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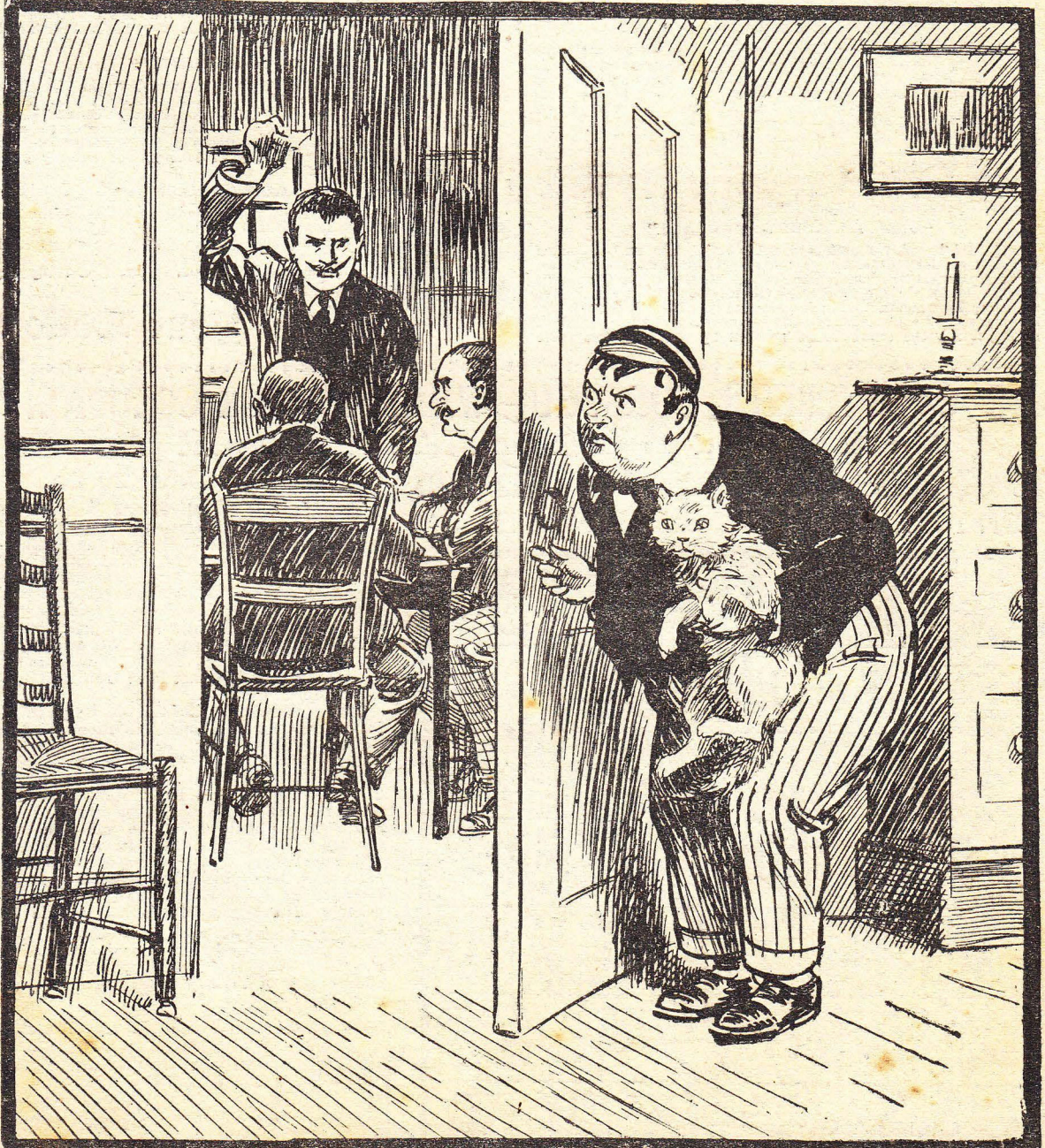
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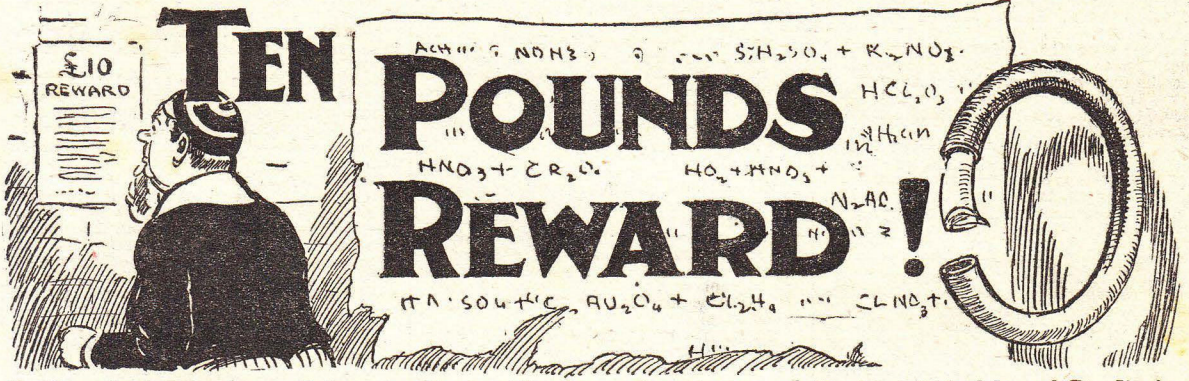
BAGGY TRIMBLE ON THE TRACK OF A MYSTERY !

(A Dramatic moment from the Long Complete St. Jim's Tale Inside.)

THE SECRET OF THE CAT'S COLLAR!

The strange adventure came to Baggly Trimble soon after he had seen that notice!—"Ten Pounds Reward," on the door of the chemist's shop. Baggly is short of cash at the moment—that is why he sets forth in search of the lost blue Persian cat. The adventures he encounters below make thrilling reading!

THRILLING MYSTERY YARN!



A Topping Mystery Tale, dealing with the adventures of Baggly Trimble of St. Jim's.

By Martin Clifford.

(Author of the stories of Tom Merry & Co., now appearing in the "Ger.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
On the Track!

GROUGH!" Baggly Trimble of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's uttered that ejaculation in dismal tones. He had every reason to feel dismal. Beads of perspiration were running in streams down his fat countenance, whilst his clothes were literally sticking to him.

All England was in the grip of a heat-wave, the intensity of which was unprecedented in the annals of meteorology, and the fat Fourth-Former, on account of his excessive avoirdupois, proved a very susceptible victim to the scorching rays of the sun.

Baggly rolled along the dusty Rylcombe Lane, emitting frequent and expressive grunts. He had a rooted objection to exercise of any kind. For once in a way a pass out of gates after lock-up did not appeal to him, but a curt command from Gerald Knox—the bullying prefect of the Sixth Form—would permit of no disobedience. Knox had a drastic way of dealing with disobedient fags. Thus, when the prefect had ordered Baggly Trimble to carry a message to the village for him, the fat junior had uttered no complaint, despite the oppressive heat, but had complied with as much graciousness as the time of day and doubtful honour conferred upon him would permit.

The message delivered, Baggly had rolled schoolwards, grunting and perspiring profusely. As he passed the last shop in Rylcombe Lane—a chemist's—a boldly-displayed notice, offering ten pounds reward, caught his eye. A never-ending state of curiosity with which was equally blended impecuniosity at once prompted him to investigate the notice at close quarters.

"Ten pounds!" he muttered wistfully. "That would buy an awful lot of Mrs. Taggles' ice-cream and ginger-pop! I could do with a dozen just now!"

Eagerly he took in the contents of the placard, which ran thus:

**"£10 REWARD!
LOST!**

A BLUE PERSIAN CAT.

The above sum will be paid to any person returning same to the owner.—Apply within."

Baggly Trimble sniffed.

"Fancy all that beastly fuss over a mouldy cat!" he grunted disappointedly. "What a waste of money!" Wish I could find the cat, though!"

And, with another grunt, he turned on his heel and ambled along the road to St. Jim's. He had scarcely travelled a hundred yards, when there was a terrific clap of thunder, immediately followed by a heavy downpour of rain.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Baggly, as the spattering rain began to drench his clothes. "This is the blessed limit! The rotten weather experts promised us rain three days ago, and we never saw a drop. To-day they forecasted scorching hot weather, without any chances of rain, and here it is!"

He made a grimace as a trickle of rain-water commenced to run down between his neck and his collar. Already he was drenched. The intermittent claps of thunder promised something more than a heavy shower, and Baggly Trimble began to feel alarmed.

Gazing about him for a temporary place of shelter, the fat St. Jim's junior caught sight of a cottage about twenty yards to his left. He rolled towards it.

Splashing through the mud and water—for the downpour was terrific—Trimble darted up a bank as fast as his little fat legs would carry him and down the other side. In his eagerness not to lose sight of the cottage, he did not pay much attention to where he was treading. His negligence cost him dear. Of a sudden his feet met nothing more solid than thin air, and with an exclamation of dismay, the St. Jim's junior pitched forward.

Splash! The force of gravity insists that any body hurled through space must return to earth. Baggly Trimble proved no exception to the rule. He suddenly found himself sprawling on his hands and knees in a small hollow which contained about three inches of water.

"Yow-ow! Grough!" he gasped breathlessly. "Ow! I believe I've broken my back or my collar-bone! Wow!"

Scrambling to his feet, Baggly Trimble felt himself gingerly all over, and then turned to all points of the compass to get a glimpse of the cottage. Having found his bearings, so to speak, he recommenced his rolling gait to that haven of refuge. The rain still lashed down with unabated fury, and Baggly's teeth were beginning to chatter. Meow-ow-ow!

The fat junior nearly jumped out of his skin as there echoed out from close at hand the unmistakable cry of a cat and dog respectively.

Meow-wow-ssssshhh! The cry of the cat seemed to come from a clump of trees about a yard away from the spot on which Trimble was standing, followed as a natural sequence the fierce, barking reply of the dog.

Then something resembling a ball of fluff seemed to whiz by the astonished junior, which was immediately followed by the less active figure of an old dog. But Baggly Trimble had no eyes for the dog. He was staring in open-mouthed amazement at a blue cat which, with back well arched and eyes flashing dangerously, had taken up a fresh position, and appeared to be eager to continue its choice flow of feline epithets

against the snapping and snarling of the old dog.

"My hat!" exclaimed Trimble excitedly. "It's the lost blue Persian cat. The ten pounds reward is mine!"

Trembling now that so useful a sum of money seemed to be his for the mere asking, at it were, the fat junior forgot that it was still pouring with rain; forgot that it was quite time he presented himself to Gerald Knox, of the Sixth, at St. Jim's. His obtuse brain was working overtime, figuratively speaking, to formulate a scheme whereby he could capture the Persian cat.

Trimble tried a little gentle persuasion. "Puss, puss, puss!" he murmured soothingly. "Good cat! Good—Here, where are you off to, you little beast?"

To Baggly's great indignation and dismay, the blue Persian cat, as soon as it saw the fat junior advancing, bolted. And the dog, forgetting for the nonce its age, and thinking, perhaps, that Baggly presented an easier victim than the fierce blue Persian, snapped playfully at the St. Jim's junior's nether garments.

"Yaroooh! Yow! Keep off, you measly mongrel!" roared Baggly, backing away from the dog. "Gerraway! Brrrrrr!"

He made a threatening gesture with his right fist, and the old dog thinking, no doubt, that the fist contained a stone or some similar missile, stopped dead in its tracks, turned swiftly, and, with tail slunk between its legs, made off as fast as old age and a broken wind would permit.

"Where's that blessed cat?" Baggly Trimble began to scour the short undergrowth in the immediate vicinity. To make assurance doubly sure that the cat did not escape him a second time, he crawled backwards and forwards upon his hands and knees.

In five minutes he presented a striking spectacle. Mud was clinging to him from head to foot, whilst his drenched clothes shrank around his fat, ungainly figure after the fashion of a bathing-suit.

But the cat was nowhere to be seen. "Just my rotten luck!" growled Trimble, as he rose to his feet at last.

Glancing upward at the rain-swept sky, the fat junior decided to seek shelter and a run-down at the cottage. Breaking into a rub, he came on a level with the tiny garden gate outside the cottage. Then he stopped, and rubbed his eyes in amazement.

Cringing by the gate-post was the drenched figure of a cat. A second look and Baggly Trimble emitted a whoop of triumph. It was the blue Persian!

Fearful lest he should allow his prize to escape him a second time, the fat St. Jim's junior literally made a dive at the creature and clasped it, almost lovingly, in his embrace.

"What a stroke of luck!" exclaimed Trimble triumphantly, hugging the now

struggling cat beneath his coat. "You don't escape me a second time, you beauty!"

Undecided whether he should make straight for the house of the chemist to claim the ten pounds reward, or first make himself presentable at the cottage, the fat St. Jim's junior finally decided upon the latter course.

Pushing open the garden gate, he walked boldly up to the front door, and knocked. But the only sound of life that reached his ears was the plaintive meow-ow of the imprisoned cat, as it struggled to free itself.

Rat-tat, tat!
This time Baggy Trimble knocked louder. But no one appeared in answer to his summons. He knocked for the third time, and in doing so, leaned against the cottage door. To his surprise, it swung inward.

"That's jolly funny!" muttered Trimble. "No one apparently at home, and the door open. Think I'll go in and wait for a bit."

Without further waste of time, the fat junior entered the cottage, and walked into the first room on the right-hand side of the narrow passage. A gas-stove in the old-fashioned fireplace attracted his attention. Paying small heed to the fact that he had no right to be on the premises, and that he certainly had no business to light the gas-fire, Trimble took off his jacket and placed it in front of the glowing warmth from the gas-fire.

The blue Persian cat immediately curled up before the grateful heat, and was soon fast asleep. The fat junior was not slow to follow the example the animal had set. Selecting a comfortable armchair, he sprawled his ungainly figure in it, and commenced to doze.

For a quarter of an hour Baggy Trimble snored softly, the Persian cat keeping him company with a steady purr of comfort. Then the junior suddenly awoke to hear voices coming from another room in the cottage, seemingly the one next to that which he occupied.

Baggy Trimble sat bolt upright. "People of the house are in, after all," he mused. "Perhaps they wouldn't like to think I had entered of my own accord. These village people are jolly suspicious. Don't think I'll stop to explain—ahem!"

Hastily grabbing his coat from before the gas-fire the junior donned it in a twinkling. Then he made a grab at the blue Persian cat, and, with the animal again beneath his jacket, softly crossed the floor. The captive cat, not liking its repose disturbed in such a violent manner, immediately began to meow!

Baggy squeezed it closer to his fat person. "Sshh, you brute!" he whispered.

Closing the door softly after him, the junior tiptoed along the passage. The voices came from a room on his right. One voice was raised above the others.

To Trimble's chagrin the door of the room wherein the speakers were sitting was half open. To pass, it would mean immediate discovery. If the tenants liked to cut up rusty Baggy knew that he would be in for a warm time.

Entering another person's house uninvited, burning the gas, and making oneself generally at home was a serious offence. Baggy saw that now. He usually did see things when it was too late!

"Oh crumbs!" he growled. "I can't—"
He broke off abruptly as a loud-voiced gentleman in the room along the passage commenced to speak. But the fact that startled and interested Trimble most was that the speaker was referring to a blue Persian cat.

Greatly interested, the St. Jim's junior crept closer to the open door. And then his little round eyes gleamed with excitement. Round a table in the room were seated three men; and they presented as rascally a trio of humanity as Baggy Trimble had ever seen. That they were foreigners he had no doubt, first, from the fact that two of them spoke with a pronounced foreign accent, and, secondly, on account of their swarthy complexions.

The tallest of the three banged his fist down upon the table, to give emphasis to his words.

"The blue Persian cat must not on any account be restored to its owner!" he declared.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Shock for Trimble!

"GREAT Scott!"
Baggy Trimble mentally voiced the exclamation as he swiftly withdrew from the sight of the three men in the room.

"Must not be restored to its owner!" he muttered. "That's where these foreign guys get left! It jolly well is going to be restored to the owner, and, what's more, Bagley Trimble is going to get the ten pounds reward! Something jolly queer on here!"

He listened attentively.
"If that cat gets back to its owner we shall be a few hundreds the poorer and the boss a few hundred thousand!" went on the voice of the man who had made the previous statement. "It was jolly careless of you, Hertz, to let the brute jump out of your arms after all the trouble we had had to capture it!"

The fellow addressed as Hertz uttered an imprecation.

"Sorry, Hooken!" he apologised. "I've done some rare things in my time, but I have never been a catkeeper before to-day. The brute was out of my arms before I could turn round!"

"Yes," replied Hooken, "we've had all that before. The thing is, we have got to recapture it—understand?"

Two heads nodded in assent.
"It can't be far away," went on Hooken. "It was about a hundred yards from here, wasn't it, Hertz, when the blessed animal sprang into the hedge?"

"Sure!" assented Hertz. "And I've scoured the whole neighbourhood ever since; but the brute might have been swallowed up in an earthquake for all I could see of it. As you have just remarked, though, it can't be very far away."

"He, he, he!" grinned Trimble softly. "It isn't!"

And he tightened his hold on the blue Persian cat.
Meow-ow!

In his eagerness to assure himself that the



To Baggy's dismay, the blue Persian cat, as soon as it saw the fat junior advancing, bolted. And the dog, forgetting its other enemy, made a snap at the porpoise of St. Jim's. (See Chapter 1.)

cat was not very far away, Trimble had, unknown to himself, gripped the Persian rather tightly. And the cat was not slow to give voice to its objections.

Meow-ow!
"Hallo! That was a cat!" exclaimed Hooken, starting to his feet. "Shush, you brute!" hissed Baggy Trimble, in alarm. "You've given the whole show away!"

A second later a face peered round the door of the room, and stared out in amazement at the sight of a schoolboy holding a cat—a blue Persian cat—under his jacket. "What the—" began Hooken, for he it was.

But Baggy Trimble did not wait for an introduction. The thought of the ten pounds reward spurred him into action. From the previous conversation he understood that the rascally trio wanted the cat for a purpose which he could not at present fathom. He wanted the ten pounds reward—that was the uppermost thought in his mind.

"Here, stop, young shaver!" roared Hooken, as Baggy turned upon his heel. "That's my cat! Stop!"

"Yah!" yelled Baggy Trimble, darting along the passage and out through the first open door he came across.

Fortunately for him, he had proceeded direct to the scullery, and from thence he rushed into the little garden at the back of the cottage. From behind him came the clatter of footsteps and raised voices.

"Oh dear!" gasped Baggy, looking over his shoulder. "The beasts! Yah! I'll beat them! They won't do me out of my rights!"

The rain had by this time abated, and the junior made good progress over the muddy ground. Still fortunate, he descried a gate at the end of the garden, which he guessed would lead him somewhere near Rylcombe Lane. Showing remarkable agility for a person of his bulk, Baggy Trimble scrambled over the gate.

Then for a fleeting moment he paused to take breath.

About twenty yards behind three men were racing in his direction, shouting and waving their arms excitedly.

"Stop!" bellowed Hooken, shaking his fist at the fat junior. "Stop! D'you hear?"

Baggy Trimble heard all right. The big voice of Mr. Hooken would have awakened the seven sleepers of Ephesus, but, for once in a way, the fat Fourth-Former came out strong. He even paused to shake his fist in return at the irate Mr. Hooken before again taking to his heels.

The vision of ten pounds reward was before Baggy Trimble's eyes, and it produced what was for him a terrific burst of speed.

Squelching mud and water at every step, the fat junior fled for his life—and ten pounds reward!

"Grough!" he grunted as he pounded along. "The beasts—the rotters!"

The trio in chase were now rapidly drawing near to the fleeing junior, and the expressions on their faces boded ill for Trimble when they caught him.

To make matters worse, the blue Persian cat had, somehow, worked loose from the "stranglehold" the junior had put upon it, and was struggling frantically to free itself.

"Quiet, you beast!" roared Trimble, making a grab at a flashing paw which was about to leave a trade-mark on his face, so to speak. "Keep still! Yowp!"

Another vindictive paw had flashed out. This time it found a billet, and Trimble nearly dropped the cat altogether as its claws scratched across his forearm. But the ten pounds reward still dangled before his eyes. At that moment it would take a lot of scratches to make him give up the idea of claiming it. He quickened his pace.

The pursuers were now only ten yards in his rear, and as Trimble glanced back over his shoulder he gasped with alarm. Gritting his teeth, he plunged on. Then he gave a whoop of triumph. Not more than twenty yards away was the chemist's shop outside which the reward poster was displayed.

"Stop, you young scoundrel!" came the howling voice of the angry Mr. Hooken. "I'll flay you when I get a hold of you!"

The threat served to increase Trimble's pace. Gasping painfully for breath, he covered the remaining distance in record time. Without glancing behind him, the fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's dashed through a small gate which gave access to

"The New House Conspiracy!"—Next Week's Tale of St. Jim's!

a passage that ran alongside the chemist's shop, and feverishly rang the electric bell of the house beyond.

Even as he did so the door opened, and a tall, well-dressed man made his appearance.

Crash!
In his haste, the newcomer upon the scene was oblivious to the presence of Baggy Trimble until he came into painful contact with that junior's considerable avoirdupois. He was sent staggering to the ground like a ninepin.

"Ow! Bless my soul! Yowp!"
Still holding the cat in a vice-like grip Baggy Trimble, gasping for breath, stared down at the man on the ground.
"I'm sorry, sir!" he spluttered. "Quick! Your cat! Men after it! Look!"

Following the junior's outstretched finger the well-dressed man, still reclining in a dazed heap on the ground, saw three villainous faces appear over the edge of the side gate. The next moment they disappeared.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "What does all this mean? What are you doing here, boy? And how dare you knock me over? How—"

His words trailed off as his eyes alighted on the blue Persian cat which Baggy Trimble was clutching to his breast.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "My cat!"

"Yes, sir!" replied Baggy eagerly. "And my reward?"

Scrambling to his feet, the man viewed Baggy Trimble's muddled appearance and a still more muddled and bedraggled Persian cat with great interest.

"Bless my soul!" he repeated. "Come inside, my boy! If that's my cat—and it looks uncommonly like it—then you shall certainly have the reward!"

Giving vent to a huge sigh, partly of relief at having escaped the threatening hands of the trio who had pursued him, and principally of satisfaction at having the ten pounds practically within his grasp, Baggy Trimble entered the house of the chemist.

"Your cat, sir!" he said, handing the struggling Persian over to the chemist. "I've had an awful job to trace it, you know, but I'm a smart chap at the detective bizney. Don't forget the reward—ahem!"

"Ahem!" echoed the chemist, as, switching on the electric hall light, he critically examined the blue Persian cat. "But I'm afraid, my boy, you have made a mistake. This cat is certainly a blue Persian, but it is not mine!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Secret Formula!

WHAT! Baggy Trimble blurted out the exclamation, for the moment thunderstruck.

The St. Jim's junior reeled against the wall. Mouth and eyes agape, he was for the moment incapable of speech.

"I am sorry, my boy, for all the trouble you seem to have put yourself to," explained the chemist; "but as I just remarked, the cat is certainly not mine."

"Oh, lor!" groaned Trimble. He had not yet recovered from the shock. "N-n-not y-yours, sir?"

"No, my lad," said the chemist gently. "However, so that there can be no possible mistake in the matter I will call my wife."

So saying, he handed the cat back to the astonished and crushed St. Jim's junior, and went to fetch his wife.

