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No.  
233.

# The POPULAR 2<sup>D</sup>

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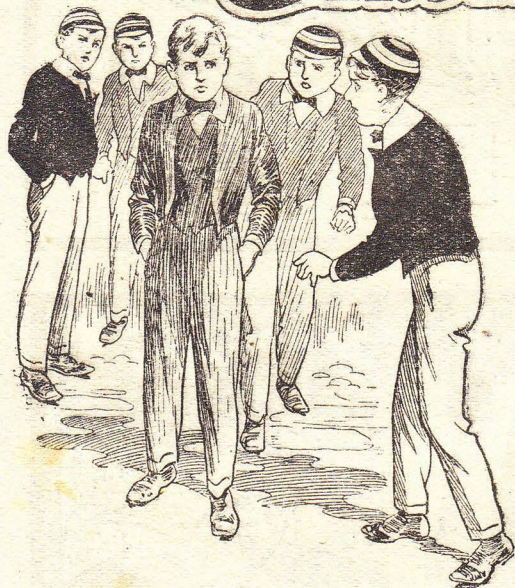
(A Terrible Position for Jimmy Silver, of Rookwood.)

## SERIOUS CHARGES AGAINST JIMMY SILVER!

Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth, finds himself in a decidedly unpleasant position when he is accused of being a funk and a rotter. Rookwood is surprised! That Jimmy should be a coward seems incredible, and yet what else are they to believe when the evidence against him is so strong and convincing?

## HERO OR FUNK?

# Jimmy Silver's Ordeal!



The most amazing Tale of Rookwood ever written, by the world-famed author

**OWEN CONQUEST**

(Author of the stories of Jimmy Silver & Co. appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### A Ripping Idea!

"SILVER!" Bulkeley, captain of Rookwood, called out to Jimmy Silver in Big Quad, as that junior was wheeling his bicycle towards the gates. With Bulkeley and Neville were also crossing towards the gates with their bicycles.

Jimmy Silver looked round, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Look here, Silver! Raby tells me you're cycling to Latcham this afternoon. And—"

"And you want to come with me," finished Jimmy Silver, nodding his head.

"Well, it'll be company for me. I tried to get those asses Lovell, Raby, and Newcome to come, but the lazy slackers said it was too much fag. However, you chaps will do, if you behave—Yarrough! Leggo!"

Jimmy Silver's cheerful words ended in a dismal yell as Bulkeley's finger and thumb closed like a vice on his ear. Pulling the august leg of the good-natured captain of Rookwood was usually quite safe up to a certain point.

Jimmy Silver, however, had apparently overstepped the point.

"Stop that rotting, youngster," commanded Bulkeley sternly, "an' listen! While you are in Latcham, I want you to pay a cricket account at Stubbins', the sports outfitter. Neville and I are cycling to Middlewood to fix up a match with Middlewood College, an' don't want to have to go round to Latcham. Here's the cash and the account."

And Bulkeley, releasing Jimmy Silver's ear, took an envelope from his pocket, slipped five pound Treasury notes into it, and, handing the envelope to the junior, rejoined him.

"Well, of all the nerve!" observed Jimmy Silver, staring after the seniors as they vanished through the gates. "Never even asked if I—"

Jimmy Silver paused as Tubby Muffin, who had watched the transaction with wide open eyes from the shelter of the old beeches, rushed up excitedly.

"I—I say, Jimmy," he gasped breathlessly, "halves, you know!"

"Eh?"

"Halves!" said Tubby firmly. "I sha'n't be satisfied with less. And—here, I say! Wait for me! I'm coming with you."

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been suddenly hitched on behind, the bicycle could not have been stopped more abruptly.

"Leggo! Wow! You silly idiot!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Leggo! You'll have me off! Wow!"

Jimmy's words were prophetic, for the abrupt stop of the machine promptly caused him to take a header over the handlebars.

"You—you dangerous ass! You—you raving maniac!" roared Jimmy Silver, sitting up in the roadway. "Why, I—I'll wipe up the blessed road with you—you—"

"But—but I say, Jimmy! I—I'm coming with—with you, you know!" gasped Tubby. "Look—look here, Jimmy, old pal, I—I've got a ripping idea! I—I—"

Tubby stopped and backed warily as Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, a Hunnish glare in his eyes. But just when the alarmed Tubby was about to bolt, Jimmy stopped and grinned.

"I've also got a ripping idea, Tubby, old son," he chuckled. "Let's hear yours though, Tubby. I'll tell you mine later on."

Tubby Muffin looked round mysteriously.

"Collar Bulkeley's grub," he whispered darkly.

"Eh?"

"Collar Bulkeley's blessed grub!" repeated Tubby, in a thrilling whisper. "Bulkeley's sent you to Latcham for grub, hasn't he? Well, we can get the stuff, take it to a quiet place, and scoff it, and when we get back, tell the old scout that the Bagshot cads have raided it—see? Ripping idea—what? He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Jimmy Silver grimly. "Ripping idea—almost as ripping as mine. But come on, old bean! Jump up behind if you're coming!"

Tubby's podgy face was beaming like a full moon as he jumped on the step and Jimmy Silver began to drive the pedals round.

The conversation for the next half-hour was very one-sided. Jimmy Silver had no breath to spare for talking. But the fat Classical fully made up for Jimmy's remissness in that respect.

He was so full of his "ripping idea" and its possibilities, indeed, that he failed to notice that Jimmy had branched off from the Coombe road, and not until Jimmy slowed down at the cross-roads when about three miles from Rookwood did he notice anything amiss.

Then as the bicycle stopped he jumped down and stared around in astonishment.

"I—I say, Jimmy, wh-where are we?" he gasped in alarm. "Where are you going to?"

"I'm going to Latcham," grinned Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "But you, my pippin, are now going back to Rookwood. Nice little walk for you—"

"What?"

"This is the ripping idea I spoke about, Tubby. Just to teach you a lesson with regard to showing your nose into other people's business, and not to be so beastly suspicious. Ripping idea—what?"

Tubby stared blankly for a moment. Then, as Jimmy Silver put his leg over the saddle, he awoke to sudden life.

"Here—I say! Stop, you beast! Wait for me!" he shrieked, dashing forward.

Jimmy Silver pushed off just a second too late, and Tubby's fat hand gripped the saddle desperately.

Whoop! Bum!

For the second time that afternoon Jimmy came a cropper and rolled in the dust. He was up again the next moment, however, and this time Tubby Muffin did not escape the just wrath of the ex-junior captain of the Fourth at Rookwood. And a weird wail of woe arose from the fat youth as his feet were swept from under him and he sat with a thump on the stony road.

"Ta-ta, Tubby!" called Jimmy Silver, leaping into the saddle.

And leaving the astounded Tubby sitting in the middle of the road gasping like a stranded fish, Jimmy Silver rode away, chucking hilariously.

He rode on, feeling he had administered a well-needed lesson to the Peeping Tom of Rookwood.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Good Samaritans!

"WOW! Ow! Ow! The howling rotter! He did that on purpose! Oh dear!"

Thus Tubby Muffin as he sat in the road shaking his podgy fist after the swiftly vanishing figure of Jimmy Silver.

The fat Classical had never been so astonished in his life. But his wrath and dismay greatly exceeded his astonishment. His great expectations of a gorgeous feed—at Bulkeley's expense—had suddenly faded away like a beautiful dream.

And now the dismal prospect of a three-mile tramp along the dusty road to Rookwood did not at all appeal to the fattest and laziest junior in the Classical Fourth.

"Ow! The spoofing beast!" spluttered Tubby, rising slowly and painfully. "I see it all now! The mean, greedy beast wants to scoff all the blessed grub himself. I'll jolly well tell old Bulkeley! Fancy pinching Bulkeley's grub!"

Tubby paused, and his eyes opened wide as they fell upon an envelope lying in the roadway. That it had fallen from Jimmy Silver's pocket he hadn't much doubt—nor had he any doubts as to its contents.

The envelope was unsealed, and somewhat hesitatingly the over-curious fat youth drew out its contents; and a scared look overspread his face as he counted the five Treasury notes.

But he gasped aloud as he saw the accompanying cricket account.

"Why—wha—what—my hat!" he murmured in disgust. "Then it's not for grub, after all! Fancy that! What a blessed sell! And after— Oh!"

Tubby Muffin fairly jumped as he became suddenly aware that he wasn't alone. Seated on a gate a few yards away were two distinctly horsey-looking gentlemen who had watched the little episode between Jimmy Silver and Tubby Muffin in great amusement. But when Tubby drew the five Treasury notes from the envelope, their amusement changed abruptly to looks of deepest interest.

As Tubby looked round, however, they started from the gate and approached the startled junior.

Both the gentlemen were known by sight to Tubby Muffin.

One of them, whose outstanding features were a red nose and blue chin, was Mr. Joey Hook, bookmaker and cardsharp. The other was Joe, the potboy from the Bird-in-Hand at Coombe—evidently out for his "half-day off."

And as Tubby recognised them, he gave a gasp of alarm, hurriedly slipped the Treasury notes and account back, and stuffed the envelope into his jacket pocket.

Mr. Hook and his friend did not, however, appear to notice the action. Indeed, their one concern and thought appeared to be for the welfare and comfort of Tubby Muffin.

Mr. Hook's manner was good-natured and considerate in the extreme as he dusted the fat junior down. His friend kindly picked up Tubby's cap, dusted it, and placed it gently on the astounded Tubby's head.

Then Mr. Hook, shaking his fist indignantly after the now distant figure of Jimmy Silver, turned an anxious face to Tubby Muffin.

"Shameful! Scandalous!" he ejaculated warmly. "To treat a young gent like you in that disgraceful manner! Excuse my anger, young sir, but it—it fair makes my blood boil the way that young scoundrel treated you. 'E jist missed a good 'iding bolting like that!"

Tubby frowned darkly.

"Come to that, I—I'd have thrashed him myself, but—but the rotter bolted!" he exclaimed valiantly. "Only—only wait until I get back to Rookwood! I—I'll be getting along now and wait for him—"

Mr. Hook shook his head kindly, but firmly.

"I won't 'ear of it!" he said. "I won't 'ear of you trampin' all that way in your state. You're not fit! No—what you wants is rest and refreshments to—to recuperate—that's the word! No; you're comin' with us now, to a place I knows of—a friend of mine's place—to 'ave a feed. An' after that you can come back with me and Joe in the trap to Rookwood."

And laying his hand on the astonished Tubby's shoulder, Mr. Joey Hook led him gently but firmly along the road.

Needless to say, the prospect appealed keenly to Tubby Muffin. It was very plain just then to Tubby that both Mr. Hook and his friend the potboy were dogs with bad names—disgracefully misjudged and misunderstood at Rookwood.

Tubby's fat face was very bright as Mr. Hook led the way through a wicket gate, and round the back of a house standing well back from the road, and half hidden by trees.

Under the shade of a tree in the garden were tables and chairs. And Joe and Tubby seated themselves, whilst Mr. Hook went indoors to arrange with his friend about the refreshments.

It was a pretty spot, and Tubby smiled with satisfaction as he looked from the shining river at the bottom of the garden across the lawn to the house. And then Tubby gave a start as his roving eyes fell upon rows of casks and stacks of bottle cases in the yard; while from an open French window came a sudden waft of stale beer and tobacco.

"I—I—I say," he stammered aghast. "Wha—wha—what place is this? Wh-why, it's a— a pub-public-house!"

"Course it is!" grinned Joe, highly amused. "The Jolly Fisherman, kept by a

friend o' Mr. Hook's. Why, what's up now?"

For Tubby had jumped to his feet and was blinking around in great alarm.

Tubby Muffin was not a very particular chap in most respects. But had he known that Mr. Hook's friend's "place" was nothing more nor less than a riverside public-house, he would certainly not have followed his kind benefactor so blindly.

"But—but—look here," stammered Tubby, after a pause, "I must be g-gug-going! I didn't know it was a beastly low p-pub—pub! I shall be s-sac-sacked if I'm caught here! Oh dear!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Joe the potboy. "What a nervous young gent you are! What 'arm is there in callin' 'ere for refreshments, eh? An' come to that, who's to see you—an' who's to know you're 'ere? Why, yer as safe an' sound in this garden as you'd be in your little bed up at the school, my son!"

Tubby didn't feel so sure about that—though it certainly was true that the garden was secluded. The high hedge well hid the garden from the view of any chance passers-by on the road. In fact, the only person who could possibly see the fat junior was old Bill Adams, the boatman, who was tinkering with his ancient motor-boat on the far side of the river. And even he could scarcely recognise anyone at that distance.

But even as Tubby stood hesitating, Mr. Hook bustled up, bearing aloft a tray piled high with cakes and biscuits and bottles of lemonade. There were also glasses containing a slightly darker liquid on the tray—but evidently the contents of these were for Mr. Hook and his friend's consumption.

"There you are, my son!" said Mr. Hook heartily. "Pile in, and welcome! It's a pleasure to treat a young gent like you!"

And all Tubby Muffin's qualms and misgivings vanished. He piled in.

Tubby was hungry and thirsty, and it was a sight to see the way he shifted the good things Mr. Hook had so kindly provided. But evidently the sight, interesting as it was, bored the good-natured Mr. Hook, for he took a greasy pack of playing-cards from his pocket and began to shuffle them casually.

Tubby had just finished his fourth lemonade when he jumped as he became aware of the little pile of cards at his elbow.

"I—I say," he gasped, "wha—what's these for?"

Mr. Hook raised his eyebrows. "Only a little game—banker! Just to pass the time away," he explained affably. "Sorry my friend's got no draughts or dominoes. Perhaps, though, you'd prefer nap, Master Muffin?"

"But—but—the fact is, I—I don't want to play!" explained Tubby, in alarm. "Look here—you two play, and—and I'll—I'll watch. I'd much rather—really I would!"

Mr. Hook frowned.

"Come, come, Master Muffin!" he remonstrated, in a hurt tone. "You're surely not goin' to spoil the afternoon like that? I'm surprised at you bein' so unsociable. It's ungrateful—that's what it is—ungrateful!"

"But—but, I—I haven't any money—not of my own!" gasped Tubby. "Besides—"

Mr. Hook laughed heartily.

"Bless me, we'll soon put that right, if that's what's troubling you!" he smiled good-naturedly. "What's the matter with bits of paper—played with 'em many a time myself? All you got to do is sign 'em—and there you are! Not that you'll need 'em, of course—I can't see a sharp young gent like you losin' at banker! Not likely! Why, as soon as I set eyes on you, I said to meself, 'Now, there's a born banker-player, if you like!' No; don't you worry about that, Master Muffin!"

Tubby Muffin swelled visibly. Next to his "tummy," his vanity was his tenderest spot. And there was certainly no harm in playing for fun with bits of paper—as far as he could see—especially if the other players played with cash!

So, deciding to take Mr. Hook's advice and not to worry about it, Tubby Muffin settled down to his first essay at banker under the exceedingly able tuition of Mr. Hook and Joe, the potboy.

With frequent pauses, whilst Mr. Hook made various pilgrimages to the house to refill glasses, the game proceeded merrily. And very soon Tubby himself began to think he was indeed a born banker-player, for quite a little pile of cash was accumulating on Tubby's side of the table.

Unfortunately, Tubby never dreamed that

it was just a little encouragement—sprats to catch whales, so to speak. And Tubby's disappointment was great when his luck began to turn and his pile of cash dwindled down gradually. But even when it was all gone the fat Classical did not worry, but plunged cheerfully and recklessly with the scraps of signed paper.

Tubby was quite enjoying his little flutter in fact. And he was more than sorry when Mr. Hook, who had been closely scanning the "scraps of paper," suddenly chuckled and gathered the cards.

"There, that'll about do for this a'ternoon!" he exclaimed somewhat thickly, winking solemnly at Joe. "I hope we'll 'ave more pleasant a'ternoons together, Master Muffin."

Mr. Hook rose as he spoke, swaying a little. And there was a gleam in his eyes that Tubby didn't like a bit. It struck Tubby quite suddenly then that the liquid refreshments his two new-found friends had been imbibing was something stronger than the lemonade he himself had partaken of.

Tubby blinked nervously at Mr. Hook. "Ye-yes, rather!" he gasped, with a dismal attempt to look unconcerned. "I—I—I quite enjoyed the little flutter, you know. B-but—what about the trap? Hadn't we better be g-gug-going now?"

"What's that?" snapped Mr. Hook grimly. "Don't you be in such a 'urry, my lad! What about settling up—eh?"

Tubby fairly jumped at the sudden change of tone in the man's voice.

"What—what do you m-mean?" he stut-tered.

"Ho, ho, ho! What do I mean, 'e's askin'!" grinned Mr. Hook sarcastically. "I suppose we 'aven't been playing at banker—and I suppose you don't owe me a five quid, young shaver?"

"Five q-quad!" gasped Tubby Muffin, aghast. "But—we were only playin' for— for fun! And—and, look here, I—I haven't any money at—at all!"

"Why, you young liar!" shouted Mr. Hook. "Didn't I see you with five quid in your 'ands only an hour ago? Now, look 'ere, me lad, I've got your IOU's for just five quid! An' you don't stir from 'ere until you've stumped up—see? So look slippy, or infer the river you goes—that's straight!"

Tubby Muffin, his fat knees almost knocking together with fright, stared at his nice, kind friends of an hour ago.

But, though a young rascal in most respects, Tubby Muffin had no intention of giving up five pounds that didn't belong to him—nor had he any desire to take an involuntary dip in the river.

So he did the best thing under the circumstances. He made a frenzied bolt for it. But, unfortunately, Mr. Hook and Joe had apparently anticipated such an intention.

Though they had no objection to Tubby going, they strongly objected to his taking the five pounds with him.

And barely had the unfortunate Tubby taken half a dozen steps, when he felt himself grabbed roughly and flung, yelling wildly, to the ground.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### In the Hands of the Philistines.

WITHOUT the tremendous weight of the fat youth, Jimmy Silver soon made up for lost time, and rode into Latham a little after four. He was whistling cheerily, as he dismounted outside Stubbins', the sports outfitters, and felt in his inside pocket for the envelope Bulkeley had given him. Then quite suddenly his whistling ceased, and with rapidly growing alarm he hurriedly went through his pockets.

But from each pocket in turn his hand came empty away. The envelope containing the five pounds and account Bulkeley had entrusted to his care had disappeared.

"My only hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver, in blank dismay. "Must have dropped out when I was rotting with that fat ass, Tubby Muffin. Oh crumbs!"

In a far from happy mood Jimmy Silver mounted his machine again. There was nothing else for it but to return the way he had come and search for the missing envelope.

At top speed Jimmy drove the pedals round, his eyes on the alert for anything white lying in the roadway. But the miles flew by, and Jimmy reached the scene of his farewell encounter with Tubby Muffin.

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"Morny Shows His Hand!"—an Amazing Tale of Rookwood Next Week!

## 4 Tell all your pals that "The League of Seven!" appears next week!

without a sign of the lost envelope. Dismounting, Jimmy began to search the road eagerly, but to no purpose, and his face was very sombre as he gave it up at last.

Pushing his bike, Jimmy Silver was walking moodily away from the spot towards Rookwood, scanning the road keenly as he went, when he gave a jump.

From beyond the high hedge on his left came a sudden wailing, followed by a yell for help in the unmistakable tones of Tubby Muffin. It was nothing new to hear wails of woe and yells for help from the Falstaff of Rookwood; and Jimmy Silver grinned as he moved towards the hedge.

Then suddenly he halted as if transfixed. For the sounds of distress were proceeding from the garden in the rear of a disreputable riverside inn—a place with an unsavoury reputation, and strictly out of bounds to all Rookwood.

"M-my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver aghast. "The silly, mad fool! What blessed trouble has that senseless idiot got himself into now?"

And leaning his bike against the hedge, he passed through the wicket-gate to investigate.

Entering the garden, he stared in astonishment at the scene before him. Struggling in the grip of Mr. Joey Hook and the potboy from the Bird-in-Hand, at Coombe, and yelling shrilly, was Tubby Muffin—which was in itself enough to astonish Jimmy Silver. When the late captain of the Classical Fourth saw the table with its tell-tale bottles, glasses, and cards, he fairly gasped in alarm.

Jimmy Silver, however, lost no time in looking around. A Rookwood fellow was in danger, and it was up to him to go to the rescue, whatever the circumstances. With a shout of anger he hurled himself at the burly figure of Joey Hook, and what happened after that, even Jimmy himself has no clear recollection.

Mr. Hook turned with a snarl, and grappled with him savagely. Joe, the potboy, also released the yelling Tubby on realising that the newcomer was a factor to be reckoned with. Together, full-grown men, they gave the junior captain of the Fourth at Rookwood a very rough time. For all that, Jimmy Silver fought strenuously, and had the men only fought fair, the sturdy junior would have more than held his own. But fair play had never been a jewel admired by the two shady scoundrels. Far from sober, they fought and kicked like savages.

Tubby Muffin, too scared to move, stood watching helplessly as the struggling figures hurled this way and that amid a trampling of feet and sundry gasps and much strong language.

There was a crash and a tinkle of breaking glass as the trio lurched against the table, upsetting that and the contents of the combatants. Dazed by the fall, Jimmy Silver was sitting helpless amid the ruins.

And a moment later he was being roughly dragged towards the river at the bottom of the garden. As he realised the ruffians' intention, he began to struggle frenziedly.

But he was still dazed, and, despite his struggles, he felt himself lifted and swung through the air.

Splash!  
A sudden chill shot through the junior as he soured under. But almost at the same instant his head struck something with tremendous force, and for the moment the world seemed to end in a blaze of light to Jimmy Silver.

For what seemed a lifetime, Jimmy Silver wallowed mechanically in four feet of water—though in reality it was but a few seconds. Then he found his feet, and slowly and dazedly staggered out and collapsed in a limp heap on the soft mud, and lay there flat, his mind a welter of confused emotions.

For a full minute he lay motionless. He heard as in a dream the shrill yelling of Tubby Muffin. Then came a confused vision of the sprawling arms and legs of the fat Classical, as he whirled overhead and fell with a tremendous splash into the deeper water far out.

"Help! Silver, oh, help!"  
As from afar, Jimmy Silver heard Tubby's terrified shriek. Dazedly and weakly, he raised himself on one elbow, a wave of giddiness sweeping over him as he did so, and stared dully and helplessly at Tubby's white, fear-stricken face as it appeared above the surface of the water.

Then, in a dim sort of way, Jimmy Silver

realised that Tubby could not swim—was, in fact, drowning. But he still stared, helpless and incapable of movement.

But other help was at hand. There came a sudden shouting, and the figures of Bulkeley and Neville appeared tearing down the garden. A splash, and Bulkeley was ploughing his way with vigorous strokes towards the drowning junior. Almost at the same moment came the chug-chugging of a motor, and old Bill Adams' ancient motor-boat was lumbering across from the far side of the river.

But Bulkeley's grasp was already on the drowning junior. As if he were watching the players on a cinema screen, Jimmy Silver saw Bulkeley, swimming stoutly, making for the bank, and saw Neville plunge into the shallows and help the Sixth-Former ashore with his burden.

And then, quite abruptly, as if awaking from a trance, Jimmy Silver came back to the world. His brain cleared, and the whole horrible feeling left him as quickly as it had come. But he was still sick and giddy, and his face was pale and drawn as he staggered to his feet, and slowly approached the two seniors as they laid the sodden form of Tubby Muffin on the grass.

"Is—is he all right?" he asked faintly, looking down at the limp figure on the grass.

Bulkeley and Neville looked up, and Jimmy Silver's face went whiter still at the scorn and contempt in their glances.

"He's coming to," said Bulkeley harshly. "He'll be all right in a minute, small thanks to you, you coward, Silver!"

There was a wealth of scorn in Bulkeley's tone, and the junior staggered back with white-set face. Then suddenly the meaning of it flashed upon him. They had not seen the whole of the wretched business, and were calling him a coward. In their eyes, he had laid there watching Tubby drowning without raising a hand to help.

"I—I—I—"  
Jimmy Silver stammered and stopped, flushing furiously. It struck him then what a lame excuse—what a feeble defence, to say that he had struck his head, and that he had been physically incapable of going to Tubby's rescue.

And yet it was true. But even as he stood haltingly, with crimson face, Bulkeley turned his back abruptly as the motor-boat stopped about a couple of yards from the bank, and the old boatman, his face stern and concerned, stood up.

"Is the youngster safe—all right?" he called out. "I saw the young gent go in, but I couldn't get the old tub to go in time."

"Yes, thank Heaven!" said Bulkeley. "He'll be himself soon."

Tubby Muffin was, indeed, rapidly regaining consciousness. His face was still white and drawn; but he was stirring a little, and a trace of colour was visible in the podgy cheeks.

As they waited silently, Bulkeley's eyes roved idly round the garden. Joey Hook and Joe, the potboy, were nowhere in sight; they had, like the cowardly scoundrels they were, bolted on the approach of the seniors. In the billiard-room window could be seen the frightened face of the innkeeper, watching the group in the garden in apprehensive alarm.

Then Bulkeley's face set grimly as his eyes rested on the overturned table under the trees, with the grass all around strewn with broken glass and playing-cards, a scene that to Bulkeley told its own disgraceful story.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"  
Bulkeley dropped on his knees beside Tubby Muffin as the fat Classical gave a gasping sigh and opened his eyes. He blinked at the group dazedly for a moment.

"Ow! Oh dear!" he gasped faintly. "Wh—where am I? Am I drowned?"

"You're all right, Muffin," said Bulkeley quietly. "Just keep quiet for a minute until you feel better."

