

FAMOUS FOR SCHOOL AND ROMANTIC STORIES!

EVERY TUESDAY.

Week Ending

January 17th,

1925.

New Series.

No. 313.

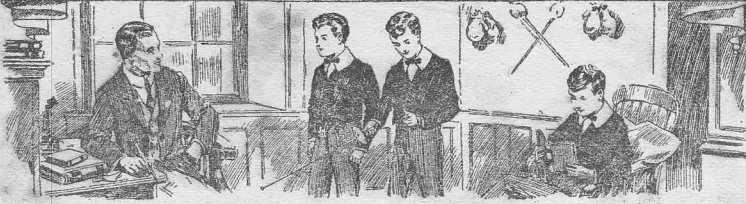
The POPULAR 2^D



A VICTIM OF THE ROOKWOOD SECRET SOCIETY!

(See—"The Chief of the Secret Society!" in this issue.)

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR



THE ROAD TO FORTUNE.

A ROUTE guide to Fortune is a fair description of "Harmsworth's Business Encyclopedia," the first part of which will be on sale Thursday, January 15th. It would be a serious omission if I failed to tell all my chums of the "Popular" of this wonderful opportunity. Get Part I and see for yourselves the value of the new work. The "Encyclopedia" tells every boy or young man who is starting in life just the things he wants to know. It is a regular "getting-there" book, crammed with priceless information and sound advice.

The road to fortune lies before you, and a few words of advice is a tremendous help. This book can act as a guiding light to you—a star to lead you to success. This important new work, which has been written by Cabinet Ministers, Treasury officials, and some of the greatest business men of the day, contains up-to-date and complete information on every branch of business and commerce. It is to be issued in fortnightly parts at 1/3 per part. For just 1d. per day the finest possible information is available to everyone who possesses ambition to succeed in the world. It is a thousand text-books in one. It will not only help you to hold down your job, but makes it possible for you to succeed to better positions until you reach the top of the tree. Part I will be on sale Thursday, January 15th, and can be obtained from any newsagent or bookseller.

You will regret it all your life if you miss this wonderful work, for never has there been such a splendid opportunity of reading a guide to success.

NEXT WEEK'S BILL.

Kindly note that I am not referring to an individual whose name happens to be Bill. It is a right good name, and is being done justice to by lots of fine fellows. But here I merely meant to deal with our coming programme. It is full of grand features—complete stories, a thrilling serial, and "Bunter's Weekly"—bright, brainy, and brilliant.

"FOUR TO THE RESCUE!"

By Martin Clifford.

Our St. Jim's yarn for the next issue deals first and foremost with Parker. Parker is the new boy whose appearance at St. Jim's has produced no end of talk—and a lot besides talk, to boot. The stranger is a bit of a mystery to everybody, and any fellow who gets that kind of notoriety pretty well inevitably finds himself cut off and left alone. As a rule, people are too busy speculating about him to make friends. But there are glorious exceptions as here. Parker meets with an adventure fraught with deadly peril, and in his hour of stress Tom Merry & Co. prove their mettle in game fashion.

"LYNCH LAW!"

A fine story this of Frank Richards & Co. at—or, rather, of Cedar Creek. For the fact of the matter is the scene passes some way up-country in the remote wilds where the methods of Judge Lynch prevail, and the "rough-necks" of Thompson Valley carry on with the worst traditions of their kind. Hopkins is to be cleared out of his clearing by force of arms. Matters are a tight pinch with the Cockney, when help arrives in the shape of a smart little rescue-party of Cedar Creek chums. They are fellows who will stand no nonsense when it is a question of seeing a comrade out of a mess.

"KNOWLES TOES THE LINE!"

By Owen Conquest.

Rookwood's "Down with Bullies League" goes apace. In next Tuesday's issue of the "Popular" we see some very pleasing things happen. It is this way. Knowles cares neither two pins or less for the secret society. He is something of a coward, really, but arrogance enables him to flout the well-meaning Rookwood crusaders. Now, as to bullying, it is not correct, as was said the other

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

day, that it is impossible to bully people who count. It is quite possible for a large-sized tyrant of a superior Form to come down heavy on a small fag who stands alone. The professional bully always chooses small game. Then he knows he is safe. This ignoble spirit the Rookwood Secret Society was out to crush for good and all. How is it managed? See next week's "Popular."

"CHUMS DIVIDED!"

By Frank Richards.

The Greyfriars story in our next shows Harry Wharton in a new light. Readers who have written to me of late saying that Harry Wharton is too good should make a special note of this yarn. Let me draw their attention to the action of the Remove skipper. He goes off the deep end. Goaded to rage by certain circumstances which I shall not go into, Harry Wharton acts hastily, and his burst of temper brings down the resentment of the whole Form. The tale just shows how the best fellows can make mistakes. The junior captain falls out with pretty well all his chums, including Frank Nugent, and there is a lamentable split in the "Co."

"BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY."

In addition to all the fine stories enumerated above, there will be a capital edition of "Bunter's Weekly." This is so very special that it takes by rights a line to itself.

A COOKERY NUMBER.

Bunter is par excellence a cook. See him attending to the succulent sausage over the study fire. He understands the chef business. If he grew up he would be a cordon bleu, as the top-line cook gets called the other side of the "sic transit" where Gay Paree lies. Bunter can prepare a bivouac stew out of the most unpromising materials. He is good at rabbits—Welsh and otherwise. In these circles it was natural it should occur to him to turn out a special Supplement devoted to the art, craft, and mystery of the cook's calling. In the matter of soup Bunter has always excelled, possibly for the reason that he has so very frequently been in the soup. I know the new issue of the celebrated "Weekly" will be received with cheers. To do real and becoming honour to the occasion there ought to have been a picture showing the willowy porpoise passing between a double line of minor cooks with soup-lades at the present. Unfortunately, there was no room for this fine illustration.