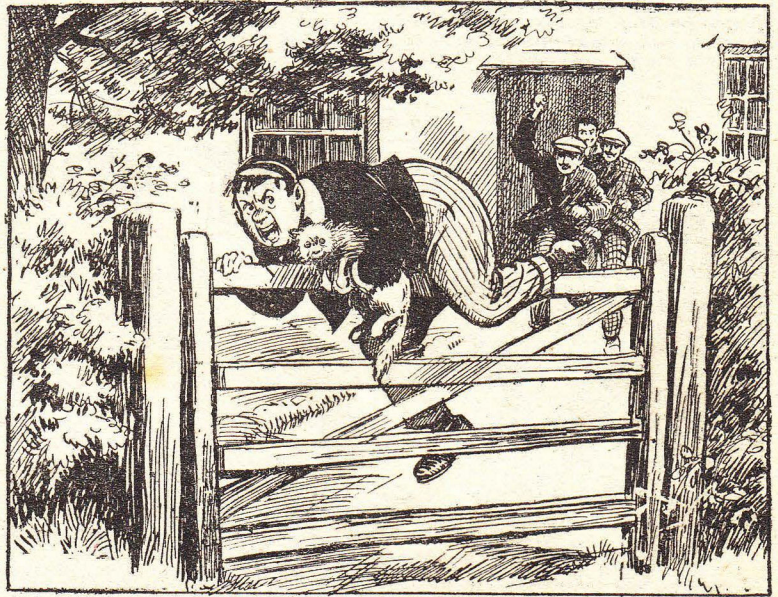
When the good lady appeared, a few moments later, she in turn critically inspected the blue Persian. Baggy watched her, hoping with all the strength he could muster that the chemist had been wrong. But the disappointed look on the lady's face told him before she told him herself that the cat was not hers.

"No, my boy," she said, handing back the Persian to Baggy Trimble. "That is not my cat. But where did you find it?"

The fat Fourth-Former, now very depressed, told his thrilling adventures of the evening. Mechanically he commenced to fondle the cat, and then something happened. His moving fingers, stroking the neck of the Persian, felt something hard about its throat. Carelessly he brushed the fur of the cat the wrong way, and then he gasped.

About the neck of the animal was a thin, cylindrical metal collar!

"Look here, sir!" suddenly exclaimed



Baggy Trimble darted out of the cottage and down the path to a small gate at the end of the garden. Showing great agility for a person of his bulk, he scrambled over into the roadway beyond, just as the men came running out of the doorway of the scullery. (See Chapter 2.)

Baggy Trimble, revealing to the astonished chemist and his wife the metal collar.

"What do you make of that?"
The chemist took the cat in his arms and examined the metal collar. His fingers came into contact with the patent fastener, and both ends of the collar flew open. As they did so something dropped to the floor.

Baggy Trimble immediately stooped to retrieve it.

"Only a piece of paper, sir," he said disappointedly, as he unrolled a thin strip of parchment paper. "Hallo, there's an odd jumble of figures and things on the blessed thing!"

The chemist appeared interested.

"That's certainly strange!" he remarked.

"May I look, my boy?"

"Certainly, sir!" replied Baggy Trimble.

"Blessed if I can make head or tail of it!"

The chemist took the piece of parchment paper, glanced at the jumble of figures and letters penned in ink upon it, and then started back as if he had been shot.

"Why, this paper contains the formula of a special dye preparation which I have been expecting from Holland for some days!" he exclaimed excitedly. "What an amazing thing!"

As he spoke there came a startling rat-at-tat-tat at the front door.

Crossing the hall the chemist opened the door.

"Hallo, Raymond!" he greeted a newcomer, who, with features ghastly pale, leaned against the lintel of the door. "Why, what on earth is the matter with you?"

The other staggered in at the doorway, and by the light of the hall globe Baggy Trimble could see a wound in his forehead.

"I've been robbed!" gasped the man addressed as Raymond. "Robbed within shouting distance practically of my destination!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the chemist. "Sit down, my dear fellow! There's a nasty gash in your head!"

"I know—I know!" muttered Raymond painfully. "But it's of slight importance. Listen, Mr. Taplow! Phone up the police at once, and ask them to send a special squad of police down here. The rogues must be captured, and the formula—the governor's formula—must be restored! Lose no time, I beg of you, sir!"

"The formula!" echoed the chemist, blinking. "Are you the selected messenger of the governor, Raymond? Were you bringing me the precious formula?"

"Yes, yes," replied the other wearily. "And it's been stolen from me—stolen a few yards from your home, sir! I shall never forgive myself, and—"

He broke off short as he encountered the smiling countenance of the chemist. An angry frown crossed his face.

"It is no laughing matter, Mr. Taplow, I assure you!"

"When you know what I've got in my hand, here, Raymond," said the chemist cheerfully, "you will smile, too."

Without more ado Mr. Taplow held out the single sheet of parchment paper whereon was inscribed the precious formula. As the special messenger's eyes fell upon it he gaped in wonderment, and looked from one to the other of the silent trio—Mr. Taplow, his wife, and Baggy Trimble. Finally his eyes returned to the formula as if it fascinated him.

"He, he, he!"

Baggy Trimble broke the spell with a fat chuckle. He could afford to laugh now. Although obtuse, the egregious Fourth-Former was not blind to the fact that he had, after all, rendered somebody a great service. He visibly shone with importance.

"You must thank this junior boy from St. Jim's," explained Mr. Taplow, "for seeing that formula in your own hands. But for him, no doubt, the rogues who robbed you would have found it again. It is evident that they did not have time to examine the cat when they stole it from you. According to Trimble here, who overheard them scheming together, the blue Persian must have jumped out of its captor's embrace a few moments after he had stolen it."

"But how did you know anything about a blue Persian cat?" exclaimed Raymond, in amazement. "The governor purposely refrained from letting you know by letter in case the rival firm got wind of it and intercepted it."

Mr. Taplow smiled.
"There again Master Trimble fills the bill," he said. "By a very remarkable coincidence my wife has missed her prize blue Persian cat, and thinking that it might have merely wandered away from the house she caused me to publish several posters offering a reward for its return. Master Trimble, a few moments ago, brought me a blue Persian cat, and at first I thought that it was ours. On inspection, however, it turned out to be another one. It was just before your arrival here that Trimble accidentally discovered the cat possessed a collar. And—well, the rest you can guess."

"Extraordinary!" gasped Raymond. "The paid rogues of our rival firm have been beaten after all their trouble. They way-laid me along the loneliest part of Ryleombs (Continued on page 27.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 252.

WAR WITH THE FIFTH!

Valentine Mornington, the new skipper of the Fourth-Form, rises to the occasion in dealing with Hansom's great fagging campaign. His method is unique, and proves very effective, and the Fourth have to agree that their captain has performed his duty to his Form with satisfaction!

MORNINGTON TO THE RESCUE!

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"Tir for Tat!"

A Special Long Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., The Cheery Chums of Rookwood, dealing with the amazing war between the Fourth and Fifth.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Unpleasant for Morny!

RESINE!" Valentine Mornington stared. Morny had just come up to his study—No. 4 in the Fourth—and he was about to push open the door when that surprising word, chalked on the panels, caught his eye.

"Resine!" Mornington paused, and blinked at the remarkable word. He did not quite understand it.

"Hallo, that you, Morny?" came Kit Erroll's cheery voice from within Study No. 4.

"Yes. Come out here a minute, Kit!"

"Anything up?"

"Yes."

Erroll came out of the study, looking a little surprised. Mornington pointed to the chalked letters on the outside of the door.

"Look at that!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What the thump does it mean?"

"Somebody's chalked it there," remarked Erroll—"somebody rather weak in orthography, I should say. Cheeky ass, whoever he was!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. came along the passage from the stairs. It was tea-time, and the Fistical Four were bound for the study. Arthur Edward Lovell had a bundle under his arm, and Raby was carrying, very carefully, a bag of eggs. The four chums stopped at the sight of Morny and Erroll staring at their study door.

"Hallo, what's that game?" asked Newcome.

"Only some cheeky ass!" said Erroll hastily. "I'll rub it out, Morny—"

Lovell blinked at the chalked word. "Resin," he said. "Resin, with an extra 'e' on the end. What the dickens does it mean? Why should anybody chalk 'Resin' on Morny's door?"

Jimmy Silver smiled, but made no remark. But Raby chimed in, with a grin:

"Put the accent on the second syllable, Lovell, old top. Then you'll get at it."

"Resine!" repeated Lovell. "Oh, resign! I see!"

And he chortled. "Resign!" grinned Newcome. "It's a message from somebody who's not satisfied with you as junior captain, Morny."

Morny's brow darkened.

"I think I can guess who it was, from the spelling," he said.

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"Tubby Muffin, of course!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Well, you're not going to resign, Morny, because Tubby Muffin isn't satisfied. Stand him a bun, and he'll think you're the best junior-skipper Rookwood ever had!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" But Mornington did not smile. He was evidently

deeply exasperated by that cheeky message from the fattest junior at Rookwood. It touched a tender spot, as it were.

Valentine Mornington had not been junior captain long, but a good many of the fellows who had voted for him had come to the conclusion that they had made a mistake in voting Morny into Jimmy Silver's old place.

Many of the fellows, who had thought that a change was a good idea, confided to one another now that things had gone better in Jimmy Silver's time.

"Muffin, of course," growled Mornington, "the cheeky cad! I'll talk to him about this!"

He strode away towards Tubby Muffin's study.

The hapless Tubby had chalked that message on his door, very surreptitiously, and doubtless firmly believed that he had left no clue behind to his identity. He was not aware that his distinct originality in matters of spelling furnished a clue that could not be missed.

"Morny!" called out Erroll, rather uneasily.

He did not like the look on his chum's face. Morny had a savage temper when it was roused, and it seemed roused now.

The junior captain did not heed his chum. He strode on to Study No. 2, and threw the door open. Erroll went back into his own room, with a troubled brow. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged a glance, and followed Mornington to Study No. 2.

There were four juniors in that study at tea—Higgs, Jones minor, Teddy Grace, and Reginald Muffin, otherwise known as Tubby. All four looked up as Morny's frowning face appeared in the doorway.

"Hallo!" said Teddy Grace coolly. "Ever heard of the ancient custom of knocking at a door, Morny?"

"Rot! I want to speak to Muffin."

"Here I am, Morny!" said Tubby affably. "If you want me to come to tea, old chap. I'm your man. I shall be finished tea here in a few minutes."

"I don't want you to come to tea, you fat rascal!"

"Eh?"

"You've been chalking on my door!"

"Not at all, old chap! I—I don't want you to resign—I don't, really!" stammered Tubby Muffin. "Pi-pip-pip-perhaps it was Jimmy Silver—"

"What?" exclaimed Jimmy, looking in over Morny's shoulder.

Tubby jumped.

"I—I didn't see you, Jimmy, old chap! I—I meant perhaps it was Lovell!"

"Me?" roared Arthur Edward. "Oh dear! Nunno, not you, old fellow—certainly not! Pip-pip-perhaps it was Erroll, or—or Oswald, or—or somebody, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You cheeky, fat cad!" exclaimed Mornington angrily. "What do you mean by it?"

"Nothing at all!" gasped Tubby, edging behind Teddy Grace's chair. "I—I never meant anything, you know!"

"Well, I mean to give you a licking for your cheek!" growled Mornington.

"Oh, I—I say—"

"Hold on, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver quietly.

Mornington gave him an angry look. "You needn't chip in here, Silver. You're not skipper now, if you want reminding of that!"

"I don't," answered Jimmy Silver. "But Tubby isn't worth licking; and, besides, he's got a grievance."

"Yes, rather!" said Tubby Muffin, more confidently now he had found a champion. "You ought to resign, Mornington!"

"What?"

"What good are you as captain, anyhow?" demanded Tubby, blinking at the enraged Morny. "You let the Fifth fag us. The Fifth Form never fagged the Fourth in Jimmy Silver's time. They do now. Well, you ought to resign if you can't stand up for the rights of the Form, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Morny!"

"Why, you—"

"Easy does it, old chap!" murmured Jimmy Silver soothingly. "What's the good of scrapping? Let's keep that for the Fifth now they've got their ears up!"

"You can't bully in this study, Morny!" remarked Higgs. "If you're looking for trouble, there's the Fifth waiting for you."

"Hear, hear!" came from Jones minor. The Fistical Four were all in the study now. They were between Morny and Tubby Muffin, and evidently intended to see that the fat Tubby was not licked. Mornington's eyes glittered, but with an effort, he controlled his temper. He gave an angry, disdainful glance round the study, and strode out into the passage.

"He, he, he!" followed him from Tubby Muffin.

"Shut up, you fat sweep!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Morny ought to resign, you know, and you ought to be skipper again," said Tubby. "I'll vote for you. I wouldn't have voted for that swanking cad before, only he stood me some tuck. It was really bribery and corruption, you know, and it wasn't right, was it? I can't help despising him. Look here—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Jimmy Silver left the study with his chums. Morny's door slammed as the Fistical Four passed Study No. 4, and Arthur Edward Lovell indulged in a chuckle as the chums went on to their own quarters.

An Extra Long Complete Tale of Rookwood Next Week!

"He's rubbed it off his door!" he remarked. "Poor old Morny! He don't seem to be making much of a success of it!"

"He hasn't really had a chance yet," said Jimmy.

"Oh, you're an ass, Jimmy! If you put up again, you'd get nine in ten of the votes!"

"Well, I sha'n't try!" said Jimmy.

"Give Morny a chance. We agreed to give him a chance, didn't we?"

"He's had his chance," said Raby, "and precious little he made of it!"

"Oh, bow-wow! Let's have tea!"

And the Fistical Four set to work getting tea, and the subject of Mornington was dropped.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putty's Idea.

VALENTINE MORNINGTON'S handsome face was dark as he sat down at the tea-table in Study No. 4.

Erroll was silent, but good-humoured.

He was accustomed to tolerating patiently the variable moods of his chum, "I've a jolly good mind to chuck up!" growled Mornington, breaking the silence at last.

"I shouldn't do that, old chap!"

"I haven't really had a chance of making good yet," said Mornington restively. "Tain't all roses being junior skipper. I've a good mind to go along now and give Muffin a thumpin' good hidin'! But he's only said what the other fellows are thinking—I know that."

"Well, Tubby's got a grievance," said Erroll, with a smile, "Hansom of the Fifth fagged him—"

"The fat cad oughtn't to have fagged for Hansom!"

"I know that; but Tubby isn't exactly a hero. Hansom and Lumsden and Talboys had him in their study and licked him. Now, the Fourth don't fag for the Fifth," said Erroll. "We're not going to stand it. Something has got to be done about it, Morny!"

"And it's up to me, you mean?" grunted Mornington.

"Well, yes. You're junior captain, and it's up to you to take the lead and give the Fifth a lesson," said Erroll, frankly.

"Hallo! What on earth's that?"

"That" was a peculiar sound from the passage.

"Yow-ow-ow! Ochone! Yaroooh! Oh, oh, oh—ow!"

"It's Flynn!" grunted Morny.

Erroll opened the door and looked out. A good many other doors had opened, too.

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn of the Classical Fourth was coming along the passage, rubbing his hands dolorously and uttering sounds of woe.

"What's the row, Flynn?" called out Conroy from Study No. 3.

"Ochone!"

"Bootles been licking you?" asked Erroll sympathetically.

"Sure, it was the Fifth!"

"Hallo! Fagging again?" exclaimed Conroy.

"Yis, entirely!" groaned Flynn. "Sure, I've got something to say to Morny. Where is the thafe of the worruld?"

Flynn looked in at the door of No. 4, and Mornington gave him a surly glance.

"You omadhau!" shouted Flynn.

"What?" snapped Morny.

"Ye spalpeen!"

"What are you babbling about?"

"Sure, I've been fagged!" yelled Flynn, in wrath and indignation. "Lumsden and Brown major, bedad, told me to fetch a cricket-bat, begorra, and laid into me with a stump when I wouldn't go! Call yourself a skipper! Phwat are ye going to do about it? Think Jimmy Silver would have let the Fifth fag us and rag us?"

And, having relieved his feelings with those emphatic remarks, Patrick O'Donovan meandered on to his own study, still rubbing his hands and yowing and wowing.

"Yah! Resign!" came a yell from Tubby Muffin along the passage.

Mornington kicked his door shut.

There was a grim silence in Study No. 4 as Morny and Erroll went on with their tea.

Morny had plenty of food for uncomfortable thought.

Since he had been junior captain the

Fifth had renewed their ancient claim to fag the juniors—a claim fiercely disputed by the Fourth.

In Jimmy Silver's time, certainly, Hansom and Co. had been given as good as they gave, and they had found it judicious to let the Fourth alone. Now they had their ears up again with a vengeance. Jimmy Silver was dutifully standing aside, leaving the lead to be taken by Morny, loyally prepared to back up the new captain to any extent. But the new captain was rather at a loss. It was not easy to decide how to deal with the presumptions of the Fifth.

Hansom and Co. were determined to assert what they were pleased to consider their rights; and they were setting to work with some strategy. They had "tried it on" with the Fistical Four, and failed dismally. But with Tubby Muffin they had been successful; and so the ice was broken, as Hansom expressed it to his chums, and the principle established.

Flynn was the next victim; and though he hadn't actually fagged, he had been licked for refusing to fag, which came to much the same thing.

Licking the Fifth in return was too large an order. The big seniors of the Fifth were rather too hefty for that.

Mornington wondered what Jimmy Silver would have done in his place. It was quite certain that the former junior captain would have devised some scheme for bringing the heroes of the Fifth to reason.

There was a tap at the door as Morny finished tea. He took no heed of it, but Erroll called out—"Come in!"

It was Teddy Grace who came in.

Morny did not even look at him. Putty of the Fourth was smiling and good-humoured as usual, but Morny was anything but good-humoured just then.

"More trouble with the fifth?" remarked Putty.

"Yes—we've seen Flynn!" said Erroll, with a slight smile.

"What are you going to do about it, Morny?"

"Find out!" was Morny's polite reply.

Teddy Grace coughed.

"I've dropped in to make a suggestion," he observed.

"You can drop out again!"

"So I will, when I've made my suggestion!" answered Putty, with undiminished good-humour. "This won't do, Morny, you know! Hansom is letting alone the chaps who are too hefty for him, and biding his time. But he's getting the Fourth to fag—some of them. Tubby's been told to go to his study and clear up!"

"Is he goin'?" snapped Morny.

"Well, I've told him not to; but he's afraid of getting another licking, so I fancy he'll go."

"I'll thrash him if he does!"

"No, you won't old top!" said Putty cheerfully.

"Who'll stop me?" demanded Mornington, with a glitter in his eyes.

"Well, I will, for one—and I fancy most of the fellows will stop you fast enough! That isn't the way. We've got to stop the Fifth."

"Well, anyhow, that's my business, not yours!"

"But you seem so jolly slow getting on with your business, Morny! That's why I'm going to offer a suggestion."

"You can keep it!"

"Oh, let Putty run on!" said Erroll.

"He has good ideas sometimes. What's your suggestion, Putty?"

"It's a ripping, good idea!" said Putty modestly. "I think of things, you know. But it will need all the fellows to back up to carry it out, and they'll back up if Morny calls on them."

Mornington's brow cleared a little.

"You can run on," he said.

"Thanks; I will! The Fifth have got their ears up, and they've got to get their dashed ears down again. That's agreed, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"We can't—ahem!—lick them; they are too hefty for that. But they claim to fag the Fourth; and that's a claim they've got to give up. Well, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; but I don't quite follow—"

"If the Fifth fag the Fourth, why shouldn't the Fourth fag the Fifth?"

"Eh?"

"That's the stunt!"

"But—"

"I don't say they'll fag if we order 'em!" grinned Putty. "I don't mean that. But suppose we catch Hansom on his own—"

"Yes?"

"Yank him along to this quarter, where his friends can't rescue him—"

"Oh!"

"And fag him!" said Putty.

"He wouldn't fag!"

"Then we'll try the same method with him that he tried with Tubby—lick him till he does fag!" said Putty cheerfully.

"That's the stunt. We'll make him clean up grates and wash teacups—"

"Great Scott!"

"And fag him till he goes down on his knees and begs pardon, and signs a paper—"

"Signs a paper?" yelled Erroll.

"Yes, signs a paper giving up his claim to fag the Fourth—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He wouldn't!" gasped Mornington.

"He might be persuaded to—by shaving his eyebrows off—"

"His—his eyebrows!"

"Certainly; and his hair!" said Putty.

"Before he was quite bald, I am sure he would agree!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in Study No. 4. Putty grinned at the junior captain complacently.

"Rather a nobby stunt—what?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes, if it will work!"

"That's for you to manage, Morny! I've only made the suggestion, you know. Think it over."

And Putty of the Fourth lounged out of the study. Mornington looked at his chums and smiled.

"Not a bad idea—what?" he remarked.

"Ripping!" said Erroll, laughing.

"It's a go!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hansom is Satisfied!

EDWARD HANSOM, the captain of the Fifth, was looking quite cheery as he came into his study with his bat under his arm.

Lumsden and Talboys followed him in, with equally cheery looks.

Reginald Muffin was in the study!

Muffin, certainly, was not ordinarily a person whom it was delightful to behold. There was a plentiful lack of appreciation in his own Form for the delights of his society. But on the present occasion, in Hansom's study, he was, as it were, a symbol.

He was of the Fourth, and he was fagging for the Fifth! He was the sign of Hansom's victory.

Tubby, however, was not looking cheery. He was fagging for the Fifth by Hansom's lofty order, lest worse should befall him. The junior captain had failed to put Hansom's ears down; and Tubby was not in want of another licking with a cricket-stump. So he was fagging with a deep sense of injury. It was no wonder that he had chalked "Resine!" on Morny's door. He was feeling inclined to take much more drastic measures than that if such had been possible.

He gave the Fifth-Formers a dark look.

But Hansom of the Fifth did not intend to have dark looks from his fag. He took Tubby Muffin by a fat ear.

"What are you scowling about?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

"Now, then—"

"Pip-pip-please, I—I wasn't scowling!" wailed Tubby Muffin. "Leggo my ear, you beast!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, please, Hansom!"

"That's better!" grinned Hansom, releasing Tubby's fat ear. "I don't want any cheek from my fag, Muffin!"

"Ow!"

"Why, you've broken one of the cups, you clumsy young villain!"

"Pip-pip-please, I c-c-couldn't help it!" gasped Tubby.

"Give me that stump, Lumsden!"

"Here you are, old top!"
Whack!
"Yaroooh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Oh, you rotter!"
"What?"
"I—I mean, d-d-don't!"
"If you break any more of my crocks, Muffin, I'll scarp you!" said Hansom sternly.
"I can't have fags breaking crocks in my study. You've got to replace that cup!"
"Ow!"
"Bring a new one next time you come here to fag!" said Hansom.
"P-Putty says I'm not to come—"
"What?" roared Hansom.
"I—I mean, I'm coming, whether Putty likes it or not. I—I like to come, you know!" moaned Tubby.
"You'd better!" growled Hansom. "I'm going to make you my regular fag, Muffin."
"Oh dear!"
"You're to turn up here every day at tea-time. I believe you can cook. You're to get my tea every day."
"Ye-es, Hansom!"
"And if you burn the toast, Muffin, I'm sorry for you—that's all!"
"I—I won't b-b-burn it, Hansom!"
"You'd better not. Now, then, you haven't cleared up that grate. It's horrid dusty. Pile in!"
"I—I was j-j-just going to."
"Well, get to work. I'm coming back in ten minutes, and if the room isn't like a new pin, you'll know about it!"
"Ye-es, Hansom!" groaned Tubby.
The Fifth-Formers put down their bats, and lounged out of the study again, grinning. Their lofty claims to fag-service were being admitted after all—at least, by Reginald Muffin.
"That's only a beginnin', you know," remarked Hansom, as they strolled down the passage. "I'm going to bring all those unruly kids to reason in the long run. Dash it all, it's better for them as well as us—nothin' like discipline, you know!"
"Nothin'!" agreed Talboys.
"It's simply rot that they shouldn't fag for the Fifth as well as the Sixth. Why shouldn't they?"
"No reason at all!" agreed Lumsden.
"Well, we're going to make them! As I said, it's better for them, too. It does a kid good to be taught to obey orders."
"Of course it does!"
"And tea in the study is much more comfy with a fag doin' the work. My opinion is that faggin' is a splendid institution!"
"Toppin'!" said Talboys.
The chums of the Fifth quite agreed on that. Possibly their views would have been different if they had been fags. But they weren't fags, so they did not consider that aspect of the case.
When Hansom & Co. came back to their study, Jones minor of the Fourth was standing in the doorway. He had his back to the passage, talking to Tubby in the study.
"You fat rotter!" Jones minor was saying. "Cut it, I tell you! We'll scrag you for fagging here!"
"I'm not going to be stumped, blow you!" was Tubby's reply.
"Cut it, I tell you! Oh! Ah! Ow!" continued Jones minor, as Hansom took him from behind by the ear and jerked him into the study. "Yaroooh! Leggo!"
"Just arrived in time, Jonesy!" remarked Hansom. "You'll find some tan boots under the table that want polishing."
"Do you think I'm going to polish your boots?" shrieked Jones.
"Yes, I rather do!"
"I won't—I won't! I— Yow! Ow, ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Oh, crikey! Yooop! I—I'll polish 'em, if you like, you rotter!" wailed Jones minor.
And Jones minor did.
Hansom stood over him with a stump while he polished the tan boots, and the polishing was well done. When it was done, a lift from Hansom's foot helped Jones minor out of the study, and he fled to the quarters of the Fourth, bursting with rage and indignation, to pour his woes into sympathetic ears.
Tubby Muffin, however, was rewarded with a tart for his fag services.
He left Hansom's study in a more contented frame of mind than the hapless Jones.
"I believe in treatin' fags well," Hansom remarked to his chums. "Lick 'em till they

know their place, and then treat 'em well. That's my idea."
And Lumsden and Talboys agreed that it was a good idea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
In the Hands of the Amatekites!
"READY?" whispered Mornington.
"Ready!" Jimmy Silver whispered back.

