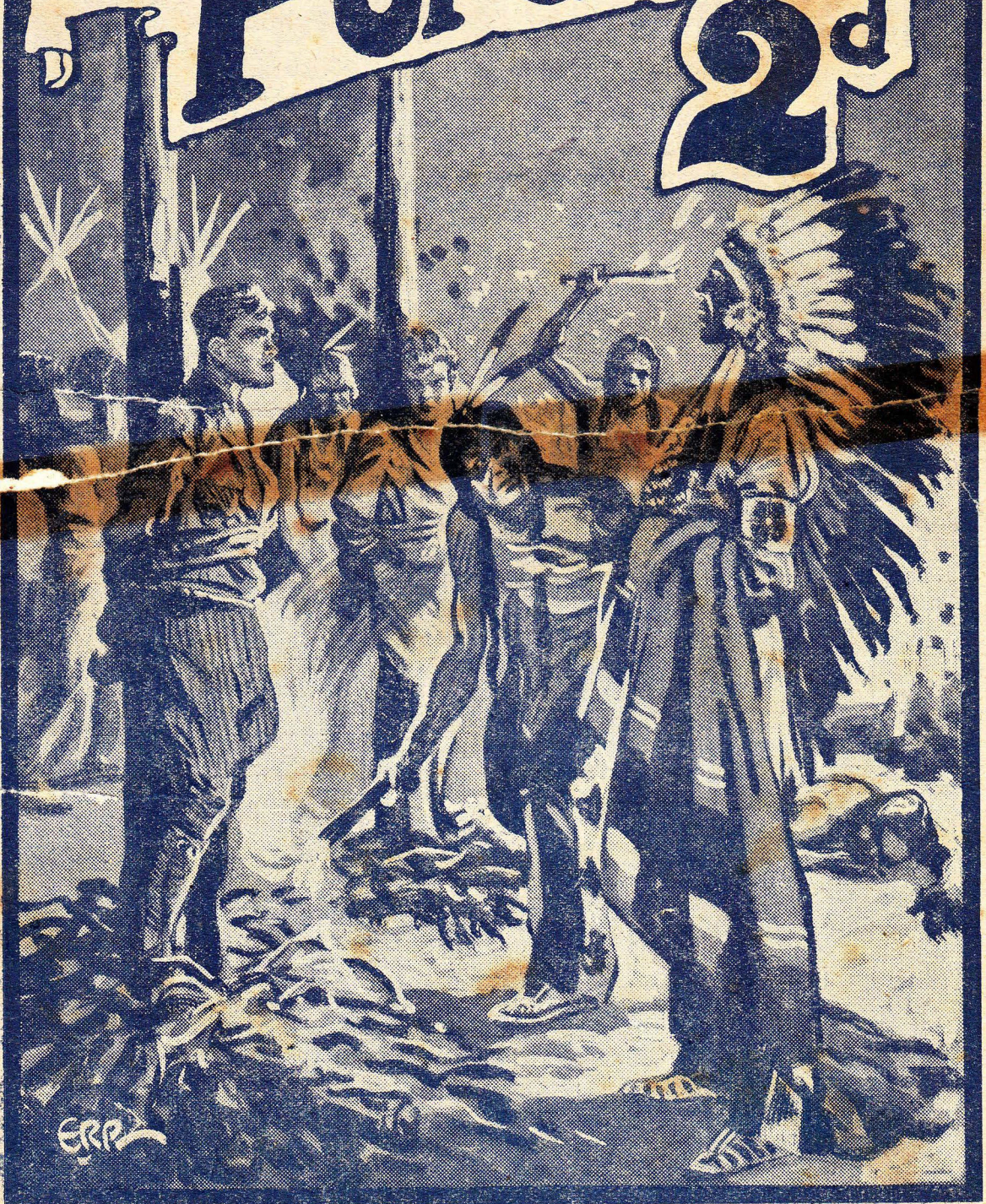


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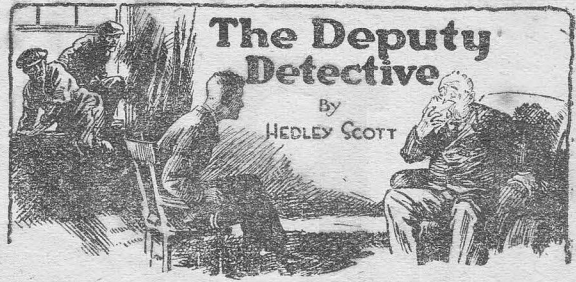


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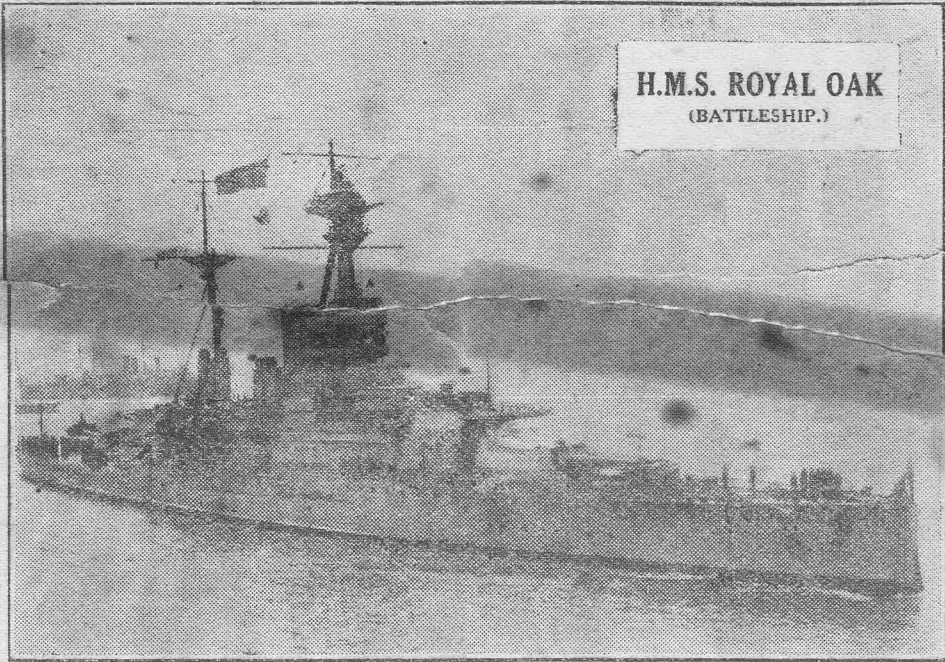
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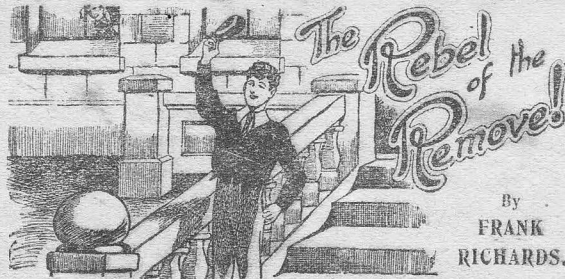
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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Troopers on the Trail!

GUESS that's the show!"

Sergeant Lasalle raised his riding-whip and pointed as he spoke.

Against the sky of black velvet, in the distance, a red glow danced and wavered and vanished and appeared again.

Vere Beauclerc watched it eagerly.

It was the reflection of a fire in the distance—evidently a huge bonfire to cast so wide a reflection.

Beauclerc and the sergeant were following a wild track in the hills, leading their horses, the footing being too uncertain for riding in the darkness of the night. Behind them came the five Canadian Mounted Police troopers, leading their steeds in single file.

Since leaving the camp of the liquor smugglers, the sergeant had lost the trail in the darkness, the traces left in the rocky soil being few and faint. He was seeking the Indian village, for which he was assured that the smugglers had headed. Beauclerc knew the direction in which it lay, but not its exact whereabouts; but the glow that suddenly danced in the sky was a sure guide.

"I guess they've got a big fire going," the sergeant remarked. "It's a jamboree, I reckon; and that shows pretty plainly that the fire-water has arrived. That's the Kootenay village yonder, my boy, and I guess the bootleggers are already there."

"It looks like it," said Beauclerc. "That's too big for a trapper's camp fire. If the bootleggers are there, Bob Lawless and Frank Richards are there, too."

"I guess so. Don't you worry, sonny," said the sergeant kindly. "I guess we shall find them all right. They're prisoners, that's sure; but I reckon we'll get there in time."

He paused.

The red glow in the sky was wider and more constant. Evidently the great fire in the Indian village was burning high. The jamboree was probably already in progress, and if the fire-water was flowing there was terrible danger for the white prisoners, though the Indians, when sober, would not have been likely to harm them. Under the influence of fire-water there was likely to be bloodshed among the Redskins themselves, and at such a time white prisoners would scarcely escape unhurt.

Vere Beauclerc realised that clearly, as well as the sergeant, and his anxiety for his chums deepened.

Sergeant Lasalle turned to his men and rapped out a brief word of command, and the troopers looked to their carbines.

It was very probable that the weapons would be needed if they arrived when the Redskins were in a state of intoxicated madness.

The little party rushed on.

They were threading their way over a rocky and precipitous hillside, descending into a valley where the Indian village lay.

In spite of their haste to get to the Kootenay village, it was impossible to proceed at more than a walk. But from the trackless rocks they came out at last into a beaten trail which ran almost directly towards the glow in the distance.

"Mount!" said the sergeant.

It was possible to ride now. This track was evidently the Indians' accustomed path to the village.

The party pushed on at a trot.

Redder and brighter grew the glow in the sky, and the sergeant's quick ears even detected the sound of distant yelling. It was plain that the Indian jamboree was in progress.

"Halt!" said Sergeant Lasalle suddenly.

The troopers stopped.

"I guess there's horsemen ahead of us on this trail," said the sergeant.

"Quiet! Dismount, and take cover!"

Vere Beauclerc's heart throbbed with impatience.

He was thinking of his two chums, prisoners in the lodges of the Redskins, at the mercy of the maddened savages.

"Sergeant Lasalle—" he muttered.

"Silence!"

Beauclerc was silent. He could hear no sound on the trail ahead, but it was evident that the quicker ears of the sergeant had warned him.

The troopers drew their horses aside from the trail, and tethered them in a clump of stunted pines.

Then, carbine in hand, they waited.

By that time Beauclerc and the rest could hear what the sergeant had heard—the sound of hoofs on the hard soil, and the jingling of stirrups and bridles.

In silence, finger on trigger, the Canadian troopers waited for the unseen horsemen to come up.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Indian Jamboree!

"FRANK, old chap!"

Bob Lawless rolled over and wriggled into a sitting posture, with his back to the lodge-pole.

After their desperate attempt to escape, dragged back into the village by the Redskins, Frank Richards and Bob Lawless had been thrown into the lodge. They were bound hand and foot with raw-hide thongs so securely that they could hardly move a limb. Their captors were taking no further risks with them.

Outside, the big fire was blazing, and the squaws were busy cooking buffalo-meat and other meats in preparation for the feast.

The cargo of fire-water, brought to the village by Hiram Hook and his gang, had been transferred to the lodge of the chief, Thunder Cloud.

Half a dozen armed braves stood guard over that lodge to keep the fire-water from pilfering hands.

Frank Richards could see the scene from where he lay in the lodge. He was no longer thinking of escape. The raw-hide thongs that cut cruelly into his flesh made that impossible.

The chums of Cedar Creek could but await their fate, whatever it was—and they feared the worst.

In any case, they would hardly have escaped with their lives when the Redskins became intoxicated, and their attempt had exasperated the savages.

"I guess it looks pretty bad for us, Frank," went on Bob Lawless. "I wonder where the old Cherub is now!"

"Poor old Beauclerc!" said Frank. "I'm glad he went back and didn't get landed with us, anyhow!"

"There's a chance yet," said Bob hopefully. "I'm sure that the sheriff of Thompson will clip in the minute Beauclerc tells him about the bootleg gang."

"It's no good thinking of that, Bob," said Frank Richards quietly. "He couldn't possibly get here before to-morrow, if at all."

Bob was silent.

Neither of the chums knew that Vere Beauclerc had fallen in with a party of Canadian Mounted Police in search of the bootleggers, and had not gone to Thompson at all. Had they only known it, it would have cheered them and given them hope.

"That villain Hook will set the Redskins

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on us, if he can," said Frank. "We hurt him in trying to get away—"

"The pesky rascal!" said Bob bitterly. "I guess I almost wish I had finished him."

"Here he comes."

The buffalo-robe at the opening of the lodge was dragged aside, and the leader of the bootleggers looked in.

Hiram Hook's bearded face was pallid, and he stood a little unsteadily.

In the struggle, before the chums of Cedar Creek had made their attempt at escape, the ruffian had been struck down, and although his wound was not very serious, it was painful. His shoulder was thickly bandaged under his coat.

His eyes glittered down at the bound schoolboys under his thick, beetling brows.

"I guess you won't get loose agin," he said. "I guess you'll be sorry you tried to stick me, young Lawless!"

"I'm sorry it's turned out no worse," answered Bob Lawless. "But you'll get hanged some day, that's one comfort!"

Hiram Hook scowled and strode into the lodge and dealt the rancher's son a heavy kick.

"I guess that will stop your tongue," he remarked.

Bob's eyes gleamed at him, but he made no answer.

Hook waved his hand towards the blazing fire and the throng of Redskins gathered round it.

"They're beginning," he said. "I reckon they'll soon be through the feast, and then the whisky will begin to flow. Do you know what's going to happen then?"

No answer.

"I was goin' to leave you hyer to take your chance," continued the bootlegger. "I guess it would have been a mighty poor chance when the Reds got mad. But I've fixed it up for you now; I've bargained with old Thunder Cloud to fix you when I'm gone. Understand that?"

"I know you're brute enough for anything!" said Frank Richards.

"I guess you're going to pay for this," said Hiram Hook, touching his wounded shoulder. "You'll pay for it arter I'm gone; I'm having no hand in it. I'm getting out now. I'm finished my trade with the Injuns, and I guess this hyer village won't be healthy for white men when the Injuns get the pi'son aboard. I reckon they'd murder me as soon as you when they're drunk. I'm lighting out—and arter I'm gone you two aire going to have front place in the jamboree. The Injuns ain't mad enough to fetch you yet; but jest you wait till they're full of tanglefoot!"

With that the ruffian turned and strode out of the lodge.

Bob Lawless was tugging at his raw-hide bonds, but he tugged in vain.

"By gum!" he muttered. "I guess I'd have liked to get my hands on that scallywag, Frank!"

"I suppose he means what he says, Bob," said Frank Richards. "He's brute enough for anything. But, anyhow, the Indians wouldn't have let us alone when they were drunk."

"I guess not."

The chums of Cedar Creek continued to watch the scene without, through the opening of the lodge.

The Redskins were gathered about the great fire, and the feast was already going on.

Hiram Hook and his followers, the three half-breeds, were making their preparations for departure.

But for the wound Hiram Hook received in his struggle with the schoolboys, the bootleggers would have been gone already.

Now they were in a hurry to get clear.

Hiram Hook and Black Henri examined the packs on the mules, and then mounted their horses. The other two half-breeds had joined the Indian feast, but Hook called them away, with oaths and threats; and the four rascals mounted at last and started.

The bootleggers rode away into the night, and vanished from the sight of the prisoners in the lodge.

"They're gone!" muttered Bob Lawless. "It's rotten to think of those rascals getting clear, Frank, after the harm they've done."

The chums continued to watch.

They observed that some of the squaws had collected up all the weapons of the braves and taken them away, a proceeding that rather puzzled Frank Richards at first.

But Bob Lawless, who knew more of the customs of the Redskins, explained it.

"That's always a preliminary to a fire—

water jamboree," said Bob. "As soon as they're full they'll begin to quarrel and fight, and if they had knives and tomahawks at hand half the village would be wiped out before the morning. They know what's coming, you see, and they always have the weapons put in a safe place before they start drinking. As it is, I guess two or three will get killed by midnight."

Frank shuddered.

"And that villain brings that stuff to them for a rotten profit, knowing the harm it does!" he muttered. "It's as bad as murder!"

"I guess it's quite as bad. Hallo! There they come with the fire-water."

The weapons having been taken away, and doubtless concealed in a safe place out of reach of the braves, some of the squaws were bearing the whisky jars from the chief's lodge to the feasters.

The jars were set down, and then the squaws turned from the scene—probably to seek safety for themselves in the wild scene that was to follow.

The jars passed among the Indians, in solemn silence at first, but as the fiery liquid was poured down the throats, the silence and gravity of the Redskins speedily disappeared.

A babel of voices arose, guttural shouting and singing soon mingled with threats and angry looks.

Some of the Redskins started a wild dance round the fire, several of them snatching flaming brands from the fire, which they waved in the air as they danced.

The jamboree was growing fast and furious now.

Frank Richards and his comrade watched, with throbbing hearts. At present they seemed to have been utterly forgotten, but at any minute, they knew, the Redskins might remember them. And then—

"Hallo, they're going it!" muttered Bob.

The first quarrel was in progress.

Two braves, with flaming eyes, were gesticulating furiously at one another, with a great deal of words, taunts, and noise in the Kootenay dialect.

Some of the Redskins gathered round them, urging them on; others continued to drink or dance, without regarding them.

The two disputants soon proceeded from words to blows.

They closed and struggled, and each groped at his belt for the knife that, fortunately, was no longer there. But for the general disarming the Redskins two dead men would have fallen in a minute more. As it was, they fought with hands and feet and teeth, like a couple of wild cats, rolling on the ground and yelling with fury.

The schoolboys watched the scene, spell-bound.

One of the combatants tore himself loose and snatched a half-burnt log from the fire. He dealt his adversary a stunning blow with that weapon, stretching him senseless on the ground.

Then he turned to the nearest whisky jar. There was a sudden howl among the Redskins, and two or three of them left the rest and started towards the white prisoners.

Frank Richards' eyes met Bob's.

"They're coming, old chap!" muttered Bob huskily.

The howling Redskins burst into the lodge, and the next moment the two prisoners were seized and dragged out.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Roped In!

"HALT!"

Sergeant Lasalle rapped out the word.

Hiram Hook gave a violent start, and an oath left his lips.

The four bootleggers, with the pack mules, had ridden down the track from the Indian village, intending to be a good many miles away in the mountains before morning.

Not for a moment had Hiram Hook suspected that there was danger for him. He did not even believe Bob Lawless' statement that his chum had gone to Thompson for the sheriff; but, even if that were true, Hook knew that help from Thompson could not possibly reach the Indian village before morning. He was utterly taken by surprise when a sharp voice ordered him to halt, and six sturdy figures in scarlet coats loomed up round the party in the dim starlight.

The carbines were levelled, and the bootleggers were covered before they knew that foes were at hand.

"Hands up!"

Promptly enough, up went the hands of Black Henri and the other two half-breeds.

Even in the gloom they knew the scarlet coats of the Canadian North West Mounted Police, and they knew better than to offer resistance to those doughty paladins of the frontier.

But Hiram Hook was made of sterner stuff. Capture meant a long term of imprisonment. That was one of the risks of his peculiar profession.

After the first instant of surprise the bootlegger drove his spurs into his horse's flanks.

To abandon his packs, which represented all the profits of his rascally expedition, was a heavy blow. But he was only thinking of his liberty, which was more precious than even his profits.

He dashed on savagely, in the hope of bursting through the ambush and escaping in the darkness.

But it was too late to be.

Crack!

A single shot rang out, and Hiram Hook's horse pitched forward on its knees and rolled over.

The bootlegger was thrown from the saddle and sprawled, half stunned, on the rocks.

Before he could collect his scattered senses a trooper had him by the back of the neck, and a revolver was pressed to his temple.

"I guess this is where you pass, pardner," drawled the Canadian trooper.

Hiram Hook "guessed" so, too.

"Let up!" he gasped.

"Hands—sharp!" said the trooper, and, as Hook was slow to obey, he gave him a playful tap with the barrel of the revolver.

The bootlegger sullenly put his hands together, and the handcuffs closed on his wrists and clicked.

He sat up dazedly, handcuffed and helpless. Black Henri and the others had dismounted obediently, and were handcuffed also.

The capture was complete.

"I guess it's a clean round-up," said Sergeant Lasalle. "Now we'll see who these beauties are, though I reckon there isn't much doubt. Show a light on this rascal. He seems the only white man here."

A lantern gleamed on Hook's savage face.

The sergeant eyed him keenly.

"Look hyer! What does this hyer mean?" demanded Hiram Hook. He had a faint hope yet of getting through by bluster. "Who aire you, anyhow?"

"Don't you know our uniforms?" smiled the sergeant. "You ought to know the North-West M.P. when you see them."

"I guess so, now I look at you," said Hook. "You couldn't expect me to see in the dark, like a cat, sergeant. What have you stopped me for?"

"Bootlegging," answered the sergeant crisply.

"I guess I don't know anything about it, and I'll tell you this—I'll let you hear of this again at Kamloops," said Hook blusteringly. "You can't ambush a peaceful trader like this hyer, sergeant, and shoot his critter. Somebody's got to pay for that hoss!"

"Why didn't you stop when called on, then?" demanded the sergeant.

"I guess I reckoned you was rustlers holding me up," answered Hiram Hook. "I can't see in the dark."

"Your pards seem to know us pretty well,"



answered the sergeant dryly. "What's in those packs?"

"Pelts—bought from the Injuns for ready money," answered Hiram Hook. "I guess you won't find nothing else."

"Not bought for smuggled fire-water?"

"Nope!"

"If you can prove that, all the better for you," said Sergeant Lasalle. "You're not the party that dropped a couple of whisky-jars on the prairie and left them behind at night?"

"I guess not."

"We shall see. You haven't seen anything of two schoolboys in these hills to-day?"

Hiram Hook started.

"Schoolboys!" he repeated. "I guess I shouldn't be looking for schoolboys in this quarter, sergeant. You're dreaming, sure!"

"He's lying, sergeant!" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc. "Here are the horses."

"What?"

"My friends' horses are here," said Beauclerc. "I know them well enough. This is Frank Richards' horse, and that's Bob Lawless'. How does he come to have their horses with him? Ask him that."

Beauclerc had looked at once at the two led horses, guessing to whom they belonged, and he had recognised Frank's and Bob's steeds immediately.

The sergeant gave a grim laugh.

"You're sure of the horses, kid?" he asked.

"I know them as well as I know my own," answered Beauclerc.

"How did you come by those horses, my friend?" asked the sergeant, fixing his eyes on the bootlegger.

"I guess we bought them off the Injuns, too. They had some hosses to sell; and if they're stolen hosses, I guess that ain't my funeral. I bought 'em fair and square."

"Well, you've only got to prove that, and you'll be all O. K.," said the sergeant sarcastically. "There's plenty of law in Canada—more than you'll want, I reckon. If you're not the party of bootleggers I've been looking for for three or four days I'll eat my Stetson—and I reckon I sha'n't have to do that!"

"Where are my friends?" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc, coming to the handcuffed bootlegger.

"What have you done with them?"

"No good asking me; I ain't seed hide nor hair of them," said the bootlegger. "I bought them hosses fair and square, and that's all I know about it."

"Are they still living?" asked the sergeant sternly.

"Ask me another, sergeant. Don't I keep on telling you I don't know nothing about them?"

"We'll get nothing out of him," said the sergeant. "Bind the lot of them to these trees, my lads, and we'll get on."

"I guess I'll have the law on you for this, sergeant!" blustered Hiram Hook.

"You're welcome to!" answered the sergeant dryly.

The four rascals were tied to the trees with their own trail-ropes, to keep them secure while the troopers pushed on. The horses were tethered close at hand.

Then the troopers remounted their own steeds, and rode on towards the Indian village.

Hiram Hook gazed after them, with bitter rage in his heart.

He had a savage hope that the two prisoners in the Kootenay village had already been placed beyond the power of telling the facts; though, even so, he had little chance of avoiding his just punishment. For whether Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were found or not, there was plenty of evidence in the village that a cargo of contraband liquor had arrived there that night, and the proof against the bootleggers was clear enough.

In fact, Hiram Hook realised that his bootlegging career had come to a sudden and complete termination, and that the prospect before him was one of hard labour within stone walls; and the fact that he richly deserved it was no comfort to him. As the Canadian troopers rode away the ruffian spat out impotent curses into the night.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Saved from the Flames!

FRANK RICHARDS and his comrade gave themselves up for lost as the Redskins dragged them from the lodge.

The scene in the Indian village was almost indescribable now.



JUST IN TIME! Right through the yelling Redskins to the fire Beauclerc rode his horse, and sprang down before it had stopped. In a second he was springing towards his chums, knife in hand. (See Chapter 4.)

Some of the Redskins had drunk themselves senseless, and lay on the ground, breathing stertorously. Others were staggering to and fro; others, again, still helping themselves from the whisky-jars. In two or three places infuriated braves were fighting with one another amid a hurricane of yells and shrieks.

A crowd of the liquor-maddened ruffians gathered round the two prisoners as they were dragged forth. In the midst of a howling mob, the chums of Cedar Creek were swept towards the fire.