"DICK O' THE HIGHWAY!"

By David Goodwin.

Another rattling instalment of the serial dealing with the elusive highwayman who was here to-day and gone to-morrow. He was the big problem of the police in those far-away days. Young Dick Neville is also well to the fore.

Your Editor.

Absolutely FREE!

Grand 20-Page Book of Stamps of the British Empire given away with every copy of—

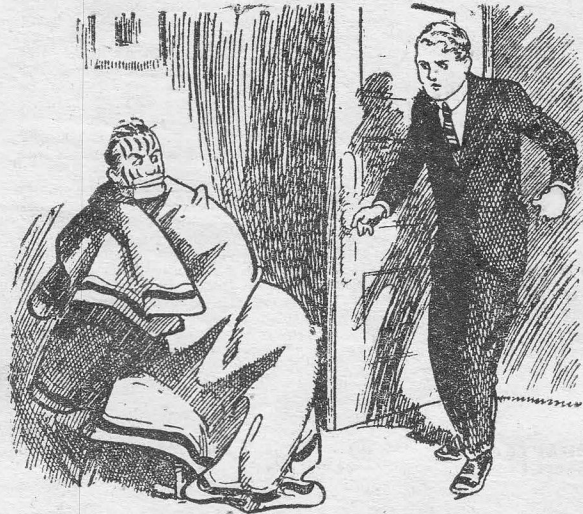
THE "BOYS' FRIEND."

NOW ON SALE!

You and all your pals must secure this wonderful FREE gift. It will delight you!

GREAT REVELATIONS!

Rookwood is agog with excitement over the mystery of the amazing organisation, the Rookwood Secret Society. What is this powerful society? Who is the chief? Some light is shed on the subject this week!



THE FIRST CHAPTER Carthew is Missing!

"A NYBODY seen Carthew?"

Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth, asked that question as he came into the School House at Rookwood to breakfast. He smiled as he asked it, and his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, smiled, too.

"Nobody's seen him yet, I think," remarked Putty of the Fourth. "He can't have come down."

"He'll miss his brekker at this rate!" grinned Lovell.

And the chums of Rookwood chuckled softly as they joined the crowd going into the dining-room.

As a rule, Jimmy Silver & Co. weren't interested in the movements of Carthew of the Sixth. The less they saw of Mark Carthew the better they liked it.

But they were interested on this special morning, and so were some more of the juniors.

Carthew's name cropped up a good many times in whispers among the Classical Fourth juniors; and, what was more surprising, Tommy Dodd & Co. were interested in the same question over on the Modern side.

Carthew, the most unpopular prefect at Rookwood, seemed to occupy a great many thoughts in the Lower School.

Jimmy Silver glanced round as he dropped into his seat at the Fourth-Form table. His glance rested on the table where the great men of the Sixth sat in state.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, was at the head of the Sixth-Form table, and one place there was empty. Carthew was not turning up to breakfast.

Jimmy saw the Rookwood captain lean over and speak to Neville and Jones major, and guessed that he was inquiring after Carthew. Neville and Jones major of the Sixth shook their heads. They didn't know where Carthew was, and probably weren't interested.

Mr. Bootles, at the head of the Fourth-Form table, could not help noticing some unusual animation among his pupils.

Often they glanced at the door, often at the Sixth; and there were many whispers, and a good many smiles.

"You will—ah!—kindly keep a little more quiet—what, what?" said Mr. Bootles, gently reproving.

The juniors ceased to whisper.

Some of the Classical Fourth seemed perplexed; not all the Form were in the secret, whatever it was.

Those who were in the secret were keeping it very dark. When Tubby Muffin whispered a query to Jimmy Silver, desiring to know what was "on," Jimmy developed

deafness. When Tubby repeated his query to Arthur Edward Lovell, that youth gruffly told him to go and eat coke. Tubby Muffin snorted, and devoted himself to bacon and eggs. Evidently there was no enlightenment for Tubby Muffin.

Breakfast finished without Carthew arriving, and his absence was by that time generally observed. It was quite unusual. So important a person as a prefect of the Sixth Form could stay out from a meal if he liked; he was not so amenable to regulations as a junior. But it was certainly very unusual.

After breakfast Bulkeley started for the Sixth-Form passage, to give Carthew a look-in. Carthew hadn't been seen that morning at all, so it could not be supposed that he had gone out and forgotten brekker. Apparently, he had not risen yet; and to remain in bed so very late was stretching even the privileges of a Sixth-Form prefect.

Bulkeley tapped at Carthew's door and opened it.

"Carthew!" he called into the study. "Aren't you up yet. Don't you know the time?"

Bulkeley gave a jump.

The Sixth Form at Rookwood did not occupy a dormitory like the smaller fry. The Sixth-Form studies were bed-rooms at night. Carthew's bed was in an alcove, nicely curtained off. Bulkeley's glance had gone towards the bed alcove as he looked in and spoke; but Carthew was not there. When he saw where Carthew actually was, Bulkeley had reason to jump.

The bully of Rookwood was seated in his armchair.