And there was a hush.
On the landing of the lower staircase six juniors of the Classical Fourth were in ambush, with bated breath.
The light on the landing had been turned out. All was dark, and all was silent.
Mornington and Erroll, Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Conroy and Rawson, were the six. And there were many more of the Fourth waiting, with bated breath, in the Fourth Form passage, up the next staircase, till the signal should be given that the enemy had walked into the trap.
Hansom of the Fifth was the enemy!
Hansom had been under observation for some time—in fact, all the evening. Scouts of the Fourth had ascertained when Hansom was at prep in his study. They had noted that Lumsden had gone down to the gym with Brown major, and that Talboys remained in the study doing "maths." They had noted, especially, that Edward Hansom had gone along to the Sixth Form quarters after prep.
A breathless scout had rushed back with the news that Hansom was in Bulkeley's

"THE LEAGUE OF SEVEN!"
WHO ARE THEY?

See Next Week.

study, talking to the captain of Rookwood. Probably Hansom was discussing cricket matters with the captain of the school, little dreaming of the measures the wrathful Fourth were taking.
Morny was in command, and he rapped out orders that were promptly obeyed. The ambush of six was stationed on the lower landing.
Hansom had to pass that landing, if he returned to his study. And one of the junior scouts had heard him call to Talboys that he would look in for him.
All was ready for Hansom; and there was a thrill of excitement among the juniors when a step was heard on the stairs.
The landing was in darkness, but from below came a glimmer of light, and the ambushed juniors watched eagerly. It was a Fifth-Former who came up, but it was not Hansom. Jobson of the Fifth stumbled on the landing and grunted.
"Where's that dashed light?"
Six juniors lay very low.
Jobson went on into the Fifth Form passage without troubling about the light that was out. He was allowed to pass, and he passed without even suspecting that an ambush was there. Jobson was not their game.
"Next man in!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell, when Jobson's footsteps died away, and there was a subdued chuckle.
Next man in was Hansom himself. The juniors caught a glimpse of him in the light below, and they hardly breathed as he came up the stairs. There was a grunt from Hansom as he came to the landing.
"That dashed light out! Some fag playing tricks, I suppose. Br-r-r!"
Hansom came on.
"Now, then!"
It was a sharp call from Mornington. There was a rush of feet, and before Edward Hansom knew what was happening he was seized on all sides, and he went down on the landing with a crash.
"Oh! Yooop! Ah-h-h-h!"
"The bag—quick!"
"Yaroooh! Leggo! Help!"
The next moment a bag was over

Hansom's head, and was drawn tightly round his neck.
"Got him!"
"Quiet!"
"Bring him along!"
Hansom of the Fifth struggled furiously. After the first moment or two of blank astonishment, he guessed, easily enough, into whose hands he had fallen, and struggled and wrestled and punched and roared for help.
But the bag over his head drowned his yells, and six pairs of hands made short work of his resistance.
He was lifted from the floor and rushed away to the next staircase.
Morny gave a whistle, which was answered from above, and a swarm of juniors came dashing down the upper staircase.
"Got him?" gasped Raby.
"You bet!"
"Hurrah!"
"Lend a hand!"
"Yank him along! Ha, ha, ha!"
"Groog-ogoooggh!" came a voice from within the bag. "Oh! Ooooooch! Grooooh! Oooooh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Wriggling wildly in the grasp of his captors, Hansom of the Fifth was whirled up the stairs. He was a good weight, but his weight was nothing in so many hands. It was a case of many hands making light work. Nine or ten juniors had hold of him now, and Tubby Muffin and Jones minor had an ear each through the bag. And they pulled at the ears with great vim. They had fagged for Hansom, and now they were indemnifying themselves. And the wild, weird, and woeful sounds from within the bag hinted that the captain of the Fifth was feeling the situation acutely.
There was no doubt that he was.
The unfortunate fagger of the Fourth was upside down as he was rushed along the Fourth Form passage, and his head bumped several times.
But nobody was thinking about Hansom's head.
He was rushed into Study No. 4, and deposited on the carpet with a resounding bump.
He rolled there, gasping.
The juniors swarmed into the study after him. Morny and Erroll and the Fistical Four, Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons and Rawson, found room in the study with Hansom. The rest congregated round the door. All the Classical Fourth were there, with very few exceptions, and some of the Modern Fourth; though the latter, at that hour, were supposed to be in Mr. Manders' House. But Tommy Dodd & Co. were not to be left out of this.
Edward Hansom sat up on the carpet, clutching at the bag on his head. He snatched it off and got his head out—a very ruffled and dishevelled head. He gasped for breath, and glared furiously at the grinning juniors.
"Yoooooooch!" was his first remark.
"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You—you—you—" Hansom stuttered breathlessly. "You—you—you cheeky young scoundrels!"
"Let me give him a cosh!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I've only pulled his ear, so far. He fagged me, you know. Stumped me! Lemme gerrat him! I want to give him a cosh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Tubby Muffin, valorous as a lion now, rushed into the study, with his fat fists clenched.
"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Mornington.
"I'm going to give him a cosh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "He's fagged me, hasn't he, and stumped me, too?"
"You—you—" gasped Hansom.
Biff!
A fat fist smote the breathless Fifth-Former on the nose, and he rolled on the carpet again.
There was a roar from Hansom.
"Now, lemme give him another! I'll—" Jimmy Silver dragged the infuriated Tubby back.
"Stop it, you mad porpoise!"
"I've only given him one!"
"Roll that barrel out!" said Mornington.
"Look here, Morny, I'm going to give him one in the eye!" roared Tubby Muffin indignantly. "I tell you—"
The indignant Tubby was pushed out. Hansom of the Fifth was scrambling

breathlessly to his feet, quite wild with rage. His nose showed signs of the heavy punch that had been delivered with Tubby's weight behind it.

"I—I—I'll smash you!" panted Hansom. "Go ahead!" grinned Mornington. Hansom went ahead. He was far too enraged to count odds at that moment. He made a furious rush for the door, hitting out as he rushed.

The juniors piled on him at once. Against such heavy odds, even the athletic Fifth-Former had not the ghost of a chance. He went to the floor again with a crash. "Now stay there!" said Mornington. "Better stay there, old top!" advised Teddy Grace. "Every time you get up you'll be knocked down."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Hansom tried his luck again, however. He scrambled up and rushed on the juniors. Down he went again, bumping. And this time he stayed down. He was too breathless for any further resistance just then.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Sauce for the Gander!

VALENTINE MORNINGTON glanced round at the juniors in the passage. "See if any of the Fifth are coming," he said. "They may have heard—"

"Right-ho!" said Putty. Putty of the Fourth cut off to the stairs. But he returned in a minute or less, smiling. "All serene!" he said. "No alarm!"

"Good!" "Ow, ow, ow, ow!" Hansom was mumbling, from his seat on the carpet.

"If there's an alarm, and they try a rescue. They've got to be stopped!" said Mornington.

"You bet!" "Now, Hansom—" "Groooooogh!" "Sit up and pay attention, Hansom!" "Wow!"

"You've been fagging the Fourth!" continued Mornington, with a stern glance fixed on the gasping Fifth-Former.

"Oooch!" "You're goin' to have a lesson." "Ow! Wow!"

"You've been brought here to fag!" said Mornington.

"Eh?" "Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Hansom, still gasping, blinked at the grinning juniors. He was in the toils, and he realised it; his lofty frowns had no more effect on Morny and his followers than water on a duck.

And he could see that the Fourth-Formers meant business.

"Get up, Hansom!" rapped out Mornington.

Hansom staggered to his feet.

"Get to work!" "What?"

"The grate is rather grubby," said Morny. "You're to sweep it up. There's a broom there. Then you're to polish the fender!"

"Wha-a-at!" "After that, there's teacups for you to wash up!"

"Wa-wa-wash up!" repeated Hansom dazedly.

"Exactly!"

"You cheeky fag!" shrieked Hansom.

"Are you going to begin?"

"No!" roared the captain of the Fifth.

"You know how you persuaded Tubby and Jones to fag. You'll get some of the same if you don't begin sharp!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Are you going to fag?"

"No!" shrieked Hansom.

"Collar him!" said Mornington.

Hansom put up his hands as the juniors closed in on him. He was down almost in a twinkling, however, and the Fistical Four grasped him and stretched him over a chair.

"Tubby, take that stump!"

"What-ho!" giggled Tubby Muffin.

He grasped the cricket-stump very readily. Tubby had not forgotten his own stumping in Hansom's study. He was ready to repay that stumping now with compound interest.

"A dozen to begin with!" directed Mornington.

"Leave it to me!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Tubby Muffin was not an athlete, but he put remarkable muscular powers into the

stumping. Hansom of the Fifth was well placed to receive it. He wriggled, and roared like a bull, as the lashes rained down.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Stoppit!" shrieked Hansom. "I'll—I'll—"

"Oh, my hat! Help! Yoop! Yaroooh! Stoppit!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yoooooop!"

Whack, whack!

"Help!"

"Chuck it, Tubby! That's a dozen!"

"Lemme give him some more!"

"Hold on! Are you going to fag now, Hansom?"

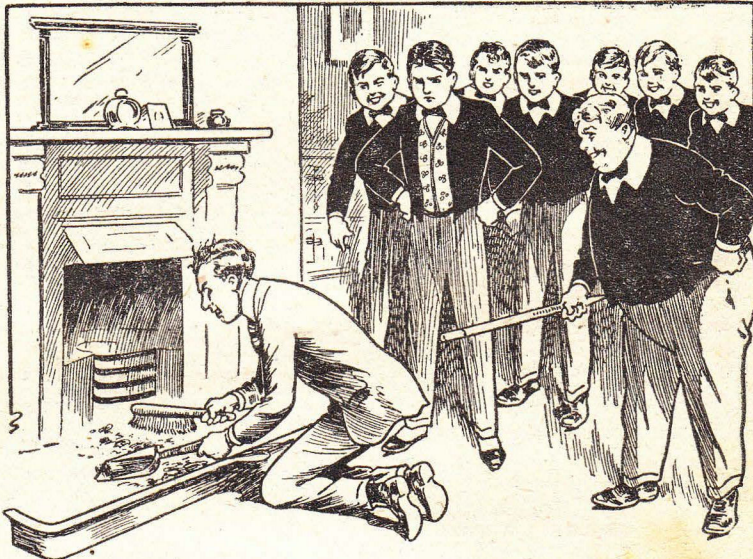
"No!" raved Hansom.

"Give him another dozen, Tubby!"

With a furious face, Edward Hansom knelt at the fender, swept up the grate, and sorted cinders from ashes under Morny's direction. And as his first attempt did not give satisfaction, Morny ordered him to sift them all over again. With a face like a Prussian Hun, Hansom of the Fifth obeyed.

Then he started washing up the tea-things. There were howls of irrepressible merriment from the Fourth. The doorway and the passage outside were crammed with hilarious juniors.

But Hansom did not feel like laughing. His face, as Lovell remarked, resembled that of the demon in a pantomime as he washed up. He ventured to let one cup fall to the floor, and his ears were promptly boxed for



HANSOM FAGS FOR THE FOURTH! With a furious face, Edward Hansom, knelt at the fender, swept up the grate, and sorted out the cinders from the ashes, under Mornington's direction. Tubby Muffin stood over him with the cricket stump ready to use it if the senior stopped. (See Chapter 5.)

"He, he, he! You watch me!"

Whack, whack, whack! Tubby seemed to think he was beating carpets. The wild howls of Hansom of the Fifth rang through the study, though they were almost drowned by the roars of laughter from the Fourth.

"Say when!" said Mornington ironically.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yoop! Stoppit!"

Hansom made a frenzied effort to drag himself away; but the Fistical Four had him fast. The stump continued to rise and fall.

"Your own medicine, you know," said Jimmy Silver. "That's what you gave Muffin till he fagged!"

"Yaroooh!"

Whack, whack!

"Stoppit!" yelled Hansom. "I—I—I give in! Oow! Stoppit!"

"Hold on, Tubby! You'll fag, Hansom?"

asked Mornington.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes!" groaned the Fifth-Former.

"Good! Let him go!"

Jimmy Silver and Co. released the captain of the Fifth. Hansom leaned on the mantelpiece, and gasped. It was, as Jimmy had remarked, only a dose of his own medicine; but it was evidently not to Hansom's taste. Discipline was a great thing; but it had its drawbacks when applied to oneself.

"I'm waiting, Hansom!" remarked Mornington.

"I—I—I—" gasped the hapless senior.

"Get on with the fagging—sharp!"

And Hansom obeyed.

There was really nothing else to be done. Tubby Muffin was prepared to go on with the stumping till bed-time; and the other fellows were ready to hold Hansom while he stumped. It was fagging or stumping; and Hansom had had enough of the stump.

So he fagged.

There were loud chortles from the Fourth Form crowd as they watched him.

the breakage. After that he was careful not to break any more crockery.

"He hasn't polished the fender!" squeaked Tubby Muffin, when the washing-up was finished.

"Get on with the fender, Hansom!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Keep that stump handy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin was ready with the stump. But Hansom did not want any more of it; he had too many aches and pains already. He started on the fender, and polished away as if his life depended on it. The juniors shrieked with laughter as he fagged. The sight of the captain of the Fifth on his knees in Morny's study, polishing the fender was irresistible.

"I think that will do!" said Mornington at last. "You've done that quite well, Hansom!"

"Now let me get out of this, you young rotters!" hissed Hansom. He was thinking, with anguish, of what all Rookwood would say when the story of the fagging spread over the school. It was not likely to remain a secret.

"Not just yet!" said Mornington. "I've got a paper here for you to sign, Hansom."

"Read it out!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. Morny read out the paper:

"Whereas I, Edward Hansom, of the Fifth Form, have had the cheek to think of fagging the Fourth, and whereas I have been justly compelled to fag for the Fourth myself, I hereby certify that I give up my cheeky claim to fag-service, and humbly beg the pardon of the Fourth Form, and promise to behave myself in future like a good boy. As witness my signature,

Hansom's face was a study as he listened. Morny dipped a pen in the inkpot and presented it to him.

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THE FIGHT WITH THE RUSTLERS!

Riding down the trail of the Thompson Valley, Frank Richards sees his old enemy, Kern Gunten, in the hands of desperate rustlers who have held him up in the post-waggon. Does he turn aside and leave the Swiss to his fate—or does he throw personal dislikes overboard, and go to his rescue? You will read all about it in the thrilling tale below!

TO SAVE HIS ENEMY!



The Amazing Schooldays of FRANK RICHARDS, the world-famous author, in the Backwoods of Canada!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Dicky Bird on the War-Path.

STOP a minute, Richards!" Chunky Todgers rolled after Frank Richards & Co. as they came out of the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek after morning lessons. Frank glanced round. "What's wanted, Chunky?" "I've got a message for you," said Chunky. "I met Gunten on the trail this morning, coming to school." "Oh, bother Gunten!" "Come along!" said Bob Lawless. "Never mind Gunten! We're going to play leap-frog to keep ourselves warm till dinner. Tuck in your tuppenny, Chunky!" "But Gunten said—" "Bless Gunten! We don't want to know what Gunten said. You're an ass, Chunky, to talk to that galoot!" "I didn't talk to him—he talked to me," answered Chunky; "and he gave me a message for Frank Richards." "Only some cheek, most likely," said Vere Beauclerc.

Frank looked rather impatient. He did not want to hear anything from Kern Gunten, the Swiss fellow who had been turned out of Cedar Creek School, and who had always been on ill terms with the Co.

Gunten was at Hillcrest now—the new school along the Thompson trail—and Frank desired to see and hear nothing more of him.

But Chunky Todgers was evidently full of news, so Frank good-naturedly gave him a hearing.

"Well, pile in, and cut it short, Chunky," he said.

"I like that!" said Chunky warmly. "I jolly well won't tell you now; but you'll be jolly surprised when Dicky Bird comes along and kicks up a shindy, if I don't tell you!"

"Dicky Bird?" repeated Frank. "That Hillcrest chap," said Chunky. "He's coming over here to-day to wallop you, Richards."

Frank flushed a little.

"Did Gunten tell you that?" he asked.

"I guess so. Gunten says that Bird is awfully mad about the trick you fellows played on his headmaster, old Peckover, and—"

"What rot!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Dicky Bird doesn't like old Peckover any more than we do."

"Well, he couldn't like him," agreed Chunky Todgers. "Nobody could. But he thinks it's up against his school, you know, and Gunten says he's going to wipe it out by thrashing Richards."

"Perhaps the thrashing may work out

the other way round," remarked Frank. "I don't want to row with Bird, but he can try it if he likes."

"Perhaps it's only Gunten's rot," suggested Beauclerc. "He's tried before to stir up trouble between us and the Hillcrest chaps."

"Correct!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "More likely than not. Don't get your rag out, Franky; very likely Dicky Bird said nothing of the sort."

Frank Richards nodded. On second thoughts he considered that very probable indeed; he did not trust Kern Gunten an inch.

"Well, that's the message," said Chunky Todgers; "and I guess that if Dicky Bird comes over here swanking, we'll collar him, and ride him home on a rail. That will take some of the cheek out of him."

"No fear!" answered Frank promptly. "If he comes over here to fight me, he can have his way, and we'll give him fair play."

"Ten to one he won't come!" said Bob. "You're an ass, Chunky; Gunten has been stuffing you. Now then, let's get going; we don't want to freeze while Chunky is exercising his lower jaw."

"Right you are!" said Frank cheerily.

It was a cold, sharp day, and the wind from the distant Rocky Mountains was keen and searching.

Some of the Cedar Creek fellows were already playing leap-frog, and Frank Richards & Co. joined them.

They were soon going strong, and in the excitement of the game they forgot all about Chunky's message from the Swiss.

But they were to be reminded of it before long.

About a quarter of an hour later Bob Lawless, glancing towards the gates, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo! There's that Hillcrest galoot!" Frank Richards was about to make a run, but he stopped and looked round.

Dicky Bird, of Hillcrest School, had just entered the gates.

He looked round the school enclosure, and came directly towards the crowd of schoolboys.

The leap-frog went on, but Frank Richards and his chums did not join in it now.

They waited for Dicky Bird to come up, watching him curiously.

Dicky Bird was generally a very good-tempered-looking fellow, with merry eyes and an almost perpetual smile.

But he was not looking good-tempered now.

His face was dark and angry, his brows

knitted, and his dark eyes gleaming under them.

If ever a fellow looked as if he were "hunting for trouble," it was Dicky Bird of Hillcrest at that moment.

The three chums did not speak as he came up; but their doubts on the subject of Gunten's message had vanished now.

For once in a way it appeared that Kern Gunten had been speaking the frozen truth.

Dicky Bird strode up to the group, and his eyes glittered at Frank Richards, whom he singled out at once.

"I've come for you, Richards!" he said. "Thanks!" answered Frank. "Anything on?"

"I dare say you know why I've come." "Well, I think I can guess," assented Frank. "I don't quite see why you should look for trouble with me, though."

"I've come to give you a hiding." Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"Go ahead!" he answered.

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless angrily. "You cheeky jay, I've a jolly good mind to run you down to the creek, and put your head under the ice for a bit, to cool you down!"

"Not a bad idea," said Beauclerc.

Dicky Bird looked at them grimly.

"I've come here alone," he said. "I depended on getting fair play here, so I wouldn't bring a crowd, and make a shindy of it. I've left my friends outside. But they'll come in fast enough if I don't get fair play!"

"Oh, ring off!" snapped Bob. "You'll get plenty of fair play. I dare say Frank can knock some of the impudence out of you!"

"I'll try!" remarked Frank.

"Well, will you come along into the timber?" said Dicky Bird. "I suppose we can't fight here, under Miss Meadows' windows. Perhaps you'd like your school-mistress to come out and stop us, though."

"That's a caddish thing to say," said Frank quietly, though his eyes gleamed.

"I'll come where you like."

"Come on, then!"

With that Dicky Bird turned and strode away to the gates.

Frank Richards & Co. followed him at once, and Chunky Todgers joined in.

Two or three more of the Cedar Creek fellows followed on their track.

They entered the timber by the creek, and found three fellows awaiting them under the trees—Fisher and Watson and Blumpy, of Hillcrest.

The trio were looking grim.

"Oh, here you are!" said Fisher. "Get your jackets off!"

Dicky Bird threw his jacket off, and

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pushed back his shirtsleeves. Frank Richards followed his example.
 Frank was angry now, and he was quite ready for a determined "scrap."
 The resentment of the Hillcrest fellows on the subject of a "stunt" played on their headmaster seemed to him unreasonable; and Dicky Bird's manner was disagreeable enough.
 "Ready?" asked Bird.
 "Quite!"
 "Then, come on!"
 And, in the midst of an interested circle, the fight began.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
The Fight!

"Go it, Franky!"
 Frank Richards faced his adversary with calm coolness, though his eyes were gleaming.
 He was as angry now as Dicky Bird, though with a good deal more reason, as he looked at it.
 But he did not allow his wrath to affect his coolness.
 Dicky Bird led the attack, and he came on hard, and in a few minutes he showed that he knew a good deal about boxing.
 He was a good deal more burly in build than Frank Richards, heavier and perhaps stronger; but Frank was fit all through, and he was very quick and nimble on his feet.
 He gave ground a little at first, and Fisher & Co. grinned as they saw him driven round the ring by Bird's heavy attack.
 But they ceased to grin all of a sudden, as Dicky Bird, taken in by a clever feint, rushed in, and was stopped by a sudden and terrific drive on the chest.
 There was plenty of weight behind that drive, and it toppled the Hillcrest champion fairly over.
 Bump!

Dicky Bird sat down, gasping.
 "Well hit!" exclaimed Beauclerc.
 "Bravo, Franky!"
 Frank Richards stepped back to give his opponent plenty of time to rise.
 There were no rounds in the fight; but Frank was not a fellow to take advantage of an enemy.
 Dicky Bird staggered to his feet.
 He had apparently started with the belief that it was a simple matter to administer a hiding to the slim English schoolboy; but it had dawned upon him now that that was a mistake.
 He came on again, breathing rather hard, and much more cautiously.
 The Cedar Creek fellows looked on with keen interest.

Frank did not look wholly a match for his muscular adversary; but he was more scientific, and quicker in his movements, and his pluck was unlimited.
 He had to stand up to some severe punishment for some minutes, but he broke away, and stalled Dicky Bird off successfully, and it was the Hillcrest fellow who went down again.
 This time it was an upper-cut, landing like a hammer on his chin, that rolled him over, and he was slower to rise.

Frank Richards stood panting a little.
 He dabbed at his nose with his handkerchief as he waited for Dicky Bird, and the handkerchief came away very red.
 Dicky Bird blinked up at him, with a new respect in his expression.
 He rose slowly to his feet, Frank standing back.
 "You're a good plucked 'un, Richards," he said. "I guess I shouldn't have thought it of you, considering."
 "I don't see why not," answered Frank.
 "What the dickens do you mean?"
 "I mean, considering that you're a swanking rotter—"
 "That's enough! Come on!"
 "I'm ready!"

