and almost fell.

He dragged savagely at the prisoner, and Clement uttered a faint cry.

"I guess you'll have suthin' to yap about soon!" muttered the ruffian, with another savage drag at the helpless man.

The French-Canadian did not understand the words, but their tone left no mistake as to the ruffian's meaning.

He tottered on towards the cabin, and Bocus Bill flung him roughly into the grass near the door.

Smith stood looking down upon him with bitter rage and malice.

"You've had your chance, my buck!" he said. "I guess you'll be sorry you've wasted our time. You don't get another chance. I'll make you write it down with the fire burning your feet, and I guess you'll tell the frozen truth next time!"

"Stow the chinwag, boss!" grunted Bocus Bill. "The galoot don't understand."

"I'll make him understand soon!" said Smith savagely. "Get the boy out to interpret, while I build the fire."

"Yep."

The words left no doubt as to the savage intentions of the rustlers.

The threat was not an idle one.

The French-Canadian miner was to be put to the torture till he told the rustlers what they wanted to know.

Smith began to gather a heap of brushwood in a little pile close to where the prisoner lay, while Bocus Bill dragged at the wedge under the cabin door.

"You know what that's for, whether you speak English or not, you coyote!" hissed the adventurer, as he threw down the brushwood beside the bound man.

"Vous ne savez jamais," said the French-Canadian faintly.

"Oh, stow your lingo! Bring the boy out, Bill."

Bocus Bill strode into the log-cabin, and disappeared from view.

Next moment he came striding out of the little doorway.

A revolver glittered in his hand now, and his savage eyes swept round the clearing.

"Boss, he's vamoosed!" he exclaimed.

Smith turned back, his arms full of brushwood.

"What?" he shouted.

"The kid's gone!"

"Impossible! The door was fastened!" yelled Smith.

"He's lit out I tell you! Somebody's been here!"

The ruffian was glaring round as he spoke, his revolver raised, evidently ready to shoot at sight.

Bob Lawless hesitated no longer.

Crack!

From the clump of trees came the sharp, ringing report, and it was followed by a fearful yell from Bocus Bill.

The sudden bullet tore through his brawny shoulder, and the ruffian went reeling back into the log-cabin, and crashed upon the floor.

Had the rancher's son chosen to aim at his heart it would have been a dead man that rolled on the floor of the cabin.

But even at that terrible moment Bob had spared him.

From the cabin came wild, savage yelling, as the ruffian lay on the floor, drenched in his own blood, and helpless from his wound.

"Thunder!"

Smith spun round, his eyes seeking the smoke of the rifle, to find whence came that sudden shot.

His revolver was raised, ready to shoot.

Over the glittering barrel his eyes were glaring.

The white curl of smoke from the clump of trees caught his eyes at once, and he fired shot after shot without a pause.

Crack, crack, crack!

The bullets tore through leaves and branches.

But the three schoolboys were in cover behind the trunks, and Bob Lawless was hurriedly but deftly jamming a fresh cartridge in the rifle.

Crack, crack!

The rustler was still firing.

Bob peered cautiously round the trunk through the foliage that screened the three from sight.

His rifle was raised again.

Five shots had cracked out almost in as many seconds, and but for the cover of the thick tree-trunks the schoolboys would have been fiddled.

The rustler was reserving his last shot, and springing for cover himself.

But he was too late.

Even as he sprang towards the nearest tree Bob's rifle rang out sharply, and his right leg curled under him, and he went with a crash to the ground.

"I guess he's got that in the leg," said Bob Lawless coolly, as he put in a fresh cartridge.

"Come on!" muttered Frank.

The three schoolboys ran out of cover swiftly towards the cabin.

"Amis—mes amis!" cried the French-Canadian joyfully.

Smith raised himself on his elbow.

His leg had been broken by Bob Lawless' bullet, and he was unable to rise; but he supported himself on one elbow, and in the other hand he gripped his six-shooter, his eyes blazing over it.

"Drop that!" shouted Bob Lawless, thrusting forward his rifle.

Whiz!

Frank Richards hurled his cudgel even as Bob spoke.

The heavy billet of wood crashed into Smith's face, and he rolled over, his revolver exploding harmlessly as he fell.

"Look out for the other!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Bocus Bill was still groaning just inside the log cabin.

Bob Lawless led the way, and his rifle covered the wounded ruffian. Bocus Bill half-raised his revolver, but lowered it again as the rifle-barrel bore full upon him.

"Let up!" he panted. "I guess I pass!"

"You'd better!" said Bob Lawless grimly.

"Take away his shooter, Frank! I'll give him one to get on with if he tries to use it!"

But Bocus Bill did not try to use the revolver.

He was almost fainting from loss of blood, and the rifle-muzzle within a yard of his face was too much for him.

Frank Richards took away his revolver and the knife from his belt.

Bocus Bill groaned deeply.

"I guess I'm a gone coon!" he said hoarsely.

"Winged—winged by a gol-darned schoolboy! Oh, great gophers!"

"Winged—and a good shot, too!" said Bob Lawless.

"But you're not done for yet, my buck! You'll live to serve your sentence; but you'll be lucky if you're ever able to use your right arm again!"

The ruffian groaned.

"A mol!" the French-Canadian was calling.

The three schoolboys hurried out to him.

Smith, wounded as he was, was trying to creep away into the forest; but he was very quickly stopped.

Beauclerc opened his knife and cut the Frenchman loose. Smith's hands were tied with the same cord.

He lay in the grass, white with pain and loss of blood, and his eyes glittering at Frank Richards & Co. like a reptile's.

"I guess this is our win!" grinned Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards helped the French-Canadian to his feet as soon as he was freed from the rope.

"All serene!" he said, smiling. "Voci mes amis, Monsieur Clement. Maintenant vous etes libre."

"Je vous remercie, mon enfant," said the French-Canadian, quietly. "Mon Dieu! Bons enfants, tout trois!"

Bob Lawless grinned.

"I guess I savvy that much French," he

said. "Right-ho, old scout! We're three of the most bon—is that right, Franky?—I mean, three of the best!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The chap don't seem fit to travel," remarked Bob. "I guess you'd better look after him here while I fetch somebody from the ranch. I reckon I shall find the popper and Billy Cook hunting for the trail. See that those two galoots don't get away, Franky. I'll leave you the rifle, and if they give the least trouble, make 'em fit for the coyotes' supper."

"You bet!" answered Frank.

And Bob Lawless started on the home trail.

Jules Clement sat in the grass, his back resting against a tree, his white face very bright in the sunlight.

He had passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and in his relief and joy he scarcely felt exhaustion and pain.

Frank Richards searched the log-cabin, and found food for the Canadian, which he ate ravenously.

And then Frank gave his attention to the two wounded rustlers.

"I suppose, we ought to do something for them, Beau," he said.

"I think so," Beauclerc answered.

And the schoolboys bound up the wounds as well as they could of the two rascals, receiving in return curses and savage scowling, which did not trouble them, however.

It was an hour later that Bob Lawless returned.

He did not come alone. Mr. Lawless and Billy Cook and a couple of the ranch cattlemen were with him.

"Safe, Frank?" exclaimed Mr. Lawless.

"Yes, uncle; thanks to Bob!" answered Frank Richards. "If he hadn't followed the trail, though—"

"When I found he was gone I promised him the biggest trail-roping of his life!" growled the rancher. "But, as it's turned out, I'm glad he tried it."

He turned to the French-Canadian, and spoke to him in his own tongue. Then he gave directions to his men.

"Get those two rustlers down to Thompson, and hand them over to the sheriff. Better stick them on their horses and lead them. You boys can come with me. We're going to help Mr. Clement get back his dollars."

"Good!" said Bob.

And while Smith and Bocus Bill were taken away by the cattlemen, the rancher and the schoolboys started with the French-Canadian through the forest.

Clement was smiling and joyful now. In company with the rustlers he had failed to find the hiding-place of the bag of money; but he did not fail now.

Within an hour they stopped at a hollow tree in the heart of the timber, and Clement turned to Frank.

"Ici," he said. "Voulez vous—"

"You bet!" answered Frank.

He squeezed himself into the hollow trunk and groped for the bag. In a couple of minutes it was handed out to the miner.

"Good!" said Mr. Lawless. "Maintenant, monsieur, vous allez chez moi."

"Merci, monsieur!" answered Clement gratefully.

And the miner from Cascade was taken to the Lawless ranch for the attention he so badly needed.

Bob Lawless rubbed his eyes when he rose from the dinner-table.

"We didn't get much sleep last night," he remarked. "I feel sleepy! Hallo, popper! What is it?"

The rancher pointed to the clock.

"School!" he answered.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Bob Lawless. "Blessed if I hadn't forgotten school! I say, popper, we shall be a bit late for afternoon lessons."

"Better late than never!" answered Mr. Lawless cheerfully.

And Frank Richards & Co. rode away to Cedar Creek School, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in Miss Meadows' class.

THE END.

FOR NEXT TUESDAY'S "POPULAR"

"A STRANGE ACCUSATION!"—A Wonderful Story of "The School in the Backwoods!"

LEFT TO DROWN! Percy Mellish witnessed Racke's fall into the river—to be borne away helpless in the whirling water—and he turned from the scene and ran!



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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Fellow who Funked! LEAR out!

C Tom Merry's tone was imperative.

The captain of the Shell was standing in the doorway of Racke's study. Manners and Lowther were with him.

Seated at the study table were Aubrey Racke, Crooke, and Mellish. They had been playing a novel racehorse game—a most amusing and harmless game if properly played. Tom Merry & Co. often played it themselves—with buttons. One fellow acted as bookmaker, and the others had to guess which horses would win. If the guess proved correct, the "baker" would be duly paid—in buttons!

Racke & Co., however, had found it rather tame to play for buttons.

Crooke suggested that they should play for halfpennies. And it was the jingle of money that had attracted the attention of the Terrible Three, who had been passing the open door.

Before the players could carry out Crooke's suggestion, Tom Merry & Co. had chipped in.

The captain of the Shell saw at a glance what was going on.

"Clear out!" he repeated. "Can't have anything in the nature of gambling, you know."

"Confound your interference!" growled Racke. "We weren't gambling!"

"No; but you were just going to."

"Wait till we actually do, before you start putting your oar in," said Crooke.

Tom Merry frowned.

"I don't trust any of you," he said. "Although you haven't been playing for money, you'd start it directly our backs were turned. And we won't leave anything to chance. Clear out into the fresh air. That will suit you a lot better."

"Well, I like that!" said Racke. "Orderin' a fellow out of his own study, by gad!"

"Yes, and I'll jolly soon enforce the order if you don't obey me," said Tom Merry, his temper rising.

"Say but the word, Tommy," murmured Monty Lowther. "and we'll pitch these bounders out on their necks."

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Manners.

Racke & Co. rose sullenly to their feet. They were no match for the Terrible Three, and they knew it. Tom Merry & Co. could have pitched them out neck and crop without any difficulty.

"Very well," said Racke. "Rather than have a scene we'll pack up!"

"And you'll put that game on the fire," said Tom Merry.

"W-w-what!"

"It's quite a good game when properly played, but you fellows only abuse it. We've stamped out gambling in the Lower School, and it's going to remain stamped out."

"We're not goin' to gamble——"

"So you say. But I can't take your word. That game must be destroyed—and at once!"

"This is a bit too thick——" began Crooke.

Tom Merry strode into the study, picked up the board and the coloured discs, and rammed them into the fire-grate. The flames licked them hungrily, and the game was soon destroyed.

Racke glared at Tom Merry.

"You've no right to do that, and you know it!" he exclaimed. "I paid one-an'-six for that game."

"There's your one-and-six," said Tom Merry, tossing a shilling and a sixpence on to the table. "Now clear out!"

Aubrey Racke and his companions had no option but to obey. They passed in single file out of the study, and the Terrible Three saw them off the premises.

"This is a pretty go!" said Mellish, as the rascally trio emerged into the quadrangle. "Our half-holiday's spoilt now!"

"Not at all!" said Racke. "We can jolly soon outwit our Puritan friends."

"How?"

"By goin' down to the village, buyin' another game, an' playin' in the old barn in Rylcombe woods!"

"Ripping!" said Mellish.

But Crooke did not seem to warm to the idea.

"You can count me out," he said. "I've not turned goody-goody, or anything like that. But Tom Merry's quite right to suppress gambling. There's no pleasure in it. It only leads to quarrels, and sometimes debt."

Racke and Mellish stared at the speaker in amazement.

"Why, it was you yourself who suggested we should play for half-pennies!" shouted Racke.

"I know. I spoke on the spur of the moment. I'm glad now that Tom Merry chipped in. He saved us from making fools of ourselves!"

"Then you're not comin' with us?" said Racke.

"Not if you're going to play for money."

"Well, we're not goin' to tramp all the way to the village, an' then to the barn in the wood, to play for trouser-buttons!" said Racke sarcastically.

"Be a sport, Crooke, and come!" urged Mellish.

But Crooke had made up his mind, and no amount of persuasion could turn him from his purpose. He nodded shortly to Racke and Mellish, and walked away.

"The silly chump!" muttered Racke, staring after Crooke's retreating figure. "Never mind, Mellish. We'll get along quite well without him. Come along!"

Racke and Mellish set off to the village. They went by way of the tow-path that skirted the River Rhyl.

The river was swollen with recent rains, and there was no sign of life. The boating season had not yet started at St. Jim's. In a month or two the river would be swarming with skiffs and punts and canoes. Now it had an air of desolation.

It was necessary to cross the river, and the St. Jim's fellows usually crossed it by the footbridge. But Racke was impatient to get to the village.

A crude wooden plank lay athwart the river at its widest part. Racke headed towards it.

"Hold on!" said Mellish. "We can't cross here."

"Why can't we?"

"It's not safe."
 "Rats!"
 Mellish was frankly alarmed.
 "You'll come to grief if you try to walk that plank," he said.
 "Bah! You haven't the courage of a mouse!" was Racke's retort. "Fall in and follow me!"
 Mellish lingered on the towpath.
 "You can do the falling in part," he said; "and I'm dashed if I'm going to follow you!"
 Aubrey Racke had already started to cross the wobbling plank. It was a hazardous and a foolhardy thing to do, especially as Racke had little or no knowledge of swimming.
 The plank rocked perilously beneath the junior's weight. Mellish looked on in growing alarm.
 When half-way across, Racke suddenly lost his nerve.
 "I—I can't go on!" he muttered. "I sha'n't be able to keep my balance!"
 "Come back, you fool!" said Mellish, turning pale.
 "All right," said Racke. "I'm comin'."
 And he started to walk backwards, which was naturally a much more difficult feat than going forward.
 Gingerly Racke stepped back with his left foot. But he failed to find a foothold, and in turning his head to ascertain his position, he completely lost his balance.
 There was a shout and a splash, and the next instant Aubrey Racke was struggling in the swirling waters of the Rhyll.
 "Help!"
 Mellish stood rooted to the towpath. He saw the danger only too clearly. He

knew that Racke was a poor swimmer. He himself was not exactly a Captain Webb or a Burgess; but he could swim a little, and it was his duty to go in to Racke's rescue.

But there was a yellow streak in Mellish's composition. Easy enough, he reflected, for an armchair critic to say, "Plunge in and save him!" but when it came to the point—
 "Help, help!"

Racke was struggling desperately in an endeavour to reach the bank. But he was caught in a current, and he was expending all his energy instead of economising it. If he had kept cool, and bided his time, he could have gained the safety of the bank, poor swimmer though he was. But he lost his head completely, and did nothing but shout and struggle. Mellish watched him with startled eyes. His thoughts were in a ferment.