Blankets were stacked round him, apparently to keep him from catching cold, for he was in his pyjamas, here and there a pink stripe of pyjama was revealed among the blankets. And his face was striped with paint.

That he was tied to the chair was evident at a glance.

Why he didn't call out to be released was also clear. There was a gag stuffed in his mouth, and tied there.

Only his eyes were active.

They glittered at Bulkeley, and spoke volumes, though silently. Those glittering eyes told of the rage that was burning in the Rookwood bully's breast, and which had been burning there for quite a long time. For many a long hour the Rookwood bully had had to consume his own smoke, as it were.

"Great Scott!" stuttered Bulkeley.

He blinked at his fellow-prefect.

Carthew jerked himself in his chair, and his eyes were eloquent. Bulkeley understood what he wanted, and hurried towards him.

The Chief of the Secret Society!

Another Dramatic Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the well-known tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every week.)

He pulled away the blankets, took out a penknife, and cut the prefect loose, and removed the gag from his mouth.

"What on earth does this mean, Carthew?" he exclaimed.

"Groooogh!"

That was Carthew's first remark.

His mouth was a little numb.

"Who has done this?"

"Gr-r-r-rh!"

"You must have had a bad time," said Bulkeley sympathetically.

"Gug-gug-groogh!"

Carthew staggered out of the chair.

Bulkeley stood watching him, overcome with astonishment, unable to make head or tail, so far, of the strange affair.

For a prefect to be tied up in his study in this fashion was an unprecedented happening at Rookwood School. Bulkeley simply couldn't "get on" to it for the moment. He was dumbfounded.

"Those young fiends!" gasped Carthew at last.

"Who—what—"

"They came into my room last night—"

pluttered Carthew.

"Who did?"

"They did!"

"Who are 'they'?"

"How should I know?" hissed Carthew.

"Those young villains who call themselves the Rookwood Secret Society!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Bulkeley.

"Some of the juniors—I don't know which. They had their faces hidden. Half a dozen of them. The same lot that handled me in the quad, I suppose, and some more. I'm going to the Head about this. They came in and collared me—"

"Why did you let them?" asked the captain of Rookwood, rather naturally.

Carthew gave an enraged howl.

"How could I help it—six or seven of them—"

"You could have shouted out, I suppose?"

"They were going to pinch my nose with pincers if I called out—"

Bulkeley gave a slight shrug of the shoulders.

All the juniors of Rookwood together could not have dealt with George Bulkeley in that style. It was pretty certain that they would never have thought of trying it. But then Bulkeley was not a bully, and he was not what bullies so often are—a funk. Carthew had apparently been quite an easy victim of the Rookwood Secret Society.

"I'll make them pay for it!" muttered Carthew. "I'm going to the Head about it! You can laugh, if you like—"

"I'm not laughing," said Bulkeley mildly.

"I'm going to Dr. Chisholm! We'll see

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

whether a prefect is to be handled in this way!" Carthew strode towards the door.

"Are you going to the Head in your pyjamas?" asked Bulkeley. "Hadn't you better get your clobber on first?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" Carthew turned back and grabbed his clothes.

Bulkeley left the study.

His face was very grave, though there was a glimmer in his eyes of something like amusement. George Bulkeley had a lurking suspicion that Carthew deserved whatever he received at the hands of the mysterious Rookwood Secret Society; but he felt that this kind of thing would never do. It was likely to undermine the Lower School's respect for the Sixth Form—a very important matter, at least, to the Sixth. Carthew had probably brought it on himself; but it wouldn't do, Bulkeley felt. And all the rest of the Sixth agreed with him on that point when they heard the startling news.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Carthew Mends His Ways!

THE Rookwood Secret Society was an astounding happening; it quite upset the calm and serene current of affairs at the old school. The Head did not quite know how to grapple with it.

Punishment without proof was not feasible; and it was as likely as not to land upon the wrong parties, and actually encourage the wrongdoers to pursue their lawless course.

A rigid personal questioning of every boy in the school might have brought the truth to light, but it was more likely to turn the delinquents into liars. A boy could not be expected to incriminate himself of his own accord. Such a questioning would have been taking an unfair advantage of a boy's sense of honour, and was only too likely to make him set his sense of honour aside for the occasion.

The Head realised that, and he did not think of applying that method. But something had to be done!

There was much gravity among the masters of Rookwood that day. They looked upon the affair of the R.S.S. very seriously indeed.

That was another instance of the undoubted fact that boys and masters seldom saw eye to eye.

For it was quite certain that the boys did not look upon the matter seriously at all.

They looked upon it as a huge joke.

There was hardly a fag in the Lower School who had not felt Mark Carthew's heavy hand at one time or another, and who did not rejoice that the bully of the Sixth had been properly punished.

The Rookwood Secret Society doubtless had few members, but fellows who were not members certainly wished more power to its elbow.

Who the members were was a deep mystery.

They themselves knew, of course, but nobody else knew. If anybody had a suspicion, he kept it to himself.

Carthew was in a very uneasy mood that day.

His uncomfortable hours in the armchair had enraged him to boiling-point, and on his release he felt an instant need of vengeance—vengeance hot and strong and undiluted. But there was no vengeance to be had. He was inclined to suspect Jimmy Silver on general grounds, but even on that point he was doubtful.

And although he was at daggers drawn with the end study, he was also bitterly unpopular with the rest of the Lower School. There were more than a hundred fellows for him to choose from to find his unknown assailants.

He was uneasy now—very!

The Head was investigating, but nothing had come of it. The actual state of affairs was, that the Rookwood Secret Society had punished the bully of the Sixth, and had escaped unknown and scot-free.