Thunder Cloud, the chief, was sitting on a log, drinking from a horn goblet, with some of his stately dignity still in his manner. He lifted his head and looked at the prisoners as they were dragged past him. And Bob Lawless shouted to him:

"Chief! Stop them!"

Thunder Cloud shook his head with drunken gravity.

Sober, he would never have allowed the two schoolboys to be done to death in his village, having too well-founded a respect for the white man's Government and the red-coated police of the North-West Frontier. But he was not sober now. Thunder Cloud was as intoxicated as any of the howling savages round him. All fear of the possible consequences—indeed, all power of considering the consequences at all—had left him.

"Paleface dog!" he answered. "You shall die! Your scalps shall hang on the pole of my wigwam!"

He addressed the braves in their own tongue, evidently giving an order.

There was a howl of approval from the excited savages.

Some of the braves rushed away, and returned with two lodge-poles, which were jammed in the ground and set up near the fire.

Held by half a dozen of the Redskins, Bob and Frank watched the preparations, with sickness in their hearts.

All hope had left them now.

They knew what the lodge-poles were being set up for; they were to serve as torture-stakes, where the prisoners were to perish in the flames, according to the ancient custom of the "noble savage" before the white man came to the country.

As soon as the poles were set up the two schoolboys were bound to them in an upright position with raw-hide thongs.

They were only six feet apart, and the two chums looked at one another, with white faces.

Brushwood and faggots were stacked round them, and an Indian caught a flaming branch from the fire to set light to the pyres.

"Good-bye, Frank, old man!" muttered Bob Lawless hoarsely.

Thunder Cloud stepped forward, staggering a little, and waved back the Indian with the flaming brand.

He put his hand to his belt for a scalping-knife, but there was no knife there. In his drunken stupidity, the chief did not seem to remember the disarmament that had taken place, though it was an invariable Indian custom. He groped and groped for a knife, blinking round owlishly for it in a way that would have been comic under less fearful circumstances.

The old ruffian evidently intended to "raise the hair" of the prisoners before they were sacrificed, and add the ghastly trophies to those already adorning his lodge-pole.

In the pause in the proceedings a sound came from the silence of the night surrounding the Indian village—a sound that struck upon the hearts of the prisoners.

It was the staccato beat of hoofs upon a hard soil.

Gallop, gallop, gallop!

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless stared in the direction of the sound—the sound of galloping horses.

Was it possible—

Was it, perhaps, the bootleggers returning, or a new party of Redskins arriving for the feast, or the wild hope thrilled in their hearts—was it help that was coming?

The Redskins did not seem to observe—or, at least, to heed—the sound in their savage excitement.

All eyes in the ferocious throng were fastened upon the prisoners bound to the stakes, and on the savage old ruffian groping for the knife that he could not find.

Thunder Cloud's dizzy brain seemed to grasp the fact at last that he had no knife,

and he stepped back and signed to the man with the brand to set fire to the piles.

The Indian came forward, having relighted the branch in the fire.

Gallop! Gallop!

The horsemen were nearer now.

The burning brand came closer to Frank Richards; he was to be the first victim.

The light had almost touched the pile of brushwood, when a rifle-shot rang out, and the Indian gave a fierce howl and toppled over.

The brand dropped on the ground, a foot or less from the pile to which it had been about to be set.

It flamed and smoked there, while the man who had dropped it rolled and howled helplessly, his leg broken by the bullet that had struck him.

The shot and the sudden fall of the Indian had a startling effect on the Redskins. They spun round and stared in the direction whence the shot had come blankly, evidently utterly astonished.

Gallop! Gallop!

The horses' hoofs were thundering now, and the riders were clear in the light from the great fire—six scarlet-coated horsemen and a schoolboy, riding at frantic speed. Sergeant Lasalle was ahead, with a smoking carbine in his hand. It was evidently the sergeant who had fired the timely shot that saved Frank Richards.

Vere Beauclerc caught sight of the two figures bound to the stakes, and waved his hand, and urged on his black horse to frantic speed. He passed the sergeant, and dashed on into the midst of the Indians with utter recklessness.

There were yells and howls as the black horse dashed the Redskins aside, knocking down four or five of them, and dashing across them, ere the startled crowd cleared back out of the way of the rush.

Right up to the fire Beauclerc dashed, and he sprang from his horse before it had stopped.

In a second he was springing towards his chums, knife in hand.

He hardly seemed to note the presence of the Redskins at all, but it was fortunate for him that the six Mounted Police were there.

A howl of rage and defiance rose from some of the Redskins, and had they been armed it is probable that a desperate affray would have taken place. Fortunately for them, as well as for the troopers, they were without weapons.

Some of the bolder braves sprang at the horsemen as they dashed up, and were knocked away with the butts of carbines and stretched on the ground. But the greater part of the Redskins scattered before the charge of the troopers, fleeing among the lodges to escape the horses' hoofs. Sergeant Lasalle had warned his men not to fire unless it was strictly necessary, and it was not needed.

While the troopers were scattering the crowd of Indians, Vere Beauclerc dragged away the brushwood piles, and slashed through the raw hide that bound his chums.

One Redskin made a spring at him with clutching hands, and Sergeant Lasalle dealt the wretch a blow on the jaw that sent him spinning, and laid him on his back.

In a few minutes Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were free. The Redskins, with loud howls, were scattering on all sides, driven headlong by the riding-whips of the troopers.

"It's the Cherub!" gasped Bob Lawless, hardly realising whether he was awake or dreaming. "Beauclerc, old chap—"

"Beau, old man!" panted Frank Richards. He grasped one of Beauclerc's hands and Bob the other.

"Thank Heaven we arrived in time!" breathed Beauclerc. "Oh! When—when I saw you—and that villain going to set fire to the wood—"

He broke off, panting, almost overcome by his emotion.

Sergeant Lasalle came towards the two rescued schoolboys, and shook hands with them.

"Safe and sound—eh?" he asked genially. "We didn't get here any too soon, I guess."

"Just in time to save our lives, sergeant," answered Bob Lawless. "I guess I've never been so glad to see a red coat before."

"Same here," said Frank Richards. "But how the thump did you get the Mounted Police here, Beauclerc?"

"I fell in with them riding to Thompson. They were coming up the Thompson Valley, looking for the bootleggers," explained Beauclerc. "They came on at once with me."

"Jolly lucky for us they did!" said Frank Richards. "But the bootleggers are gone, sergeant. They've been gone a good hour."

The sergeant laughed.

"Don't you worry about the bootleggers, sonny," he said. "We've got them. They walked right into our hands."

"And we found your horses with them," explained Beauclerc. "They wouldn't tell us anything, but we knew you must be here."

"You've got Hiram Hook?" exclaimed Bob Lawless joyfully. "You've roped in that bulldozer?"

"It is his name's Hook we've got him," answered the sergeant. "I guess this means ten years for him. You boys can swear to his bringing the liquor here, eh?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Thank goodness that rascal hasn't got away!" said Frank Richards. "He's the cause of the trouble here. The Indians would never have harmed us but for the fire-water. Bob, old chap, we shall see Cedar Creek again, after all."

"I guess I never reckoned I should ten minutes ago," said Bob Lawless. "Hurrah!"

That night—or the remainder of it—Frank Richards and Bob spent in the lodge where they had lain as prisoners. Vere Beauclerc shared the lodge with them, and the sergeant and the troopers camped by the fire. There was not much sleep for any of them, but they rested well on their guard. Two troopers were sent to bring in Hiram Hook

(Continued on page 10.)

FISH THAT SHOCK YOU!

By N. TOURNEUR.

"FISH shock me? No, not likely, at all, at all!" is the reply usually given to this question. Yet there are fish that can, and do, shock you in more ways than one. More than one of them can make you jump, and one in particular can sting sharper than any gnat or bee or wasp—sting like a red-hot iron.

The "Balloon Fish," or "Tetradon," found among the rocks of the Comoro Islands, gives you a shock of electricity that makes you drop it into the water again, where it immediately takes the shape of a balloon, and scuttles off at a tremendous speed. It is not so savage, though, as the stinging ray, which lives off the coast of South America, and is so deadly that it has been known to kill a man. It has a black-looking, flat body, that is not only ugly to look at, but contains a whole battery of lances ready to attack. These lances or spines run along the length of the body, which sometimes is as much as fifteen feet broad. When the fish is attacked, it bends itself round so that the tip of its nose almost touches the end of its tail, then it lashes out, and gives terrible wounds with its spines. Luckily, the stinging ray keeps at the bottom of the sea as a rule.

In the Mediterranean is a high fish much dreaded by the fishermen and sailors of Greece and Italy and Spain. Many a strange yet true story do they tell about it. The "Torpedo Fish," named thus because of the shape of its body, that resembles a torpedo flattened out, is charged with electricity. When you are fishing in the Mediterranean, you may get so strong a shock from it touching your line that your arm and shoulders are made rigid as steel.

Yet a weak thing is the "Torpedo Fish" in comparison with the "Electric Eel," that gives most powerful shocks. The machine Nature has given it to produce the electricity is most curious. It is made up of a number of tubes, and it is rather like a piece of honeycomb. These tubes take up the entire length of the body between the upper and under surface of it, and thick, sticky stuff is found in them. As can be imagined, the "Electric Eel" is very much dreaded by its neighbours.

In South America this fish not only gives you a violent electric shock, but often prevents travellers from passing over a river or a lagoon unless a boat or canoe is at hand. The "Gymnotus electricus" it is called, and it is found in various regions of that wonderful continent. Long before the Portuguese and Spaniards came to South America the Indians made use of this electrical fish to tame their wild buffaloes and other animals. They would take the most unruly beast and drive it into a lagoon, or pond, or shallow river where it was known the fish was in great numbers, and under the influence of the shocks it got it would come out tamed and very easy to be managed.

So, after all, there are fish which can make you jump.

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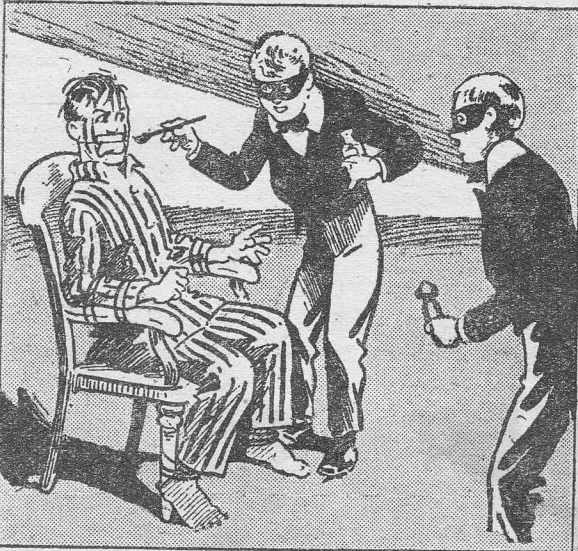
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WAR AGAINST THE BULLY!

Jimmy Silver & Co. have stood the tyrannical rule of the Bully of the Sixth far too long, and it is no great surprise to their form-fellows when they rebel. Mark Carthew is made to suffer for his many sins!



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Warned!

TAP! "Who's there?" growled Knowles of the Sixth. Knowles' study door was locked. There were four Sixth-Formers in the study—Knowles and Frampton and Catesby of the Modern Side, and Carthew of the Classical Sixth. And as the four "sportsmen" of Rookwood had met for a little game of poker, it was very necessary for the door to be locked.

Even Mr. Manders, with whom Knowles was a favourite, would have been surprised and shocked and exceedingly wrathful if he had known how his favourite prefect was occupied just then.

On such occasions it was Knowles' cautious habit to lock his door, and it was not likely to be opened until cards and cigarettes had been swept out of sight.

So when the tap came at the study door Cecil Knowles only growled out: "Who's there?" instead of "Come in!" There was no answer to the question from outside.

Knowles & Co. removed their cigarettes from their mouths with a touch of trepidation.

It was always possible that Mr. Manders might drop in unexpectedly, and such possibilities gave a certain thrill to the "sportive" life of a "sportsman" at Rookwood School.

"Hallo! Somebody's slippin' a letter under the door!" ejaculated Frampton.

"What the thump!" muttered Knowles. The four seniors stared in astonishment at an envelope that came sliding under the door.

There was a footstep outside, and then silence.

"My hat!" murmured Carthew. Knowles rose to his feet.

"Some joke of the fags, I suppose," he said, knitting his brows. "I'll—"

"Don't open the door!" exclaimed Catesby hastily. And he waved his hand to the cards and smokes on the table. "Get that little lot out of sight first. If somebody was passing and—"

"Only a fag!" said Carthew. "We don't want a fag to see this turn-out," said Catesby dryly. "Keep the door shut, Knowles!"

Knowles nodded. Without opening the door, he stooped and picked up the envelope that lay just inside and glanced at it.

"It's addressed to you, Carthew," he said, "and us, too, apparently. What the thump does it mean?"

He held up the envelope for his companions to look.

It was addressed in Roman capitals with a brush, evidently for the purpose of concealing the "fist" of the writer.

The address was "Carthew & Co." "Some fag's cheek!" growled Catesby.

"Dodd or Doyle, perhaps. They may guess that a little game's going on here—they're rather sharp young rascals—and that we wouldn't open the door in a hurry—"

"Open the letter!" said Carthew. Knowles slit the envelope.

A small sheet of cardboard was inside, and upon it was traced a message in capitals with a brush and Indian ink.

Carthew gritted his teeth as he saw it. He had seen that kind of message before, and he had half-expected it. But it was new to the Modern Sixth-Formers. The message ran:

"BULLIES! BEWARE! THE HOUR IS AT HAND!"

By order,
THE ROOKWOOD SECRET SOCIETY."

"What thunderin' idiot—" began Frampton, in amazement. Knowles blinked at the card.

"I—I suppose it's a joke of some kid who's been to the pictures, and got them on the brain," he said. "I'll find out who did this and skin him! Dodd or Cook or Doyle, I dare say!"

Carthew bit his lip hard. "You've seen nothin' of that kind before?" he asked.

"Nothin'. Have you?" "Yes."

"Oh, this comes from the Classical side, then?" exclaimed Knowles.

"I believe so, though some of the Modern fags may be in it," said Carthew. "I've had half a dozen notices like that in my study over in the School House."

"Oh gad! And who's done it?" "I don't know. It's some kid working a sort of cinema stunt on us, of course. There's no such thing as a Rookwood Secret Society," said Carthew. "I suspected Jimmy Silver at first—"

"Just the fellow!" "Only one of the cards was put in my study while I was interviewing him in his study—"

"Oh!" "I don't know what it is. Of course, it can't go any further than this," said Carthew. "There's nothin' in the threat."

Knowles laughed. "I don't think the Rookwood Secret Society, whoever he is, would care to try to handle the Sixth!" he remarked.

"Of course not. Only—only it's a beastly worry," said Carthew. "This sort of thing gets on a fellow's nerves in the long run."

The Painted Prefect!

A Splendid Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the famous tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every Monday.)

I wish we'd seen the young cad who put that under the door."

"Too late now!" said Knowles carelessly. "Let's have our game!"

He tossed the warning of the Rookwood Secret Society into the fire, and the three Modern seniors dismissed the matter for their minds for the present.

Mark Carthew did not find it so easy to dismiss it.

It was, as he had said, getting on his nerves. The persecution of the so-called Secret Society was beginning to harass him.

He was the most unpopular prefect at Rookwood, and most of the Lower School had long scores against him for bullying. His methods had made him so many enemies, in fact, that it was simply not possible for him to guess the identity of the author of these mysterious missives. It might have been any one of the fifty or sixty fellows.

"Play up, Carthew!" "Oh, all right!" grunted the Classical prefect.

The game of poker went on. Carthew dismissed the Rookwood Secret Society from his mind at last in the interest of the game.

For half an hour nothing was heard in Knowles' study but the patter of the cards and a few remarks in connection with the game, and the occasional scratch of a match to light a cigarette. Four faces bent greedily over the cards in unhealthy excitement, looking strangely old for their years. Carthew was the first to "quit."

He rose to his feet with a sullen brow, his supply of cash having passed over to Knowles & Co.—chiefly to Knowles. Cecil Knowles was a great expert in card games, and his successes did not always endear him to his "sportive" associates.

"Chuckin' it, old bean?" asked Knowles blandly.

"Yes; I've some work to do in my study." "Right-ho!"

Knowles rose and unlocked the door, opening it wide enough for Carthew to pass out, and then closing it again. The three Modern seniors resumed their game. Mark Carthew went down the passage, and scowled at Tommy Dodd & Co. on the stairs, for no reason excepting that he was feeling sulky and "down" and the three Tommies looked very cheery. Then he walked out of Mr. Manders' house into the quadrangle.

There was a mist from the sea in the old quad of Rookwood, and the ancient beeches were hidden from sight. Carthew strode along without a pause, however. Nothing was further from his mind than the thought of danger. He was taken utterly

THE POPULAR.—No. 312.

by surprise when there came a sudden rush of feet in the gloom, and he was seized on all sides, and came down on his back with a crash.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. In Mysterious Hands!

"O Hi!" Carthew spluttered as he came down.

Four pairs of hands were upon him, gripping him tight, and he had simply no chance of resistance.

A knee was jammed on his chest as he sprawled on his back. Both his wrists were intently gripped.

"What—what—a-at—" spluttered Carthew.

"Silence!" Carthew opened his mouth to shout.

"Groooogh!" he spluttered. Something was thrust into his mouth to silence him. From its taste, he guessed that it was an oily rag picked up in the bike-shed.

It effectively silenced him.

His intended shout spluttered away into a gurgle.

He struggled, but in vain. He felt a cord being looped over his wrists, and resisted furiously; but the cord was looped on and drawn tight. Then his ankles were shackled with another cord, with a length of about a dozen inches between his feet to give him just freedom to shuffle along. Then he was dragged to his feet.

"March!"

It was a deep bass voice that spoke, but Carthew knew that it was the disguised voice of a junior.

He could not make out his assailants, but their height told him that they were members of some Form below the Fifth.

Each of them had his face covered with a cardboard mask, fastened with a string at the back of the head—a complete disguise.

Eye-holes were cut in the masks, and through them the eyes looked with a glittering effect.

Carthew, bound and helpless, and gripped by four pairs of hands, glared helplessly at his captors.

"March!" repeated the deep voice.

"You young hounds—" he mumbled under the gag.

"Kick him!"

The order was promptly obeyed.

One of the masked assailants stepped back, and landed with his boot on Carthew with a loud thud.

The Classical prefect spluttered and staggered.

"Now march!"

"I—groogh—I—grrrrrrh!"

"Kick him again!"

Thud!

"Gr-r-r-r-r-rh!"

Carthew decided to march. Evidently he was in the hands of the Amalekites, and there was no mercy for him. He marched.

Carthew guessed by this time that it was the "secret society" of Rookwood that was dealing with him.

His surmise that the mysterious messages came from one junior, who was playing a trick on him learned from the "picture," was evidently ill-founded.

There were four at least of the Rookwooders in this affair—that was clear. He wondered if there were more.

The secret society led him away from the lighted windows into the darkness of the quadrangle.

They passed under the old beeches, and Carthew found himself bumped up against a damp tree-trunk.

Here he made another attempt at resistance, and the chief rapped out his order again.

"Kick him!"

Thud! came a boot.

Carthew gurgled, and ceased to resist.

A cord was run round the tree, and tied to the prefect's wrists on either side of the trunk.

Then the captors stepped back, and a chuckle was audible from under the cardboard masks.

Carthew stood against the tree, a helpless, dumb prisoner, and glared at the quartette.

He had a strong suspicion that they were Jimmy Silver & Co., the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth; but there was nothing to give a clue to their identity.

"Carthew!" said the deep voice.

Gurgle!

THE POPULAR.—No. 312.

"Do you know in whose hands you are?"

Gurgle!

"You are in the hands of the Secret Society of Rookwood."

Gurgle!

"You are being addressed by the Grand Master."

Gurgle!

"You have received warnings from us, and you have not mended your ways," went on the deep bass voice. "You have been warned that the hour is at hand. Now the blow will fall!"

"Hear, hear!" came in a murmur.

"Silence!" said the deep voice of the Grand Master. "Leave the talking to me, Carthew, are you sorry that you are a bully?"

Gurgle!

"Are you sorry you are a crawling cad?"

Carthew spluttered helplessly under the gag. The taste of that rag was horrid, and it prevented speech. He could not tell the Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society that he was sorry. As a matter of fact, he wasn't sorry; he was only furious.

"Remove the gag," said the Grand Master. "Even this base knave shall not be executed without speaking in his own defence. Carthew, if you try to call out your nose will be pinched!"

Carthew shivered as the edges of a pair of pincers closed lightly on his nose.

They were metal pincers from some school-boy's carpentry chest, and if they closed hard the result would be so painful that Carthew did not care to contemplate it.

He did not call out as the gag was removed.

He understood now that his assailants were in deadly earnest, secure in the fact that their identity was unknown, and could not even be guessed with any certainty.

"Now, Carthew, speak in a low voice, or I shall have to twist the tip of your nose off!"

"You young sweep!" panted Carthew.

"That is not the way to address the Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society."

"You cheeky little rotter!" gasped Carthew.

"I know you, Jimmy Silver! I'll have you up before the Head for this!"

"Your observations are quite irrelevant, Carthew."

"You—you—"

"Are you sorry for being a beastly bully?"

"I'll smash you!"

"Will you undertake to mend your ways, and in a manner likely to win the approval of the Lower School?"

"I—I—I'll slaughter you!"

"The prisoner is quite unrepentant," said the Grand Master calmly. "Brothers, proceed with the paint, and replace the gag."

The oil-rag was jammed into Carthew's mouth again. He tried to shut his jaws to keep it out, but a warning pressure from the pincers caused him to open them again in a hurry. He was duly gagged.

Then there was a smell of paint.

A wet brush dabbed on Carthew's face, and made him shudder with the contact.

His horrified eyes discerned a paint-can, just uncovered from the newspaper in which it had been wrapped. It was one of old Mack's paint-cans from the woodshed, and it contained a green paint of a racous hue, the green paint with which old Mack was in the habit of touching up fences. It was thick, and it was oily, and Carthew shuddered in every nerve as it was ladled upon his face.

He gurgled painfully.

He could not speak through the gag, but he contrived to mumble out a curse, which was answered by a dab of the paint-brush.

One dab of paint in his mouth, along with the oily rag, was enough for Mark Carthew. He did not curse any more.

The paint was laid on his face with a generous hand. How long it was likely to take Carthew to get that paint off again was a dreadful problem, which his mind hardly dared to grapple with.

The painter proceeded industriously with his task, not forgetting the prefect's ears and neck, and giving his hair a daub or two.

In a few minutes Carthew's infuriated countenance was streaming with vivid green paint.

"That will do, Brothers!" said the Grand Master. "Depart!"

Three of the dim figures vanished in the mist.

The Grand Master remained.

He struck a match and contemplated Carthew's face for a moment, and chuckled.

Carthew's eyes blazed at him from the green paint.

As the masked junior chuckled, his mouth opened, and his mouth was not covered by the cardboard mask.

Carthew noted that there was a black space where a tooth should have been.

The match went out.

But Carthew was almost consoled for his disaster by the discovery he had made.

A junior with a front tooth missing would not be difficult to search out at Rookwood.

Vengeance at least was certain now.

"Now I leave you to meditate upon your sins, Carthew," said the deep voice of the Grand Master. "You can toot now as much as you like."

He jerked the gag from Carthew's mouth, and vanished in the darkness under the beeches.

And the moment his mouth was free Carthew yelled for help.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Painted Prefect!

"H A. ha, ha!"
"What the merry dickens—"
"Green as grass!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter, and Rookwood fellows rushed from all sides to see the extraordinary sight.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in from the dusky quad, leading a remarkable figure.

Bulkeley was looking astonished. Carthew's aspect undoubtedly was astonishing. His yells for help had soon been heard, and the captain of Rookwood had hurried out into the quad to discover what was the matter. He discovered Carthew tied to a beech, streaming with paint, and yelling.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was not smiling as he led Carthew in. This outrage upon a prefect was a serious matter in his eyes. But the crowd in the house simply howled.

Carthew stamped away furiously towards the Head's study.

He was not exactly in a proper state to present himself before the august Head of Rookwood, but he did not care for that.

He wanted Dr. Clisholm to see exactly the extent of the fearful outrage that had been perpetrated.

"The Head will get a shock," murmured Mornington, as the painted prefect disappeared, leaving a trail of spots of green paint behind him.

The Fistical Four went along to Study No. 3, which belonged to Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn, the three Colonials. Sounds of merriment in the study greeted them as they opened the door. Putty of the Fourth was there. He was lying at full length on the table, kicking up his heels in an ecstasy of enjoyment. Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn were chorling in chorus.

"Je triumph, tu triumphe, nous triumphe!" chanted Putty of the Fourth.

"Je rejoice, tu rejoice, nous rejoicions! Je cheer, tu cheer, nous cheerions!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Putty, you ass—" began Jimmy Silver.

Putty sat up.

"Is it thou, O James?" he inquired. "Have you come to laugh with us? Go it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, there's going to be an awful row!" grinned Lovell.