"If I try to save him," he reflected, "he'll probably get me by the throat, and the pair of us will go under. I—I can do nothing!"

He glanced wildly up and down the towpath, but there was not a soul in sight. And the boathouse, from which he might have obtained a rope or a boat-hook, was over a mile away.

Racke had not gone under yet. It was probable he would be able to hold out for a few minutes longer. But he was doing himself no good by struggling.

"Help!" he screamed louder than before. "Come and get me out of this, Mellish!"

At last Mellish made a move. But not in the direction of the water. He had weighed all the pros and cons in his mind, and he had come to the conclusion that if he went to the rescue two lives would be lost instead of one.

Yet he could not stand there and see his schoolfellow drown under his very eyes.

Mellish's one desire was to get away from the spot with all speed.

It was appalling cowardice, but Mellish could see nothing else for it.

Leaving Aubrey Racke struggling in the water, Mellish turned on his heel. White-faced and panting, he sped away in the direction of Rylcombe woods, and every now and then he pressed his hands to his ears, as if to shut out the cries which followed him.

"Come back! Help, help!"

Gradually those cries grew fainter, until at length they died away completely, and all was silent.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Vain Quest!

"THIS is too awful for words!"
 Mellish stepped into the old barn in Rylcombe woods. He was a prey to tormenting thoughts

This was the same barn in which he and Racke had proposed to spend the afternoon. But Racke was not here. He had been abandoned to a terrible fate.

Mellish flung himself down on the straw-covered floor of the barn. His brain was in a turmoil.

"It was Racke's own fault!" he muttered. "I warned him not to try to cross that plank. It was a mad thing to do!"

But Racke's recklessness was no excuse for Mellish's conduct. He had left his schoolfellow to drown. He had come away without making any effort to save him.

And what now?

Mellish felt that he could not return to St. Jim's. He could not face the fellows. Everybody would be asking where Racke was. And what could Mellish say?

The wretched junior was haunted by the vision of Racke's white face above the surface of the water. And Racke's despairing scream still rang in his ears.

"Come back! Help, help!"
 The actual cries had, of course, died away long since. But Mellish fancied he still heard them.

The afternoon wore slowly on.

For hour after hour Mellish remained in the barn, like a hunted fugitive. He was trembling in every limb, and he hadn't the courage to go back to the school.

Dusk fell over the silent woods. The interior of the barn became dark, and it was bitterly cold. But Mellish could not bring himself to leave the place.

As he lay there, in a state of wretchedness which he had never experienced before, the sound of voices came to his ears.

Mellish raised himself on his elbow and listened.

"Might as well look in the barn," he heard somebody say. It sounded like Tom Merry's voice.

Footsteps approached. Mellish's craven heart was thumping against his ribs.

Then the door of the barn was jerked open, and the powerful rays of an electric torch lit up the place.

"Why, here's Mellish!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

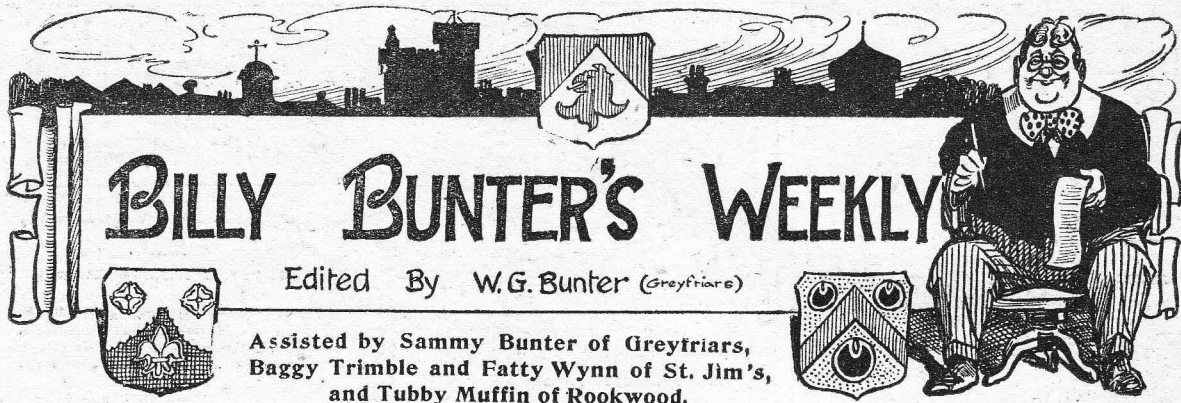
The Terrible Three stood in the doorway, and looked down at the cowering figure of the cad of the Fourth.

"What are you doing here?" rapped out Manners.

"N-n-nothing," faltered Mellish.
 "Where's Racke?" demanded Tom Merry.



THE FUNK! There was a shout and splash, the plank gave way, and Aubrey Racke was struggling in the swirling waters of the Rhyll. "Help!" Mellish stood rooted to the towpath. His friend was struggling for life, but he couldn't nerve himself to plunge to the rescue. (See Chapter 1.)



BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY

Edited By W.G. Bunter (Greyfriars)

Assisted by Sammy Bunter of Greyfriars,
Baggy Trimble and Fatty Wynn of St. Jim's,
and Tubby Muffin of Rookwood.

Supplement No. 105.

Week Ending January 13th, 1923.

AN ESSAY ON SHAKESPEARE!

By Dicky Nugent.

William Shakespeare was a poet and a playwright, who flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Shakespeare first saw the light of day at Stratford-on-Avon. I forget the year in which he was born, but I think it was about 99,999 B.C. That's near enuff, anyway.

We know very little about Shakespeare's life. When a youth he was said to have been convicted of shooting deer in a private park.

Shakespeare wrote quite a number of plays. The best-known is probably "Julius Caesar" or "Othello." Two other good plays are "The Merry Wives of Athens" and "Timon of Windsor."

Shakespeare also wrote a good many sonnets, ballads, odes, and other kinds of literature. He was an actor as well as a playwright, and he made most of his munny on the stage.

When he was a boy, Shakespeare saw a fine, big house at Stratford-on-Avon, and he said, "One of these days I shall buy that house and live in it!" Everybody thought he was potty to talk like that; but he kept his rezzerlation. Later in life he returned to Stratford, and occupied the house he had set his hart on.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare was a grate poet. But a clever crittick like me can find a lot of faults in his work. In the first place, a good deal of his poetry didn't rime. Take Mark Antony's speech, for eggssample:

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!

I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him."

This is not poetry at all. It ought to have been written after this stilt:

"Romans, countrymen, and friends!
Julius Cæsar's life now ends.
Lend me your flappers—list to me!
I come to bury Cæsar—see?"

If only Shakespeare had written like that, his plays would make a much wider appeal.

Shakespeare died and was buried at Stratford-on-Avon, and thousands of Americans come over every year to see his tomb.

Monuments have been erected all over the country to Shakespeare's memmery; and he certainly deserves to rank with Oliver Cromwell, Wellington, Joan of the Ark, and other sellybrated poets.

Three cheers for the Bard of Avon!

Supplement 1.1

EDITORIAL!



By Billy Bunter.

My Dear Readers,—William Shakespeare was one of the minor poets. He lived in those warlike times when people used to shake spears at each other—hence the name Shakespeare.

"Old Bill," as he is familiarly called, was born at Stratford-on-Avon. Everybody has heard of his famous walk to London, at an early age, when the bells rang out the messidge, "Turn again, Shakespeare, thrice Lord Mayor of London!" Perraps I am confusing this with the annickdote about Dick Whittington. If so, I crave your pardon.

Just as Chaucer is known as the Father of English Poetry, so is Shakespeare known as the Elder Brother of English Poetry. He wrote quite a lot of good stuff, which has been handed down through the jennytrations.

People quote Shakespeare every day. Such familiar expressions as "Heat me these doughnuts hot," "Oh, my giddy aunt!" and "Where do flies go in the winter-time?" are all derived from the works of Shakespeare.

I think it only right that we should have a Special Shakespeare Number of my weekly. With this object in view, my sub-editors and myself have consumed large quantities of midnite oil, and this is the rezult. If this number isn't the best you've seen since last week's, I shall be a very disappointed youth.

Now that we have had a Special Shakespeare Number, I eggspsect some of my readers will be clammering for a Special Bunion Number. (John Bunion was the man who wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress.") But I am afraid I cannot publish a Bunion Number just yet. Let's wait till next harvest-time, and have a Special Corn Number!

Yours joakingly,
YOUR EDITOR.

ON WILL SHAKESPEARE!

By Dick Penfold.

Will Shakespeare was a brainy man,

And a clever cove was he;
For all his days he scribbled plays
Of tragedy and glee.

The pen is mightier than the sword,
And Shakespeare proved it so;
Search where you can, you'll find no man
His equal here below.

John Milton wrote some ripping rhymes,
And so did Johnny Keats;

Of pretty flowers and shady bowers,
The gentle Wordsworth bleats.
And Byron wrote some stirring stuff
Of Ancient Rome and Greece;

But good old Will is champion still,
And may his fame increase!

We mean to give performances
Of "Hamlet" and "King Lear";
And some will laugh, and some will chaff,
And grin from ear to ear.
But many will be overjoyed,
And every Greyfriars fellow
Should see us act, in building packed,
That thrilling play, "Othello."

Hats off to Shakespeare! Some may say,
"Dick Penfold, you're mistaken;
These plays were penned, my foolish friend,

By good old Francis Bacon."
Well, let them say just what they like,
I shall ignore each crank,
And still insist it was the fist
Of Shakespeare we must thank!

THE FAGS'
SPECIAL NUMBER
NEXT TUESDAY!

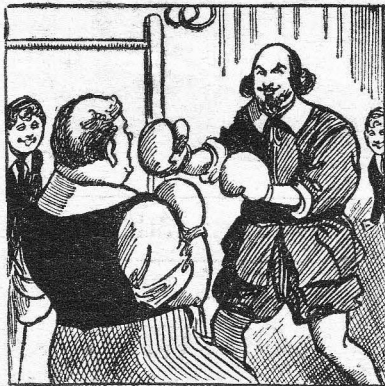
A Laugh in Every Line!

THE POPULAR.—No. 208.

The Four Fat Subs in Next Week's Special Supplement!

IF!

By Tubby Muffin.



If Shakespeare came to life again,
I'd compliment him on his brain.
(Though, really, I am sick to death
Of swotting Hamlet and Macbeth!)

If Shakespeare came to Rookwood now,
I'd say, "A mighty man art thou.
You also are a generous sort,
Lend me a ten-bob note, old sport!"

If I should see him cross the quad
I'd think it very strange and odd.
I'd yell to him in tones of glee,
"Come, Billy—come and feed with me!"

If he should come, I'd buy some cakes
(The sort that Sergeant Kettle makes),
And let old Shakespeare feed until
He'd satisfied his inner Will.

I'd watch him with admiring eyes
Consume a number of mince-pies.
I'd pour him out a cup of coffee,
And choke him with my home-made
toffee!

I'd volunteer to show him round
This school so charming and renowned.
I'd take him to the tuckshop first
(Unless he had already burst!)

I'd ask him for his autograph,
With merry jests I'd make him laugh.
I'd also take him to the gym,
And have a friendly spar with him.

If Shakespeare came upon the scene,
What a sensation it would mean!
The news would spread like fire through
gorse,
And all would gather round, of course!

It would be much too good to miss.
But what's the use of wishing this?
In solitary state I sup,
For Willie Shakespeare won't turn up!

NEXT WEEK!

FAGS' NUMBER!

DON'T MISS IT!

THE POPULAR.—No. 208.



A Short Sketch of Shakespeare!

By Mr. H. H. QUELCH,
M.A.

(Master of the Grayfriars Remove.)

WHY all this fuss about Shakespeare?" is a question which many people have been asking of recent years. Or, slightly to misquote the Bard of Avon,

"Who is Shakespeare? What is he
That all the folk commend him?"

Well, Shakespeare is the greatest poet and playwright the world has ever seen. That is why we make a fuss of him; and he deserves all the praise we can give him, and more.

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon in 1564. He lived fifty-two years, he wrote thirty-seven plays and some miscellaneous poems, and he was an actor of merit. Curiously enough, he made most of his money by acting on the stage. In those days, as now, it was very difficult to make a living by writing poetry. When you come to think that Milton received only ten pounds for "Paradise Lost," you will realise that a poet's lot was not a happy one.

There are cases on record where poets have actually died from starvation. Chatterton, the brilliant boy genius, perished miserably in an attic, while Spenser, of "Faery Queen" fame, died, as Ben Jonson bluntly tells us, "for lacke of bread."

Some of you may feel inclined to say, "Well, if there was no money in it, why did these men write poetry? Why didn't they become blacksmiths or pork butchers?"

The fact is, no true poet writes solely for money. He has a message to give to mankind, and he feels that he is bound to give it, whether he reaps personal profit in the process or otherwise.

But to return to Shakespeare. Little is known of the life of this amazing man. Crowds of so-called "Lives" have been written, but we are still as much in the dark as ever. We know that Shakespeare was educated at the grammar school in his native town; we know that he went up to London in his youth, fired with the desire to make a fortune; we know that he prospered, and that he eventually returned to Stratford-on-Avon and spent his last years in quiet retirement.

Lots of unkind things have been said concerning Shakespeare. We are told by some people that he was just a fifth-rate ballad-monger, and that the magnificent plays which bear his name were really the work of Bacon. But this has never been proved, and I venture to say it never will be.

Others say that Shakespeare was a "black sheep," and that he spent his life in reckless dissipation. This is all wrong, because we have proof that Shakespeare was a thrifty man. If he had not been thrifty, how could he have bought that fine house and estate at Stratford?

Opinions differ as to which was Shakespeare's greatest play. Personally, I think his best work is in his tragedies. "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Julius Caesar," and "Othello" belong to this category. And of these four plays, my preference is for the first-named, though it is terribly sad.

"Hamlet" is chock-full of phrases which are still in everyday use. And it contains many wonderful speeches.

Which is the finest speech that occurs in Shakespeare's works? Here is indeed a poser! Many people would vote for Mark Antony's eloquent address to the Romans. This is certainly very fine; but to an Englishman I think Henry the Fifth's speech before Agincourt makes an even stronger appeal. I cannot quote it in full, or Bunter will say I am stealing valuable space in his paper; but here is an extract:

"He who hath no stomach to this fight
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man's company!

Then shall our names,
Familiar in their mouths as household words—
Harry the King, Bedford, and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloster,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
We few, we happy few, we Band of Brothers:
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother
And gentlemen in England, now a-bed,
Shall think themselves accursed they were
not here,
And hold their manhood cheap, while any
speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispian's
Day."

Needless to state, there were very few men—if any—who turned a deaf ear to this appeal. Agincourt was fought and won, although the English were heavily outnumbered.

Historical scenes such as these were Shakespeare's speciality. But he was also a very fine humorous writer, his best-known comedies being "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Merry Wives of Windsor," "Much Ado About Nothing," and "All's Well that Ends Well."

Details of Shakespeare's death are as scanty as those of his life. We know that he died in 1616, but the cause of his death remains a mystery. Some writers assert that he died of a fever; but this is one of the stories rendered doubtful through lack of evidence.

William Shakespeare was buried in his native town, and his memory is honoured by all true Englishmen. Like Julius Cæsar, he "bestrode the narrow world like a Colossus," and he must ever be reckoned as one of the giants of the world's literature.

Famous Sayings from Shakespeare.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to
fortune."

Julius Cæsar.

"Cowards die many times before their
deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once."

Julius Cæsar.

"Life every man holds dear; but the brave man
Holds honour far more precious dear than
life."

Troilus and Cressida.

"Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might
win,
By fearing to attempt."

Measure for Measure.

"Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

Hamlet.

"Who steals my purse steals trash;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

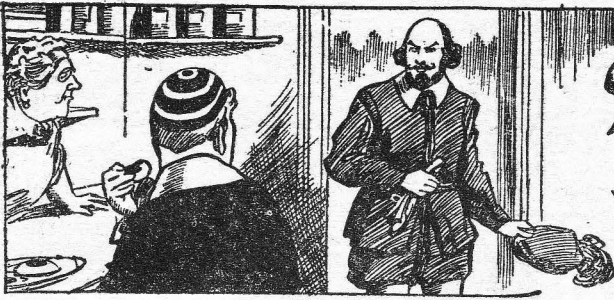
Othello.

"This England never did, nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror."

King John.

[Supplement II.]

One Long Laugh from End to End!



Shakespeare St. Jim's!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

(Of St. Jim's.)

(SCENE.—The School Tuck-shop. BAGGY TRIMBLE is seated on a stool at the counter, eating jam-tarts. DAME TAGGLES is looking on.)

BAGGY: I want another dish of tarts, fair dame!
DAME TAGGLES: Then show me first the colour of your money.
BAGGY: I haven't got a penny—it's a shame!
DAME TAGGLES: I don't supply jam-tarts on credit, sonny!

(Enter WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.)
BAGGY: Great Scott! Who are you?
SHAKESPEARE: 'Tis I—the Bard of Avon.
BAGGY: You—you are William Shakespeare?
SHAKESPEARE: Yea, my podgy friend.
BAGGY: What brings you here?
SHAKESPEARE: I come to visit this historic school. Fain would I feast mine eyes upon its sights. The porter's lodge, the tuckshop, and the gym, The dormitories, where schoolboys sleep at nights, And the Head's study, where his fearsome cane Doth swishingly descend. My only aunt!

BAGGY: Are you indeed William Shakespeare?
SHAKESPEARE: Ay, good, my dame, I swear it by my beard! I am the writer of those goodly plays

Which make my name revered throughout the world. Bring me a dish of thy jam-tarts, I prithee! Three hundred years have passed since last I supped.

DAME TAGGLES: Mercy me! Then you must be dreadfully hungry. Mr. Shakespeare!

SHAKESPEARE: Yea ma'am, I'm ravenous, you may depend on't.

My appetite would make this Falstaff here Turn green with envy.

BAGGY: Oh, really, Shakespeare, I'm not a Falstaff—
SHAKESPEARE: Thou art a plump and greedy wight, forsooth! Plumper than Falstaff; greedier, too, withal. Than any glutton figuring in my plays.

BAGGY: I say, Shakespeare, old chap, I'm stony—
SHAKESPEARE: Thou must remain in that most wretched state,

For I have not the wherewithal to help thee. Good dame, I trust thou wilt supply my tarts Upon a credit basis.

DAME TAGGLES: In your case, yes; in Master Trimble's, no!
(SHAKESPEARE seats himself on a stool at the counter, and eats his jam-tarts, BAGGY TRIMBLE watching him with envious eyes.)

SHAKESPEARE: These are most sweet and succulent jam-tarts, As dear to me as are the ruddy drops That visit my sad heart.

DAME TAGGLES: I'm glad you like them, sir.
SHAKESPEARE: Yea, verily, and in good sooth, I do! I shall not look upon their like again.

(Smacks his lips.)
When I return to those vast airy realms From whence I came, I will tell other sprites That Mrs. Taggles' tarts are simply "it." I will tell Milton, yea, and Johnny Keats, I will tell Byron, and the rest of them; Such tarts as these delight a poet's soul.

BAGGY: I say, Shakespeare, where are you going when you've finished stuffing?
SHAKESPEARE: I will betake me to the football field. To see the match that shortly will be played Betwixt St. Jim's and Greyfriars.
BAGGY: Oh, good! Are you ready? If so, I'll escort you to the ground. This way, Shakespeare!

(They leave the tuckshop together, and proceed to Little Side.)

SHAKESPEARE: Tom Merry is about to take the field With ten good men and true; I fain would give A message of encouragement to him.
BAGGY: Go ahead, then!

SHAKESPEARE (approaching the St. Jim's Eleven):
Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
And strew the merry field with Greyfriars scapls!

In normal times, nothing becomes a chap Like modest stillness and humility. But when a football match is under way,

Stiffen the sinews, make grimaces fierce, And strive to put the breeze up thine opponents!

The sunshine of success shall shortly greet
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

(The match commences. TOM MERRY dashes right through on his own, and scores a grand goal.)

SHAKESPEARE: Now is the winter of our discontent Made glorious summer by this goal of Merry's. See how the caps go hurtling in the air! And hearken to the deafening crash of cheers That greets the grand achievement.

Mark how the fortunes of this thrilling game Do fluctuate. D'Arcy, the speedy winger of St. Jim's,

Takeh the bouncing leather in his stride, And raineth shots upon the Greyfriars goal. (Play continues to be fast and exciting, and eventually St. Jim's run out winners by three goals to one.)

SHAKESPEARE: Merry! Thou art, indeed, a bonnie lad. Thy shots at goal were truly marvellous. Now that the battle hath been fought and won,

Take me, I prithee, to thy sumptuous den. That I may toast thy health in lukewarm tea. Good old Shakespeare! We shall be jolly proud to have you for a guest.

(SHAKESPEARE accompanies Tom Merry & Co. to their study, and, after a royal repast, the great playwright is shown round the school building. After his tour of inspection, he makes the following speech.)

I am well satisfied with all the sights That thou hast shown to me this gladsome day.

Ere I depart, I wish thee great good luck In all thy enterprises. May prosperity Attend on thee throughout thy school careers;

And may good health and happiness combine To brighten thy existence. Fare thee well!

THE END.

SHAKESPEARE and FOOTBALL!

By H. Vernon-Smith.

Was football played in Shakespeare's time? Most certainly; but the game differed from the present-day style as much as chalk differs from cheese. In the olden days a huge ball was pushed, rolled, kicked, and shoved from one village to another; and the whole village turned out to take part in the match. Casualties were frequent, and the Boy Scouts and the ambulance people were kept busy rendering first aid.

I have heard a rumour that Shakespeare played at inside-right for Stratford-on-Avon; and that in the year 1600 he topped the list of goal-scorers. But there is nothing in this.

Would Shakespeare have made a good footballer? It is more than probable. As a young man, he seems to have been strong and sturdy. There is a picture of him in one of our art galleries, and it shows him being arrested for deer-stalking. The picture shows him to be quite an athletic sort of fellow. If he were alive to-day it is quite possible he would be playing for Aston Villa or West Bromwich Albion.

Quite a useful football eleven could be composed from British poets. Let us run through the list, and form an imaginary team. It will be good sport.

Lord Tennyson did not care for athletics, and neither did Shelley. John Keats was a dashing young man, and very useful with his fists. So I think we will select him to keep goal for our team of poets. And what about burly Ben Jonson at right-back? He would fill the bill, I guess. To partner him we could have Milton, who would be as sound as a rock.

For our half-back line I suggest the three B's—Burns, Byron, and Browning. Burns was a sturdy son of the soil—a ploughman in his earlier days. Byron was a trifle lame, but he was very athletic, and would be certain to put up a good game. I am a little uneasy in including Browning, because I don't know anything about him, except that he wrote "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." But we will give him a place in our team, and chance it.

Now for the forwards! The gentle Wordsworth would be no use. And neither Cowper nor Pope was fitted to be a footballer. We shall have to fall back upon some of those grand soldier-poets, whose songs ring through the generations. Sir Philip Sidney as centre-forward is a top-hole selection. Then we could have Colonel Lovelace, who wrote "Stone walls do not a prison make," at inside-right. Sir Walter Raleigh, who wrote verse, must have a place in our team. And if we allot the two remaining positions to Tom Hood and young Chatterton, we have an eleven which is not to be sneezed at! A flight of fancy, you say? Yes, but it is a happy fancy, so what matters?

THE POPULAR.—No. 208.

HIGH JINKS AT ROOKWOOD!



The concert-hall at Rookwood was packed to overflowing on Saturday evening, when the Rookwood Amateur Dramatic Society rendered—or tried to render—"Hamlet."

No girls took part in the play, so the parts of the Queen of Denmark and Ophelia had to be taken by fellows. Kit Erroll made a very fine Queen, but Tommy Dodd as Ophelia was inclined to be too heavy on his feet. When Ophelia was supposed to trip lightly on to the stage, he was like some lumbering navy in hobnailed boots. However, Tommy Dodd recited his lines in a shrill, girlish treble, and he played a difficult part to the best of his ability.

Jimmy Silver was "Hamlet," but he was not tragic enough for the part. He giggled several times during the performance, and thus spoiled the effect. It was impossible for the audience to take the play seriously when Jimmy Silver declaimed his lines like this:

"To be or not to be, that is the question.
(Ha, ha!)
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows (giggle!) of outrageous fortune, (Ha, ha, ha!)
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
(He, he, he!)
And, by opposing, end them? (Ho, ho, ho!)"

Mornington made an excellent Ghost, and he was the best actor in the cast. His sudden and uncanny appearances caused cold shivers to run down our backs. And the ghostly wails he uttered were truly terrifying.

Arthur Edward Lovell, as Horatio, played the part of Hamlet's loyal friend to perfection. And Newcome, as Laertes, was not far behind him in point of theatrical ability. The part of Polonius was played by George Raby. And when he hobbled on to the stage, with a long white beard that descended to his knees, everybody yelled "Beaver!"

Tommy Cook was the King of Denmark, but he gabbled his lines so badly that nobody knew what he was talking about.

The two grave-diggers were Peele and Lattrey, and, to do them justice, they played their parts well.

Tommy Doyle was a Danish soldier; but he spoke in a strong Irish brogue, and this sent the spectators into hysterics.

The most thrilling episode in the play was the duel between Hamlet and Laertes. Jimmy Silver and Newcome attacked each other right lustily with cricket-stumps, and they had the satisfaction of killing each other—in pretence, of course.

On the whole, the performance was well received. And we are now looking forward to the "Merry Wives of Windsor," which will be performed by the Rookwood Amateur Dramatic Society on Saturday next.

SIDELIGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE!

By the Headmaster of
Rookwood.

At Stratford Grammar School, where Shakespeare was educated, lessons commenced at six o'clock in the morning.

Shakespeare's teacher at the Grammar School received a salary of twenty pounds a year.

Shakespeare's father was unable to write his own name.

Anne Hathaway, whom Shakespeare married, was eight years older than the poet. The latter was only nineteen at the time of the ceremony.

The house which Shakespeare bought in later life was the largest in Stratford-on-Avon. It stood close to the Grammar School at which he was educated.

The theatres in Shakespeare's time were so badly conducted that members of the audience sometimes had to sit on the stage itself!

"Love's Labour Lost" is believed to be the first play Shakespeare wrote.

Shakespeare wrote, on an average, one play every six months.

The poet's name has been spelt in numerous ways, and the correct way has never been established. Here are a few of the variations: Shaxpere, Shaksper, Shakespere, Shakespeyre, and Shackspere.

There were many fine poets who lived in Shakespeare's time, but he overshadowed them so completely that their names are half forgotten. The most important were Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Chapman.

Shakespeare moved in high society, being a personal friend of the Earls of Southampton, Pembroke, and Montgomery.

Shakespeare is said to have been a very charming man, and he was noted for his upright dealing and his generosity of mind. It is evident from his writings that he had many friends and was well-loved.

If You Want to ROAR

READ

OUR FAGS' NUMBER

NEXT TUESDAY!

[Supplement IV.]

A COWARD'S ORDEAL!

(Continued from page 12.)

At that point-blank question Mellish started as if he had been shot. "I—I don't know," he managed to stammer at length.

"Has he been here with you?"

"No."

"Well, we've been sent out to search for the pair of you," said Monty Lowther. "We've found one bright beauty, but not the other."

Tom Merry looked frankly puzzled. "Tell the truth, Mellish," he said. "Don't you honestly know where Racke is?"

"No," said Mellish. Then he gave an involuntary shudder.

"You seem scared stiff about something," said the captain of the Shell.

"I—I'm fearfully cold!"

"Well, that's your funeral," said Manners. "What are you doing in this barn?"

"Just—just passing away the time," was the feeble reply.

"You'd pass the time much more happily in a warm study," said Tom Merry.

"I can't help thinking that you're up to some shady trick or other. You see, we know you of old, Mellish."

"The question is, where is his brother-conspirator?" said Lowther.

"Yes, where's Racke?" persisted Tom Merry. "You must know, Mellish. Taggles says you went out of gates together."

"But we parted in Rylcombe Lane," said Mellish. "I've no idea where Racke went after that."

It was a desperate lie. But it served its purpose.

"Well, you'd better come back to the school with us," said Tom Merry.

"We'll keep a sharp look-out for Racke as we go."

"We may find him at St. Jim's when we get back," suggested Manners.

"Quite likely."

The Terrible Three took the quaking Mellish in tow, and the quartette proceeded to St. Jim's.

Every now and then, as they passed through the dark woods, Tom Merry & Co. shouted Racke's name.

Mellish might have told them that they were wasting their breath. But he remained miserably silent.

That journey to the school was like a ghastly nightmare to the cad of the Fourth.

At last the familiar gates came in sight. Taggles, the porter, stood in the gateway swinging a lantern.

"Racke come in yet?" asked Tom Merry.

Taggles shook his head.

"Wot I says is this 'ere. Master Racke will get 'is 'ide tanned for stayin' out so late!" he growled. "Mr. Railton says I'm to send Master Racke to 'is study the mianit 'e arrives."

Tom Merry stroked his chin in perplexity.

"Where can the silly chump have got to?" he exclaimed.

"Give it up," said Monty Lowther. "We've searched the highways and the byways, and we've left no stone unturned to find the giddy truant."

"Still, we've found Mellish, and that's better than coming back empty-handed,"

said Manners. "You'd better go and report to Railton, Mellish. He'll want an explanation."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Mellish.

At that moment a tall form loomed up in the dusk. It was Mr. Railton.

"Are Racke and Mellish here?" inquired the Housemaster, peering at the group of juniors.

"Only Mellish, sir," said Tom Merry. "We've hunted high and low for Racke, but we can't find him."

"Good gracious! Do you know anything of Racke's whereabouts, Mellish?"

"No, sir."

"Where have you been yourself?"

"I went for a stroll, sir, as far as Rylcombe woods. These fellows found me resting in the old barn."

"You have no idea where Racke is? Answer me truthfully, Mellish!"

Mellish thanked his stars that it was dark, for he could not have met the Housemaster's searching gaze.

"I—I haven't the foggiest notion where Racke is, sir," he said.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "I will report the matter to Dr. Holmes, and he will doubtless arrange for fresh search-parties to be sent out. There will be serious trouble for Racke when he is found—unless he has a satisfactory explanation to offer."

The Housemaster walked away towards the building. And the juniors followed him in.

There was great excitement at St. Jim's when it became known that Aubrey Racke was absent.

A search-party of seniors was sent out to scour the countryside. Mellish saw them go, and he knew that their errand would prove futile.

Racke's whereabouts would remain a complete mystery until the river was dragged!

Mellish shuddered at the prospect. He was almost out of his wits with fear and dread.

He shut himself up in his study for the remainder of the evening, and sat huddled in the armchair, alone with his thoughts.

Again and again the scene of the catastrophe flashed before his mind. He saw Racke struggling in the water, and heard his panic-stricken cries for help.

Bed-time came at last, and Mellish found the Fourth Form dormitory in a ferment of excitement, and speculation. For Racke had not yet returned.