The fight was harder and faster from that point.
 Frank Richards had a good deal more punishment to take; but it was easy for the onlookers to see that he was getting the upper hand now.

As bare knuckles were used, there were signs of severe damage on both sides, but the adversaries hardly seemed to feel them.

Both were fighting hard; but superior skill was telling, as strength was spent.
 Dicky Bird was driven back and back till he was driven through the ring, the onlookers grinning and making room for him.

He brought up against a tree, when he could go no farther, and he defended himself desperately, without being able to recover ground.

But he was evidently failing.
 His breath came in short, quick gasps, and his defence was growing fatigued and feeble.

There was a bump as Dicky Bird went down at last.

He lay gasping.
 Frank stood back, dabbing his heated face with his handkerchief.
 Dicky Bird made an effort to rise, but he sank back again. He was "done" now beyond denial.

Fisher stepped forward to help him up, and Bird stood unsteadily, leaning on his chum.
 His head was swimming, and he had to cling to Fisher for support.

"Licked!" said Chunky Todgers triumphantly.

"Dry up, Chunky!" said Frank.
 "Well, he is licked, isn't he?" demanded Chunky.

"Shut up, I tell you!"
 "Yes, I guess, I'm licked," said Dicky Bird bitterly. "You're a better man than I thought, Richards. You've done me this time, but I'll try you again another time."

"Just as you like," said Frank.
 "Now you can go swanking as much as you like!" said Dicky savagely.

Frank looked at him steadily.
 "That's the second time you've said that," he remarked. "I don't quite see what you're getting at, Dicky Bird. I don't see what you've come and picked a quarrel with me at all for."

"You know well enough," gasped Dicky Bird.
 "Ow!"

"What does it matter to you if we japed your headmaster the other day? You don't like the man."

"What's that got to do with it?" growled Dicky Bird. "You can go for old Peck-over as much as you like, for all I care."

"But I thought—"
 "Then what have you come over here at all for, if it's not that?" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

"Richards knows!" groaned Dicky Bird, mopping his nose.
 "I'm blest if I know," said Frank.

"Gunter told Todgers this morning you were coming over on the war-path because of the trick we played on Peckover. That's all I know."

Dicky blinked at him painfully.
 "I don't understand that," he said. "I came over to wallop you—ow!—because you told Gunter I was afraid of you, and was dodging you. It was a thumping lie, and you know it."

Frank started.
 "Because I told Gunter—" he began.
 "Oh, you silly chump! I haven't told Gunter anything. I never speak to the rotter!"

"Wha-a-at?"
 "So Gunter told you I had been swanking and bragging, and you were silly ass enough to believe him?" exclaimed Frank hotly. "You chump! Hadn't you sense enough to see that Gunter was pulling your leg?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Dicky Bird. "You— you didn't say—"
 "Of course I didn't, you fathead! Why should I? Haven't you known Gunter long enough to know that he's a lying worm?"

"Oh!" said Dicky Bird.
 He blinked doubtfully at Frank Richards. Fisher whistled.

"I guess Gunter is rather a liar," remarked Watson. "But—but I—I never thought—"
 "You don't seem to grow much brains at Hillcrest," said Bob Lawless scornfully. "If you had any hoss-sense, you'd know that Frank wouldn't talk in that strain. Gunter was putting you up to come over here and fight Franky because he's afraid to come himself, the coyote!"

"Oh!" said Dicky again blankly. "I—I've been taken in."
 Frank smiled faintly.

"Of course you have," he said; "and we've had this scrap for nothing. You might have explained before we started."

"I—I thought—"
 Frank held out his hand, smiling.
 "Give me your fist," he said. "We're both pretty well licked, and honours are divided. I'm not going to fight you again, Dicky Bird, but I'm going to look for Gunten, and scalp him!"

Dicky Bird shook hands with the Cedar Creek fellow in a very shamefaced way.

"I—I was taken in," he mumbled. "I'm sorry."
 "All serene!"

The late adversaries put on their jackets, both of them feeling very spent and sore.

The Hillcrest fellows moved away through the timber, Dicky Bird grunting dismally as he went.

"Do I look very bad, you fellows?" asked Frank, rubbing his face.

"You look a picture, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "You'd better come and bathe your face before Miss Meadows sees it."

Frank Richards did the best he could for his damaged face, but it was certainly a "picture" when he had done all that was possible, and there was no hope of the damage escaping Miss Meadows' observation.

His nose was swollen and red, and one of his eyes had a dark shade round it. As matters had turned out, it was no comfort to him to know that his adversary's state was a good deal worse.

All his wrath was centred upon Kern Gunten, who had wreaked his malice in this cunning way, keeping safe out of the combat himself.

And Frank Richards was determined that the cunning Swiss should pay the piper at the very earliest opportunity.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
In Disgrace.

"RICHARDS!"
 Miss Meadows' voice was very severe as she caught sight of Frank's face at the dinner-table.

"Yes, Miss Meadows?" mumbled Frank.
 "You have been fighting!"

"Ye-e-es, Miss Meadows!"
 "I did not know you were a quarrelsome boy, Richards."

"Oh, Miss Meadows!"
 "And with which of your schoolfellows have you been fighting?"

"None at all, ma'am. A—a chap outside the school. It—it was all a mistake," stammered Frank. "We're really good friends, only there was—was a sort of misunderstanding."

"You should not allow a misunderstanding to go to that length, Richards. You are not in a state to appear in class."

"Oh!"
 "You will be sent home this afternoon," added Miss Meadows sternly, "and you will not return to school, Richards, until your appearance is less likely to reflect discredit on Cedar Creek."

Frank Richards sat crimson and dumb. He said nothing.

But he was feeling extremely uncomfortable—apart from the discomfort of his injuries—during dinner, and he was glad when the meal was over, and he escaped from Miss Meadows' severe glance.

He went out into the playground with his chums, who were sympathetic.

Missing lessons was certainly not a misfortune in itself, but to be sent home because his appearance reflected discredit on the school was a punishment Frank felt more than he would have felt a caning.

"It's rotten, old chap!" said Bob, with great sympathy. "I reckon, though, Dicky Bird will get ragged to death by old Peck-over when he shows up at Hillcrest with two black eyes."

"I'd rather be ragged than sent home!" growled Frank. "What am I going to say to your pater, Bob?"

"Tell him the facts, old chap, and he won't blame you," said Bob comfortingly. "Feel very bad?"

"Ow! Yes! I don't want to mooch about by myself at the ranch nursing a dashed black eye!" said Frank disconsolately.

Bob chuckled.
 "Well, then, you needn't waste the afternoon. Look for Gunten."

"But he'll be at school! I can't march

(Continued on page 16.)



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.

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IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

 By Billy Bunter.

My Dear Readers.—Most of us were tiny toddlers in knickerbocker suits when the great "Limerick boom" was at its height.

Mr. Quelch, who did me the honour of having tea in my editorial sanctum, says he can remember it well. One of our most popular periodicals started a Limerick competition, and the prizes offered were so enormous that the affair made a great stir. Other periodicals started Limerick contests, and the writing of "last lines" became quite a craze with the British public.

Soon everybody in the land was writing Limericks—or, rather, the tail-end of Limericks. Peers, business men, labourers, office-boys, young men and maidens, old men and children, threw themselves into the new game with a zest which has hardly ever been equalled.

We have Mr. Quelch's word for this. He himself, he declares, was badly bitten by the craze. He once won twenty pounds for a "last line," and he collected many minor prizes.

In case any of my younger readers are in the dark as to what a Limerick is, I will quote one as a sample.

"There was a young lady of Riga
 Who went for a ride on a tiger.
 They returned from the ride
 With the lady inside,
 And a smite on the face of the tiger!"

In order to show that Limericks have not been relegated to the limbo of forgotten things, the Editor of the Companion papers has launched a Limerick competition in the "Magnet" Library. And that has started the craze over again.

Dick Penfold, the merry bard of Greyfriars, is a very good Limerickist, as you might say. If only the ancient scribe could see Penfold at work, he would say, "Of making many Limericks there is no end." For Dick Penfold turns them out like sausages from a machine.

Yours feeling very Limerickish,
YOUR EDITOR.



The Diary of a Cricket-Ball!

MONDAY.

I ought first of all to mention that I'm a leather ball, valued at fifteen bob—not one of those cork cricket-balls that gets smaller and smaller till it's reduced to the size of a marble! I am beautifully made—at least, I was. I'm a sorry old creak now, but we'll come to that later. To-day I was purchased by Bulkeley of the Sixth, who came over to Latcham to buy some cricket gear. Bulkeley was very struck with my appearance. He pulled rather a long face when the shopman told him I was fifteen bob. Still, he felt me all over, and tossed me into the air, and decided I was worth the money. He slipped me into the pocket of his blazer, and there I nestled all the way back to Rookwood.

TUESDAY.

I made my first appearance on the Rookwood cricket-ground. They used me at the nets, and my owner decided to give me a good hiding—goodness knows why! Anyhow, he got hold of a bat and took his stand at the wicket, and I was bowled to him. You ought to have seen the way he clumped me! I tried in vain to knock down his wicket by way of revenge, but he was too good a batsman to let that happen. After knocking me into a solid brick wall on three occasions, Bulkeley was surprised to see that I was becoming unstitched. He expected me to stand such hard knocks without showing any sign of wear and tear, which, as old Euclid would say, is absurd.

WEDNESDAY.

I played in a real match to-day, and had an alarming experience. Bulkeley was batting, and he smote me clean out of the ground and into an adjoining meadow. I excited the curiosity of a grazing cow. The animal came up to me and picked me up in its mouth. I could have screamed with terror, but unfortunately they had not given me a tongue when they made me. However, the cow decided that chewing the cud was preferable to chewing a cricket-ball, so he dropped me. I rolled into a ditch, and perspiring fieldmen were searching for me all the afternoon; but they found me not. I lay doggo in the ditch, taking a well-earned rest after my alarming experiences.

THURSDAY.

I was discovered to-day by Algy Silver of the Third. He didn't know I was Bulkeley's property, and he acted on the principle of "findings are keepings." I hoped I should receive better treatment at the hands of a fan, but I was sadly mistaken. Young Silver and his pals actually played with me on the flagstones of the quad. The result was that all my stitches came out, and my stuffing began to show. Now when a cricket-ball gets to that stage the doctors generally shake their heads and pronounce life extinct. And this is what happened in my case: "This ball's no longer fit for active service," said Algy Silver. "What shall we do with it?" "Send it home to your sister, and ask her to sew it up," said Lovell minor. "That's a good wheeze," said Algy. And he packed me up straight away and posted me to his sister.

FRIDAY.

I received kind and considerate treatment at the hands of Miss Silver. She stitched me up very carefully, and returned me to her young brother. But alas! When they started billing me about on the flagstones I came unstuck worse than ever, and finally Algy Silver threw me into the lumber-room in disgust. I am now a sorry spectacle. I've a big, gaping hole in my exterior, and the stuffing is simply dropping out of me. Yet at the beginning of the week I was a brand new ball, fit to play at Lord's or at the Oval! Ah, me! "To what base uses are we come?" as Shakespeare remarks.

SATURDAY.

I am still in the lumber-room, and here I shall remain, I suppose, all through the cricket season. Worth fifteen bob a week ago; absolutely worthless now! But there is a comical side to the whole business. Bulkeley and the others are still searching for me in the meadow. They do not know that Algy Silver discovered me, and they are hoping against hope that I shall turn up. If old Bulkeley were to pay a visit to the lumber-room he'd have several sorts of a fit! By the way, I must ask Teddy Grace, the Rookwood rhymier, to write me an epitaph. Something on these lines:

"The battered form you here may trace
 Of Cuthbert Cricket-ball, Esquire;
 Kindly preserve his leather case,
 And burn his stuffing on the fire!"

**PITY THE POOR
POET!**

By Dick Penfold.

The fellows don't appreciate
My really ripping verse;
They start to sing a hymn of hate,
Or else do something worse.
They all start hurling hefty bricks
When I'm reciting limericks!

When battling on the field of play,
The fellows rise and cheer;
It's "Good old Pen! Hip, hip, hurray!"
We've got a Jessop here!"
And yet they wallop me with sticks
When I'm reciting limericks!

When I am boxing in the gym
They murmur, "Pen's first-rate!
Sound as a bell in wind and limb,
And absolutely great!"
They say, "We're enemies of Dick's,"
When I'm reciting limericks!

I mentioned one to Mr. Prout,
It was a lovely verse;
And he began to frown and pout,
On hearing me rehearse.
Then with his cane he gave me six;
Prouty no likee limericks!

So what's the use of writing rhyme
That angers everybody?
"We look on limericks as a crime"—
These are the words of Toddy,
But I'll still play my merry tricks,
And go on writing limericks!

**MY
DIARY!**

By Tubby Muffin,

All my adventures, grave and gay,
Number of tarts I put away,
Are entered in you day by day,
My diary!

If by my fellows I am smitten,
Or by a bulldog badly bitten,
Such incidents in you are written,
My diary!

Whether I'm weary, worn, or sad,
Whether I'm gloomy, gay, or glad,
You are my only writing-pad,
My diary!

The impositions I receive,
The japes and wheezes I conceive,
Are written in you every eve,
My diary!

The punishments that make me squirm,
And writhe and wriggle like a worm,
Are duly noted, term by term,
My diary!

The name of every titled peer
That I'm related to, is here;
I write for money year by year,
My diary!

You are a true and faithful friend,
A book I'll never sell or lend,
But keep until my journey's end,
My diary!

**DICKY WRITES
HOME.**

A letter from Dicky Nugent, of the
Second, to his Sister Doris.

Dear Doris i hope you are in the pink
as it leeves me at prezzant with a bad
attack of the blues.

i got into trubble with old Twigg and
old Twigg's a beest! I put a tame
hedgehogg in his desk and when he went
to his desk to get the cane in order to tan
young Bunter he dabbed his hand on the
hedgehogg's prickles and he said oh dear
i've punctured my hand in fifteen places.
Who had the ordassity to put this creature
in my desk? I said guilty sir and
he said you again Nugent minor you are
a perpetual sauce of trubble to me and i
shall cane you severely. And i got it in
the neck or rather a little lower down!

i played kricket the other day for my
Form and got a cupple of dux-eggs and
that's enuff to give anybody the blues
isn't it? We were playing the Third and
young Tubb bowled me out in both
innings and he said ha ha call yourself a
kricketer Nugent minor? Why you can't
play for munkey-nutts! i felt like brain-
ing him with the bizness end of my
bat i was so savvidge.

Dear Doris i hope you will be able to
read this writing but i was licked so many
times to-day in the Form-room that my
right hand ought to be in a sling by
rights. Old Twigg's a broot and a beest
and the sooner they pension him off the
better!

Dear Doris will you please nitt me
some more stockings beakwise i've got
holes in those i'm wearing now and all
the fellows larf and shout Pertaters when
i pass them and it's beginning to get on
my nerves.

Frank sends his love and he wants me
to tell you that the footer jersey you
nitted him is Top Hole but as it duzzent
happen to be the Greyfriars cullers he
can't wear it so he's sending it to a fellow
who plays for Norridge City beakwise it
happens to be a canary culler.

By the way have you heard this one
There was a young man of Madrid
whose motor-bike happend to skid he said
Well i never it's good-bye for ever i'll
leave all my cash to the kid!

Give my love to mater and pater and
tell them that if they don't send me a
remittance and a tuck hamper by return
of post i'll jolly well disinherit them!

My white mice are flurrishing and send
their best respects and i remain dear
Doris for wheel or whoa your luvving
brother Dicky.

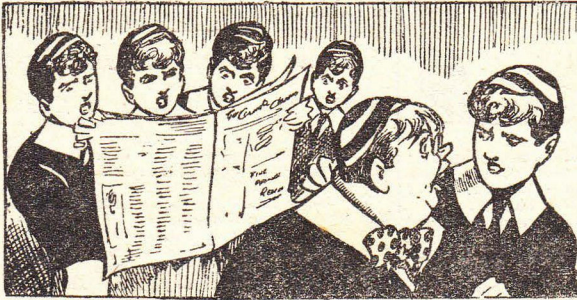
(We suggest to Mr. Twigg that a
lesson in punctuation would be a jolly
good thing for Nugent minor!—Ed.)

Universal Opinion—
"Billy Bunter's
Weekly" is always up
to the mark!

THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY."



Back Row—Baggy Trimble of St. Jim's. Fatty Wynn of St. Jims'. Tubby Muffin of Rookwood. Front Row—Sammy Bunter of Greyfriars. BILLY BUNTER, the Editor.



BUNTER THE PRIZEWINNER!

By TOM BROWN.
(Of the Remove, Greyfriars.)

A STRANGE silence brooded over the Remove passage at Greyfriars. The sound of leather meeting willow could not be heard; neither could the wailing of my gramophone.

All the fellows were in their studies, scribbling away industriously. They were not writing impositions; neither was it time for prep. Everybody was writing poetry—or trying to!

The Editor of the "Courtfield Chimes," a new paper which had just been taken over by a plump profiteer, was offering a prize of five pounds for the best poem dealing with spring-time.

There are lots of poets in the Remove—amateur and professional, good, bad, and indifferent. And those who could write verse, and those who only thought they could, were going in for the competition.

If you took a peep into Study No. 1 you would see Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent busily engaged in composing sonnets on spring. In Study No. 2, on the opposite side of the passage, Bulstrode, Hazeldene, and myself were all at the same game. We were all hoping that the five pounds would come to Greyfriars, and that a Remove chap would win it.

In Study No. 7 three fellows were active, and one was unemployed: Peter and Alonzo Todd and Tom Dutton were scribbling verse, and Billy Bunter sat watching them, his flabby cheeks expanding in a broad grin.

"Aren't you going in for this competition, Bunt?" inquired Peter Todd.

"Yes, rather!"
"Then why don't you get busy?"
"I've written my poem already. It only took me about ten minutes. Poetry comes natural to me, you know. I don't have to sit chewing a penholder for hours on end, waiting for inspiration to come!"

"But you have been remarkably quick, my dear Bunter, if you have written your poem already!" said Alonzo Todd. "What is it about, might I ask?"

"It's a sort of spring-song," explained Billy Bunter. "About a lover and his lass, you know."

"And you dashed it off in ten minutes?" exclaimed Peter.

"Yes."
"Then it won't stand an earthly!" Billy Bunter chuckled.

"I'm certain of winning that five," he said. "It's useless for you fellows to compete against me. You're simply wasting your time. When the editor sees my poem, he won't want to look at any of the others!"

"I don't suppose he will," grunted Peter. "Yours will just about feed him up!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"
Peter Todd turned to Tom Dutton, the deaf minor.

"How are you getting on?" he yelled into his study-mate's ear. "Have you finished?"

"No, I haven't finished yet," replied Dutton. "I'm on the fifty-eighth verse."

"My hat! How many verses do you intend to write, then?"

"About eighty."
"But it's a poem that's wanted—not a serial story! The editor won't have time to wade through an eighty-verse poem, you frabjous chump!"

"But there's only two lines to every verse," explained Dutton. "And there's only two words to every line."
"Oh!"

"The first verse goes like this," said Dutton.

"Sweetly sing
Concerning Spring."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Peter. "And what's the second verse?"

"Winter's gone;
Carry on!"

"Well, they say that brevity's the soul of wit," said Peter; "but I'm dashed if I can see any wit in that!"

"It's jolly good stuff!" said Dutton. "You're only jealous because you can't do better!"

And Tom Dutton resumed his task of scribbling the remaining twenty-two verses of his poem.

The whole of the poems were finished that evening, and either taken or posted to Courtfield.

Billy Bunter was quite confident of success. So much so, that he had already planned what he was going to do with the five pounds. He asked Mrs. Mimble at the tuckshop to reserve him tuck to the value of two-pounds-ten, and he told us that the remaining two-pounds-ten would go to swell his balance at the bank. When we expressed doubts as to whether Bunter boasted a banking account, he was most indignant.

Dick Penfold, the poet laureate of the Remove, had gone in for the contest, as a matter of course. I stopped Pen in the Close, and asked him what he thought of his chances.

"Not much," was the reply. "I've sent in half a dozen efforts, but I don't suppose any of them will click. You see, the editor of the 'Courtfield Chimes' is an absolute duffer. He's only a figurehead on the paper, and his subs do all the work."

"Then why was he made editor?" I asked.

"Because he's a fat old profiteer, with plenty of tin, and he's invested a lot of his capital in the concern."

"Will he do the judging, do you think?"

"Afraid so," said Pen, with a doleful shake of the head.

"When is the result coming out?"

"Next Wednesday."
Naturally, we were all very excited during the next few days. And Billy Bunter was as confident and as cocksure as ever.

Early on Wednesday morning Bunter borrowed Johnny Bull's bike and buzzed over to Courtfield.

Bunter was back before breakfast. He dismounted in the school gateway, his face beaming like a full moon.

"Is the result out yet, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather! I didn't see the editor—too early in the morning for him to be knocking around—but I saw one of the subs, and he handed me the prize."

"The—prize?" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes. I told you fellows I was going to win—and I've won!"

"Seeing's believing!" growled Nugent.

"Let's see the five!"

A certain cure for the
dumps and gloom is
our top-hole funny
Supplement.

"Certainly, my Doubting Thomas—I mean Doubting Frank!"

So saying, Billy Bunter groped in his breast-pocket, and produced a five-pound note, at the sight of which the fellows nearly swooned.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Vernon-Smith, at length. "Fancy Bunter winning the poetry prize—a fellow who can't rhyme 'cat' with 'rat'!"

"There must be a mistake," said Wharton incredulously. "I don't know how Bunter got hold of this five, but I sha'n't believe he's won until I see it in the paper. In the meantime, we must stop Bunter from spending this money. It may not be his to spend."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
At that moment the fellows were summoned to breakfast.

Bunter ate with his usual hearty appetite. But when the meal was over he still had room for more. He made tracks for the tuckshop, but Harry Wharton & Co. collared him, and restrained him by force.

Bunter nearly wept with rage and chagrin. "You fellows have no right to stop me spending my own money!" he yelled. "I'll tell Quelch! I'll tell the Head!"

Bunter was still struggling and protesting when the morning papers were delivered at the school. The "Courtfield Chimes" was among them.

Bob Cherry promptly bagged a copy of the paper, and glanced through it until he came to the competition result. This he declaimed aloud:

RESULT OF OUR POETRY
COMPETITION!

"The prize of Five Pounds has been awarded to

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER,
Greyfriars School, Friar-dale,

for the following charming poem:

"It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey and a ho, and a hey-nonino,
That through the green cornfields did pass
In Spring-time, in Spring-time,
The only pretty ring-time,
When birds do sing, hey ding-a-ding ding;
Sweet lovers love the Spring!"

Bob Cherry got no further than the first verse. There was a howl from all the fellows.

"That's not Bunter!"
"It's Shakespeare!"
"Oh, really, you fellows—" began the fat junior, in alarm.

"The editor was so ignorant that he didn't twig that this was Shakespeare's, and he's printed it, and awarded Bunter the prize!" roared Dick Penfold. "Let's come over to Courtfield and see him about it!"

There was just time for us to pop over to Courtfield before morning lessons began. We marched Billy Bunter over with us, and the editor was in when we arrived.

We pointed out the appalling blunder, and the editor nearly fell through his chair in his dismay. But he said it was too late to suppress the paper or make any alteration in the award, and that the result would have to stand.

Billy Bunter fairly cackled with glee. But his cackling died away when we marched him away to the Cottage Hospital, and insisted upon him handing over his five to that deserving institution. We also gave him a jolly good bumping for daring to crib from Shakespeare. And it was a very sick and sorry prizewinner that eventually staggered back to Greyfriars!



"Tricked on the Trail!"

(Continued from page 12.)



into Peckover's class-room and punch his nose, ass!"

"To-day's Wednesday," answered Bob. "When Gunten was at Cedar Creek he used to be excused lessons on Wednesdays to drive the post-wagon. It will be the same at Hillcrest. This afternoon Gunten will be taking the post-wagon out of Cedar Camp to the southern trail."

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"My hat! I never thought of that!" he exclaimed. "I'll jolly well be on the trail when Gunten comes out of camp, Bob! I want to reward him for this nose and this eye! The awful rotter!"