Tubby Muffin sat up in the grass, looking pale and dazed.

"But—but I remember now. Tho—those brutes pitched me in! D—did you see them? I jolly near drowned!" he gasped. "I—I say, who—who pulled me out?"

"Bulkeley!" said Neville quietly. "It was Bulkeley yanked you out, Muffin!"  
Tubby Muffin grunted.

"I—I say, I—I feel rotten, and awfully wet, you know?" groaned Tubby peevishly.

"I—I say, Bulkeley, you might help a fellow up, instead of standing there staring. I've been jolly near drowned, an' a lot you seem to care!"

Bulkeley bent down and helped the fat Classical to his feet without a word. It was very evident that Bulkeley stood in no danger of becoming embarrassed by a touching scene of rescued thanking rescuer.

But though it was abundantly plain that Tubby had really come to himself spiritually, so to speak, it was very evident that he was far from being himself physically. He swayed dizzily in the captain's strong grasp, and was plainly not fit to stand, much less walk.

"Better get him to the school at once," said Bulkeley, with a concerned glance at Tubby. "But how on earth are we going to do it?"

"Better carry him to the boat, an' I'll run him down to the school boathouse," suggested Bill Adams. "You'll have to wade out with him, though. There's some old piles hereabouts, and I can't get the boat any nearer in. But it's only about four foot deep at most."

"Good—and thanks!" said Bulkeley, his face clearing. "That will simplify matters. We'll cycle back, and wait for you at the boathouse. Then we can take him to the saun'y. He looks jolly bad!"

Tubby Muffin really did look ill, and he was groaning dismally as Bulkeley and Neville waded out with him and laid him in the bottom of the boat. Then Bulkeley splashed his way back to Jimmy Silver, his face dark and ominous.

"Silver!" he exclaimed harshly. "I will not ask you what all this means—that," went on Bulkeley, with a nod of disgust towards the overturned table, "tells its own story. You had better go back in the boat with Muffin now. You will have every chance to explain to the Head later on."

"But—but my bike's—"  
"Never mind your bike!" rapped out Bulkeley. "We'll see to that. Get out to that boat at once!"

Jimmy Silver turned slowly, and, with his face clouded and miserable, splashed to the waiting boat and boarded it. Then Bill Adams started the engine, and a moment later the boat moved out into mid-stream.

The whole business seemed like some horrible nightmare to Jimmy Silver just then. His head was aching abominably, and he could not think clearly. In fact, it had all happened so quickly that he had hardly had time to think at all up to now.

But, unfortunately, it was real enough. Bulkeley's last words told him plainly that not only did they regard him as a sheer funk, but as a pub-haunting blackguard as well.

And Jimmy Silver was wondering dismally and confusedly what the outcome of it all would be as he crouched, wet and dispirited, by the side of Tubby Muffin in the front of the boat.

"Ow! Oh dear I do feel awful! I—I say, Jimmy. I—I think I'm going to have pneumonia, or appendicitis, or something! I'm awfully wet, too!"

Jimmy Silver pulled himself together with an effort to banish his worrying thoughts and forebodings as the gasping wail of Tubby Muffin broke on his reflections.

"I—I—I say, Jimmy," went on Tubby feebly. "I—I'm sure I'm going to die—I'm soaked through, you know! But—but look here. What's Bulkeley going to d—do?"

Tubby's fat face was full of alarm. It was plain to Jimmy Silver that the fat youth was feeling ill; but it was also very plain that he was not seriously ill—at least, not too ill to think over things, and to worry about saving his own precious skin.

"Never mind Bulkeley, Tubby," said Jimmy rather kindly. "Just lie down and don't worry, there's a good chap!"

"But—but, I say, there'll be an awful row about this! Oh dear, what am I to do? I shall be fl—flogged, and s—sacked! Bulkeley saw those cards and things, and—and that beast, Joey Hook! He'll think I was playing—playing cards with those cards! But—but, of course, I wasn't—certainly not, Silver!"

"Then that's all right, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Don't you worry now about the cards—just lie down and be quiet."

But Tubby, like Rachael of old, refused to be comforted.

"But—but you won't t—tell anyone that I was there—that I was in the garden?" spluttered Tubby tearfully.

"I shall tell the truth!" exclaimed Jimmy quietly. "But I won't give you away, if that's what's worrying you, Tubby."

"You—you mean you won't mention my

name—won't say anything about me at all?" gasped Tubby, in a relieved tone.

Jimmy Silver hesitated. Not only did Tubby look wretched, but he also looked feverish and ill. And all Jimmy was concerned about was to pacify his excitement, and to persuade him to lie down.

"No!" he said briefly, at last.

"You—you won't mention my name—honour bright?"

"On my honour!" said Jimmy, with a smile.

Tubby Muffin lay down again with a deep gasp of satisfaction, and for the remainder of that journey to Rookwood was silent.

But Jimmy Silver little dreamed what the consequences to himself were to be for that promise so lightly given.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**  
**The White Feather!**

**"RATS!"**

"Rot!"  
"Bunkum!"  
"Bosh!"

"Tell that to the marines!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I tell you it's true!" howled Peele angrily. "Both Gower and myself were standing by the gates when they arrived, wet through and carrying Muffin. And we heard Bulkeley tell Greely all about it, and he ordered 'em to take Tubby to the sanny!"

"Wha—what!"  
"Perhaps you'll believe us now!" sneered Gower spitefully. "Fancy Jimmy Silver showing the white feather, eh? My hat! Only what one can expect, though! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell's eyes flashed and he clenched his fists.

"No need to get ratty, Lovell," growled Gower, somewhat nervously. "It's true enough—every word of it! And you'll know soon enough!"

"And here's Silver now," announced Peele triumphantly. "Ask him yourselves! Anyway, he looked jolly sick, I can tell you, when Bulkeley was telling old Greely about it all at the gates!"

There was a stir of interest among the group at the foot of the Classical steps, as Jimmy Silver was seen approaching from the direction of the sanny.

Raby, Newcome, Putty Grace, and, in fact, most of the juniors were grinning. Jimmy Silver, they knew, would soon give the lie to the wonderful yarn, of course!

But the amused grins faded as Jimmy Silver came nearer, and they noted his bedraggled appearance and downcast face.

"I—I say," muttered Mornington of the Fourth slowly. "It's all rot, of course, but—but he looks pretty sick, and—well, hang it all, there must be something in the yarn—something's happened, anyway!"

Jimmy Silver came up slowly and his face crimsoned as his eyes encountered the curious glances. Lovell stepped forward, his face set and grim.

"I—I—I say, Jimmy, old man!" he exclaimed, with a nervous laugh. "Look here! Is—is it true that Tubby's been nearly drowned?"

"Yes!" replied Jimmy quietly.

"B—but look here," stammered Lovell. "There's a wonderful yarn going round. They—they say that Tubby was drowning, and you—you lay in the grass without raising a hand to help him. Silly rot, of course. And—"

Lovell stopped and stared. He had half hoped, half expected a hearty laugh—or at least a prompt denial for answer. But to his astonishment and alarm there was neither. But his chum's face was set and wretched.

"I—I—I—" Jimmy Silver stammered and stopped, conscious that all eyes were fixed upon him curiously.

"By gad!" ejaculated Mornington of the Fourth.

"Sure—surely it can't be true, Jimmy?" muttered Lovell aghast.

"It—it's true enough," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "But—but—"

"Silver!"

Across from the direction of the sanny came Bulkeley, his clothes sodden, and his boots squeaking dismally. The astounded juniors eyed him expectantly as he came up.

But when he saw Silver his face set grimly and he stopped at once.

"Silver, one moment! It has just struck me!" began the captain harshly. "I gave you an envelope this afternoon to take to Stubbins' in Latcham. Did you deliver it?"

"I—I—I—"

"Well?" snapped Bulkeley suspiciously.

"I—I've lost it!" faltered Jimmy Silver slowly.

"You've lost it?"

"Yes, Bulkeley," said Silver wretchedly.

"I—I must have dropped it out of my pocket, for it was gone when I reached Latcham. I was searching for it when I heard—heard—"

Jimmy Silver's words ceased as he remembered his promise to Tubby Muffin. And it was then for the first time that the junior realised what a serious position he was in. How on earth could he explain or defend himself without bringing the fat Classical into the story at every turn?

In tense silence Bulkeley waited, and Silver's face paled as he read the frank disbelief in Bulkeley's glance.

"Very well!" exclaimed Bulkeley at last. "I will see you later about this matter, Silver. Cut off now and get changed! You will be required very soon in Dr. Chisholm's study, I fancy. So hold yourself in readiness."

Without a word Jimmy Silver mounted the steps and passed indoors. Bulkeley, without a glance at the group of astounded juniors, followed, his brow dark and clouded.

For fully a minute the excited Fourth-Formers blinked at each other in silence. Then an excited buzz broke out.

"Well, my only hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Would you believe it!" gasped Conroy in sheer amazement.

"Blessed if I believe it even now, by gad!" drawled Morny thoughtfully. "Jimmy Silver a blessed funk! No—hang if I do! There's a mistake somewhere!"

"But he admits it himself," sneered Peele. "And it's jolly plain Bulkeley thinks so, too. He spoke to him like—like—"

"Like talkin' to a dog, old bean," grinned Adolphus Smythe of the Shell. "My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

But there was no answering laugh—unless the sniggers of Gower and Peele could have been called laughs. Most of the fellows—Classicals and Moderns alike—were looking grave and concerned. Silver's extraordinary lapse—if lapse it could be—was no laughing matter to them.

"Let's get out of this before I slay someone!" roared Lovell irritably. "What on earth can have come over Jimmy. He must be potty! Hang it all, we know jolly well he couldn't play the funk! But—"

"It beats me altogether!" exclaimed Raby uncomfortably. "Besides, there's something else behind it all. What did old Bulkeley mean about that envelope business? It's jolly queer!"

"It's—it's rotten!" muttered Arthur Newcome miserably.

"Rotten isn't the word for it," snapped Lovell. "But come up to the study for goodness' sake, or I shall bust. We'll wait for Jimmy and have the thing out."

And Arthur Edward Lovell led the way gloomily towards the end study where the three chums discussed the astounding news almost in whispers, as they waited for Jimmy Silver. He appeared presently, tubbed and changed. But his expression was still gloomy in the extreme.

"Look here, Silver! It can't be true—what you admitted just now. Hang it all, what's it all mean?"

"It's true enough, Lovell. I—I did lie watching Tubby Muffin drowning! But—but—"

"Well?" queried Lovell wonderingly.

Jimmy Silver pulled himself together with an effort.

"The fact is, you chaps," he went on quietly, "I—I've never been given a chance to defend myself yet—to tell the whole story. Before Tubby went in I was pitched in, and—and I only fell into shallow water and must have hit my head against a submerged log of wood or something. Anyway, it was a tidy old jar—fairly knocked me silly. I can't understand it myself. I wasn't exactly unconscious, and I could see Tubby was drowning. And yet I couldn't have raised a hand to help him if—"

Jimmy Silver stammered and stopped, fully conscious that his words sounded halting and weak. But Lovell's face wore a relieved expression.

"Look here, Jimmy," he ejaculated warmly. "I don't jolly well pretend to understand it. It's all jolly mysterious. But you're our pal, and we know you better than anyone else. And if you give us your word that you didn't funk—didn't play the coward, then I, for one, am going to believe you. And hang everyone else!"

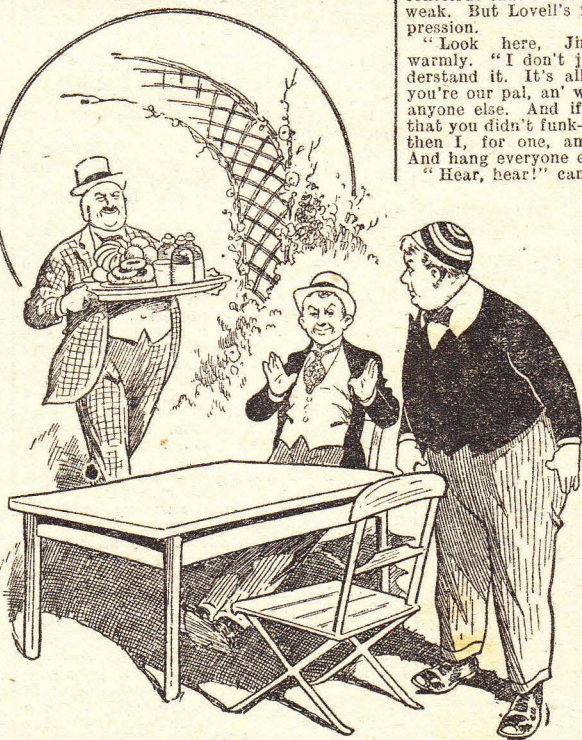
"Hear, hear!" came from Raby and Newcome promptly and enthusiastically.

Jimmy Silver's face cleared a little.

"Thanks, you fellows! I didn't funk it! And you chaps know jolly well I'd have gone to help Tubby like a shot if I could! But—but—that's not all!"

"Eh?" inquired his friends.

"I—I can't explain fully," muttered Jimmy slowly. "I—I've given my word not to do so. But the whole business happened in the garden of the Jolly Fisherman near the cross-roads leading to Middlewood and Latcham. And Bulkeley and Neville think I was pub-hunting and brawling with Joey Hook an' that cad Joe, the potman from the Bird-in-Hand in Coombe. It was those two who pitched Tubby and myself into the river. Not only that, but—but Bulkeley gave me five pounds to pay a cricket account in Latcham. And—"



**FEEDING THE BIRD BEFORE PLUCKING!** Mr. Hook bustled up, bearing aloft a tray piled high with cakes and biscuits and bottles of lemonade. "There you are, my son!" he said heartily, "Pile in, and welcome!" Tubby Muffin hesitated no longer. (See Chapter 2.)

and I've lost the money. You chaps heard him ask me about it. Bulkeley thinks I've pinched it to play cards with—I'm certain he does!"

There was an astounded silence as Jimmy finished.

Then Lovell gave vent to a long whistle of amazement.

"My only hat, Jimmy!" he gasped. "You've fairly been having an afternoon out. All the same it's frightfully serious! But—but surely you can explain—"

Lovell's words ceased as a sharp rap sounded at the door, and Bulkeley entered. He shot a glance of hearty contempt at Jimmy Silver.

"Silver, the Head wants you in his study! Follow me at once!" he exclaimed, in an ominous tone.

And Jimmy Silver gave his chums a miserable glance, and followed the captain of Rookwood out of the room.

Without a doubt Bulkeley had acquainted Dr. Chisholm with the facts, as far as he knew them. And plainly it was the captain's duty to do so.

But Jimmy Silver wondered vaguely as he followed Bulkeley's stalwart figure how he was going to explain his position, how he was going to defend himself without giving Tubby Muffin away.

### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

#### At the Bar of Justice!

"COME in!"

Dr. Chisholm's brow was dark as Bulkeley of the Sixth entered the sacred study of the headmaster of Rookwood with Jimmy Silver. And there was more than a trace of anger in the Head's keen glance as it rested on the junior's downcast face.

"Silver," began the Head sternly, "doubtless you are fully aware why I have sent for you. Bulkeley has brought to me a very disquieting and discreditable report regarding your conduct this afternoon, a report that is as astounding as it is distasteful!"

The Head paused, and Jimmy Silver's face crimsoned under his piercing gaze.

"The charge," "wardice, happily, does not come within my province," proceeded the Head quietly. "I have no power, nor do I wish to judge any boy's conduct in that respect. That matter must be left to your own conscience, Silver. But—"

"I am not a coward, sir!" muttered the junior through clenched teeth. "Bulkeley has only told you one half of the story. I have not had a fair chance to—"

"Silence, Silver!" snapped Dr. Chisholm angrily. "I do not wish to—"

"But it's not fair, sir," protested Jimmy Silver hotly. "Everyone is calling me a coward. They say I watched Muffin drowning without moving to help—"

"That is perfectly true, sir!" exclaimed Bulkeley grimly. "Both Neville and myself saw—"

"It is true enough, but not all the truth!" broke in the junior passionately. "Bulkeley saw me lying there; but he did not know that I had been thrown into the river, that I was injured, and unable to go to Muffin's help!"

"I certainly did not know that, Silver," ejaculated Bulkeley, in surprise, "or I should certainly have made sure of the facts before making the matter public. And in those circumstances I think it only right that the facts should be heard!"

Dr. Chisholm frowned thoughtfully, and drummed his fingers on the table before him.

"Very well, Silver, I will hear what you have to say," he said quietly.

And in low tones Silver told his story, only relating the happenings from the time he was flung into the water to his boarding the motor-boat. And the Head's brow darkened as the junior spoke of Joey Hook and his companions. When he had finished, however, the Head was eyeing him thoughtfully.

"I am strongly inclined, Bulkeley, to believe this boy's statement. He is certainly entitled to be given the benefit of the doubt. Under the exceptional circumstances it would be unjust to do otherwise. But—"

Dr. Chisholm's voice became harsh as he turned a glance like steel upon the junior.

"But," he proceeded grimly, "though that disposes of the charge of cowardice in so far as I am concerned, it is my intention to subject the further disgraceful charges

brought against you in the strictest investigations. Silver," went on the Head, with a note of anger in his tone, "you have been found, under the most shameful circumstances, on the premises of a disreputable inn strictly out of bounds to Rookwood boys. That in itself would fully justify me in instantly expelling you. To my mind," went on the Head, "it seems too amazing and incomprehensible that any boy of this school—much less a junior—can have laid himself open to such grave charges. And I cannot, and will not, believe it possible without the strongest proofs of guilt. I intend, therefore, to give you every chance to defend yourself, Silver. And now what have you to say?"

"I—I—I—"

"Well?" said Dr. Chisholm, as the junior stammered helplessly.

"I cannot explain, sir," exclaimed Jimmy Silver stoutly, pulling himself together with an effort. "But I have done nothing that I am ashamed of!"

The Head's face darkened with anger.

"Does that mean, Silver, that you actually refuse to explain?" he thundered.

No answer.

"Then there is only one construction that I can place on your silence, unless—unless, possibly, you are keeping silent from a desire to shield someone else, from a foolish, misguided sense of schoolboy honour. If that is so, Silver, let me warn you as to the seriousness of your position. Unless you can satisfactorily explain your conduct, I shall have no other course than to expel you with ignominy. Now will you answer me?"

Silence, during which the Head's brow grew darker and darker.

"Very well, then, Silver," said Dr. Chisholm, in a determined tone. "As you still persist in this foolish refusal to speak, I will not, for the moment, question you further on these charges. There is, however, one other matter—a very grave matter indeed, that I hesitate to bring against you, but which certainly requires some explaining by you. Bulkeley informs me that he gave you the sum of five pounds to pay an account in Latcham. But I understand," added the Head grimly, "that you claim to have lost the money. Is that so, Silver?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"Then cannot you see, boy, that under the circumstances under which you were found this places you in a very grave position—that you are responsible, and must give a satisfactory account of the money?"

Jimmy Silver raised his head and met the Head's keen gaze unflinchingly.

"I understand fully, sir!" he exclaimed somewhat bitterly. "But it is the truth! I did lose the money! It was while searching the spot where I thought I had dropped the envelope that I heard—heard—"

"Yes, Silver?" said the Head testily.

"Proceed!"

"I—I—that is all I can say, sir!" stammered the junior. "But I am speaking the truth. I have lost the money, and not used it as you think, sir!"

"As I think!" repeated Dr. Chisholm angrily. "I have not suggested in any way what I think about the matter, Silver. You state you have lost the money, and there is not an atom of evidence to the contrary. But this foolish, obstinate silence must end, Silver. I demand here and now that you give a full and accurate account of your movements this afternoon. Otherwise—"

The Head paused meaningly, and his lips set in a determined line. Jimmy Silver's lips were also compressed and his head downcast. He knew that the eyes of both the Head and the astonished captain of Rookwood were fixed upon him accusingly.

"I am waiting, Silver!" thundered Dr. Chisholm.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! But—but I cannot explain further!" muttered the junior miserably.

"Very well, Silver! I have given you—and still intend to give you every opportunity of defending yourself. To this end I will give you until six o'clock to-morrow evening to think over the matter. By that time your companion in yesterday's affair, Muffin, will be discharged from the sanatorium, when I hope to get the truth of this astounding business. Should, however, nothing come to light in extenuation of your conduct, or should you still persist in this foolish silence," went on the Head in cold, deliberate tones, "you will be expelled from Rookwood! You may go!"

In grim silence Jimmy Silver turned and

left the room, and the door closed behind him.

And that evening all Rookwood was in a buzz of excitement, and the astounding affair was on every tongue. It was soon known that Jimmy Silver was practically under sentence of expulsion, and the news was discussed by all the excited juniors, gravely and volubly.

And Jimmy Silver found himself under a cloud, and treated to the "marble eye" on all sides. The accusation of cowardice—perhaps the most heinous offence in a school-boy's eyes—was in itself enough to earn him the contempt of his schoolfellows.

For Jimmy Silver's strenuous denials of guilt counted for nothing against the evidence of Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth. And even his own chums of the end study eyed him oddly, though they stood by him loyally, and vainly tried to hide their inward uneasiness as Jimmy persisted in his unaccountable silence.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### Tubby Explains!

"TUBBY—I say, Tubby Muffin!"

Jimmy Silver called out eagerly as the fat figure of the Falstaff of Rookwood slowly descended the sanatorium steps. It had been known to all and sundry that Tubby would be present in class that morning. And Jimmy Silver, long before the rest of the Fourth had finished breakfast, was hovering round the sanny with the intention of questioning the fat junior at the earliest possible moment.

Tubby's face was still pale. And he blinked nervously and apprehensively at Jimmy Silver as that junior approached him.

"Glad to see you, Tubby!" said Jimmy sincerely. "Feeling better now?"

"I—I—I'm all right now," stammered Tubby uneasily. "I—I—I say! I—I—I'm in rather a hurry, you know! I shall miss breakfast if—"

"Just a moment, Tubby," exclaimed Jimmy Silver, laying a hand on the fat youth's shoulder. "I'm sorry to worry you just now, but—but it's frightfully serious. It's about that five pounds you saw Bulkeley give to me. Look—"

"I—I say, you know, I shall miss my breakfast!" gasped the fat junior, in alarm. "Besides, I know nothing about Bulkeley's five pounds—absolutely nothing! Never even knew you had the five quid, in fact, Jimmy Silver!"

"What?"

"Come to that, it's no business of mine, either, Jimmy Silver, if you did drop the five quid on the Latcham Road—jolly careless of you, I think!" proceeded Tubby, with great dignity. "And I decline—"

"Then you do know something about it?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver eagerly.

"Certainly not, Silver!" said Tubby, in great alarm. "And I decline to discuss the matter! I shall be late—"

"But—"

"Look here, Silver," said Tubby loftily. "Once and for all, I decline to discuss this matter further with you. If you think I know anything about Bulkeley's five pounds, you're jolly well mistaken! And, as for playing banker with the cash, I'd never dream of such a thing. Certainly not! In fact, even when Joey Hook threatened to pitch me into the river, I refused stoutly to pay up out of Bulkeley's money. I was jolly plucky about that, I think. I told him straight the five pounds wasn't mine, and—I mean—that is to say, I—I—I know nothing about the cash—absolutely nothing!" stammered Tubby hastily. "So now let me go! I shall jolly well miss my breakfast!"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Do you actually mean to say, Muffin, that—that you've been playing rotten cards with Bulkeley's five pounds?" he ejaculated, tightening his grip on the fat youth's shoulder.

"Nunno! Certainly not! Not a bit of it, Silver!" gasped Tubby indignantly. "Haven't I jolly well told you I didn't play with the money? You surely don't doubt my word, Jimmy Silver? I was too jolly sharp for that beast Joey Hook, I can tell you! In fact, I had it in my pocket even when I was pitched into—into—I mean—that is to say—I mean—to say when I didn't—I mean, I never had the money at all, of course! I—I—I—"

Tubby floundered helplessly. Even the fat, obtuse mind of Tubby Muffin grasped the

fact that he had given himself hopelessly away. But that fact did not worry Tubby for long—not nearly so much as the fear of missing breakfast. Tubby had already had one breakfast in the sanny. But illness had by no means impaired his appetite, and Tubby was quite ready for another.

"Look—look here, Jimmy!" he spluttered peevishly. "I want my breakfast. Let me go now! Hang Bulkeley's five quid! I'm jolly hungry!"

"Just wait a minute, Muffin!" exclaimed Jimmy grimly. "You've practically admitted you had the money all the time. And—"

Tubby jumped. "I didn't! I wasn't! I haven't!" he spluttered frantically. "I've never seen it. In fact, I know nothing about it. Besides, it ain't my fault if the blessed envelope fell out of my pocket. Why, it may even now be lying in Bill Adams' old tub. Anyway, it wasn't in my pocket when I came to look in the sanny, so it must be. You can't blame me for that! You'll admit that yourself, Jim—"

Tubby broke off, and the ex-junior captain of the Fourth almost gasped aloud with relief. There were often golden grains of truth to be found in Tubby Muffin's romances. And Jimmy really felt he had found one at last.

"Here, I say!" gasped Tubby, as Jimmy Silver was turning away with gleaming eyes. "You w-won't tell?"

"I'm going up the river to search Bill Adams' motor-boat," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

And in blank amazement the fat Classical watched Jimmy Silver as he strode across the quad and vanished through the gates. Then, suddenly remembering breakfast, Tubby hurried indoors.