Jack Blake & Co. plied Mellish with questions. But he stubbornly denied all knowledge of what had happened to Racke. He stuck to his story that they had parted in Rylcombe Lane. Some believed him; others showed quite plainly that they didn't. But although Mellish was pumped for information, he either could not or would not throw any light upon Racke's present whereabouts.

There was no sleep for Percy Mellish that night. Through the long hours he lay tossing restlessly on his bed. He had never imagined that a night could be so long. It was like an eternity.

Strange, ghostly shadows seemed to lurk in the dormitory. There were times when the unhappy junior could have screamed aloud. But the fear of rousing his schoolfellows tied his tongue.

At last the grey dawn came stealing in at the high windows. And shortly afterwards the rising-bell rang out on the frosty air.

Haggard and heavy-eyed, Mellish turned out to face the new day. He seemed to have aged during the night. Even Jack Blake, who scorned and despised Mellish, was moved to compassion when he caught sight of the junior's face.

"You're ill, man!" he said. "I should go round to the sanny, if I were you."

Mellish was certainly a wreck. But his sufferings were mental rather than physical. His mind was in a torment, and he felt that he could not hold out much longer.

He went mechanically through his toilet. Mechanically he took his place at the breakfast-table. But he ate nothing, though he might have known that his strange conduct would arouse suspicion.

After breakfast, Mellish was in a state bordering on collapse. He alone knew what had happened to Racke, and he felt that if he continued to nurse his guilty secret he would go mad.

He must confide in somebody. But in whom?

Mellish had very few friends. Sneaks are nearly always friendless.

Crooke of the Shell had more in common with Mellish than anybody. Yet how could he tell Crooke? What would Crooke say if he knew that Racke had been left to drown in the Rhyll? He would turn on Mellish, and bitterly denounce him as a coward and a hopeless outsider.

No; he could not tell Crooke.

Who else was there?

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy always lent a sympathetic ear to those in trouble. But D'Arcy would hardly be likely to help Mellish now. The swell of St. Jim's, brave as a lion himself, would not be likely to forgive cowardice.

Mellish paced to and fro in the quadrangle, wondering to whom he could confide his story. And presently a thought struck him.

"I'll go to the Head, and make a clean breast of it!" he muttered.

This needed courage. And Mellish's store of courage was almost negligible. But he summoned what little he had, and with a firm step made his way to the Head's study.

The bell was ringing for morning lessons. But Mellish paid no heed to it.

Several fellows called to him that he would be late for lessons; but Mellish ignored their shouts. And presently he stood tapping on the door of the Head's study.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Dramatic Ending!

"COME in!"

The Head's voice sounded agitated. And the Head looked agitated, too, when Mellish stepped into his study.

Dr. Holmes was greatly worried by Racke's absence. And he was just debating whether to send a telegram to Racke's father. He could only conclude that Aubrey had run away from school.

"You wish to speak to me, Mellish?" said the Head.

The junior nodded dumbly. His face was deathly pale as he confronted the Head. For an instant he reeled, and was obliged to clutch at the back of a chair for support.

"Why, bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head, in astonishment. "You are ill, boy!"

With a great effort, Mellish pulled himself together.

"I want to tell you something, sir," he said, in low but clear tones. "It—it's about Racke."

The Head gave a start.

"Racke!" he echoed. "Do you know anything of his whereabouts, Mellish?"

"Yes, sir."

THE POPULAR—No. 208

Having taken the plunge, Mellish gathered courage as he went on. It was no use making half a confession, he reflected. The whole story must be told.

"I'll tell you what happened yesterday afternoon, sir," said Mellish. "I started out for the village with Racke, and we went by way of the towpath. Racke was too impatient to cross by the foot-bridge. He tried to cross a loose wooden plank that had been thrown across the river. I urged him not to; I told him it was unsafe. But he took no notice of me. He got half-way across the plank, and then he suddenly became panicky. He tried to work his way backwards along the plank, and he—he—"

Mellish paused.

"Go on, Mellish," said the Head, a startled expression coming over his face.

"Racke lost his footing, and fell into the river, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"I know I ought to have fished him out, sir. I ought to have had a shot at it, at any rate. But I was scared stiff. And Racke was struggling and shouting, and I knew that if I went in after him he'd grab me and pull me under with him. And so—it's a horrible thing to say, sir, but I must say it—I cleared off, and made no effort to save him."

There was a long silence in the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes looked as pale as Mellish now.

Only too clearly the kindly old gentleman realised what had happened.

Mellish stood with downcast eyes. He could not dare to meet the Head's glance. His hand still clutched the back of the chair—clutched it so tightly that the knuckles stood out sharp and white.

It was the Head who broke the long and painful silence.

"Then we must conclude, Mellish, that the worst has happened—that the unfortunate lad has been drowned?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Was there no means of saving him, apart from plunging into the water?"

"No, sir. The boathouse was a mile away, and there wouldn't have been time to fetch a rope or a boathook. And there wasn't a soul in sight."

"What of the plank? Could not Racke have reached it, and drawn himself up by it?"

"No, sir. He tried several times to do it, but it was beyond his reach."

"But if you had crawled along the plank, you would doubtless have been able to pull Racke up to safety."

Mellish shook his head.

"You've no idea what the plank was like, sir. It was ever so narrow and unsafe. It wouldn't have borne the weight of two fellows."

"Would it have been possible to manoeuvre the plank in such a way that Racke could have grasped it?"

"I don't think so, sir—at least, I'm sure I couldn't have done it. The only way I could have saved him was by going in after him. And I—I hadn't the pluck!"

If Mellish expected the Head to turn fiercely upon him, and lash him with his tongue, he was mistaken. When Dr. Holmes addressed him, his voice was anything but harsh.

"You acted like a coward, Mellish," he said quietly. "And cowardice is inexcusable. At the same time, it is understandable. It would have required great courage to plunge in to Racke's rescue, especially as he appeared to have lost his head. There was no other way of saving him, or I am sure you would have taken it. This is a very grave and terrible business, but I cannot punish you for the part you have played. Your conscience has already punished you far more effectively than I could do. I can see you have not slept, and that you are a prey to bitter remorse. You did well to come to me with this confession. Had you chosen to remain silent, it is probable the truth would never have come to light. It is not for me to sit in judgment upon you. As I say, you have already been punished. I must at once communicate with Mr. Racke—"

There was a tap on the door. Before the Head could say "Come in!" a dishevelled junior staggered into the study.

The Head started back with a gasp of amazement. As for Mellish, he stared at the visitor with eyes which

The Result of "NOTTS FOREST" Football Competition.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

L. HAINES,
Clapton,
Berkeley, Glos.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following three competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

A. Cleaver, Q.M.C.C., 17 Hut, Woodcote Park, Epsom; John Budd, Gellygron Road, Pontardawe, Swansea; Alfred Carr, 70, Barge, Boston, Lincs.

The ten prizes of 5s. each have been divided among the following nineteen competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

B. E. Watson, 21, Salisbury Road, Highgate, N. 19; A. Pizer, Goadby, Marwood, Melton Mowbray; Leslie Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol; Leonard Grayson, Coal Aston, Sheffield; C. W. Denby, 37, Highfield Avenue, Grimsby; Arthur Dyer, jun., 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E. 9; E. W. Hott, 4, St. Kilda Parade, Gloucester; G. E. Barrard, 9, High Street, Chesterton, Staffs; H. J. Gee, 21, Grove Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire; Will Dale, 74, Renfrew Street, Glasgow; Hugh Barnes, 55, Craigdale Road, Romford, Essex; Hugh B. Gibson, 53, Dawes Drive, Scotstoun, Glasgow; Ronald Sansom, 6, Allington Terrace, North Allington, Bridport; F. W. Ballard, 71, Graces Road, Camberwell, S.E. 5; R. Baynes, 4, Kings Mount, Dalton-in-Furness; H. Purdey, 9, Rosedale Road, Richmond, Surrey; F. A. Gilbey, 140, High Street, Braintree, Essex; J. Nicholls, 28, F. Lewis Buildings, Ixworth Place, Chelsea, S.W. 3; E. Leslie Hincks, 23, Mackenzie Street, Longsight, Manchester.

SOLUTION.

Notts Forest is one of the oldest clubs in this country, and made a brave effort to remain true to its amateur ideas. It was formed in the sixties by a happy band of young fellows, and in the course of a varied career has won high honours, including the Cup.

seemed to be starting from their sockets. And his lips framed the one word:

"Racke!"

It was, indeed, Aubrey Racke.

Miraculous though it appeared, Aubrey was still in the land of the living. The Head's expression of deep anxiety changed to one of joy and relief.

"My—my dear boy!" he panted. "Your dramatic appearance calls for an explanation. Thank Heaven you are safe!"

Racke smiled slightly.

"What I have to tell you, sir, will sound like a fairy-tale," he said. "But it's perfectly true. After Mellish had left me to drown yesterday"—Mellish winced at these words—"a man came along, and jumped in to my rescue. He was a strong swimmer, and he got me out without much difficulty. I felt jolly grateful to him, as you may guess, and I insisted on giving him a reward. I made sure he was a decent fellow, after the way he had saved my life, but I soon found that I was up against an ugly customer. I took a pound-note out of my wallet, and he tumbled to the fact that I was well off. I was fool enough to tell him that my pater was a millionaire. So he promptly collared me."

"What!" gasped the astonished Head. "Do you mean to tell me, Racke, that you were kidnapped?"

Racke nodded.

"I was taken to a lonely house on Wayland Moor, sir," he went on. "The man shut me in a top attic, and said he was going to write to my pater, with the idea of getting a ransom. He was going to remove me from Wayland in a day or two, and take me to a more secure hiding-place. I made up my mind to escape, and this morning, just before daybreak, I managed it. I was locked in the attic, and my only exit was the window. I tore sheets into strips and knotted them together, and I managed to descend to within a dozen feet of the ground. I dropped the rest."

"Bless my soul! This scoundrel must be placed under arrest without delay!"

Racke laughed.

"He will have taken to his heels by now, sir," he said.

"Yes, I am afraid that is only too probable. Now, with regard to Mellish's conduct of yesterday, Racke—"

"Yes, sir?"

"I have decided not to give publicity to the matter. Mellish's sufferings have already brought him to breaking-point. You understand me, Racke?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"I must ask you to keep your own counsel concerning the regrettable events of yesterday, Racke. Will you promise me that you will do so?"

"I promise, sir," said Racke. "But all the fellows will wonder where I've been—"

"I will make a public explanation of the matter, in such a way that it will not incriminate Mellish," said the Head.

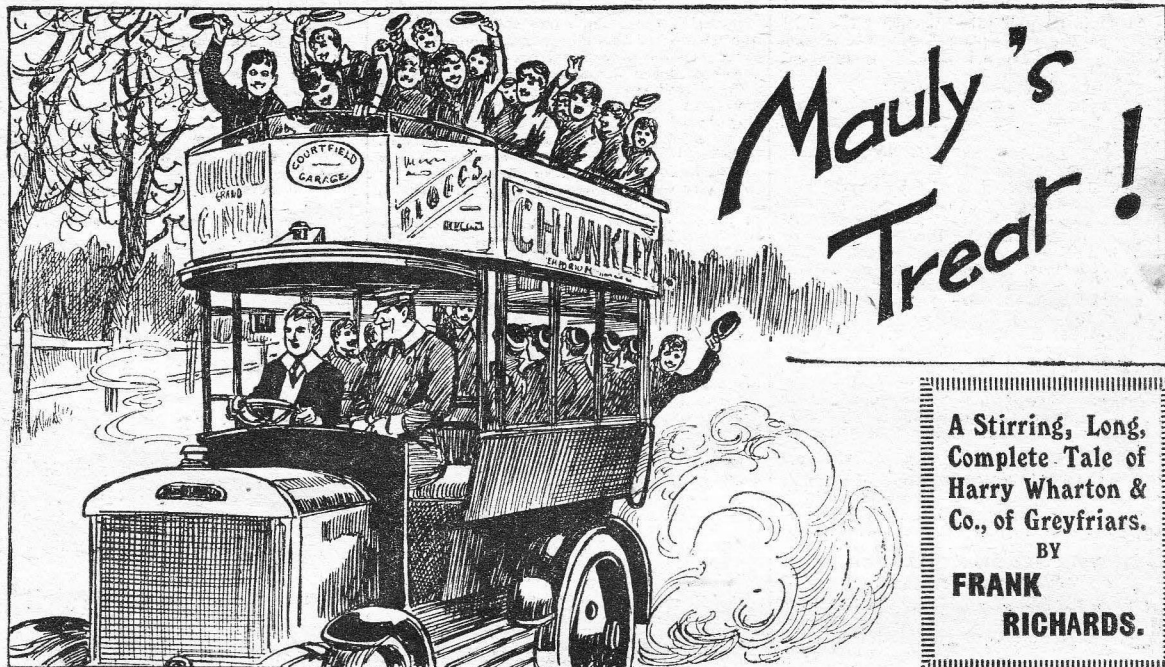
Needless to state, Percy Mellish was, for once in his life, truly grateful. And his act of cowardice, for which he had been amply punished, never became common knowledge.

THE END.

There's a rattling story of St. Jim's and Tom Merry & Co., next Tuesday,
"THE FELLOW WHO DARED!"

Let me tell you it's one of Martin Clifford's finest sporting yarns.

A MOTOR-BUS JOY RIDE! In which Lord Mauleverer hires a motor-bus and takes the Remove Form to see the great League football match between the Spurs and Crawley!



A Stirring, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lord Mauleverer's Great Idea!

"W"ERE quite old pals," said Billy Bunter. A dozen voices replied to Billy Bunter all at once, and they all made the same reply. "Rats!" "But I tell you—" "Rot!" "I know him as well as anything. He—" "But, I say, you fellows—" "Shut up!" "Cheese it!" "Ring off!"

And Billy Bunter "rung off," not because he wanted to, but because he simply couldn't make his voice heard. He blinked indignantly at the Remove fellows through his big spectacles. He had intended to make an impression—a great impression—by his statement that he knew Diniwayo, but the rude remarks hurled at him showed that he had not made any impression at all. He had only confirmed the impression the Removites had always had—that he could easily beat Ananias in his own line.

It was a matter of great interest that the Remove fellows were discussing, in the junior Common-room at Greyfriars.

Tottenham Hotspur were coming down to King's Crawley to play Crawley United, and as King's Crawley was within reachable distance of Greyfriars, a crowd of the fellows had made up their minds to get over to Crawley by hook or by crook, and see the match.

The Greyfriars fellows did not often have an opportunity of seeing a club like the Spurs, and Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove had especially made up their minds that they wouldn't let that opportunity slip.

But it was not only in the famous Spurs that they were interested.

Crawley United were a good team, and they had one special player who was very remarkable, being a South African of native race, and almost as black as the ace of spades.

Diniwayo had come over from South Africa with a South African team, and, like a good many touring footballers from overseas, had joined an English club, and remained in England.

He was the best forward in the Crawley club, and some of the Greyfriars fellows who had seen him play were loud in his praises. To see him playing against such a team as

the Spurs would be, as Bob Cherry remarked, an uncommon treat.

"I've seen him once," Frank Nugent remarked. "He's a little chap, but as strong as a horse, and quick as lightning. It will be ripping to see him, and the Spurs, too! We've got to get over to Crawley somehow to-morrow."

"It's a question of ways and means," said Harry Wharton. "The railway fares are pretty heavy; it's a good distance. We might manage it on the bikes."

"I'm coming with you," Billy Bunter remarked. "Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry, not at all politely.