"I reckoned it would console you!" chuckled Bob. "I wish I could come with you. But you could handle two or three Gunten on your own."

"You bet!"

Frank remained with his chums till the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Then, as the Cedar Creek fellows went into the school-room, Frank fetched out his horse.

There had been no snow for some days, but there was still a powdering of white on the trails.

Frank Richards mounted, and trotted away through the timber.

When he reached the fork of the trail, instead of keeping on towards the Lawless Ranch as usual, he turned at the fork, and rode on in the direction of Cedar Camp.

This brought him within sight of Vere Beauclerc's home, the little shack by the creek, where the Cherub lived with his father, the remittance-man.

Frank glanced towards the shack, which stood back from the trail, as he trotted by, with a salute ready for Mr. Beauclerc if he saw him.

A horseman had just dismounted outside the little wooden building, and was looking in at the doorway.

The man's back was turned to Frank Richards, but he knew him well enough. It was Poker Pete, the "sport" of Thompson.

Frank gave his horse a touch, and rode on faster.

He did not want to see Mr. Beauclerc in the presence of Poker Pete; and there was a shade on his brow as he rode on.

It seemed clear, from Poker Pete's visit to the shack, that the remittance-man was falling into bad company again.

It was no business of Frank's, of course; but he felt keenly for his chum, who had been sorely troubled in the past by the recklessness of the remittance-man.

Frank dismissed the matter from his mind, however, and broke into a gallop as he left the timber behind and came out on the open plain on the south side of Cedar Camp.

He halted when the chimneys of the camp were in sight in the distance across the plain.

The grassland was marked by the trail that ran southwards from the camp towards Silver Creek, and beyond that the railway—many a long mile distant—towards the American border.

Here and there by the trail clumps of trees grew, and in one of the clumps Frank Richards came to a halt and jumped off his horse.

Leaving the animal to crop the herbage under the trees, Frank posted himself on the edge of the clump and watched the trail.

That afternoon, sooner or later, the post-wagon would leave Cedar Camp, driven by Kern Gunten, who was the son of the postmaster at Thompson.

Frank knew that he was in time for it; in fact, that he had considerable time to wait. But as it was possible that Gunten might be earlier than usual, he had taken no chances and lost no time.

As it turned out, he had a long wait before him.

He moved to and fro under the trees to keep himself warm while he waited and watched the trail.

THE POPULAR.—No. 232

There was nothing to be seen on the wide plain save the nodding tops of the trees, and in the distance an occasional steer wandering from the Lawless Ranch.

Frank became more attentive as he heard a distant sound of hoof-strokes, and his glance turned quickly towards the distant Cedar Camp.

But the post-wagon was not coming. Two horsemen appeared in view some distance up the trail, emerging from a belt of spruce-thickets.

Frank glanced at them carelessly, expecting to see them turn from the plain into the trail, either towards the camp or towards him.

To his surprise, they rode into a clump of timber close beside the trail, and did not appear again.

He watched the clump for some minutes. It was about a hundred yards from the trees which concealed himself, in the direction of Cedar Camp.

If the horsemen had emerged he could not have failed to see them.

But they did not emerge.

A quarter of an hour passed, and there was no sign of them.

Frank was more and more astonished.

He himself had an object in keeping under cover by the trail and watching. It was to settle accounts with Kern Gunten.

But what game were the two horsemen playing?

Frank Richards' thoughts were interrupted by a sound of hoofs and the rumble of the post-wagon in the distance.

His heart beat as he looked along the trail towards the camp and saw the big vehicle come into sight.

Two horses were drawing the wagon at a trot, and Kern Gunten sat in the driver's seat, the reins in his hands.

The Swiss was alone, and whistling carelessly as he drove on his horses.

Frank watched, his heart beating, forgetful now of the purpose with which he had come.

He was wondering whether the two horsemen in the further clump would "show up" now that the post-wagon was in sight.

But he had not long to wait now.

As the post-wagon came almost abreast of the clump of timber there was a sudden sound of brushing branches, and two riders darted out into the trail.

The wintry sun glinted on a steel barrel.

"Halt!"

The challenge rang sharply on the keen air, and it reached Frank Richards' ears a hundred yards along the trail.

WIRELESS SETS FREE

WITHOUT ANY COMPETITION OR ENTRANCE FEE.

See this week's

PLUCK

which is an absolute "top-notch." It is absolutely packed with thrilling, gripping yarns, wonderful illustrations, and lots of fine helpful advice on "wireless." No boy should miss this week's "PLUCK" (on sale Tuesday, June 26th)—it's a real record number.

Kern Gunten started violently, and drew in his horses.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Road-agents.

FRANK RICHARDS caught his breath. There could be no doubt now. One of the unknown riders had a revolver in his hand, which was bearing upon the astonished Swiss schoolboy in the post-wagon.

The other had gone to the horses' heads, and was holding them in.

It was evidently a robbery that was intended, and Frank knew there was likely to be a good quantity of "dust" on the post-wagon on its way from Thompson down to Kamloops.

Amazing as it was in the law-abiding Thompson Valley, there was no further doubt: the two men were "road-agents," and they intended to plunder the post-wagon.

If Frank had needed more proof it was there, in the fact that both men now had their faces hidden, each of them wearing a strip of canvas tied over his face in the way of a mask, with slits cut for the eyes and mouth.

That was proof enough that they were thieves.

"Put up your paws!"

Gunten stared at the men from the driver's seat.

"What stunt's this?" he asked.

Crack!

There was a loud yell of alarm from Gunten as his hat went spinning from his head, carried away by a bullet.

"You'll get the next one through your cabsza if you don't put up your paws, you fool!" exclaimed the horseman menacingly.

Gunten's hands went up fast enough then.

He realised at last that the masked riders were in deadly earnest, and that it was a robbery that was intended.

"Keep them up!" stammered the ruffian.

"I—I guess so!" stammered Gunten.

"Keep that shooter away! I guess I'm not giving trouble."

"You'd better not!"

"I—I say—"

"Stow your chinwag! Get out on the trail!" grunted the horseman. "Sharp!"

Gunten descended from the wagon, a matter of some difficulty with his hands clasped over his head, but he dared not lower them.

He stumbled into the trail, and almost fell, but pulled himself up, and stood with his knees knocking together.

It was pretty plain that the road-agents had no interference to fear from Kern Gunten.

"Get along yonder!"

Gunten obeyed the gesture, and stumbled along to where the other rascal was holding the horses.

He was to be kept under that individual's observation, evidently, while the man with the revolver "went through" the post-wagon.

The latter clambered off his horse into the wagon, returning the pistol to his belt.

He drew a knife, and bent down by the pile of sacks containing letters and packets.

Gunten watched him dumbly.

Frank Richards, from the distance, was watching, too.

He had called softly to his horse, and the animal joined him under the edge of the trees, and, still in cover, Frank climbed into the saddle.

He had his riding-whip, and he resolved to intervene in the rascally robbery that was proceeding on the trail.

In a tussle with two road-agents, of course, he had no chance. He was not thinking of that.

But a sudden charge, when they believed themselves alone and unobserved, would flurry them, and if they believed that there were other foes at hand, it was likely enough that they would be scared from their prey.

Frank was thinking of the hard-working miners of the upper valley, whose dust, the fruit of hard toil, was in the grasp of the conscienceless rascals who had stopped the post-wagon.

He felt that he could not stand idly by while the robbery proceeded; and there was no help at hand.

It was a risky trick he intended to play, but in the excitement of the moment he hardly thought of the risk.

He drew a deep breath, and set his teeth, as he moved out of the timber into the trail. A touch of the whip, and his horse broke into a gallop.

At top speed, Frank Richards swept up the trail towards the halted waggon, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Come on! Here they are! Billy Cook, this way! Don't let them get away!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

By Luck and Pluck!

"COME on! This way!" yelled Frank, as he charged up the trail.

The man in the waggon jumped out, with a muttered curse on his lips.

Frank Richards, tearing up the trail at a frantic gallop, was on the scene in a moment.

The man at the horses' heads turned in his saddle, but before he could raise a hand, Frank was upon him, and the heavy butt of his riding-whip swept through the air, and struck the ruffian full in the face.

There was a fearful yell as the horseman tumbled out of his saddle and landed in the tough grass.

"Come on!" roared Frank.

The man in the waggon had caught at his revolver for a second, but he did not draw it again.

With one bound he was out of the vehicle, and in the saddle of the horse waiting by the wheels.

Scarcely had he touched the saddle when the horse was in motion, galloping off the trail into the prairie.

He had not given one glance at his comrade, who had fallen under Frank's riding-whip butt; his only thought was for his own safety at the sudden attack.

So swift were his movements that Frank's first shouts were still echoing on the plain when the rider vanished in the grass at full career.

"This way!" shouted Frank again, with all the strength of his lungs. "Don't let them get away! Shoot! Shoot!"

The fallen man scrambled up, half-blinded by the blow he had received across the face.

He threw himself across his horse, and drove it out into the plain, setting it in furious motion before his leg was fairly over the saddle.

The trick had succeeded like a charm.

Both the rascals had the impression that a party had come upon them, and that only hard riding could save them.

They were not likely to suspect, even if they had had time to think, that a school-boy had charged them "on his own" without help at hand.

As the two rascals vanished on the grass-land Frank shouted again and again, his voice ringing over the prairie.

Bending low over their horses, spurring as if for their lives, the two road-agents vanished from sight.

Frank halted, breathless, in the trail.

Kern Gunten was staring blankly.

The sudden turn of events had dumb-founded him.

The two road-agents were probably feeling relieved at getting clean away; but their relief did not equal that of Frank Richards.

The trick had succeeded, but it had been touch and go.

"Thank goodness they're gone!" he panted. "Gunten, you moon-struck duffer, get aboard and get a move on."

"Frank Richards!" stammered Gunten.

"Yes. Get going, you duffer!"

"Where are the others?"

"What others?"

"Isn't there anybody with you?" yelled Gunten, in astonishment.

Frank laughed breathlessly.

"No; it was a trick. I was trying to scare them off. I succeeded, too!"

"Great gophers!" gasped Kern Gunten.

He stared round him, as if more willing to believe his eyes than his ears, but the trail was deserted, and he had to believe.

"Well, carry me home to die!" ejaculated Gunten. "Of all the nerve—"

"Get the waggon going, you ass!" exclaimed Frank. "They may come back!"

"I guess I—I'm kind of rattled!" gasped Gunten. "Give a chap time to get his breath!"

"There's no time to waste!" exclaimed Frank.

He jumped into the waggon, and gathered up the reins.



TO THE RESCUE OF THE POST WAGGON! Frank Richards, tearing up the trail at a frantic gallop, was on the scene of the hold-up in a moment. The rustler at the horses' head turned in his saddle, but before he could raise a hand, Frank was upon him, and the heavy butt of his riding-whip swept through the air, and struck the ruffian in the face. (See Chapter 5.)

"Now get in, if you don't want to be stranded!" he called out.

He was already setting the post-waggon in motion, and Kern Gunten hastily clambered in behind.

Frank called to his horse, which trotted after the vehicle as it rolled along the trail.

Gunten sat on the post-sacks, gasping for breath.

The sacks had been sliced by the knife of the road-agent, but he had not had time to lift any of the contents when the alarm had put him to such sudden flight.

Frank Richards, in the driver's seat, heedless of Gunten, cracked his whip and urged the horses to a gallop.

He was anxious to get the post-waggon in safety, for it was possible that the robbers might observe the true state of affairs from a distance, and return for their plunder.

The post-waggon rumbled and jolted on at a great speed behind the two galloping horses, while Frank's steed followed behind.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Kern Gunten, recovering himself at last. "I guess those galoos were going to clean out the waggon, Richards."

"No doubt about that."

"Some rustlers from over the border, I guess."

"They seem to know their way about this section," answered Frank.

"That's so, too," Gunten eyed the English schoolboy curiously. "My word! You've got an eye there, Richards! What are you doing out of school?"

Frank knitted his brows as he remembered what had brought him to the Cedar Camp trail.

"I was sent home for fighting," he said. "And I came along here to wait for you, Gunten, and give you a thumping licking for telling lies to Dicky Bird, and making him come over and row with me."

Gunten backed away in the waggon.

"Oh, you needn't be alarmed!" exclaimed Frank contemptuously. "I'm not going to touch you now."

"I—I guess—" faltered Gunten.

"Oh, dry up!"

Frank Richards gave the Swiss no further attention.

After what had happened, he did not feel inclined to carry out his purpose; his wrath had evaporated now.

Silver Creek was in sight when Frank relinquished the reins to Gunten.

"Safe now!" he said.

Gunten nodded, and took the reins. Frank jumped out on the trail without stopping the waggon, and mounted his horse.

Gunten slowed down, and turned his head.

"I—I say, Richards, you're a good plucked one," he said shamefacedly. "I—I guess I'm sorry I spun Dicky Bird that yarn. Look here, I'll tell him I was only chewing the rag!"

"All serene!" said Frank.

The waggon rumbled on, and Frank Richards rode away across the plain, heading for the Lawless ranch.

The afternoon was growing old now; and instead of going on to the ranch, Frank followed the timber trail, to meet Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc coming away from school.

He passed the shack by the creek once more, but there was no sign of Mr. Beauclerc there, neither was any smoke rising from the chimney.

Apparently the remittance-man was absent. Frank trotted on along the trail under the big, leafless boughs, in a very satisfied mood.

He had not carried out his purpose, for which he was not sorry, now that he was calmer; but he was glad that he had way-laid the post-waggon that afternoon.

There were some hard-toiling miners up the valley who would be glad of it, too, when they heard what had happened.

And he had some exciting news for his chums.

Frank's eye was still painful, but his heart was light.

He reached the fork of the trail, and caught sight of his chums ahead in the dusk of the forest, and spurred on cheerily to meet them on the trail.

THE END.

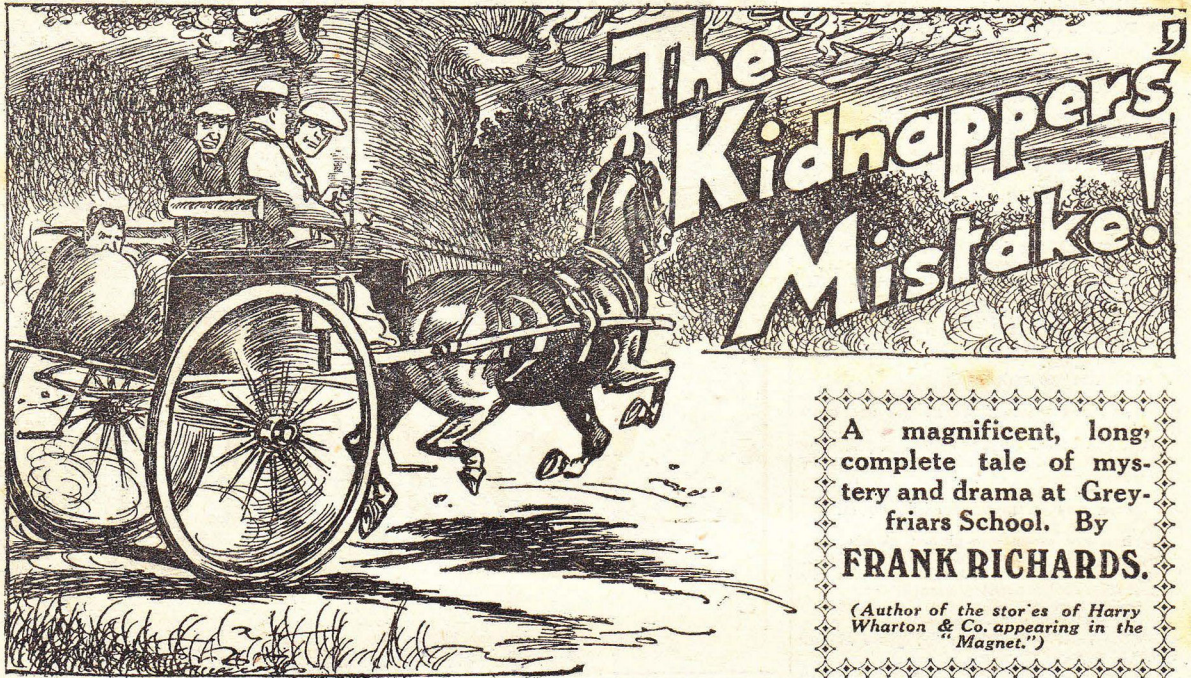
(You must not miss next week's topping backwoods tale.)

A SHADOW OF THE PAST!

Who is the stranger who comes to see Mr. Larry Lascelles, the maths. master of Greyfriars? That is the question for which the Chums of the Remove cannot find an answer. There is deep mystery hovering in the air! Who are the new tenants of the haunted house? And where has Loder of the Sixth suddenly disappeared to? Read this topping tale below.

MYSTERY AND SCHOOL TALE!

Who is the stranger who comes to see Mr. Larry Lascelles, the maths. master of Greyfriars? That is the question for which the Chums of the Remove cannot find an answer. There is deep mystery hovering in the air! Who are the new tenants of the haunted house? And where has Loder of the Sixth suddenly disappeared to? Read this topping tale below.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

Shown in!

THIS 'ere Greyfriars?"

The question was addressed to Loder of the Sixth, who was standing in the gateway of Greyfriars School, looking down the road towards Friardale.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove were outside the porter's lodge, finding a little harmless and necessary amusement in chipping Gosling, the porter.

Loder looked superciliously at the questioner. The chums of the Remove looked at him curiously.

He was a squat, thick-set man, with very broad shoulders, and short, stumpy legs, evidently tremendously strong and muscular. His head, shaped like a bullet, was adorned with a low-crowned bowler-hat, set a little on one side, and looking decidedly rakish. His face was very ruddy, scarred in several places, and the nose was broken. "Pug" was written, as it were, all over his countenance. He looked like what he evidently was, an old prize-fighter, and what he could possibly want at Greyfriars was a mystery.

Loder did not reply to the question, but after one lofty glance at the stranger, looked past him, and seemed unaware of his existence.

Whereupon the gentleman with the broken nose repeated the question, in a somewhat louder tone.

"This 'ere place Greyfriars, young shaver?"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned. To hear Loder, who was a prefect, and a tremendous swell in the Sixth Form, addressed as "young shaver," was a pure delight to them. Loder jumped. He condescended to direct his lofty glance upon the stranger once more.

"Are you speaking to me?" he asked contemptuously.

The broken-nosed gentleman nodded.

"I ham!" he replied, with unnecessarily aspirated emphasis. "I arsked you, young shaver, if this 'ere place was Greyfriars?"

"Yes, this is Greyfriars!" said Loder coldly. "I don't see how it concerns you, my man. You had better be off! Tramps are not allowed in here!"

"Tramps!" repeated the inquirer. "Who are you calling a tramp? Do you want me

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to knock you into the middle of next week, young shaver?"

Loder backed away a little. He was a big fellow, and taller than the stranger; but there was no doubt that the broken-nosed gentleman could have knocked him into the middle of next week, or still further along the calendar, if he had liked, and Loder promptly backed out of reach.

"Don't be afride!" said the stranger. "I ain't goin' to 'it you! But don't you call a gentleman a tramp, young shaver! If you don't know a gentleman when you see one, it's time you learned! I'm 'ere to see an old friend, and don't you forget it!"

And he came in at the gateway.

"You'd better cut off!" said Loder angrily. "If you come in here, I'll call the porter to set the dog on you! Who the deuce are you?"

"Name of Sawyer!" said the broken-nosed gentleman. "Enry Sawyer, a nime well known to the fancy, young shaver! I'm 'ere to see an ole pal, I reckon. There's a Mister Lascelles at this 'ere school, ain't there?"

Loder stared at him.

"Mr. Lascelles! The mathematics master? Yes. Do you mean to say that you've got any business with him?"

"You've 'it it!"

"What rot! If you've come here to beg—"

Mr. Sawyer made a threatening movement, and Loder of the Sixth did not finish his sentence. He beat a retreat.

Mr. Sawyer frowned after him, and then turned to the group of juniors, who were regarding him very curiously. Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics master at Greyfriars, was very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.—all the more because they knew what was not generally known at Greyfriars—that he had been a pugilist before he became a master in the school.

That was a secret, and Harry Wharton & Co., who had learned it by chance, had kept it. They guessed at once that Mr. Sawyer was one of the old acquaintances of the mathematics master, in the days when he had been known in the ring as Larry Lynx. And they could guess, too, that Mr. Lascelles would not be pleased by a personal visit from a gentleman of Mr. Sawyer's description.

"Pr'aps you young gents will tike me to Mr. Lascelles?" said the broken-nosed

gentleman. "I come down 'ere special from London to see 'im!"

The chums of the Remove scanned him. There was a bulldog tenacity of purpose in the scarred face of the old pugilist; but there was goodnature, too, and they concluded that he had come to see his old acquaintance as a friend, ignorant of the harm it might do him in the school. The sight of such a visitor for Mr. Lascelles would undoubtedly set the whole school talking.

"Does Mr. Lascelles expect you?" asked Harry.

Mr. Sawyer shook his head and chuckled. "That 'e don't!" he replied.

"Then don't you think you'd better write to him first?" Wharton ventured to suggest.

"It isn't known here that that—"

"That he's got friends like me, you mean?" said Mr. Sawyer composedly.

"Bless your 'eart, Larry won't mind! He ain't a snob, Larry ain't! One of the best, old Larry—a fist of iron and a 'eart of gold! Sides, it's important, and I've got to see 'im!"

"Wot do you want 'ere?" asked Gosling, the porter, coming out of his lodge with a frowning brow. "Oo are you?"

"Name of Sawyer!"

"I'm surprised at you young gentlemen talkin' to this pusson!" said Gosling severely.

"Wot I says is this 'ere, I'm surprised!"

"Ass!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"Chump!" said Johnny Bull.

Gosling snorted.

"You clear hout of 'ere, my man!" he said with a wave of the hand towards Mr. Sawyer. "You can't come in 'ere!"

"Can't I?" said Mr. Sawyer. "I'd like to see who'd stop Enry Sawyer when he's come to see an old pal. You're the porter, I s'pose—wot? Well, then, I s'pose it's your dooty to show visitors in, ain't it? You show me!"

"I'll show you out!" said Gosling angrily.

"You'll show me in," said Mr. Sawyer, coming closer to Gosling. "I want to see Mr. Lascelles—Mr. Lawrence Lascelles wot is a master 'ere. Savvy?"

"Houtside!"

"Are you goin' to show me in?"

"No, I ain't!" said Gosling flatly. "I don't show in your sort. You get houtside, that's wot I say. 'Ere, 'ands off!" yelled Gosling.

Mr. Sawyer had reached out at the school-porter, and grasped him. Gosling struggled in his grasp; but he might as well have

Loder Has Been Kidnapped by Mistake! Will He Remain a Prisoner?

struggled with a boa-constrictor. The old "pug" handled him as easily as if he had been an infant. He swung Gosling off his feet, and tucked him under his arm like a sack. Gosling's legs waved in the air behind Mr. Sawyer, and his hands clawed the air in front, and his red and furious face rubbed on Mr. Sawyer's brilliant fancy waistcoat. Carrying the porter as easily as a child, Mr. Sawyer started across the Close towards the School House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The chums of the Remove burst into a yell of laughter.

The sight of the unfortunate Gosling being carried off bodily like a naughty infant was too much for them.

"Ow!" roared Gosling. "Lemme down! Lemme go! Ow! You're bustin' my ribs, you scoundrel! 'Eip! Wot I says is this 'ere—Ow—ow—ow! 'Eip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
There were shouts of laughter from all sides, as fellows came hurrying in every direction to see the extraordinary sight.

"My only hat!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Who is it? What is it? Why don't you walk, Gosling, you old slacker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Eip, Master Coker—Master Temple, 'eip me! 'E's a-bustin' of my ribs!" wailed the unhappy Gosling.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Great Scott!" murmured Loder of the Sixth. "Can that ruffian really be a visitor for Lascelles! Great pip! What sort of connections has the fellow got?" And Loder grinned. He did not like Mr. Lascelles, who had more than once chipped in to stop the Sixth-Former from bullying the fags.

"My only aunt! This will be a show-up for Lascelles, if he's really connected with that fellow!"