For the next hour, Tubby was very busy indeed—with his chin. The first half-hour he spent eating, and the next half-hour talking—two chin exercises in which Tubby Muffin excelled. And for once the fat youth had someone ready and eager to listen to him.

Indeed, Reginald Muffin was just then the cynosure of all eyes. For that half-hour Tubby fairly revelled and basked in the limelight. And he was swelling with importance and smiling brightly with smug satisfaction as he entered the Fourth Form-room that morning. But, unfortunately for Tubby Muffin, this happy state of affairs did not last long. Barely had the Fourth taken their seats when Bulkeley of the Sixth entered. And there was a curious look on Bulkeley's face as he approached Mr. Bootles.

"Dr. Chisholm wishes to see Silver and Muffin in his study immediately, sir," he exclaimed quietly.

Mr. Bootles looked surprised. "Ah! H'm! Certainly Bulkeley!" he exclaimed mildly, turning to the class.

"Silver—Muffin, you will follow Bulkeley—Bless my soul! Where is Silver?"

Mr. Bootles blinked around in astonishment on realising that Silver was not present. Tubby Muffin however, though the summons to visit the Head had alarmed him considerably did not intend to miss this opportunity of airing his knowledge.

"Ple—please, sir, I know where Silver is!" he gasped breathlessly. "He's gone up the river, sir—fancy that!"

"Bless my soul! This is most unusual—what—what!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "However, Muffin, you will follow Bulkeley to Dr. Chisholm's study, and I will send Silver immediately on his return, Bulkeley."

And not looking at all happy, Tubby Muffin rose reluctantly from his seat and rolled after Bulkeley to the Head's study.

But he looked simply terrified, and his knees almost knocked together with fright when he entered that sacred apartment a moment later.

For Dr. Chisholm was not alone. Seated on the extreme edge of a chair, and looking exceedingly uncomfortable, was old Bill Adams, the boatman.

"Muffin," said the Head gravely, after Bulkeley had explained Jimmy Silver's absence, "I have sent for you in connection with that affair up the river yesterday. This gentleman is Mr. Adams, who claims to have witnessed the whole occurrence from the far side of the river. In fact, Muffin," went on the Head grimly, "Mr. Adams has told me an astounding story."

Tubby Muffin's podgy face paled visibly. "H-ha-has he, s-sir?" he stammered.



**THROWN IN, AND POWERLESS TO HELP!** As Jimmy Silver lay motionless in the mud, his mind a welter of confused emotions, he had a vision of the sprawling arms and legs of Tubby Muffin. The fat Classical whirled overhead and fell with a tremendous splash into the deep water.

(See Chapter 3.)

"Yes, he has, Muffin!" snapped Dr. Chisholm. "And as his story concerns you—or, at least, a boy who answers exactly to your description—I am going to ask you a few questions which I require answering carefully and truthfully. First of all, Muffin, have you seen or have you any knowledge of that?"

Dr. Chisholm, as he spoke, laid the envelope Silver had lost, and he had found—and lost again. In fact, it was the envelope containing Bulkeley's five pounds.

"No-o-no, sir," gasped Tubby in alarm. "You've never seen this before?" exclaimed the Head.

"N-no, sir—never! Certainly not! Not at all, sir!" gasped Tubby hurriedly. "I know nothing about Bulkeley's five pounds. I'm as innocent as a baby, in fact, sir! And if—if Silver tells you I found it on the road outside the Jolly Fisherman, then he's telling wicked untruths, sir. Because I didn't! And as for playing cards with Joey Hook—why, I'd never even dream of such a thing! In fact, I wasn't near the Jolly Fisherman yesterday afternoon—not within miles of the place. You—you can ask Jimmy Silver, sir—he'll tell you I wasn't—he promised me he would, anyway."

"Muffin!" said Dr. Chisholm, in a dangerous voice. "You are telling deliberate untruths, and are the most stupid, foolish boy I have ever dealt with. This envelope containing five pounds which you disclaim all knowledge of, was found by Mr. Adams in his boat, and he has been kind enough to bring it back, with the suggestion that it had fallen from your pocket as you lay in the boat yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, s-sir!" gasped Tubby.

"Also," went on the Head grimly, "Mr. Adams, when asking after your condition, happened also to ask about Silver, of your Form, and while doing so dropped several hints which led me to question him, when he was good enough to relate what I firmly believe are facts that will lead to this astounding affair being cleared up. He states that he saw you, first of all, consorting with those two unspeakable scoundrels, and that

Silver apparently only entered the precincts of that inn to come to your help. And—"

"D-d-does he, really?" stammered Tubby, in a shocked voice. "Oh, my! What wicked untruths! Fancy that—"

"Silence, Muffin!" thundered Dr. Chisholm. "I may add that I place every reliance on Mr. Adams' story. There are, however, several points that only you can clear up, Muffin. Now," went on the Head grimly, picking up a cane from the table, "unless you at once confess to your share in yesterday's happenings, Muffin, I shall not only flog you, but expel you immediately from Rookwood. But I demand the truth. At the slightest suggestion of a falsehood, Muffin, I shall—"

The hapless Tubby shivered apprehensively as the Head swished the cane suggestively. And after that it did not take Tubby Muffin long to arrive at a decision.

He decided to confess! And for once Tubby Muffin told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

But to Tubby Muffin's great astonishment and relief, Dr. Chisholm's stern face relaxed somewhat as the fat Classical tearfully proceeded with his woeful tale.

The Head, in fact, was looking quite relieved by the time Tubby had finished.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "I really believe, Muffin, you wretched boy, that you did enter that disreputable resort in ignorance of the character of the place. And I also think you acted afterwards not comprehending the seriousness of what you were doing. Were it otherwise, I should certainly expel you at once. And as it is I intend to punish you severely for your astonishing falsehoods!"

"Ow!" gasped Tubby. "But in consideration of your narrow escape yesterday, and the resulting illness," went on the Head drily, "I will postpone your punishment until a more favourable opportunity. You may go, Muffin!"

And Reginald Muffin went with alacrity, sincerely hoping the favourable opportunity would never present itself, and that the postponement would therefore remain indefinite.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Coward!

BULKELEY'S face wore a determined expression as he left the Head's study that morning. Jimmy Silver had been proved innocent of the charge of pub-haunting, and the five pounds had been found. But the accusation of cowardice still hung over the junior's head. And Bulkeley felt that, as he had been the first to charge the junior, and to make the matter public, it was up to him to find out the truth.

For, though Bill Adams' story had convinced Bulkeley at last that Jimmy's story was correct, he knew that unless proof was forthcoming that the junior had really injured his head, he would still remain under a cloud at Rookwood.

And Bulkeley had determined to furnish that proof. And to this end he had persuaded Dr. Chisholm to allow him to accompany Bill Adams up the river. And a talk he had with the old boatman on the way convinced him more than ever that Jimmy Silver had not faked going to Tubby Muffin's rescue.

"Him a coward—no fear!" said Bill Adams emphatically. "I saw the young 'un pitched in, and I guessed what had happened when he crawled out and dropped in the grass. There used to be an old landing-stage at the bottom of that there garden; and the r's—leatways, what's left of them—are still there. That's why I couldn't get the old tub nearer in yesterday. No, the young gent hurt his head, without a doubt, and a tidy old jar it were, I bet!"

"Well, we'll soon know for certain," said Bulkeley. "And if it is so, I'll soon let the fellows know, you may be sure. It's on—Hullo! Yonder's the Jolly Fisherman, now! Have you got a boathook?"

The boatman had a boathook. But, as it happened, that article was not necessary, for the boat stopped with a dull thud about a couple of yards from the bank. And, looking down, Bulkeley could plainly see deep-sunken piles, stumps, and long pieces of timber running the complete length of the garden edge. Without a doubt, Jimmy Silver's story was true.

"That settles it!" ejaculated the senior grimly. "And now where's Silver? I've got something to say to him about this! Unless that fat fool Muffin's spoofed me, he must be up here!"

"Likely up at the cottage yet," said Bill Adams. "It's only round the bend there. We'll run up and look!"

And the boatman, who had been steering directly across towards the old ramshackle buildings where he housed his boats for hire, altered his course, and a moment later the boat turned the bend, and the old boatman's cottage came in sight.

"Hallo! There's the missus!" ejaculated Bill Adams all of a sudden. "What on earth—Good heavens!"

Startled, the senior followed his glance, and saw a woman rushing about frantically on the edge of the steep bank topping the river-bank. Then Bulkeley's eyes fell upon a splash of black and white far out on the shining surface of the river. The boatman was struggling frantically with his engine to get more speed on the boat. And then Bulkeley also saw the reason, as the objects out in the river became clearer.

"Good heavens! It's Silver—in the river!" he gasped.

"And my little girl!" muttered Bill Adams tensely. "Get ready when I cut off the engine, young sir!"

Bulkeley could now plainly see Jimmy Silver's face and the head of the little girl he was strenuously fighting to keep above water. Jimmy Silver's face was white and drawn, and he was plainly at his last gasp.

"Stick it, Silver!" shouted Bulkeley, leaning over the side as the engine was shut off and the boat glided silently towards the struggling figures in the water.

"I—I'm done!" gasped Jimmy Silver faintly. "T-take the kiddie, Bulkeley!"

With a tremendous effort, Bulkeley took the child from the junior's grasp, and handed her into Bill Adams' ready, strong grip. Then Bulkeley leaped swiftly over the side.

For directly the child was taken from Jimmy Silver's grip, the junior had fallen back and sunk like a stone.

Then the ex-captain's head appeared, followed by his shoulders. And in his strong grasp he held the limp form of the junior.

Jimmy Silver's face was white, and his eyes were closed. The junior was unconscious.

"Help me!" gasped Bulkeley, gripping the side of the boat. "He's unconscious!"

The boatman bent down and lifted the junior into the boat, and Bulkeley followed, breathing spasmodically. A moment later the boat touched the bank. Jumping out, Bulkeley laid the limp, sodden form of Jimmy Silver in the grass, while the boatman handed his little girl into the eager, thankful arms of her mother.

Bulkeley knelt by the side of Jimmy Silver anxiously. But just then the junior opened his eyes and sighed deeply.

"How—how's the kiddie?" he gasped.

"Right as rain, young 'un!" said Bulkeley. "Thanks to you, young sir!" exclaimed the boatman thankfully. "You're a rare plucked 'un—that you are! But you'd best come and have something hot to drink."

Bulkeley shook his head. "Better get back to Rookwood now—thanks all the same!" he exclaimed quietly.

"Come, Silver, if you feel fit!" And at a brisk trot Bulkeley started for Rookwood, with Jimmy Silver by his side.

But when opposite to the Jolly Fisherman Inn, Bulkeley called a halt.

"Yesterday, Silver," exclaimed Bulkeley quietly, "I called you a coward for not going to Muffin's help over there. I was wrong! I know now that you did not funk—you did injure your head. And now—"

"That's all right, Bulkeley!" gasped Jimmy Silver hastily. "No need to rub it in! All serene. I—I say, did old Bootles miss me in class? I came to search for— for something. And while I was talking to Mrs. Adams her little girl strayed, and fell into the river. But—but—but about that five—"

"I guessed what had happened," said Bulkeley. "And now you've no need to worry about the five pounds or anything. Silver. The money's been found, and Muffin's confessed; but the Head wants to see you when you get back, an' you'll hear all about it then."

THE END.

(Full particulars of next week's Rookwood story will be found on page 27.)

HOLIDAY MONEY FOR YOU!

SOLVE THE PICTURE-PUZZLE BELOW!

FIRST PRIZE £5. SECOND PRIZE £2 10s. 10 PRIZES OF 5s. each.

What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid Cricket competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find the history of the Gloucester C.C. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Gloucester" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, July 12th, 1923.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be regarded as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Gem," and readers of those journals may compete.

I enter the POPULAR "GLOUCESTER" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name .....

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**AN AMAZING JAPE!**

Keen rivalry has always been displayed between the two houses at St. Jim's, and this story deals with an amazing jape which is organised by Figgins & Co., of the New House, against their old rivals!

**TURNING THE TABLES ON THE SCHOOL HOUSE!**



# THE NEW HOUSE CONSPIRACY!

This is one of the funniest stories of St. Jim's ever written, and it is by your favourite author,  
**MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

**THE FIRST CHAPTER,  
A Deep, Dark Plot.**

"HIS plumper than I am!" said Fatty Wynn.  
"Then he must have the circumference of a blessed barrel!" said Figgins.

And Kerr chimed in with: "Absolutely!" People who were plumper than Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of St. Jim's, were not met with every day. They were, in fact, very few and far between.

Baggy Trimble of the School House, Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, and Tubby Muffin of Rookwood, were Fatty Wynn's only rivals, so far as rotundity of person was concerned.

"Do you seriously mean to say, Fatty," said Dick Redfern, "that Tubby Joyce is fatter than you?"

Fatty Wynn nodded.  
"I went into the dressing-room of the theatre last night to congratulate him on his ripping acting," he said. "While I was chatting to him, two members of the company had a wager as to which was the fattest. So they took our measurements, and Tubby Joyce had me beaten. He goes an inch more round the waist than I do."

"My hat!"  
"And yet the fellow's awfully nimble on the stage," said Lawrence. "You'd think he would go off pop if he tried to exert himself."

"Yes, rather!"  
Six New House juniors were at tea in Figgins' study. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn shared that famous apartment, and Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had been invited to the spread.

The conversation centred upon Tubby Joyce, a wonderful boy actor, who was appearing at the Wayland Theatre. He was a plump, genial fellow, and he might easily have been taken for Fatty Wynn's brother. In features, they were as alike as two peas. The only difference between them was that Tubby Joyce was slightly the plumper.

"To-morrow's Wednesday," said Figgins, "and there won't be a matinee at the theatre. So what about inviting Tubby Joyce to St. Jim's, and standing him a feed?"  
Dick Redfern made a grimace.

"If Tubby's appetite is anything like Fatty Wynn's," he said, "he'll eat us out of house and home."

"That doesn't matter," said Figgins. "We're in funds, and we can easily stand the racket."

"Speak for yourself, Figg!" said Owen. "My sole asset amounts to a penny stamp and a French coin with a hole in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"But we really ought to entertain Tubby Joyce," said Figgins. "The company will be leaving Wayland at the end of the week. They're going on to Brighton."

"Why not let the School House bouncers do the entertaining?" suggested Kerr.

Figgins stared at the speaker in surprise. "What do you mean?" he asked, a trifle breathlessly. He could tell by the merry twinkle in Kerr's eyes that the keen-witted junior had something up his sleeve.

"I've thought of a wheeze," said Kerr. "Rather a more daring one than usual, but I think it's workable."

"Let's hear it, old man!" said Redfern eagerly.  
Kerr grinned as he poured himself out a fresh cup of tea.

"We all know what a clever actor Tubby Joyce is," he said. "Well, supposing he comes up to St. Jim's to-morrow, dressed in girl's clothes—"

"Eh?"  
"And plays the part of Fatty Wynn's sister?"

"Great Scott!"

"He could pull the legs of the School House bouncers ad lib, ad infinitum," Kerr went on. "He could insist upon having tea in Tom Merry's study, and he could lead them no end of a dance! There's no limit to the merry stunts he could get up to. Of course, I'm taking it for granted that Tubby Joyce will be willing to fall in with the arrangement. We haven't asked him yet, and it's possible he may not care to take the risk."

Kerr's schoolfellows blinked at him in astonishment. It took quite a little time for the wheeze to sink into their minds. For it was, as Kerr had said, a more daring wheeze than most.

"Tubby Joyce as my sister!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Oh, what a priceless stunt!"

"Of course, you'll have to play up to the part of the affectionate brother," said Kerr. "When 'Miss Wynn' arrives at the school you must embrace her cordially, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh!"  
"Then you must introduce her to the School House fellows, and leave her in their hands," Kerr went on. "On second thoughts, though, I don't think you'll find it necessary to introduce her. She'll introduce herself! And she'll cause quite a fluttering in the doves, I can tell you!"

"It's certainly a first-rate wheeze," said Figgins. "The question is—will Tubby Joyce be willing to play the part?"

"We'll bike over to Wayland and ask him. He's a merry soul, and I don't think he'll refuse."

The New House juniors proceeded merrily with their tea, and from time to time they gave vent to explosions of merriment.

If Tubby Joyce declined to fill the bill as Fatty Wynn's sister, the bottom would be knocked out of the whole business. But the juniors had great faith in the boy actor.

After tea the six juniors cycled over to Wayland. Tom Merry & Co., of the School House, saw them go, and wondered what was

in the wind. But they had not the slightest suspicion of the jape that was being planned for their benefit.

Figgins & Co. called at the theatre in Wayland, and were informed by the commissionaire that Tubby Joyce was at his lodgings in West Street.

"The end 'ouse on the right 'and side—that's where you'll find 'im," said the man in livery.

Figgins dropped a sixpence into the man's palm, and the juniors remounted their machines and cycled to Tubby Joyce's lodgings.

They found the boy actor having tea. He sat before a laden table, with a beatific smile on his plump countenance. He was doing himself well, for there were cakes and pastries of every description on the table.

"Hope we're not intruding!" said Figgins, as the landlady ushered the St. Jim's juniors into the room.

"Not at all!" said Tubby Joyce.  
"The fact is," said Fatty Wynn, "we want you to do us a favour. Are you free to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes."  
"That's good! Well, we've planned a little jape on the School House fellows at St. Jim's. I'll tell you what the wheeze is, and then you can accept or decline, as you choose."

Tubby Joyce listened with keen interest, and with many chuckles, while Fatty Wynn propounded the scheme.

"By Jove, what a jape!" he exclaimed. "Are you game?" asked Figgins eagerly.

"Yes, rather! I'll roll up at the school to-morrow afternoon as Miss Winnie Wynn."  
"Hurrah!"

"It won't be an easy part to play," said the boy actor, "so you mustn't be frightfully disappointed if I get bowled out. I'll do my level best not to be, of course; but there's many a slip. Won't you sit down, you fellows, and let me brew you some tea?"

"We've had tea, thanks!" said Kerr. "I say, it's awfully sporting of you to fall in with this jape!"

"Rats! I shall thoroughly enjoy it," said Tubby Joyce. "But I don't suppose the School House fellows will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Having pressed Tubby Joyce into service—not that he needed much pressing—the New House conspirators cycled back to St. Jim's, and the sound of their laughter rang merrily along the road.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER,  
Winsome Winnie.**

"SISTER ANNE—Sister Anne! Do you see anyone coming?"  
Monty Lowther stood in the school gateway with his chums. He shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed down the road.

"The Old Man of the Mill!"—a Mystery Story of St. Jim's Next Week!

It was Wednesday afternoon, and the Terrible Three were in their flannels, though they had no cricket fixture.

"There's certainly someone coming," said Tom Merry. "But who on earth is it?"

"Is it an animal of some sort?" asked Manners. "Looks too substantial for a human being."

As the approaching figure drew nearer, Taggles, the porter, standing in the doorway of his lodge, ventured the opinion that it was a "fieldmale."

"You're quite right, Taggy," said Tom Merry. "It's a woman—no, it's a girl. And what a size she is!"

"A sort of Baggy Trimble in petticoats," said Monty Lowther.

It was rude to stare, and the Terrible Three were very well-mannered young gentlemen, as a rule. But for the life of them, they couldn't keep their eyes off the advancing figure.

"Did you ever see such a freak?" gasped Manners.

"No, never!" said Lowther solemnly. "I do believe she's coming here!"

"The fates forbid!" murmured Tom Merry.

The "fieldmale," as Taggles had called her, headed straight for the school gates. At close quarters, she presented an amazing appearance. Her clothes were not of the cut and style fashionable in Paris or Bond Street. She wore a long plain skirt, which might have been fashionable when Mrs. Grundy was a girl. Her blouse, which was not cut low at the neck, was a flaming pick. She had black bobbed hair—the only modern thing about her; she wore a broad-brimmed hat, under which two or three people might have sheltered during a rainstorm. Her boots were heavy and cumbersome, and she wore thick woollen stockings.

The general appearance of the young lady was ludicrous in the extreme.

Tom Merry & Co. lifted their caps to her, and they had great difficulty in keeping their faces straight.

"Good-afternoon, miss!" they said in chorus.

"Good-afternoon!" said the young lady in shrill tones. "Is David here?"

"David!" echoed Monty Lowther. "Do you mean the late Prime Minister or the merchant who slew Goliath?"

"Don't be funny!" was the stern reply. "When boys try to be funny at my expense I always tweak their noses!"

"Oh!"

"When I said David, I meant my brother."

Tom Merry stared.

"You—you don't mean to say you've got a brother at St. Jim's?" he ejaculated.

"There's a boy named David Wynn here, isn't there?"

"Yes. But surely—"

"Send him to me at once!"

The young lady's tone was imperative, and her manner was very sharp—almost aggressive, in fact. Like the person in Shakespeare's play, she had an eye like Mars, to threaten and command.

Tom Merry resented being ordered about as if he were a fag. Had a member of his own sex given him such an order, he would have thought twice about carrying it out. But the age of chivalry was not yet extinct, and Tom Merry decided to do the young lady's bidding.

"I'll find Wynn," he said.

"Thank you! Tell him his sister Winifred is here. They call me "Winsome Winnie," you know, because I'm so good-looking, I suppose."

This was too much for Monty Lowther. He broke into a loud cackle.

"If she's a good-looking girl," he murmured, aside, "I shouldn't care to meet an ugly one!"

Winsome Winnie seemed to have very sharp ears. She approached Monty Lowther with a masculine stride, and dealt him a sounding cuff on the side of the head.

"Yarooooo!" roared Lowther, staggering back.

"I'll teach you to make sly remarks concerning my personal appearance!" panted Winsome Winnie. "Apologise at once, you rude boy!"

"Yow! Sorry!" gasped Lowther.

"Your apology is accepted!" said Winsome Winnie haughtily. "Now, tell me, am I a good-looking girl, or am I a frump?"

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"You—you're ever so beautiful!" stammered Monty Lowther. "Adorable, in fact! You ought to be on the stage!"

"I am!" murmured Winsome Winnie, under her breath.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry had dashed away in quest of Fatty Wynn. He found him on the New House steps, chatting with a crowd of his House mates.

"You're wanted, Fatty!" said the captain of the Shell.

"Eh? Who by?"

"Your sister Winifred. She's down at the gates waiting for you. Dashed if I knew you had a sister!"

"Good old Winnie!" said Fatty Wynn. "First time she's ever paid me a visit. Anybody with her at the gates?"

"Manners and Lowther are there."

"Hope they don't start making eyes at her, that's all!" said Fatty. "She's a jolly good-looking girl! Cousin Ethel and Marie Rivers aren't in the same street with my sister for looks!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

His own private opinion was that Winsome Winnie was far and away the ugliest girl he had ever seen. There was certainly no danger of either Manners or Lowther giving her what was known as "the joyful optic."

"Come and introduce us to this sister of yours, Fatty!" said Figgins.

"All serene, old chap! But mind you behave yourself! Don't get chucking sheep's eyes at her, mind!"

Figgins grinned, and the party started off for the gates.

Quite a crowd of fellows had flocked out into the quadrangle by this time. The sudden and unexpected appearance of Miss Winifred Wynn had caused quite a stir.

"Good gracious!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye and surveying Winsome Winnie from a convenient distance. "What a feafully ugly gal, bal Jove! I should have thought Fatty Wynn would have been able to produce something' bettah than that in the sistah line!"

"Same here!" said Jack Blake. "Not what you might call a ravishing beauty, is she?"

"Hardly!" chuckled Herries.

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn hurried towards the plump young lady who was standing in the school gateway with Manners and Lowther. Those two, already tired of playing the part of squires of dames, were very relieved when Fatty came up.

"David!"

"Winsome!"

It was a tender and touching moment. Fatty Wynn threw his arms around the neck of Winsome Winnie, and implanted a resounding kiss on her cheek.

The onlookers were almost in hysterics. They hardly knew where to put themselves.

"Dear old David!" said Winsome Winnie in her shrill tones. "It's good to see you again! I'll bet these boys were awfully jealous when they saw you kiss me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kindly introduce me to your friends, David!" said Winsome Winnie.

Fatty Wynn performed the necessary introductions. His "fair" companion shook hands with each of the School House fellows in turn, and her grip was painfully crushing.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumped about a foot in the air when his slim hand was taken in a vice-like grip.

"Yow!" he ejaculated. "Weally, Miss Wynn, I do not approve of such hearty handshakes!"

"Bah! You are a weakling!" said Winsome Winnie scornfully. "These New House boys made no murmur when I shook hands with them!"

Perhaps that was because the young lady's grip had been less crushing in the case of Figgins & Co.

"I say, sis," said Fatty Wynn suddenly. "I wonder if you would excuse me for half an hour or so? I've got an awfully important appointment—"

"Very well, David. Have your New House friends got to go, too?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Well, I have no doubt these School House boys will jump at the chance of entertaining me."

Tom Merry & Co. groaned aloud. They had not the slightest desire to entertain Winsome Winnie. They much preferred that young lady's room to her company.

But Fatty Wynn and his pals were already beating a retreat, and common chivalry demanded that Tom Merry & Co. should take Fatty's sister in tow. There was no help for it. For the space of half an hour, while Fatty Wynn kept his awfully important appointment, the plump Fatima would have to be entertained.

"Shall we have tea first?" asked Winsome Winnie brightly.

"That—that's a jolly sensible suggestion, Miss Wynn!" said Tom Merry, forcing a wan smile.