Mark Carthew thought a great deal about that.

That day it was noticeable that Carthew did not cuff a single junior, and did not bow "Fag!" down the corridor. He fagged for himself at tea-time.

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

Apparently, the bully's behaviour was on the mend.

Jimmy Silver & Co. passed him, going down to footer practice after lessons, Jimmy with a football under his arm. Carthew glanced at them, but did not even scowl. It was just the occasion when Carthew would have called on Jimmy to fag, in his old style. Now he turned away without a word.

The Fistical Four smiled as they walked on.

"Carthew's biting on to it," Lovell remarked, in a low voice. "Bullying doesn't seem so much to his taste to-day."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"He's thinking of next time," he remarked. "There won't be a next time if Carthew behaves himself. He's learning."

"Isn't the R.S.S. the stunt of the term?" demanded Putty Grace

"It is—it are!" assented Jimmy. "You do have good ideas sometimes, Putty. But, for goodness' sake, hide your light under a bushel this time; don't go out for glory!"

"No jolly fear!" grinned Putty. "I say, if Carthew's cured, we'll begin next on Knowles and Frampton and Gatesby of the Modern side. Tommy Dodd & Co. are quite keen. Shush! Here's Tubby!"

And the chums of the Fourth were talking football as Tubby Muffin rolled into hearing.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Tubby's Chance!

THAT'S telling!"

That remark was made by Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, in the junior Common-room that evening.

Muffin made that remark in a very mysterious manner, with a very knowing wink.

"That's telling!" he repeated. "I may know something about the R.S.S., and I may not."

"With the odds on the 'not,'" suggested Mornington.

"That's all you know, Morny! Perhaps I was the chap who tied Carthew up last night. Perhaps I wasn't."

"No perhaps about it," grunted Conroy. "Don't give us that stuff, Tubby. We can't swallow it, you know."

Tubby sniffed.

A good many very curious glances were turned upon the fat Classical. He was the cynosure of all eyes, in fact, when Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered into the Common-room after prep.

"Heard the latest, Jimmy?" called out Dick Oswald.

"What's that?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"Tubby Muffin owns up that he's the Rookwood Secret Society!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Ha ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"Good old Tubby!" chuckled Raby. "Tell us another, old scout!"

"How do you know I'm not, then?" demanded Reginald Muffin warmly.

"Oh! Ahem! Of—of course—" Lovell stammered.

As a matter of fact, the Fistical Four had good reasons for not explaining in public how they knew that Muffin wasn't a member of the R.S.S. Any display of accurate knowledge on the subject was as good as a confession that they were members themselves.

"You don't know anything about it," said Tubby Muffin, with a superior smile. "I'm not admitting anything, of course. I'm not going to say anything. I'm keeping it all very dark. But fellows who can put two and two together can figure it out for themselves. That's all."

And Tubby looked very lofty.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver, and he smiled as he strolled on.

Tubby Muffin was evidently out for glory. The mysterious membership of the Rookwood Secret Society was the one topic at present. There was endless speculation and curiosity on the subject. Fellows wanted to know, and asked one another if they knew, or guessed, or suspected.

The mystery was so deep and impenetrable that Muffin felt it was quite safe to make a claim.

The genuine members of the R.S.S. couldn't dispute that claim without betraying themselves; so Tubby thought it was all serene. He had only to claim the glory, and it was his. Tubby loved the limelight, and very little limelight ever came his way. He was not going to lose this chance.

Reginald Muffin had long laboured under the delusion that he was really a very distinguished fellow; only that other fellows couldn't, or wouldn't, recognise his distinction. He was no good at games, and little good at lessons. He could beat the other fellows hands down when it came to eating, or sleeping, or prevaricating; but these distinctions won him no admiration, quite the contrary. But here was a chance too good to be lost.

The unknown "Grand Master" of the R.S.S. was a delinquent in the eyes of the school authorities; but he was a hero to the Lower School—a very admirable hero of the first water. For excellent reasons, no one laid claim to the distinction. So Tubby Muffin cheerily rolled in and bagged it for himself.

With mysterious nods and winks and hints, Tubby conveyed that he knew what he knew, and that he could tell a thing or two if he chose, and so forth; and he had at least the satisfaction of rendering himself the object of great curiosity.

"What do you think of that, Jimmy?" asked Valentine Mornington, joining the Fistical Four at a little distance from the group of juniors surrounding Tubby Muffin.

"Nothing!" answered Jimmy.

"You don't believe Muffin is Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society?"

Jimmy smiled.

"He says he is," he replied.

"You agree?"

"How should I know, old top?" asked Jimmy blandly.

Mornington deflected one eye a little.

"I rather thought the end study would know somethin' about the facts," he remarked.

"My dear chap, you shouldn't think," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Stick to your neckties, and don't think."

Mornington laughed, and walked away. Tubby Muffin was getting quite a crowd round him in the Common-room now. The limelight he loved was falling to his share, and he enjoyed it—so much that he wanted more. Nods and winks and hints were giving place to open statements now. Tubby was yearning to be looked upon by his Form-fellows as a bold bad blade—a daring, reckless sort of chap—exactly the reverse to what he really was, as a matter of fact.

"I don't mind telling you fellows."

Twenty-five juniors at least were the recipients of Tubby's cheery confidences, fellows of the Fourth and Shell and Third. "Keep it dark, of course. I'm taking you into my confidence. I know I can trust you. Awful row if it got out, of course—not that I should care. I'm not nervy."