"Eip!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme go, you 'ound—lemme down, you 'orrible ruffian—ow!"

Mr. Sawyer paid no heed to Gosling's roaring and wriggling. He carried him on calmly towards the house, grinning affably at the surrounding crowd, who were yelling with laughter. Half Greyfriars had gathered round, and were following them. Mr. Sawyer reached the School House, and strode up the steps into the wide hall, with Gosling still wriggling and panting in his grasp.

"Now you'll show me in to Mr. Lascelles—wot?" said Mr. Sawyer.

"Ow! Ow!"
"Bless my soul! What is all this noise?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, looking out of his study.

"A visitor for Mr. Lascelles, sir," said Loder maliciously.

"What!"
"Make 'im lemme go, sir!" wailed Gosling. "He's 'urtin' my ribs something crool. Ow!"

"What—what—what—" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "My good man—ahem!—what does this mean? Put Gosling down at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence, boys! This—is this is most extraordinary! Put Gosling down!"

"No offence, sir," said Mr. Sawyer, ducking his head to the Remove master, and taking off his bowler hat with his left hand, his right arm being wrapped round Gosling's person. "No offence meant, sir, and I 'opc none taken. This 'ere understrapper wouldn't show me in to see Mr. Lascelles—"

"Please put him down."
"Anything to oblige, sir," said Mr. Sawyer. And he put Gosling down.

Possibly Mr. Sawyer had a misguided sense of humour. At all events, he put the wrong end of Gosling down first, and the school-porter stood on his head for the fraction of a second, and then tumbled over on the floor, and lay gasping like a pair of very old bellows.

The Greyfriars fellows who had followed them in burst into shrieks of laughter.

"You—you have come here to see Mr. Lascelles?" ejaculated the Remove master. "Really—really, my good man—"

"Here's Mr. Lascelles!" exclaimed Loder, as the mathematics master came into sight in the passage. "Mr. Lascelles, sir, a visitor for you!"

"Enry Sawyer swung round. "That's 'im!" he said.

Mr. Lascelles stared at him blankly. The well-built, handsome master looked a startling contrast to the bullet-headed, broken-nosed man who claimed his

acquaintance. But Mr. 'Enry Sawyer evidently did not see the incongruity. He advanced towards Mr. Lascelles with outstretched, stumpy hand.

"And 'ow goes it, Larry?" he asked affectionately.

Look and manner showed that he had a very friendly regard for the mathematics master of Greyfriars.

Mr. Lascelles muttered something indistinctly. Everybody could see that he was disconcerted by the sudden appearance of Henry Sawyer in the school. He took the outstretched hand mechanically.

"He knows him, by Jove!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, begad!" murmured Lord Maul- ever, the dandy of the Remove. "And he ain't ashamed to show it, either! Didn't I always say he was a sport?"

"You—you know this—this gentleman, Mr. Lascelles?" asked Mr. Quelch, his voice almost failing him.

The mathematics master nodded shortly. "I know him," he said. "Come into my study, Sawyer!"

"I'm arter you," replied Mr. Sawyer.

The old pugilist followed Mr. Lascelles into his study, and the door closed behind them; and the closing of the door was followed by a general gasp of amazement from the spectators of the strange scene.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Left in the Lurch!

"MY hey!" said Mr. Sawyer, glancing round Mr. Lascelles' study. "You are well fixed up 'ere, Larry, and no bloomin' error!"

"Sit down!" said Mr. Lascelles. "Thank you, Larry!"

Mr. Sawyer sat down. The stumpy, muscular bruiser, in his loud, check clothes, his glaring fancy waistcoat, his striking tie, with his close-cropped head and broken nose, seemed strangely out of place in the master's study at Greyfriars.

But he did not seem to realise it. Mr. Sawyer had plenty of self-confidence, a great faith in himself. He sank comfortably into the deep, leather armchair, then he pulled out a short, black pipe.

"You don't mind, Larry?" he asked.

"Not at all!"

Mr. Sawyer filled the pipe with a strong shag, struck a match upon his trousers, and lighted it.

Strong fumes of tobacco filled the study. Mr. Lascelles did not sit down. He remained standing, with one elbow resting on the mantelpiece, looking at his visitor. The well-dressed, handsome master, with his clear-cut, intellectual face, offered a strange contrast to his friend. Yet Mr. Sawyer evidently was his friend. Mr. Lascelles' expression was quite cordial, though a little uneasy.

"S'prised to see me 'ere?" said Mr. Sawyer, when his pipe was fairly going.

"Yes."

"I 'ope it won't do you no 'arm, my comin' 'ere," said Mr. Sawyer, with momentary uneasiness. "I s'pose they don't know anythin' 'ere about your 'avin' been a pug?"

Mr. Lascelles smiled. "It is known to a few," he said. "But the secret is kept. Of course, it would not do me any good to have it known here."

"I s'pose not. Course, I ain't said a word to give you away." Mr. Sawyer seemed anxious to impress this upon the mathematics master. "Not a syllable! I come 'ere simply as an old friend or a visit, and nobody need suspect nothing from that—wot?"

Mr. Lascelles only nodded. The old "pug" seemed unconscious of the fact that he was a very remarkable kind of friend for a master in a public school to possess.

"And I ain't goin' to drop in hev'ry day, Larry. Don't you be afraid of that. I knows a thing or two. I ain't a fool," said Mr. Sawyer, with a wise shake of the head. "I say, you don't mind me callin' you Larry, now you're so toffy 'ere?"

"Not at all."

"Oh, orl right, then!" said Mr. Sawyer. "I knowed you ain't the kind of man to put on hairs over your old pals. We been old pals, ain't we?"

"I shall never forget that I owe you a great deal," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Yes, I did 'elp you on at first," said Mr. Sawyer ruminatingly. "There was you, a young gent fresh from college, with your 'ead crammed with all sorts of knowledge—mattymatticks and Greek and things—wot wouldn't fetch a single brown—wot? And you could box like a cherub, and 'ad the very gift for the ring. And there was me. You remember the first time we met. Fifteen rounds. You only a beginner then, and me a experienced pug, and you finished me in the fifteenth. And from that hower we was pals. And I 'elped you to get on in the ring and make a living at it, didn't I?"

"You did."

"And you did very well—wot?"

"Very well indeed!"

"You can't be making so much tin now as you did then, Larry?" said Mr. Sawyer. "This 'ere is very toffy, but there ain't much money in it."

"Not nearly so much."

"Then why did you make the chynge?" demanded Sawyer. "You give up the fancy to be a schoolmaster. I must say I'm s'prised at you, Larry! This 'ere is all right, I dessay, but it ain't a man's life like t'other."

Mr. Lascelles smiled genially.

"You see, I wanted this all the time," he explained, "but it isn't easy for a man fresh from the University to get a good position. I was quite fitted for the post, but there are more applicants than posts in these days. As I did not care to sponge on friends and relations, I came pretty near starving before I turned my skill in boxing to account. I took it up only in a small way at first. But for your friendship and assistance I might never have made a success of it—"

"Oh, you'd 'ave come to the top, anyway," said Mr. Sawyer. "No doubt about that. But I 'elped to make the beginnin' easy, bein' as I knowed the ropes."

"But when, through the influence of my friend, Mr. Quelch, I obtained the offer of this position, I was quite willing to give up the boxing. I filled my last engagements, and gave it up for good. I intended to say nothing about it, but I was betrayed by a boxer I had beaten in the ring, and I had an explanation with the Head. Luckily, he took a kindly view of the matter—"

"Proud to 'ave Larry Lynx in his school, I dessay!" Mr. Sawyer remarked.

"Well, not exactly. But he agreed to overlook the matter—of course, upon condition that I gave up boxing definitely. That was understood."

Mr. Sawyer's face fell.

"You didn't promise?" he exclaimed.

"There was no need. It was an understanding."

"But you ain't exactly given your word?"

"Not in words, certainly; but it's understood."

Mr. Sawyer drew a breath of relief.

"You're stickin' to this, then? You ain't no hidea of going back to the mittens?"

"None at all."

"But don't you feel sometimes—jest every now and then—that you'd like to 'ave another mill—jest one light agin, with the mittens on, and the crowd lookin' on round the ropes—wot?" said Mr. Sawyer persuasively.

"Perhaps—yes," said Mr. Lascelles slowly. "But it's impossible! That kind of thing is incompatible with my position here."

Mr. Sawyer rubbed his square jaw in a thoughtful way.

"You was always given to sich jaw-crackin' words," he said. "Wot might that mean, now?"

The master laughed.

"I mean I can't run the two things together. I should be asked to resign my position here if I should appear in the ring again."

"And you'd rather keep up this 'ere?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, I don't understand it," said Mr. Sawyer, shaking his head. "But I never did quite understand you, Larry. You was always a queer fish in some ways. Well, I ain't proposin' to you to come into the ring agin for good. But jest once—"

Mr. Lascelles shook his head.

"I have wrote to you about it two or three times," said Mr. Sawyer, "and each blessed time you answered that it was impossible. Then I says to myself, says I,

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that I'd come and see you, and put it to you like one man to another. You see, it's a peccoliar case. There's the Bernondsey Slogger—you remember him—Jim Hooker?"

"I remember him."

"You beat him once, but it was a close finish. He's simply thirstin' to go for you agin, Larry. He says you're afraid to meet 'im. Says you've disappeared from the ring 'cause you durstn't face 'im."

"Never mind."

"But I do mind," said Mr. Sawyer indignantly. "Ain't you my old pupil? Didn't I fust shove you forrard? Ain't I been your trainer? 'Ere's the Slogger offerin' to meet you for a thousand pounds a-side, and me knowin' 'eaps of gents willing and ready to put their money on you. An' the Slogger, every time I meet 'im, jeerin' and sneerin'. Says as 'ow you're funky of 'im, and as 'ow you've thrown me over too, and won't meet him to oblige me. And I've said to 'im that you'll do it jest to oblige an ole pal. I've told my pals that you was sure to do it to oblige me. I thought as 'ow you'd be glad for one more bust. I says to myself, says I, he must be gettin' sick of the schoolmaster business, and simply dyin' for a round or two in the old style. That's wot I thought. It was all practically arranged."

"Then I writes to you, and you replies that it can't be. I come to talk you over, Larry. You can't leave your old trainer in the lurch. You can come outer this jest for once. Think of me, with the Slogger jeerin' and sneerin' that my old pupil is funk'ing him, and my pals all thinking, and some of 'em sayin', that you've thrown me over now you've become a toff. They knows you've become a toff, though I've kept it dark where you are and wot you are, accordin' to agreement. But it's 'ard on me now—don't you see that?"

"Yes, I see that, old man. But—"

"Then you'll do it jest for once? You can beat the Slogger. It will be a 'ard tussle, but you'll beat 'im, and there'll be a thousand quid on it."

"It can't be done!"

Mr. Sawyer made a hopeless gesture.

"It's 'ard on me," he repeated. "I depended on you as an old pal, and I've as good as give my word as you'll turn up."

Mr. Lascelles' face was very grave.

"I'm sorry, old fellow," he said—"very sorry! But it's quite impossible. I've a clear understanding with Dr. Locke that that is all over for good. If I took it up again—even for a single occasion—I should be deceiving him. I could not do it without resigning my position here."

"Pr'aps if I was to see the 'eadmaster, and explain to 'im—" suggested Mr. Sawyer.

"I'm afraid that would be quite useless," said Mr. Lascelles, with a smile. "The Head would hardly understand your point of view. And I could not possibly ask him. And it is not only the Head—there is the Board of Governors. The matter might get to their ears, and Dr. Locke would be placed in a very awkward position if he did not ask me to resign. I'm sorry; but it's quite out of the question."

"Then I've come here for nothing?"

"I'm afraid so."

Mr. Sawyer rose to his feet.

"Well, I can't s'ye as this is treatin' an old pal like an old pal!" he said reproachfully. "There wouldn't be no need for anybody to know. I s'pose the 'ead don't read the boxin' noos in the 'Pink 'Un, does he? But you was always an obstinate bass, Larry. I'm disappointed!"

"I'm sorry!" said Mr. Lascelles. "It can't be helped. Anything else I could do—"

"There ain't nothing else," said Mr. Sawyer, with dignity. "You're leavin' an old pal in the lurch, that's wot you're doin' of!"

"Don't put it like that, Harry. I'd oblige you if I could; but it can't be done," said Mr. Lascelles, his handsome face quite distressed. "It's impossible!"

"Things that's impossible 'appens sometimes!" said Mr. Sawyer, with a queer look at the master. "Pr'aps you'll change your mind—"

"I can't."

"Pr'aps you will—pr'aps!" said Mr. Sawyer, evidently following some curious train of thought in his own mind. "We shall see. I won't 'ang on any longer 'ere. I'll be off. Good-bye, Larry, and if you

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change your mind, you know where to write."

"I cannot change my mind!"

"We shall see," said Mr. Sawyer enigmatically. And he shook hands with the master, and Mr. Lascelles went to the door with him.

A good many curious eyes watched Mr. Sawyer as he walked across the Close again. He nodded affably to Harry Wharton & Co. Gosling looked at him from his lodge, but did not come out. He was very anxious not to get to close quarters with Mr. Sawyer again. The old prizefighter, with a clouded brow, walked out of the gates.

Mr. Lascelles remained in a very thoughtful mood in his study. The visit of 'Enery Sawyer had brought back his old life freshly to his mind, contrasting strangely with the quiet, scholarly existence he led at Greyfriars.

Perhaps there was a glimmer of regret in his handsome face—and certainly he felt keenly the disappointment of his old friend. He owed much to Mr. Sawyer—very much—and he admitted it. But it could not be helped, and Mr. Lascelles tried his best to dismiss the matter from his mind.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Strange Discovery!

WHEN Harry Wharton & Co., the next day, announced their intention of having a picnic at the Grange, Billy Bunter told them it was let.

The chums did not believe that statement, and, anyhow, as they had promised to take Marjorie Hazeldene & Co., of Cliff House, with them on the picnic, Bunter's statement, true or untrue, made no difference.

They went, and so did Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevelyn. Probably Billy had an idea he could join the picnicers, and thought the Grange was too far away. Bunter never did like walking. At any rate, Billy Bunter was not one of the party that entered the grounds of the Grange and then the house.

Harry Wharton & Co. rambled through the old house. It was the first time they had explored the building, though many other of the Greyfriars juniors had done so. The old house had been deserted for many years, but they were not surprised to see, here and there, signs of recent occupation.

Tramps often made the old building a resting-place, and lighted fires there, and camped there for days at a time. The furniture was smothered with dust, what there was of it. In the old kitchen, floored with stone flags, a fire was low in the grate, and the remains of a meal lay on the table. Wharton started as he looked about the room. There were many new utensils there, and he was surprised to see them.

"Jolly curious that a tramp should bring all these things with him," he remarked.

"It is odd," said Marjorie. "Is it possible that the house is let, after all?"

"If it's let, where are the tenants?" said Harry. "No fear! That chap's camped here, and very likely he wanted to stay for some time, and didn't want to be known. He's cleared right off now."

"But he's left his property behind," said Miss Clara.

"He'll come back after we're gone. Let's have a look upstairs."

They ascended the broad old staircase. Everywhere the dust was thick, and cobwebs hung in heavy festoons. But in two of the old bed-rooms the windows were open, and fires had been lighted, and there were signs of habitation. Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation as he stopped outside a door on the second floor.

"My only hat! Look here!" he exclaimed. The juniors gathered round, with looks of wonder. Outside the door two strong iron brackets had been screwed on the doorposts, and an iron bar stood in the corner against the wall.

The door opened outwards, and the bar and the brackets were evidently for the purpose of securing it later. They were evidently new—fresh from the ironmonger's. They had been put up that day or the day before. The juniors gazed at them in amazement.

"What on earth does that mean?" Wharton exclaimed.

"Looks as if somebody was getting ready to keep a prisoner here," said Bob, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "They can't be going to turn the place into a prison or a lunatic asylum, I suppose?"

"Blessed if I can understand it!"

"Let's look into the room," said Nugent. The door was locked, the key on the outside. Wharton unlocked it, and pulled open the door.

The interior was in deep shadow. Shutters were closed on the window outside. Through the shutters came only a dim gleam or two of the sunshine without.

"These shutters are new," said Bob, tapping them with his knuckles. "Look here! Quite new, and jolly thick wood, too! They're screwed down!"

The juniors gazed at one another in blank astonishment.

Shutters screwed down on the only window, and a bar provided for the door! What did it mean? It evidently meant that the room was to be used for a prison. But why, and for whom? What strange mystery had the juniors stumbled upon in that deserted old building?

"Looks as if the house is let, after all," said Nugent, in a low voice. "Tramps couldn't have done this."

"But why should a tenant want to fix a room up like this?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"There's something jolly fishy about it," said Harry. "Somebody might have taken the house for a private lunatic asylum, perhaps; but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's come in!" exclaimed Bob.

There was a sound of footsteps below. Then a voice was heard.

"They're in the 'ouse, I believe."

"Come out of this," said Wharton, in a low voice.

The party trod cautiously out of the shuttered room, and Wharton locked the door again, leaving it as he had found it. There were already steps on the stairs. The three girls were looking a little scared.

"Don't be frightened!" said Harry reassuringly. "They can't hurt us. Even if the house is let, we're doing no harm here."

A man in a jersey appeared on the broad stairs, looking upward. He uttered a shout as he caught sight of the juniors.

"'Ere they are, Mr. Sawyer!"

"Mr. Sawyer!" ejaculated the juniors, with one voice.

A bullet-head, adorned with a low-crowned bowler hat and a broken nose, came into view on the dusky staircase.

It was Mr. Sawyer, the strange visitor who had come to Greyfriars a few days before to visit Mr. Lascelles.

The juniors stared at him blankly.

Another man—a rough-looking fellow, with only one eye and a curiously battered face—was behind Mr. Sawyer on the stairs. Mr. Sawyer was looking very grim, but his expression relaxed as he beheld the juniors.

"'Allo! It's you young gents, is it?" he exclaimed. "Didn't I see you the other day at Greyfriars—wot?"

"Yes, Mr. Sawyer," said Harry Wharton. "Glad to see you again!"

"How do you do?" said Bob Cherry affably.

"The topfulness of the afternoon to you, my esteemed friend!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Mr. Sawyer's companions were looking surly and scowling. The old pugilist himself looked very curious. Upon the whole, his expression was good-natured.

Harry Wharton & Co. had made a good impression upon him on the occasion of his visit to Greyfriars.

"So it's you," said Mr. Sawyer, after a pause. "Well, alright. But you ain't allowed in 'ere, you know, now the 'ouse is let."

"Let, is it?" said Bob.

"Yes. Young gents and young ladies, I s'pose you don't mean any 'arm 'ere, but now the 'ouse is let you must not come in."

"But what has it to do with you?" asked Harry Wharton. "Even if the house is let, I suppose you are not employed to look after it, are you?"

Mr. Sawyer stared.

"The 'ouse is let to me!" he explained.

"You!"

"Yus," said Mr. Sawyer. "Why not?"

"My hat!"

"You see," said Mr. Sawyer, apparently thinking that some explanation was necessary—"you see, I'm training a man for a

Mr. Sawyer Has Threatened to Force Larry Lascelles to Fight!

big fight, and we want a quiet place to train in, to keep away from reporters, and such. You know how them reporters simply 'aunt a man when he's trainin' for a big fight. So I've took this 'ere 'ouse for a month, for trainin' purposes—see?"

"Oh!" said Wharton. "So you're the new tenant?"

Mr. Sawyer nodded. "I ham. I left my pal Badger in charge, and he comes to me and says, says he, that a gang of trespassers was in the place—"

"Well, if you've taken the house, I suppose we are trespassing," said Harry. "But the place has always been open to all comers, you know, and—"

"Orlright," said Mr. Sawyer affably. "It's O.K. You didn't mean any 'arm. I know that. You get out now and no 'arm's done. That's all right!"

"Right-ho! And as you're the tenant, we apologise for coming in like this," said Harry. "Of course, if we'd known—"

"That's orlright," said Mr. Sawyer affably. "Don't menchi!"

The picknickers went downstairs. Mr. Sawyer was still affable, but he was evidently anxious to see them off the premises. They wondered whether his anxiety had anything to do with that mysterious room they had discovered. They quitted the old house—Mr. Sawyer "shooing" them, as it were, off the premises, in a good-natured but determined manner. He "shooed" them out of the garden in the same way, and took off his hat very politely to the young ladies as they departed.

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when they were outside the old ivied walls again.

"He was very kind, I think, though he is rather a dreadful-looking man," Marjorie remarked. "The other men looked very bad-tempered."

"I think they would have liked to go for us," said Harry, laughing. "But Sawyer is an old sport. It must have cost him a good bit of money to take that house, even for a month. I suppose it's really just the place for what he wants it for."

"But what does he want a barred room for?" said Bob Cherry. "He doesn't mean to bar his man in a room to keep him away from the reporters, does he?"

"Ha, ha! I should think not."

"But they haven't taken all that trouble for nothing," said Bob.

"N-no! It's jolly odd. But Sawyer is a decent chap," said Harry. "I don't think it can be anything fishy. Anyway, I suppose it's no business of ours."

That was certainly the case—but the juniors could not help thinking about the odd circumstances of the barred room, with the strongly-shuttered window. For whom had that room been prepared—for that it had been prepared for some inmate could hardly be doubted. The chums of the Remove walked home to Cliff House with their girl chums; and then sauntered away in the sunset to Greyfriars. And, as they went, their thoughts turned, in spite of themselves, upon that mysterious barred room in the lonely old house.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Done in the Dark!**

"HERE he comes! Steady now!"

It was a faint whisper in the darkness under the trees, close to where the path from the vicarage entered the lane—a whisper so faint that it could not be heard by the one whose footsteps sounded on the path through the thick gloom of the night.

But it was heard by the men who were skulking in the shadows of the trees, and there was a low whisper in response.

"We're ready, boss!"

Then deep silence. Loder, the prefect, did not hear. Loder of the Sixth had been too busy that evening to see lights out for the Remove, and his chum Walker had taken the duty on himself. Loder's business had been outside Greyfriars; very peculiar business, too, for a Sixth-Former and a prefect of the old school.

Loder's business had been to tempt the goddess Fortune at the game of poker in the back-parlour of the Cross Keys. Fortune had been very unkind to Loder, and he had stayed on later than usual, hoping that luck

would turn, until all the ready cash he possessed had gone into the pool, and there was no chance of luck turning. The sporting gentlemen at the Cross Keys did not play on "tick." So when Loder was cleared out, the only thing for him to do was to clear out also, which he did in a very bad temper. And he then made the discovery that it was turned half-past eleven, and that he would not be back at the school before midnight—a discovery which added to his bad temper.

So, as the hour was so late, Loder took the short cut through the churchyard—a path generally avoided at night—and, as there was no one to see him, Loder ran all the way, till he came out into the path near the vicarage gates. There he slacked down, breathless, and walked on at a more moderate pace towards Friardale Lane.

All the lights were out in the vicarage, and the path was densely dark under the shadow of the trees that over-arched it on both sides. But, having left the churchyard behind, Loder was not nervous, and he walked on carelessly enough, only thinking about his losses, and wondering what he should do for "tin" until his next allowance came.

In the darkness he did not see three dim figures lurking in the deep shadows of the trees, and he did not hear the faint whisper among them.

He came on unsuspectingly.

There was a sudden rush of feet in the darkness, hardly heard on the soft grass, and the three dim figures were upon Loder of the Sixth.

Before he knew what was happening, before he realised that he was attacked, an open sack was dragged down over his head, and his arms were pinioned on both sides by a strong grip.

"Got 'im!"

The muttering voice came to Loder's ears through the sack, and, muffled as it sounded, the tones seemed familiar to him.

He began to struggle blindly.

"Take it easy!" said the muffled voice.

"Tain't no good strugglin', cully! We've got yer! Don't be afride! You're in friends' 'ands!"

Loder felt a looped rope tighten round the sack, and it secured his arms down to his sides in the sack.

He shouted, but the sack muffled his voice. There was a chuckle from his captors.

He was lifted off his feet and carried away—where, he could not guess. With his face covered by the sacking, he could not even make a guess at the direction he was taking.