He despatched Manners and Lowther to the tuckshop for supplies, and escorted Winsome Winnie to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

Jack Blake & Co. tried to escape to their own quarters. They were only too willing to leave the entertaining to Tom Merry & Co. But Winsome Winnie called them back, and she insisted that they should attend the festive board. They murmured something about an appointment, but Miss Wynn did not excuse them so readily as she had excused the New House fellows—in fact, she did not excuse them at all. And seven unhappy juniors—the Terrible Three, Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby—found themselves faced with the appalling task of entertaining Winsome Winnie for the space of half an hour.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. A New House Triumph!

LET us eat, drink, and be merry!" Thus spake Winsome Winnie.

The plump young lady, seated with her hat on in the armchair of Study No. 10, proved herself a past-mistress in the art of eating, drinking, and being merry. She "scoffed" everything that was set before her, and she emptied the teapot alone and unaided. Her appetite was prodigious, her thirst insatiable.

The School House juniors found it impossible to eat and drink. All their time was taken up in waiting upon their plump guest. As for being merry, they looked as if they were attending a funeral.

Winsome Winnie had quite lost her aggressive manner—for the time being, at any rate. Under the influence of tea and cakes she became quite cheery, and prattled gaily to the juniors—when she could find time to speak.

"These fancy pastries are prime!" she mumbled. "Please send for some more."

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom Merry.

He made frantic signals to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Funds had run out, and Gus's financial help was urgently needed.

A ten-shilling note changed hands, and Tom Merry sped away to the tuckshop for a fresh supply of fancy cakes.

It really seemed as if Winsome Winnie would continue to regale herself with good things until the cows came home, so to speak. But at last she expressed herself as being satisfied, and sank back heavily in the armchair, which groaned and creaked beneath her great bulk.

"That was a very enjoyable little snack!" she murmured.

"Little snack!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Great pip! Supposing we had had to stand her a square meal!"

Lowther spoke softly, but once again the sharp ears of Winsome Winnie detected what he said. Her aggressive manner returned in a flash. She rose to her feet, not without difficulty, and glared at the unhappy Lowther.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed, in high-pitched tones. "How dare you make slighting and ill-mannered remarks about your guest?"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Lowther.

"You are a very rude person!" snapped Winsome Winnie. "Already I have had occasion to box your ears. But I can clearly see that what you really want is a good hiding!"

"A— a g-g-good hiding!" stammered Lowther.

"Certainly! And what's more, you shall have it! The light snack I have just had will not affect my form at boxing. You've got a gymnasium here, I suppose?"



An Amazing End to a Midnight Cross-Country Run!

Monty Lowther stared blankly at Winsome Winnie. Despite her warlike manner, he could not believe that she was really serious. "Of course, you're joking, Miss Wynn!" he stammered.

"Joking, am I? I'll soon show you whether I'm joking or not! Come along! I'm going to lick you!"

"Weally, Miss Wynn," interposed Arthur Augustus, "these things aren't done, you know. A fellah nevah fights with a membah of the—ahem!—fair sex."

Winsome Winnie gave a snort. "I must insist upon giving this rude person the thrashing he deserves," she said. "Lead me to the gymnasium at once!" "Oh, my hat!"

The juniors exchanged glances of dismay. It was an impossible situation. They did their utmost to pacify their plump guest, but Winsome Winnie flatly refused to be pacified or placated. She had quite made up her mind to "lick" the unfortunate Lowther.

"Better humour her!" murmured Tom Merry at last. "But go easy with her, Monty. Don't hit her, whatever you do!"

"Of course not!" grunted Lowther.

The party adjourned to the gym. Arthur Augustus, who prided himself on being a fellow of tact and judgment, and a wonderful peacemaker, did his utmost to persuade Winsome Winnie to let Lowther off the threatened thrashing. But the young lady was adamant.

Monty Lowther was not afraid of any physical damage he might receive at the hands of his challenger. What he was afraid of was the ridicule to which he would be subjected. He knew that he would cut a most absurd figure, sparring with Fatty Wynn's sister in the gym, and he would have given anything to have been able to back out.

But there was no way of escape. Monty had to go through with it.

Crowds of fellows flocked into the gym to see the fun.

The New House fellows, having fulfilled their appointment, whatever it was, joined the throng of spectators. They were grinning broadly.

Fatty Wynn felt that he ought to lodge some sort of a protest against the proceedings. He repressed his grin, and stepped up to Winsome Winnie.

"I shouldn't advise you to scrap, my dear," he said. "It's undignified. And besides, you might get hurt."

"Nonsense, David! It's Lowther who is going to get hurt. Will you be my second?"

"Well, if you insist on going ahead, yes." Winsome Winnie proceeded to don the gloves. She did not remove her broad-brimmed hat. Perhaps she thought it would prove a successful shield for her cranium.

Monty Lowther also donned the gloves—very reluctantly. He was painfully conscious of the ridiculous figure he cut. Fellows were still pouring into the gym, and their hilarious laughter brought the colour to Lowther's cheeks.

"Get it over quickly!" murmured Tom Merry in his chum's ear. "Fall down the first time she hits you, and don't get up again."

This was precisely what Lowther had planned to do.

Tom Merry took charge of the proceedings. "Time!" he exclaimed.

Winsome Winnie led off with a blind rush. Although so sharp of hearing, she appeared to be somewhat short-sighted. Anyway, the first blow she struck missed Monty Lowther by a couple of yards.

It was Tom Merry who stopped that blow. He received it full in the chest, and went sprawling into a crowd of fellows.

Winsome Winnie paused, panting for breath.

"Down and out!" she said triumphantly. "Oh, my hat! That wasn't Lowther you hit, Miss Wynn!" gurgled Jack Blake. "It was Tom Merry!"

"Oh, dear! What an absurd blunder!" said Winsome Winnie. But there was a gay twinkle in her eyes.

Again she rushed to the attack, and once more Monty Lowther escaped scot-free.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who was in the wars on this occasion. Gussy stopped a terrific "pile-driver" with his jaw, and he went crashing to the floor with a wild yell of anguish.

"Yawoooooh!"



AN UNWELCOME VISITOR! Winsome Winnie seated herself in the armchair, and the juniors gathered round with cakes and tarts and many other eatables. She "scoffed" everything that was set before her, and she emptied the teapot unaided. (See Chapter 3.)

Winsome Winnie breathed hard. "Got him that time!" she chortled. "Count him out, referee!"

"On being informed that she had again got the wrong victim, Winsome Winnie looked quite astonished.

"I'm making some absurd mistakes!" she murmured.

Arthur Augustus sat up on the floor, caressing his jaw.

"I weally think they are bein' made delibewately!" he gasped.

And the swell of St. Jim's was not very far from the truth!

The spectators were simply rocking with laughter, particularly the New House section of them. Figgins & Co. were in imminent danger of bursting their waistcoat buttons.

Never before had such a quaint comedy been witnessed in the historic gym.

Monty Lowther planted himself right in front of his plump opponent.

"Your quarrel's with me, Miss Wynn—not with the spectators!" he said. "Try hitting me this time, for a change."

"I will!" was the grim reply.

Taking Monty Lowther at his word, Winsome Winnie dealt him a terrific punch in the chest. It was a punch with plenty of power behind it—a punch such as few girls could have given.

Monty Lowther made a noise like a deflated tyre, and promptly collapsed.

"Are you going on?" demanded his opponent.

"Nunno!" gasped Monty.

Tom Merry hastily counted his chum out. He was desperately anxious to put an end to the farce. The laughter of the New House fellows nettled him sorely.

"There, I've licked him!" exclaimed Winsome Winnie, in tones of triumph. "Remove my gloves, David! Thank you!" Then, glancing at the gym clock, she added: "I really think I must be catching my train now."

"Thank goodness!" muttered Tom Merry fervently.

And Tom's brief thanksgiving was echoed by all the School House fellows. Never had they spent such an uncomfortable afternoon.

Winsome Winnie took her departure shortly afterwards, and Figgins & Co. escorted her from the school premises. When they reached the roadway, beyond the school gates, they stopped short, and howled with helpless merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"This is where we smile!"

And the "smiles" of the New House juniors might have been heard at quite a considerable distance.

When Winsome Winnie, alias Tubby Joyce, had returned safely to Wayland, details of the amazing jape began to leak out.

Tom Merry & Co. were thunderstruck when they learned that "Miss Winifred Wynn" had been none other than Tubby Joyce, the boy actor from Wayland.

It was certainly a great triumph for the New House, and for some time afterwards the victims of the jape were compelled to hide their diminished heads.

Seldom had the New House been so successful in "putting it across" their rivals, and there would be smiling faces in the New House until such time as Tom Merry & Co. succeeded in turning the tables.

THE END.

**NEXT WEEK!**

A TOP-HOLE TALE OF ST. JIM'S.

**"THE OLD MAN OF THE MILL!"**

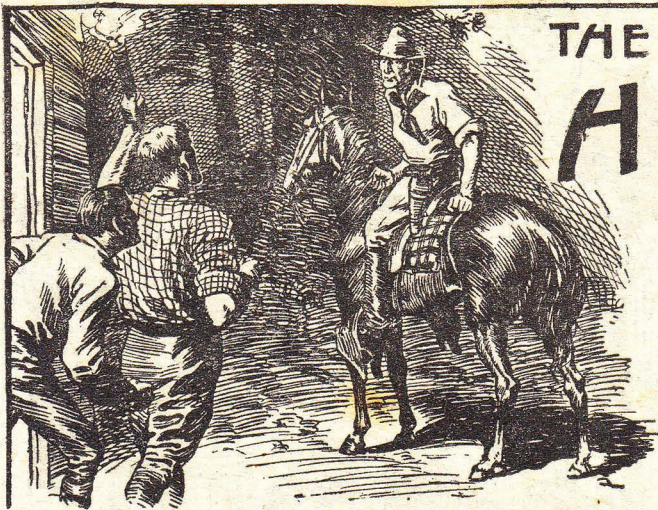
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE POPULAR.—No. 233.

**IN BORROWED PLUMES!**

Both Cedar Creek and Hillcrest are astounded when they hear the news—Kern Gunten, the rascally Swiss schoolboy, has played the part of a hero! They are more than astounded—they are stunned! What does it all mean?

**KERN GUNTEN—HERO!**



# THE HILLCREST HERO!

A Splendid Roaring Far-West Tale, dealing with the Schooldays of Frank Richards, the famous Author.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER. Surprising News.**

**"LAWLESS!"**  
 "Yes, Miss Meadows?"  
 Lessons were over at Cedar Creek, and the school was being dismissed.

Bob Lawless stopped on his way to the door as the schoolmistress called to him.

"Wait for me, Cherub!" he murmured.

Vere Beauclerc nodded, and Bob hurried to the schoolmistress's desk.

The rest of the fellows filed out, and Beauclerc waited in the doorway.

Bob Lawless's sunburnt face assumed its meekest expression as he stopped at Miss Meadows's desk.

His chum, Frank Richards, had been in hot water that day, and Bob wondered whether there was a little left over for him, so to speak.

So he endeavoured to look as if butter would not melt in his mouth as he met Miss Meadows's dark eyes.

The schoolmistress was looking severe.

"Lawless, I sent your cousin, Richards, home this afternoon for coming into the school with a black eye."

"It wasn't Franky's fault, ma'am," said Bob meekly. "It really wasn't, Miss Meadows. He—he didn't ask for it."

"He had been fighting with some boy outside the school, Lawless. It has occurred to me since that it was probably one of the Hillcrest boys. Is this the case?"

"Ahem! Yes, ma'am."

"I thought so. I am sorry, Lawless, to see that you are on ill terms with Mr. Peckover's boys."

"Not at all, ma'am," said Bob eagerly. "We like them all right, only—"

"But that does not prevent fighting between you."

"You—you see, it was a mistake," stammered Bob. "Dicky Bird—ahem!—I mean, the chap Frank had a scrap with, came over because—because—"

"Well?"

"Because an awful rotter had been stuffing him up, ma'am—I—I mean, taking him in—that is to say—"

Bob gasped a little. "I mean, he was mistaken about Frank. A fellow had been pitching him a yarn. But it was all explained afterwards."

"Oh!" said Miss Meadows. "In that case, Richards was not so much to blame as I supposed. You may tell him, Lawless, that he may come to school as usual to-morrow morning."

"Thank you, ma'am!"  
 "I shall speak to both of you on this subject to-morrow," said Miss Meadows. "I must stop this trouble with the Hillcrest boys. You may go now, Lawless."  
 Yes, ma'am.  
 Bob Lawless joined his chum, and they left the lumber school together.  
 "We're in for it, Cherub!" groaned Bob.  
 THE POPULAR.—No. 235.

as they went towards the corral. "I suppose Miss Meadows has been getting complaints from Peckover. We're to stop ragging with the Hillcrest chaps, and we're going to have a lecture to-morrow. Oh dear!"

Beauclerc laughed. "Well, it's chiefly due to Gunten making mischief," he said.

"Only we can't explain that to Miss Meadows."

"No; but Gunten can be shut up," remarked Beauclerc.

Bob Lawless chuckled. "I wonder what Miss Meadows would have said if she'd known that Franky hasn't gone home, but has gone to meet Kern Gunten instead?" he remarked.

"By gum, I hope he won't come back to-morrow with two black eyes instead of one! That would give it away!"

"Ha, ha! It would! But Gunten isn't likely to give Frank a black eye," said Beauclerc, laughing. "More likely to collect two himself than to give Frank one."

"That's so," agreed Bob. The chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses, and mounted in the trail.

The dusk was falling as they rode along the timber trail to the south, on the way to the Lawless Ranch.

They were thinking of Frank Richards as they rode, and wondering how he had fared that afternoon.

Frank had been sent home in disgrace, owing to the discoloured eye which had resulted from his fight with Dicky Bird of Hillcrest, and his chums knew that it was his intention to wait for Kern Gunten, who was driving the post-wagon that afternoon from Thompson to Silver Creek.

It was Gunten's mischief-making that had caused the row, and it had seemed just—and eminently satisfactory—to the Cedar Creek chums for punishment to be visited on Gunten's head.

"Hallo, there's Franky!" exclaimed Bob Lawless suddenly, as the two schoolboys came in sight of the fork in the trail, where Beauclerc was accustomed to turn off for his home.

Frank Richards came round the bend at a trot, and rode on to meet his chums.

They stopped in the trail as they met. "Here you are," said Frank. "I thought I should catch you on your way home."

"Good man!" said Bob. "You met Gunten?"

"Yes; he came along in the post-wagon, near Cedar Camp."

"You've whopped him?"

"No."  
 "Not whopped him?" exclaimed Bob. Frank Richards shook his head, with a smile.

"You don't mean to say that he whopped you?" shouted Bob Lawless, in astonishment and consternation.  
 "Ha, ha! No fear!"

"Then what's happened?" asked Beauclerc. "Did you let him off, after all?"

"Well, you see—"

"You blessed jay!" exclaimed Bob in disgust. "Didn't you ride out there on purpose to wait for the post-wagon?"

"Yes; but—"

"Didn't you go there specially to lambaste that Swiss rotter?"

"Yes; but—"

"Didn't he land you with a scrap with Dicky Bird by telling Bird beastly crammers?" exclaimed Bob indignantly.

"He did. But—"

"And you haven't walloped him?"

"No. You see—"

"I guess I don't see," said Bob obstinately. "You've got a purple eye, and Gunten has the grin of you. And we're all going to be jawed to-morrow about scrapping with the Hillcrest galoots. And you've let Gunten off!"

"You're an ass, old chap. It's no good talking; you're a jay from Jaysville!" said Bob crossly.

"Let Frank have a word," said Beauclerc, laughing. "Something's happened to prevent him."

"Oh!" said Bob. "In that case—Why the dickens can't you tell us what's happened, Frank?"

"Are you giving me a chance?" exclaimed Frank warmly. "If you'll use your ears instead of your chin for a minute or two—"

"Go ahead! What's happened?"

"The post-wagon came along," said Frank. "It was held up on the prairie trail by two rustlers."

"What?" yelled Bob.

"Fact! Two chaps with cloth tied over their faces—regular road-agent style," said Frank. "They stopped the post-wagon, and started to rob it."

"Gammon!" said Bob incredulously. "Road-agents in the Thompson Valley! Draw it mild!"

"Honest Injun!"  
 "Well, carry me home to die!" ejaculated Bob. "That's something new. Must be some bulldozers from over the line."  
 "I thought so at first, but I don't think so now," answered Frank. "They knew all about the post-wagon, coming along from Cedar Creek on Wednesday afternoon, and when and where to wait for it. That doesn't look like strangers in the section."  
 "By gum!" said Bob. "It doesn't! But what happened? Did they rob the wagon?"  
 "No."  
 "Somebody came along and chipped in?" asked Bob.  
 "You've hit it!" said Frank, smiling.  
 "Who was it?"  
 "Little me."  
 "You!" yelled Bob.  
 "Exactly!"  
 "Make it a little milder, old scout,"

urged Bob Lawless. "Take off fifty per cent and begin again."

Frank Richards laughed. "But I'm telling you the facts, fathead!" he said.

"You rounded up two road-agents!" grinned Bob. "Have you got them in your trousers-pockets now?"

"I didn't round them up. I rode them down," answered Frank. "I made believe I had a lot of chaps with me, and shouted like thunder. And they thought they were surprised by a party, and ran for it. If they hadn't it would have gone hard for me. But I thought they would; and they did."

"Scared them off—eh?" said Bob. "Yes. They were taken by surprise, and bolted without stopping to think. The best thing they could have done, if it had happened to be Sheriff Henderson and his men—as it might have been, you know. As it happened, it was only me," said Frank, with a laugh. "I went with Gunten as far as Silver Creek to see him safe. After what had happened I didn't feel inclined to pitch into him."

"Well, my word!" said Bob. "I say, there's usually a lot of dust in the post-wagon. You've saved some of the Thompson miners from losing their pile."

"I'm jolly glad!" said Frank. "Besides, Gunten spoke quite decently after it. He said he would own up to Dicky Bird that he had been pulling his leg."

"Catch him!" said Bob. "I'll believe he'll do that when I hear he's done it. Still, it was mighty lucky you were there, Franky. What do you think, Cherub?"

Vere Beauclerc was sitting his horse in silence. He had not spoken a word since Frank began his explanation.

His chums glanced at him in some surprise. Beauclerc's handsome face was pale and troubled.

He started and flushed as he met their glances.

"Eh? Yes—oh, yes!" he said confusedly. "Did—did you say you saw their faces, Frank?"

"Whose—the road-agents?" asked Frank. "Yes, yes!" said Beauclerc, with a feverish eagerness that surprised his chums still further. "What were they like?"

"I didn't see their faces."

"Oh!" exclaimed Beauclerc, with a deep breath. "They were masked, in a way—they had cloth or canvas, or something, tied across their faces, with holes cut for the eyes," said Frank.

"Regular road-agent style!" said Bob Lawless with a chuckle. "I guess they won't find the game pay. Sheriff Henderson will have them in the calaboose in two shakes of a beaver's tail, I reckon."

"I hope so," said Frank. "Did you notice their horses?" asked Beauclerc.

"Their horses?" repeated Frank in surprise.

"Yes. If they belong to this section you may have seen their horses before."

"Never thought of it," confessed Frank. "I remember they were dark horses with white patches, that's all; quite commonplace looking."

"I guess that's nothing," commented Bob Lawless. "If they know their business they'd disguise their horses. A few dabs of paint would do it. Well, we'd better get on, Franky. You must tell poppa all this, and he'll send word to the sheriff."

"I expect Gunten will do that," answered Frank.

"Good-night, you fellows!" said Beauclerc abruptly.

Hardly waiting for their response, Beauclerc gave his horse a touch, and dashed away round the bend in the trail.

Frank and Bob rode on towards the Lawless Ranch.

"What's up with Beau?" asked Frank, as they trotted along under the big, leafless branches.

Bob shook his head. "Blest if I know. Your yarn seems to have upset him somehow. Blest if I see why it should."

"Same here!" said Frank, puzzled.

Neither of the two chums, as they trotted along in the dusk, was near guessing the dark and scary thoughts that were in the mind of the remittance-man's son as he rode homeward at a gallop by the timber trail.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**  
**Saved from Himself.**

**"FATHER!"**  
Vere Beauclerc gasped, rather than spoke the word, as he jumped down from his horse before the shack on the bank of the creek.

The door was opened, and the firelight glowed within, but there was no other light. In the ruddy glow of the fire, Lascelles Beauclerc was seated upon a pine bench, his arms folded across his broad chest, his brows knitted, his gaze intently fixed on the flames.

He started and glanced over his shoulder as his son appeared in the doorway. Even in the firelight Beauclerc could see that his father's face was pale.

"You, Vere!" muttered the remittance-man.

"Has—has anything happened, father?" "What should happen here?" said Mr. Beauclerc in a harsh tone. "What a strange question, Vere! Take your horse to the shed!"

"Yes, father."  
The schoolboy led away his horse, his face downcast and his heart throbbing strangely.

He hardly dared to name the fear that had sprung up in his breast as he listened to Frank Richards' story on the timber trail.

He knew that of late his father had been in company with Poker Pete, and the other shady characters who had once been his associates, and whom he had dropped, as Vere had hoped, for ever.

Late hours and sullen moods had warned the boy that his father was falling into his old ways, with the inevitable result of want of money.

The remittances from the Old Country were quite sufficient to support father and son in comfort in the simple life of the Canadian West, but they did not suffice for poker games at the Occidental and faro at the Red Dog Saloon.

And once before, as Beauclerc knew, his father had almost yielded to the voice of the tempter.

With a heavy heart, though he would not admit to himself the fear that was in his breast, Beauclerc led his horse away to the shed behind the shack.

He lighted a lantern there, to see to rub down the animal and give it its feed.

There was another horse already in the shed—his father's.

Bob Lawless' words were ringing in Beauclerc's ears, but he would not look at his father's horse, perhaps already for fear of confirmation of his suspicions.

There was a quick step outside the shed.

"Vere!"

"Yes, father."

"Don't trouble about my horse. I will attend to him presently."

The boy's heart beat with a sudden pain. As if his father's words had fixed his determination, he took the lantern and bent over the horse that was lying in the straw. His lips were tightly compressed.

Only too plain, on the glossy hide, were the traces of daubs of white paint, roughly but not completely rubbed away by a hasty hand.

Beauclerc needed to see no more; his blackest suspicions were confirmed.

He could scarcely keep back the groan of misery that rose to his lips.

"Vere!" Mr. Beauclerc's voice was sharp and angry. "What are you doing? What is the matter, boy?"

Without answering, Beauclerc took a cloth and began to rub down the horse by the lantern-light.

His father strode into the shed.

"I told you to leave my horse alone, Vere!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Better clean it at once!" said Beauclerc in a tone of intense bitterness. "It might be seen, father!"

"What do you mean? What if it is seen?"

"Because the road-agents on the Cedar Camp trail had their horses disguised with patches of white paint, father."

"Vere!"

There was a dead silence as the schoolboy finished cleaning down the horse.

Then he blew out the light, and followed his father back to the shack.

Lascelles Beauclerc mechanically stirred the logs on the hearth.

The flames leaped up, lighting the shack, and playing strangely on the two pale faces, as father and son faced each other.

Mr. Beauclerc broke the silence.

"Vere," he said huskily, "what—what do you know?"

"Father!"

The utter misery and shame in the boy's voice seemed to go to the heart of the remittance-man.

"Vere! My boy!"

"It's come to this, father! I knew it meant evil when I saw Poker Pete coming to the shack again! That man has led you into this?"

"Vere, how can you know?" muttered the remittance-man brokenly. "You have just come from school!"

"I met Frank Richards; he was away from school this afternoon."

"Frank Richards! Then it was—was he—"

"It was Frank Richards who interrupted you," said Vere bitterly. "And if you had fired—"

The remittance-man bowed his head.

"I should not have fired, Vere. I have not fallen to that. And the boy was not in

(Continued on page 16.)

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# BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY

Edited By W.G. Bunter (Greyfriars)

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

Supplement No. 131.

Week Ending July 7th, 1923.

## IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By BILLY BUNTER.

My Dear Readers,—At this season of the year the clicking of cameras is heard up and down the countryside. The camera-feend is on the warpath, and you come across him everywhere—at the seaside, by the river, on the road, and in "the meddoes rich with corn."

Photography is a fine art, and I've nothing to say against it. But very few fellows know how to take a decent photograph. There are too many novices, and not enuff eggsperts, in my opinion. An appalling number of plates are wasted every summer. Sometimes the operator forgets to turn the little gadget which moves the films round, with the result that he takes two photographs on the same plate, and all is chaos and confusion. Or he stands with the sun in front of him, instead of behind him. Or again, he fails to get the proper fokuss.

No fellow ought to buy a camera until he knows how to use it. But crowds of fellows do. You wouldn't buy a cake if you didn't know how to eat it, would you? Neither would you buy a cricket-bat if you didn't know what it was for. Very well, then. Why buy a camera unless you know how it works?

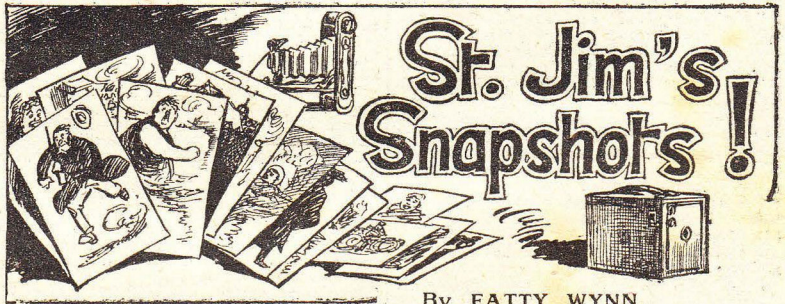
If I could find time, I'd start a School of Photography at Greyfriars, and for a modest fee of a ginny I would give lessons in the art. But my hands are too full at prezsent, as the orchard-ræider said when he got away with the plums.