"Suppose Bootles got on to it, you bold, bad, bloated buccancer?" asked Putty of the Fourth.

"I shouldn't care! If I have any cheek from Booties, I'll serve him as I served Carthew!" said Tubby.

"Phev!"

"Or the Head, if it comes to that," pursued Tubby, quite intoxicated by this time with his own reckless audacity. "Any rot from the Head, and we'll give him a lesson. You mark my words!"

"The Head would mark your paws, if he heard that!" said Peele.

"What other fellows are in it, as well as you, Tubby?" Putty Grace inquired, with great interest.

"That's telling!"

"Can't you confide in us, now you're being so jolly confidential, old bean?" urged Putty.

Muffin shook his head.

"You see, our secret society has awfully strict rules, like freemasons and things," he explained. "Like freemasons and nihilists and bolsheviks, and so on. It's death to let out any of its secrets."

"It's wha-a-at?"

"Death!" said Tubby solemnly. "The traitor who reveals the deadly secret is slain by an unknown hand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

Tubby blinked at them.

His statement was founded upon a vague recollection of something he had seen on the "pictures" at Rookham Cinema, and he had expected the juniors to be awed, impressed, and thrilled. But they weren't. They only howled with merriment.

"You can cackle!" said Tubby wrathfully. "Wait till the R.S.S. starts on you, that's all! You'll be sorry then. You can't cheek the Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society, I can tell you! I may order my myrmidons—"

"Your what?" shrieked Putty.

"My myrmidons," said Tubby firmly. "I may order my myrmidons to seize you in your beds at the dead of night, and—and—and—"

"And strew the hungry churchyard with our bones?" asked Putty.

Tubby curled his lip.

"Don't you be funny about such an awful thing as the Rookwood Secret Society," he said. "It's a thing to shudder at, I can tell you. I could make your flesh creep by telling you some things I know. I won't. But I could. But take care, all of you! A mysterious eye is upon you!"

And with that fearful warning Tubby Muffin walked off, with his fat little nose high in the air.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Muffin In All His Glory!

"WHO'D have thought it?"

Two or three score of fellows were making that remark on the following day.

The mystery which had seemed so dreadfully deep had been revealed at last. The Grand Master of the R.S.S. was known, and it was Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth.

Everybody knew it. Tubby had told it—in confidence, of course—to nearly everybody who would listen to him.

There was no doubt that Muffin had the limelight now.

His brain was a good deal too obtuse for him to realise what a very perilous distinction he had annexed. The Head and all the masters and prefects were particularly anxious to lay hands upon the chief of the mysterious R.S.S. And with all the Lower School discussing Tubby's claim to that distinction, they could hardly fail to hear of it sooner or later. But Reginald Muffin wasn't thinking about that aspect of the case at all. He was thinking only of the "kudos" he had suddenly acquired, and he was enjoying it to the full.

It made him feel like a mixture of the dashing hero and the deep, dark villain on the "screen" at the picture palace. He had fallen into the habit of shaking his head ominously, casting sudden glances over his shoulder, and speaking in thrilling whispers. Indeed, by this time Tubby probably half-believed that he was telling the truth, having a fertile imagination which might have made the fortune of a journalist.

Certainly nobody else claimed the distinction; Tubby was left to enjoy it all by himself. It was probable that the enjoyment would come to an end when the Head heard of it.

"Who'd have thought it?" the Rookwood fellows said to one another. "If it's true, fancy the ass giving himself away!"

"The Head will flog him," said Oswald.

"Carthew will skin him," remarked Peele.

"He'll be sacked, very likely."

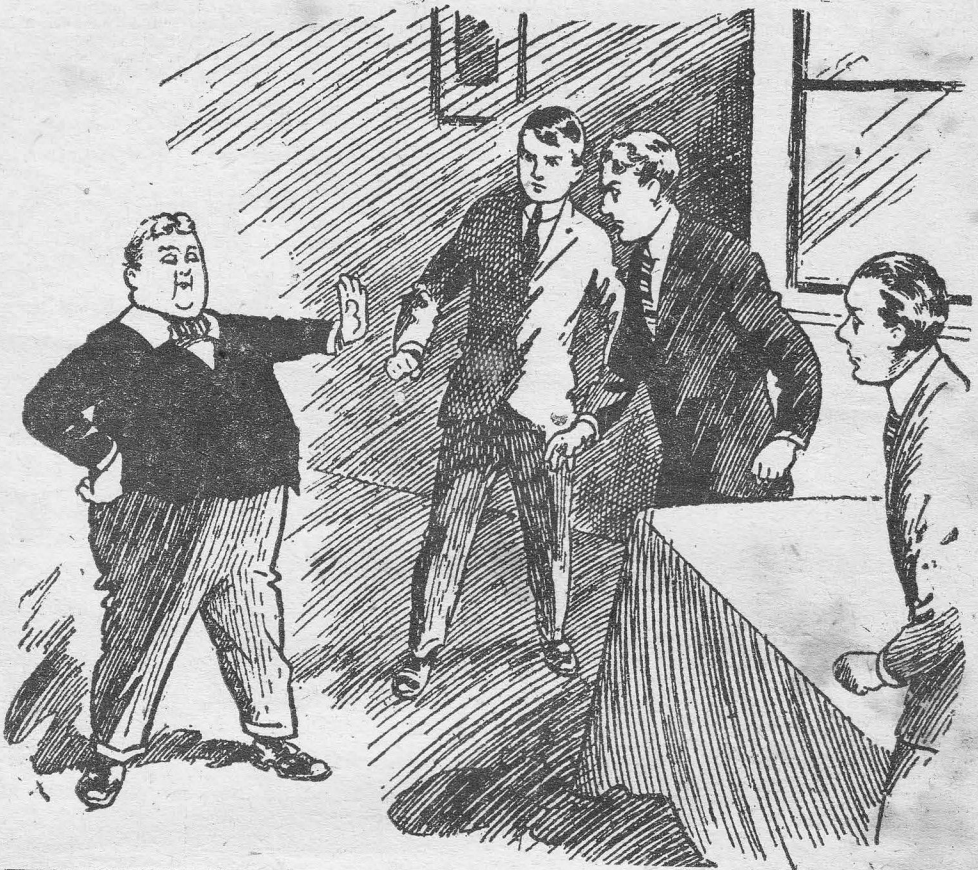
"All the prefects will jump on him."