"Did you note his complexion?" queried Putty. "Did you observe the bloom on the rye? Have you ever seen anybody look so green?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got a clue!" chanted Putty. "He knows who did it because he saw that he had a front tooth missing. Oh dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Conroy.

"But, I say—" began Raby seriously.

Putty held up a tiny object—a fragment of black elastic. It belonged to the property-box of the Classical Players of Rookwood.

The Fistical Four burst into a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, the dear youth never tumbled that he was allowed to see it on purpose!" sobbed Putty. "He's goin' to search Rookwood for a kid with a front tooth missin'."

Let's hope he'll find one. Kids with front teeth missin' aren't really common here. Never seen one at Rookwood myself. But let's wish Carthew success."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth shouted in the passage:

"All the Lower School into Hall at once!"

"Hallo! Assembling the giddy school!" said

Arthur Edward Lovell. "Is it on account of Carthew? That looks as if the Head is taking it seriously."

"It's for Carthew to pick out the chap with a front tooth missin'!" chortled Putty. "Ha, ha, ha!"

In hilarious spirits the chums of the Fourth made their way, with a crowd of other fellows, into Big Hall.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Nobody Guilty!**

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were feeling hilarious when they arrived in Big Hall. But they adopted expressions of extreme gravity as they took their places in the ranks of the Classical Fourth there.

Privately, in the Fourth Form passage, it might be a laughing matter, but it was no laughing matter in the presence of the Head, for nothing could be more certain than that the delinquents would be soundly flogged if they were discovered. Quite possibly they might be expelled from Rookwood. From that point of view the painting of Mark Carthew was a serious matter enough.

taking the affair very seriously indeed. Carthew followed him in. The bully of the Sixth had cleaned off the paint—as well as he could. But oily paint is not easy to clean off, and very visible traces of green showed about Carthew's ears and under his hair. His face was crimson with scrubbing and rubbing. But for the presence of the Head a ripple of laughter would have greeted Carthew. As it was, there was a murmur, which the prefects silenced at once.

"Boys!"
The Head's voice was deep and stern. Deep silence reigned. Even Putty of the Fourth realised that it was no laughing matter now.

"Boys, an unprecedented outrage has been committed within the walls of Rookwood. A prefect of the Sixth Form has been seized, tied to a tree, and outrageously smothered with a very offensive paint. This unparalleled outrage has been committed by four boys belonging to this school. I need not say that their punishment will be drastic—exceedingly drastic. No doubt they are well aware of that."

"Very good. The boy in question may now step forward," said the Head. "He must be aware now that he cannot hope to escape detection."

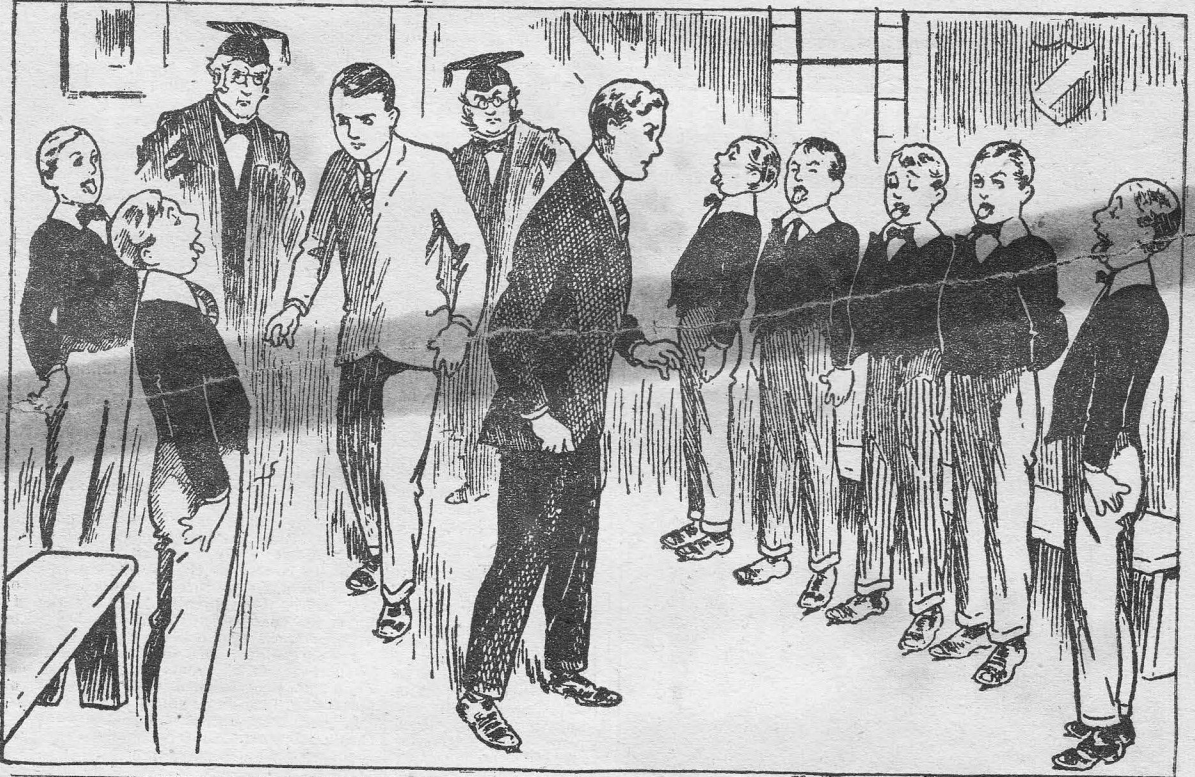
Still no one stepped forward. The Head frowned.

"Bulkeley, the prefects will now examine all the juniors, and bring forward any boy who has lost a front tooth."

Bulkeley and the other prefects "got busy" at once. They passed up and down the ranks of the juniors, examining every fellow in turn. The juniors were told to open their mouths, and some not only opened their mouths but put their tongues out, and there was a good deal of suppressed merriment, in spite of the majestic presence of the Head.

The examination took a considerable time. Every boy in the Hall had to be looked at in turn, for that missing tooth was exceedingly hard to find. When Bulkeley of the Sixth came up the Hall towards the Head at last, he came alone, to meet the coldly surprised glance of Dr. Chisholm.

"Well, Bulkeley, where is the boy?"
"He is not here, sir."



LOOKING FOR THE CULPRIT! "Bulkeley, the prefects will now examine all the juniors and bring forward any boy who has lost a front tooth," said the Head. Bulkeley and the prefects passed up and down the ranks of the juniors, examining every fellow in turn. The juniors were told to open their mouths, and some put out their tongues. (See Chapter 4.)

All the Lower School of Rookwood came into Hall and took their places. A good many of the Sixth and Fifth turned up as well. The prefects were all there to keep order, and Hansom & Co. of the Fifth came in out of curiosity.

Modern as well as Classical juniors were gathered there in numerous array. "What's the thunderin' row? Anybody know?" asked Smythe of the Shell. "Assault on a prefect," said Tracy. "Oh, good!" said Adolphus Smythe. "I hope they thumped him well."

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Fourth looked inquiringly at Jimmy Silver. They knew what had happened, and they were thinking of the Fistical Four.

Jimmy smiled and shook his head. "Queer how fellows seem to think it's us when there's any kicking over the traces," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "Queer, isn't it?" smiled Jimmy Silver. "Here comes the Head!" said Oswald. "Silence!"—from the prefects.

There was silence and deep gravity as the Head of Rookwood entered. Dr. Chisholm's face was stern and severe. Evidently he was

"Oh lor!" gasped Tubby Muffin involuntarily.

"The perpetrators of this unheard-of outrage will now step forward!"

No one stepped forward. As Morny remarked afterwards, in his slangy way, it was not surprising that there were no takers.

The prospect of exceedingly drastic punishment really was not attractive.

The Head waited a full minute, doubtless to give the hapless delinquents time to step forward and face the exceedingly drastic punishment. Then he went on, in a deeply rumbling voice:

"The heinous perpetrators of this outrage cannot hope to escape punishment. One of them, at least, can be identified, and he will be instantly expelled from the school unless he names his associates. Carthew, you informed me in my study, that one of the boys who assaulted you had a front tooth missing, by which you could identify him with certainty."

"Yes, sir. I—"
"You adhere to that statement?"
"Certainly, sir!"

"Is every boy belonging to the Lower School of Rookwood present?"

"Every one, sir. The roll has been called."

"Every boy answered to his name?"

"Yes, sir."

"No one has since left the Hall?"

"No one, sir. The doors have been closed."

"Do you mean to tell me, Bulkeley, that there is no junior at Rookwood at all with a front tooth missing?"

"Not one, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

Carthew blinked.

He was even more surprised than the Head. Certainly such a thing as a missing front tooth could not be overlooked in a search—it was sufficient to mark out the Grand Master of the Secret Society among his fellows. Carthew wondered whether he was dreaming. No one at Rookwood with a missing front tooth! Who, then, was the Grand Master of the Secret Society? Not a Rookwooder at all? But—

The Head was speaking.
"Carthew!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the dazed prefect.
 "You hear what Bulkeley says. If your statement is correct— You still assure me that it is correct?"
 "Certainly! I'm certain—quite certain!" stammered Carthew.
 "Then all the boys present are cleared!" said the Head. "Amazing as it seems, the assault was plainly committed from someone from outside—someone who does not belong to Rookwood School at all! I am glad of it. I am very glad indeed that it has been proved that no Rookwood boy was guilty of this act of hooliganism."
 "B-but, sir—" gasped Carthew.
 "Well?"
 "I'm certain it was a Rookwooder! I—" "You are certainly mistaken on that point. Carthew, from your own evidence." Dr. Chisholm raised his hand. "The school is dismissed!"
 And the Rookwooders crowded out of Big Hall.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
 In the Dead of Night!**

M IDNIGHT!
 Carthew of the Sixth sat up in bed suddenly.
 Perhaps it was the twelve heavy strokes from the clock-tower that had awakened him. Or was it—

He felt safe enough, even from the Rookwood Secret Society. He had taken care to turn the key in his lock before going to bed.
 And yet—
 "Wake!"
 It was a deep voice in the darkness of his room.
 Carthew trembled.
 Well enough he knew the bass voice assumed by the Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society.
 A glitter of light shone through the gloom as an electric torch was turned suddenly on.
 The light blazed in Carthew's face, dazzling him.
 "One cry, and your nose is pinched!" said the deep voice.
 Carthew blinked dazedly.
 There were six figures—not four this time—by his bedside; six figures, fully dressed, whose faces were covered by cardboard masks.
 One of them held a pair of pincers.
 Carthew's glance passed them wildly to the door. It was closed, and he had left it locked. How had they entered through a locked door? Somehow, the lock had been forced from the outside. Carthew did not cry out. The six intruders were ready to leap on him, as he could see, and the pincers were ready for his unhappy nose. He sat and blinked at them.

His apprehensive nose had deceived him. It was a bottle of marking-ink that the Grand Master produced from his pocket. Carthew could see the label on the bottle—"Indelible." He wriggled spasmodically.
 The Grand Master removed the cork, and dipped a brush into the bottle. Then quietly, methodically, mercilessly, he proceeded to paint zebra-like stripes on Carthew's face, from the forehead downwards. One of the masked intruders held the electric torch turned on, while the Grand Master painted. The work was done in silence—a terrifying silence.
 In five minutes the bottle was empty, and Carthew's aspect had become startlingly original. Through his stripes he glared at the masked avengers.
 "Caitiff!" said the Grand Master, when he had finished. "Scallywag! This ink is indelible—warranted not to wash out! You are marked—marked as a victim of the R.S.S. Brothers, the deed is done—I mean, done!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shush!"
 The Grand Master jerked the blankets from the bed, and draped them round Carthew. He did not want the hapless victim of the R.S.S. to catch cold, apparently. Then the light was turned off. With straining ears, Carthew heard the masked intruders stealing softly from the study, and he heard the door close gently after them. Then silence.
 And the bully of Rookwood waited for dawn!

THE END.

(Look out for another topping long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood, next Tuesday.)

"SAVED FROM THE STAKE!"

(Continued from page 6.)

and the other prisoners, and the bootleggers passed the dark hours in handcuffs, the Kootenays had almost cleared off, but squaws and papooses peered at the red-coated troopers from among the lodges.
 In the early dawn Sergeant Lasalle prepared to take the trail.
 A sobered and very repentant and apprehensive Thunder Cloud came up to the sergeant at dawn, full of apologies and excuses. It was, as the hapless chief pointed out with many gestures, the fire-water that had caused the trouble. But for the fire-water his young men would never have lifted a finger to harm the little white chiefs.
 The sergeants talked to the old chieftain in stern tones for about ten minutes, and Thunder Cloud cringed away when he had finished. All that remained of the fire-water was carefully collected and poured away, and the jars broken.
 Then the troopers mounted, with the chums of Cedar Creek and the prisoners, and rode out of the village.
 They left a very dejected tribe behind them. Thunder Cloud and his braves had a bad headache all round, added to an apprehension of what might happen to them later.
 Glad enough were Frank Richards & Co. to turn their backs on the Indian village, where they had passed through such terrible peril. Glad, too, were the chums to see Hiram Hook riding, tied to his horse, en route for trial and prison. The bootlegger gave them savage looks during the day's ride without detracting from their satisfaction.
 Late in the afternoon the chums parted with the Mounted Police, who rode on to Thompson with their prisoners, while Frank Richards & Co. headed for home. Needless to say, their reappearance gave great relief and joy. And now that they were safe out of the perils that had fallen upon them so thick and fast, the chums were not sorry for their adventure. They had gone through a terrible experience, but they had the satisfaction of knowing that they had very materially assisted the Canadian troopers in rounding up the bootleggers.

THE END.

(Don't miss reading "Standing by Hopkins!"—next week's long dramatic story of the chums of the Canadian Lumber School.)

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"Get out of bed—in silence!"
 "I—I—" "Obey!"
 Carthew obeyed.
 "Seize him!"
 The grasp of the six was laid on Carthew. In the daytime the proceedings might have seemed absurd and cinematographic; but at midnight's solemn hour the effect was quite different. Carthew was trembling.
 He did not resist as the six seized him; he did not cry out. He knew that even if he awakened the house the intruders would have ample time to deal with him before help could come. And he shuddered at the thought of the iron grip of the pincers on his nose.
 "You know who we are!" said the deep voice.
 "N-n-no!" stammered Carthew.
 "We are the Secret Society of Rookwood! We have come here to deal with you! You have been guilty of bullying again since your last punishment!"
 "You—you young villain!" breathed Carthew.
 "Gag him!"
 Carthew opened his mouth, but the pincers were too close. He shut it again—silently—on the gag that was thrust between his teeth. One of the masked intruders wound a length of twine round his head, knotting it securely to keep the gag in place.
 "Sit down!"
 Carthew was hustled towards his armchair.
 He made a movement as if to resist as a cord was looped round his legs. But pincers tapped his nose, and he desisted. His legs were tied to the legs of the chair, his wrists to its arms. His apprehensive nose was already aware of the smell of paint. But he was mistaken,

THE STRANGE INTRUDER!

Who is Parker, the new boy, who appears at St. Jim's and excites the curiosity of the Lower School? That question can only be answered by Parker, the mysterious!



PARKER THE MYSTERIOUS!

A Grand Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's introducing a new and amazing character.

By Martin Clifford.

(Author of the well-known tales of St. Jim's now appearing in the "Gem.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Terrible Three have a grievance!

"IT'S beastly!" said Tom Merry, of the Shell of St. Jim's.

"Positively perfid!" agreed Monty Lowther, his chum.

"Rotten!" growled Harry Manners.

"To have a fat-headed stranger named Parker—Parker, of all names!—stuck into our study!"

"And to be jolly well told that the least we can do is to go and meet the outsider at the station!"

"If it was anybody but Railton—"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's pretty good, Manners, because nobody but Railton could shove the merchant on us or order us off to meet him."

"Order us? My hat! I like that! What right has Railton or anyone else to give us orders about a thing of that sort? What earthly bizney of ours is this wretched new chap? A snivelling young ass, I expect, or the rottenest outsider going—"

"Not quite that," said Tom Merry, beginning to get back something of his customary good temper.

But Manners still scowled. Manners felt that his grievance was a much bigger one than either Monty Lowther's or Tom's.

The study was already too small. There was never proper room in it for the photographic work in which the soul of Manners delighted.

"Probably a little darling, milk-sop, or rascal in short clothes!" said Monty.

"Oh, don't be so funny!" he growled.

"Can't help it, old chap. Born so," answered Lowther.

"I wasn't referring to the under-done pudding you call a face. It's your childish attempts at wit I mean."

"Do you yearn for a thick ear, Manners?"

"No. Yes, I do, though, if you can give me one! I'd like to punch someone's silly head, and as Parker ain't here yet, yours will do. His can't be much thicker, anyway."

"You can't start in doing that sort of thing to Parker straight away," said Tom.

"Oh, can't I? That's all you know!" snapped Manners.

"It wouldn't be decent. You must find out what the chap's like first."

"We don't want him, whatever he's like!"

Manners snorted in utter contempt. He considered that his chums were resigning themselves much too easily to the prospect of Parker's intrusion.

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"Time," he said. "We don't want to have to run every blessed yard of the way to the station."

"Let's start, then," said Lowther.

"I'm not coming!" announced Manners.

"My hat! You've simply got to come! You can't fly right in Railton's face like that."

But Manners sat himself down determinedly—rather, as if he had taken a lease of his chair, and had no intention of quitting it till the lease expired.

"Look here, I've as much respect for Railton as anybody," he said, "but this is silly rot! Telling us to go and meet this—this—pestilent Parker!"

"Can't remember his saying that, Manners," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, shurrup! What I mean to say is that he didn't mean to say—"

"That they didn't mean to say that we didn't mean to say that she didn't mean to say. Go on, old chap; it's as clear as mud!"

"Ass! I mean that Railton never intended that all three of us need go."

"What is the mattah, deah boys?" inquired a languid voice, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, walked in.

His trousers were beautifully creased, as usual. He had on a new fancy waistcoat of very chaste design, and a new tie of really striking pattern. In his buttonhole was a hothouse flower, in his right eye a monocle, and on his classic features a beaming and friendly smile.

"Oh, bunk, Gussy! Two fat-headed idiots are as much as I can stand at once!"

"Weally, Mannahs, I am afwaid that youah name and youah natchah have vey little in common."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Gussy's made a joke—made it all by himself—out of his own head, by Jove!"

"A chip of the old block," said Lowther blandly.

"I assuah you that I intended no joke whatever," said Arthur Augustus, regarding them through his monocle with great severity. "What is the mattah, deah boys? Mannahs is mowose to an extent that I weally cannot undahstand."

"There's a new chap coming into the Shell. He's to be stuck in here. Manners doesn't like it," Tom explained briefly.

"I am weally ashamed of you, Mannahs! Is this St. Jim's hospitality?"

"That's the style, Gustavus! Let him know how his base churlishness appears to a real Vere de Vere!" chuckled Lowther.

Manners forgot all about the lease of his

chair, and arose in wrath. He went for Gussy.

But in his haste he forgot that he had left his precious camera lying on the floor, and he stumbled over it.

He picked up himself and the camera in one action. Had the article been anything less dear to him than the camera, it would certainly have been sent flying at the head of Arthur Augustus.

"If you don't bunk, Gussy, you clump. I'll jolly well slay you!" he howled.

"I beg to inform you, as head of this studay, Tom Mewwy, that I decline to answah anyone who addresses me in such violent and abusive language! I should sewiously recommend you to send Mannahs to the kennels with Hewwies' dog Towsah, an' adopt the new fellah in his stead. At the vey worst, he cannot be below Mannahs in the important mattahs of westwaint and dignity."

"My camera's busted!" groaned Manners. "And we've got a beastly intruder coming into this studay. And a silly ass who wears a cuff for a collar and a waistcoat that you could hear a mile off blows in and jaws your hind legs off, and—and— Oh, I'm fed up, right up to the neck!"

"I guess we'd better leave you to it, old chap," said Tom Merry, "and I hope you'll have cooled down a little before Parker arrives. Because—I admit it's a wild stretch of the imagination—he may turn out quite decent; and it's hardly worth while to let him start under the impression that he has dropped into a lunatic asylum."

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Meeting Parker!

ARM-IN-ARM the three passed across the quadrangle. Arthur Augustus was coming to the station, of course.

Gussy really enjoyed meeting new fellows. He liked to give them at the outset a pleasant impression of the tone of St. Jim's.

Such impressions were likely to be modified later, for not everyone at St. Jim's emulated the polished manners and real kindness of the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

But, well knowing that, Gussy still thought it worth while.

The only fellow the three saw on the way across the quad was Mellish. They said nothing to him as he passed them, wheeling his bicycle towards the gates. None of them was keen on the sneak of the Fourth, who had seemed of late a worse rotter than before.

"Now, have the kindness to tell me all about this new fellow, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy. "I can undahstand that you natchually wegwet the necessity of havin' anothah chap domiciled in Studay No. 10, but I fail to perceive sufficient justification for the vewy violent language employed by our friend Mannahs, not to speak of the tewwible tempah he displayed."

"I say, aren't you rather giving it to us this morning, Gussy?"

The swell of the Fourth, with great deliberation, put his monocle into his eye and surveyed Monty Lowther with immense dignity.

"I weally fail to undahstand you, Lowthah."

"Not my fault, Gussy. I'm not responsible for your imperfect understanding, you know. But it was quite an easy one, as a matter of fact. So many great big dic words like 'domiciled,' and all that sort or hot air."

"It is my firm an' considahed opinion that among the failin's most unhappily wife at St. Jim's—"

"Wouldn't St. James' be more in keeping with your present tone, Adolphus?" asked Tom Merry mildly.

"My name is not Adolphus, Tom Mewwy, as you are vewy well awaah. Nevahtheless, I thank you for the cowwectioan, an' will adopt it with pleasuah. Among the failin's most—"

"You said that before, Algernon. In fact, we'd got as far as St. Jimses. Don't make back-tracks."

"Weally, Lowthah, I had hoped bettah things of you. Among the failin's most wife at St. Jim's—I should say, St. Jimses—no. St. James—you have mixed me up most horribly, but nevah mind—is that of gossily slangy language. We can, I twust, behave as gentlemen. Why should we not talk as gentlemen, and not indulge in such appwobvious expressions as 'fathead,' 'ass,' and the like?"

"You see, a chap really can't help slingin' those compliments about when he looks at some fellows, Gustavus," replied Lowther, looking very hard at Gussy as he spoke.

"But you were asking me about Parker, Gussy," said Tom.

"Deah me, so I was! Pway excuse me for wandewin' from the subject, Tom Mewwy."

"Object, you should say, Adolphus. Parker's more likely to be that, I fancy."

"He's rather a queer merchant, from what Railton tells us, anyhow," said Tom. "Never been to school before—private tuition, or some wheeze of that sort. A bit old-fashioned in his ways, they say. So Railton's asked us to be kind uncles to him till he's a bit used to things. Manners don't cotton to the notion, and I ain't altogether sweet on it myself. As for what Lowther thinks—if ever he does, of which there's no evidence—"

"Oh, ring off, Tommy! That's too cheap for anything. Not that real wit's any good to Algernon Adolphus Percival here. He can't undahstand it. But I'll own I don't mind this bizney as much as I did at first, for there ought to be some fun in it. I only hope that Parker isn't one of those dear little, delicate, 'kiss-me-mother' sort of images that there's no enjoyment in taking a rise out of."

"I twust that in any case you will respect Wailton's confidence in you and tweat Parkah with wpropah politeness."

"Oh, I twust so, Gussy—I twust so," replied Lowther, revolving in his mind even as he spoke schemes for making Parker "sit up."

"I say, you chaps, danger!" said Tom Merry suddenly.

The other two glanced back over their shoulders, and then quickened their pace at once.

Behind them they had seen a little band of Grammarians. Gordon Gay was there, and with him were Frank Monk and Carboy and the two Woottons and several more.

Between the juniors of St. Jim's and those of Rylcombe Grammar School there was an undying feud. No malice in it, but plenty of hard knocks. To be caught thus, with odds heavily against them, meant for the St. Jim's fellows being put through it.

"Three into ten goes all right," said Lowther, "but it leaves a fraction. And if we three get in among that crowd I guess we shall come out vulgar fractions. And think how it would hurt the feelings of Adolphus here to be anything at all vulgar!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 312.

Not to speak of Algernon's lovely waistcoat and tie and those beautiful bags!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you are too widic for anythin'!" said D'Arcy. "Let us huwwy, Tom Mewwy! I am not, I twust, of a cwaven natchah; but the wough-an-tumble methods of those Gwammah School boundahs are most howbilly destructive to decent clobber, an'—"

"All serene for the present, Gussy," said Tom calmly. "I spot one of their masters coming this way. As long as he's in sight they'll be good kids."

Arthur Augustus breathed a great sigh of relief.

They were close to the station now. The train was overdue, but the signal-arm had not yet dropped.

Mellish had outdistanced them on his bike, and he now stood on the platform, diligently perusing one of those entrancingly interesting notices in which railway companies make it clear to the meanest intelligence that they are not and will not be common carriers.