"I sha'n't ask you to pay my fare!" said Bunter, glaring at him. "I'm expecting a postal-order this evening, so that it will be all right. I really want to see Diniwayo again. I know him well. Quite an old pal!" "Br-r-r-r!"

"In fact, I've thought of asking him over here to see the school," said Billy Bunter obstinately. "I think—Yow! Ow! Leggo my ear, Bob Cherry, you beast!"

Bob Cherry compressed Bunter's fat ear between his finger and thumb with energy. "Shut up!" he said. "Ow, ow!"

"You don't know Diniwayo, and you're only gassing! Dry up!"

"Groo-oo! Leggo!" "I don't believe you've even seen him, you fat duffer!"

Billy Bunter tore himself away, and rubbed his ear furiously. "You—you beast! I tell you I know the chap! We're quite old pals—"

Bob Cherry made a spring towards him, and Bunter bolted from the Common-room. Bob pursued him as far as the door, and Bunter went down the passage at a speed that would have done him credit on the cinder-path. Bob returned to his friends, breathing hard.

"The silly fat duffer!" he growled. "Talk about Ananias and Munchausen! Bunter could give them points, and beat them easily every time. Blessed if I ever knew such a gasbag! Now, about the Crawley match to-morrow—"

"What price a brake to Crawley?" said Johnny Bull.

"Rather too expensive, I should say. My contribution would be ninnence, exactly," said Bob ruefully.

"And mine a tanner," said Nugent, laughing.

"I could contribute half-crownfully," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Beastly to be short of tin at a time like this!" said Harry Wharton. "I suppose it will have to be the bikes. But it's a jolly long ride, and we mayn't get there in time for the kick-off. And we don't want to miss any of the match."

"No fear!" Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, came into the Common-room, glancing about him. He caught sight of the chums of the Remove, and came over to them.

"Lookin' for you fellows," he remarked. "Well, now you've found us," said Harry Wharton, "are you coming over to Crawley to-morrow to see the Spurs?"

"Yaas. That's what I was going to speak to you about."

"I can see that blessed slacker hiking it—I don't think!" growled Johnny Bull. Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Couldn't do it, dear boy." "How are you thinking of going, then—train?"

"No." "Walking?" asked Nugent sarcastically. "No."

"How, then, fathead?" "Motor-bus," explained his lordship. "Motor-bus!" howled Bob Cherry. "They don't run motor-buses from here to Crawley, you frabjous duffer!"

"Yaas; I know they don't," said Lord Mauleverer, with a nod.

"Well, if they don't run motor-buses, how can you go by motor-bus?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"They don't run motor-buses, but they'll run a motor-bus," his lordship explained, with a chuckle. "We shall go in that."

"Oh!"

"I want all you fellows to be my guests for the day," Lord Mauleverer explained. "You can make up the party, Wharton—if you don't mind. Too much fog for me. If I stand the bus, you can do the rest. What?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Willingly. But a motor-bus for the afternoon will cost a heap of money."

"That's all right; I've got plenty of tin!" said the schoolboy millionaire. "I thought it would be a good idea to take over a party, you know, to see the match. Don't see the Spurs every day, you know. I've telephoned to Courtfield, and they can send a motor-bus over to-morrow in time to make the run to Crawley. Takes sixty chaps. Rather a good idea—what?"

The Removites fell upon Lord Mauleverer and hugged him.

"The Black Footballer!" This is a Tale of Greyfriars with a Big Thrill!

"Come to my arms!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Let me fold you to my watch-chain and weep!"

"Oh, begad—"
"Corn in Egypt!" said Nugent. "The right duffer in the right place! What a ripping thing it is to have a millionaire lying about loose!"

"The rippingfulness is terrific!"
"Ow! Leggo!" gasped his lordship. "Don't thump me on the back, you ass! Clear off! Is it a go?"

"Yes, rather!"
"Hurrah!"

"We'll take a feed in the bus, too," said Lord Mauleverer. "Nuff for sixty—what? Make a day of it, begad! Ask anybody you like—up to sixty chaps. Don't let 'em come and bother me, will you? If you thump me on the back again, Bob Cherry, I'll hit you in the eye! Ow! Chuck it!"

And Lord Mauleverer made his escape, considerably ruffled by the enthusiasm of the chums of the Remove. He left great joy behind him in the Common-room. Lord Mauleverer had unlimited cash, and it was no more to him to hire a motor-bus for an afternoon's excursion than it would have been to any other Remove fellow to hire a bike. And never had Lord Mauleverer's "filthy lucre" proved more useful.

His guests on that auspicious occasion were to number sixty, but the probability was that at least twice that number would want to board the motor-bus when it came round to the gates of Greyfriars on the morrow.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Full Speed Ahead!**

ON the following morning it might have been observed—and, as a matter of fact, was observed—that most of the Greyfriars juniors were upon extremely good behaviour.

Never had classes been so punctual, so attentive, or so well-behaved.

The Remove was not generally a model Form, but it might have been taken for a model Form that Wednesday morning.

Every fellow who was booked for King's Crawley was prepared to go to any length in good behaviour rather than risk detention that afternoon.

Even Billy Bunter exerted himself in the Form-room, and surprised Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, by being considerably less obtuse than usual.

Virtue is its own reward, and there is sometimes no other. But on this occasion the virtue of the Greyfriars juniors was well rewarded. There were no detentions for the afternoon, and when morning classes were dismissed every fellow drew a breath of relief on finding himself safe outside his Form-room.

"Good luck!" said Bob Cherry, when the Remove came out. "All safe, sound, and sober! I thought Quelch was going to drop on-Bunter when he construed 'Hac oratione adducti.' He led these speeches," Smithy whispered to him just in time.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter grunted.
"Blessed if I see the sense in all that rot!" he remarked. "I think Julius Cæsar might have found something better to do than piling up blessed commentaries to worry schoolboys two thousand years after he'd kicked the bucket? Blow Cæsar! Blow Orgetorix! And blow the Helvetians and the rest of the silly duffers!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry, with feeling. He rather agreed with Bunter on that subject. "Never mind. We're done with the Helvetians for to-day, and we can think about the Crawley United."

"When is the giddy motor-bus coming?" asked Bolsover major.

"Half-past one!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Time for dinner, and then we buzz off. It will take a good bit over an hour to get to Crawley."

"Good!"
The Removites looked very cheerful over dinner.

After that meal was over they put on their coats and crowded down to the gates to wait for the imposing vehicle that was to take them to King's Crawley.

A crowd of fellows of other Forms joined them there, to the number of considerably more than the sixty that the motor-bus could accommodate.

There was a cheer as the big vehicle was

seen snorting and grunting along from the direction of Courtfield.

The chauffeur brought it to a halt outside the gates of Greyfriars.

Loder of the Sixth came out with Walker and Carne, as the motor-bus stopped. The three seniors were far from being on good terms with the Removites, and they had not been offered seats in the bus. Harry Wharton had specially invited Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth, but they had decided to go over by train. Loder and his friends, however, had economically determined to save the fares by taking a free passage.

"We're coming with you kids," said Loder, with unusual affability. "I'm afraid a lot of juniors couldn't be trusted in a motor-bus by themselves."

"We've got the chauffeur," said Wharton. Loder shook his head.

"That's not enough."
"And we've got the Head's permission," said Wharton bluntly. "And all the seats in the bus are taken. You'll excuse us, Loder!"

Loder scowled.
"We'll go on top, you chaps!" he said to his companions.

"Look here—" began Bob Cherry hotly.

The seats on top, of course, were preferred to the others inside, and Harry Wharton had reserved them for the Remove. Loder & Co., however, mounted the steps behind, and the juniors exchanged enraged glances.

As Loder and Walker were prefects, the juniors could not very well pitch them out, but they looked upon this invasion of their rights with exasperated eyes.

"The rotters!" said Bob Cherry. "There will be a crowd on top now. We're not going to leave anybody behind for them."
"No fear!"

"The no fearfulness is terrific!"
"All aboard!" sang out Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five stationed themselves on the steps, and allowed only Removites to go on top—with the exception of the three seniors who had taken the law into their own hands.

Fifth and Shell and Fourth crowded into the spacious interior of the bus.

Coker demanded a seat on top, and was politely but firmly refused, and he growled a little as he went inside. But the Fifth were not sacred persons like the Sixth, and they would have been pitched off the bus at short notice if they had given trouble.

The motor-bus was soon crowded inside and out.

Some of the fellows for whom there was no room jumped on the step, and clung there in defiance of the orders of the Famous Five.

"We're all right here," said Wylie of the Shell, "we'll hold on. The blessed engines won't break down, I suppose?"

"Tell the chauffeur to start, Mauly," said Harry Wharton. "We shall have the whole giddy school hanging on behind soon."

And the motor-bus started.

The fellows left behind waved their caps and cheered as the huge vehicle, swarming inside and out, rolled away down the road.

To accommodate sixty the seats had to be more crowded than was intended by the builders, and the addition of the three Sixth-Formers, therefore, made a considerable difference to the comfort of the Removites.

Loder and Carne and Walker insisted upon having plenty of room, and they occupied the space that was intended for four, and which Harry Wharton had intended for five or six. And they had taken the front seats.

The Famous Five were immediately behind them.

Lord Mauleverer had mounted beside the chauffeur. Mauleverer was an old hand at motor-driving, and as soon as the bus was out of sight of Greyfriars he intended to relieve the chauffeur at the steering-wheel.

Lord Mauleverer forgot his slacking habits when he was on board a motor-car, and on such occasions he had a taste for breathless speed, and he intended to let that motor-bus "rip" on its journey to King's Crawley.

The bus rolled and snorted away through Friardale amid shouts from the village urchins, who had seldom seen such a vehicle before, and took the road towards Redlyffe. Then Lord Mauleverer changed places with the chauffeur.

Loder of the Sixth looked down from above, and called out to him:

"What are you doing with that wheel, Mauleverer?"

"Holdin' it, my dear fellow!"

"You're not going to drive?"
"Yaas!"

"It's not safe!" shouted Loder. "Give the wheel to the chauffeur at once!"

"Begad!"
"Do you hear me?"

"Yaas!"
"Then do as I tell you!"

"Rats!"
"Stick to it, Mauly!" shouted the Removites.

"Yaas, I mean to!" said his lordship. "We're going to make a record on this journey. All funks are recommended to jump off before I put the speed on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We're going quite fast enough!" said Loder angrily.

"Not at all, dear boy!"
"We shall get to Crawley in time—"

"Yaas; but we're going to make a record."

Loder leaned over the front of the bus and shook his fist at his imperturbable lordship below.

"You're not to drive! Do you hear?" he shouted.

"Yaas!"
"Chauffeur, you're to drive!" shouted Loder.

"Sorry, sir! This young gentleman's my employer, sir," said the driver calmly. "I'm under his orders, sir."

"Mauleverer, I'm a prefect! How dare you disobey me?" yelled Loder.

"This is my bus, Loder, my dear fellow. If you don't like it, you can get out and walk, begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer was putting on speed now. The motor-bus sailed along at a breathless rate. It swayed considerably, especially when it bumped over ruts in the road, and at every jolt the juniors roared with delight. It was exciting to them, and as for danger, they did not think or care about it.

But with Loder & Co. it was different. They were not reckless juniors, and they set a high value upon their necks—too high a value, the Removites considered. Loder shouted and raved to Lord Mauleverer, but the schoolboy earl did not heed. Indeed, he did not take the trouble to reply again. He required all his attention for the road.

Loder rose to his feet, with the idea of descending into the bus and coming to close quarters with his lordship from inside. But he hesitated. The fellows crammed inside the bus were enjoying themselves, and they were not likely to let Loder go through in peace. Indeed, the obnoxious prefect was very likely to be roughly handled if he ventured into the crowded interior of the bus.

"Tell that reckless young fool to slack down, Wharton!" said Loder furiously.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"This suits us," he replied.

"It doesn't suit me!" roared Loder.

"Can't be helped. You shouldn't have come."

"You weren't asked," growled Johnny Bull. Loder gritted his teeth.

"You'll slow down, or I'll give you a jolly good hiding!" he said, grasping his walking-cane. "I can't get at Mauleverer, but I can get at you."

"And we can get at you!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "If you handle that cane, Loder, we'll wallop you and drop you over the side."

"Drop him over anyway!" said Bulstrode. "Good egg!"

"Collar the cad!" roared Bolsover major. Half the Removites jumped up excitedly. The pace at which the bus was racing along was exciting in itself, and the juniors were in a reckless mood. Gerald Loder realised that it behoved him to be careful. He lowered his cane.

"Sit down, Loder," said Harry Wharton. "and shut up! Hands off, you fellows; mustn't handle a prefect—unless he gives trouble."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he gives us any trouble, we'll jolly well chuck him out!" said Tom Brown.

Loder sat down helplessly. As if to exasperate the prefect further, Lord Mauleverer was still putting on speed. The road was wide and lonely, and there was little danger with a good driver. Lord Mauleverer was a first-class driver; but the Sixth Formers, naturally enough, had little confidence in the ability of a junior to handle the enormous

vehicle. And the motor-bus was swaying and jolting in a most alarming manner.

"There's Redclyffe!" said Bob Cherry, as Redclyffe School came in sight.

"They've got a brake!" exclaimed Peter Todd, standing up and staring towards the school. "I shouldn't wonder if they're going to Crawley, too."

"There's Campbell in the brake!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Give 'em a yell as we go by!"

Redclyffe School were old rivals of Greyfriars, in football and cricket and other things. Redclyffe were evidently going to see the match at Crawley, and Campbell, the skipper of the football team, could be recognised in the brake, with several more of the eleven Greyfriars Remove had often played. The Redclyffians sighted the bus just as the big brake was starting from the gates at Redclyffe.

Campbell shouted to the driver, and the brake went down the road at a gallop. The Redclyffe fellows sent a yell back at the Greyfriars bus.

"Racing us, by Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Put it on, Mauly!"

"Buck up, Mauly!"

"Go it!"

"Yaas, begad!" chuckled Lord Mauleverer. And the motor-bus fairly flew.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Loder is Left!**

"HURRAH!"

The crowd on the motor-bus roared with delight as the race began. Only Loder and Carne and Walker did not seem pleased. The pace was now simply terrific, and the three seniors expected the huge vehicle to lurch over at every turn.

The Redclyffians were going down the road in great style. They had a large brake, with six horses, doing the thing in style, as Bob Cherry remarked. But the Removites gleefully observed that they were doing the thing in better style than Redclyffe. Redclyffe had a big brake, but a motor-bus capable of accommodating sixty fellows was a bigger order than a brake.

And, fast as the team of horses were, they really had no chance against the bus. Lord Mauleverer was covering the ground in great style, and the lumbering bus came rapidly nearer to the brake. They swept past the gates of Redclyffe, and gained fast upon the brake.

"Put the brake on, you silly ass!" roared Loder. "There isn't room to pass!"

"We shall put the brake out, not on!" chuckled Bob Cherry, alluding to the Redclyffe brake, which was not the brake Loder was referring to.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove. "Go it, Mauly!"

The bus was sweeping right down on the brake. The latter was keeping the middle of the road, and there certainly wasn't room for the Greyfriars fellows to pass. It looked as if Lord Mauleverer had made up his mind to run the brake down from behind.

That idea was evidently in the minds of the Redclyffians, for they shouted to the school-boy chauffeur to slacken down. Campbell, a burly Sixth-Former, of Redclyffe, shook his fist at Lord Mauleverer, as the space between the two vehicles decreased.

"Stop, you silly ass!" he roared. "Do you want to run us down?"

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What!" yelled Campbell.