"And all the masters."

"But is it true?"

"Well, he says so. He ought to know."

It was about midday that day that Mark Carthew heard of it. It was really surprising that he had not heard earlier, considering how the matter was talked of far and wide. Carthew heard a group of Third Form fags discussing Tubby's claim, and his



TUBBY KNOWS SOMETHING! "What does this secret society mean?" asked Bulkeley. "Ask me not!" said Tubby Muffin. "The deadly secret cannot be revealed. But beware! The arm of the society is long, and it strikes in secret." (See Chapter 5.)

eyes glittered as he heard. He went away at once to Bulkeley with the news. He found the captain of Rookwood in the prefects'-room, with Neville and Lonsdale of the Sixth, and he imparted the rather startling intelligence at once.

Bulkeley smiled. "What rot!" he said. "Whoever the fellow was, it certainly wasn't that fat little duffer Muffin!"

"He seems to have owned up to it—in fact, he's been bragging of it, from what I hear!" snapped Carthew.

"But is it likely, on the face of it?"

"Carthew set his lips.

"There were at least half a dozen of them," he said. "More of them were in it, I believe. Muffin may be a member. I shouldn't wonder if half the Fourth are really in the game."

"Well, what do you want us to do?" asked Bulkeley. "If you think it was really Muffin—"

"It's for the prefects to investigate the matter," scowled Carthew. "I suppose that one prefect is entitled to support from the others? I don't care to go to the Head, in case it turns out to be a mare's-nest. The Head isn't any too sweet-tempered about the affair."

"Pretty certain to be a mare's-nest, I think," said Bulkeley. He looked out of the open window, and signed to a junior in the quad. "Here, Grace!"

Putty of the Fourth came up to the window.

"Yes, Bulkeley?"

"Have you heard anything of young Muffin being in the Rookwood Secret Society, or whatever it is the young asses call themselves?"

"Ahem!"

"You're his study-mate, I think," said Bulkeley.

"Yes."

"Well, you'd know. Do you think it's so?"

"I think it's very unlikely, Bulkeley,"

answered Putty. "I—I don't think Tubby has nerve enough to do such—such dreadful things."

Carthew gave a scowl. "They all stand by one another, of course!" he snapped. "Send for the young rascal here, Bulkeley."

"Oh, all right! Tell Muffin to come here at once, Grace!"

"Yes, Bulkeley."

Putty of the Fourth cut off. He found Reginald Muffin under the beeches in the quadrangle, holding forth to an interested, if somewhat incredulous, group of juniors. Tubby was expatiating upon the terrible and deadly laws of the mystic society of which he was the chief—according to his own account.

"You're wanted, Tubby!" said Teddy Grace, tapping him on a podgy shoulder. "Bulkeley—in the prefects'-room."

"Bulkeley can go and eat coke!" answered Muffin independently. "A fellow with such power as I have isn't going to be ordered about by a prefect. I've only got to say the word, and Bulkeley would mysteriously vanish, never to look upon the light of day again—"

"Wake up, old bean!" said Putty. "You're not at the pictures now. Cut along to Bulkeley before I kick you!"

"If you kick me, Putty Grace, I shall say to my mysterious followers—Yarooooooh!" Tubby Muffin broke off with a howl as Putty's boot gently smote upon his podgy person. "Ow! Yow! You beast! I'm just going, ain't I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tubby Muffin went.

A crowd of fellows followed him. It was easy to guess what Bulkeley wanted the fat Classical for, and the juniors were intensely keen to know how Tubby would face the ordeal. Some of them followed Tubby down the passage to the prefects'-

room; others gathered under the open window. And they were all ears.

"Here he is!" said Bulkeley, as the fat junior rolled in. "Now, Muffin, I hear that you know something about that foolery called the Rookwood Secret Society."

Tubby's heart sank for a moment.

But he braced himself for the shock. He was encouraged by the murmur of voices and the shuffling of feet, which told him that he had a large audience near at hand.

Before that audience Tubby wasn't going to climb down from his pedestal—not if he knew it! Besides, it was common talk among the juniors that Carthew had been frightened by the dealings of the R.S.S. with him, and Tubby's obtuse brain saw no reason why the other prefects shouldn't be frightened, too. So, instead of shrinking back or dodging away—which was his first instinct—Tubby Muffin drew himself up to his full height—not very extensive—and fixed a defiant eye on the captain of Rookwood.

"Ask me not!" he said.

Bulkeley jumped.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ask me not!" repeated Tubby dramatically.

"Have you gone potty?" roared Bulkeley. Tubby curled his lip.