The signal went down at last. The train rolled in. Out of it stepped half a dozen passengers.

The three had no difficulty in spotting the fellow they had come to meet.

He was of about their own height, but looked older. Perhaps his peculiar upbringing accounted for a rather unboyish look which his face wore. But a certain chubbiness, both in face and figure, made the unboyishness less apparent at a glance than it might otherwise have been.

His Etons fitted him a trifle too tightly, and he scarcely seemed at home in them—perhaps from not having room.

But he might have been much worse. Tom and Monty Lowther, meeting one another's eyes, silently agreed upon that.

"Is your name Parker?" asked Tom politely.

"Eh? Oh, yes, my boy—that is, I mean, yes, of course! Very pleased to see you—what! You are from St. James'. I take it?"

"My boy!"

It was rather a peculiar form of address in the circumstances. Tom Merry and Lowther looked at the new fellow with some resentment, and Arthur Augustus elevated his monocle and regarded him with curiosity.

"Yes," replied Tom, somewhat dryly.

"My name is Parker—Ignatius Parker; Philip Ignatius Parker, to be precise. And yours?"

The question was a little too off-hand, coming from a new boy. But they had been warned that this was not quite an ordinary new boy.

"I'm Merry. In the Shell—your Form, you know. This is my chum, Monty Lowther. You're to share a study with us and Manners, who isn't here, not being quite well—in the temper," added Tom, under his breath.

"You've forgotten me, deah boy!" put in Gussy.

"Oh, yes! Awfully sorry, old chap; but you are so very retiring and modest—I don't think! This, Parker, is the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!"

"Our glass of fashion and our mould of form," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Wing off, Lowthah!"

"Pleased to meet you, D'Arcy!" said Parker, shaking hands. "You must belong to the Eastwood family, I think?"

"Yaas, deah boy!" said Gussy.

"The chap's a snob!" whispered Lowther to Tom Merry.

"Oh, go easy! He don't know any better, I suppose. We'll soon cure that!"

"I must say that I hardly expected to have to share a study with three boys—three other boys, I should say," remarked Parker.

"I naturally anticipated having an apartment, even though small, to myself. But I hope we shall get on well together."

Lowther thought his tone too condescending for anything. It was as though he looked down upon them from some superior height.

"It might be as well if you looked after your traps," said Tom.

"Oh—ah, my luggage—yes, certainly, Wherry!"

Parker hurried off to the guard's van.

"Can't say I cotton to him a little bit!" said Lowther.

"My hat, give the fellow a chance! But he really does seem a trifle too big for his—"

"Trousers!" put in Lowther, with his eyes on Parker's chubby figure.

There was a slight altercation between Philip Ignatius Parker and the guard; and

as the train moved away the guard was heard to address the great Philip Ignatius as an "owdacious young fat-face!"

Lowther was grinning when Parker rejoined them, and the new boy looked at him severely.

"Which is the tuck-box, Parker?" asked Lowther, unheeding that severe look.

"Eh? I fear that I do not quite grasp your meaning, Crowther."

"My name's Lowther. I said 'tuckbox.' That's English, I think. Do you prefer Russian, or Choctaw, or Esperanto? Any old thing to oblige, you know."

Mellish, who, unregarded by the three, was still reading railway by-laws with an appearance of great interest, grinned.

"Oh, I apprehend your meaning now, Flower. I have no tuckbox. I do not care in the least for pastry and—er—all that sort of thing."

"Then there really isn't any tremendous virtue in going without it, is there?" countered Lowther. "You don't seem to have got on to my name yet. It's Lowther. Shall I spell it for you?"

"No, I thank you. It is a matter of no real importance."

"Oh, isn't it?" muttered the owner of the name. "We'll see about that, Pip, my boy!"

"Can you tell me—er—Cherry, how I am to get my luggage up to the school?" Parker inquired.

"One of the porters will bring it. I hope it won't break his poor ancient back. But that's his look-out. By the way, my name's Merry."

"Oh, yes! I dare say I shall remember all your names, if you will only give me time. It is not easy at first. Let me see." This is the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"He can remember that," muttered Lowther. "But not because he knows our tame ass is a lord's son—oh dear, no! Not at all!"

"And this—let me see—Pontifex Flower, is it not?"

"See here, Mr. Pignacious Parker," said Lowther hotly, "you have not been here quite long enough to begin japing in that style, you know!"

"What did you call me?" demanded Parker, with no less heat than Lowther had shown.

His chubby face was quite red, and his eyes glinted angrily.

"Pignacious Parker!" repeated Lowther. "That's near enough. Pugnacious Parker, if you prefer it. But if you'll have the gracious goodness to make a note of my name, which is L-o-w-t-h-e-r, I'll do my little best to remember yours."

"Weally, Lowthah! Pway do not be so wude! I am suah Parkah intended no wude-ness to you."

"That's more than I am, Gustavus. But I don't want to be unceivil. We'll call it a draw, shall we, Parker?"

"Certainly, Lowther. I trust I am correct this time," replied the new boy, extending his hand. "But my memory, while in most respects up to the average, is rather weak on names, and at the present moment I am naturally in some slight confusion amidst unfamiliar surroundings."

The anger faded out of both faces as they gripped hands. Lowther noticed what a strong, manlike grip Parker had.

Tom Merry was thinking how like a man—or a book—the fellow talked.

But his queer upbringing accounted for that, no doubt.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mellish Hears Things!

MELLISH had studied the light literature so kindly provided by the railway company to no purpose.

He felt a bit disgusted. He had got wind of the new boy's coming as he got wind of many things in the School House—by eavesdropping. He was hard up—as usual. The new boy was pretty certain to have tin. The Terrible Three were putting off their departure to the station rather late. It struck Mellish that to be before them and make a favourable impression on the newcomer might prove a paying game.

But the train had been late, and Tom Merry and Lowther and D'Arcy had cut out

(Continued on page 16.)

BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY



IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!
By Billy Bunter.

MY DEAR READERS,—If I am anything of a profit, there will be a New Year coming along shortly. I read something about it in the newspapers. The present year will end on December 31st—unless anything unforeseen happens.

Personally, I'm jolly glad to see the back of 1924. It has brought me some gay times—and some grim ones. On consulting my diary, I find that I received less than fifty floggings in 1924. Most of them were public floggings, but a few were administered in the privacy of the Head's study. I also find that I received 365 impotts, which is an average of one per day. Assuming that the average impott was a hundred lines, I've written 36,500 lines during the year! It's a wonder I haven't got writer's camp!

I haven't kept a record of the number of bumpings and thumpings and clumpings I've received at the hands of my brootal Form-fellows. I eggspect the number would run into thousands. Anyway, you can see for yourselves that I've no reason to bless 1924. I'm jolly glad to see it go shuffling off the stage of Time, and I'll cheerfully give it a parting kick!

What will 1925 bring fourth?—More lines and lickings, I suppose; and more bumpings and clumpings. But I have every reason to believe that they won't be so numerous as in 1924. You see, dear readers, I've made a whole heap of New Year rezzerlutions, and I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Let the cry go up, "Billy Bunter's going to reform!" It's a fact. I'm going to redeem my character—as the man said when he stepped into the pawnshop. No more gorging and gluttony for me! No more sneaking and spying! I'm going to be a Good Little Georgie in the New Year—not a Wicked Little William. I shall start with a clean sheet—and a clean counterpane into the bargain, because they're changing the bedding in the Remove dormitory!

It isn't often that I burst into poetry, but I've written a poem in this issue, describing my New Year rezzerlutions. Dick Penfold, to whom I showed the poem, said the spelling was all wrong, and he's corrected it for me. He has also touched up the rimes here and there. The verses were quite all right in their original state, but Penfold has ruined them. However, I thought it as well to give him his head, or else he wouldn't have written any verse for me in 1925. And everybody seems to like Pen's poems, for some obscure rezzon.

Well, dear readers, I wish you health and wealth, and all happiness, in the New Year!

Your sinser pal,
YOUR EDITOR.



JANUARY.

I predict a very cold and boisterous month. It will be a case of "Every prospect pleases, and July Jan. is vile!" On the fifth of the month there will be a snowstorm, followed by a few hurricanes and blizzards, with a cyclone thrown in. St. Jim's will be shaken to its foundations. Shouldn't be surprised if the tower came crashing down on our noble nuts. The bad weather will continue at intervals during the month, and it will be at its worst on half-holidays, just when we want it to be fine.

FEBRUARY.

An epidemic of influenza will spread through the school. Everybody will be sneezing and wheezing, and the sunny will be filled to overflowing. Footer matches will be cancelled—(groans)—and lessons will be suspended—(cheers)—and the whole school will be put on a diet of gruel. (Groo.)

MARCH.

Nothing very exciting will happen this month. Those born on the 13th should avoid playing with hoops, or they will be liable to contract "hooping" cough! Those born on the 20th should refrain from playing footer on that day, for they are liable to meet with an injury. The weather will continue to be beastly, and there will be three feet of snow in the quad. There will be no sun to melt it, so Taggies, the porter, will have to get busy with his broom!

APRIL.

Wonderful prophet that I am, I have made the astounding discovery that Easter will fall during this month. Rain will fall, too—by the bucketful. April showers will be the order of the day, and it's going to be a dirty, diabolical, disagreeable month! (That's the way, Gore, old chap! My readers simply love being cheered up!—Ed.)

MAY.

It may be a nice May, and it may not. We sincerely hope you may, May!

JUNE.

The English summer commences, so don't forget your fur coats and your warm woollen underwear. You'll need 'em. You know what these English summers are—perishing cold! Most of us will spend the month of June huddled in our study fires. We shall be too frozen to talk much; but our teeth will do the chattering!

JULY.

Continuation of our glorious English summer. Icebergs will be floating around these isles, and lots of St. Jim's fellows will be on the sick-list, suffering from frostbite!

AUGUST.

Summer vacation starts. But schoolboys will be delayed in getting to their homes, owing to being snowed up on the railway-line. It will be too cold for cricket, and skating and tobogganning will be the proper caper.

SEPTEMBER.

"Dirty days hath September." And this month will prove no exception to the rule. I predict rain and mud and slush, and every abomination that goes to make life unbearable. Cheery optimist, aren't I?

OCTOBER.

If I read the signs aright, October will be just as bad a month as the rest of 'em, if not worse!

NOVEMBER.

The English summer will put in a belated appearance. The sun will shine gloriously, and people will sit fanning themselves in deckchairs; and the ice-cream vendors and bathing-machine proprietors will do a roaring trade!

DECEMBER.

The year will come to an end on the 31st, and everybody will be jolly glad to see the back of it. It's going to be the beastliest year on record. Pardon me if I seem to be a bit gloomy, but I've been a martyr to violent toothache whilst compiling this almanack!

NEW YEAR GREETINGS!

Addressed to the Editor of "Billy Bunter's Weekly."

From the Editor of the Companian Papers.

I have great pleasure in sending you—no, not a tuck-hammer, my dear Bunter—but my cordial good wishes for the New Year, which I trust will prove just as acceptable. Come up and see me when you have an opportunity. I should like to suggest some special numbers for 1925. I trust your chief New Year resolution is to make "Billy Bunter's Weekly" better and brighter than ever.

THE GREAT WAX-WORK MYSTERY!

(An Amazing Episode in the Career of Herlock Sholmes, the World's Worst Detective, recorded by his faithful friend, Dr. Jotson.)

"PERSON to see you, sir." Mrs. Spudson, our landlady, put her head into the consulting-room and made that announcement with a pronounced sniff. From her remark and the tone of it, Herlock Sholmes, with his usual perspicacity, deduced that a lady had called.

"Show her up, Mrs. Spudson, please." Our landlady withdrew, and two minutes later reappeared with a large, red-faced, perspiring, puffing woman in tow.

Mrs. Spudson gave another sniff, and closing the door behind her, left the visitor panting like a stranded grampus in the consulting-room.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Wudger!" said Herlock Sholmes, rising and doubling himself up like a penknife.

The lady gave an extra-loud snort which sounded like the effort of a hunted hippopotamus upon being punctured by an arrow.

"B-bless me, Mr. Sholmes!" she panted. "You know me?"

"I have never had the pleasure of your acquaintance before to-day, madam," said Sholmes politely. "But it was easy for me to recognise that you were the Mrs. Wilhelmina Wudger, who is proprietress of the waxworks in the Charing Cross Road. Odd bits of coloured wax adhering to your hands and the lobes of your ears made the recognition a matter of merely simple deduction."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"It is nothing to what I can do, as you know, my dear Jotson," said Sholmes modestly. "But pray be seated, Mrs. Wudger, and state the reason for your call here to-day."

Mrs. Wilhelmina Wudger broke the last spring of our armchair as she subsided into that article of furniture.

"Oh, it's dreadful, Mr. Sholmes!" she said, mopping her brow with the somewhat old-fashioned muff she carried. "Some of my best wax models have wilted away."

"Wilted away?" said Sholmes. "Pray be more explicit, madam."

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Sholmes," said our visitor. "I have a particularly fine lot of models in the Mixed Department. They are almost as good as the bunch down in the Chamber of Horrors. Among them I had some of the greatest politicians of the day."

"In the Chamber of Horrors?" said Sholmes keenly.

"No—in the Mixed Department. There was Lloyd George, Joe Beckett, and Jackie Coogan, Salmon and Gluckstein, Sam Slammer, Mr. Pickwick, Horatio Bottomley—"

"Quite so, madam," put in Herlock Sholmes; "but we are drifting away from the point. Kindly explain the reason for the wilting away of these—ahem!—effigies of the great."

"Ah, that's just it, Mr. Sholmes! If I knew that, as like as not I shouldn't have called here to-day. I woke one morning to find that the face of Mr. Lloyd George had wilted. His forehead was all flopping down and his nose about six inches long. Looked more like Shylock than Lloyd George, he did!"

"I see," murmured Sholmes. "Something had happened to the face of his waxen image during the night."

"Yes, something had happened to it,"

affirmed Mrs. Wudger. "At first I suspected that that Lloyd George had been there himself and spoiled it. I wrote a letter to his secretary, I did, but I was assured that Mr. Lloyd George was in Wales at the time. Next Ramsay Macdonald went to rack and ruin."

"Ramsay Macdonald!"

"As sure as my name's Wilhelmina Wudger! His whiskers had turned black, and his face had grown long."

"What did you do?" queried Sholmes.

"Well, the first thing I did was to go round to his house. In my experiences as a waxworks proprietress I have learned that some of these bigwigs don't feel too pleased with their effigies in my waxworks. I thought maybe Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had been having a little game. But his chauffeur assured me that Mr. Macdonald had been in bed and asleep all the previous night. The next night Joe Beckett and four other lads near him in the Mixed Department went west. You'd have thought that Joe had been hit by the fist of Georges Carpentier to have seen his face. Looked like a piece of pounded dough, it did. Half a dozen of my best waxworks absolutely spoiled! And the thing a perfect mystery!"

As the lady concluded her strange story, Herlock Sholmes rose from his seat.

"Come, get your hat, Jotson," he said. "We will accompany Mrs. Wudger to her waxworks." And he added in a whisper: "It will be a free show—a sort of combination of pleasure with business."

A penny bus ride brought us to Charing Cross Road. Mrs. Wudger let us in by the front door of her small house, which adjoined the waxworks proper. In the kitchen we found Inspector Pinkeye sharing a rabbit-pie with Veronica, the maid.

Hastily the inspector concealed a large portion of crust under his tunic as we entered the room, followed by Mrs. Wudger.

"M'mm, m'mm!" mumbled Pinkeye. "I just dropped in, hearing there was a mystery afoot," said he.

Sholmes laughed. "The mystery of the missing rabbit-pie, eh, Pinkeye?" said Sholmes jocularly. "But come with us. You may be useful."

Mrs. Wudger said nothing. She merely favoured Pinkeye and the maid with a stony stare. The mystery of other missing things, such as sausage-rolls, apple charlotte, and so forth, had become solved in her mind.

"That door leads through into the waxworks," said Mrs. Wudger, pointing to one in the passage.

Sholmes entered the room indicated and glanced alertly about him.

"I see there's a window broken here," he remarked.

"It was done yesterday, sir," said the maid. "I think the fellow who has been spoiling the lovely waxworks must have got in by this way."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Wudger. "We can soon test the matter," said Sholmes.

He took from his pocket a large magnifying-glass, and, bending low, examined the pieces of glass which lay scattered on the carpet. Rising, he gave his opinion.

"There is no mystery about this," said he. "One of the particles of glass clearly shows a mudstain. A muddy tennis-ball broke that window."

"Well, how the man gets in to spoil the lovely waxworks beats me," mumbled Veronica, the maid.

"Be quiet!" snapped Mrs. Wudger. "Go back and prepare tea, my girl. Mr. Sholmes and Dr. Jotson will take tea with me. You may show your tram-conductor friend the back door, Veronica."

When Sholmes had explained that Pinkeye was really an officer from Scotland Yard, Mrs. Wudger became more reconciled to his presence. Together they all entered the waxworks, which had been closed to the public since the last outrage.

Sure enough, in the Mixed Department, as Mrs. Wudger called it, a number of the effigies had been completely spoiled. Some of the faces had been so melted that they looked almost as though they had icicles suspended from their noses and chins.

After a glance at these, Sholmes, somewhat to the astonishment of Mrs. Wudger, asked to be shown to the Chamber of Horrors, situated in the basement of the building.

For half an hour we wandered among the effigies of the criminals. Sholmes was like a child with a new toy. He admired the features of one notorious character after another. He tinkered with the guillotine. He fondled the relics of the rock-cake by which the notorious Schlitzhanger had choked her seventh husband.

"Now," said Sholmes at last, rubbing his hands, "let us get to the business of the afternoon."

Together we all returned to the "Mixed Department."

"It looks to me," said Pinkeye, tugging his moustache, "as though the criminal who has spoiled these beautiful effigies has come to the place during the day."

"Ah! And remained hidden?" I said. Inspector Pinkeye favoured me with a look of scorn.

"In a sense, yes, Dr. Jotson," he said. "What would be more simple for a person to adopt the role of a waxwork model? You would only have to strike a position and stand in an odd corner to be missed completely at snuffing up time."

Herlock Sholmes laughed lightly. "Ingenious, but hardly creditable," said dear Pinkeye," he remarked. "See that?"

He pointed aloft. Directly above that portion of the Mixed Department where the outrages had taken place was a small skylight. It was not more than a foot square. Then it was Pinkeye's turn to laugh.

"Ho, ho! You don't think that the miscreant got through there, Mr. Sholmes?" he guffawed.

"No, my dear Pinkeye," said Sholmes. "As the old proverb says, there are more ways of killing a cat than by choking it with butter. I don't believe for a moment that the culprit ever set foot in the waxworks. Let us now take tea with Mrs. Wudger. With her permission, we will keep watch here to-night, and I think that I can capture the misguided rascal who spoils her excellent effigies."

As we were walking back to Mrs. Wudger's living-rooms Solmes, who had been deep in thoughts, asked suddenly:

"By the way, Mrs. Wudger, have you an enemy?"

"An enemy?" said Mrs. Wudger. "Hundreds and hundreds of them! Every human being who is reproduced in that Mixed Department is an enemy of mine."

"Quite so," said Sholmes. "I meant a special enemy."

Mrs. Wudger shook her head. After a good tea, to which we all did full justice, Sholmes, Inspector Pinkeye, and myself returned to Shaker Street together.

That night we went back to Charing Cross Road. By means of a key, which Mrs. Wudger had given Sholmes, we let ourselves into the waxworks, and made our way to the Mixed Department. It was an eerie sort of visit. I confess to a shiver as I made my way among those gaunt rows of politicians, prize-fighters, and other desperate characters.

From a corner Sholmes obtained a step-ladder which he had noticed during the previous visit. This he placed directly under the skylight. Mounting it, he took from his overcoat pocket a length of strong cord with a loop in the end. The loop he arranged about the skylight, attached the cord to the woodwork lightly by means of

(Continued on the next page.)

"THE GREAT WAX-WORK MYSTERY!"

(Continued from previous page.)

some little wire staples, which he pressed in with his thumbs.

Dismounting, Sholmes put the step-ladder back in its place, and, taking the long end of the cord, walked with it among the effigies.

"Listen!" said he. "If my theory is correct, the miscreant will crawl along the roof gutter to that skylight. I noticed to-day that it would be easy to reach the gutter from the next-door building. When we hear a sound, we three must remain perfectly motionless, so our quarry will not be scared away."

For nearly two hours we watched and waited. Then suddenly there was a scraping sound on the roof. Sholmes and Pinkeye, who were together, stiffened like sentinels on the approach of the major-general. I, who had walked a few yards to stretch my cramped limbs, also stopped, motionless. I was directly under the skylight. But I think it speaks well for my presence of mind that I did not even glance up.

A few seconds later I became aware of a small, dark object before my head. Next instant I let out an agonised howl.

"Yow-wow! Oo-er! Help! I'm scalded!"

A moment later there was another howl from the skylight, and something fell with a clatter at my feet.

"Got him!" cried the jubilant voice of Sholmes.

He had jerked the long cord, and the snapping of the little staples from the wood-work had caused the loop to close about the arm of a man that had been inserted in the skylight. While he himself held the cord, Pinkeye ran out of the waxworks, loudly blowing his whistle.

Ladders were procured, and a ladder brought down through the roof by two burly constables and placed before Sholmes.

"Sam Slammer!" cried Sholmes. "It was as I expected!"

"Yes, it's me!" growled the prisoner! "And I'd do it again! I'll learn that old Mother Wudger to put me in a waxworks!"

"Remove the prisoner!" said Sholmes. "Pinkeye, take that dark lantern attached to the string with you. It will form valuable evidence."

As Sholmes and I made our way out of the building to rouse Mrs. Wudger and report the capture of the miscreant, my famous friend explained the whole extraordinary affair.

"As I suspected in the first place, Jotson," he said, "the destruction of these wax models was done out of revenge. At one time Sam Slammer was a noted election agent, but later he became a footpad and burglar. Naturally, having a sort of right to a place in the Chamber of Horrors, he considered it undignified, to say the least, to be included among the politicians. Very annoying to a gentleman of Slammer's ideals."

Out of revenge he started to destroy some of Mrs. Wudger's wax models. By lowering a lighted dark lantern through the skylight and dangling it near the face of an effigy, he was able to melt the wax by the heat of the lantern, and it was the hot lantern that burnt poor Jotson's face.

Slammer avoided destroying his own effigy probably with the hope in his mind that it might eventually be included in the Chamber of Horrors.

"Altogether, a sad case," concluded Sholmes, "and I'm not without a certain sympathy for Slammer. He'll get three months in gaol, and, probably in consideration of this fact, Mrs. Wudger will at last decide to put his effigy in the more respectable company in the basement, where an extra sixpence is charged for admission. And I think that you will agree with me, my dear Jotson, that Slammer has earned the honour!"

THE END.



Collected from Greyfriars, Rookwood & St. Jim's. By Tom Brown.

I HAVE spent a very busy week, interviewing various people on the subject of their New Year resolutions. The first person I approached—not without inward quakings—was the Head of Greyfriars. "Pip-pip-please, sir," I stammered, terrified by his forbidding frown, "w-w-will you be g-g-good enough to tell me your New Year resolution?" "Yes!" thundered the Head. "My New Year resolution is to cane every boy who comes into my study asking frivolous questions!" I beat a prompt retreat before the Head had time to put his New Year resolution into effect!

IN the quad I ran into Dicky Nugent, the leading light of the fog fraternity. Producing my notebook, I demanded to know his New Year resolution. "I'm going to give up smoking," said Dicky. Rather a ridiculous resolution, considering Dicky never puts a cigarette to his innocent lips. But I presume he means that he's going to give up smoking herrings at the Common-room fire!

SKINNER of the Remove was inclined to be sarcastic on the subject of New Year resolutions. "I've made a resolution not to make a resolution," he said, in response to my query. So that's that! It's a pity Skinner can't make a few good resolutions. If ever a fellow needed to take himself in hand and make amends for past misdeeds, that fellow is Skinner!

BILLY BUNTER intends to be a model fellow in the New Year—the beau ideal of all that is best in British boyhood. "I'm an awfully decent fellow already," explained Bunter, "but I'm willing to admit that there's still room for improvement. I shall give up gorging, for one thing. I shall not listen at keyholes any more. I shall scorn sneaking and spying. I shall keep my hands from sticking and peeling—I mean, picking and stealing." In short, Bunter promises to become a paragon of all the virtues in 1925. Alas! Bunter's promises are like his favourite article of diet—piecrusts!

When I visited St. Jim's I had an amusing chat with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy concerning his New Year resolution. Gussy has resolved to cut down his wardrobe. "Instead of keepin' a gwoos of toppahs in stock, dear boy, I shall only keep a paltwo hundred!" he said. "An' I shall cut down my supplies of shirts an' socks an' neckties in the same mannah. In the past I have been wathah a dwoos-worshippah, but I mean to turn ovah a new leaf in 1925." Good old Gussy!