There are lots of keen photographers in the Remove. Monty Newland is the keenest, and I have given him a Special Camera Corner all to himself in this issew.

Next week we shall get on to a more eggsting toppick. Photography, like most of the animals at the Zoo, is a wee bit tame! All the same, I can't allow the summer to go by without publishing a number dedicated to the camera-feend. Many of my readers are keen photographers, and I must study their tastes, —Yours sincerely,

YOUR EDITOR.

THE POPULAR.—No. 233.



By FATTY WYNN.

The fun has been fast and furious this week! Mr. Railton, himself an enthusiastic photographer, offered an award of one guinea to the fellow who took the best snapshot, humorous or otherwise, during the week. So we unearthed our cameras, and got busy.

Figgins got a fine "snap" of Mr. Ratcliff running to catch a train. His coat-tails were flying in the breeze, and his features—never handsome at any time—were screwed up into an expression of fierce determination. Perhaps Mr. Railton, when he came to judge the entries, thought this snapshot was a bit too personal, for he didn't award it the prize. But I'll bet he had a quiet chuckle over it in the privacy of his study!

Dick Redfern secured a glorious snapshot of Baggy Trimble bathing. Baggy was waist-deep in the water, puffing and blowing like a grampus, and his bathing-costume was bulging out like a balloon, making him appear twice as plump as he really is. It was a most amusing snapshot, but it failed to bag the guinea.

When Taggles, the porter, sat down rather heavily in the quad and landed in a puddle of water, Monty Lowther was at hand with his camera, and he caught Taggles nicely. The snapshot showed Taggles sitting in the puddle, looking as if an earthquake had struck him. Lowther had high hopes of collar-ing the guinea with his humorous snap; but his hopes were shattered.

Mellish of the Fourth thought that Mr. Railton would award the prize to a serious snapshot, so he photographed the school chapel. But he got it badly out of focus, and the building seemed to

be lurching sideways, as if it had been jerry-built, and might come tumbling down at any moment. So there was no hope for Mellish.

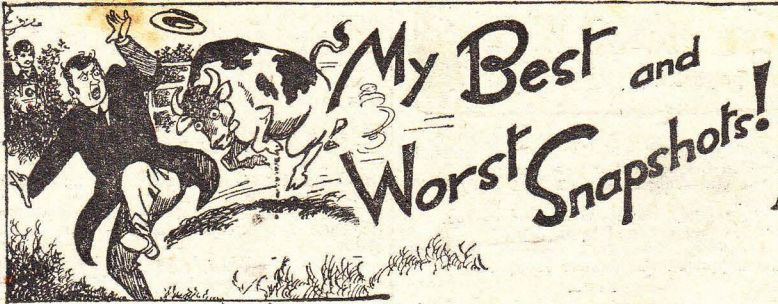
A fistic encounter in the quad between Grundy and Buck Finn formed the subject of Tom Merry's snapshot. They were going for each other like tigers, with the result that the snapshot came out looking rather blurred. But the two combatants, with their warlike expressions, and their fists whirling like wind-mills, made an amusing picture. But Mr. Railton doesn't approve of dog-fights in the quad, and so Tom Merry's brilliant effort was passed over.

I took a photo of Mr. Selby chasing a cat, but, as it was night-time, all that came out was a plate of pitch-blackness, with a very vague figure somewhere in the left-hand corner. This figure was Selby, but it did not receive a reward.

Manners, who has always been an ardent amateur photographer, took a clever snapshot of Kildare of the Sixth reclining in a punt on the River Rhyll. The light and shade on the water, the clump of willows in the background, came out splendidly. It was a delightful scene, well chosen and well taken. Mr. Railton decided that Manners' snapshot was the best of the bunch, and he awarded him the guinea. Few of us will feel inclined to quarrel with Mr. Railton's decision. I rather hoped that a New House fellow would secure the coveted prize; but I take off my cap to Manners as the finest amateur photographer at St. Jim's!

[Supplement L.

More Fun and Laughter Next Week, You Fellows!



**JIMMY SILVER.**—The finest "snap" I ever took was one of Mr. Manders fleeing from an infuriated bull. Through a gap in the hedge, I got the range beautifully. When the snapshot was developed, it was passed round the school, and old Manders happened to get hold of it. He ripped it into a hundred fragments, and gave me a jolly good swishing, in his usual heavy-handed style. As to my worst snapshot—well, at the risk of appearing conceited, I can proudly claim that I've never yet taken a "dud" one!

**TUBBY MUFFIN.**—The most wonderful snapshot I have ever taken was of Sergeant Kettle, standing in the doorway of the tuckshop. Owing to a slight error, however, he came out upside-down! When I offered to sell him half-a-duzzen of the snaps for a bob, the gallant sergeant gave a snort. "Which I ain't in the 'abit of standin' on me 'ead," he said, "an' I wouldn't buy any of them snapshots at any price! If the 'eadmaster was to see 'em, he'd think I was distoxicated, seein' me in such a ridiculous posture. Jest you tear them fotografys up at once, Master Muffin!" I protested that they were works of art, but old Kettle wouldn't have it. Being a Kettle, he fairly boiled over! He snatched the offending snaps out of my hand, and tore them to shreds. That being my best effort at photography, I don't think you'd care to hear about my worst!

**TEDDY GRACE.**—I've taken so many stunning snapshots at different times that I really can't recall my best effort. But I can remember which was my worst. I saw Tubby Muffin crossing the quad one day, carrying a plum-cake. I promptly snapped him, and when I developed the film, I found that it was horribly out of focus. The plum-cake was about six times the size it should have been, and Tubby Muffin looked a slim skeleton. Needless to state, I took jolly good care not to exhibit that snapshot in public!

**TOMMY DODD.**—My best snapshot was taken during a cricket-match between the Moderns and the Classicals. I snapped Jimmy Silver just as his middle stump was being knocked clean out of the ground. I afterwards had the snapshot enlarged, framed, and hung in my study. The Classical bounders gnash their teeth with rage every time they see it, and many attempts have been made to destroy the picture. But it still hangs on the wall—an eloquent proof of the fact that the Classicals can't play cricket for toffee! My worst snapshot was one which I took of Tommy Doyle. He came out with his head bigger than his body! All the

fellows roared over it, and so did Tommy Doyle—but not with merriment. He fairly scragged me when he saw the snapshot!

**THE HEAD.**—I must decline to reply to the question, "Which were your best and worst snapshots?" I am not in the habit of walking about with a camera slung over my shoulder—though I did so in my younger days. I regard it as an impertinence that this question should have been placed on my study-table by some person unknown. I am a very busy person, and have no time to contribute to the facetious publication known as "William Bunter's Weekly."

**ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL.**—My best photograph was one of a cricket match between the Sixth and Greyfriars, and I took particular care to get the score-board well in the foreground on the picture. Why? Because we were winning by a large margin, and I wanted to send one to friend Wharton. My worst? Well, the worst snapshot I have taken was one of Jimmy sitting down in a chair. His feet came out four times the size of his head, which is like a pin-head.

## THE CAMERA FIEND!

By Dick Penfold.

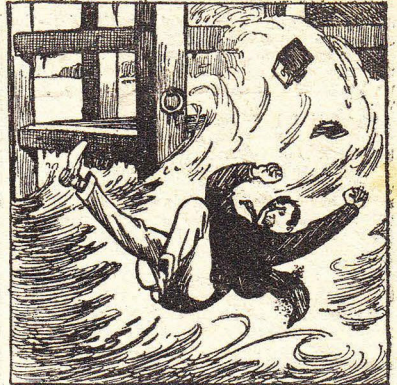
The camera fiend to the coast has gone,  
In the seaside throng you'll find him;  
His touring togs he has girded on,  
And his camera slung behind him.  
Whene'er he spots a mermaid fair,  
His Kodak he's unstrapping;  
He strolls here, there, and everywhere,  
And spends his time in "snapping."

He takes a snapshot of the sea,  
The bounding, booming breakers;  
And hot upon the trail is he  
Of all the pleasure-makers.  
He "snaps" the boatman, old and grim,  
With weather-beaten visage,  
Who still is sound in wind and limb,  
And quite alert for his age!

The camera fiend's a pushful chap,  
He wades into the water,  
Hoping, perchance, to get a "snap"  
Of Father Neptune's daughter.  
And when a crab attacks his toe  
He hops with vim and vigour;  
And while he's shrieking "Yow! Ah! Oh!"  
The bathers loudly snigger.

Eventually, at set of sun,  
You'll see him homeward sprinting;  
And in his dark-room will be done  
The fixing and the printing.  
He never tires, like other chaps,  
However long the job is;  
And he declares that taking "snaps"  
Is the most grand of hobbies!

## OUR CAMERA CORNER!



By Monty Newland.

Statistics show that one fellow in every three, at Greyfriars, possesses a camera. Lord Mauleverer has half a dozen, but he is too jolly lazy to use them. They are growing rusty on the shelf in his study cupboard.

Successful indoor photographs are very rare, unless taken by flashlight; but Bob Cherry got a splendid one the other day of Billy Bunter having a public flogging in hall. Unfortunately for Bob, the Head heard the click of the camera, and the enthusiastic photographer collected five hundred lines!

The luck of Bolsover major is clean out. He stood on the jetty at Pegg, taking a "snap" of a rough sea, when he happened to lose his footing, and also his camera! Bolsover arrived at Greyfriars with his wet "bags" bulging out like a balloon! And he was in such a royal rage that we had to keep out of his way for the next twenty-four hours.

Billy Bunter claims to be an expert photographer, but you should have seen the snapshot he took of his minor Sammy! It was horribly out of focus. Sammy's head was the size of a pea, and his boots were as big as barges! Billy offered to sell Sammy a dozen of the snaps, at sixpence each—an offer which was rudely declined! (Look hear, Newland, you beast, I was taking photographs before you could toddle, and what I don't know about the subject isn't worth knowing! How dare you libel me in my own paper, you rotter!—Ed.)

Tom Brown complains that his study-mates won't allow him to turn Study No. 2 into a dark-room. Not possessing cats' eyes, they complain that they can't do their prep in the dark. Let me give Browney the tip that the coat-cellar makes an excellent dark-room. It's most advisable to work there in one's Sunday togs, though.

Coker of the Fifth is about to mount some photographs. If he mounts them as clumsily as he mounts his motor-bike, the result will be a perfect scream! I should advise Coker to give up photography in favour of the less exacting hobby of collecting cigarette-pictures. Loder of the Sixth will oblige him with some of the latter.

I am going to suggest to Mr. Quelch that we have a special photo class instead of history or English. I think such a lesson would be very popular with everyone—that is, with all the fellows—though I doubt whether such a thing would go well with the masters. On second thoughts, I think I will wait a little while before putting the question before Quelchy.

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## "The Hillcrest Hero!"

(Continued from page 13.)



danger. He had a party with him—the cattlemen from the ranch, I think."

"He was alone," said Beauclerc. "He has told me what happened. That was a trick to scare the thieves away from the post-wagon."

"Oh, if I had known!"

"Would you have harmed him, father?" muttered Beauclerc.

"No," said the remittance-man, with a deep breath. "Never! What Poker Pete might have done, I don't know. But he was scared; the boy struck him down with the butt of his whip, and he did not stay to look twice. He thought—as I thought—that the Lawless Ranch men were upon us. Vere, my poor boy—"

His voice broke.

"Father," said Beauclerc wretchedly. "I—was so happy when I thought you had given up the company of those scoundrels; and—now—"

He could not go on.

In spite of himself the tears welled from his eyes, and streamed down his pale face.

"I'm not so bad as you think, Vere!" muttered Lascelles Beauclerc. "Even when you came in I was thanking Heaven from the bottom of my heart that the robbery had been prevented. I swear it to you, Vere! I was mad when I allowed Poker Pete to draw me into it. If—if I had not gone, he would have found another companion—Euchre Dick or one of them. But—but after it was over I was glad we had failed. I swear to you, Vere, that I was glad, and that I vowed never to have a hand again in such work. It is the truth, my boy!"

Beauclerc's suffering face brightened a little.

It was evident that the remittance-man was speaking the truth—that he was almost overwhelmed with remorse and shame.

"Oh, father, if you mean that—"

"You shall see that I mean it," said the remittance-man quietly. "Poker Pete will be here soon."

"Here!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"We fled in different directions; we supposed the cowboys were after us. I stopped in the thicket to wipe the paint from my horse. Poker Pete is sure to come here to see if I have escaped. He will fear my tongue if I were caught," said the remittance-man bitterly. "Bark!"

There was a clatter of horse's hoofs in the darkness without.

A horseman halted at the door of the shack.

"Beauclerc!" called out a husky voice.

Lascelles Beauclerc took a red brand from the fire, and stepped out of the shack, followed by his son.

Poker Pete, breathless, looked down at him from his steaming horse in the light of the brand.

"Safe, then!" he exclaimed.

"As you see," answered Mr. Beauclerc quietly.

"By gad! It was a close call!" said Poker Pete, with a deep breath.

"Not so close as you think," said the remittance-man, with a curl of the lip. "We were scared away by a schoolboy—alone!"

Poker Pete swore a furious oath.

"That whelp Richards! If was Richards—"

"Yes."

"And he struck me. I'll remember him! I'll—"

The sport of Thompson ground his teeth.

"You will not seek to harm Frank Richards," said the remittance-man quietly.

"You will reckon with me if you do, Poker Pete! You need not dismount; you will not enter here!"

"What?"

"There lies your road," said Lascelles Beauclerc. "I was a madman to have a single word with you. I will not have another! You are finished here. Go your way, and leave me to go mine!"

The sport looked down at him under

lowering brows; and then, with a curse, he wheeled his horse and rode away.

The clattering hoof-beats died away in the night.

The remittance-man turned to his son.

"Are you satisfied now, Vere?"

And Vere Beauclerc's look of gratitude and happiness was answer enough.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### An Invitation to Hillcrest.

**F**RANK RICHARDS and Bob Lawless started for school in cheery spirits on the following morning.

Frank's eye was still a beautiful purple, and it still caused him some discomfort, but Bob's message from Miss Meadows had comforted him.

He was not to stay at home in disgrace until the black eye had disappeared.

And it was difficult for a healthy youth not to be cheerful on that bright, frosty morning.

The two chums trotted along merrily to the fork in the trail, where Vere Beauclerc met them as usual.

Beauclerc was looking his usual self, though there was a thoughtful expression on his handsome face.

He hardly spoke during the ride to Cedar Creek.

He was thinking of the scene in the shack the previous evening, but his heart was no longer heavy.

The attempt on the post-wagon had failed; that mad, reckless act had never been carried into effect.

For that the remittance-man's son was devoutly thankful, and he knew that his father was thankful, too.

The incident was closed; his father had been saved, in spite of himself. He had broken with Poker Pete, and, as was usual with the unhappy wastrel when the mood of repentance was on, Lascelles Beauclerc had turned to work that morning with great energy, instead of riding away to the Occidental Hotel to join a morning poker party.

There was great comfort in that for Vere Beauclerc, and he could only pray that the identity of the attempted robbers would never transpire.

There was little chance of that.

Their faces had not been seen, and the mask and the paint on the horses had vanished, leaving no clue to connect Poker Pete and the remittance-man with the two road-agents.

Frank and Bob, oblivious of what was in their chum's mind, discussed the affair of the post-wagon as they trotted along to school.

The trio arrived at Cedar Creek cheerily enough, and Chunky Todgers met them at the gates.

"You're in for it, you three!" he said, wagging a fat forefinger at the three chums.

"What's the row?" asked Bob.

"Miss Meadows told me to tell you to go in as soon as you came," grinned Chunky.

"You're in for a jaw! My word! What an eye you've got this morning, Frank Richards! All the colours of the rainbow! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want one like it?" demanded Frank wrathfully; and Chunky retreated promptly, to indulge his merriment at a safer distance.

The Co. presented themselves in Miss Meadows' sitting-room before lessons.

They found the Canadian schoolmistress looking very severe.

All three looked as meek as possible as Miss Meadows delivered her little lecture.

It lasted exactly five minutes, as Bob Lawless remarked afterwards. He had timed it by the clock over Miss Meadows' head.

Miss Meadows certainly was not aware of that as she impressed upon the three schoolboys the necessity of living in peace and concord with the Hillcrest boys.

Having reduced the three to a proper state of seriousness, and warned them that

further "rows" with Hillcrest would be followed by severe measures, Miss Meadows dismissed them.

"Cheap, I call it!" remarked Bob, when they were out of hearing of the schoolmistress. "If it had been old Peckover it would have been the cane. Miss Meadows is a brick. And look here! We'll try our very hardest not to row with Dicky Bird for a week or two."

"We will!" agreed Frank. "He's a good sort, and so are the others, excepting Gunten and Keller. And we can give those two worms a wide berth."

With which excellent resolution for the future Frank Richards & Co. went in to class.

But the best laid schemes of mice and men do not always turn out as intended; and so it was with those good resolutions, as it was destined to prove.

Frank's darkened eye was the cause of a good many glances and smiles in class that morning, and at the dinner-table afterwards.

Even Molly Lawrence seemed to find something amusing in it, which somehow did not please Frank.

After dinner, as the chums were coming out into the playground, there was a clatter of hoofs, and Fisher of Hillcrest School rode up.

True to their resolve, Frank Richards & Co. saluted the Hillcrest fellow with elaborate civility, and Fisher grinned cheerily in response.

"Miss Meadows about?" he asked. "I've got a note for her from old Peckover."

Miss Meadows stepped into the porch and took the note.

"Please, I'm to take back an answer, ma'am," said Fisher.

"Very well; wait a moment!"

Miss Meadows read the note, and raised her eyebrows a little.

"Very good," she said. "Tell Mr. Peckover that I shall be very pleased to do as he wishes, Fisher."

"Yes, Miss Meadows."

Fisher rode away.

Frank Richards & Co. could not help wondering what it was about.

They were aware that there was no love between Miss Meadows and the headmaster of Hillcrest.

As soon as the school was assembled for afternoon classes they learned what was "on."

Instead of commencing lessons as usual, Miss Meadows addressed her class.

"I have had a note from Mr. Peckover, of Hillcrest," she said. "You will be pleased to hear, my boys, that Kern Gunten, who used to be at this school, has performed an act of great bravery."

"Great gophers!" ejaculated Bob Lawless involuntarily.

"Kindly be silent, Lawless!"

"Ye-es, ma'am!"

Gunten has distinguished himself by an act of great courage, so Mr. Peckover tells me," resumed Miss Meadows. "This action is to be recognised in public at Hillcrest this afternoon. As Gunten used to be at this school, Mr. Peckover thinks it is fitting that the ceremony should be witnessed by some of the Cedar Creek boys. He thinks it will give you pleasure to be present."

"Oh!" murmured Frank Richards.

"Mr. Peckover therefore requests me to let a number of my pupils go over to Hillcrest this afternoon," said Miss Meadows.

"I shall be very pleased to do so. Of course, I cannot let you all go; but I am sure it will please Gunten to have some of his old schoolfellows present on such a gratifying occasion. I will call out the names of those I have decided to send, if they care to go."

There was not much doubt that they would care to go.

"Lawless, Beauclerc, Lawrence, Hopkins, Dawson, Richards, Molly Lawrence, and Kate Dawson," said Miss Meadows. "You may all go if you wish."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Meadows!"

And the lucky eight left the school-room at once.

They were feeling rather excited and interested.

How Gunten, who had been known at Cedar Creek as little better than a funk, had performed such an act of bravery as to call for public recognition was a mystery to them.

"Isn't it surprising?" exclaimed Molly



Lawrence, as they rode out of Cedar Creek in a cheery crowd.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless dryly.  
 "But it must be true!" said Molly.  
 "Must be if Peckover says so!" grinned Bob. "I'm blest if I can make it out! Can you, Franky?"

"Ask me another!" was Frank's reply.  
 "Well, I guess, on second thoughts, that I can make it out a bit," said Bob reflectively.  
 "Old Man Gunten has a stake in Hillcrest School. It's no secret that he put up most of the dollars to start the place. Gunten is old Peckover's favourite for that reason. Peckover has got up this little affair to stroke Old Man Gunten the right way."

"But there must be something in it," said Beauclere. "He couldn't get up a scene without something to go on."

"That's so. But—" Bob looked very sceptical. "Some silly trifle they're making into a big thing—a mountain out of a mole-hill, I guess. Anyhow, if Gunten has done anything plucky, we've been jolly well mistaken about him."

"Well, we'll see what we'll see!" said Frank.

And about that at least, there could be no doubt.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.  
 A Hapless Hero!**

**D**ICKY BIRD & CO., of Hillcrest, met the Cedar Creek party when they arrived at the new school.

Apparently lessons were not going on at Hillcrest that afternoon.

"Hallo! You're just in time for the circus!" said Dicky Bird, with a grin.

"Have you come over for it?"

"Yes," answered Frank, noting, with a grin, that both Dicky's eyes were purple.

"When does it start?"

"Three sharp. No end of a circus!" yawned Fisher. "Old Man Gunten is here, looking as pleased as Punch. And Kern Gunten looks as if he wants a larger size in hats."

"But what's he done?" asked Bob.

"Haven't you heard?"

"Nope. We only heard there's to be a merry ceremony, and Mr. Peckover asked our schoolmistress to let some of us come over for it."

Dicky Bird chuckled.

"Gunten's Peckover's favourite," he said.

"Old Man Gunten is no end of a big gun in this show. It's going to be a regular ceremony. Gunten's to be presented with a new rifle as a memento. My belief is that Old Man Gunten is standing the rifle, though it's supposed to come from Peckover."

"But what the thump—"

"It's the talk of Thompson," said Dicky Bird. "I wonder you haven't heard. It seems that when Gunten was driving the post-wagon yesterday—Hallo, here's old Peckover!"

The headmaster of Hillcrest came out.

"All boys march into the school-room!" he called out. And the Hillcrest fellows obediently marched in.

Mr. Peckover greeted the Cedar Creek party with a rather dry politeness, and showed them where to tether their horses.

Then they were ushered into the big school-room.

Frank Richards & Co. took their places along with the Hillcrest fellows in a state of wondering anticipation.

Mr. Peckover went to his high desk.

Beside the desk Mr. Gunten, the rich storekeeper of Thompson, was standing.

The fat Swiss was looking, as Fisher had remarked, as pleased as Punch.

Gunten was standing in his place among the Hillcrest fellows, and the start he gave at the sight of Frank Richards & Co. showed that he at least had had no hand in the invitation.

In fact, his jaw dropped as he saw them, and he looked the picture of dismay.

"That lot here," he muttered to his chum Keller.

"I suppose Peckover's asked them," said Keller. "What does it matter? Rather a good effect, I guess."

"Oh!" muttered Gunten.

Keller looked at him rather oddly.

"I say, Gunten, is there anything fishy about it?" he whispered. "Did you really—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Gunten.

Keller shut up, but he was looking very curious.

"Silence, please!" came from Mr. Peckover.

There was silence in the school-room.

Mr. Peckover rose to his feet, and surveyed the attentive crowd over his desk.

"My boys," he said, after clearing his throat with a little preliminary cough, "you are gathered together to do honour to your schoolmate, who has distinguished himself by an act of great courage and devotion."

There was a murmur of applause as Mr. Peckover paused. He seemed to expect it, so it was given.

"Gunten, please stand out!"

Kern Gunten advanced with a faltering step.

Only a few minutes before he had had a lofty, not to say swanky, look. But since Frank Richards & Co. had arrived the starch seemed to have gone out of Kern Gunten somehow.

They were soon to learn.

"The post-wagon," went on Mr. Peckover, after an impressive pause, "was stopped by these armed ruffians, who cut open the post sacks. A considerable quantity of gold-dust, the fruits of the labour of the Thompson miners, lay at the mercy of the thieves. Gunten was alone and unarmed. But he felt that it was his duty to risk his life, if need were, in defence of the property entrusted to his charge."

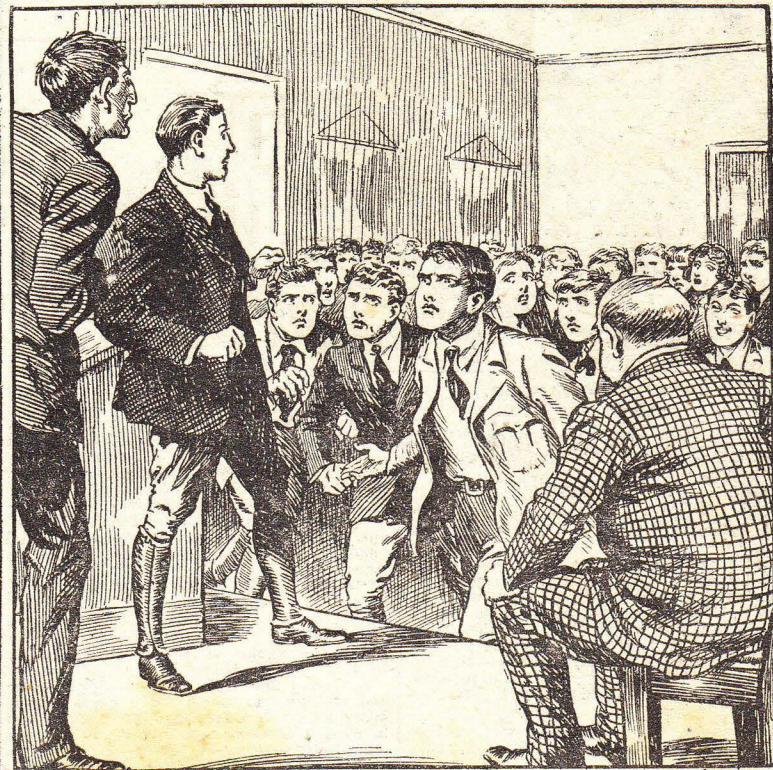
Frank Richards' eyes opened wide.