There was an irrepressible giggle outside from the crowded doorway. Tubby was evidently taking his role seriously, and his language appeared to have been borrowed from a play.

"Ask me not!" he said for a third time. "Enough!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Tubby Muffin Wakes Up!

BULKELEY blinked at Tubby Muffin. His first thought was that the fat Classical had taken leave of his senses; that seemed the only way of accounting for his remarkable language.

Lonsdale chuckled, and Carthew scowled. Tubby Muffin folded his arms and stared defiantly at Bulkeley.

"If you're not potty—" began Bulkeley at last.

"Bah!"

"What?"

"Bah!"

"What does this mean, Muffin?"

"I refuse to answer!" said Muffin calmly.

"Ask me not! The deadly secret cannot be revealed!"

"Then you know something—"

"Ha, ha! I do! But beware! The arm of the secret society is long, and it strikes in secret!" said Tubby Muffin impressively. "A word to my myrmidons, and you are a dead man!"

"A—a—a dead man?" repeated Bulkeley dazedly.

"Yes, rather—I mean, 'tis so!" said Muffin. "Beware! The power I wield—"

"I don't think you're potty, Muffin," said Bulkeley, with an air of reflection. "I think you've been to the pictures, and it's got into your silly head! Now, I want a plain answer! Do you know anything about the affair in Carthew's study the other night, and did you have a hand in it?"

"Bah!"

"Will you answer me?"

"Never!"

"Hand me that ash-plant, will you, Lonsdale?"

"Certainly!"

Tubby Muffin backed a step. "Beware!" he exclaimed. "One touch, and the secret society is on your track! You will perish— Yow-ow-ow-woop!"

Apparently the secret society had no terrors for Bulkeley of the Sixth. He grasped Muffin by the collar, and there was a loud whack as the ash-plant came into contact with a very podgy person. "Yaroooh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Leave off! Ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-woooooop!"

The whacks were not very hard, but they were quite hard enough for Reginald Muffin. They brought him back out of dreamland, as it were—back to common earth again.

He realised that he wasn't the mysterious chief of a mysterious society, with unlimited power in his hands, but was just Tubby Muffin of the Fourth—being whacked!

"I—I—I say! Stoppit!" he howled. "C-c-can't you take a j-j-joke, Bulkeley? Ow, ow, ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the doorway.

"Clear off, you young sweeps!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "Now, Muffin, do—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Do you want any more licking?"

"Yow-ow! No! Ow!"

"Then tell me the truth, you young ass!

What do you know about the affair in Carthew's study?"

"Oh dear!"

"Out with it, sharp!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "N-n-nothing!" stammered Muffin.

"Were you there?"

"N-n-no!"

"Did you have a hand in it?"

"N-n-no!"

"You've been saying that you had!" growled Carthew savagely.

"Oh dear! I—I—I was only pulling the fellows' legs, you know!" groaned Tubby Muffin dismally. "I—I don't know anything about it, really, you know. Oh dear!"

Bulkeley laughed, and Carthew gritted his teeth. Even Carthew had to believe Tubby Muffin's disclaimer. It was only too clear that the fat youth had been "talking out of his hat." But Carthew was not pleased at being deprived of a victim.

As Bulkeley tossed the ash-plant aside, Carthew caught it up.

Whack, whack, whack!

Carthew laid it on harder than Bulkeley had done, and Tubby Muffin fled for the door, yelling. He butted into a crowd of chuckling juniors in the passage.

"Hail, mighty chief!" chortled Putty of the Fourth.

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin rolled away dismally into the quadrangle with the laughing juniors. His brief glory had departed. He had been stripped of his borrowed plumes. But apparently he had not given up hope yet—not quite. In the quadrangle he surprised Jimmy Silver & Co. by bestowing upon them a fat wink.

"I pulled his leg a treat, didn't I?" he asked.

"Eh? Whose leg?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Bulkeley's."

"Bulkeley's?" exclaimed Oswald.

Tubby winked again, though rather feebly. "Yes. I—I'll bet he doesn't believe now that I'm the chief of the Rookwood Secret Society," he said. "I've got to keep it dark, you know, so I—I—I—"

"Are you keeping that up, then?" roared Putty.

"Certainly! It's the fact, you know—"

"The fact! Oh, my hat! You awful, lying, fat bouncer!"

"Beware!" said Tubby Muffin. "A word to my myrmidons, you know, and— Leggo!"

"We've had enough of your myrmidons, and of your thundering lies, too!" said Mornington. "Give him the frog's-march, and teach him to tell the truth!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar him!"

"Here, I say, leggo!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I'll make an example of you, I'll set the secret society on your track. I'll tell my myrmidons, I'll— Yaw-yoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!"

But there was no help for Reginald Muffin. He was frog-marched under the beeches, and finally bumped down on the hard, unsympathetic ground.

There the chuckling juniors left him to consider himself, with the warning that any more "whoppers" would lead to the same results.

Tubby Muffin limped away in dismal spirits. His borrowed plumage was gone for good. The limelight had passed from him. The Fourth Form heard nothing more of Tubby's terrible powers, or of his mysterious myrmidons.

The real identity of the Rookwood Secret Society remained undiscovered. Carthew thought on the subject till his head ached, but without getting any "forrader." And, provisionally, as it were, Carthew gave up bullying.

Meanwhile, he took counsel with his friends, Knowles & Co. of the Modern side, and the real members of the R.S.S. realised that they had to walk warily, and they walked warily accordingly. The campaign was not over yet; but so far, at least, the honours were with Putty of the Fourth and Jimmy Silver & Co.