How to Build An

"ALL-WAVE CRYSTAL SET!"

See Next Week's Grand

HOBBY SUPPLEMENT!

FATTY WYNN was in a rebellious mood when I met him. Unlike Billy Bunter, he is not going to give up gorging. His New Year maxim is going to be, "Eat More Grub!" If Fatty keeps this resolution he will probably go off pop by the end of the year!

TUBBY MUFFIN of Rookwood has made a curious resolution. He is resolved not to write any more for "Billy Bunter's Weekly" unless the Editor agrees to pay him at the rate of a shilling a word. I'm afraid Tubby will be unlucky. From what I know of Bunter's "generosity," Tubby will probably be paid at the rate of a shilling a mile! And he's hardly likely to write a mile of manuscript in the course of a year!

MY NEW YEAR RESOLVE!
BY BILLY BUNTER.

MY dear loyal readers,
And fond fellow-feeders,
I've formed a New Year resolution.
I made it just now,
And I solemnly vow
To put it in prompt execution.

No longer I'll stuff
On doughnuts and duff,
And gorge like a greedy young glutton.
I mean to go steady,
I've started already—
Refused a fourth helping of mutton!

I wish to get thinner.
I'll cut down my dinner
From six hefty helpings to three.
No meals before bed!
I shall sample, instead,
A supper tacked on to my tea!

I've finished with spying,
And sneaking, and lying.
And "tanners" I'll no longer borrow.
However, I'm willing
To borrow a shilling
And promptly repay it to-morrow!

At Latin and Greek
I'll slog every week,
Until I'm a wonderful scholar.
I'll work like a nigger
With vim and with vigour,
And numerous prizes I'll collar!

At footer I'll practise.
At present, alas, 'tis
A game which reveals me a duffer.
But soon I'll excel,
And play awfully well,
And my frame will get tougher and tougher!

I'll work and I'll play
In the true British way,
And build up a strong constitution.
So wish me good luck,
And applaud my great luck
In making this grand resolution!

"PARKER THE MYSTERIOUS!"

(Continued from page 12.)

Mellish. He had simply had his ride for nothing.

He had waited to see what Parker was like, and had come to the conclusion that on the whole he was not a very hopeful subject for sponging operations. A meeker and milder fellow would have suited Percy Mellish's book better.

Not that it mattered much, as things had turned out. Parker was scarcely likely to come into close touch with him now.

Just as Mellish was about to go he happened to notice two rough-looking strangers emerge from the waiting-room.

He had seen them get off the train, and he remembered now that they had made at once for cover, as though anxious not to be spotted by someone.

The stationmaster, who was collecting tickets, approached them and asked for theirs. Then he cut across the line, and Mellish and the two roughs were left in possession of the platform, for the elderly porter was already across with Parker's luggage.

One of the roughs nudged the other and nodded towards Mellish.

Mellish, with the corner of an eye upon them, pretended to be studying the architecture of the station buildings. He scented a mystery here.

Percy Mellish feared risk of any kind. But he liked mysteries—they sometimes paid.

"This is Rylcombe, ain't it cocky?" said one of the men.

"Yes, unless that board's a bad joke," answered Mellish.

"Ah, you're a smart one, ain't you, kid? No flies on you, I see! Big school here, ain't there?"

"Two. There's the Grammar School; that's a fair size. But St. Jim's is bigger."

"Ah! Now, you'd be a Grammar School boy, I reckon."

"Then your reckoning's out," said Mellish. "I'm St. Jim's."

"Same school as the young gent we travelled with said he was goin' to, Rusty," said the talkative man to the silent one. The silent man nodded.

Mellish knew that the fellow was telling lies. They had not travelled with Parker. They had got out of a third-class compartment near the rear of the train, and he out of a first-class one near the front. But it was not Mellish's business to tell them he knew.

There was a mystery here, he was more certain than ever. And if, without too much risk, he could get fully on the track of it, he meant to do so.

"Name of Roberts, weren't it, Rusty?"

"Don't rightly 'member," growled Rusty, who evidently preferred chewing a quid to talking.

"You wouldn't know, young sir, I s'pose?"

"Me? Know what?" returned Mellish.

The name of the nice, fattish, affable young gent as got out of the train an' was met by three other young gents with caps same as yours?"

"Oh, that chap! He's a new boy. His name is Parker, I believe."

"There, if I didn't feel sure as it was either Roberts or Parker! Nosey Parker, I should say—eh, Rusty?"

Some joke must have been hidden in this, for Rusty showed his ugly, yellow fangs in a broad grin. Then he spat, looked serious again, and shook his head, as if reproving his comrade's levity.

They were very much interested in Parker—of that much Mellish was sure. Perhaps they meant to kidnap him! Mellish did not mind greatly. But there might be profit in helping to foil their plans.

Mellish's mind had not yet grasped at the possibility of profit by standing in with them.

"I s'pose you ain't got the price of a quart as you'd care to pass on to two 'ard-workin' chaps sufferin' with a norrible thirst, 'ave you, young sir?"

Mellish had that, and very little more.

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Percy Mellish was not at all a generous fellow, and he could hardly refuse that cheeky request. It was not fear that moved him. The two roughs would not have dared to attack him on the platform.

He handed over the price of a quart—rather more, for Mellish did not know much about the price of beer. He had drunk it on more than one occasion, when he would very much have preferred ginger-beer; but it had always been someone else who had paid.

He watched the two slouch off, and saw that they made for the Green Man. He followed them, skirting with great care the edge of a disturbance which was going on in the village street. No one saw him go. The fellows who were engaged there were far too busy to pay heed.

Mellish dodged into the Green Man yard, and crouched under the window of the tap-room. It was quite a warm day for the season, but that window must have been left open by accident. The Green Man did not greatly favour fresh air.

"It's him right enough, Smiler," said Rusty, in a harsh, creaking voice.

No doubt that voice had earned him his nickname.

"Oh, yuss, it's 'im!" said Smiler. "I never 'adn't no real doubt about that!"

"Strike me lucky, but I had! Wot's he doin', rigged up in boys' clobber, an' comin' here to school as innercent as kiss-me-and, like any kid o' thirteen?"

"Him wot's been to the war, too—not to mention funnier places nor that—ah, an' riskier ones! But you never know what Mr. Blessed Parker-Roberts will be up to next—except as it's 'middlin' sure to be something you'd never think of yourself!"

Mellish pricked up his ears. His head was almost in a whirl; but he understood two things at least.

The name of the new boy was Parker-Roberts, not Parker. There must be something fishy about him, Mellish charitably concluded.

And the new boy wasn't a boy at all, but a man! He had been to the war, Smiler said. He must be a man, for if he had been a boy, with his chubby face and figure, he could never have passed as a man!

"Somethink gone wrong at the school, an' the 'Messenger' gang sent him down 'ere to investigate, I sh'd say!" creaked Rusty.

There was nothing wrong at St. Jim's—more than usual. Mellish knew that. He was in a position to know; for in what was wrong there Percy Mellish usually played a part—if not a part of the first importance.

"Mebbe. But, arter all, Rusty, old cock, the 'Messenger' ain't runnin' a 'tec business, are they?"

The "Messenger"—that could surely mean nothing but the famous daily paper! Mellish had read it at times. He remembered now that it had lately earned fame by the way in which its "special crime investigator" had helped the police to get to the bottom of one or two very puzzling cases. A murder—Mellish recalled that—and a big jewel robbery, and he fancied there had been something else.

"I ain't worryin' myself," creaked Rusty. "Ere we are, Smiler, you an' me, booked for a nice 'oliday out of the smoke—plenty of the lush. Wof more does a cove want?"

Smiler made an impatient answer. It was evident that he had a far more active mind than his companion, and did not care for so slow a place as Rylcombe.

"W'y, if that there silly, blessed winder ain't open!" said Rusty. "I thought I felt a norrid draught! Enough to give a chap his death!"

"That's one of the drorbacks of the blessed country!" remarked Smiler. "Too much fresh air, an' not enough—"

That was the last word Mellish got the chance to hear. But it did not matter much what it was that Smiler failed to find enough of in the country.

Mellish had heard quite enough to be going on with—enough to set his mind in a ferment.

"I shall have to tell Crooke," he muttered, as he stole away. "But Crooke bungles things so! What a pity Levison is running straight now! He'd be the very chap to see his profit in this game, and I could stand in while he did the hard work and took the risk. But it's no go!"

Which, though not so intended, was a big compliment to the former black sheep of the Fourth. Mellish, who knew him as well as anyone, was quite sure that it would be of

no use now to ask him to stand in for a share in a dirty game!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

St. Jim's v. the Grammarians!

LEFT to himself, Manners began to wonder whether he might not just as well have gone to the station after all.

"It was all through that idiot Gussy!" he murmured. "If he hadn't blown in, I should have gone. I think I'll take this blessed camera down to the village and see if I can get it mended!"

He trotted off, with the camera under his arm.

It was a beautiful day, and the warm sunshine and gentle breeze helped to soothe the ruffled temper of Manners.

"Hallo, you chaps! Where are you off to?" he asked, catching up three members of the Fourth Form.

The three were Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, the famous Co. of the New House.

"Oh, only to Rylcombe!" replied Figgys. "What's the matter with the old firm, Manners, that you are on your lonesome? Has it dissolved partnership?"

"Dissolved your Aunt Jemima Jane!" retorted Manners. "It's to be extended, as it happens. Tom and Lowther have gone to the station to meet a new merchant who's to be bunged into our study!"

"Oh, snakes! Another School House rotter!" groaned Kerr.

"Cheese that, fathead! I suppose he wouldn't be a rotter if he was coming to your dog-kennel?"

"It's a pity, in a way, that he isn't booked for our show," went on Fatty peacefully. "Tin's short, and supplies from home are dead off, and a new chap would be sure to bring some tommy along!"

"Some chaps think of nothing but gorging!" said Manners, in disdain.

Fatty Wynn looked at him in mild surprise.

"It's awful rot to pretend you ain't keen on your grub, Manners!" he said. "When a chap says he isn't, I know he's either a beastly fibber or else he ain't real!" Now, I've got a good, healthy appetite, and I don't mind owing it. I think a good deal about my grub—"

"You do!" groaned Figgins.

"You does!" said Kerr solemnly. "Don't we know it?"

"Of course I do. There ain't anything better to think about—nor anything more important, come to that!"

Manners laughed. Fatty's simple creed was expressed so fervently that a fellow could hardly help feeling tickled. And Fatty, for all the solid load of flesh he carried, looked so fit and healthy, too.

There was only one shop in Rylcombe where one could take a camera with any chance of getting it mended. It was but a chance there, indeed.

Manners went into this shop just as the train which brought the mysterious Parker to Rylcombe was signalled. They saw the signal drop.

"You chaps might look out for Tom Merry and the rest of them," he said, as he went in.

Kerr followed him in. Kerr took some interest in cameras.

Figgins and Wynn had their faces turned to the station, and they failed to perceive the steadily approach of the Grammarians band.

"St. Jim's bounders! Go for them!" yelled Gordon Gay.

No chance to flee. Hardly time to look round before the enemy were upon them.

"Collar them! Sock them!" howled Carboy.

Manners and Kerr heard, and came rushing out of the shop.

They were just in time to see Fatty Wynn turned upside-down by three Grammarians.

Four more had got Figgys nicely into position for the frogs-march.

Kerr darted to the aid of his great war-chief, Manners, telling himself that it really was no bizney of his, but not half believing it, also waded in.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Yaroooogh!"

One exclamation came from Carboy, the other from Wootton minor.

The heads of those two heroes had met with considerable force.

Next moment they perceived that the force had been exerted by Manners.

They loosed their hold upon Fatty, and went for the newcomer to the fray.

Meanwhile, Kerr had clutched Gordon Gay round the neck, and had dragged him backwards.

This released the right leg of Figgins. That right leg, plunging wildly, took Frank Monk in the lower part of the waistcoat.

Figgins had not meant to kick, of course, but these things will happen in the course of such a scramble. And the result was just as painful as if the kick had been intentional.

"Ow! You rotter!" gasped Monk. He sprawled backwards upon the prostrate form of Fatty Wynn.

"Yoooop! You're crushing me to death!" howled Fatty.

"Go for 'em! Groooh! You'll strangle me, you sweep! Bump the cads!" yelled Gordon Gay.

Then, with a yell and a rush, three more combatants plunged into the battle.

"St. Jim's to the rescue!" roared Tom Merry.

"Wescue!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"We're coming!" sang out Monty Lowther.

And he seized Carboy and slung him on top of Monk.

Parker said nothing. Parker did nothing, except to stand gazing in evident disapproval. He had not been used to this sort of thing, and it appeared to take him by surprise.

"Take a hand, Parker!" shouted Tom Merry.

"I decline to do anything of the kind!" replied Parker, quite decidedly.

"New St. Jim's cad! Let's christen him!" howled Gordon Gay.

He wrenched himself free from the grasp of Kerr, and rushed across the road.

Parker turned. For a moment it looked as though Parker meant to disgrace himself and St. Jim's in flight.

But he did not. He faced round again.

"Boy," he said sternly, "I forbid you to touch me! Do you hear? I forbid it! If you persist—Yarooooh!"

Parker was down in the dusty road, with Gordon Gay on top of him.

"Honk-tonk! Honk-tonk!"

The warning hoot of a motor-car sounded. The driver clapped on his brakes hard; but even so, Gay and his captive only just rolled out of the way in time.

The car sped on again. Gay gripped Parker more tightly. The nearness of danger had not affected Gordon Gay's determination. But—and this seemed stranger—neither had it affected Parker's nerves. He seemed to think of nothing but the wanton nature of the attack upon him.

"Stop this at once!" he spluttered. "I will not endure it!"

"Looks as if you'd got to!" panted Gordon Gay.

"I tell you I will not! Is there no policeman in this wretched village? Police—police! Ow! Yow! Confound your impertinence! Stop it, I say!"

Some passing greengrocer's boy had carelessly dropped a potato from his basket.

Gordon Gay saw it where it lay. He seized it, and stuffed it into Parker's open mouth.

Parker was roused to fury now. He spluttered out vows of vengeance and fragments of potato together.

A mighty heave he gave, with far more strength in it than one could have expected from him, and Gordon Gay went flying.

But as Parker struggled up, the Grammar School junior caught him by a leg and pulled him down again. And as he went down the foot belonging to the other smote Gay hard in the ribs.

"You rotter! Kicking's dead off!" roared the Australian junior.

"I did not kick with intent—Keep off! I refuse to be—Oh, keep off, I tell you! Stop it, or I shall handle you severely!"

The odds were too heavy for St. Jim's.

Fatty Wynn was winded, and of little use at this stage of the conflict.

Arthur Augustus, after a valiant struggle, such as became a D'Arcy, now sat on the pavement, his collar up beside his right ear, his new tie in rags, and red drops pouring from his classic nose down his chaste, light waistcoat.

An elbow had done that. Fists were against the customs of these encounters. But an elbow can hurt as much as a fist.

Manners was down, too, and two Grammarians were sitting on him to keep him down.

Tom Merry, Figgins, Lowther, and Kerr

still upheld the battle; but they were too busy to come to Parker's aid—even if they wanted to, and that is by no means certain.

That left Wootton major and Lane free to come to the help of their leader. They came with a rush and a roar.

They snatched up Parker. They gave Parker the frogs' march—an ordeal that never in his life before had he experienced.

His struggles—and he struggled hard—were in vain. His threats were met with ribald merriment.

"Pump on the cad!" yelled Frank Monk.

"That's the wheeze! Let's christen him!" sang out Gordon Gay.

The village pump was near at hand.

They dragged the furious Parker towards it.

Tom Merry and the other three, perceiving how gamely the new boy was now resisting, made a valiant attempt at rescue.

But they were beaten back by overwhelming forces. Half a dozen more Grammarians, led by Mont Blanc, the French junior, had come up.

There was no getting through the serried horde.

"Charge 'em, you fellows! Sock 'em! Break through! We're coming, Parker!" yelled Tom Merry.

"When they'll let us," added Monty Lowther, tumbling over Mont Blanc, and depositing Carboy neatly on top of him.

Arthur Augustus arose, and, with nose still streaming, plunged anew into the battle. Manners was also in the thick of it again by this time. Fatty Wynn, blowing like a porpoise, lent his weight to the charge.

All was in vain! The Grammarian ranks stood to it as firmly as the Macedonian phalanx of old, or the gallant Canadians in Flanders.

Philip Ignatius Parker had to go through it.

The splash of water sounded. Frank Monk, grinning from ear to ear, worked the pump-handle vigorously. Three more grinning Grammarians held Philip Ignatius under the stream.

"Stop it! I will not—Ow! You are chok—Ow! Yow! Desist!"

"Better keep your mouth shut, unless you've a real big thirst on you!" said Frank Monk cheerfully.

"Cheese it now! He's had enough," said Gordon Gay.

The fierce fury of the St. Jim's charge was suddenly stayed.

Parker's captors stood him right end up.

The serried ranks of the Grammarians split. The fellows on both sides stood and roared with laughter at Parker's plight.

Anything funnier than Parker looked at that moment was almost past the power of imagination to conceive.

His face was red as beetroot. All the dust he had gathered in the road had now become mud. There may have been a dry stitch somewhere upon him, but it would have needed finding.

"Ha, ha, ha! What a ripping lark!" roared Frank Monk.

"A lark? Do you call this wanton and unprovoked assault a lark?" stormed their victim. "You shall learn before long how it is regarded by a bench of magistrates! Possibly you will change your tune then. I shall most certainly prosecute! Such indignity as this is not to be borne tamely!"

"It wasn't," said Gordon Gay.

And assuredly there had been nothing tame about the struggling Philip Ignatius Parker. He had fought like a wild cat.

"It wasn't," said Gordon Gay.

And assuredly there had been nothing tame about the struggling Philip Ignatius Parker. He had fought like a wild cat.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Queer Bird!

"Oh, easy does it, Parker!" said Tom Merry. "Don't talk silly rot about prosecuting! This sort of thing often happens, you know!"

"This sort of thing shall not happen to me again! I will take care of that!" snapped Parker.

"I wouldn't be too sure, old scout," said Carboy, grinning.

"I do not like this sort of thing, and I will not have this sort of thing!" went on the new boy. "I do not regard it as a 'ripping lark.' I regard it as sheer hooliganism. Decent British lads reared in civilised surroundings should be ashamed to behave like the veriest Huns!"

He stopped for want of breath.

"Huns is a bit thick!" said Wootton minor, breathing hard.

"But, my aunt, he can spout, can't he?" said Carboy, half admiringly.

"Oh, razzer!" agreed Mont Blanc.



RAGGING THE NEW BOY! Parker had to go through it. The splash of water sounded. Frank Monk worked the pump-handle vigorously. Three more grinning Grammarians held the new boy under the stream. "Stop it! I will not—ow—Yow!" roared Parker. (See chapter 4.)

"So can the pump," said Frank Monk. "See here, you chap, all you got was no more than you deserved! You shouldn't have kicked Gay! Kickin's a low game! That's Hunnish, if you like!"

"It is a base calumny! I kicked no one!"

"And 'No One's' ribs are aching above a bit," retorted Gordon Gay. "I suppose I must be 'No One'—I've been called worse names—for you most certainly kicked me!"

"How could I possibly have kicked you, you absurd young idiot? I was no sooner upon my feet than you dragged me down again by the leg. It is a physical impossibility for anyone to kick with his right foot while his left leg is in the air."

There was something in that, as Gordon Gay saw.

And now Figgins spoke up.

"Look here, Monk, I kicked you—at least, my foot barged against you jolly hard."

"It did, old chap," said Frank Monk feelingly.

"Do you reckon it was done purposely?"

"Of course I don't, ass!"

"But I don't know this chap," said Figgins.

"But I should say that there's no more likelihood that he kicked, except by accident, than that I did. Gussy's nose bleeds. Are you going to admit that someone pounded it? That would be jolly near as completely off as kicking. This wasn't a free-fight, you know, only a friendly scrap."

Parker gasped. He gasped again when he understood that what seemed to him the very peculiar theory of Figgins—peculiar as regarded the nature of the encounter, that is, for he quite agreed as far as the kicking charge was concerned—found favour with the rest.

"All serene," said Gordon Gay generously. "I forgive you, Parker, or whatever your name is. We won't say any more about it."

"That's the style!" said Tom Merry heartily. "It's all right now—eh, Parker?"

"It certainly is not all right, Derry!"

replied Parker indignantly. "There has not even been anything in the nature of an apology—not that a mere apology could be expected to set straight a matter so grave as this! I must ask the names of all those who took part in this disgraceful assault."

He put up his hand to his chest, as if feeling for some article which should be there.

Then he dropped it, as if suddenly remembering something.

"A notebook!" thought Kerr, the keenest observer of them all. "It's rather a queer thing for a chap to carry, but this is a queer bird. Why doesn't he fetch it out?"

He did not. He stood there, and his face changed its expression.

It was rather as though he was resigning himself with difficulty to a changed order of things, Kerr thought.

Gordon Gay bowed gravely.

"Put me down as the Duke of Hookemsnivey," he said.

"And me as the Lord Knozoo," said Frank Monk.

"Moi—je suis—that ees, I am ze General Joffre!" chimed in Mont Blanc.

"Oliver Cromwell, at your service," said Wootton major.

"I'm Billy Shakespeare, and don't you forget it, old scout!" Carboy said.

"They've bagged pretty nearly everybody but the Kaiser, and I ain't him, anyway!" grumbled Wootton minor.

"Cease this foolery!" snapped Parker. But something like the faint dawn of a smile appeared on his chubby, though old-looking face.

"Take away that bauble!" ordered Wootton major, pointing, whether by accident or intention, to Parker's head.

"Here's old Crump coming!" Lane warned them. "Time to look down your noses—like Parker!"

P.-c. Crump stalked down the village street, shaking his head solemnly. The stout constable always made a point of looking particularly dignified and majestic, after making a point of arriving upon a scene of turmoil too late. But no one minded that. It was better than his getting there sooner and giving trouble, anyway.

Tom Merry seized Parker's arm. Crump liked an occasional "case," and if Parker laid a report, there might yet be the piper to pay.

"Come along, old chap!" said Tom persuasively.

"There's the portah with youah twunks," said Arthur Augustus, taking the other arm.

THE POPULAR.—No. 312.

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"He will be at the school as soon as we are, or vewy neahly, an' you can get into dwy clobber. Come along, deah boy!"

Parker went like a lamb. Monty Lowther was disposed to attribute his docility to the fact of his arm being taken by the son of a real live lord. But it was not that.

"I do not like this sort of thing at all," said Parker. "I shall take strong measures if there is a repetition of it. But as it seems to be part of the strange manners and customs of the school, I will look over it on this occasion."

"Aw'f'ly good of you, Barker!" chuckled Gordon Gay.

"Oh, Parker's all serene!" said Frank Monk. "Not half such a wash-out as he looks. Three cheers for Parker, you chaps! And may we soon meet him again!"

They cheered. Parker was rather bewildered, but quite sure that he had no wish whatever to meet them again soon!

He had not much to say on the way to St. Jim's. They had anticipated a fuss about his wet clothes, but he made no complaint on that score. Once or twice he was observed to smile, but at what they could only guess.

Tom Merry politely escorted him to the Shell dormitory, and provided him with a change of clothes. Parker thanked him, with some reserve, but also with politeness.

Then Tom went down to the study. He found it crowded. Figgins & Co. had come along, and Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and Talbot were all there.

"Rough luck on us! We seem to have missed the funniest thing yet!" said Blake.

"Not at all!" replied Lowther. "The funniest thing yet has only gone up to the dorm. You won't miss it, Blake. Speaking for myself, I could bear to."

"He's a rum 'un, and no error!" said Manners.

"But I don't believe he's a bad sort, really," Tom said.

"Why don't you go and get clean, Gussy, you ruffian?" asked Herries. "You're a perfect disgrace to the school in that state!"

"Worse than Pignacious Porker," said Lowther.

"Parker will get on his ear badly if you don't drop that, Monty," said Tom, laughing.

"It's my 'considered opinion' that Parker will practically live on his ear as long as he stays at St. Jim's," replied Lowther.

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"Am I so dweadfully untiday?" asked Arthur Augustus anxiously. "The Gwamahians are such wough beasts; they have no respect whatever for one's clobber."

"You ain't a bit 'wough' yourself, are you, Gustavus?" grinned Figgins.

"Certainly not, Figgins—that is, except when I am constrained to be. I do not regard all this wough-an-tumble bizney as at all a necessary featich of public school life, an' I p'pouse to take steps to atah it!"

"You'll get tired of walking, Gussy," said Lowther. "It will take quite a few steps, I fancy. But never say die—not till you've worried 'yourself grey-headed over it, anyway."

"D'Arcy will have the moral and material support of the new merchant in his campaign," said Kerr gravely. "I'm jolly sure Parker don't approve of the rough-and-tumble."

"What do you think of him, Kerr?" asked Tom.

"He's a queer bird—no mistake about that! Talks like a grown-up person, you know. A master who'd been ragged might have slanged the ragers very much as he did."