He was carried perhaps thirty yards, and then he was lifted higher, and laid down. The feeling showed that he was laid in a vehicle of some description.

He heard the sound of a horse, of rattling harness. He felt two men climb into the vehicle after him, and heard the third man gather up the reins.

Then there was a patter of horse's hoofs. Wheels rolled rapidly under him. The two men seated beside him kept their grip upon him, as if in expectation of some attempt to break away.

But Loder made no such attempt.

He was not a coward, but he realised his helplessness. There were three men—three powerful ruffians—to deal with, and his arms were bound by a strong rope, knotted round him over the sack. It was useless to shout. There were not likely to be passers-by on that lonely road at midnight, and a blow would have stunned him as he lay helpless and stifled his cries. And Loder was more amazed than alarmed.

What did it mean?

He had been kidnapped—kidnapped by men who were evidently lying in wait for him. What could it mean? Why had they kidnapped him? What on earth was he worth to them? Where were they taking him? What could it all mean?

His brain was in a whirl. And that husky whisper—that he was in the hands of friends! It was an appalling mystery. What troubled Loder most of all was the fact that he was being carried away from Greyfriars. If he were unable to return before morning! He



GOSSY SHOWS THE STRANGER IN! Mr. Sawyer swung the school-porter off his feet, tucked him under his arm like a sack, and started across the Close for the School House. "You're going to show me where I can find Mr. Lascelles!" said the stranger. (See Chapter 1.)

grew cold all over at the thought. If his nocturnal excursions once became known to the Head, he knew what it meant—expulsion from the school, without the slightest mercy. He had risked it often enough, but he had never dreamt of a mischance like this. Who were these men? What did they want with him? Where were they taking him?

The vehicle rattled on. Loder guessed that it was a trap—and not a large one, by the way he was huddled up in it with his unseen, unknown companions. The trap had been in readiness—these ruffians had been ready for him. But how had they known he was coming that way? It was only because of the lateness of the hour that he had taken that short cut through the churchyard, and so had come out into the vicarage path. They could not have known.

And then it dawned upon him that he had been mistaken in the darkness for someone else. He had gone that way by blind chance; and these rascals had been waiting for someone, and had not expected a chance wayfarer that way at such an hour, and they had slipped the sack over his head so quickly that they had not had a chance of discovering their mistake.

That was it, undoubtedly. Who on earth had they been waiting for on the vicarage path? Not the vicar. It was absurd to suppose that fat, uncouth Mr. Lambe was the intended victim of the kidnapers.

Besides, he would not be leaving the vicarage at that late hour. Yet they must have been lying in wait for someone from the vicarage—the path led from nowhere else, excepting from the churchyard—and the churchyard path was never used at night. Then Loder suddenly remembered that Mr. Lascelles paid a visit every Wednesday evening to the vicarage to play chess with Mr. Lambe, and generally left about eleven. Then he understood.

It was Mr. Lascelles they had been waiting for. And they had heard only his footsteps—they had not seen him—and so he had been collared and taken off.

And then like a flash came the recollection of where he had heard that husky voice that had muttered through the sack; it was the voice of the broken-nosed man who had come to Greyfriars to see the mathematics master, and who had spoken to Loder at the gate.

Mr. 'Erry Sawyer!

Loder had heard some talk at the Cross Keys about Mr. Sawyer, the old pugilist and trainer, who had honoured that delectable establishment with his custom for two or three days past. He was hanging about Friardale for some reason; and Loder understood the reason now.

As he realised how matters stood, Loder began to wriggle in the sack. Once he made these ruffians understand that they had made a wrong capture, they would doubtless release him. And yet—would they? Perhaps they would guess that he knew too much to be safely released. But it was worth trying, at all events.

"Keep quiet, Larry!" muttered a voice over him. "Tain't no good makin' a fuss—and we ain't goin' to 'urt you!"

Loder, in spite of his uneasiness, almost grinned in the sack. The name "Larry" showed him that his surmises were correct. Lawrence was Mr. Lascelles' Christian name—and Loder, too, knew the undercurrent of talk at Greyfriars that connected the mathematics master with Larry Lynx, the boxer. He was quite certain now.

"Let me out!" said Loder.

There was a chuckle. The sack muffled his voice and disguised his tones, so their unfamiliarity did not warn his captors of their mistake.

"Not likely, Larry! We got you. But you ain't comin' to any 'arm—you knows as we're all your old pals!"

"Let me out. I'm not the man you take me for!"

"Draw it mild, Larry!"

"Not so much jore there!" came Mr. Sawyer's voice from the front of the trap.

"Larry's talkin', boss!"

"Don't answer 'im, then."

Loder struggled in the sack.

"Can't you understand?" he shouted. "I know you take me for Mr. Lascelles—or Larry Lynx, as you call him. I'm not Mr. Lascelles!"

"He, he, he!"

"I—I'm—" Loder had been about to give his real name, but he paused in time. THE POPULAR.—No. 232.

If it were known at Greyfriars that he was out of bounds at that hour of the night, it was ruin to him. It would not do to place it in the power of these rascals to betray him—perhaps to blackmail him. His voice died away. There was another chuckle from the kidnapers. Evidently they were tickled at the idea of their prisoner denying his own identity to get loose from their clutches.

"I tell you I'm not Lascelles!" Loder exclaimed. "Haven't you any sense? Lascelles is three inches taller than I am, and he must weigh a lot more. He's ten years older!"

There was no chuckle this time. Loder's words had made an impression upon the unseen men in the trap.

"My hey!" muttered a voice. "I thought 'e was werry light for Larry, Badger!"

"He didn't put up the fight you might 'ave expected from Larry!" muttered the other voice. "I say, boss, if there's bin a mistake I—"

"Mistake!" snorted Mr. Sawyer. "Bosh! You're a fool, Toodles! Didn't we wait for him for a hower and a 'arf?"

"Somebody else—"

"Who'd come down that there path at that hower? Do you think you've got the vicar?" Mr. Sawyer snorted again. "You couldn't 'ave lifted that fat old lamb into the trap!"

"I don't care—it ain't Larry!" said Toodles sulkily. "Larry's got three stone more than this 'ere spadger, I should say!"

Mr. Sawyer appeared impressed by that observation. The trap stopped, and Loder heard him hooking the reins over a branch by the lane-side. Then he scrambled round in the trap.

"Got your knife, Toodles?"

"'Ere it is. Wot—"

Loder shuddered with horror. Was that to be the result of their discovery of their mistake—sudden, merciless murder? He struggled frantically in the sack and yelled with terror.

"Help—help! Murder!"

"Shet up!" growled Mr. Sawyer, his hand showing the sacking violently over Loder's mouth. "Nobody's goin' to 'urt you. 'Taint Larry—he ain't a sbriekin' coward. I wonder what slinking polecat we got 'old of, arter all? Got your knife? Cut a slit in the sack and let's see his dial!"

Loder ceased to struggle as he realised what the knife was wanted for. He lay very still; he did not want the knife to gash his face as well as the sacking.

The keen blade was drawn across the sacking, making a slit before Loder's face. Rough fingers pulled the edges back, and Loder's face was uncovered; though still invisible in the darkness. He felt the fresh air on his cheeks, and he blinked in the darkness. Only shadowy branches overhead, and dim forms around him met his gaze. He heard Mr. Sawyer fumbling. There was the scratch of a match, and a sudden flare of light. The broken-nosed man bent over Loder, holding the match so close to his face that he winced and blinked. Then the old pugilist uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"It's a kid!"

"'Taint Larry, anyway, boss!"

"My hey, this 'ere is a go!" muttered Badger. "We got the wrong pig by the hear, and no bloomin' error! Wot's to be done?"

"Done!" growled Mr. Sawyer. "I got a good mind to take 'im along and chuck 'im into the blooming sea. I seen this young shaver afore somewhere. Speak up, you young villain, you; wot's your name?"

"Smith!" panted Loder.

"Liar!" said Mr. Sawyer, reading the lie easily enough in Loder's twitching face and slinking eyes. "Not that it matters a rap to me whether you're Smith, Jones, or Robinson. Wot do you mean—ah, I know you now. You're the young shaver wot I spoke to 'other day at Greyfriars, when I came to see my ole pal—and was so cheeky to me, hey?"

"I—I didn't mean to be—"

"So you says now!" sneered Mr. Sawyer. "And wot was a young gentleman of Greyfriars doin' out at midnight—eh? I don't know much about your school, but I s'pose that ain't allowed. Pretty goings-on, wot?"

"I—I had gone out for a walk—"

stammered Loder.

"At midnight! Liar!" said Mr. Sawyer again.

Loder was silent. "Wot's to be done?" said Toodles. "We don't want this young spadger. But he knows now wot we're arter."

"And one word to Larry—" muttered Badger.

Mr. Sawyer muttered savagely to himself. Evidently he was very much disturbed by the mistake that had been made.

"One of you bungling jossers order 'ave seed as it wasn't Larry!" he growled.

"Well, you didn't see 'oss—"

"Oh, don't jore!" said Mr. Sawyer crossly. He was evidently not in a reasonable mood. Loder found his voice again.

"I—I— You can trust me! I—I wot not speak to Lascelles! I'll keep this dark."

The match had gone out. But Loder could see now the gleam of Mr. Sawyer's eyes in the darkness above him.

"You'll keep it dark?" repeated Mr. Sawyer.

"Yes, yes!"

"You know that there's a gime on foot to collar Larry and take 'im orf?"

"Yes, I couldn't help—"

"For all you know, we may mean to 'arf murder 'im, or rob 'im," said Mr. Sawyer.

"He's no friend of mine."

"You mean, you'll 'old your tongue, and let 'im get it in the neck—jest wot we choose to do to 'im?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, you dirty, sneakin', cowardly polecat!" broke out Mr. Sawyer, in a sudden burst of eloquence.

Loder bit his lips; he had certainly gone the wrong way to work to placate Mr. Sawyer. It was not easy to understand that gentleman. Loder couldn't be expected to guess that a man who was planning to carry off Mr. Lascelles by bodily force was at the same time his enthusiastic admirer, and devotedly attached to him. That was a puzzle that a keener fellow than Loder might never have comprehended.

"If you're that sort of blighter, you ain't to be trusted—not a hinch!" said Mr. Sawyer emphatically.

Mr. Sawyer added some more expressions, which need not be reproduced. The old "pug" had not learned his eloquence in a polite school.

"But wot are you goin' to do with 'im, sir?" muttered Toodles despairingly.

Sawyer rapped out an oath.

"Do with 'im? He ought to 'ave his bloomin' neck wrung; but we can't do that. And we can't send him back to the school to jore. We got to keep him quiet till arterwards."

"Let me go! I promise—"

"'Old yer tongue!" growled Mr. Sawyer, in disgust. "'Old your jore! Keep 'im quiet 'ere, cullies—if he yells out agin, knock 'im over the 'ead. He ain't Larry, and it don't matter 'ow you 'andle 'im. Keep him quiet. We've missed Larry now—'tain't no good goin' back. Another time'll do—easy enough so long as Larry don't know the gime. Keep that sneakin' spadger quiet!"

"There'll be trouble over this 'ere, boss. This 'ere is kidnappin'," muttered Toodles uneasily.

"And wot was it if we'd nailed Larry, you hass?"

"That's different. Larry wouldn't have rounded on his old pals. But this spadger—"

"Can't be 'elped now. It's the whole hog or none," said Mr. Sawyer finally. "Let 'im go, and he'll jore; he couldn't 'elp it. Then we lose our chance with Larry."

And Mr. Sawyer unhooked the reins from the branch, and drove on again. Loder's heart sank. He had been kidnapped by mistake; but he was kidnapped, all the same. He could not return to Greyfriars—he was a prisoner. And even the prospect of seeing the kidnapers punished afterwards was marred by the reflection that then his own conduct would come to light. He would have to explain what he was doing in Friardale at midnight. That would have to be kept dark. He would have to invent some story that he had been seized at the school. But, in that case, he would have to let the kidnapers escape scot-free, to keep them from disclosing the facts. Loder's reflections were far from pleasant as he lay in the trap, rolling away in the darkness to he knew not whither.

THE END.

(There will be another topping tale of Greyfriars next week.)

KING RICHARD COMES BACK TO ENGLAND!

After his many weary months of imprisonment in Normandy, King Richard Cœur de Lion returns secretly to England. His coming is the signal for the faithful barons and knights all over the country to take up arms and muster their forces to drive the usurper, Prince John, from the throne!

THE GATHERING OF THE CLANS!



The Story that is Thrilling the World!

[Introduction.]

GUY FITZHUGH, a young ward of King Richard Cœur de Lion, unable to tolerate the tyranny of Sir Humphrey de Brienne any longer, has made his escape from the castle of his rascally guardian, fled into the forest of Sherwood, and joined the great band of outlaws under the leadership of ROBIN HOOD. Here he meets many friends—Allan-a-Dale, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and two wandering minstrels, Sweeney, the harper, and Isobel.

About this time King Richard had been imprisoned in Normandy when returning from a crusade into the Holy Land, and Prince John had become master of Merry England by underhand means. John is hated by many, but none like him less than ROBIN HOOD THE OUTLAW.

Many times the prince's men-at-arms have come into conflict with the merry men of Sherwood, and many times they have been defeated. But a day comes when John's great following turn the tables on the outlaws, and the foresters are driven into the woods, to seek shelter in their secret hiding-places. But John is not satisfied with this; he kidnaps MAID MARIAN and ISOBEL, the minstrel, and takes them to KENILWORTH with him, where he is to hold a tournament, and where he hopes to trap Robin Hood.

When Robin hears the news he sets forth, masquerading under the title of Sir Nameless of Cumberland, with Guy FitzHugh and one or two other trusty men, and follows the prince to Kenilworth.

But John discovers the identity of the Nameless Knight and his band of followers, and the outlaws have to leave the town hurriedly. Guy and Allan get on the track of the escorted litter and the prisoners, and by a clever ruse change places with Maid Marion and Isobel.

After resting at a town, the escort continue their journey to London. They come to a lonely part of the country, and Sir FitzPeter, the leader of the men-at-arms, calls his second-in-command to his side. "I fear a rescue to be made here, as it is so lonely. If such a thing does happen, I want you to draw your dagger and kill the outlaw's wife instantly!"

Now Read On.

THE RESCUE!

"It shall be done as you wish," said Simeon of Worcester; and, drawing his dagger from his girdle, he tried the point upon his thumb, and slipped it back into its sheath with a vicious click.

On the wild expanse of moorland now known as Berkhamstead Common the gorse was blooming in all its golden glory, and the thorn-trees were in flower. The springy turf that carpeted the Roman road was brilliantly green, and as Much, the miller's son, buried his elbows in it, and looked at the larks soaring up through the blue sky, he heaved a sigh of great content.

"By St. Hubert," said Much, "there are worse places than this where a man might spend his days!"

"Save only," said Right-hitting Brand, who lay beside him, "for the castle in the hollow down there, and the town, which is somewhat too close, though for our present

purpose I grant you no spot could be better. Why, a thousand men might be concealed among this broom and bracken until the enemy were close upon them!"

As a matter of fact, twenty men did lie hidden within a stone's throw of the two outlaws, each with his bow beside him, and his eyes bent on the road by which they expected the cavalcade would travel. A little heap of white ashes amid a clump of thorns not far off showed where they had bivouacked the night before, and now they waited in ambush.

"Ah!" said Right-hitting Brand suddenly. "What is you but the glitter of sun on steel? By the rood, they come!"

"Someone comes, 'tis certain!" replied Much, crawling forward to the better shelter of a bush of yellow broom, from which he peered. "They are horsemen, and a goodly company, but I see no women with them."

'THE PRISONERS' ESCAPE!



"Quick, Guy, into the saddle!" cried Allan-a-Dale. And, catching a riderless charger that came thundering by, Guy leapt into the saddle that Simeon of Worcester had left a moment before. A second later the two boys were charging across the heath. (See page 24.)

The party approached at a quick trot, casting their eyes right and left, yet seeing nothing, and in a few moments they had passed on their way, and the thud of their hoofs was lost in the distance.

"'Tis strange," mused Much, "yet think I that we are upon the right track. Those were John's men, that will I swear, for I recognised more than one face that I saw at Kenilworth."

"Hold! Here come some more!" said his companion. "Now we are rewarded. See, they ride in two lines, and between them is a horse-litter."

Much whistled softly like a curlew, and the breeze that shed the thorn-blossom in a shower of snowy petals brought a faint, answering call to his ear; and as he seated himself upon his heels, and fitted an arrow to the string, Robin's lieutenant knew that twenty bows were ready, and only awaited his signal to be loosed.

"They are strong!" he muttered to Right-hitting Brand, who knelt beside him—"full forty men, at least. And that is FitzPeter's scarlet crest riding beneath the litter."

"I have a clothyard shaft here," said Right-hitting Brand, "that shall stain that crest a deeper hue. Let them not draw too close, Much, else shall we not try a second flight upon them."

Sir Roger FitzPeter, his clenched fist resting on his right thigh, gazed with a frown at all that wondrous glory of bush and blossom, and saw no beauty in it. The sun was hot, and his throat thirsted for a draught of cool wine, when they should draw rein within the triple moat of Berkhamstead Castle, and all impatience to cross the breezy heath that offered such lurking-place for an adventurous foe, he had opened his mouth to bid them quicken their pace, when the very thing he most dreaded came about.

Surprise!

An eldrith whistle rang above the lark's song, and, with alarming suddenness, a score of figures stood erect where a moment before nothing had been seen but bush and blossom.

"Beware!" cried Robert of Rouen, his sword flashing out in the sunlight.

But the warning came too late, and the terrible arrows came with it. The deadly flight struck the line of men-at-arms who rode on the right-hand side of the litter, and in a moment all was terrible confusion. Horses reared and plunged, and fifteen of those stout soldiers lay prostrate on the turf.

But for the sight of them and the riderless horses stampeding across the common, the thing might never have happened, for, before the twang of the bowstrings had ceased upon the air, every outlaw had sunk down and vanished out of sight. It was only for an instant, however.

Up they sprang again, and once more those deadly shafts winged their unerring flight upon the escort, which, as was not unnatural, was thrown into mad confusion.

Sir Roger FitzPeter had escaped by a miracle, but his scarlet plume, rent from his helmet's crest, floated to the ground.

"Upon them—upon them!" cried Robert of Rouen, the strong man of the party inevitably taking command. "Follow me!"

And, setting spurs to his horse, he dashed boldly into the bushes.

"Do as I bid thee!" said Roger FitzPeter to Simeon of Worcester, pointing to the litter, which had come to a stand.

And as the knight—who was a brave man enough—spurred after Robert of Rouen, Simeon of Worcester sprang from his horse and drew his dagger.

But the ruffian had no defenceless woman to deal with, and, left alone with the litter, Simeon of Worcester found himself confronted by the two captives, each armed with a short sword.

"Have at thee, dog!" cried Allan-a-Dale, leaping upon him.

And before the miscreant could change the dagger from his left hand and draw his blade, he received a terrific slash across the face that sent him staggering back.

"Quick, Guy, into the saddle!" cried Allan-a-Dale. "Here is a horse that will suit my purpose!"

And, catching a riderless charger that came thundering by, with the reins trailing about his haunches, Guy leapt into the

How King Richard Arrived on the Shores of England!

DRASTIC MEASURES!



The knight came charging round the bend, and Guy, riding alongside of the astonished man, seized him by the bridle arm and dragged him from his seat. "Mount, Allan, mount!" he shouted. "Exchange is no robbery!" (See this page.)

saddle that Simeon of Worcester had left a moment before.

From the hawthorns on the right came a piercing whistle, which the boys knew to be a signal that their friends had seen them; and for an instant they looked at each other, and then at the mounted men-at-arms, who were plunging through the bushes in hot pursuit of the flying band.

From the green ridge behind them came a loud shout, and, turning round, they saw FitzPeter's rearguard setting spurs to their horses and riding down upon them.

"Come on, Allan! 'Tis the best horse will win the day!" cried Guy. "I know not where this track leads to, but we must outdistance these newcomers."

And, leaving Much and his band to fight or fly, they set off at a tremendous gallop.

A Hot Chase and a Forbidden Sanctuary!

GUY'S heart bounded high with every leap of the gallant horse beneath him.

"Allan," he cried, turning round and looking under his arm, "come what may, we must rid ourselves of this garb. These grey horses are mark enough, let alone our green gowns."

Allan jerked his head, and Maid Marian's cap of red velvet floated away on the wind and fell among the bushes.

"Marry, friend Guy," he cried, "we have our hands full, for I see in yon foremost rider Sir Roland de Mont Michael, one of Earl John's boon companions, and the best horseman in England! See, even now he draws away from his followers, and is gaining on us!"

Guy made no reply, but clenched his teeth and urged his horse on with voice and knee. He had already noted the man on the black horse, and even at that distance he knew that there was trouble in store for them. Had he been alone, he would not have minded, but Allan-a-Dale was not as accomplished a horseman as himself, and Guy

knew that they must trust to ruse rather than to hard riding.

On over the springy turf they sped. The golden gorse and the yellow broom went by on either hand. Once, through a dip in the rolling country on their right, they caught a glimpse of the blue smoke of Berkhamstead rising on the morning air, but it was gone in a moment, and now a wide expanse of open country lay before them.

Allan-a-Dale drew his knife, and slashed and cut at the skirt that cumbered him, until, with a cry of relief, he tore himself clear of its folds and let it fall to the ground.

Then the common dipped, and, looking back, they saw the troop still coming on at a hard gallop, with Roland de Mont Michael and another horseman more than fifty yards ahead of it.

"I know not this country one whit, Allan," said Guy, as they tore along neck and neck. "Whither are we going?"

"London lies to the south," replied his companion, "and, since we go eastward, ten miles should bring us to St. Albans."

"Unless I am a false prophet," said Guy, "much will happen before we have made half that distance. Gadzooks, how yonder rogue gains on us! If we can only carry him far enough away from his men, I think the safer plan will be to await him on the edge of some wood, and rid ourselves for ever of his unwelcome company."

Then for some time they rode on in silence, and nothing but the creak of the stirrup-leather and the thud of their horses' hoofs was to be heard. A man tending swine, started up out of the grass, gazed at them a moment, and fled away in terror. A grey wolf, with red tongue hanging out, swerved aside, and disappeared into a hazel copse.

They were at the bottom of a long slope now, and, looking backwards, saw Sir Roland and his companion ride into view on the skyline above them, and, with a loud shout

and a signal to his followers, spur relentlessly down in their wake.

"Steady, Allan!" said Guy, as Allan's horse made a false step and nearly fell. "That beast is not so surefooted as mine, and already he is covered with sweat. I doubt much if he will hold on another league 'fore they overtake us."

Allan had a rein in each hand, and his breath was coming in short, painful gasps. He envied the ease with which Guy sat his grey, and, more accustomed to his own legs, poor Allan was becoming flurried and confused.

They had struck into a road which led them into a belt of woodland, and as they approached the spot where it curved to the right Guy took a hasty glance at their pursuers. The man on the black horse and the squire who rode with him had shortened the distance considerably, but the troop seemed to have lagged behind, and had only just reached the top of the hill.

"Now, Allan, do as I tell you," said Guy. "Let him think that we quicken our pace, but the moment we are out of sight round the turn of the track, pull in, and draw your sword."

Allan made no reply, but, bending forward on his horse's neck, urged it forward with his heels, and in another minute they had placed the corner of the wood between them and their pursuers.

"If we must fight, I shall fare better on foot," said Allan.

And, springing to the ground, he flashed his weapon from his sheath.

"By the road, Raoul," cried Sir Roland de Mont Michael to his squire, who kept good pace beside him, "we have heard much of Maid Marian, but never did my eyes see the like! Marked ye how she cut away her skirt? I had almost sworn 'twas a man we were pursuing, had I not seen her safely placed in yonder litter."

He spoke at the top of his voice, and his words fell on the ears of Allan-a-Dale, as the knight and his squire checked their pace around the bend of the road, which had a bog in it at that place.

"And you would not have been far wrong!" cried the forester, leaping from his concealment with a suddenness that made Sir Roland's black horse rear. He made a cut at the horseman.