He remembered Kern Gunten cowering on the trail with knocking knees, and he was astounded.

"Then," went on Mr. Peckover impressively, "Gunten seized his opportunity. While one robber was busy with the post sacks Gunten sprang upon him and hurled him from the wagon—"

"Great Scott!" gasped Frank Richards.

"The other robber was holding the horses,



**DENOUNCING THE IMPOSTOR!** Bob Lawless jumped to his feet and pushed forward. There was an angry exclamation from Old Man Gunten. "Stand back, Lawless!" "It's not true!" roared Bob. "It was Frank Richards who drove the robbers away!" (See Chapter 4.)

Certainly, at the present moment, he looked like anything but a hero.

"Come on, my boy!" said Mr. Gunten encouragingly. "You have deserved well of your school, Kern, and your headmaster is about to recognise it in a fitting manner."

Gunten dragged himself forward, with the corner of his eye, as it were, on the Cedar Creek group.

"Boys," resumed Mr. Peckover, "some of you may not be aware of the splendid act performed by your schoolfellow Gunten—especially those who are strangers within our gates. You are doubtless aware that on Wednesdays Kern Gunten drives the post-wagon for his father, Mr. Gunten, one of our most prominent citizens, who holds the honourable post of postmaster in Thompson. Yesterday, as Gunten was driving the post-wagon from Cedar Camp to Silver Creek, he was stopped on the trail by armed ruffians."

Mr. Peckover paused to give due effect to this announcement.

Gunten shifted uncomfortably from one leg to the other.

All the Hillcrest fellows noted how his "gas" seemed suddenly to have evaporated, and they wondered why.

but Gunten lashed them into a gallop, and the man was hurled aside and—"

"Hurled aside!" stuttered Frank Richards.

"The—the man was hurled aside! Was he? Oh, my hat!"

"Then Gunten drove on the post-wagon at full speed, with the robbers riding in pursuit and firing after him," said Mr. Peckover.

Bob Lawless pinched Frank's arm.

"Franky, am I awake?" he gasped.

"Blest if I know! Oh, crumbs!"

"Fortunately, Gunten was not hit, though one bullet went through his hat," said Mr. Peckover. "The robbers gave up the chase, and he brought the post-wagon safe to Silver Creek. By his courage and resource he saved over a thousand dollars' worth of property, and defeated the design of the lawless ruffians. For that splendid act, my boys, we are met together to do honour to Kern Gunten! I pause for a cheer for this brave lad."

"Hurrah!" roared all Hillcrest.

"As a memento of this occasion," continued Mr. Peckover, when there was silence, "I have much pleasure and pride in

(Continued on page 25.)

**THE PRISONERS OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE!**

Gerald Loder has disappeared! The prefect of the Sixth has vanished into thin air—what has become of him? Search parties are sent forth, but return empty-handed. Then Mr. Larry Lascelles sets out in quest of the missing boy—and he does not return!

**A MYSTERY AND SCHOOL TALE!**

What has become of him? Search parties are sent forth, but return empty-handed. Then Mr. Larry Lascelles sets out in quest of the missing boy—and he does not return!



**THE FIRST CHAPTER.**  
**The Missing!**

**S**ENSATION followed sensation at Greyfriars, and the whole school was in a buzz.

In the first place, Loder, the unpopular prefect of Greyfriars Sixth, had failed to turn up, and there had been much speculation as to what had become of him.

Loder was known to do many little things "under the rose"—amongst them being surreptitious visits to various inns, where he played billiards against sharps who rooked him times out of number. Thus, when Loder failed to turn up for morning prayers, many fellows—especially juniors—thought that Loder was lying in bed with, perhaps, a head which felt considerably bigger than it actually was.

But they were wrong. Loder was nowhere to be found—although his bed had been slept in.

What the juniors did not know was that Mr. Larry Lascelles, the maths master, was the one who should be missing. There had been a visit from Mr. Sawyer, an old "pug" who badly wanted to train Larry Lascelles, alias Larry Lynx, for a certain big fight. Naturally, the master refused, and Mr. Sawyer had gone away, very disgruntled and extremely thoughtful.

Mr. Sawyer had therefore waylaid a person he thought to be Mr. Lascelles and kidnapped him, possibly with the idea of bargaining for the master's freedom. Unfortunately—in more ways than one—Loder happened to be the person.

That only served to make matters all the more confusing at Greyfriars.

Dr. Locke, the Head, very distressed, sent out search-parties in every direction, and perhaps it was Fate that took Mr. Lascelles off in one direction, the master being only too anxious to find the missing prefect of the Sixth.

Dusk descended upon the old Close at Greyfriars.

Tired and dusty, in twos and threes, the searchers came dropping in.

Weary fags, tired with clambering and scrambling over cliffs and rocks, lumped in at the gates.

And every new arrival was hailed with questions. Had he seen anything of Loder? And to all questions the reply was the same. No, he hadn't.

THE POPULAR.—No. 233.

Gosling was going down to lock up when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. The Famous Five looked very tired and dusty. They had taken the task very seriously, and had spent the whole afternoon searching the crevices and crannies of the cliffs for miles. But they had had no luck. They had used all the skill they had acquired in practice as Boy Scouts; they had hunted for "sign," but there was no sign to be found. Gerald Loder had disappeared without leaving a trace behind.

"Any luck?" asked Temple of the Fourth, as the Co. came in.

"None. No news here?"

"None!"

And the chums of the Remove went in to tea.

More and more fellows came dropping in, and Gosling had to open the gates a good many times; but for once juniors were not in danger of being reported for being late. All of them brought the same news, or, rather, lack of news—they had discovered no trace of the missing prefect.

It was remarkable that Walker and Carne of the Sixth were looking very blue. They had taken part in the search, with the same success as the rest. But the other fellows did not know where their search had led the two black sheep of the Sixth. They had found an opportunity, as a matter of fact, of dropping in at the Cross Keys, and questioning Mr. Cobb.

Mr. Cobb was surprised and alarmed to hear that Loder had disappeared. He assured them that Loder had left his place quite safely the previous night soon after eleven o'clock. His evident alarm was an assurance that nothing had happened to Loder at the public-house. He had left the Cross Keys, but he had not reached Greyfriars. Somewhere between the public-house and the school he had vanished. Walker and Carne, therefore, did not go down to the cliffs. They knew Loder could not have gone there at night. But where had he gone? They cudgelled their brains over that mystery in vain.

They were worried on their own account as well as on Loder's. Mr. Cobb was alarmed, for if it came out that a Greyfriars fellow had been playing cards at his public-house almost till midnight, it would certainly do him harm. Mr. Cobb's licence had been in danger before, and it was in greater danger than ever now. And Walker and Carne knew that it was their duty to tell the Head that they were certain

that Loder had disappeared overnight, and not in the morning at all. But they could not do so without revealing their own connection with the sporting set at the Cross Keys. And that meant ruin to them. Mr. Cobb urged them to keep silent for all their sakes; and though they cared little about Cobb, they cared very much about themselves. They kept silent as to what they knew; but it was no wonder that they looked decidedly "blue."

The police were searching for Loder, but they believed that he had disappeared during an early morning walk. Not being in possession of the facts, their search for the missing prefect was more than ever likely to be futile. Walker and Carne knew that; but they kept silent. They dared not tell what they knew; but their knowledge lay a heavy load upon their minds. It was their punishment for foolish and reckless conduct; and the punishment was heavy.

Their glum looks were observed, and caused much sympathy. No one had suggested that they were so attached to Loder, for their giunness was attributed to their friendship for the missing Sixth-former.

At calling-over, a good many of the seniors were still absent. They dropped in one by one, or in twos and threes, later in the evening, footsore and unsuccessful. At half-past eight calling-over was taken again, and then all the fellows answered to it. There was only one of the searchers who had not yet come in—Mr. Lascelles.

"Larry's keeping it up," Bob Cherry remarked to a group of juniors at the doorway, who were waiting to see the mathematics master come in. The juniors sometimes alluded to Mr. Lascelles as Larry—not in his hearing, of course.

"Nine o'clock," said Harry Wharton, rather uneasily. "He can't be searching for Loder in the dark."

"He isn't the kind of ass to have any accident," said Nugent, reading Wharton's misgiving in his face.

"He doesn't know the cliffs as we do. He's new here," Tom Brown remarked.

"I hope he'll come in before we go to bed," said Harry.

But Mr. Lascelles did not come in.

At half-past nine the Remove went to their dormitory as usual; and the mathematics master was still absent from Greyfriars.

They did not sleep soon.

"Harry Wharton & Co. in France!"—the Title of Next Week's Greyfriars Story!

About midnight Harry Wharton awoke from an uneasy slumber. He could hear a slight sound of someone moving about downstairs. He slipped out of bed, and quitted the dormitory.

Lights were still burning in the lower part of the house—a most unusual circumstance at that hour. Wharton went softly downstairs, and caught sight of Wingate and Herr Gans in the hall, speaking together in low tones.

"Wingate!" Harry called out softly. The Greyfriars captain started, and looked up the stairs.

"What are you doing out of bed?" he exclaimed gruffly.

"I woke up. Is there any news?"

"No."

"Has—has Mr. Lascelles come back?"

"Not yet. Go back to bed."

"He hasn't come in?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No, I tell you. Cut off!"

Wharton returned to the dormitory. He was disturbed and uneasy. Why had not Mr. Lascelles returned? Another accident? It seemed utterly improbable. But why had he not come back?

Harry Wharton slept but little more that night. He had a great regard for the mathematics master, and he was alarmed about him, much more than about Loder. He was glad when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

The Remove turned out eager for news; and Wharton was the first down. A housemaid was turning out the lights. Evidently vigil had been kept all night in the School House. Mr. Quelch came out, looking very disturbed, and Wharton ventured to speak to him.

"Did Mr. Lascelles come in, sir?"

The Remove master shook his head.

"He has not returned," he said. "There must have been an accident of some kind. It is very extraordinary."

The school was buzzing with it before long. Loder's disappearance had started all the school; and now the mathematics master had vanished. It was mystery on mystery! Pelion piled upon Ossa, as Temple put it poetically. What had become of Mr. Lascelles?

"He didn't know his way about the cliffs, as we do," said Bob Cherry dolefully. "Poor old Larry's busted a leg, or something, in the dark. I wonder whether we shall get another day off."

Inspector Grimes came over from Courtfield to see the Head early that morning. He went away looking very grave. The disappearance of Mr. Lascelles following that of Loder, evidently "flabbergasted" him, as Bob Cherry remarked.

All Greyfriars was flabbergasted, for that matter. The Head was looking decidedly worried at morning chapel. The fellows wondered whether there would be lessons that morning. In the excitement that was reigning in the school, little work was likely to be done. They were not surprised when a notice appeared on the board, giving permission to the school to renew the search. The general impression was that Mr. Lascelles had fallen down somewhere in the cliffs, and was lying there helpless; and the Greyfriars fellows were very keen to find him. It was a day out for the whole school; and the shore, and almost every crevice in the long range of cliffs, was searched again and again. But the day wore on without any discovery being made. Mr. Lascelles had vanished as completely as Gerald Loder had done. When dusk fell once more upon the old school, the searchers came in wearily—unsuccessful.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Kidnapped by Pals!

"YOU can't say no, Larry!"

Thus Mr. Erry Sawyer.

The scene was a room in the dismantled old house on the hill, where Harry Wharton & Co. and the Cliff House girls had picnicked. It was a strange scene. There were four persons in the room—Mr. Sawyer, and his comrades Toodles and Badger, and Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics master of Greyfriars. Mr. Lascelles sat in a deep, old-fashioned armchair. His hands were secured with a strong cord, loose enough to allow him free movements, but knotted too securely for him to break away.

His handsome face was pale with anger.

Mr. Sawyer's manner was apologetic, sheepish, but determined. The old pugilist was a man of determination. He had taken a great amount of trouble, and considerable risk, in carrying out his fixed idea. And he had succeeded, so far. Larry Lynx, his old pupil, known at Greyfriars School as Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, was in his hands at last. Mr. Sawyer had not made a mistake the second time.

It had been easy enough. The master, tramping homeward, tired and weary after a long hunt on the cliffs, had been seized in the dusky lane, a sack thrown over his head, a looped rope passed round him and drawn tight. He had not been expecting anything like an attack; he had been taken completely by surprise. Roped up in the sack, he had been whipped away by the three pugilists. They had seized him within a quarter of a mile of the Grange, and they had carried him after dark to the old house safely. When the sack was removed from his head, the angry and astonished master found himself a prisoner in the hands of his old friends.

His amazement was extreme, and so was his anger. But Mr. Sawyer, attached as he was to his old pupil, was not a man for half-measures. Mr. Lascelles' hands were secured, and he was helpless. The three pugilists had seen him in the ring too often, and knew his prowess too well to run any risks with him. Given the free use of his hands, it was quite possible that Larry Lynx could have knocked out Mr. Sawyer, Badger, and Toodles, all together.

"Larry, old pal, you can't say no, now."

"You can't, Larry," said Toodles, almost beseechingly. "Look wot a lot of trouble we've took with you."

"You ain't got the 'cart to do it!" affirmed Badger.

Mr. Lascelles set his lips hard.

"Will you have the kindness to tell me what this means?" he asked.

"Don't you know well enough?" said Mr. Sawyer. "I've asked you—you can't deny 'ow I've asked you—to oblige an old pal. 'Ere's the Slogger sneerin' and jeerin' at me, sayin' as my old pupil ain't got the pluck to stand up agin' 'im in the ring. 'Ere's me, with a 'undred quid put on you, afore I knows that you'd leave me in the lurch. 'Ere's many sportin' gentlemen keen to see you meet the Slogger, and to put up a thousand quid—which the same is yours for the trouble of takin' it. And you says no—always no. Naterally, I takes the law into my own 'ands. And 'ere you are."

"Yes, I am here," said Mr. Lascelles, with a shrug of the shoulders. "That's plain enough. And, now I am here, what are you going to do with me?"

"Ave some sense, Larry!" said Mr. Sawyer, in a tone of mild expostulation. "'Ere's your old punchers, all ready to stand up for you to slog 'em, in the old way, for to git into form agin arter neglectin' yourself so long, wastin' your vallyhle time schoolmasterin' and sich. 'Ere they are, all ready to stand up and be knocked erbout—wot?"

"Bless your 'cart, quite ready," said Mr. Toodles.

"And the 'arder you 'its, the better we'll like it," declared Badger.

"And then you gits into form, and the fight comes ort with the Slogger. You out 'im, and pouches a thousand quid!" said Mr. Sawyer temptingly.

"Do you mean to say that you've kidnapped me, to train me for a fight?" demanded Mr. Lascelles, his amazement overwhelming his anger, as he realised the extraordinary scheme that had been developed in Mr. Sawyer's determined mind.

"That's the size of it, Larry."

"You—you—you duffer!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles. "I think you must be insane, Sawyer! I shall not do anything of the kind. I shall not change my mind—I cannot. This does not make the slightest difference to me. The moment you loosen me I shall walk out of this place."

"Will you? Then you won't be loosened in a 'urry. You ain't goin' to 'ave your 'ands loose, old pal, till you've give your solemn davy to train regler, and meet the Slogger."

"I shall not promise anything of the kind."

"Which I know you're a man of your word," said Mr. Sawyer. "Once you give your davy, you'll stick to it. It's easy enough. You'll come over 'ere regler to

train. We'll get the big fight fixed for a month ahead, and then—"

"I tell you it cannot be!"

"And I tell you it can be and will be!" said Mr. Sawyer obstinately.

"Once for all, I will do nothing of the sort! Now let me go."

"We didn't nail you for to let you go agin'," said Mr. Sawyer calmly. "You'll change your mind, Larry; I know that. You can't reely mean to go back on an old pal in that way. You'll 'ave time to chynge your mind. 'Ere! We've got comfy quarters all ready for you; shutters screwed down on the winder, and nice iron bars to the door. You'll feel as though you was in the stone jug. But that's your look-out. You'll be fed regler, on the fat of the land. We'll look arter you, won't we?"

"We'll look arter you," said Toodles and Badger together.

"Is it possible that you mean to keep me a prisoner here, unless I agree to train and meet the Slogger?" Mr. Lascelles exclaimed.

"Exactly! That's the hidea."

"But—but this is preposterous! Do you know that you are breaking the law? That you may be sent to prison on a charge of kidnaping?"

"I know that—if our old pal chooses for to give us away, and round on us," said Mr. Sawyer steadily. "But I don't think as you'll do it, Larry."

"Larry ain't that sort," said Toodles solemnly.

Mr. Lascelles burst into an angry laugh. He was intensely exasperated; and yet there was something touching in the dog-like fidelity of the rough-and-ready trio, combined with their grim determination to overcome his resistance to their plans.

"You're taking an unfair advantage of me," he said. "You know I won't do anything to have you punished."

"Course you won't!" said Toodles. "That wouldn't be our Larry!"

"But don't you see the harm you're doing me? I shall be missed from the school—searched for—and ultimately found. You can't keep me hidden here long. But—"

"You won't be found in a 'urry," said Mr. Sawyer, with a smile. "It will take 'em some time to guess as your old pals 'ave collared you, and took this 'ere nice place for you to roost in nice and comfy, Larry."

Mr. Lascelles frowned. It was quite true. He would never have dreamed of such an outrageous scheme himself; and the police were not likely to think of it. A man might be kidnapped by his enemies; but to be kidnapped by his friends was a little too startling for anyone to guess that it had happened. He looked at the three rough, scarred faces, and read relentless determination there. They were devoted to him. They would have gone through fire and water for him, if necessary. But they would not give him his liberty unless he promised to carry out their wishes, and appear in the prize-ring once more as Larry Lynx, to meet the famous Slogger of Bermondsey.

It was an absurd, unheard-of situation, almost comic; and yet it was very real, and very serious for the mathematics master of Greyfriars. He knew the trouble and the anxiety that would be caused at the school by his disappearance, and the difficulty he would have in explaining matters without betraying his attached but troublesome old "pals." And he could not think for a moment of delivering Mr. Sawyer & Co. up to the police as kidnapers.

That was not to be thought of.

The three pugilists watched his face anxiously, hoping to read signs of yielding there. But they read nothing of the sort. Mr. Sawyer was determined; and so was his old pupil. The mathematics master of Greyfriars had no intention whatever of giving way. It was impossible for him to do so without resigning his position at Greyfriars for good; and that was a little too much. But he understood only too clearly that the outcome of this affair might be that he would have to resign.

"They ain't found the other yet," Mr. Toodles remarked, with a slight grin.

Mr. Lascelles started.

"The other! What other? What do you mean, Toodles?"

"Which we made a mistake the first time," explained Mr. Sawyer. "We knowed

you was at the vicarage, and we laid for you. And a bloke come down the path, and we shoved the sack over 'im and collared 'im—and it wasn't you. But we got 'im locked up safe and sound."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles, aghast. "Do you mean to say that that is what has become of Loder? You have kidnapped a Greyfriars boy?"

"He's a Greyfriars boy right enough, but he wouldn't give 'is name," said Mr. Sawyer calmly. "Said it was Smith; but I knowed he was lying."

Mr. Lascelles showed signs of agitation now.

"You—you fool!" he said. "Loder will make the worst trouble he can over this! You will be prosecuted! Why didn't you let him go when you found you'd made a mistake?"

"He knowed too much; and he'd have jawed, and we shouldn't 'ave got you," said Mr. Sawyer coolly. "I knowed it was a risk, but we 'ad to take it."

"Then he is here?"

"Next room to yours," said Mr. Sawyer cheerfully.

"Good heavens! This will mean imprisonment for all of you!"

"P'raps—arter the Slogger's beaten!"

"You—you duffer!"

"P'raps we can make terms with the young gent," said Tootles, with slow solemnity. "He won't want his 'eadmaster to know as he was comin' ome from a pub late at night. I s'pose that ain't allowed at Greyfriars?"

"So that was it!" muttered Mr. Lascelles. "It was night, then. I suspected as much. I am glad he has come to no harm; but you must let him go."

"Arter the fight, yes—or arter you've promised to meet the Slogger," said Mr. Sawyer. "Not afore that!"

"Look here, Sawyer—"

"You can't say 'No, Larry. You'll meet the Slogger?" said Mr. Sawyer coaxingly.

"I cannot!"

Mr. Sawyer sighed.

"Well, it goes agin' the grain to be 'ard on an old pal, and an old pupil," he said; "but you drives me to it. Tike 'im to his room, boys!"

"I appeal to you, Sawyer, to have a little sense. You're acting against the law—you're doing harm to me and yourself, too. Let me go at once, and I'll try to keep Loder's tongue quiet."

"Will you meet the Slogger?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then there ain't nothin' more to be said. I'll ask you agin to-morrow, and agin the day arter—for a month of Sundays if you like. Tike 'im in!"

Mr. Lascelles set his lips. He knew that argument was useless in the face of Mr. Sawyer's determination. Five minutes later he was shut up in the room.

Mr. Sawyer and his friends had so carefully prepared for him. The room was furnished now, and food was on the table.

In the door a gap had been sawn for food to be passed through. After Mr. Lascelles' hands were once free, his gaolers did not intend to risk unbarring the door until they had his promise.

The door closed on him, the iron bar fell into place, and the key was turned in the lock. He was a prisoner—as secure as if he had been immured in a cell in a prison. Mr. Sawyer blinked through the slit in the door.

"Put your 'ands 'ere, Larry, and I'll loose you," he said. "I ain't makin' an old pal uncomfortable—not me!"

Mr. Lascelles silently extended his hands, and the cord was cut. He was free to use his limbs now, but the freedom was useless to him. Mr. Sawyer's face looked at him through the slit in the door, with a curious expression upon it—half apologetic, half exasperated.

"You won't say 'Yes' now, Larry?"

"No!" thundered Mr. Lascelles.

"I'll wait, then!" Mr. Sawyer sighed. "When you chynge your mind, all you've got to do is to put your 'ead to this 'ere ole in the door and yelp. One of us will allers be in 'earin' of you. Good-night, Larry!"

Mr. Lascelles made no reply. The old "pug" stumped away, leaving the mathematics master of Greyfriars a prisoner, and a prey to extremely unpleasant reflections.

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### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Wharton Puts Two and Two Together.

"COME into the study—and mum's the word!"

Harry Wharton whispered the words softly to Bob Cherry in passing him. Bob looked surprised, but he did not reply, simply nodding.

Another night had settled darkly on Greyfriars—on a school throbbing with excitement and anxiety.

Mr. Lascelles was missing, as well as Loder, and the mystery of it hung like a cloud over the school. The police were puzzled; the Head was at his wits' end; the boys were astounded, perplexed, alarmed.

Too thorough a search had been made for it to be supposed that Mr. Lascelles had met with an accident on the cliffs—or Loder either. They were not to be found, and the theory of two accidents, both leading to complete disappearance, was incredible.

And even if Loder had committed the improbable action of running away from school, it was impossible to imagine that Mr. Lascelles had done so. The vanishing of the mathematics master, in fact, cleared up, to a certain extent, the mystery of Loder's disappearance.

He must have been kidnapped—there was no other possible solution—and if he had been kidnapped, doubtless Loder had been kidnapped also. Where, when, by whom, and why, remained impenetrable secrets; but there could hardly be any doubt about the fact.

And that much being practically established, it became known that the Head had decided to "gate" the whole school until the matter was cleared up. Some secret kidnapper was at work; and, for all the Head knew, he—or they—might have further designs. There would be no more searching done by the Greyfriars fellows, lest there should be another inexplicable disappearance to follow.

Harry Wharton had passed the word round to his chums to meet in the study after preparation.

Wharton's brow had been clouded with deep thought for some time. When the Famous Five were gathered in Study No. 1, the juniors looked inquiringly at their leader. They knew that Wharton had something of importance to say, and they guessed that it referred to the disappearance of Mr. Lascelles.

"Well, what's the little game?" Bob Cherry asked.

"We can't look for Lascelles any more," Nugent remarked.

"That's just what I'm going to suggest," said Wharton quietly.

Johnny Bull whistled softly.

"School's gated," he said.

"Can't be helped. This is among ourselves, of course. It seems to be pretty clear now that there has been kidnapping."

"Can't think of any other explanation," said Nugent sagely. "Can't imagine two accidents—two complete disappearances of the body—or two persons clearing off without warning. Coincidences don't happen like that. They don't come back because they can't come back. It's a clear case of kidnapping—though why, goodness knows! Loder's not rich; and as for poor old Lascelles, we know he's not rolling in wealth by any means. They could have nailed Mauly much more easily, I should think—or Smithy—or Inky here, with a better chance of making a profit out of it!"

"It's not a case of kidnapping for money," said Harry quietly.

Nugent stared.

"You speak as if you know!"

"I think I do!"

"Oh! Do you mean to say you've got an idea where Lascelles is?"

"I believe I could walk straight to the very spot."

The chums of the Remove stared hard at Wharton. His quiet statement almost took their breath away.

"I won't ask you if you're joking," said Bob, after a pause; "but how the dickens can you possibly know anything about it?"