"There's not much in that," remarked Talbot, who had just come from a talk with Mr. Railton, the Housemaster. "He hasn't any experience of boys' ways, and any chap is likely to seem old-fashioned when he has always lived with older people."

"Something in that," said Kerr. "But, making all allowances, he's more—what's the word, Lowther?"

"Pignacious—or pernicious, perhaps."

"No, ass! More mature, I mean. He didn't threaten the Grammarians on his own account, not after they had fussed him. He talked about the law. And then he put up his hand to take out a notebook, it seemed like. And then he remembered that he was a boy—remembered it all of a sudden—and changed his tone a bit."

"Well, what do you make of it, Kerr?" said Tom. "You're about the wisest chap of us all when it comes to deducing things."

"How old is the chap supposed to be?" asked the Scots' junior.

"Oh, about the same age as the rest of us—somewhere nearer sixteen than fifteen," said Tom. "Is that right, Talbot? You seem to know a bit about him."

"That's right, according to Railton," answered Talbot.

"I don't believe it!" said Kerr emphatically. "He's nineteen if he's a day!"

"But—"

"Education neglected," said Kerr. "His folks don't like owning it, so they've lopped four years or so off his age."

"Ass! If his education had been neglected he wouldn't be in the Shell!" said Manners hotly.

"Just where he would be!" grinned Figgins.

"Perfect asylum for that kind of chap, the Shell!" added Blake.

"Queer thing you idiots can't get into it, then!" snorted Manners.

"That's just why," said Herries.

"Because you're idiots, do you mean?" inquired Tom.

"No. And their education has not merely been neglected," said Lowther cuttingly. "It has been omitted completely! It is as wholly lacking as their manners!"

"I'm glad we're lacking him, anyhow!" said Fatty Wynn coolly. "It is a good miss, being without Manners!"

"I should call it a misfortune!" said Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthab, I maintain—"

"Don't, Gustavus! Go and get washed! It will do a lot more to improve your appearance!"

"He's a queer bird, Figgy, and there's more in this bizney than appears on the surface," said Kerr, as the New House trio went to their own quarters.

"You'll have to keep an eye on him, Kerr," said Fatty Wynn.

"I mean to keep two eyes on him!" replied George Kerr.

But Kerr was not the only junior who intended to keep an eye on the amazing new boy. Mellish was smitten by the same intention. He intended to keep two very large and keen eyes on Parker, the mysterious.

(There will be another splendid long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and the amazing new boy, entitled: "In Deadly Peril!" in next week's special issue. Do not miss it.)

FISHY ON THE WARPATH! Fisher T. Fish, the cute American junior, hits upon a gilt-edged scheme of revenge upon his Form master, but like all his plottings, it comes to a surprising end!



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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Starting News!

"I SAY, you fellows—"
Morning lessons were over at Greyfriars. Mr. Quelch had been very quiet and subdued in the Form-room. He had not been irritable, but he had been plainly worried, and two or three careless juniors had earned the sharpest edge of his tongue. Fisher T. Fish had been among them.

Fisher T. Fish had been in Mr. Quelch's bad books of late. Only the previous day the Remove master had caught the American junior charging his Form-fellows an exorbitant rate of interest on loans, ranging from threehalfpence to a pound. That was Fishy's idea of business. Unfortunately for Fisher T. Fish, it was not Mr. Quelch's.

Fishy's money had been confiscated, and his "interest" had been a severe caning. Burning with rage and adrift for vengeance, Fisher T. Fish had openly stated his intention of making Mr. Quelch "sit up."

So far, however, Fisher T. Fish had done all the "sitting up."

Bunter had been another fellow to "catch" it in class. Bunter hadn't done his prep the evening before, and it was useless to explain to Mr. Quelch that he had been too busy making toffee. Even Mark Linley, the best scholar in the Form, had been snapped for a slight slip. The best fellows in the Remove, realising that Mr. Quelch was out of sorts, were patient and attentive; but the slackers grumbled under their breath, and felt extremely injured. As Bob Cherry remarked good-naturedly, after the ordeal was over, if a Form master couldn't rag his own Form when he was waxy, whose Form could he rag?

Harry Wharton & Co., though they felt no resentment for the unusual "rattiness" of a master who was generally kind and just, were glad to get out of the Form-room. They sauntered out into the Close, Bob remarking that he needed some fresh air to buck him up after Quelch.

The chums were chatting in the quad, when Billy Bunter came up, breathless, red, excited, his eyes almost bulging through his glasses. Bunter was simply bursting with news.

"I say—I say, you fellows, he's come for him!" gasped Bunter.

"Has he?" said Bob cheerily. "Who's come for him, tubby? Get your second wind, and tell us all about it!"

"Quelch! Grimes! He's come! And I'm jolly glad!" gasped the fat junior. "I say, do you think he will handcuff him?"

"Who? Which? What?" roared Bob. "Him, you know—he's come, and he's gone to his study—he has, really, and he's there; he was there when he came, and he was taken to him at once."

"What on earth are you burbling about?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Who's he, and who is him?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Make it a bit clearer, old chap!" said Bob encouragingly. "Now, let's have it straight. He came for him, and he was there when he came, and he saw he, and he saw he, and both saw him, and he and him, and him and he—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! You know what I mean. Those typed letters, you know—didn't I tell you Quelch was being dunned for money?" said Bunter triumphantly. "I guessed he was in debt; it couldn't be anything else, you know. When a man gets a typed letter, and goes into tantrums, and licks a chap for nothing, you can bet he's being dunned. I knew it. You fellows will have to admit that I found it out first of all!"

"Nobody's likely to dispute your claim of being the first to shove a fat nose into what doesn't concern you," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! But he's come for him!" shouted Bunter. "Old Grimes, you know—Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield!"

"Has old Grimes come here?" asked Frank Nugent.

"What-ho!" chirruped Bunter. "He's come for Quelch!"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I tell you Inspector Grimes came in a few minutes ago, and asked for Mr. Quelch, and Trotter took him to his study at once," said Bunter excitedly. "He was jingling the handcuffs in his pocket."

"Ass!"

"Well, he had his hand in his pocket, anyway; I saw it—"

"How could you see it if it was in his pocket?"

"Oh, really, you know! I saw that he had his hand in his pocket. And he was looking as stern as—as—"

"As the stern of a ship?"

"Oh, don't be funny, you fathead! He's come for Quelch—I know that. Quelch's

got into debt, you see, and he can't pay up, and Grimes has come to arrest him, and I'm jolly glad!" chirruped the cheerful Owl. "I say, you fellows, do you think he'll be handcuffed? After the way he's treated me, I should be glad to see him handcuffed. I think he deserves it, don't you?"

"You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, why don't you come and see him taken away? You don't often see a Form master marched off by a copper."

And Bunter rushed back to the School House, determined that, for his part at least, he would not miss that interesting sight of a Form master being marched off by a "copper."

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch's Trouble.

QUITE unconscious of the thrilling excitement he was causing in the ranks of the Removites, Mr. Quelch was seated in his study, facing the portly inspector. From Inspector Grimes' manner it would not have been supposed that he had come with hostile intentions. He was very respectful and very interested.

"Thank you very much for answering my telephone call so promptly," said Mr. Quelch. "I am greatly in need of your advice, and perhaps assistance."

"A matter of threatening letters, sir, you told me on the phone," remarked the inspector. "Depend upon it, it won't take long to nail the rascal. Let me have the details of the matter."

"It is really most extraordinary," said the Remove master, with a harassed look. "I have not, so far as I am aware, an enemy. Certainly not one in this neighbourhood, where, I believe, I am respected. I am amazed, and quite perplexed. I received the first letter yesterday by the midday post. Another was delivered to me this morning, in much the same tenor. Then I resolved to communicate with the police without further delay, and I rang you up."

"And do you know from whom the letters came?"

"I have no idea."

"The handwriting—"

"They were typed," said Mr. Quelch. "There is, so far as I can see, no clue to the sender. But possibly you may detect things that are hidden from my eyes."

"Quite possibly, sir," smiled the inspector. "That is my business. Have you consulted anyone else, so far?"

"I have acquainted Dr. Locke with the matter. He suggested sending for his relative, Ferrers Locke, the celebrated detective. But—but I naturally wish as little fuss to be made as possible."

"I think you may rely on the local police, sir," said Mr. Grimes, a little stiffly. "I scarcely think Ferrers Locke would be likely to have more success in the matter than myself, for instance. Pray let me see the letters."

"They are here."

Mr. Quelch opened his desk and took out two envelopes. They were addressed to himself in type. The inspector scanned the envelopes.

"Typed on a machine using a purple ribbon," he remarked. "Of course, there are probably some thousands of such machines in the county."

"But the postmark is Friardale," said Mr. Quelch. "I am not aware that anyone in the village uses a typewriter."

The inspector smiled.

"True; but there are dozens used in Courtfield. The writer of the letter might choose to post it in another place, in order to cover up his tracks."

"Yes, that is very true. This is the first letter I received."

The inspector examined the letter. It was typed in purple, on ordinary typewriting paper. There was no heading. It ran:

"HENRY QUELCH, BEWARE!

"Tyrant, an enemy is on your track! When you least expect it, the blow will fall! Prepare to meet your doom!"

"NEMO."

"Extraordinary!" said the inspector.

"And this is the second letter, which I received this morning."

The second letter ran:

"TREMBLE!

"This is the second warning!

"Seven warnings will be given, and then the blow will fall! Tyrant, your days are numbered! Prepare to perish!"

"NEMO."

Inspector Grimes examined both letters very attentively. He was looking somewhat perplexed.

"Well, sir, what conclusion do you draw?" asked Mr. Quelch at last. "Is it some incredibly foolish joke, or does some danger in reality threaten me?"

"That it is scarcely possible to say at this stage," said the inspector gravely. "You say that you have no personal enemy?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"There is no one who—excuse me—may consider that you have injured him?"

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

"I cannot recall anyone. Of course, I have not passed through life without some little differences with various persons. But I can conceive of no reason why anyone should threaten my life. Unless the letters are a foolish practical joke, they seem to me the work of a lunatic."

"That is possible," said the inspector. "A man of unsound mind might nourish a sense of injury for a wholly imaginary cause."

Mr. Quelch shuddered.

"It is not pleasant to suppose that some lunatic has marked me down as his victim," he exclaimed. "I should prefer to look upon the letters as a foolish joke."

"If that is the case it will cost the joker dear when he is discovered," said the inspector. "The writing of threatening letters, even for a joke, is punished by imprisonment. With your permission I will take these letters with me, and if you receive any more communications of the sort, please telephone me at once."

"I will certainly do so."

"I will leave no stone unturned to discover the writer," said Mr. Grimes. "Meantime, I should recommend you to remain within the school walls. It is useless to run unnecessary risks."

"I shall certainly not go out till you have investigated the matter, Mr. Grimes. I was going this evening to play chess with the vicar—"

"I should advise you to cancel that."

"Yes, yes; I will do so. I need not say

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that I am very anxious for the matter to be cleared up."

The inspector rose.

"You may safely leave it in my hands, Mr. Quelch." He put the letters in his pocket-book. "I will take these letters, with your permission. By consulting an expert I shall soon ascertain upon what make of machine they were written, and that will narrow down the field of search. Rely upon me."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Quelch. "I shall wait very anxiously to hear from you."

And he opened the door for his visitor.

To the disappointment of several juniors who were hanging around the passage, Grimes stalked off without Mr. Quelch in handcuffs.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Grimes on the Track!

THE next morning Mr. Quelch's letters were taken into his study, and did not appear on the breakfast-table.

In his study the Remove master looked over them with a puckered brow. He started, and his lips set tightly as he picked out an envelope addressed to him in typewriting.

"Another!" he murmured.

He cut open the envelope, and drew out the letter. Like the previous missives, it was typed on ordinary typing paper. It ran:

"Tyrant! Tremble! This is the third warning! Last night you escaped me! You dared not come forth. But the hour will come! Tremble!"

"NEMO."

The letter shook in Mr. Quelch's agitated hand.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured. "It is some lunatic—some fearful, irresponsible lunatic who fancies that I have wronged him—else why does he allude to me as a tyrant—a really absurd and melodramatic expression. The letters, indeed, might be written by some foolish person whose mind has been perverted by reading newspaper reports of crimes. Dear me! Bless my soul!"

Buzzzzzz!

Mr. Quelch hurried to the telephone as the bell rang. He took up the receiver with an agitated hand.

The deep voice of Inspector Grimes, of Courtfield, came over the wires:

"Is that Greyfriars School?"

"Yes, yes—Mr. Quelch speaking."

"I am Inspector Grimes. I think I may say we are on the track. Have you received any further communications?"

"Yes—by this morning's post."

"The same kind as before?"

"Precisely the same. But you say you are on the track, inspector?"

"I think I may say so. I sent two of my best men off last night. They discovered a man lurking on the Friardale Road, within a short distance of the school. His manner was most suspicious. He was lurking in the road, keeping in the shadows as much as possible, and at sight of them he darted into the wood. They lost track of him there, in the dark. But his actions speak for themselves. I have very little doubt that he will be found to-day."

"Good—very good!"

"He will then be obliged to give an account of himself, and if he is the writer of the threatening letters, I have not the slightest doubt that the fact will come to light. Either upon his person, or in his lodgings, some evidence will be discovered."

"I trust so, inspector. I am in a state of great uneasiness."

"Rely upon us, sir!"

Mr. Quelch felt a little relieved after that talk on the telephone. The police, with their usual activity and perspicacity, were already on the track of the mysterious "Nemo." Probably he would soon be laid by the heels. But if they did not capture him—what then? Suppose—suppose the awful ruffian should lose patience, and, instead of waiting for him to come forth, should attempt to penetrate into the school under cover of darkness? Mr. Quelch resolved to lock his bed-room door that night.

He was late to breakfast, and his pale and harassed look did not escape the attention of his Form. Fisher T. Fish watched with a subdued grin. The American junior seemed to feel that he was getting "his

own" back. Harry Wharton was a little concerned. He really liked and respected his Form master, and he was sorry to see him looking so harassed.

Billy Bunter gave the Famous Five a reproachable blink as they came out after breakfast.

"I say, you fellows, Quelch looks awfully queer," he said.

"He does—he do!" said Bob Cherry. "Looks as if he's going to be ill. I wonder what's the matter?"

"It's his pressing debts, of course."

"Fathead!"

"I think you fellows ought to do the decent thing," said Bunter, pulling a sheet of blank notepaper from his pocket. "You ought to help old Quelch out of his difficulties by heading my subscription list—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Bob Cherry. "We've heard all about your subscription list. It's still a beautiful blank, I see."

"And likely to remain so!" grunted Nugent. "It's not a subscription for Quelch, it's for—"

"W. G. Bunter!" said Johnny Bull bluntly.

"Oh, really, Bull!" said Bunter. "What can I put you chaps down for?"

"Nix!"

"Beasts!"

The Famous Five grinned and walked away. "I say, Coker! The Owl of the Remove bore down on Coker of the Fifth in the passage. 'Coker, old man!'"

"Cut off, you cheeky fag!" said Coker tersely.

"I say, Coker, as—as a prominent fellow in the school—a fellow who ought really to be head prefect—you ought to help in this," urged Bunter.

Coker paused, thawing. "Soft sawder" was never applied in vain to the great Coker.

"What is it?" he asked, more graciously.

"It's a subscription for Quelch. He's head over ears in debt, and we're trying to raise a fund to get him out of the scrape."

"Great Scott!"

"I'd like you to head the list, Coker, as—as the head of the Fifth Form," said Bunter. "You see, Quelch's being dunned right and left. What are you making faces at me for, Bob Cherry? Quelch's head over ears in debt, and old Grimes brought him a summons yesterday, and—"

"BUNTER!"

Billy Bunter jumped. It was Mr. Quelch's voice. The Owl of the Remove understood now why Bob had been making faces at him.

"Bunter, how dare you?"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Bunter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Reward!

MR. QUELCH glared at the quaking Bunter, almost at a loss for speech.

His face was pale with anger.

Bunter stood trembling like a jelly. The fellows near at hand stood as silent as graven images, quite awed by the expression upon the Remove master's face.

"Bunter! You utterly stupid and impudent young rascal, how dare you make such statements respecting your Form master?"

"I—I—I didn't, sir!" stammered Bunter.

"What! I have just heard you!"

"I—I—I mean, I—I—I—"

"You have invented a story that I, your Form master, am in debt, and dunned for money, and summoned for the same."

"Not at all, sir. We're all very sorry indeed to know that you are hard-up, and we're raising a subscription for you," stammered Bunter.

"How dare you!"

"I—I thought you'd like it, sir!"

"Are you insane, Bunter? If I were in need of money, do you think I could accept monetary aid from the boys of my Form?"

"I—I suppose so, sir. I would!"

"You have actually been collecting money, and using my name?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "Good heavens, I have never heard of such insolence! How much money have you collected?"

"N-n-n-one, so far, sir. The—the fellows were so jolly suspicious, and they—they thought I should blue it on grub!"

"I have very little doubt that their suspicions were well founded, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You have dared to use my name, and to represent me as being in debt."

"I'm sure I'm awfully sorry you're in debt, sir," gasped Bunter. "When—when my postal-order comes, I'd be very pleased to lend—"

"BUNTER!"
"Ye-e-s, sir. I—I mean—"
"I must sift this matter to the bottom," said Mr. Quelch. "Kindly tell me who informed you that I am in debt, Bunter."

"Nun-nun-nobody, sir!"
"Then what gave you the impression?"
"Be-because it's true, sir!"
"It is not true, Bunter."
"Oh crumbs!"

"Now tell me what put such an incredibly absurd and insolent idea into your foolish head?" thundered the Remove master.

Bunter's knees knocked together.
"I—I—I— Those dunning letters, sir!" he gasped.

"What letters? Is it possible that you have been prying into my correspondence?" gasped the Form master.

"Nunno, sir—oh, no! I'd scorn such an action, sir, and I never had any chance! I mean, I wouldn't have done it if I'd had a chance. But those typed letters, sir, as they were dunning letters—"

"They were not dunning letters, Bunter."
"Oh, I—I see, sir."

"And why," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice—"why should you suppose that they were what you call dunning letters, Bunter?"

"Bub-bub-because you were so waxy after getting them, sir!" stammered Bunter.

There was a chuckle, instantly suppressed as Mr. Quelch glanced round with a freezing eye.

"Bunter, I hardly know how to deal with you," said Mr. Quelch, after a pause. "I must conclude that you have spread this ridiculous story through the school."

"Oh, no, sir; I—I haven't mentioned it to anybody, sir."

"What! Yet you have been attempting to raise subscriptions! Don't prevaricate, Bunter!"

"Certainly not, sir. I—I couldn't if I tried."

"Boys," said Mr. Quelch, looking round. "I think I hardly need say that this utterly foolish and is completely mistaken. The letter he alludes to had no connection whatever with monetary matters. I make this statement to remove the false impression Bunter's stupid folly may have created. Bunter, you will follow me to my study!"

"Oh lor!" groaned Billy Bunter. He had reason to groan when he entered the Form master's study. Sounds of anguish proceeded from that apartment, accompanied by the swishing of a cane. When Billy Bunter came out he looked as if he were trying to tie himself into a sailor's knot.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Inspector Grimes makes a Capture!

SUNDAY was the next day. There was an early morning delivery of letters at Greyfriars that day, and Mr. Quelch received one. He was not surprised to see that it was typed. It was a threatening letter, in much the same strain as the previous ones, and Mr. Quelch wiped his perspiring brow as he read it. It proved clearly enough that the letter-writer had not yet been captured by the enterprising inspector.

The matter was getting on Mr. Quelch's nerves seriously.

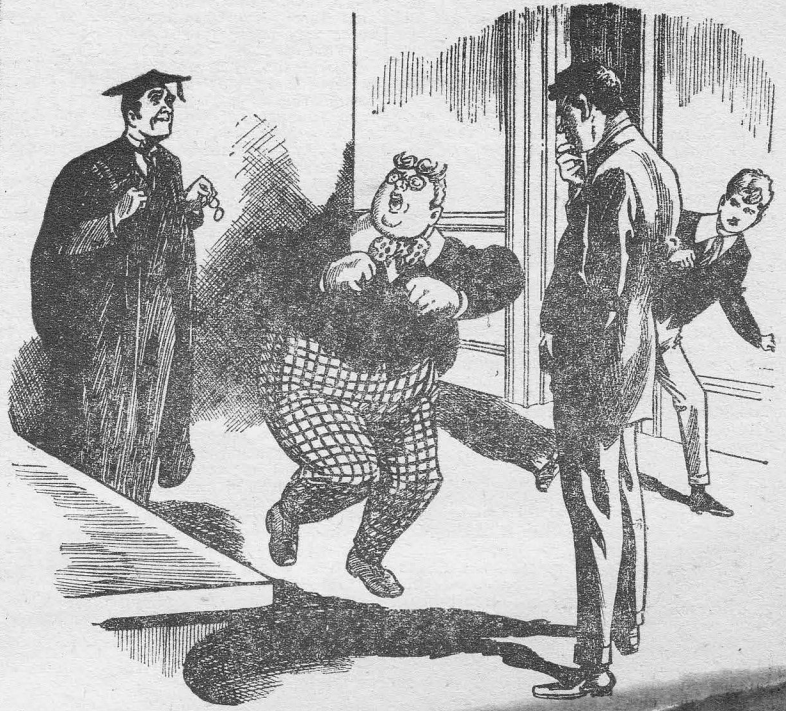
All the Greyfriars fellows could see that he was worried and anxious, and could not help wondering what was the matter with him.

Bunter's absurd theory of debts and dunning letters having been disposed of, the Removees were left quite in the dark, but they could not fail to see that there was something troubling their Form master seriously.

Most of them were sorry to see it, for they liked their Form master very well. Three or four fellows, like Skinner and Snoop, were glad to see it. Fisher T. Fish positively rejoiced in it. He "guessed" that Quelch was being made to sit up at last, as he told the Famous Five. Harry Wharton looked at him hard when he made that accurate "guess."

"Do you mean to say that you have nothing to do with it, Fish?" he asked.

Fisher T. Fish chuckled.
"I guess I don't mean to say anything," he answered. "We learn to keep our yaup-traps shut in Noo York, sir."



OVERHEARD! "You see, Quelch's being dunned right and left," said Bunter. "What are you making those faces at me for? Quelch's head-over-heels in debt, and old Grimes brought him a summons yesterday, and—" "BUNTER!" Billy Bunter jumped and spun round. It was Mr. Quelch's voice. (See Chapter 4.)

"I don't see how you could be the cause of it."

"I guess there's heaps of things you don't see, you galoot! Didn't I tell you I'd make Quelch sit up for being down on me?"

"Yes. But—"
"And isn't he sitting up?"
"Well, yes; but—"

"Then I calculate you can put two and two together," chuckled Fishy. "Put it down to me, sir. But I'm not letting anything out. We cut our eye-teeth early in the Yew-nited States, sonny. But I kinder reckon that by this time Quelch is feeling rather sorry for himself—some!"

"If I believed that was anything but gas I'd take you by the neck and rub your face in the coal-locker," said Wharton quietly. "But I believe it's only gas!"
Fisher T. Fish sniffed.

"You can believe what you like, and go and chop chips!" he said. "But I guess I'm after his scalp—just a few!—and I'll worry him till his last hairs turn grey—some! I guess I'll teach him not to wallop a free American citizen."

"If you've been playing a trick, what is it?" demanded Nugent.
"I guess that's telling!"

And Fishy sauntered away chortling. On Monday morning there was another letter for Mr. Quelch. It was typed as before, and it ran:

"This is the fifth warning. Prepare for death! In the dead of night the blow will fall. Beware!"

"NEMO."

"Good heavens!" murmured Mr. Quelch. "I—I really shall be ill if this continues much longer. Really, I should have expected that Inspector Grimes would have had some success before this!"

Later in the morning he encountered the Head, and Dr. Locke glanced at him quite anxiously.

"You are not looking well, Quelch," he said.

Mr. Quelch passed his hand across his brow.

"I am not feeling well, sir," he said. "I confess that that mysterious matter is affecting my nerves. Every morning regularly I

receive a letter containing the most savage threats."

"If you wished, I would ask Ferrers Locke to come here—"

"I am sorry I did not accept your offer to do so before, sir. But now I have placed the matter in Inspector Grimes' hands I cannot very well withdraw it."

"No; that would naturally be a slight to the inspector. I sincerely trust that he will be successful in finding this unscrupulous wretch."

After dinner there was a call on the telephone for Mr. Quelch. It came from Court-field Police-station.

"Mr. Quelch?"
"Yes, yes. You have news for me?"
"Good news, sir! The man has been arrested."

"Thank goodness!"

"The arrest was made yesterday afternoon. The man is a tramp, and cannot give a satisfactory account of himself. He has been lurking about the neighbourhood for a week, and is evidently a suspicious character. Unless some proof is forthcoming to connect him with the threatening letters we cannot detain him long; but I hope to clear up the matter—"

"One moment!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "You say that this—this suspicious character was arrested yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes, on Hayes' Farm, on a charge of frequenting with felonious intent."