Twice did the short sword smite deep on Sir Roland's shoulder, but the stout links of the chain-mail turned its edge. His arm fell numb and powerless at his side; and Guy, rushing upon the squire, hurled him from his saddle, and, riding alongside the astonished knight, seized him by the bridle arm and dragged him ignominiously from his seat, trailing him two or three yards along the road before he loosed his hold.

"Mount, Allan—mount!" he shouted. "Exchange is no robbery!"

And before Sir Roger could struggle to his feet his own horse bounded by him, with Allan-a-Dale on its back, and as the two lads tore upon their way their shout of mocking laughter came back on the wind.

Quivering with fury, the Norman knight went to the assistance of his squire, and, picking him up in his arms, he bore him to the roadside.

"Ten thousand fiends!" cried Sir Roland. "What strange mystery is this? Someone must reckon heavily with Earl John for this morning's work; but, for myself, I vow never to break bread again until I have overtaken those varlets!"

As he spoke the head of the troop swung round the corner of the wood and drew rein, with a cry of astonishment.

"Let he who hath the swiftest horse give it up to me," cried Sir Roland, "and the rest follow, as you value your lives!"

The whole affair had only occupied a few minutes, but it was time enough for the outlaws to place half a mile between themselves and their pursuers; and, deeming it wise to husband their horses' strength, they drew rein a little, and changed their mad gallop into a quick trot.

The country for some distance was well wooded, but presently they came upon signs of cultivation, and before long there burst upon their view the grey-walled Abbey Church of St. Alban's, upon a hill not two miles off.

"Guy," said Allan-a-Dale, "we must seek shelter yonder with the monks. Save for a snatch of sleep under my aunt's roof, we have neither of us seen our beds 'tween two nights, and my strength is failing."

Guy had his doubts as to the wisdom of the plan, but as nothing better suggested itself to his mind, he nodded, and the pair, breaking into a gallop once more, soon neared the ruins of ancient Verulam.

Looking back, they saw that they were still pursued, though the glitter of armour was nearly a mile behind, and as the bell tolled for tierce—which was at nine in the morning—they reined up before the great gate of the abbey, and rapped upon its oaken portal.

Guy pulled the whimple about his face, deeming it better to preserve his disguise until he was within the sacred precincts, and he had only just done so when the wicket opened, and the face of the porter looked upon them.

"Sanctuary—sanctuary, good brother," said Allan-a-Dale. "We are hard pressed, and crave the shelter of your house!"

"How now," said the porter, "a handsome wench and a likely lad. Who be ye? And why are ye pursued?"

"Let us in, good brother," said Allan. "Even now I can hear the cry of those that follow us. We will tell all to the abbot."

"Then you can stay where you are until I bring him hither."

And the porter, who not unnaturally deemed them to be a couple of runaways eloping together, locked the wicket behind him and shuffled off in search of his superior.

They waited patiently for the wicket to open again. And this time it was the abbot, attended by two or three monks, who, hastily summoned by the porter, gazed at them with a curious eye.

"Speak, my children," said the abbot. "An' thou canst give me good cause why we should let you in, thou shalt have nothing to fear. Who is it that pursues thee? And for what cause?"

In an unlucky moment of thoughtlessness Allan-a-Dale loosed his tongue.

"We fly from Sir Roland de Mont Michael, Father Abbot," he said, "and if you do not give us shelter, we shall most assuredly be slain!"

The instant he had spoken both lads realised that they had fallen into grave peril, for there was a loud murmur from the monks, and the abbot's face changed colour.

Sir Roland de Mont Michael was known to be one of Earl John's most intimate friends, and even the rich abbey of St. Alban's could not afford to incur the usurper's displeasure.

"Go hence, my children! It grieves me sore to turn any way who claim my protection, but ye cannot enter here!"

And, stepping back, the wicket was banged to, and the lads looked at each other with consternation in their faces.

And well they might, for now the clash of armour and the clang of hoofs told them that the knight and his men-at-arms were not many yards distant. And, with a gesture almost of despair, they urged their horses into a gallop and dashed through the narrow streets of the ancient town.

A jaded grey horse and a noble black charger, whose chest was flecked with foam, struggled across the patch of heath that lay about the little church of Hadley. Close behind them came twenty men-at-arms—all that remained of the troop that had followed them so remorselessly since early morning. Pursuers and pursued were weary with the long ride, but already the men-at-arms were gaining upon them hand-over-hand.

"We can do no more, Allan!" said Guy hoarsely. "My horse is spent. A few yards and he will give up. Let us dismount and run forward to yonder tower, and, setting our backs against the wall, die like men!"

Allan replied with a groan, and, reining in, they leapt to the ground, and, drawing their swords, staggered rather than ran towards the little lane that reared its tall, beacon-crowned towers over the waving woods of Hadley in the hollow beneath it.

A shout of triumph burst from their pursuers, not twenty yards behind them, but it was mingled with a sudden and very unexpected sound—the ringing blast of a bugle-horn.

"Thanks be to the saints!" cried Allan-a-Dale, suddenly coming to a stand and looking skyward.

The blast had come from the top of the tower itself. And as the lads gazed up, panting with exhaustion, a welcome sight greeted their eyes. The embattled parapet

had suddenly become alive with figures clad in Lincoln green; the bright sun glinted on the steel arrow-heads. And as the well-known voice of Robin Hood cried, "Ho, my merry men, loose upon the rogues!" the air resounded with the hum of thirty bow-strings twanged as one, and a flight of deadly clothyard shafts poured down into the ranks of the pursuers.

The Reunion of Robin Hood and Maid Marian!

SURE was the aim and terrible the execution. Of the twenty men-at-arms, twelve fell lifeless to the ground, and several others were severely wounded. Down from the top of the church-tower came the outlaws, making the air ring with their shouts of triumph, and the first man to issue forth was Robin himself.

"Well met—well met, sweet Isobel!" cried the outlaw. "But, quick, tell me of my Marian!"

Guy threw back the scarlet whimple that shrouded his face, and burst into a merry laugh.

"Marry, master, if my disguise deceives your eye, it must be good indeed! Where Mistress Marian be at the present moment I know not, but of one thing rest assured—she and Isobel are in safe hands!"

"Now, Heaven be thanked!" cried the outlaw. "My heart has been well-nigh bursting all this while! But let us first see to this Norman carrion, for I know thou hast a long tale to tell me!"

The outlaws had meanwhile surrounded the stricken soldiery; and as Guy, making haste to rid himself of the garments that had served him so well, joined the group, the first thing he saw was Sir Roland de Mont Michael lying prone upon the ground. His helmet had fallen off when he was

borne backwards from his horse, and, pale with pain and anger, the Norman knight lay helpless, at the mercy of his captors.

As for the rest, three who had escaped scathless were already making what speed they might in the direction of Barnet; and though Will Scarlet sent an arrow after them, that shot one of their number through the back, Robin said:

"Let them go. Their story will add to our renown, and we have had enough of slaughter. Now, Sir Knight, what is there to prevent us dealing out the death to you?"

And, folding his arms, he looked down upon the helpless man.

"Strike an' thou wilt, outlaw!" said Sir Roland de Mont Michael. "It shall never be said that I craved life or pity from such as thou!"

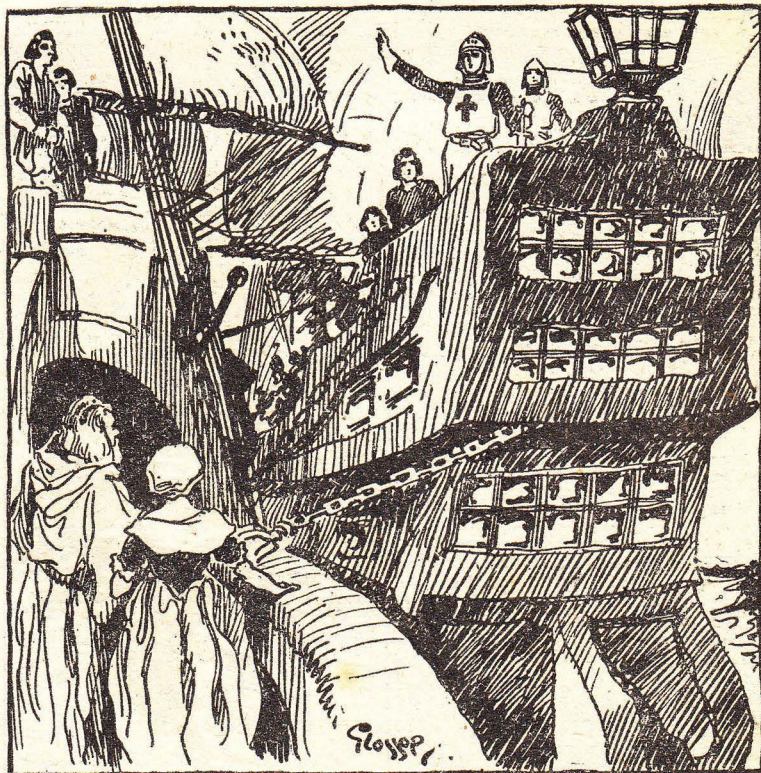
"Fie, man! I am more generous than you deem me, and would scorn to take advantage of a brave foe, even though he be a follower of that usurper who lusts for the throne of the good King Richard! Release him, lads! Strip him of his sword, and let him go his way! But have a care, Roland de Mont Michael! If you cross my path again we shall not part thus! Yet, stay; let him not go yet awhile. Gather the spoils that we have won in fair fight. Some of you strip these dead men of their armour, and carry it, with such of the horses as are not foundered, into the town yonder, where you will find ready purchasers, for, in truth, our purse is running somewhat low, and needs replenishing!"

The outlaws did as he bade them, and in less than an hour they came back across the heath singing merrily, Will Scarlet jingling a bag of gold which he had got in return for the horses and the armour.

"And now, Sir Knight, farewell! We go whither you would be wise not to follow!"

Then, leaving Sir Roland and the wounded survivors of his band crestfallen and sick

THE RETURN OF THE ROYAL CRUSADER.



As the two vessels ground their bulwarks together, a tall knight, whose crimson silk surcoat bore the white cross of the English Crusaders upon its breast, came forward from the stern and approached the side of the Grey Gull. "The saints be praised!" cried Swayne, the harper, raising his hands. "'Tis Richard Lion Heart, King of England!" (See page 26.)

at heart, the outlaws set forth at a swinging pace, and took the northern road.

On the way Allan-a-Dale and Guy told of all that had happened.

Then the outlaws related how Robin had divided his band into two portions, to watch the roads into London. And late in the afternoon the travellers drew near to the wild common of Berkhamstead, where, to their great joy, they were joined by Much and Right-hitting Brand, who had managed to elude the pursuit of Robert of Rouen and FitzPeter, without the loss of a single man.

Dark clouds were rolling across the sky, and the wind sobbed mournfully among the broom and bracken. On the grassy track they found traces of the conflict, and two dead horses lay in the broken shafts of the litter with the blue curtains.

Much told them how the baffled searchers had ridden down to the castle in the hollow, and how, after an hour's absence, they had reappeared, and passed at a quick trot northward again, no doubt on their way to apprise Earl John of all that had happened.

As the outlaws approached the town of Leighton Buzzard, Robin called a halt, and he sent Allan-a-Dale and Guy on in advance, lest possibly some of the men-at-arms might still be in the town.

The rain had begun to fall, and night was coming down, when the messengers returned with tidings that Maid Marian and Isobel, mounted upon two horses—which Dame Winifred had procured for them—had ridden off as soon as the litter had disappeared.

They had left word that they would make for Briarwulf, the homestead of Edwy the Saxon, by devious paths; and, though it was a bitter disappointment to Robin, he bore it manfully. And, pausing but to break their fast and drink a cup of wine at the inn, the outlaws pushed on, and a day or two later an affectionate reunion took place between the gallant outlaw and Maid Marian.

The Return of King Richard!

THE sunset had faded, and darkness descended over the broad, grey bosom of the River Thames. The low hills of Gravesend and the flat shores of Tilbury passed quickly astern as the good ship Grey Gull slipped quietly down the river to the sea.

On the shore a band of outlaws watched it as it disappeared into the night, and they drew in deep breaths of relief.

Many strange things had happened to Robin Hood and the Merry Men of Sherwood during the last few weeks. Many wonderful adventures they had encountered. Wearied by their last battle with Sir Roland de Mont Michael on the outskirts of Hadley, where Guy FitzHugh and Allan-a-Dale had so nearly lost their lives, the outlaws had returned to the cooling, comforting glades of Sherwood Forest to rest awhile, and to regain their strength. And whilst they rested, far from the clutches of the usurper and his men, Prince John was preparing to fight for the throne of England, whilst his brother, King Richard, was still held a captive abroad.

To all parts of the country messengers had been sent to the barons and knights, appealing for help, and those who had lost their faith in the imprisoned monarch turned readily to the earl.

The outlaws watched these secret moves on the part of their great enemy from the shadows of the forest, biding their time to interpose.

At last had come the time to take action, and, stealing forth from the seclusion of the forest, they had started for the mouth of the River Thames.

Arriving at a small fishing port, they had found that Master Steven, of the Grey Gull, a friend of the outlaws, had returned from France with a cargo, and was willing to set forth upon the enterprise which Robin Hood and Sweeney, the harper, had in mind. Thus had the old man and his pretty ward bade farewell to their forest friends one dark night, anchor was pulled up, and the ship set sail.

From the shore came again the rousing cheers of the outlaws as they watched the Grey Gull bearing away the messenger to the King.

When the moon rose they had passed the Medway mouth. Tom Steven, who had

given the tiller to one of his men, stepped swiftly to the starboard bulwark, and looked anxiously under his hand.

A large vessel was approaching them; and in those days there were pirates on the high seas.

"By the faith, I like not the look of that yonder craft!" said the captain of the Grey Gull, as he ordered the helmsman to bear away to port. As they altered their course so did the stranger alter hers, and showed a decided intention of bearing down upon them.

"Out with your bows, men!" cried Tom Steven. "Though I doubt me yonder seawolf carries twice our company, still will I not give in without resistance."

The English tars, nothing loth, soon lined the ship's side, and the glitter of their arrowheads shone through the moonlight, when, from the rapidly-approaching stranger came a loud hail in a voice that brought the laughter to Tom Steven's lips.

"Marry, lads, 'tis old Will Willoughby, after all! But he has got a new sail, which was why I did not recognise him!"

The helmsman put the helm down, and the Grey Gull turned to meet the oncoming vessel.

"How now, Will?" said Tom Steven, through his cupped hands. "We took you for a pirate! Do you want speech with me?"

"Ay, that we do!" was the reply. "Lie to, Tom Steven! Since thou comest from London town, thou art the very man in all the world I am gladdest to see!"

"Thou talkest glibly, Will Willoughby, of lying to; but I am for the French coast, with a good wind behind me."

"Tut, tut, man!" said the captain of the other vessel, a lean, grisly man. "When thou knowest all thou wilt not deem the time wasted."

And, turning to his own company, he ordered them to lower the sail, which was

promptly done; and Tom Steven, greatly mystified, bidding his own men do the same, they got out the sweeps, and after some delay the two ships ground their bulwarks together, and were secured by grappling-irons.

A tall knight, whose crimson silk surcoat bore the white cross of the English Crusaders upon its breast, came forward from the stern of Willoughby's vessel, followed by two others, and as he approached the waist of the ship those on board the Grey Gull saw that Willoughby's company stood respectfully aside, while Will Willoughby himself doffed his cap.

"What ails thee, father?" said Isobel, passing her arm through that of the aged harper. "Why do you tremble so?"

"Peace, child!" said Sweeney, raising his hands high above his head. "God and the saints be praised that I have lived to see this day! Kneel, Isobel, kneel, for yonder knight is Richard Lion Heart, the King of England!"

At these words the knight opened his vizor, and showed a frank and handsome visage the skin still dusky-brown from the Eastern sun, though the cheeks were somewhat thin from long captivity.

"Welcome, thrice welcome, worthy Sweeney!" he cried, extending his long arms across the bulwarks until he grasped the harper's thin white hand. "My return is all the sweeter for the greeting of an honest friend. The good bishop hath told me how well thou hast striven in my cause, and right royal shall be thy reward. But first tell me how fares it with my black-hearted brother, who, from all accounts, has usurped my kingship, and made the name of Plantagenet hated through the land?"

"My liege," said Sweeney, his face working convulsively with violent emotion, "I was on my way to warn you. The earl hath a strong following, and thou wouldst do ill to trust thyself, so slenderly attended, within his reach."

"Sayest thou so?" exclaimed the king. "Not only do I say it, my liege, but I will go upon my knees to urge it," replied the harper. "Until thou canst gather round thee good men and true, and call the loyal barons together, thy perils in the Holy Land will be as naught to those you must face here."

"Pardie!" said the King, stamping his foot upon the deck. "I fear me the old man speaks true, and that we have come home too soon."

"Never too soon for England's happiness!" exclaimed Sweeney. "But if I might venture my counsel, I know of one who would not only prove a valiant bodyguard, but who, for certain reasons, is the best man in all England to spread the news of your coming to those who love you dearly."

"Speak, harper, speak," said the king, "and tell us who is this paragon of all the virtues!"

"Robin FitzOoth, the outlaw," said Sweeney, in a piercing voice, "sworn enemy of John, firm friend of Richard Lion Heart. Within an hour of your meeting the gallant men will lie them north and south, and east and west, with the swiftness of deer, and thou shalt have such a following in a week's time as shall make the usurper tremble."

"Marry! I like thy plan," said Richard. "But where is this FitzOoth to be found?"

"Not four leagues from London, where they tarry with Guy FitzHugh in the Forest of Epping," replied the harper; "but your Majesty must not tarry long."

At mention of Guy's name Richard started, and his eyes flashed.

"Surely 'tis not my ward of whom thou speakest?" he exclaimed. "But no, that cannot be, since I left him in the jealous care of stout Humphrey de Brionne, who well I know will be the first to fly to my side."

A strange smile passed over the harper's face.

"The foulest traitor of them all, my lord, is Sir Humphrey de Brionne, as I will prove to you by papers taken from the coffer of his brother, the Abbot Anselm."

But what Sweeney would have added was lost as the two vessels gave a mighty lurch as the wind suddenly freshened.

"I pray thee haste, my liege," said Will Willoughby. "Thou art indeed lord of the land, but there cometh up a tempest that will respect neither king nor earl, and we must part company."

IN THE GRIP OF THE STORM!



The moon vanished, and the roaring wind piled up the rain-clouds thickly overhead. A furious storm burst across the sea, and the ship tossed from one mountainous billow to another. (See page 27.)

"As for that," said Tom Steven, "saving your grace's presence, an' we put our passengers aboard with you, thou canst talk thy fill, and we go on our way."

Willing hands lifted Isobel and the harper over the bulwarks, the king himself receiving Isobel, and setting her lightly down upon the deck beside him, and casting off the grappling-irons, Tom Willoughby's craft and the Grey Gull parted company, and, hoisting their respective sails, they drew swiftly away from each other.

The moon vanished, and a roaring wind piled up the rain clouds thickly overhead. A furious storm burst across the estuary, and as Will Willoughby, with three men to help him, hung on to the tiller, he knew that there lay before him a task of no common difficulty.

All night long the stout ship battled with the tempest, sometimes turning and running before it, and then bearing round to beat up against it inch by inch. Nor was it until the afternoon of the next day that he ran into the shelter of Barking Creek, lowered his sail, and dropped anchor.

(Our wonderful serial is getting greater than ever. You simply must not miss next week's instalment—full of thrills and dramatic situations.)

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TEN POUNDS REWARD!

(Continued from page 5.)

Lane, about ten minutes before the storm broke, and stunned me. How they managed to get wind of the fact that the cat in some manner held the precious formula is beyond me. However, bar a nasty crack on the head there's no harm done."

"None whatever!" smiled Taplow. "You have, after all, accomplished the governor's mission, Raymond."

Raymond smiled in turn, and then he looked sharply at Trimble, who was standing by, an interested and proud listener.

"And you say that you offered a reward for the recovery of your own Persian cat?" inquired Raymond of Taplow.

"Yes," said the latter. "Ten pounds."

"Then I think that Master Trimble has well earned it," smiled Raymond. "In fact, he shall have double that amount."

"Oh, good!" beamed Baggy Trimble, rubbing his hands with great satisfaction. "That's jolly ripping of you, sir. Not that I haven't deserved it, of course. I had a terrific struggle to wrest the cat from those scoundrels, sir—the fight of my life!"

"Fight!" murmured Taplow wonderingly. "If I! You omitted to mention anything in the nature of a fight to me. Thought you said flight!"

"Ahem!"

"Whatever it was, my boy," said Raymond, "I shall not forget the good service you have rendered me."

And with that he took out his cheque-book, and promptly wrote out a cheque for twenty pounds, payable to B. Trimble, Esq.

It was a very self-satisfied fat junior who vacated the home of Mr. Taplow two hours later. He had been the guest of the evening. The chemist had phoned through to Dr. Holmes, explaining matters, and asking permission for the junior to be allowed to stay with him for the evening.

When the Fourth-Formers at St. Jim's got to know of Baggy's "latest"—and they got to know of it without any loss of time from that worthy himself—they voted it but another creation of his fertile brain. A glimpse of the cheque he possessed, however, put a different complexion upon the matter, and when, upon the following day, two visitors—Mr. Taplow and Raymond respectively—called, to take the fat junior out for a motor drive, their looks of contempt and doubt changed suddenly to amazement. With evidence like that Baggy's "yarn" was proved conclusively to be true.

Thus once again had Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's astonished the natives, so to speak!

(Full particulars of next week's St. Jim's tale on page 2.)

ARE YOU ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES?

The Result of the Cricket No. 1 Competition.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

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55, Rutland Road,
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The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided among the following five competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

M. A. Howard, 31, Blandford Road, Beckenham, Kent.

F. Crickmere, 50, Loudon Street, Irvine, Scotland.

Lizzie Dakin, 63, Albert Street, Burslem, Staffs.

C. Nixon, 45, Rose Street, Hanley, Staffs.

Harry Morgan, 27, Victoria Road, Folkestone.

Twenty-three competitors, with two errors each, divide the ten prizes of 5s. each. The names and addresses of these prizewinners can be obtained on application at this office.

SOLUTION.

The Cricket season commences this week, and as the picture puzzle competitions on celebrated football teams have been so remarkably popular, your Editor is pleased to say that he has arranged to carry on with the County Cricket elevens. The same money prizes will be offered for correct solutions.

CORRESPONDENCE.

E. Hambour, Kapunda, South Australia, wishes to exchange stamps with readers in British Colonies.

Jack Draper, 9, Anglesea Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, wishes to correspond with readers in Scotland or Wales; interested in stamps, magazines, etc.

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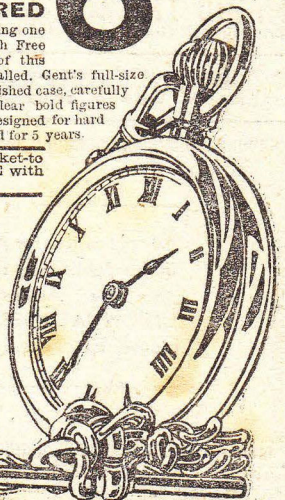
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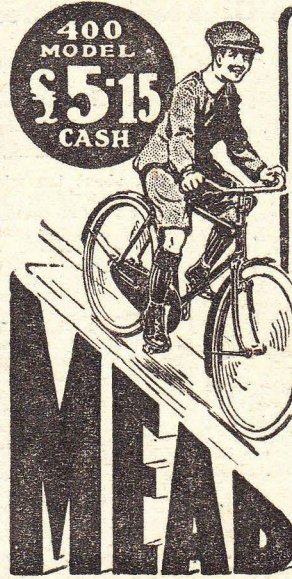
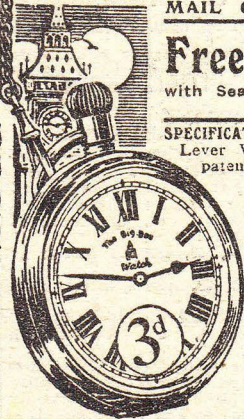
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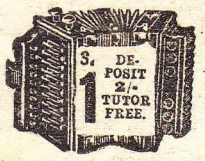
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