"I've been thinking," Wharton's tone was low and quiet. "You remember last Wednesday afternoon we picnicked with Marjorie at the Grange?"

"What the deuce has that—"

"We explored the old house afterwards, and we made a queer discovery there—"

a room with new shutters screwed down over the window, and a new bar and brackets outside the door!"

"Oh!"

"It all looked as if that room had been specially prepared for a prisoner; we thought so at the time."

"We did," said Bob, in a low voice.

"But—but—"

"And a couple of days afterwards Lascelles vanishes, and is being kept a prisoner somewhere," said Harry quietly. "It isn't a very big jump—from the prison to the prisoner. It's simply putting two and two together, I should say!"

Bob Cherry scratched his curly head.

"My hat!" he said. "My only summer hat! You think that Lascelles—"

"We know he's being imprisoned somewhere. And we know that the old house has been suddenly taken, and a room in it fitted up for keeping a prisoner safely. We should be duffers if we didn't think of that in connection with Mr. Lascelles' disappearance—now we know that he must have been kidnapped!"

"Hold on!" said Johnny Bull, in his slow way. "The tenant of the Grange is that pugilist chap Sawyer, and he's a friend of Lascelles. Men don't kidnap their friends!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That staggered me a bit when the thought first came into my head," he admitted. "Only it's a peculiar case. You remember what they were saying when we came on them in the lane. Sawyer wanted Larry Lynx to take on a new fight, and was urging him; and Mr. Lascelles refused point-blank. Sawyer may have lost his temper with him, and done this, or he may have some scheme of forcing or persuading Lascelles. I know it's a queer business, and I don't intend to say anything outside this study about it. But I can't help thinking of that barred door in connection with the fact that Mr. Lascelles has been taken away and imprisoned somewhere!"

"And Loder?"

"That beats me! I don't see in the least why they should kidnap Loder," confessed Harry; "unless he may have found out something about them, and they're keeping his mouth shut. But I'm not concerned about Loder now. This is the case about Lascelles, in a nutshell. Mr. Sawyer urges him to oblige him in a certain matter—he refuses—Sawyer takes a lonely house near Greyfriars, and has one room barred up to use as a prison-cell—then Lascelles disappears. Putting it together like that, it looks to me as if there's only one possible conclusion."

"My hat, it does!"

"Only we don't want to tell what may turn out to be a cock-and-bull story, and risk being laughed at," said Harry. "I'm not going to the Head with this, or to Inspector Grimes. My idea is that we should put it to the test ourselves!"

"Ourselves!" murmured Bob.

"Yes, to-night!"

The juniors looked silently at Wharton. They understood now what he had in mind—an expedition to the old house under cover of darkness, secretly, to discover whether the mathematics master was imprisoned there. It was a risky business; but the idea of the adventure appealed to them, and their attachment to Mr. Lascelles made them quite ready to run the risk—risk of violence from Mr. Sawyer's rough companions, and of punishment from the Head of Greyfriars if their escapade was discovered.

"And if he's there?" asked Nugent, after a long, long pause.

"If he's there we may be able to help him out, or simply clear off with the news and tell the police, according to circumstances," said Harry. "And if it's all moonshine—if I'm mistaken—we needn't say a word about the matter at all."

There was another long pause.

"Well, are you fellows game?" asked Wharton, at last.

"I'm game!" said Bob at once.

And Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh declared that the gamefulness was terrific, and Nugent and Johnny Bull nodded assent.

"Midnight, then," said Harry. "I'll call you. And not a word, mind!"

"Not a giddy syllable!"

Nothing was breathed outside the study on the subject. If the theory was all moonshine, the juniors did not want to be laughed at for their pains. But the more they thought about it, the more certain

fact that he had given himself hopelessly away. But that fact did not worry Tubby for long—not nearly so much as the fear of missing breakfast. Tubby had already had one breakfast in the sanny. But illness had by no means impaired his appetite, and Tubby was quite ready for another.

"Look—look here, Jimmy!" he spluttered peevishly. "I want my breakfast. Let me go now! Hang Bulkeley's five quid! I'm jolly hungry!"

"Just wait a minute, Muffin!" exclaimed Jimmy grimly. "You've practically admitted you had the money all the time. And—"

Tubby jumped. "I didn't! I wasn't! I haven't!" he spluttered frantically. "I've never seen it. In fact, I know nothing about it. Besides, it ain't my fault if the blessed envelope fell out of my pocket. Why, it may even now be lying in Bill Adams' old tub. Anyway, it wasn't in my pocket when I came to look in the sanny, so it must be. You can't blame me for that! You'll admit that yourself, Jim—"

Tubby broke off, and the ex-junior captain of the Fourth almost gasped aloud with relief. There were often golden grains of truth to be found in Tubby Muffin's romances. And Jimmy really felt he had found one at last.

"Here, I say!" gasped Tubby, as Jimmy Silver was turning away with gleaming eyes. "You w-won't tell?"

"I'm going up the river to search Bill Adams' motor-boat," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

And in blank amazement the fat Classical watched Jimmy Silver as he strode across the quad and vanished through the gates. Then, suddenly remembering breakfast, Tubby hurried indoors.

For the next hour, Tubby was very busy indeed—with his chin. The first half-hour he spent eating, and the next half-hour talking—two chin exercises in which Tubby Muffin excelled. And for once the fat youth had someone ready and eager to listen to him.

Indeed, Reginald Muffin was just then the cynosure of all eyes. For that half-hour Tubby fairly revelled and basked in the limelight. And he was swelling with importance and smiling brightly with smug satisfaction as he entered the Fourth Form-room that morning. But, unfortunately for Tubby Muffin, this happy state of affairs did not last long. Barely had the Fourth taken their seats when Bulkeley of the Sixth entered. And there was a curious look on Bulkeley's face as he approached Mr. Bootles.

"Dr. Chisholm wishes to see Silver and Muffin in his study immediately, sir," he exclaimed quietly.

Mr. Bootles looked surprised. "Ah! H'm! Certainly Bulkeley!" he exclaimed mildly, turning to the class. "Silver—Muffin, you will follow Bulk—Bless my soul! Where is Silver?"

Mr. Bootles blinked around in astonishment on realising that Silver was not present. Tubby Muffin, however, though the summons to visit the Head had alarmed him considerably, did not intend to miss this opportunity of airing his knowledge.

"Ple-please, sir, I know where Silver is," he gasped breathlessly. "He's gone up the river, sir—fancy that!"

"Bless my soul! This is most unusual—what—what!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "However, Muffin, you will follow Bulkeley to Dr. Chisholm's study, and I will send Silver immediately on his return, Bulkeley."

And not looking at all happy, Tubby Muffin rose reluctantly from his seat and rolled after Bulkeley to the Head's study.

But he looked simply terrified, and his knees almost knocked together with fright when he entered that sacred apartment a moment later.

For Dr. Chisholm was not alone. Seated on the extreme edge of a chair, and looking exceedingly uncomfortable, was old Bill Adams, the boatman.

"Muffin," said the Head gravely, after Bulkeley had explained Jimmy Silver's absence, "I have sent for you in connection with that affair up the river yesterday. This gentleman is Mr. Adams, who claims to have witnessed the whole occurrence from the far side of the river. In fact, Muffin," went on the Head grimly, "Mr. Adams has told me an astounding story."

Tubby Muffin's podgy face paled visibly. "H-ha-has he, s-sir?" he stammered.



**THROWN IN, AND POWERLESS TO HELP!** As Jimmy Silver lay motionless in the mud, his mind a welter of confused emotions, he had a vision of the sprawling arms and legs of Tubby Muffin. The fat Classical whirled overhead and fell with a tremendous splash into the deep water. (See Chapter 3.)

"Yes, he has, Muffin!" snapped Dr. Chisholm. "And as his story concerns you—or, at least, a boy who answers exactly to your description—I am going to ask you a few questions which I require answering carefully and truthfully. First of all, Muffin, have you seen or have you any knowledge of that?"

Dr. Chisholm, as he spoke, laid the envelope Silver had lost, and he had found—and lost again. In fact, it was the envelope containing Bulkeley's five pounds.

"No-o-no, sir," gasped Tubby in alarm. "You've never seen this before?" exclaimed the Head.

"N-no, sir—never! Certainly not! Not at all, sir!" gasped Tubby hurriedly. "I know nothing about Bulkeley's five pounds. I'm as innocent as a baby, in fact, sir! And if—if Silver tells you I found it on the road outside the Jolly Fisherman, then he's telling wicked untruths, sir. Because I didn't! And as for playing cards with Joey Hook—why, I'd never even dream of such a thing! In fact, I wasn't near the Jolly Fisherman yesterday afternoon—not within miles of the place. You—you can ask Jimmy Silver, sir—he'll tell you I wasn't—he promised me he would, anyway."

"Muffin!" said Dr. Chisholm, in a dangerous voice. "You are telling deliberate untruths, and are the most stupid, foolish boy I have ever dealt with. This envelope containing five pounds which you disclaim all knowledge of, was found by Mr. Adams in his boat, and he has been kind enough to bring it back, with the suggestion that it had fallen from your pocket as you lay in the boat yesterday afternoon."

"Oh, s-sir!" gasped Tubby.

"Also," went on the Head grimly, "Mr. Adams, when asking after your condition, happened also to ask about Silver, of your Form, and while doing so dropped several hints which led me to question him, when he was good enough to relate what I firmly believe are facts that will lead to this astounding affair being cleared up. He states that he saw you, first of all, consorting with those two unspeakable scoundrels, and that

Silver apparently only entered the precincts of that inn to come to your help. And—"

"D-d-does he, really?" stammered Tubby, in a shocked voice. "Oh, my! What wicked untruths! Fancy that—"

"Silence, Muffin!" thundered Dr. Chisholm. "I may add that I place every reliance on Mr. Adams' story. There are, however, several points that only you can clear up, Muffin. Now," went on the Head grimly, picking up a cane from the table, "unless you at once confess to your share in yesterday's happenings, Muffin, I shall not only flog you, but expel you immediately from Rookwood. But I demand the truth. At the slightest suggestion of a falsehood, Muffin, I shall—"

The hapless Tubby shivered apprehensively as the Head swished the cane suggestively. And after that it did not take Tubby Muffin long to arrive at a decision.

He decided to confess! And for once Tubby Muffin told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

But to Tubby Muffin's great astonishment and relief, Dr. Chisholm's stern face relaxed somewhat as the fat Classical tearfully proceeded with his woeful tale.

The Head, in fact, was looking quite relieved by the time Tubby had finished.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "I really believe, Muffin, you wretched boy, that you did enter that disreputable resort in ignorance of the character of the place. And I also think you acted afterwards not comprehending the seriousness of what you were doing. Were it otherwise, I should certainly expel you at once. And as it is I intend to punish you severely for your astonishing falsehoods!"

"Ow!" gasped Tubby. "But in consideration of your narrow escape yesterday, and the resulting illness," went on the Head drily, "I will postpone your punishment until a more favourable opportunity. You may go, Muffin!"

And Reginald Muffin went with alacrity, sincerely hoping the favourable opportunity would never present itself, and that the postponement would therefore remain indefinite. THE POPULAR.—No. 233.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Coward!

**B**ULKELEY'S face wore a determined expression as he left the Head's study that morning. Jimmy Silver had been proved innocent of the charge of pub-haunting, and the five pounds had been found. But the accusation of cowardice still hung over the junior's head. And Bulkeley felt that, as he had been the first to charge the junior, and to make the matter public, it was up to him to find out the truth.

For, though Bill Adams' story had convinced Bulkeley at last that Jimmy's story was correct, he knew that unless proof was forthcoming that the junior had really injured his head, he would still remain under a cloud at Rookwood.

And Bulkeley had determined to furnish that proof. And to this end he had persuaded Dr. Chisholm to allow him to accompany Bill Adams up the river. And a talk he had with the old boatman on the way convinced him more than ever that Jimmy Silver had not funk going to Tubby Muffin's rescue.

"Him a coward—no fear!" said Bill Adams emphatically. "I saw the young 'un pitched in, and I guessed what had happened when he crawled out and dropped in the grass. There used to be an old landing-stage at the bottom of that there garden; and the r'ees—leastways, what's left of them—are still there. That's why I couldn't get the old tub nearer in yesterday. No, the young gent hurt his head, without a doubt, and a tidy old jar it were, I bet!"

"Well, we'll soon know for certain," said Bulkeley. "And if it is so, I'll soon let the fellows know, you may be sure. It's on—Hollo! Yonder's the Jolly Fisherman, now! Have you got a boathook?"

The boatman had a boathook. But, as it happened, that article was not necessary, for the boat stopped with a dull thud about a couple of yards from the bank. And, looking down, Bulkeley could plainly see deep-sunken piles, stumps, and long pieces of timber running the complete length of the garden edge. Without a doubt, Jimmy Silver's story was true.

"That settles it!" ejaculated the senior grimly. "And now where's Silver? I've got something to say to him about this! Unless that fat fool Muffin's spoofed me, he must be up here!"

"Likely up at the cottage yet," said Bill Adams. "It's only round the bend there. We'll run up and look!"

And the boatman, who had been steering directly across towards the old ramshackle buildings where he housed his boats for hire, altered his course, and a moment later the boat turned the bend, and the old boatman's cottage came in sight.

"Hallo! There's the missus!" ejaculated Bill Adams all of a sudden. "What on earth—Good heavens!"

Startled, the senior followed his glance, and saw a woman rushing about frantically on the edge of the steep bank topping the river-bank. Then Bulkeley's eyes fell upon a splash of black and white far out on the shining surface of the river. The boatman was struggling frantically with his engine to get more speed on the boat. And then Bulkeley also saw the reason, as the objects out in the river became clearer.

"Good heavens! It's Silver—in the river!" he gasped.

"And my little girl!" muttered Bill Adams tensely. "Get ready when I cut off the engine, young sir!"

Bulkeley could now plainly see Jimmy Silver's face and the head of the little girl he was strenuously fighting to keep above water. Jimmy Silver's face was white and drawn, and he was plainly at his last gasp.

"Stick it, Silver!" shouted Bulkeley, leaning over the side as the engine was shut off and the boat glided silently towards the struggling figures in the water.

"I—I'm done!" gasped Jimmy Silver faintly. "T-take the kiddie, Bulkeley!"

With a tremendous effort, Bulkeley took the child from the junior's grasp, and handed her into Bill Adams' ready, strong grip. Then Bulkeley leaped swiftly over the side.

For directly the child was taken from Jimmy Silver's grip, the junior had fallen back and sunk like a stone.

Then the ex-captain's head appeared, followed by his shoulders. And in his strong grasp he held the limp form of the junior.

Jimmy Silver's face was white, and his eyes were closed. The junior was unconscious.

"Help me!" gasped Bulkeley, gripping the side of the boat. "He's unconscious!"

The boatman bent down and lifted the junior into the boat, and Bulkeley followed, breathing spasmodically. A moment later the boat touched the bank. Jumping out, Bulkeley laid the limp, sodden form of Jimmy Silver in the grass, while the boatman handed his little girl into the eager, thankful arms of her mother.

Bulkeley knelt by the side of Jimmy Silver anxiously. But just then the junior opened his eyes and sighed deeply.

"How—how's the kiddie?" he gasped.

"Right as rain, young 'un!" said Bulkeley.

"Thanks to you, young sir!" exclaimed the boatman thankfully. "You're a rare plucked 'un—that you are! But you'd best come and have something hot to drink."

Bulkeley shook his head.

"Better get back to Rookwood now—thanks all the same!" he exclaimed quietly. "Come, Silver, if you feel fit!"

And at a brisk trot Bulkeley started for Rookwood, with Jimmy Silver by his side.

But when opposite to the Jolly Fisherman Inn, Bulkeley called a halt.

"Yesterday, Silver," exclaimed Bulkeley quietly. "I called you a coward for not going to Muffin's help over there. I was wrong! I know now that you did not funk—you did injure your head. And now—"

"That's all right, Bulkeley!" gasped Jimmy Silver hastily. "No need to rub it in! All serene. I—I—I say, did old Bootles miss me in class? I came to search for—"

For something. And while I was talking to Mrs. Adams her little girl strayed, and fell into the river. But—but—but about that five—"

"I guessed what had happened," said Bulkeley. "And now you've no need to worry about the five pounds or anything. Silver. The money's been found, and Muffin's confessed; but the Head wants to see you when you get back, an' you'll hear all about it then."

THE END.

(Full particulars of next week's Rookwood story will be found on page 27.)

HOLIDAY MONEY FOR YOU!

SOLVE THE PICTURE-PUZZLE BELOW!

FIRST PRIZE £5. SECOND PRIZE £2 10s. 10 PRIZES OF 5s. each.

What You Have to Do!

Here is a splendid Cricket competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find the history of the Gloucester C.C. What you are invited to do is to solve this picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears below, pin it to your solution, and post it to "Gloucester" Competition, POPULAR Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C.4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, July 12th, 1923.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all, or any, of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be regarded as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Boys' Friend," "Magnet," and "Gem," and readers of those journals may compete.

I enter the POPULAR "GLOUCESTER" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name .....

Address .....

P. ....

**THE LAST SCENE!**

Robin Hood and his merry men of Sherwood are the first to ride to the side of King Richard Lion Heart when the latter moves towards London to regain his throne. It is the last great scene of all—outside the Tower of London, the master of England and the usurper face to face for the reckoning.

**THE TAKING OF THE TOWER!**

other's attitude. "Go, bid him come, for the King wishes speech with him!"

"The friar must be mad," replied the governor of the Tower, "since the earl is many leagues away, and King Richard farther still!"

"For the governor of a fortress, my friend," said Friar Tuck, as a score of archers mounted on to the wall beside the castelain, "thou art wondrous ill-informed, for yonder is the King, as all the world may see. As for the earl's whereabouts, 'twill not take us long to discover them."

"Be not deceived, citizens," replied the governor, who, to do him justice, knew not that John was in the castle. "Trust not the first impostor who calls himself King Richard, or a begging friar who had far better be telling his beads than stirring up rebellion!"

The governor's words were greeted with a loud roar of laughter from the crowd; but before Friar Tuck could make any retort Allan-a-Dale, who had glided like an eel through the immense multitude, caught him by the shoulder, and whispered in his ear:

"Guy Fitzlugh hath told Robin of the secret passage into the Tower, and Robin himself, with all our lads, is about to enter the fortress by that way. For ten minutes, he desires you to keep this fool parleying, and then, at a signal from the hill, you are to lead the attack on the gate. That will draw off the attention of the garrison, and the rest is assured."

As soon as he had said these words Allan-a-Dale glided away again, and, making his way with what speed he could, he reached the secret door as the last of the outlaws entered it.

"Back, boys, back!" cried Friar Tuck suddenly, as the governor of the Tower made a signal to his archers. And it was not a moment too soon, for the twang of the bow-strings rang out on the morning air, and eight citizens fell. One arrow passed through the cowl of the friar's frock, grazing his shoulder, and making the red blood trickle down his back, and helter-skelter went the London men up Tower Hill again.

"Now, my friends," said the friar, casting his keen eye round the mob, "we do but retire to gather greater force, like the wave on the shore. In a few moments we shall rush down to the gate. Heed not the arrows, but let us be prepared with a battering-ram, for yonder timber is stout, and there are strong men behind it. If you want encouragement, look at your King there, sitting so proudly on his charger. Let him see that you are worthy subjects this day!"

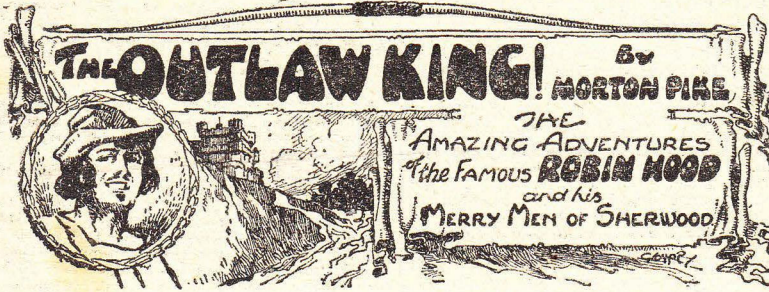
Inspired by his words, several men ran off, and by the time they returned with a couple of stout beams, which they had taken from a ruined storehouse by the river bank, a trumpet suddenly rang out, and Richard himself, with gallant old Robert of Rouen, who, disgusted with Sir Humphrey de Brionne, had joined the outlaws some months before, on one side, and Sir Oliver of Hounfeur on the other, moved down the hill, pointing with his sword towards the gateway.

"Down with the tyrant!" yelled the friar, brandishing his quarterstaff. "On—on, my lads! In five minutes the fortress will be ours!"

And, with a tremendous shout, the citizens followed him, and hurled themselves against the wooden barricade.

Sixty archers manned the wall, and their shafts flew thick and fast; but there were also bows in the crowd, and more than one mail-clad soldier toppled backwards with an arrow in his heart. The crash of the battering-rams was like thunder, and the doorway trembled; but those behind it had piled up stones, and the friar knew that it was going to be no easy matter.

"Gadzooks!" he thought to himself, as his mind travelled back to that secret passage,



**Introduction.**

GUY FITZHUGH, a young ward of King Richard Cœur de Lion, unable to tolerate the tyranny of Sir Humphrey de Brionne 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, Sweyne, 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 KENILWORT 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 Fitzlugh 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 they rescue Maid Marian and Isobel, and the band returns to the sheltering glades of Sherwood.

A few months pass, and King Richard, who had been imprisoned in Normandy, returns to England, and is met on the shores by Robin Hood and the men of Sherwood. The march to London is commenced.

(Now Read On.)

**King Richard Lands in London—And The Taking of the Tower.**

"A THOUSAND thanks, good people!" cried King Richard, waving his long arm high above his head. "Twas almost worth the weary months of imprisonment to receive a welcome so hearty and so whole. But something more remains than to rend the air with shouting. Yonder walls are manned by the earl's followers. Where is there a herald whom we may send to summon them to the allegiance of their rightful sovereign?"

King Richard, after many months abroad, had at last reached London, and had been acclaimed by the multitude, who were sick to death of John's cruelties.

The scene was outside the Tower, inside which John had secured himself with the remnant of his followers.

As Richard uttered these words the crowd parted, and the burly figure in the brown garb of a wandering friar elbowed his way forward, crying: "Room, good folk—room!"

At the first sound of his voice, Robin Hood, who was with the King, and who had not seen the friar for some time, stood up in his stirrups, and to his indescribable joy saw the shaven crown and good-humoured countenance of Friar Tuck. One glance of greeting passed between them, and only one, for the friar said something in a low voice to Robin.

"My liege—my liege!" cried the outlaw. "The earl himself is in the fortress! This worthy friar saw him enter with his own

eyes, and, moreover, he hath discovered a secret way by which we can get into the very heart of the Keep!"

"Say you so?" cried the King. "Then send me a messenger to the gate yonder, for it shall not be said that I made war upon my brother without cause."

"I will be thy messenger, Richard Lion Heart!" cried Friar Tuck. "I warrant my voice is good as any bugle sound."

Holding his great fists before him, the friar ploughed his way through the thickest of the crowd, and, followed by all eyes, reached the new gateway that Longclamp had built. The crowd closed up in his wake, following him, and that movement John and his confederates witnessed from the top of the battlements.

"Lend me thy staff, good fellow!" cried the friar, laying his hand unceremoniously on a stout ash pole, the property of a very little man, who did dare not resist, and, smiting three sounding blows upon the wooden gate, Friar Tuck cried:

"House—house! Open in the name of Richard of England!"

"And stand back, say I, in the name of Earl John!" replied a voice from the wall. And, looking up, they saw a burly, soldier-like man, in steel cap and mail shirt, leaning on his sword. "What means this tumult? Why are ye here, citizens? By my halidom, 'twill be ill for ye if the earl returns and finds ye up in arms!"

"The earl hath returned," said Friar Tuck, leaning on his quarterstaff in imitation of the



where he knew the lads in Lincoln green to be. "Five doors did I count upon the way, and if they all be locked, 'twill be rather ten hours than minutes ere the fortress is won! I pray you, my liege," he cried, coming up to the King's stirrup, "do not hazard your precious life to a chance arrow. Withdraw a little space, and all will be well."

"You counsel wisely, friar," said Robert of Rouen, "and I would add my entreaties also. If the King dies the usurper triumphs!"

"Pardie," exclaimed Richard, "it grieves me sore when my arm is rusting for the blow of battle; but for once I will be wise!"

And, reining up his charger, he stood watching excited citizens flinging themselves against the doorway, and listened to the crash and thud of the battering-rams. The archers on the wall had soon exhausted their shafts, but two of their number appeared bearing a chest of arrows between them. And still the gate held, and still there was no sign of Robin Hood and his band.

And whence came this delay? Lit by the light of a dozen flambeaux, the outlaws made slow progress along that secret passage, for each of the five doors was locked, as the friar had feared, and they yielded slowly to the hammer of Philip the Smith. He had torn off his jerkin, and stood stripped to the waist, wielding his ponderous sledge, the perspiration pouring in streams from muscle and sinew, and slowly but surely door after door yielded, until they reached the last one, where, pausing for breath, and with a sign to the rest to keep silence, Philip placed his ear to the lock, and heard the murmur of voices from the other side.

"Have no fear for me," John said, who stood there, sword in hand, displaying more courage than Montluc, his ally, had anticipated. "Longchamp built strongly, and the gate will hold. Those rascally citizens, whom I have ground down with my heel, are craven to the very heart."

"By the saints," cried Raoul de Montluc, "there are those behind this door who know no fear! Listen to the swing of the hammer! In another moment they will be upon us! Fly—fly!"