"But—but I received another of the threatening letters this morning!"

"Wha-a-at?"
"The postmark was Friardale; the hour last evening."

"Great Scott!"
"This letter must have been posted while you had the man in custody."

There was a long pause before the inspector replied. His tone was quite altered as it came over the wires at last.

"Ahem! Hum! H'm! Under the circumstances, it appears that—that this suspicious character cannot be the—the person in question. I—I shall question him—ahem!—before he is released; but—but—it is true that he had denied any knowledge of the letters—ahem!—ahem!"

"The letter-writer is evidently still at liberty, Mr. Grimes," said the Remove master

dryly. "Would you—ahem!—have any objection to my consulting Ferrers Locke, the detective, on the subject?"

"Oh, none at all—none at all!"

"Thank you!"

Mr. Quelch hung up the receiver, and hurried to the Head's study.

"Dr. Locke, will you have the kindness to telephone for your young relative? If Ferrers Locke could come—"

"Certainly, Mr. Quelch. But the inspector—"

"The inspector arrested a tramp upon suspicion yesterday afternoon."

"Then—"

"And while the man was in custody, another letter was posted to me in Friar-dale."

"Oh!"

"I think, therefore, that I am justified in calling in Mr. Locke. At this rate, Mr. Grimes may cause a great deal of inconvenience to perfectly innocent persons."

The Head smiled.

"I will telephone at once," he said.

And he did; and Ferrers Locke replied over the wires that he would be at Greyfriars by the early evening train.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Light on the Subject!

FERRERS LOCKE, by Jove!"

Bob Cherry spotted the famous detective as he stepped out of a taxi before the School House in the dusk of the evening.

Mr. Locke nodded kindly to Bob as he came in. He proceeded directly to the Head's study, and a few minutes later was seen tapping at Mr. Quelch's door. The door opened, and closed again behind the detective.

In Mr. Quelch's study, Ferrers Locke was greeted warmly by the Remove master.

"I cannot say how glad I am to see you, Mr. Locke," said the worried gentleman. "I hope you will be able to help me."

"I sincerely trust so," said Ferrers Locke, as he sat down. "It is a matter of threatening letters, I understand from Dr. Locke?"

"Exactly!"

"Please give me the details."

Mr. Quelch explained, the detective listening attentively.

"A very remarkable matter," said Mr. Locke. "You have some of the letters here?"

"The first two are in Inspector Grimes' hands, but I have received three since then. They are here."

"I shall be glad to see them."

Mr. Quelch laid the letters on the table. Ferrers Locke glanced over them, and then picked up the latest arrival, and examined it closely.

The Form master watched him anxiously. Whether the detective would discover anything that had been hidden from Inspector Grimes he could not guess; but he had faith in Ferrers Locke, and he hoped. He was surprised to see a smile fit over the grave face of the detective.

"This is a very curious letter," said Mr. Locke.

"A very alarming one," said the Remove master.

"I hope not."

"You think there is nothing to fear?"

"I trust not. But we shall see. In almost every one of these letters, sir, you are alluded to as a tyrant."

Mr. Quelch flushed.

"A most unjust accusation," he exclaimed, "and a most absurd one, from a person who has never come in contact with me. How could my conduct have been tyrannical towards an individual I do not know?"

"How, indeed?" said the detective. "The inevitable conclusion is that you do know him, sir."

"What!"

"And that you have been at some time or other in a position of authority over him, and doubtless treated him—or he supposed so—with severity."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"Some discharged servant, you think? That would certainly narrow down the field of inquiry."

The detective shook his head.

"I scarcely think, Mr. Quelch, that a discharged servant would cherish such animosity towards you. I am quite sure that your treatment of any dependent would never

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merit that. Moreover, does it not strike you that there is a certain youthful air about these very peculiar epistles?"

"Youthful!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Decidedly. The wording of them shows a juvenile imagination, to my mind—the imagination of a young person who has fed upon newspaper reports of crimes and stories of Anarchists. Such rubbish as the cheap and nasty stories for boys which are published in America."

"Certainly that occurred to me," confessed Mr. Quelch. "I attributed the absurd expressions in the letters to the state of the man's mind. I consider that he must be insane."

"If it is a man—yes."

"You do not suppose that a boy would or could write such letters?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"A foolish and revengeful boy might do so, borrowing the melodramatic expressions from his favourite literature. But we shall see. Whoever wrote these letters had access to a typewriter."

"Yes, and it is unlikely that a boy would possess such a machine. True, a lad in a business office might have access to one, but such a lad could not be supposed even to have heard of me, much less to cherish animosity towards me."

"True. I understand that you possess a typewriter yourself, Mr. Quelch."

"Yes, it is here!" said the Remove master, astonished by the remark.

"What colour ribbon do you use?"

"Purple record."

"These letters have been typed with a purple record ribbon," said Ferrers Locke.

"Yes, I observed that."

"Will you hand me a sheet of the typing paper you use?"

"Certainly!"

The amazed master did so, and Ferrers Locke smiled slightly again.

"You use exactly the same paper as your mysterious correspondent, Mr. Quelch. You observe the quality, the thickness, and the water-mark are the same."

"I had not observed it, but it is certainly the case," assented Mr. Quelch. "Such paper, however, is used everywhere."

"Quite so. May I try your machine?"

"Try my machine?"

"Yes."

"Certainly, if you wish. But I fail to see—"

"Patience a few moments, my dear sir."

Mr. Quelch, in utter astonishment, removed the cover from his typewriter. Ferrers Locke slid the blank sheet on the cylinder, and proceeded to type. He made a copy of the latest missive received by the harassed Form master. A slightly impatient expression was appearing upon Mr. Quelch's face. Ferrers Locke's action was utterly incomprehensible to him.

Ferrers Locke drew the written sheet from the machine, and compared it carefully with the threatening letter.

"Well?" said Mr. Quelch, at last.

The detective looked up.

"It is exact," he said.

"But—but I do not understand—"

"The explanation is simple, Mr. Quelch, and I do not think you will have far to look for your mysterious correspondent. The threatening letters were written here."

"Here?" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

"In this study, on your typewriter," said Ferrers Locke calmly.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Dangerous Character!

MR. QUELCH gazed speechlessly at the detective.

"For some moments he could not find his voice."

"Mr. Locke," he gasped at last, "is—is this a jest?"

"Nothing of the kind. Look at these two letters—one written by 'Nemo,' the other a copy taken by myself on your machine."

"I confess that they tell me nothing."

Ferrers Locke smiled.

"Now observe this letter from your unknown 'Nemo.' Take the letter 'i,' which occurs more than once. The letter 'i' is slightly inclined to the right. You observe that?"

"Now that you point it out, certainly."

"Take the letter 'g.' The tail of the 'g' is slightly broken. That letter on your machine has suffered a little."

"It is so."

"Take the capital 'N,' in 'Nemo.' The right-hand stroke is slightly chipped."

"True."

"Now look at the copy of the letter I have made on your machine. You will see that the 'i' is slightly inclined to the right; that the 'g' is broken slightly; that the capital 'N' is chipped on the right-hand line. There are a dozen or more indications of the same sort, which I need not enumerate. But it is perfectly obvious that these threatening letters were written on your machine."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"It seems clear enough," he said. "Quite clear, Mr. Locke. But—but how in the name of wonder has that wretch obtained admittance to the school? How did he know that I possessed a typewriter, that he came here to use it? Mr. Locke, it seems incredible that any outsider should have been able to obtain access to the House and to my study unseen!"

"It is incredible," said Ferrers Locke, with a nod. "And the explanation is that these letters were written by some inmate of Greyfriars."

Mr. Quelch jumped up.

"A Greyfriars boy?" he shouted.

"Undoubtedly."

"Good heavens!"

"The threats contained in the letters are mere nonsense, and there never was, of course, any intention of carrying them out," said Ferrers Locke. "The letters were designed to worry and harass you, doubtless in revenge for some punishment inflicted by you in the course of your duties here."

"Then—then the unscrupulous rascal must be a boy in my own Form!" the Remove master exclaimed.

"I should say that that was quite certain," said Ferrers Locke. "That accounts for the revengeful action and for the ridiculous appellation of 'tyrant' addressed to you."

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Quelch sat down again, almost gasping.

He blushed to reflect how his nerves had been worked upon by the trick. His whole Form had seen his state of nerves—the letter-writer among the rest. Doubtless all the time he had been grinning over the success of his scheme for harassing the Form master. Mr. Quelch coloured at the thought.

"You need not blame yourself for having been deceived, sir," said Ferrers Locke, who easily read the Remove master's uncomfortable thoughts. "Naturally, you could not guess. Inspector Grimes apparently took the letters seriously, even to the extent of arresting a person on suspicion. You need not blame yourself; but I should recommend you to find out the young rascal concerned, and make him understand clearly that this is not a safe game to play."

Mr. Quelch's eyes gleamed.

"But—but there are a large number of boys in my Form, Mr. Locke. Most of them, I am sure, would be incapable of such an unfeeling and rascally action. But how to uncover the guilty party—"

"I do not think that will be difficult."

"Then what would you recommend?"

"Let the young rascal convict himself by being caught in the act."

"Ah! You mean he may be caught in my study the next time he indites a letter upon the typewriter. By watching the study at night—for he must certainly have used the machine at night—"

Ferrers Locke shook his head.

"It is possible that he might be caught in that manner," he replied. "But it is very probable that he typed a number of the letters at once, having found a favourable opportunity of using your machine without your knowledge. That course would be a safer one for him to follow."

"Then if he is searched the letters will be found in his possession!" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Very probably, but not certainly, for he may not have adopted that course," said Ferrers Locke. "But one thing is certain, these letters are posted at Friar-dale, to catch the last collection. To catch that collection the boy must leave the school after locking up."

"It is true."

"I shall leave Greyfriars at once," said Ferrers Locke. "The guilty party will steal out this evening, as usual, to post his letter in the village. It has doubtless been easy enough for him to do so hitherto without discovery. But on this occasion the village post-office will be watched. If a Greyfriars boy, of the Remove, comes there to post a letter, he will be seized before he can place the letter in the box. If it is a typed

address to yourself on the envelope, I will bring him back to school with the letter. There will in that case be no possible doubt."

"Thank you, Mr. Locke! Such a plan cannot fail."

And after a few more minutes Ferrers Locke took his leave.

Fisher T. Fish glanced at Ferrers Locke as he left the School House and stepped into the taxi. Harry Wharton & Co. saluted the detective, who gave them a kindly nod. The taxi whirled away in the dusk.

"I guess he's vamoosed," said Fisher T. Fish, with much satisfaction. "I guess he's no earthly good, after all!"

"What were you scared about, you ass?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I guess I wasn't scared!"

"You've been playing some trick to worry Quelch, and you were afraid Ferrers Locke would find it out," said Harry Wharton, knitting his brows.

"Waal, I guess he's slipped up on it, anyway!" grinned Fish.

Mr. Quelch came out of his study, and passed the group of juniors. Fisher T. Fish drew a quick breath for a moment. But the Remove master did not glance at him.

The American junior breathed more freely when he was gone.

"All O. K., I guess!" he muttered.

And he strolled away, whistling. "Is he up to some dirty trick, or is it only his gas?" said Bob Cherry.

"Blessed if I know!" said Wharton. "But if it's something serious enough for Ferrers Locke to be called in about, I should say Fishy's number is up!"

"He's been jolly mysterious lately," said Frank Nugent. "Breaking bounds in the evening—what for he won't say. It looks to me as if he's going off his rocker."

Fishy's latest habit of breaking bounds in the evening was considerably surprising to the juniors who knew of it, as no reason could be assigned for it. Fishy was too "cute" to waste his money at the Cross Keys, as some of the "blades" of Greyfriars did. As for wanting to post a letter in the village box, that did not seem reasonable, unless he chose the lateness of the hour to conceal the fact that he was posting letters at all; but why he should wish to keep the circumstance dark was a puzzle. But, naturally, Mr. Quelch had not taken his Form into his confidence on that point.

Fisher T. Fish was missing again that evening, and Harry Wharton & Co. could guess easily enough that he was out of bounds. There was little danger of discovery in the ordinary course, as Fish went out after calling-over, and returned in time for bed. But events out of the ordinary course were destined to happen that evening.

The chums of the Remove were in the Common-room later in the evening, when Billy Bunter burst in, his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "I—I say—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Grimey come for Quelch again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say—it's Fishy! He's arrested!" shrieked Bunter.

"Fishy this time, is it?" yawned Bob Cherry. "You'll make it the Head next, Bunter, I suppose. Why don't you make it the Head?"

"It's true!" yelled Bunter. "Ferrers Locke has come back, and he's got Fishy by the collar—"

"What?"

"He rang Gosling up, and had the gates opened, and they're coming across the quad now!" panted Bunter. "Come on! I tell you Fishy's arrested!"

And Bunter dashed off again, to witness the thrilling sight of Fisher T. Fish being marched in with Ferrers Locke's hand on his collar. A crowd rushed after him in great astonishment.

Unlike a great deal of Bunter's news, it was true this time. A crowd of excited juniors reached the Hall just as Fisher T. Fish came in, with the grip of Ferrers Locke on his collar. Mr. Locke was looking quiet and grave, and Fisher T. Fish was white as a sheet, and looking as scared as a rabbit.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What has Fishy done, Mr. Locke?"

"You will know soon," said Ferrers Locke quietly.

"I—I calculate it was only a joke," grinned Fisher T. Fish, utterly down in the mouth. "I—I guess—"

Mr. Quelch came hurriedly out of his study. "Mr. Locke—" he exclaimed.

"I have brought this boy to you, sir," said Ferrers Locke. "He came to the village post-box, and I caught him as he was putting the letter in. The letter is here."

Mr. Quelch took the letter. Half Greyfriars had gathered round in the Hall in wonder and amazement.

The Remove master gave Fisher T. Fish an expressive glance, and cut open the envelope, which was addressed to himself in typewriting.

The letter inside ran:

"TYRANT! The hour of doom approaches! Beware of vengeance! In the dark hours of night the blow will fall! You are doomed!"

"NEMO."

Mr. Quelch read that precious letter, with a grim brow.

Then his eyes were fixed upon Fisher T. Fish. Ferrers Locke had released the unfortunate junior. Fish seemed to curl up under Mr. Quelch's glittering eye.

"So, Fish," said Mr. Quelch, in a voice like a rumble of thunder—"so rascal, your guilt is proved!"

"I—I—I guess—" stammered Fish.

"Mr. Locke, I am extremely obliged to you—more obliged than I can say. Fish, you know what to expect, I presume?"

"I—I reckon it was only a joke, sir," muttered Fisher T. Fish, licking his dry lips.

"I—I guess I never meant any harm, sir. I—I shouldn't have done anything, of course; it—it was only a matter of writing the letters, sir!"

"Unscupulous young rascal! And what was your motive in attempting thus to trouble and harass your Form master?"

"I—I guess—"

"In revenge, I presume, for a well-deserved punishment, administered on account of other rascally and unscrupulous actions!" said Mr. Quelch sternly.

Fisher T. Fish mumbled. "May we know what Fish has done, sir?" asked Harry Wharton respectfully.

"You may, Wharton. All Greyfriars will know, and will be able to treat this wretched and wicked boy with the contempt he deserves. Fish has written me a series of abusive and threatening letters—"

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean—"

"I do not wonder that you are surprised, Wharton. I hope every boy here is surprised and shocked. Doubtless, in order to secure

his own safety by avoiding the use of hand-writing, Fish used my own typewriting machine for the purpose, and through that action he was detected by Mr. Locke.

"Good old Sherlock Holmes!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You may read this letter," continued Mr. Quelch. "Having read it, you will fully understand why Fish is going to be punished with unexampled severity."

"Ow-yow!" mumbled Fisher T. Fish, in dire apprehension.

There was a murmur of indignation as the letter was read. Glances of contempt were turned on the wretched Fish from all sides.

Fisher T. Fish stood limp and quailing. The first-rate, gilt-edged "stunt," as he would have called it, for making his Form master "sit up," had recoiled on his own head. That there was anything specially unscrupulous and rascally in writing anonymous and threatening letters Fisher T. Fish could not see. But it was certain that the Head's birch would assist in making it plain to him.

"Follow me, Fish!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "It rests with the Head whether you are flogged or expelled for this rascality. Follow me!"

Fisher T. Fish limped away after Mr. Quelch to the Head's study.

He left the crowd in a buzz. Fishy's mysterious conduct of late, his weird and mysterious hints, were explained. And the general opinion was that Fishy was going to get a record flogging, and that he deserved it.

And he did.

The next morning Fisher T. Fish was called out before the assembled school, and hoisted upon Gosling's broad shoulders, and for some time Dr. Locke was very busy with the birch. The yells of Fisher T. Fish rang through the Hall, and when the infliction was over he was quite limp. The Head told him he trusted that that would be a lesson to him. He was not likely to write any more anonymous letters.

And he did not receive any sympathy in the Remove. Even Billy Bunter told him he was disgusted with him, and all the Remove agreed that it was jolly lucky he had been "bowled out."

THE END.

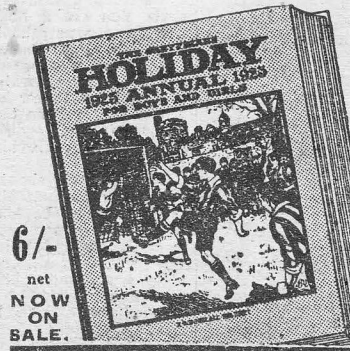
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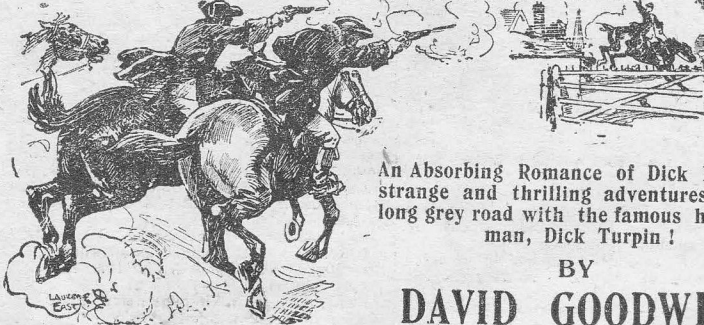
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DICK O' THE HIGHWAY.



An Absorbing Romance of Dick Neville's strange and thrilling adventures on the long grey road with the famous highwayman, Dick Turpin!

BY
DAVID GOODWIN.

NEW READERS START HERE.

Travelling North to school in the guardianship of their Uncle Vesey, Dick and Ralph Neville, the two sons of the late John Neville, of Faulkborough, one of the finest estates of old England, are held up by a highwayman.

The highwayman proves to be none other than the notorious Dick Turpin, a robber still burning with rage over the manner his rascally uncle has swindled both of them out of their estates, Dick Neville decides to leave his uncle there and then, and join Turpin on the road. He saddles himself on one of Vesey's horses, and takes one hundred pounds from him that has been left to him in the will of John Neville, and rides away.

Mad with anger, Vesey Neville continues the journey with only Ralph as his companion, and Dick Turpin, with his newly-found companion, watch the coach disappear from sight over the brow of the hill.

Having firmly made up his mind to join Turpin, Dick resists a horse-dealer and wins by his wonderful horsemanship a beautiful black horse which is named Satan.

Dick has not been long on the road when

he hears that his young brother Ralph is in danger of his life in the school in the North. In great haste he rides to Duncansby School, and arrives in time to save Ralph's life.

Dick Neville has in his mind a school in which he feels his brother will be safe, and that school is St. Anstell's. The two brothers journey to the school, and when Ralph is safely installed under an assumed name Dick rides away. The headmaster—one Dr. Trelawney—being indebted to the young highwayman, who once saved his life, is pleased to take charge of Ralph, in spite of the knowledge he holds that Dick Neville is an outlaw with a wriggle on his head.

At St. Anstell's Ralph makes several friends, but he also makes a bad enemy in a young rascal named Dirkley. Dirkley discovers Ralph's real identity, and with two of his chums plots to capture Dick Neville. But Dick escapes their trap. Dr. Trelawney hears of this attempt, and steps in. He calls Dirkley into his study and severely reprimands him.

(Now read on.)

The Gipsy's Capture!

DIRKLEY slunk out, wondering what had become of his great sensation. He could not make it out. He made his way sulkily downstairs, and tried to escape to a solitary class-room; but there were scouts placed on the staircase, and they seized him.

"Come on, you chaps! Here's the sneak!"

"Let me go!" yelled Dirkley at the top of his voice, hoping to bring a master on the scene.

"What have you told the doctor, you cur?" cried Conyers. "If you've got Faulkborough or the other chap into hot water, we'll murder you!"

"I haven't—I didn't!" yelled Dirkley, as Conyers and Hilton seized him and the others crowded round. "I—I only told him I'd been fighting with you chaps, and he said he'd flog me."

"I jolly well wish he had, and expelled you into the bargain!" exclaimed Hilton. "Here, you fellows, it was this beast that kept Dick Neville's letter, and laid the trap for him. Let's kill the sneak!"

"Boo—yah—ow!" roared Dirkley. "Hoo—yow!"

So lustily did he howl, that he soon brought a master on the scene—a favourite move with fellows of Dirkley's kidney—who dealt out a hundred Greek lines all round, Dirkley included; and then the dormitory bell rang, and everybody was marshalled off to bed, just as the boys had arranged to make Dirkley run the gauntlet. The sneak had a bed in No. 4 Dormitory, where—by good luck for him—none of his enemies berthed, and so he escaped their vengeance for the moment.

"I believe old Trelawney knew all the time!" muttered Dirkley savagely to himself, as he pulled the bedclothes over him. "I swear I'll be even with him. If he won't attend to the matter, I know who will!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 312.

He composed himself to sweet dreams of revenge, and next morning hid himself out of the way of the others till chapel and morning school began. His experience was that these matters blow over if one lies low for a time. But the boys were thoroughly roused by Dirkley's underhand plot to entrap their friend and benefactor; and Ralph, who was the hero of the school now he was known to have a real live highwayman for a brother, was especially anxious.

"I tell you what it is," he whispered to Hilton, before morning school broke up, "the doctor's shut Dirkley up—wouldn't listen to him, or something. But that won't stop the fellow; he'll take his tale elsewhere."

"Where?" said Hilton, who was listening. "Why, to the magistrates, at Hutton, you ass! You see if he doesn't sneak off that way as soon as school's over. We've got to stop him. Pass the word round!"

The word was passed, and everybody kept a sharp eye on Dirkley. On Ralph's advice, they did not follow him too closely, but let him get away from the school; and the boys, hot on his track soon after, saw him stealing away towards Hutton, just as Ralph had predicted.

"After him!" shouted Hilton. "Come on, you fellows! Hunt him down!" Dirkley took to his heels like a hare as soon as he saw what was afoot, and away went the whole field in pursuit. They chased him across half a dozen meadows and through a copse, gaining on him yard by yard, though he doubled and twisted like a fox.

"Ho! Stick it on, boys; we've got him at last!" shouted Conyers, as the sneak forged along not a dozen yards ahead.

Suddenly Dirkley saw before him a couple of gipsy vans. Spurring all he could, he rushed towards them, the pursuers close at his heels, and he sprang up the steps and dived into the nearest.

"Save me—save me!" he yelled to a big, swarthy man who was sitting at the door.

"Keep them out! I'll pay you—I'll give you money!"

The gipsy took a sharp look at Dirkley, nodded, and slammed the door, which reached half-way up the opening of the caravan, just as the boys reached it.

"Now then, my gorgios, what do you want?" he said coolly.

"Hand that chap out! He's our prisoner!" cried the boys. "He's a sneak!"

"Keep them off! Don't give me up!" yelled Dirkley.

"I won't give you up," said the gipsy significantly, with a glance at Dirkley's showy clothes and the flashy jewellery he wore, "since you've come to me of your own free will. Clear off, you!" he said threateningly to Conyers, who had mounted the van steps. "Get off my stoop, you mumpy chaf, or I'll dell you adre the miri!"

"What's the beggar talking about?" cried Conyers.

"They won't give him up!" shouted Hilton, as the other gipsies gathered round menacingly. "Come on, you chaps; we'll take him for ourselves! We're not going to be cheated of him. Give them fits if they try to stop us! Forward!"

"Keep back, you kinchins!" shouted the gipsy, snatching up a blunderbuss and leveling it, "or I'll scatter this load among you! Be off! You'll get nanty here."

"Yah-boo!" shrieked Dirkley, dancing up and down inside the van. "Cowards! Come on, if you dare!"

The boys checked and halted. Two blunderbusses were levelled at them by the gipsies, several of whom were armed with knives, which they drew, and there was not a shadow of doubt they would use them.

"Here, we must drop it, you fellows," said Hilton hastily. "We don't want any bloodshed! I don't mind a rough-and-tumble, but knives and guns are no joke. Those beggars mean business, and they've a right to keep us out of their vans, I suppose, after all. I say, Johnny, there, will you put those weapons away, and fight it out fairly with fists?"

"No!" cried the head gipsy, with a mocking laugh. "Be off, I tell you, or we'll snicker you!"