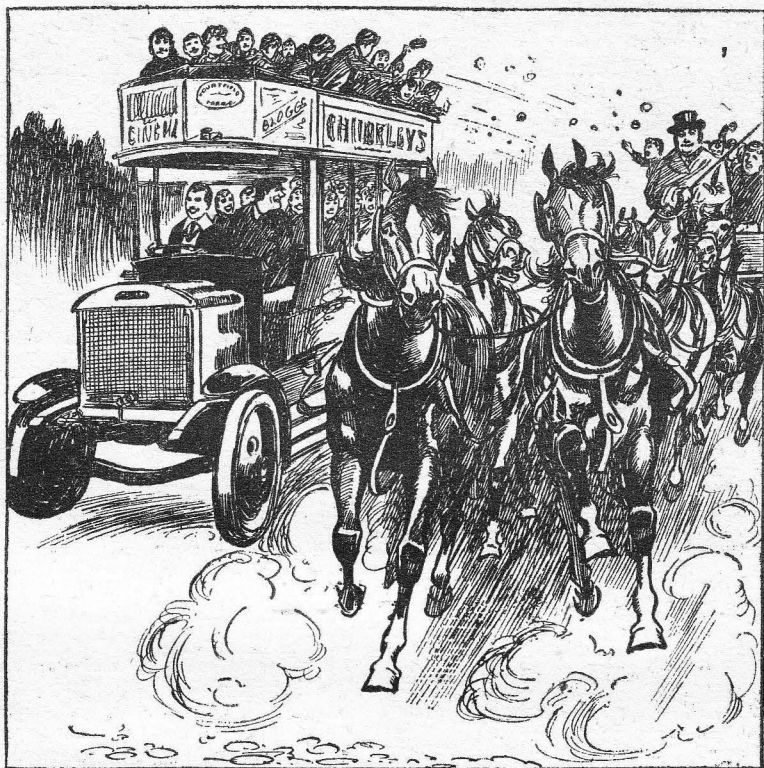
"But I'm not goin' to!" added his lordship.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A biscuit might have been tossed from the brake to the bus when Lord Mauleverer slackened down at last. The bus came on to within three feet of the rear of the brake, and then kept pace with it.

The Removites were all on their feet on top of the bus now, crowding forward to yell at the Redclyffians and chip them. The Redclyffians yelled back. But the motor-bus was higher in the world, as Bob Cherry put it, than the brake, and from their coign of vantage the Greyfriars juniors were able to hurl things more solid than mere epithets.

Several of them had pea-shooters with them, with which they had intended to exasperate innocent passers-by during their ride to Crawley, and the pea-shooters were now brought into play for the benefit of Campbell & Co. Some of the Removites, too, had oranges and apples and nuts that they had intended



BUS VERSUS BRAKE! Lord Mauleverer put on speed, and the great motor-bus swept by the brake, the Removites giving the Redclyffians a parting volley of peas and apples and yells as they passed. The brake dropped behind. (See Chapter 4.)

to consume on the journey; but they were all devoted now to a better cause.

Campbell gave a yell of wrath as an apple caught him on the ear, and an orange burst under his chin. He shook both fists frantically at the motor-bus.

"Give 'em beans!" roared Bob Cherry.

"We haven't any beans, but here's an orange!" grinned Tom Brown. "Campbell, old man, will you have this in the other ear?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Squash!"

There was another yell of laughter as the orange smashed on Campbell's chin. Peas were rattling fast into the brake, and the Redclyffians were wild with wrath.

"Get aside and let us pass!" shouted Wharton. "We're bound to be first at Crawley, you know! Greyfriars always beats Redclyffe!"

"Hurray!"

Campbell wiped the orange from his chin, and brandished his fists again. A shower of peas peppered him, and he roared with wrath.

There was no help for it—the brake had to give ground. Campbell & Co. had intended to keep the bus back, and arrive before them at Crawley—assured, of course, that Lord Mauleverer would not take the extreme step of running into them. But the Removites' method of clearing the road was effective.

Campbell called to the driver to get aside, and the brake swerved to the side of the road, leaving room for the motor-bus to pass.

Lord Mauleverer put on speed, and the great vehicle swept by, the Removites giving the Redclyffians a parting volley of peas and nuts and apples and yells as they swept past. The brake dropped behind.

"We are the giddy victors!" grinned Bob Cherry. "This is where we touch the giddy stars with our sublime heads, as Julius Caesar says!"

"Ha, ha! It was Horace!"

"Never mind who it was—I don't care a button! We've beaten Redclyffe. They will be ratty when they get to Crawley and find us in the best seats!" chuckled Bob.

"Hurray for Greyfriars!"

"Hip-pip!"

The bus tore on, and the brake disappeared from view behind.

"I—I'm not going to stand this!" gasped Loder, as the bus rocked over a bump in the ground, Lord Mauleverer having taken a short cut through a decidedly rough lane. "We're hardly half-way to Crawley yet, and we shall be killed before we get there at this rate!"

"I'm expecting a broken neck every minute!" snarled Carne.

"Come down and make him stop!" said Walker desperately. "We'll pitch young Mauleverer off, and leave him behind!"

The three seniors rose together; but the Removites rose too.

"Mind what you're up to, Loder, my son," said Bob Cherry. "We're not in school, now, you know. If you start looking for trouble, you'll find more than you want!"

"The morefulness will be terrific, my worthy and esteemed Loder!"

Loder made no reply, but began to shove his way along the aisle between the seats on top of the bus. Walker and Carne pressed behind him. The juniors barred the way, and Loder began to lash out viciously with his cane. It was a heavy cane, and the juniors who felt its weight roared with pain and indignation.

"Collar the cad!" yelled Johnny Bull, springing at Loder.

The prefect hit out savagely, and Johnny Bull was knocked down among the seats. But that was the finishing touch. Johnny Bull's chums piled on Loder & Co. at once, and the rest of the Remove backed them up with excited yells. The three Sixth-Formers disappeared under a struggling mass of juniors.

"Got 'em!" panted Bob Cherry. "Mauly, slacken down a bit, will you, while we chuck this rubbish off!"

"Yaas!"

There was a grinding of brakes, and the motor-bus slowed down. Loder and Carne and Walker were dragged along the top of the bus and bundled down the steps. They resisted furiously, but they were helpless in the hands of so many.

All three of the seniors went bundling down, in the midst of a struggling swarm of juniors, and they were tossed off the bus one after another. And as they rolled in the dusty road, gasping and saying things that we could not possibly reproduce in print, the bus put on speed again, and they were left behind.

"Good-bye, Blublub!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go home!"

"You can walk the rest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three seniors jumped up. They were dusty and dishevelled, and their hats were gone. They rushed down the road in pursuit of the motor-bus, yelling to the juniors to stop. But the juniors had no intention of stopping for them. They had got rid of their unwelcome passengers, and they did not mean to take them on board again.

Loder & Co. dashed after the bus frantically. They were landed in a lonely lane, half-way between Greyfriars and Crawley, and they had no chance whatever of finding a vehicle of any sort to take them on to Crawley, or to take them back to Greyfriars. And they did not relish the prospect of walking about fifteen miles.

But the bus simply raced away from them. The juniors sent back derisive yells, till the three running figures disappeared in the distance behind, and were seen no more.

"Oh, my ha!" gasped Bob, wiping away his tears. "Poor old Loder! Always looking for trouble—and finding it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought this ride was going to be a treat, but I didn't expect quite such a treat!" gasped Wharton. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Mauly!"

"Keep it up!"

"Pile it on!"

"Yaas, begad!" chortled Lord Mauleverer. And the bus raced and thundered on. And not till they were approaching the confines of the town of King's Crawley did Lord Mauleverer relinquish the guidance to the driver. And it was at a somewhat more moderate speed that they thundered up to the gates of the Crawley United Football ground.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Black Footballer!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were in good time for the match, thanks to the exertions of Lord Mauleverer en route.

The motor-bus was left in charge of the chauffeur outside the ground, and the Greyfriars army marched up to the turnstile. Lord Mauleverer at their head, with a bank-note in his hand.

"Sixty, please!" he said.

"Sixty-five," grinned Bob Cherry. "There are some extras."

"Begad, yaas! Sixty-five, please!"

And the army marched in; and, thanks to their early arrival, they filled up the best seats in the grand-stand.

King's Crawley Football Ground was a large one, and the enclosure was capable of accommodating a good many thousands of spectators, and by the crowd that was pouring in at the turnstiles it seemed that its accommodation would be fully taxed. Football enthusiasts were coming from near and far to see the match with the great team from London.

Billy Bunter was in a front seat, and he blinked round him with great interest. He could not see very far, and he growled at Lord Mauleverer for forgetting to bring his field-glasses.

"Looking for your friend Diniwayo?" chuckled Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a dig in the ribs.

Bunted gasped.

"Ow! Yes; I'm looking for Diniwayo. Of course, I shall nod to him!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! You may nod to him, but he jolly well won't nod to you!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Tell us another, and a smaller one!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! Of course, I know the chap well—"

"Anauas!"

"I'm going round to see him after the match!" said Bunter loftily. "I'd take you fellows round and introduce you, only, as you doubt my word, I shall refuse to do anything of the sort!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, when you see me chumming with him, after the match, perhaps you'll believe me!" snapped Bunter.

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"Yes; I'll believe you then!" grinned Bob. "Seeing is believing, you know. I suppose you know all the Spurs, too, don't you—every man-jack of them?"

Bunter grunted and did not reply.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here come the giddy Redclyffians!" said Bob Cherry.

And he stood up and waved his cap to Campbell & Co., of Redclyffe.

Campbell waved in return, but he waved a fist instead of a cap. The enclosure had been filling, and the crowd from Redclyffe had to be content with very back seats.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I shouldn't wonder if we have a rag with the Redclyffians before we get home," he remarked. "Well, it's all in the day's work. Campbell looks quite wild. These Sixth Form chaps don't like being chipped, somehow!"

"Hallo, there's the darkey!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

A short, thick-set, very active-looking man, as black as the ace of spades, or very nearly so, had appeared from the entrance to the dressing-rooms. There was a loud cheer from the crowded enclosure.

It was Diniwayo.

The black footballer grinned, showing a beautiful set of gleaming white teeth, and raised his cap, revealing a thickly-growing mass of woolly hair.

He was a good-looking fellow, in his own way, and looked remarkably fit, active, and alert.

"That's the darkey!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "There's your old pal, Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Call out to him, Bunt!" grinned Nugent. "You can't pass an old friend over without speaking to him, you know."

"I'm going to speak to him after the match," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Diniwayo went into the dressing-room, and disappeared, and the crowd settled down to wait for the match.

Meanwhile, the enclosure was quite filled. Six or seven thousand people were waiting to see the match, with eager impatience.

There was a cheer when the teams appeared on the field at last.

Among the local spectators Diniwayo, the black footballer, was evidently very popular. The black centre-forward was the finest player in the Crawley club, and he had been the means of placing Crawley in a very good position, so far, in the Cup competition.

Not that Crawley United had much chance of getting into the final; but it was something for the club to be still in the running. The Crawley directors had done a good stroke of business in securing the footballer from South Africa.

Tottenham Hotspur won the toss, and chose a goal, and the blue-and-white of the Spurs lined up opposing the red shirts of the Crawleys.

Crawley kicked off, and the match began. The Greyfriars juniors were all eyes now. Harry Wharton & Co. were keen footballers, and they knew that there was much to be learnt by watching first-class players. And the game was exciting from the start.

The Spurs were soon attacking hotly, and the game was all in the home half at first, and there were loud cheers as the ball went in from the foot of Cantrell.

But from the restart the luck changed, and the Spurs goal was besieged, and then the black footballer showed all his quality.

His pace was wonderful, and his passing a marvel; and, in spite of a dogged defence, the Crawleys brought the leather through, and Diniwayo sent it in.

"By Jove, that darkey's jolly good!" Harry Wharton exclaimed. "It's ripping!"

"I guess he goes like greased lightning," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "But I guess they wouldn't have a nigger in a football team in the States. No, sir; we bar niggers!"

"Rats!" said Wharton. "What's the matter with him?"

"Colour, I guess!"

"Bosh!"

Fisher T. Fish sniffed. He had all the prejudice of the average American upon that subject—a feeling that was incomprehensible to his English companions.

"I guess I don't half like sitting here and watching a nigger!" he growled.

"Clear off, then!" grunted Johnny Bull.

But Fisher T. Fish did not clear off. He sat frowning. He did not join in the cheering that greeted Diniwayo's splendid goal, but shrugged his narrow shoulders and grunted. Evidently he did not see anything

to admire in whatsoever had been done by a coloured gentleman.

"I jolly well wish Crawley United would come over and play our first some day!" Bob Cherry remarked. "We wouldn't mind a darkey—what?"

"No fear!" said Wharton, laughing. "But there couldn't be a match—Crawley is a professional side."

"The darkey isn't a pro, though," Bulstrode remarked. "He's playing for the United as an amateur. He lives in Crawley—he's studying with an engineering firm there. That's why he's playing for the local team. The directors got him for nothing. He'd be worth his four quid a week as a pro, though, I should say."

"Yes, rather!"

"The rutherfordness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, who was watching the performances of the black footballer with the keenest interest.

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"Sort of fellow-feeling for him, Inky, I suppose?" he asked.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh looked round at the American junior.

"If the esteemed Fish knew anything about the honourable matter, he would knowingly be aware that a Hindu is not a nigger," he remarked mildly. "The esteemed Fish is an esteemed ass!"

"Not much difference in colour, I guess!" snapped Fish. The American schoolboy was irritated by the admiration the juniors showed for the negro, and he seemed determined to make himself disagreeable.

"The difference is terrific, my esteemed, idiotic Fish. My complexion is brownful, and the complexion of the esteemed Diniwayo is blackfully darker," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, still quite good-temperedly.

"Waal, I guess I don't believe in making a fuss about a nigger."

"Shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

"I guess—"

"Shut up!" repeated Bob.

"Look here, I reckon—"

"If you don't shut up," said Bob, "I'll dot you on the nose! Fed-up! Don't you understand?"

Fisher T. Fish apparently did understand, for he snorted and shut up.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Goal!

GOAL to goal was the score in the first half of the match.

The players trooped off for the interval.

The game had been hard and fast, and very exciting. Joyce, in the Spurs goal, had been kept very busy, and several times he had barely saved shots from the black centre-forward.

The Crawley crowd were in high spirits, evidently anticipating a victory over the famous London team.

During the interval Bob Cherry found a little harmless and necessary recreation with his pea-shooter. His target was Campbell of the Sixth Form at Redclyffe, and his aim was good. Campbell, who was chatting with another Redclyffe senior, gave a sudden jump as a pellet stung him on the ear. He clapped his hand to his ear, and looked round in surprise.

"What on earth was that?" the Greyfriars juniors heard him exclaim.

"What's the matter?" asked his companion.

"I—I think it was a wasp—no, it couldn't have been a wasp," said Campbell, in astonishment. "Something stung me on the ear, Lucas!"

Lucas chuckled.

"There's a young imp down there with a pea-shooter," he said.

Campbell turned red with wrath.

"Stop that, you young ass!" he shouted, shaking his fist over the heads of the crowd at Bob Cherry.

Bob grinned, and took aim again.

But Harry Wharton dragged him back into his seat.

"Cheese it, you ass!" he said, laughing. "You'll be chucked out if you play tricks here. You can pea-shoot Campbell after the match."

"I'll see you kids when you get outside!" yelled Campbell.

"We'll wait for you!" yelled back Bob Cherry.

"Shut up! Here comes the Spurs!"