As he spoke, the little iron-bound door that opened into the dungeonside, shivered and swayed, and the dozen billmen who stood beside Montluc lowered their weapons with a hoarse cry, as it groaned on its hinges and flew open.

There was a few seconds' pause, then from the black cavity hummed twelve clothyard shafts, and every billman sank to the floor.

With a howl of rage and despair and fear, the earl turned and dashed up the steps leading into the guard-chamber, followed by the Norman, whose thin lips curled with a sneer of contempt. They threaded the room and the passage beyond, and darted out into the sunlight, only to be met by an outburst of cheering, as the battering-rams burst open the outer gate at last, and the head of a wild mob poured into the open ground that surrounded the Keep.

John cast one wild look at the shouting horde, glanced over his shoulder, and saw the lads in Lincoln-green doublets hard upon their heels, and, tossing his sword aside, ran with incredible swiftness towards the postern that gave on to the river bank. Montluc was not three strides behind him, and in another moment would have been in safety; but John, thinking of nothing but his own skin, darted through the door, banged it to, and locked it on the outside.

"Black-hearted hound!" cried Raoul de Montluc. "Is it for such as thou that I have perilled my life?"

And, turning round, possessed with a sudden fury, he saw the crowd open, and three horsemen bound under the gateway, swinging their long swords in the air.

At that moment the gate broke down.

For an instant Raoul de Montluc, grasping his long, two-handed weapon, paused irresolute, and the next moment he ran swiftly into the throng, singling out the tall, mounted figure with the white cross gleaming on the red silk surcoat. Could he but slay the King all would yet be well with him, and coming behind the unsuspecting Lion Heart, he slung his weapon back for the deadly slash.

It all happened in a moment of time, but Guy FitzHugh's quick eye saw the King's danger, and he darted like lightning to the spot.

The sun gleamed on his blade; one swish-circle it made in the morning air, and

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cloven deeply through the neck with a blow that severed the chain-mail as though it had been cardboard, Raoul de Montluc pitched forward upon his face dead at the feet of the Lion Heart, whose life had trembled in the scales of Fate.

"God's blessing on thee, lad!" cried Robert of Rouen, who had seen the danger too late to avert it.

"Let Him rather bless thee, old friend!" cried Guy. "For 'twas you taught me that blow!"

A hundred eyes had seen it, and a hundred voices rose in loud acclaim, and, turning in his saddle, King Richard of England bent his glance upon the lad in his motley minstrel garb.

"Thy name, boy?" said Richard, as the citizens swept by, driving the remnant of the garrison before them.

"Sire," cried Robert of Rouen, "'tis he of whom I spoke a while since. There stands thy ward, Guy FitzHugh, the best lad in all England! Seek them where you may."

"Kneel, Guy FitzHugh," said Richard Lion Heart. "Deem it no shame to bend the knee to thy King!"

And, doing as Richard bade him, Guy knelt beside the monarch's charger, and with sword, Richard tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"Rise, Sir Guy FitzHugh!" he cried. "Be true and valiant as King Richard's knight, and place thy hand in mine, boy! Never shalt thou leave my person more."

More he would have added, but for a cry of rage that went up from the river-wall, and Sir Oliver of Honfleur, spurring to the postern, which they had broken open, returned with a black shadow resting on his brow.

"Earl John hath escaped, my liege!" he cried. "The sail of that stout ship which brought us over is already bent to the freshening wind, and the long sweeps urge her faster on her way!"

"Let him go," said the King. "Foolly as

he hath wronged me, I must not forget that he is my father's son!"

### The Last Scene of All!

**A**BOUT the middle of the afternoon there came a cloud of dust along the road that led from the north, and two travellers, attended by twenty mounted men, reined up in some surprise before the Bishop's Gate.

"How now?" cried the Baron of Bollingwood, at length recovered from his hurst. "Why do the scurvy citizens close their portal at this unwonted hour?"

"'Tis strange!" muttered his companion, who was none other than Abbot Anselm of Merly. "Methinks, too, that the distant clamour of shouting falls upon mine ear."

The news of the King's return had not as yet spread beyond the City walls; but keen eyes watched the approach of the baron and his brother, for behind the gate stood a group of the outlaws on guard, with Friar Tuck at their head.

"Good luck!" exclaimed the friar. "Could anything be more fortunate? Here come two pretty rascals whom we will straightway carry before the King!"

The baron, who carried a light boar-spear in his hand, beat upon the gate with it, and shouted haughtily for them to open. And as it flung wide he touched his horse with his spur, the abbot following on his sleek mule. But ere the escort could enter, the gate was closed in their faces, and baron and abbot found themselves suddenly surrounded by the lads in Lincoln green; while Friar Tuck, with a huge smile upon his face, made mock obeisance to them.

"Thrice welcome, father," said Friar Tuck to the abbot. "The King is even now in his council-chamber, dealing out justice and mercy to friends and foes alike. You are just in time!"

And in the twinkle of an eye the baron was disarmed of sword and spear.

In the council-chamber of the Tower Richard Lion Heart sat in a large, carved chair, his brow darkening as he listened to Swayne the Harper, who drew forth paper after paper from his leather wallet, and unfolded the tale of treason and treachery that he had unearthed.

It was a gay group that surrounded the King. Robin Hood, leaning on his bow, a magnificent figure in his forester's garb, with a guard of thirty merry men behind him. Robert of Rouen stood close by, conversing in an undertone with Sir Oliver of Honfleur, an old comrade of the French wars; and beside them Guy, still in his minstrel garb of red and yellow, whispering to pretty Isobel, who looked at him with the lovelight shining in her great eyes.

The clamour of the delighted citizens outside rose like the distant humming of bees.

Suddenly the heavy tread of feet resounded on the staircase without, and through the open doorway strode the Baron of Bollingwood, a brilliant figure, with the bright yellow surcoat and its black heart covering his shirt of mail. And beside him, strangely alike in face and form, save for the abbot's robe he wore, came his brother, Anselm of Merly.

Filling the doorway stood Friar Tuck, a huge grin of delight on his broad face, and over his shoulders peeped half a score of lads in Lincoln green.

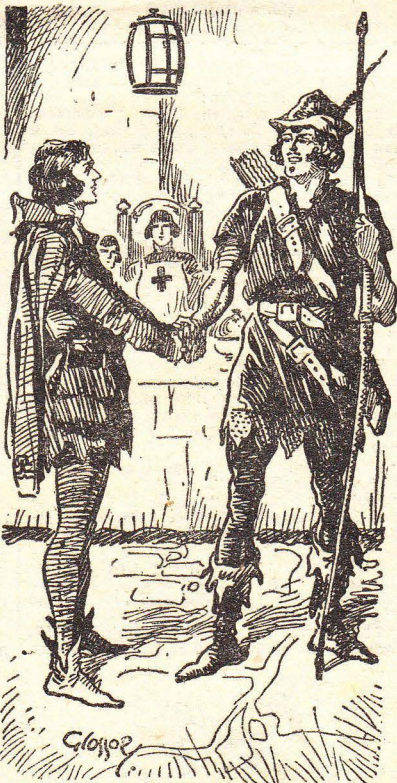
King Richard sprang from his chair and stood erect, and though the abbot stole a quick glance at the assembly there—a glance that chilled him to the very soul, the baron's eyes were fixed on those of the King, held and fascinated by the red anger that smouldered in them.

The words of false greeting with which he had hoped to retrieve the position died away upon his lips unsaid, and for a moment King and traitor gazed into each other's eyes.

"Did I not say that my liege man of Bollingwood would be among the first to welcome me?" said Richard; but the sharp irony that underlay his words sent the blood surging back to the black heart of Bollingwood.

His mouth opened and shut, but no sound came from it, and then, as his brother plucked him by the sleeve, he saw the face of Robin Hood, the outlaw, and Swayne the Harper, and Guy of the Greenwood, and the proud baron knew that his time had come.

### THE LAST FAREWELL!



Robin Hood clasped Guy's outstretched hands. "Good-bye, Guy!" he said, a little hoarsely. "It is best that you should leave us now that you are a great knight. We are for Sherwood, whilst you, you return to your old home. Good-bye!" (See page 25.)



"My liege," he cried, dropping on his knee. "to none other in the world but thyself would I bend. But what is this I read in your face and in your voice? And why have I been seized at the gate of the city and dragged here ignominiously, the sport of a scurvy crowd?"

There was a pause.  
"How now, Sir Humphrey of Bollingwood?" said the King sternly. "When I departed for the Holy Land I left in your charge a boy, a son of one of my oldest and worthiest friends. Give an account of your stewardship!"

"My liege—" began the baron.  
But the abbot sprang forward, laying a hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Sire," he cried, "you have been misled by lies and calumnies! There stands the lad of whom you speak, and I, Anselm, Abbot of Merly, tell you that no falsier or more unworthy scion ever disgraced a noble name!"

The King threw back his head and laughed aloud, as Guy's eyes flashed and his fists clenched.

"Father Abbot," said the King, reaching his hand across the table and gathering a sheaf of papers, "knowest thou this—and this—and this? Ha, mark ye, my lords, how the knave quails! But enough! Robin FitzOoth, seize those men and carry them to the dungeons, and to-morrow they die!"

To the surprise of all present, save only the ancient harper, Isobel glided forward to the foot of the King's chair, and, stretching out her shapely arms, cried, in a tremulous voice:

"A boon—a boon, my liege! Mercy for Sir Humphrey de Brionne!"

"How now? What is this?" said the King, looking at the sweet face, framed by the scarlet whimple that had fallen back from her shoulders. "Why claim you mercy, little one, for the greatest traitor in my realm?"

"Because," faltered Isobel, the colour coming and going, "though he be a traitor and cruel man, still, he is my father!"

A murmur of astonishment ran round the assembly, and no man was more astonished than Sir Humphrey himself; but, looking at her, his eye fell on a cross of gold, with a large ruby in the centre of it, that now hung suspended by a silver chain from the girl's neck.

"Where did you get that?" he exclaimed, pointing to the trinket.

"From the hand of her dead mother," said Swayne the Harper, stepping forward; "the wife who fled from your brutality, leaving her child in my care."

"Be silent, Humphrey de Brionne," said Richard. "Remorse is added to thy punishment! Stand forward, Sir Guy FitzHugh! All who are here pay heed to my words, gentle and simple alike. I spare thy life, Sir Humphrey de Brionne, for the sake of the sweet maid who asks it, but your title I give to the lad you wronged so deeply; and, lest I should seem to take away from Mistress Isobel what should be hers by right, in a twelvemonth and a day our good archbishop shall join their hands in wedlock, and they are both willing."

A tremendous shout went up from the outlaws; and, stepping forward, Guy took Isobel's trembling hand in his and raised it reverently to his lips.

"As for the monk," continued the King, with a withering glance of scorn at Anselm, who had fallen upon his knees, "the same boat that carries thy brother from England's shore shall bear thee also, and thy lands shall be given to the White Abbot of Epworth, a worthy man and true. Now, begone to banishment!"

And, without another word, the two brothers went swiftly from the council-chamber, ruined and broken men, yet thankful enough to have escaped with their lives.

Robert of Rouen, who had already enrolled himself under Richard's banner, was the first hand to grasp that of Guy, and his the first rough, soldierly words of congratulation.

By this time, thanks to the messengers that Robin Hood had despatched, loyal knights and nobles were speeding towards the Tower of London, and ere another sun should rise John's followers would be fled or flying. Baron, squire, and knight of the shire already thronged its stone staircase, and threatened to crowd the council-chamber to overflowing.

CHARGING THE GATES OF THE TOWER!



Friar Tuck pointed to the gateway. "Down with the tyrant!" he yelled. "On—on, my lads; in five minutes the fortress will be ours!" With a tremendous shout, the citizens followed him, and hurled themselves against the wooden barricade. (See this page.)

"By my halidame," said Robin Hood to Little John, "I fear me that some of the King's friends may prove to be our enemies, and I shall not be sorry to exchange these stone walls for the free air again."

Even as he spoke Richard turned towards him.

"And now, good Robin FitzOoth," cried the King, "before this goodly assembly I thank thee from my heart for the help thou hast given me. Speak up, man, and tell me how I can reward your valiant services!"

"My liege," said Robin, stepping forward, "the Earldom of Huntingdon is mine by right!"

But the words provoked an instant storm of disapproval from the barons and squires and knights of the shires, and a cry of "Outlaw!" rent the air.

"It grieves me sore that your request must go ungranted," said the King. "Ask me something else that I may give without offence to these brave gentlemen."

Robin looked round the throng and laughed aloud, seeing here a fat abbot whose money-bags he had plundered, and there some petty tyrant whom he had punished in his rough-and-ready way.

"My liege, the only other boon I crave is one that will please this company, since it will rid them of my distasteful presence. Outlaws we are and outlaws we must remain, though for loyalty to your person we will not yield an inch to belted earl or shaven abbot!"

And, bowing his head, Robin made a signal to his men, whereat the crowd of courtiers opened, leaving a passage-way clear to the door at the bottom of the council-chamber.

There was keen sorrow in the King's face and admiration in his eye as it rested on the stalwart figure of the great outlaw.

"Well, Robin FitzOoth, speak! And whatever 'tis you ask, Richard of England grants it!"

"It is but leave to pass, I and my followers, unmolested through the City gates and for one league beyond."

"'Tis but little enough," said the King.

"But we shall meet again. Thou art too brave a man to stand aloof from your sovereign!"

And, stretching forth his hand, the King took Robin's in his grasp. As the forester turned away, with a strange smile, Guy came forward quickly.

"Heaven bless thee, lad!" said the outlaw, wringing his hand.

Then one by one the lads in Lincoln green filed after their master, each one clasping hands with the young baron and doffing his cap to blushing Isobel.

Allan-a-Dale was the last to come forward. "Farewell, Allan-a-Dale!" said Guy. "You and I shall meet again!"

For a moment the young outlaw stood in the doorway; then he waved his hand, and the curtain closed upon him.

THE END.

(Now turn to page 26.)

THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION!

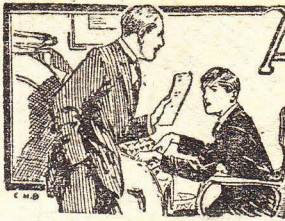
Full particulars of this Topping Competition will be found in this week's issue of the "Magnet"; Buy a copy and enter to-day!

THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COUPON, No. 13.

A footpad, in menacing manner,  
Ordered Bunter to give him a tanner.  
William George, though a funk,  
Resolved not to bunk—

THIS EXAMPLE WILL HELP YOU:  
So he screwed up his pluck—with a spanner!

THE POPULAR.—No. 233.



## A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

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But the great story, "The League of Seven!" has less to do with the gay and debonair Monmouth than with young Trevor. The duke thought he had the kingdom for the asking, and a few fights between the western seaboard and London. So it might have been if he had had as followers more fellows of the cut of young Trevor, the hero of our story, and Lavender, and their immediate friends.

I can honestly say that there is not a line of the story which does not merit close attention. The brilliant author shows us the working of this mysterious league. Not all the members were true men, true to the cause they had espoused, but the leading characters are seen plotting, fighting, prepared to lay down their lives for what they thought was the right.

One more word about the gallant Duke of Monmouth, and then I must pass on to the details of the new serial, which will make a fresh record for the good old "Popular." There was some reason for the false impression under which he laboured, for he had heard much during his wanderings in France and Holland of the rank unpopularity of the bigoted James. Moreover, at Lyme he was given a princely reception, and the men of Dorset and old Somersetshire extended right royal honours to the newcomer. A lot of the gentry were for him, too, but, be it

THE POPULAR.—No. 233.

noted, that some of the most loyal supporters of the man who would be king were from the plough, the fishing fleets, and the workshops. These stout-hearted fellows knew little of politics, and cared less, but they knew a man when they saw one, and the duke struck their fancy as a soldier, and not an aristocrat on stilts, who was too big for his boots. And these fine chaps proved their worth, and died by the hundred for the prince who thought he had a fighting chance of the crown.

But it is this LEAGUE—The LEAGUE OF SEVEN—which dominates this wonderful story. Its mysterious influence is felt far and wide. Its ramifications are tremendous. The whole country is astir, and uneasy because of something which is passing behind the ordinary events of the day. Nobody understands it, but there is immense disquiet on account of the LEAGUE OF SEVEN. Its power is known to be enormous. When it acts, its movements are dramatic and unerring. It does not fail. Keep your eye on the LEAGUE which works in the dark. Its enemies never realised their peril until the blow fell. The LEAGUE worked mysteriously, and its methods struck terror to the heart.

And now, how was it that young Trevor got caught up in the meshes of the LEAGUE OF SEVEN? That you will see in due course, and the chronicle of it will fascinate everybody.

Trevor was on his way to join the bodyguards of King James, in London, and chance throws him in the way of certain gentlemen around whom there is much mystery. Later Trevor comes to understand something about the LEAGUE. Circumstances draw him into its ranks.

The story opens up vistas of bravery and romance second to none in the history of

the old country. We see Trevor and Captain Lavender fighting shoulder to shoulder in all the skirmishes, and pitched battles which preceded the sweeping defeat, the grim tragedy of Sedgmoor, when the Duke of Monmouth was made prisoner and carried off to London, to meet his death at the hands of the headsmen on Tower Hill.

Sedgmoor would never have been had Monmouth listened to sage counsel. He wasted priceless time in being proclaimed in town after town on the march east. These delays enabled James' generals to get their forces together. Then there were traitors in the camp, as there must be. Trevor, in our story, is seen with his devoted comrades blotting out the errors of others, and struggling, up to the eleventh hour, to save the duke. It was not the chief members of the LEAGUE OF SEVEN who failed, but the few odd shilly-shally fellows who wavered, and shrank from the dread ordeal.

Trevor and the other members of the league are up to any ruse de guerre. Watch them outwitting the haughty leaders of the other side. See them in that breathless chase through the streets of old-time London. And again you have them as men—men who do not know when they are beaten, splendid adventurers and sportsmen who meet life gaily and unflinchingly.

It was a tragic summer, that of 1685. The Monmouth rising lasted something under a month—the weeks of sunshine between June and July. The scarlet poppies of the West Country fields marked the resting-places of the fine fellows who went down.

Of course, in this appealing yarn we find Judge Jeffreys, the brute in ermine, who visited with savage ferocity the crime of rebellion. He was a pest who met his deserts. As for Monmouth—he came over the seas to win a throne, and he lost. It is all, or nothing, as here.

Read this story. You will be thrilled, and it will make you think even more than before of Old England, even of those who made mistakes. For the man who never makes mistakes never makes anything at all.

## THE RESULT OF The "SURREY" CRICKET COMPETITION.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures. The first prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to the following competitor, whose solution contained one error:

GEO. CHAMBERS,

172, Dover Road,

Folkestone.

The second prize of £2 10s. has been divided between the following two competitors, whose solutions contained two errors each:

Walter Simmons, St. Catherine's, Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight.

John Hogben, 35, Bournemouth Road, Folkestone.

Ten competitors, with three errors each, are awarded the ten prizes of 5s. each:

Margaret Kirkham, 48, Kenilworth Road, Wallasey; William Dinnis, 19, West Terrace, Bomarsund, Stakeford, Northumberland; W. Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Frances Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; F. Bissell, 11, Gt. Sloop Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Rose Cooper, Ivy Cottage, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, Stourbridge; Albert Woodcock, 9, Warton Terrace, Bootle, Liverpool; Vincent Hilling, 4, St. Albans Road, Treherbert, Glam; D. A. Fowler, 17, Syr David's Avenue, Cardiff; J. Board, Dowell Street, Honiton, Devon.

### SOLUTION.

The Surrey County Cricket Club commenced in 1846, but the county had played matches nearly a hundred years earlier. Surrey shares with Yorkshire and Notts the distinction of having gained the championship eleven times. At present the Oval team is a very strong one, with such men as Fender, great hitter and versatile bowler, Hobbs, the globe's most renowned batsman, etc.

Drop a Line to Your Editor! He's Your Pal!

# A Word With Your Editor.

(Continued from previous page.)

## GREYFRIARS: "HARRY WHARTON & CO, IN FRANCE."

Next week's monster programme is crammed with special attractions. I am offering four magnificent school stories. The first deals with school life abroad. Harry Wharton & Co., the best known characters in fiction of the day, go to France. Why they go, and what comes of it, you will see next Tuesday. The Bounder takes a hand in the adventure. Peter Hazeldene is also on the stage, and Peter plunges head-over-heels into a most astounding drama, which bears a strong resemblance to a tragedy. You will say this yarn is as big a thing as we have ever had.

## CEDAR CREEK. "BOUND BY A PROMISE."

Here we have No. 2 of the complete stories of school life. It is another chapter in the life of the Backwoods chums. You get a glimpse of schooldays far away in the wilds. Frank Richards & Co. are met with in a thrilling adventure. These Cedar Creek tales are outstanding—full of sensation, and with a plentiful dash of humour. Just make a note of it that they are the only yarns of the kind on the market; next week's issue of the "Popular" contains a brilliant example of the grand series.

## ROOKWOOD: "MORNY SHOWS HIS HAND."

Next Tuesday's Rookwood story is of adventure at the school. The new Form leader starts his campaign against the blades of Rookwood who smoke in open defiance of the regulations. Valentine Mornington, since his elevation to his present position, has been something of a dark horse. Well, the dark horse runs a fine race this time. The delinquents are taught a lesson they are not likely to forget. There is a lot more in this amazing

yarn, and I should not dream of anticipating the interest, even if space permitted. It hums with excitement, and leaves you wanting more, which, after all, is the best proof of the right-down excellence of any story ever written. Keep your eyes on Mornington. Sometimes this character may have caused some slight disappointment. It will not be so next week, I promise you. Mornington is a deep-thinking, most sincere chap, and not one to ride the high horse without good cause. But, of course, he, like others, is afflicted by weak moments. It takes a very sterling fellow to maintain his popularity, and his authority at the same time. That's where strength of character comes in.

## ST. JIM'S: "THE OLD MAN OF THE MILL."

Our fourth splendid school story for Tuesday is a mystery one. You are never likely to meet a grippier mystery tale than this. It is eerie and appealing, and you get the uncanny impression of something terrible in the wind. It is as though a frightful tragedy were being enacted the other side of a curtain which could not be drawn aside. What of those eight juniors who slip out of St. Jim's in the dim watches of the night? Only two come back! I can recommend this vivid yarn with its curious undercurrent, and positively weird suggestiveness.

## "BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY."

The supplement next week is a real winner. The plump editor has laid himself out to score a signal success, and his funninesses are jollier and more captivating than ever. I know you always read the wisdom of Bunter. There ought to be a book containing the sage remarks of the Owl, but though that is for the present impossible, you can have the whipped cream of his observations week in, week out in the good old "Popular."

Your Editor.



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**94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.**  
THE POPULAR.—No. 233.

# THE HILLCREST HERO!

(Continued from page 17.)

presenting Kern Gunten with this rifle, and I trust— Bless my soul! What—what is—"

Bob Lawless, unable to restrain his wrath and disgust, rushed forward.

Gunten seemed to shrink a size smaller as the wrathful Bob rushed up to the master's desk, his face ablaze.

There was an angry exclamation from Old Man Gunten.

"Stand back, Lawless!"

An excited murmur rose.

"It's not true!" roared Bob Lawless. "If Gunten told them that at Silver Creek he told them lies! It was Frank Richards who chipped in and drove off the road-agents; and he's here to prove it!"

"What?" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Boy! How dare you!" shrieked Old Man Gunten furiously.

Bob's eyes blazed at the miserable hero of Hillcrest.

"I'm telling the truth!" he shouted. "Frank Richards did it, and he can tell you so himself! He's here! Come and tell them, Frank!"

The murmur grew to a roar.

This was news to Hillcrest, and, knowing Gunten as they did, they believed it much more easily than they had believed the story of Gunten's heroism.

"So that's it!" chuckled Dicky Bird. "I knew it was fishy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and tell them, Frank!" roared Bob Lawless. "Come and show up that lying skunk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Peckover's eyes met Mr. Gunten's.

Probably both of them realised that the indignant Bob was stating the facts. But

if they did they certainly did not intend to acknowledge it.

Mr. Gunten strode forward.

"Leave this school!" he thundered. "Outside at once! How dare you make a disturbance here? Go! Peckover, have them put out if they will not go!"

"Oh, we'll go fast enough!" said Bob disdainfully. "I've told you the truth! Look at the worm, and you can see whether he was lying!"

"Put them out!" roared Mr. Gunten. "Boys of Hillcrest, will you see your headmaster insulted? Put them out!"

The Hillcrest fellows probably did not care much for their respected headmaster, but they were ready for a row with Cedar Creek, anyhow.

There was a rush and a scuffle.

Dicky Bird and Fisher, however, escorted Molly and Kate with great politeness from the school-room.

"Ta-ta, you fellows!" sang out Dicky Bird, as the Cedar Creek party mounted. "We know it's true, Lawless—ha, ha! Old Man Gunten won't own it, but we know! We'll take ten cents for our hero!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. rode away, most of them laughing, but Bob still indignant.

Dicky Bird and the rest returned to the school-room for the conclusion of the somewhat impaired ceremony in recognition of the no longer admired hero of Hillcrest.

THE END.

(You simply must not miss next week's roaring backwoods story, "Bound by a Promise!" It's the real goods!)

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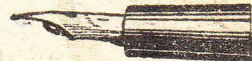
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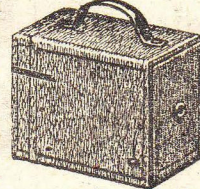
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