"Come on! Let's get back," said Conyers. "We can catch the beast when he reaches the school again. We can't tackle those blessed brigands!"

The pursuers retired in the direction of St. Anstell's, for it was nearly call-over time, and Dirkley's hoots of derision followed them.

They had run a long way in pursuit of their quarry, and they were within a mile of the school again when a horseman came trotting towards them down the bride-path, and they saw it was Dick himself.

"Well met!" cried the young outlaw.

"What news, lads?" They hastened to tell him all that had befallen, and Dick laughed hugely. Then suddenly he became grave, and, after a moment's thought, called Ralph to him.

"There's more in this than meets the eye, old boy," he said quietly. "You'll find Dr. Trelawney your best friend if there is trouble, remember that. But this Dirkley creature is the most troublesome we have to deal with; but I think I see a way to settle that matter. From what you tell me, it may be done already. Hasten back to St. Anstell's now, and keep your eyes open. Good-bye, lads!"

He waved his hand and cantered off, and half an hour's search brought him to the camping-ground of the gipsies; but they were there no longer. The wheel-marks showed plain on the turf, but the vans had gone.

Dick laughed softly to himself. Then, dropping one hand on the butt of his pistol as it lay in the holster, he rode along at a gentle trot between the tracks of the van wheels, following them as he went.

The wheel-tracks wound about strangely, skirting the sides of the wood, but it was not long before Dick caught sight of the vans ahead of him, and cantered on to overtake them. As soon as he was near enough to get a good look at them, he paid no more attention to his pistols. But a broad grin grew upon his face as he listened to a disturbance in the rearmost van. It was Dirkley's voice that spoke.

"Let me go! Put me down!" he yelled. "I shall be late for call-over! Give me back those things!"

"You'll be late afore we've done with you!" said the voice of the big gipsy. "Give me that there scarf-pin. Look, Anita, my chf, what a pretty gold pin from the young gorgio!"

"You thieves!" yelled Dirckley. "I'll get the constables on you for this! Cw! No, I won't! I didn't mean it! Oh, put that dreadful knife away!"

"He says he'll tell the chokengres," said the big gipsy, with a mocking laugh. "You'll have little chance for that, my young chal. There's money to be made out of you, by the look o' your clothes. You'll stay along of us, an' learn to rokker Romany an' poach the woods. We'll see you don't get away till we've done with you!"

"I don't want to stay! Let me go!" blubbered Dirckley. The sneak and bully, like most of his breed, was the first to cry out when trouble came.

"Good-day to you, brother!" cried Dick, arriving just at this moment. "Do you happen to have a young chal with you from St. Anstell's?"

"What is that to you?" growled the gipsy suspiciously, laying a hand on his gun.

"Ah, save me! Save me!" yelled Dirckley, rushing forward and sticking his head over the door. "Make these dreadful men let me go!"

"You'll not get him from us!" said the gipsy. "We won't give him up; he's our prize!"

"Nay, I'm not here to fight you for him," cried Dick, with a laugh. "I'm glad you've got him safe. What will you do with him?"

"That's to be seen," said the gipsy, looking at Dick with a more friendly eye, relieved that his caravan was not going to be attacked by such a well-armed looking rider. "Hold him for half a year, maybe, till there's a good reward for him, and then give him up." "Oh, make them give me up!" howled Dirckley.

"You don't know when you're well off, my son!" grinned Dick. "I know a hundred boys who'd be glad if your chance; and St. Anstell's is too hot to hold you."

"Are you going to peach on us, gorgio?" said the big gipsy darkly. "I tell you none shall take him from us!"

"Keep him, and welcome, and I wish you joy of your bargain!" cried Dick. "The farther from this part of England the better! I've mark me? 'Tis a very scurvy little dog, I fear, but you may make a man of him yet. And look ye, don't ill-treat him. Here's a trifle to pay for his keep."

"Well, well!" cried the gipsy, with a wink, catching the well-filled purse Dick flung to him. "The chal shall have no such bad days with us. I see you are a friend, and I like your looks, for all you are not of the Romany. If ever you need a helping from our brethren of the woods and ways, say Jasper Grengre is your friend, and you may come by good service. Good ride to you, and a fair road!"

"Boo-hoo! Ow!" wailed Dirckley, as the caravan jolted off, leaving Dick laughing and waving his hat by the roadside, and the gipsies went on their way.

"That is a rare piece of luck!" chuckled Dick to himself, as he rode back. "Yonder nasty little tale-bearer might have made sad danger and trouble for Ralph, to say nothing of myself; and now the van-men have got him, I warrant they'll stick to him. He was too small an enemy for me to deal with, and he is well served out for his treachery. It is no bad life with the gipsies, and I'll go bail they miss him little at St. Anstell's. Hallo! What, more of the Romany?"

A little bare-footed urchin from the vans came running after Dick, and called to him.

"My father, Jasper Grengre, bids me ask your name, and whether it is Dick Neville?" said the youngster.

"At your service!" said Dick. "And what then?"

"We have been seeking you with this message three days," said the young gipsy. "It was trusted to us on the chance of our finding you."

"Thank you!" said Dick, taking it eagerly, for he recognised the writing.

And, throwing a loose guinea to the gipsy boy, who caught it, and raced back after his caravan in huge glee, Dick tore the note open and read it quickly.

"I am giving this to the old Romany in the hope of his finding you in time. If you get it, meet me in the west front room of the Old Grange, on Calthorpe Hill, at ten on Monday night. 'Tis a safe place. Greetings, old comrade, and a loose bridle to you!—Yours,
RICHARD TURPIN."

"And right blithe I shall be to see the merry rascal again!" said Dick, as he put the note away. "I owe him too much to be long apart from him, and he will give

me good counsel. I wonder what his news is? Something of Vesey Neville, I dare swear?"

Lord Malmalson's Vengeance!

DICK cantered away, for the dusk was growing, and he was far from where he wished to be. The lights of the little hamlet of Calthorpe twinkled before him, after half an hour's ride, about a mile from the hill on which the old Grange stood. Dick knew the house well, having already spent a night there. It was an empty, but strong and well-preserved old manor-house of Tudor times, and its owner, having another seat a couple of miles away, did not inhabit it. It was very lonely, and had the usual reputation of being haunted, but that was a matter Dick did not care a straw for.

"Trust Turpin for knowing the place!" thought Dick, as he drew rein at the door of the Three Crowns in the village. "That note barely reached me in time. They have had it three days, and this is Monday night. I will dine here on such a fare as they can give me, and ride on to the Grange by ten."

Dick looked to Black Satan's wants before he did anything else, and then, leaving the black horse saddled in the stable, entered the inn, and called for the best they had. The Three Crowns was a poor place, in spite of its high-sounding name; but the landlord, impressed by Dick's clothes and bearing, managed to set a very fair meal before him, and the young rider fared well. But more than once, as he dined, he caught sight of someone peeping at him behind the door.

"Turpin mentioned this house as a safe haven," said Dick to himself, as he took the armchair by the fire after dinner; "but there is surely some plaguey curious person who is taking a good deal of interest in me. Here he is again!"

However, Dick was feeling too comfortable to shift his quarters; but, as he was a little suspicious after what he had seen, he placed one of his pistols on a chair beside him, out of sight from the door, and took his ease.

Having been in the saddle all the night before, he was more than a little weary, and gradually he sank into a sort of half-doze. He did not fall asleep, however, but remained dreamily conscious of outside events. The doglike sleep was a trait of Dick's, though to a stranger he seemed to be slumbering deeply.

Presently the door opened noiselessly, and in stole a little dapper man, with damp black hair that lay across his forehead in snaky streaks, and two little twinkling eyes that seemed to cover all the room in a glance. He looked at Dick, and then came quietly up and sat down opposite, to find Dick's eyes wide open and fixed on him.

"Are you Dick Neville?" said the stranger cunningly.

Dick's hand dropped on the butt of the pistol beside him as he heard the question. "No need for that," said the little man, without moving a muscle. "I have no men outside, sir. I did not come as an enemy, but as a friend."

"Indeed!" said Dick. He looked the man over, but could not quite place him. He might have been a seedy sort of attorney's clerk or a bagman.

"Yes," said the little man; "I have come to make you an offer. Is it your wish to get even with your uncle, Mr. Vesey Neville, now of Faulkboorn?"

Dick sat up in his chair. "What is that to you, sir?" he said fiercely.

"Tut, tut!" said the little man. "Tut, tut, my dear sir! 'Sh-sh! I mean no offence. It is my business to know people's affairs, and I have come to you with a proposition. Would you not like to win back Faulkboorn—the noble estates and fortune that should have come to you from your father, but which your Uncle Vesey has possession of?"

"I should indeed," said Dick dryly. "Do you see any prospect of that same?"

"An excellent prospect, my dear sir—an excellent prospect!" said the little man, rubbing his hands, perhaps a little disappointed that Dick did not show more eagerness. "I may say a certainty, if you will do me a small service in return."

"And am I to believe," said Dick, looking at the man, "that you are able to bring all this about? You certainly seem to know something of my affairs, but I have never seen you before."

"But I have seen you, sir!" chuckled the little man. "I can do all I promised."

"And what do you want from me in return?"

"I will tell you," said the stranger. "You are acquainted with Richard Turpin, the famous outlaw. You have been seen in his company."

"Well, what then?"

The little man reached forward and tapped Dick on the knee. "Deliver him into our hands, and I will restore you to your estates and fortune!"

There was dead silence for nearly a minute, during which Dick stared straight into the eyes of the damp-haired stranger.

"Is that your price?" said Dick at last. "That is our price," said the little man; "accept it. It will be no loss to you, and you will regain all you have lost."

"Let us understand one another exactly," said Dick. "If I betray Turpin into your custody, my uncle is to be deprived of the estates he has wrongfully taken possession of, and they are to be returned to me. There is a difficulty to begin with. I am an outlaw."



HUNTING THE SNEAK! "After him!" cried Hilton. "Hunt him down!" Dirckley took to his heels and away went the whole field after him. They chased the sneak across half a dozen meadows, gaining on him yard by yard. (See page 24.)



THE GIPSY'S PRISONER! "Do you happen to have a chap with you from St. Anstell's?" asked Dick, riding up to the gypsy. "What is that to you?" growled the man, laying a hand on his gun. "Ah, save me—save me!" yelled Dirkley, rushing forward and sticking his head over the door of the caravan. (See page 25.)

"It is part of the bargain, sir," said the little man, "that you shall receive a free pardon."

"Indeed?" said Dick. "Then, allowing that, how do you propose to oust my uncle from his ill-gotten possessions? By process of law?"

"Ah, we should leave that to you, sir," said the little man, rubbing his hands again. "We shall pay you a thousand guineas the instant the man Turpin is in our possession, and you will do the rest. You will see that, with a free pardon and a thousand guineas to fight with, it will be no hard matter to turn your uncle out. It is your outlawry that ties your hands at present. Is it not so?"

"You say truly," said Dick. "Had I a free pardon and a thousand guineas I would soon be in possession of Faulkbourne."

"We will bind ourselves to get you both, in return for the apprehension of Turpin," said the stranger.

"What do you mean by 'we'?" said Dick. "I am acting for a personage of great rank and position," said the little man, "who is easily able to procure these things. Nay, I may not tell you his name."

"I will do nothing unless I know," said Dick. "How else shall I be sure that he is able to fulfil the bargain?"

"If you must know, sir, it is my lord the Marquis of Malmaison, who, I need not tell you, is second to none in northern England. He has great influence, and can procure a pardon with ease. Besrewh me, sir, if he desired a King's pardon for Beelzebub himself, he has but to ask for it!"

"Very likely," said Dick. "But why should Malmaison pay such a price to secure Richard Turpin?"

"The outlaw has done my lord a most grievous and irreparable wrong, sir," said the little man, "and the noble marquis will spare no pains or expense to secure him. My lord told me with his own lips that he would never rest till he saw Turpin swinging from the gallows upon Blackheath. I am in Lord Malmaison's confidence, and I may say the credit of this plan is due to me."

"And great credit it does you," said Dick, eyeing the little man thoughtfully.

"I think so, sir. Indeed, I know that you can deliver Turpin to us, if you will. Come, sir, is it a bargain? Do but this one thing, and from a hunted outlaw, scorned by all, you become a great gentleman, of lands and fortune and honour."

"Egad!" said Dick, leaping to his feet.

"Then there's no time like the present. What say you?"

"By all means!" cried the little man.

"The sooner the better!"

"Then in three hours' time I will bring Turpin to you," exclaimed Dick, "and you shall do as you please with him! There is one condition I must make. Lord Malmaison himself must come."

"I don't know, sir," murmured the man. "My lord will not care to expose himself to the danger. This Turpin is a perilous rogue."

"He need not show himself till after the prisoner is secured," said Dick. "He shall have a safe hiding-place. Failing his presence, I will have nothing to do with the plot. He must be there to fulfil my bargain."

"Well, I think I can promise his attendance," said the little man, "for he will be right glad to see his enemy's capture and humiliation, provided his person is safe."

"I will look after my lord myself," said Dick. "Oh, be assured he shall have my full attention! And now, sir, have you settled upon any special plan for the capture of the outlaw?"

"Why, sir, I thought that were best left to you, for you know the rascal's ways. I shall provide five smart and sturdy fellows, all well armed, with ready pistols, against whom the rogue will have no chance. We prefer to capture him alive, you understand; but if not, we shall take him dead."

"Very good," said Dick. "Then do you bring your five armed men to Old Grange, upon the hill yonder, at half-past nine o' the clock this very night. In the west front room, as you may know, are three large, deep, oaken chests, each of which will hold two men with ease. The one thing necessary is to take Turpin unawares, for he is a wondrous quick fighter and slippery as an eel, and should be ready for your men before he can make any good resistance, and bind him fast; or, better, put a bullet through him. As for my lord, he can hide in a cupboard upstairs, where he will be safe till the capture is made."

"Ay, so I have heard!" said the man eagerly. "What then, sir?"

"Your five men must hide in these three chests, and burst out suddenly when I bring Turpin into the room and give the signal. I shall at once escape, for he is likely to empty his first pistol into me when he sees he is betrayed. Your men will be upon him before he can make any good resistance, and bind him fast; or, better, put a bullet through him. As for my lord, he can hide in a cupboard upstairs, where he will be safe till the capture is made."

"An excellent plan!" cried the little man. "I see I have done well to secure your aid,

sir. I will be there with my lord and the men before half-past nine."

"And I will show you the hiding-places and make all ready," said Dick; "and I will deliver Turpin into your hands by ten o' the clock. The pledge of the pardon and the thousand guineas in gold must be mine before half-past ten."

"They shall be in your hands ere that!" said the man. "A thousand thanks, good sir. And now I must hasten, for there is none too much time to make my preparations. 'Tis a rare fruit we shall pluck for the gibbet this night!"

With a low bow he turned and hastened away. When he had gone, Dick sat long in the armchair, staring pensively into the heart of the fire.

The moon shone coldly on the white snow that covered the ground, and the walls and gables of Old Grange stood up black and forbidding against the sky. A low wind moaned and whispered among the shrubberies, and the place looked utterly desolate and forgotten.

In the dark of the west front room a stout, fleshy man, clad in rich cloth and lace, and shivering slightly in the cold, sat on the edge of the table and drummed impatiently with his fingers, muttering to himself. Standing up were half a dozen big, powerful-looking men armed to the teeth. And at the window, peering out into the night, was the little man who had come to the Three Crowns.

A step was heard in the hall, and Dick Neville entered, debonair and careless as ever, save that a pistol-butt poked from each pocket of his riding-cloak. The little man at the window hurried forward.

"My lord," he said obsequiously to the stout man, "this is Richard Neville, who will deliver the man Turpin into your hands. Mr. Neville, you see before you the most noble the Marquis of Malmaison."

Dick bowed courteously to Malmaison, who raised his chin and greeted him with a haughty stare.

"You are able to deliver this outlaw into my custody?" he said.

"I will bring him into this room within the hour," said Dick.

"And now," said Malmaison uneasily, "as the time draws near, take me to this place of vantage where I may wait while this vile knave is secured."

Dick bowed, and led the marquis upstairs, where he opened the door of a roomy cupboard, and advised Malmaison to step in. Dick closed the cupboard door on him. When this was done, our young friend quietly shot the bolt. Then he went downstairs.

"Into those chests with you," he said to the five armed retainers, "and when I enter the room with this Turpin have your weapons ready. When you hear me say loudly: 'Now, Turpin, to business!' burst out and secure him. But if you value your lives, do not peep out or attempt to raise the lids of the chests as much as a twentieth of an inch from now till then, or you will risk your own lives and spoil all."

With coarse laughter, the men stowed themselves in the big, iron-bound chests, two in each, the last man hiding alone in the third chest.

"This is very well," said the little attorney nervously, "but what is to become of me? I think I will go right away. I shall not be needed."

"Nay, you may meet Turpin on the way, and arouse his suspicions," said Dick. "There is a cupboard on the upper floor that will just hold you in safety and comfort."

He stowed the little man in a press upstairs, doing to him as he had done to Malmaison, and then went down again and bent over the first of the three chests.

"Are you all right?" he inquired.

"Ay, right enough," said a muffled voice inside.

"By my faith, you are!" murmured Dick to himself, as carefully and noiselessly he shut down the great iron hasp over its staple without a sound, and turned the pin that fastened it. He put the same question and did the same thing to the other chests, and then stole out of the room, a queer smile lurking about his lips.

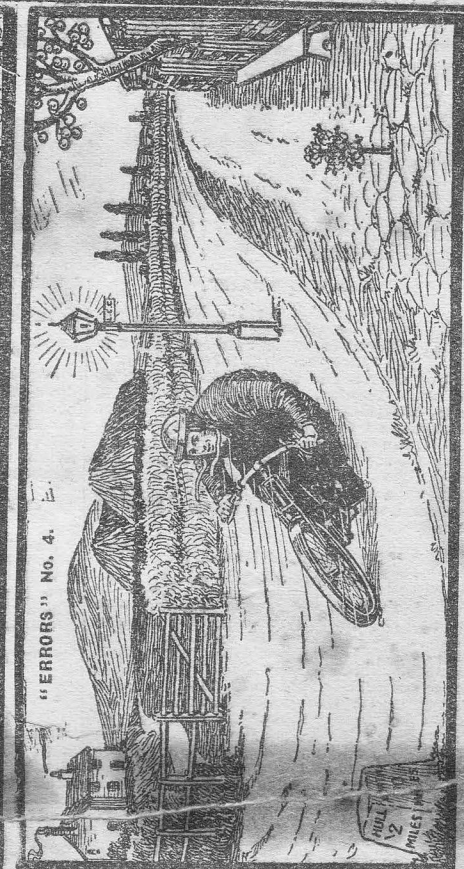
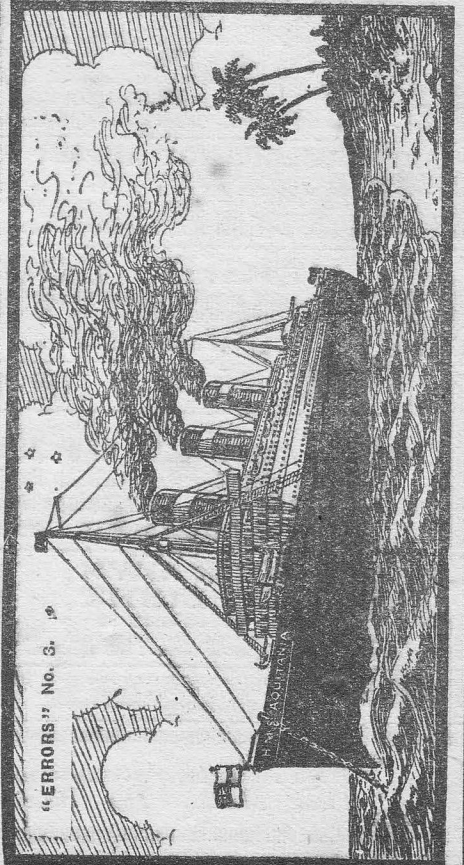
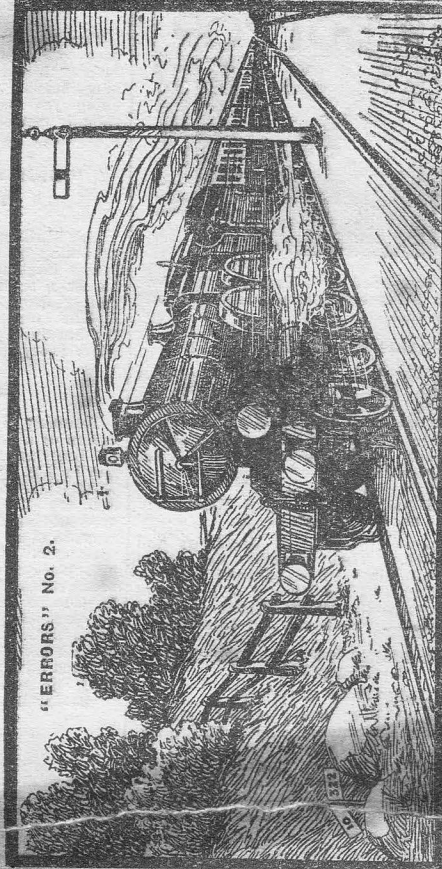
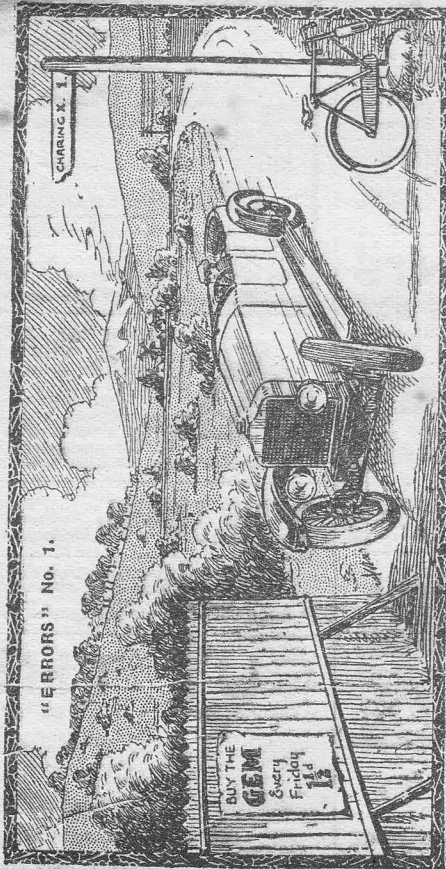
(There will be another long instalment of our powerful serial next week.)

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THE HOBBY SUPPLEMENT.

Two heads are better than one! In the case of next week's Hobby Supplement several heads combine, and the result is magnificent. The new number beats anything yet, and any fellow with a hobby should consult the well-written, lavishly illustrated articles.

"DICK OF THE HIGHWAY!"
By David Goodwin.

This thrilling serial swings along, the pace as killing as that of Turpin as he charged across England for life and liberty. There has been no fluer yarn of the old stand-and-deliver days. Next week there are prodigious events. You have got it all here—the romance and the drama of the bygone when every man went armed.

BE SUCCESSFUL.

Thursday, January 15th, will see the publication of a new work of great importance to all boys and young men who are starting out in life. "HARMSWORTH'S BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA," written by Cabinet Ministers, Treasury officials, and some of our greatest business men, will contain full information on every branch of business and commerce. It will form a complete guide to the choice of a career, and will supply everything necessary for study and advancement. It is to be issued in fortnightly parts at 1/3 per part—only just over 1d. per day. If you are ambitious, if you want to be successful, make a point of buying Part 1. You will see at once how useful it is going to be to you. You will be able to get it at any newsagent or bookstall.

Your Editor

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR



A GOOD START.

A GOOD lead-off for the New Year is what we all want. The "Popular" shows the way. Unluckily, there is no space this time for more than a fleeting reference to the first-rate programme for next Tuesday. Another week I shall have something to say concerning future arrangements for the good old "Pop." Anyway, when you drop in the shop for the "Pop" next week you will be satisfied. For the "Pop" is a non-stop in its way, and carries you through from cover to cover with no break of splendid interest. Now to details.

"IN DEADLY PERIL!"
By Martin Clifford.

St. Jim's is to the fore in our next with a highly ingenious yarn about the amazing Parker. Parker, the new boy, has so far been an impenetrable mystery, but certain members of the Lower School have found out a few things about him. This particular Parker is not the most distant connection of the infamous "Nosey" of that ilk. He has won considerable popularity, as a matter of fact, and all your sympathies will be with him when he fluds one unpleasant curiosity-monger, trying to make capital out of a

few facts connected with Parker's real identity. This is mystery enough, and the peril is terribly real.

"STANDING BY HOPKINS!"

Hopkins, the Cockney lad, would have been down on his luck in grim earnest had it not been for the timely aid of Frank Richards & Co. In the hour of Hopkins' bitter need the comrades of Cedar Creek stand shoulder to shoulder, with results which are thoroughly gratifying.

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"THE CHIEF OF THE SECRET SOCIETY."

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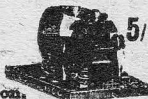
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