The players streamed on to the field again and lined up for the second half. Immediately all attention was given to the game,

and Greyfriars fellows and Redclyffians forgot each other's existence.

The second half began with a brilliant attack by the Spurs, and for twenty minutes or more the Crawleys had nothing to do but defend.

The attack ended with a goal from Middlemiss.

"Two for the Spurs!" said Frank Nugent. "Looks like a win for Hotspur."

"Wait till the darkey gets a chance," said Wharton.

There was a snort from Fisher T. Fish. "Bet you that darkey's done!" he said.

"He's no good! I guess I'd lay a dollar against a red cent."

"You'd lose!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Look there!"

The Crawley forwards were going again in splendid style.

Diniway was the life of the front line. Never had he appeared in better form.

The attack was hot and irresistible. The defence seemed nowhere against it, and the black centre-forward sent the leather in within three minutes of the kick-off.

There was a roar of cheering as the pill found the net.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo, darkey!"

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry clapped his hands with reports like pistol-shots, and yelled gleefully.

"Two all!" said Johnny Bull. "It will be a close finish!"

The game went on as keenly as ever, but without a score, the defence being equally sound on both sides.

The minutes ticked away, and the spectators began to look at their watches.

"Five minutes to time!" Harry Wharton announced at last.

"Looks like a draw."

"Buck up, Crawley!"

"Go it, Spurs!"

"On the ball!"

The leather was in midfield. It went into touch, and was thrown in. The minutes were ticking off, and still the struggle was doubtful. Close on time now. The excitement in the crowd was almost breathless.

There was a sudden shout as the Crawley forwards broke away, Diniway going down the field like lightning with the ball at his feet.

Lightfoot and Weir closed on him, but he

eluded them as if by a miracle, and, leaving his own line too far behind to take a pass, he dashed on. Brittan charged, but the black footballer eluded him by another miracle, rushed on, and shot for goal. The referee was raising his whistle.

Harry Wharton & Co. were on their feet now, their faces ablaze with excitement.

It was a gallant attempt to save the match on the very stroke of time, and all depended upon that lightning shot. Would it materialise?

Joyce was looking out, but the leather passed him—his finger-tips barely touched it

—and it found a resting-place in the net. It was a shot that no goalie could have saved.

There was a thunderous roar:

"Goal!"

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

Phoop! went the whistle.

The match was ended.

Crawley United had won by three goals to two, and all three goals had been kicked by the black centre-forward.

No wonder the Crawley crowd cheered him almost deliciously!

(Continued on page 27.)



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BUNTER AND THE BLACK.

Look out next Tuesday for "The Black Footballer," a ripping yarn of Greyfriars. It heads the POPULAR bill for next week. Wingate asks the purpose to bring Diniwayo, the famous coloured player, to the school. Bunter has boasted that he knows the dusky champion, and, wonder of wonders, the captain of Greyfriars believes him. Of course, Bunter was swanking, as usual, so, to save his face, the Owl produces a sham Diniwayo. And then the real champion comes along, much to the joy of Greyfriars, ditto to the discomfiture of Bunter, and his bogus variety. This is a really jolly yarn, full of high spirits, and you can't blame Frank Richards for showing up Bunter once more as an egregious lump of vanity.

SCHOOL AND FOOTER.

St. Jim's has the "flu" in next week's tale. The fell-complaint will queer anything from a pitch to a footer match. As the Public Schools' Challenge Cup is being fought for at St. Jim's, things look awkward, since places are vacant. Matters would have been very bad indeed, only Cardew steps forward and says he will see the thing through. You will be interested in what Cardew does in this topping yarn. He figures uncommonly well. Don't miss a capital story, full of vim. "The Fellow Who Dared!" (Cardew, to wit) will be remembered.

ROOKWOOD.

"The Mystery Master!" is the title of the next story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood. The school is in a ferment. It has caught the same complaint as Denmark of old—something rotten in it. The masters are on strike—small blame to them, for the provocation was extreme. See next Tuesday the effect on the crisis of the "Mystery Master." Nobody quite understands him, but it was just as well, all things considered, that he blew in. But, though, for the moment, the world of Rookwood is out of joint, there will be better times yet.

THE BACKWOODS.

Strange things happen in the backwoods, but few stranger than the episode related in "A Strange Accusation!" the coming story of Cedar Creek. In this tale the author shows us further astounding adventures of the chums of the school in that fascinating region at the back of beyond, where "Injuns," honest and otherwise, roam at will.

BUNTER'S WEAKLY.

Once again the printer has erred and put in an "a" instead of a second "e." We can let it go, as business is extra heavy just before holiday time. But please do not let it be understood that there is anything defective, either structurally or temporarily, with the massive frame of the Editor of the Supplement. Bunter is all right. He set his heart this time on having a Special Fags' Number, and, as usual, he has had his way. It is but natural. An editor's word is law. When an editor is ruffled, all the world feels sad and sorry for itself. It has reason. When the editor smiles all is sunshine. It just is so. There is no explaining these mysteries, which touch the deeper side of things. Anyhow, you will like the cheery Fags' Number of "Bunter's Weekly." Occasionally Bunter may say things in the Greyfriars Parliament, and out, which might suggest to

those who do not know the width of his sympathies that his mind was small. Perish the ignoble thought! Even yet the world does not understand Bunter as the noble fellow deserves to be understood. I can recommend the Fags' Number. It is a notable issue, and gives Samuel B. a chance. After all, the best thing you can give to anybody is a chance. Samuel Bunter has too long been eclipsed by the mighty character of his senior.

OUR SERIAL.

There was an extra special word I much wanted to say concerning the serial, but the mischief is there is very little elbow room. Victor Nelson's stirring tale, "The Rival Sportsmen," will be coming to a close in a few weeks' time. Look out for a new and amazing serial which will follow.

MORE GRAND PHOTOS.

As you will see, the POPULAR is still well away with the finest series of sporting portraits—anybody could possibly wish for. You will say this week's free glossy photo is a more than usually good addition to the magnificent collection you are making. Readers of the POPULAR will possess just the kind of portrait gallery which any sportsmen sets his heart on. There are better things still to come, and my advice to you all is, don't miss one of these splendidly-produced pictures. There is something more to say about this topping feature. Our Companion Papers, the "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Gem," will be starting a record series in the very near future—so near that you may as well get your albums all ready for the coming treat.

Your Editor.

HERE—YOU CHAPS—HAVE A SHOT AT THIS!

Fine Money Prizes for the Correct Solution—Its simple

FIRST PRIZE £5 0 0: Second Prize £2 10 0: TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH.

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 Arsenal 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 "ARSENAL" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, January 18th, 1923.

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 events 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.

I enter "ARSENAL" Competition, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

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The Most Successful and Popular Story on the Market!



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.

In the fourth round of the English Cup, Courtney's team, Romford Rovers, is drawn to meet the Wanderers. Court-

ney arranges with a reserve, Jem Newbold, who is up against Harry, to administer drugs to his team at half-time.

The dastardly scheme is carried out, and when the two teams commence the play again, three of the Wanderers fall down unconscious. But in spite of this catastrophe, Codling, the captain of the Wanderers, decides to continue the match, playing short.

After a stern struggle the Wanderers defeat their opponents. Later Tony Wagg discovers that Newbold is responsible for the drugging, and Newbold is turned out of the club.

Courtney makes several attempts to kidnap Harry and also Marjorie Randall, but he is unsuccessful. At last the day of the Grand National arrives.

(Now read on.)

Grand National Day at Aintree—"They're off!"

ON the afternoon of the following Friday, the racecourse at Aintree, Liverpool, presented the usual scene of congestion always to be witnessed on Grand National day.

Though the weather was bitterly cold, and there had been more than a hint of rain throughout the morning, the fact had in no way interfered with the attendance.

The Grand National is at once one of the most dangerous races of the season and the most thrilling spectacle of sport of which this old world of ours can boast, and to-day, as in previous years, from an early hour crowds had wended their way to the course.

People from Liverpool and its suburbs, who never went to any other race meeting throughout the year, were there in their thousands, simply because it was Grand National day, and they swelled the huge army of "regulars," whilst another veritable pilgrimage had crossed from Ireland to follow the fortunes of a well-backed candidate from the Green Isle called Rory O'Keefe.

The hum of excitement that had begun upon the course with the conclusion of the lesser races that had opened the programme developed into a positive roar.

The twenty-three horses running in the National, the great race of the day, were streaming on to the course in the parade.

First came the favourite, a horse named Black Diamond, who had been soundly supported by his stable, and who stood at the cramped odds of 7 to 2, in spite of the generous field. He was followed by the Irishman, Rory O'Keefe, who had good form to his credit in his native land, and who was expected to make a bold bid for the spoils. The cheers for him vied in enthusiasm with the mighty yell of applause that had gone up for the favourite, who belonged to a well-known sporting baronet.

With a rattle of hoofs, Fast and Free followed this pair past the stands, Austin Courtney in the saddle.

The rogue had been bitterly disappointed at the failure of his plan to put Tearing Haste II. out of the running, disappointed and not a little frightened, when he had heard of the turn events had taken. He had half-expected either his cousin, Harry, or the father of Marjorie Randall, to take drastic action to try to bring his guilt home to him, but the days had slipped by and nothing had happened, and he was safe here with his mount at Aintree.

Having suffered no harm from her thrilling adventures, Marjorie was in the grandstand with her father, and her girlish face flushed with excitement as, a little behind the rest, Harry Lestrade made his appearance on Tearing Haste, and galloped after the others, who were now bound for the starting-post. Her heart beat hard. If only her boy friend could win! What an achievement it would be! It would mean that he had as good as won his father's fortune, for, try as he might, Austin Courtney would surely never be able to equal it.

"Seven to two Black Diamond! Five to one bar one! Sixes Rory O'Keefe and Fast and Free! Tens Tearing Haste!"

Whilst the horses were being got in line at the post, the voices of the bookmakers rose in a veritable babel. Then there came a roar that eclipsed even this medley of sound. It was—

"They're off!"

It came from thousands of throats like a concerted effort, and was followed by a tense silence, relieved only by the clanging of a bell.

The greatest jumping race in the world had started. How would its end affect Harry Lestrade and Austin Courtney?

Would they be amongst the many whose mounts would fall, as horses did every year, at the terrible, almost cruel, jumps? Or would one of them beat the rest of the field and thunder first past the winning post, bringing the winning of the late Sir Charles Lestrade's fortune within measurable distance?

How the Race ended!

IF it were humanly possible, he was going to win! That was the determination in the mind of Harry Lestrade, as, with the twenty-two other riders, he leapt away with his mount from the starting-post.

Every muscle, every nerve in his body, every muscle and nerve in the splendid thoroughbred beneath him had got to be strained, if necessary, to that end, if only to punish Austin Courtney for his despicable treatment of Marjorie Randall and his villainy since the start of the great contest between them.

Up to the present, the horses were sweeping along in an almost straight line.

It was not really a case of racing as yet. Practically every rider was nursing his mount.

The first obstacle hove in sight.

For a moment Harry Lestrade knew misgivings, remembering the injury Tearing Haste had received some months before at the hands of his cousin's hireling, Jerry Murker. He wondered if, before the race was over, any weakness that might have been left would be brought out.

Then, as he put Tearing Haste at the black, gorsed fence, and felt him soaring over it like a bird, his fears left him, and were replaced by a thrill of exhilaration.

The horse was fit enough, and was going to trouble the best of them.

The horse racing next to Harry—its name was 'The Friar'—pecked badly and came a cropper at the next jump. His jockey was too badly haken to catch him and remount, so that he was early out of the running.

An outsider named Almanac commenced to forge ahead, but there was nothing in it yet, and the remainder, with the exception, of course, of 'The Friar,' continued for awhile almost level.

Harry Lestrade shot a sidelong glance at the other racers, trying to catch a glimpse of his cousin.

But in this he did not succeed.

He had been drawn almost at the end of the line, near the rails, and there were too many other horses between him and Austin Courtney for him to be able to see the rogue.

The next gorsed fence was cleared by Tearing Haste just as superbly as he had taken the others.

A touch of the hand from Harry was all he needed. He and his rider understood each other perfectly, and Tearing Haste would have attempted to jump a six-foot stone wall, had Harry put him at it.

On, on, thundered the field, and over the next obstacle, with Tearing Haste never making the least mistake.

But, although four more horses had now fallen, Fast and Free, like Harry's mount, was jumping like a cat and holding his position, with Courtney sitting rather forward in the saddle, his pale face grim and determined.

One more fence, four feet nine inches in height; then the horses and their riders neared Becher's Brook, with its treacherous ditch on the far side.

This was a critical test, and Harry Lestrade knew it.

Almanac, still leading, got over safely, followed magnificently by the favourite, Black Diamond.

His jockey had pressed him ahead, after the outsider, whilst Rory O'Keefe was, in his turn, in close attendance at Black Diamond's flanks.

The Irish animal also negotiated the jump in fine style. Then Harry, on Tearing Haste, and Courtney, on Fast and Free, reached it.

Harry gathered Tearing Haste together for the leap, his lips setting in a thin, straight line.

The great fence, towering above the water, looked gigantic, insurmountable, and appeared to rush at him. It is a sight that is bound to give the rider who has not attempted it before a thrill of awe, and for just a breathing space Harry wondered if Tearing Haste was capable of clearing it successfully.

Tearing Haste was one of the gamest horses in training, however. He rose at the obstacle like a swallow and flew over it neatly, gracefully, his long, lissom body outstretched to its fullest extent.

The leap he made was a revelation to Harry, who had caught in his breath, for

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it had seemed to him that they were never coming down.

The horse landed a full three feet beyond the ditch, and kept in his stride at that, thundering on after Almanac, Black Diamond, and the Irishman. And after that, the boy no longer had the least doubt about his mount being a suitable horse for the course.

A conviction came to him that he was going to sweep Tearing Haste first past the post, as he had so dearly hoped.

Austin Courtney got Fast and Free over without a blunder. The horse landed just behind Harry, and Courtney speedily brought Fast and Free level with Tearing Haste, so that Harry, momentarily turning his head, had his first sight of his cousin.

There was a positive bevy of tumbles amongst that portion of the field that followed the cousins over the "Brook." Four pecked badly and came down. Three others slipped up, and actually plunged into the water, saturating their riders. From that moment the field began noticeably to thin and tail off.

Valentine's Brook brought disaster to three more candidates, including the outsider, Almanac, who had looked as though he might create a surprise. His rider was badly injured, and had to be carried from the course on an ambulance.

At the next fence the well-backed Irish candidate, Rory O'Keefe, fell and broke a leg, and eventually he had to be destroyed.

Truly the Grand National is a cruel race! Fence after fence was negotiated, and a roar of excitement went up as the horses and their riders came in full view of the stands.

The glasses of Marjorie Randall and her father were first focussed upon Harry, then on Courtney, and they saw that, with his rider sitting him well, Fast and Free was moving like a well-balanced piece of machinery, and that he was apparently as fresh as when the race had started.

Like the Randalls, Specs, who was also in the grand stand, had his field-glasses raised. He was content to watch his chum. His vision was somewhat blurred, and he found that enough to cope with, without paying any attention to other riders in the event.

Specs' father had chanced to have business in Liverpool, and that morning had looked up his son and Harry at the hotel, where they were staying with the Randalls, and Specs had prevailed upon Mr. Ranger to come out to Aintree and see the great race.

The pace grew suddenly hotter. Racing in real earnest was beginning now.

To reassure him, Harry pressed his knees into Tearing Haste's side as they neared the water-jump, thinking the sight of it might startle him.

Tearing Haste took it as gamely and neatly as he had the more formidable of the other obstacles, and once again a wave of pardonable confidence swept over the boy.

The terrible course had been safely travelled once, and he and Tearing Haste could do it again—and win!

The horses thundered on, on their way on their second time round.

With a rush, horses called Eagle's Wing and Roman drew level with the flanks of Tearing Haste and Fast and Free, who were both racing after Black Diamond, whilst others, beginning to put on speed, were only lengths away.

But staying powers told now. Provided they "stood up" the race seemed left to the favourite, Tearing Haste, Fast and Free, Eagle's Wing, and Roman; for these five began to draw away from the other candidates, most of whom had been remounted after coming croppers.

The five in the van cleared "Becher's" for the second time, all landing safely beyond the ditch. At "Valentine's" Eagle's Wing, who was an 8 to 1 chance, and carrying a good deal of public money as well as that of his stable, made a bad mistake, falling and rolling upon his rider. The latter, though not so badly hurt as might have been supposed, was too "winded" to pick himself up in time to catch him, so that Eagle's Wing was booked for a place amongst the "also rans."

Over the next fence went Black Diamond, the crack cross-country jockey upon him, sitting down and riding with a fixed determination to win. But Fast and Free, Tearing Haste, and Roman had taken the leap almost beside him, and for a few seconds the quartette raced almost neck and neck.

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It was not for long, however. Slowly but surely Black Diamond began to creep ahead again, increasing the distance between himself and his three opponents.

He was leading by a full three lengths, as the four horses tore round the bend to the last two jumps, though good judges who watched declared that Tearing Haste still had enough in hand to make him a dangerous factor at the finish.

At the final fence, for the first time during the race, Tearing Haste leapt awkwardly, and so surprised was Harry at his mistake that he almost pitched from the saddle.

Black Diamond, the Roman, and Fast and Free had landed cleanly, and were racing for home. The clumsy jump of his mount had cost Harry almost two lengths. He clenched his teeth and rode with hands and knees, though for a moment the position seemed hopeless.

Austin Courtney had his whip out, and was fairly thrashing Fast and Free into a last spurt of speed. Roman was passed, looking to be standing still, and nearer and nearer Austin Courtney forced his mount to Black Diamond.

The young man's face was livid and set in harsh lines. He had missed his cousin from beside him, realised that some mishap must have befallen him, and hoped that it was serious.

If only he could beat the favourite and win the race, his uncle's fortune might yet be his.

"Twenty to one on the favourite!"

The shout rose from hundreds of those who watched the two horses that were fighting out the desperate finish. Two? No, it was three! For Harry Lestrade was bringing Tearing Haste along again in a tremendous burst, riding as never before in his life.

He thundered by Roman and crept nearer and nearer the flanks of Fast and Free. And then there happened that which brought gasps of mingled excitement and dismay from the spectators.

Fast and Free was threatening to draw level with Black Diamond, in spite of the confidence shown by those who had begun to shout the favourite home. But somehow Austin Courtney's mount missed his stride, crossed his legs, and stumbled. He went down on his knees, shooting Courtney head over heels out of the saddle, and lay on the wet and muddy grass, kicking and plunging.

It was only by something very like a miracle that Harry Lestrade avoided colliding with the fallen horse and pitching over it with his mount. He swerved in the nick of time, steadied Tearing Haste, and raced him on, after the favourite.

Three lengths between the pair! The jockey on Black Diamond belaboured him with the whip as he heard the thud of hoofs close behind him, but stayer and speedy horse though he was, Black Diamond could do no more than he was doing, and up to his flying heels crept Harry; then, with a last rush, he had Tearing Haste level.

"Black Diamond! Black Diamond wins!" yelled one section of the crowd.

"Tearing Haste!" roared another, until the din was ear-splitting.

"Now, old chap—now!" Harry Lestrade cried to his mount, as he leant low over his neck, seeming fairly to lift him over the ground. "Now!"

The winning-post had flashed into view. It was as if Tearing Haste not only heard, but understood. He thundered over the grass as he had never raced before in his career. He drew ahead—a neck, a length! A sharp cut with the whip brought Black Diamond neck and neck with him again for just a moment—but only for a moment.

Stamina told. The favourite fell back, beaten, within a few yards of the post, and Tearing Haste flashed by it, a winner by length and a half!

Harry Lestrade had won the Grand National, with Black Diamond second, Roman third, and Fast and Free, whom Austin Courtney had remounted, an indifferent fourth.

The Watcher!

IT seemed that all Harry Lestrade's friends had streamed on to the course, as the delighted Williams led the winner in. The trainer was positively beaming. Not only had he at

last gained the honour of training a Grand National winner, but the feat that his beloved "Master Harry" had achieved had brought him within measurable distance of inheriting Lestrade Castle and his father's colossal fortune.

Marjorie Randall, her father, Sir Travers, Specs and his sire, not to mention Tony Wagg and practically every player of the Wessex Wanderers, whose fares Harry had insisted upon paying that they might witness the race, crowded about the horse.

Marjorie waved her handkerchief, the players their caps, whilst Specs yelled himself hoarse, notwithstanding the fact that his short-sightedness was causing him to be in frequent collision with everyone else.

Cheer after cheer was given for Harry, cheer after cheer for the gallant horse that had successfully braved the terrible four miles of country, with its formidable obstacles.

Austin Courtney sat upon Fast and Free near by and scowled and chewed savagely at his moustache as he waited to follow the three horses that had been placed into the weighing-in enclosure.

He had thought that for just a moment, as Tearing Haste and the favourite had thudded along, locked together, there had been a little bumping on one side or the other, and he prayed that, even now, the owner or the jockey on Black Diamond might register an objection.

That was his one last, slender hope. If the objection was made and sustained, it would mean Harry being disqualified, in which case he—Courtney—would be placed third.

But no such quibble arose. Both the "crack" who had been on the favourite and the owner of the animal knew that they had been fairly beaten by a better horse, and Harry Lestrade, having tipped the scales satisfactorily, was officially awarded the race.

Courtney's face was working with passion and hatred, and his eyes were morose with the bitterness of his disappointment, as he left the weighing-room.

He could never hope to bring his sporting record up to that of his cousin now. All chance of his winning his uncle's money and Lestrade Castle was gone, and, for him, there remained only one thing—revenge!

More congratulations were poured upon Harry Lestrade, as, later, having changed his silk for ordinary attire, he quitted the jockeys' room and rejoined his friends.

In the event of his winning, as he had done, he had arranged for a dinner of celebration to take place at his hotel in Liverpool, the Majestic. Marjorie, her father, Specs, Mr. Ranger and the football players and Tony Wagg, were awaiting to accompany him there now.

"Awfully sorry, father, that I will have to leave you after we have taken your grub, old chap," Specs said; and Austin Courtney, who had followed his cousin from the jockeys' room, started as he overheard.

He paused to listen, making a pretence of selecting a cigarette from his case. He was conscious that Sir Travers Randall was glaring at him, and, for a moment, his nerve almost deserted him. Then, he stood his ground, deciding that as Marjorie's father had not taken immediate action against him for the imprisoning of the girl he was unlikely to do so now.

"Dad will have to catch the nine-thirty train to-night, for he must be back in London for business reasons early to-morrow morning," Courtney heard Specs continue. "You'll stay until to-morrow, I suppose?"

"Yes, Specs," Harry agreed. "For one thing, I want a good rest after riding that race," he added, with a laugh. "Then Sir Travers is stopping overnight, for Marjorie wants to see Liverpool and its sights. We shall leave by the midday express to-morrow. I shall find you at the castle, I suppose?"

"Sure, old bean! I'll go there, after I leave father in London and wait for you," Specs returned.

Austin Courtney had heard enough and moved away, a very sinister expression in his eyes. Tony Wagg, who had noticed his presence, glanced after him. Then the football trainer drew a quick breath.

He had seen a youngish man approach Courtney and begin to converse with him (Continued on page 28.)

MAULY'S TREAT!

(Continued from page 23.)

They cheered and roared and yelled, and rattles and tin trumpets joined in to swell the din. Hats and caps were waved frantically.

The Greyfriars juniors were clapping and cheering as loudly as anybody, with the single exception of Fisher T. Fish. That free American citizen wasn't going to cheer a nigger. But nobody noticed or cared for Fisher T. Fish just then.

"Well, that was ripping!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath, when the players had gone off the field and the spectators were beginning to disperse. "Simply ripping! Jolly glad we came!"

"Time for you to go and see your pal, if you're going to see him, Bunter!" grinned Bob Cherry, giving Billy Bunter a playful dig in the ribs.

Bunter blinked at him. He had been thinking deeply. He was determined that the Greyfriars juniors should believe his statement, and he had been forming a scheme for that purpose. He nodded.

"Yes, I'd better go and have a word with him," he remarked.

"Ananias!"

"What's the good of keeping that up, you awful fibber?" said Johnny Bull impatiently. "You know we don't believe a word of it." "You'll see. I suppose the bus will wait a bit while I go and see my old pal?" "Oh, we'll wait," grinned Bob. "But—"

"Then I'll go."

The juniors looked at him in surprise. Billy Bunter had a way of keeping up a "whopper" till the very last moment, but it really began to look as if he had been telling the truth this time. Of course, it would not have been a specially remarkable thing if he had had a personal acquaintance with the black footballer. The juniors had disbelieved him simply because he was Bunter.

"You don't really mean to say that you know the chap?" said Wharton.

"Just wait and see," said Bunter loftily. "Of course, it isn't impossible," said Bob Cherry. "Anybody might know him, I suppose. Only Bunter pretends to know everybody that's talked about."

"He's quite an old pal," said Bunter. "I suppose I'd better go round to the players' entrance?"

"You can get to the dressing-rooms this way," said Johnny Bull; "and we'll watch you go in."

Bunter hesitated a moment.

"All right," he said.

And he made his way towards the exit by which the players had gone.

Wharton & Co. watched him. They were very interested. It would be a great occasion, as Bob Cherry remarked, upon which Bunter was discovered to have been telling the truth. An attendant stopped Bunter at the exit, and the juniors watched him exchange a few words with the man, who then allowed him to pass.

"By jove," said Wharton, "he's gone in!"

Bob Cherry rubbed his eyes.

"I suppose I'm not dreaming?" he remarked. "He must have been telling the truth for once. Well, wonders will never cease!"

Johnny Bull grinned sceptically.

"He could make some excuse for going in," he said. "He might pretend that he had a message for somebody."

"Why, so he could!" said Bob. "I never thought of that."

"Let's get back to the bus!" said Wharton. And the Greyfriars party trooped out, and returned to the waiting motor-bus, where Billy Bunter joined them just in time to avoid being left behind.

Lord Mauleverer took the driver's seat, and the motor-bus swooped along the road at a spanking rate. The Greyfriars crowd burst into song, and their voices rang far on either side of the road as the motor-bus rushed on, with gleaming lights, through the gathering dusk.

Greyfriars was reached all too soon. And the juniors, as they swarmed in, agreed unanimously that the afternoon's excursion had been a tremendous success, and the best thing of the term, and there were cheers in the dusky Close, for Lord Mauleverer.

THE END.

OUR CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE!

Open to All Readers of the "Companion Papers."

H. G. Clarke, 400, Selwyn Street, Christchurch, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers interested in boxing, tennis, amateur journalism, pigeons, and the exchange of back numbers. He would also like a reader in England to supply him with a copy of an amateur magazine.

J. Francis Teo, 24, Macao Street, Singapore, Straits Settlements, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 18-22, anywhere; exchange of stamps. All letters answered.

I. Negus, 27, Tooke Street, Cook's Hill, Newcastle, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and football, ages 11-13.

Miss May R. Hartnell, Yeovil, Port Albert, Kaipara, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to hear news of Raymond Meredith.

Miss Ivy Bailey, 1, Northgate Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth, wishes to correspond with readers overseas, ages 14 upwards. All letters answered.

Dudley M. Pilcher, 34, Dundas Street, Scatoun, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; interested in stamp collecting; he wishes to exchange. All letters answered.

F. Bottomley, 48, Downhills Park Road, Tottenham, N. 15, wants readers and contributors for his typewritten and illustrated magazine, "The Pathfinder"; pass round system. Readers wishing to exchange books should join this correspondent's back-number agency.

Philip Muzlin, 10, Belgrave Road, St. John's Wood, N.W. 8, wishes to hear from readers who are interested in the "Holiday Annual."

Gert P. J. Coetzee, 462, Proes Street, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers in South Africa, especially stamp collectors.

Mahomed Hahili, Jassawala Hall, Warden Road, Bombay, India, wishes to correspond with readers who are interested in stamps, pictures, painting photography, sports, and old stories in the "Magnet."

Harry Kihn, 16, Gordon Street, Garden, Cape Town, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 16-18, in the British Isles, France, and Canada. All letters answered.

Miss Flossie Larson, 49, Pirie Street, South Boulder, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, ages 15-18, anywhere.

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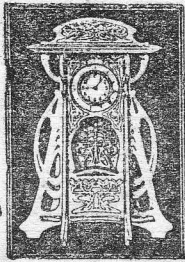
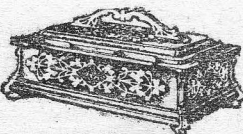
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"THE RIVAL SPORTSMEN!"

(Continued from page 26.)

almost fiercely, and Tony Wagg had recognised the newcomer upon the scene as the suspended football-player, Jem Newbold.

"So that treacherous tyke is still hobnobbing with Courtney—eh?" Tony thought. "I wonder what they are chinwagging about so decidedly?"

Prompted by a sudden impulse, Tony Wagg slipped quietly away from his party and moved through the crowd towards Harry Lestrade's cousin and his companion.

They had chanced to halt near where a crowd was gathering about a sportively-attired tipster, who vowed that for the modest sum of half-a-crown he could give anyone and everyone a "stone-dead certainty" for the next race.

Tony mixed with this throng, so that neither Courtney nor Newbold noticed him,

as he worked his way near them and he caught scraps of what they were saying.

"How the thunder could I help it?" Courtney was snarling savagely. "Didn't come that cropper for pleasure, you fool!"

Then came Newbold's tones, and he said something about "the young cub" and "revenge."

"I'll see I'll have that!" Courtney assured him; and, glancing at his face, Tony saw that it was murderous. "I'll get him before he's many hours older. . . . already got a plan. . . . revenge. . . . before I clear out of the country."

Tony Wagg's face was grave as he turned and left the spot. That the two scoundrels were bent upon striking a last blow at Harry Lestrade the football-trainer felt certain, and his first impulse was to warn his young friend to be upon his guard.

The trainer said nothing to Harry when he rejoined him and the others, however. On second thoughts, he decided that he would keep his own counsel, but place Courtney and Newbold under a strict surveillance.

Knowing Harry Lestrade as he did, Tony Wagg was fairly sure that to caution the boy would be about as effective as pouring

water upon a duck's back. He was too courageous to bother about the possibility of an enemy harming him.

Tony happened to know that Austin Courtney was staying at a smaller hotel almost opposite to the Majestic in the London Road, for he had chanced to see him leaving it that morning.

Knowing he could pick up his trail there, provided he remained in Liverpool for any length of time, the football-trainer purposely allowed himself to get separated from Harry and his other friends, when a move was made from the course and he hired a taxi and drove into Liverpool.

Here Tony went into a post-office and asked to see a local directory. He discovered the name and address of a well-known firm of theatrical costumiers and wig-makers and journeyed to its establishment in Prescott Street.

"Can you disguise me so that my own mother, supposing she were still alive, would not recognise me?" Tony asked of the assistant who stepped forward to attend to him. "I want to play a joke on some friends and give them a surprise."

(To be continued.)

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