Whether they were to eventually be successful in their project time alone could show!

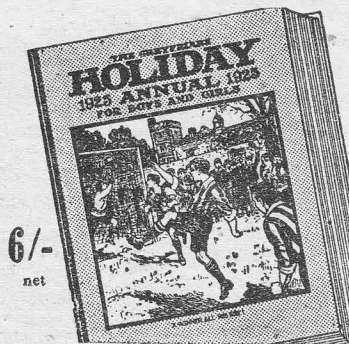
THE END.

(You must not miss next week's thrilling long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. and the mysterious Rookwood Secret Society, entitled: "Knowles Toes the Line!" by Owen Conquest.)

This is the Story-Book You've Been Looking For!

The world-famous "Holiday Annual" for Boys and Girls.

Crammed
with only
the best
stories of
school,
sport and
adventure.



6/-
net

Wonderful
coloured
plates and
many
interesting
pictures and
articles.

NOW ON SALE!

FRIENDS IN NEED! When the Hopkins family is in trouble they find sturdy supporters in Frank Richards & Co., who answer the call of friendship without counting the consequences!



A Stirring Long Complete Story of FRANK RICHARDS, in the Lumber School of the Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
A Pal in Trouble!

HOPKINS!" Miss Meadows spoke somewhat sharply. It was the second time she had addressed Harold Hopkins, the Cockney schoolboy of Cedar Creek, and the Canadian schoolmistress was not accustomed to speaking twice to a member of her class before receiving an answer.

Frank Richards glanced at Hopkins. The Cockney youth was sitting with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and an expression of deep and gloomy thought was upon his ruddy face. He seemed oblivious of the fact that he was in class at all, and that Miss Meadows was speaking to him.

"Ow!" Bob Lawless reached out with his boot, and gave Hopkins a smart tap on the shin to wake him up, as it were.

It certainly woke him up. Harold Hopkins started out of his reverie with a howl, and blinked round him. "Yow-ow!" he repeated.

There was a chuckle in the school-room of Cedar Creek. Miss Meadows silenced it at once with a frown.

"Silence! Hopkins, what is the matter with you?"

Hopkins blinked at the schoolmistress. Some of the Cedar Creek fellows noted with astonishment that tears were trembling on his eyelashes. All was evidently not well with Harold Hopkins.

"Skuse me, ma'am!" mumbled Hopkins. "Did you speak?"

"I have spoken to you twice!"

"Sorry, ma'am; I didn't 'ear you!"

Miss Meadows glanced at the schoolboy rather curiously.

"You should pay attention, Hopkins," she said. "Is anything the matter?"

"No, ma'am."

"Are you not well?"

"Yes, ma'am," muttered Hopkins dejectedly.

Then, to Miss Meadows' surprise and concern, the tears escaped from his eyelashes and rolled down his plump cheeks.

"My dear boy, there is something the matter," said Miss Meadows, kindly enough. "You may go into the playground for a little while, if you like."

"Thank you, ma'am!" gasped Hopkins.

And, keeping his face averted from his schoolfellows, the Cockney of Cedar Creek hastily quitted the school-room.

Most of the fellows looked after him in

wonder, wondering what was the matter with him.

Hopkins was not of the crying kind. His early years had been spent in the East End of London, where he had grown up hardy and tough. He was a "tenderfoot" among the Canadian schoolboys, and a good many jokes were played on his ignorance of the Wild West, but he was liked, and not regarded at all as "soft." Yet there were undoubtedly tears on his cheeks, and tears were a sign of weakness much despised by the hardy youths of the Thompson Valley.

"Poor old Cockney!" murmured Bob Lawless. "Must be something wrong at home that's upset him."

"I know!" said Chunky Todgers. "You see—"

Silence!

Chunky's information was cut short by Miss Meadows' voice, and the lesson was resumed without Hopkins.

He did not return to the school-room before morning classes ended.

When Cedar Creek came out after lessons Frank Richards & Co. looked for the Cockney schoolboy.

They were feeling sympathetic; but there was another fellow looking for him who was not at all sympathetic. That was Eben Hacke, and it was the burly American boy who found him.

Hopkins was seated on the wood-pile near the lumber school-house when Hacke came on him. His eyes looked a little red, and his face was full of woe. He looked up, flushing, as he caught Eben's mocking glance.

"Waal, you're a soft cuss, you are!" said Eben Hacke derisively. "Turning on the waterworks in class! Are they all as soft as you where you come from?"

"Oh, git out!" snapped Hopkins.

"I guess you want to go home to mammy!" said Hacke. "I guess—"

"Yaroooh!"

Hacke was suddenly interrupted, as Frank Richards & Co. arrived on the scene.

Bob Lawless' knuckles ground into the back of his neck as the rancher's son gripped him by the collar.

Hacke was jerked away, and spun round, yelling.

"Leggo!" he howled. "I guess I'll make shavings of you! Let up!"

"You vamoose!" snapped Bob.

He spun the bulky Hacke away, sending him spinning at full length on the ground.

Hacke sat up and gasped.

"I—I guess—"

"Jump on him!" said Bob. "All together!"

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc jumped, but Hacke did not wait for them. He squirmed away, leaped to his feet, and fled.

Then the Co. turned to Harold Hopkins. He grinned at them faintly.

"Now, young shaver," said Frank Richards, "what—"

"Don't you go for to make fun of a bloke, young Richards!" muttered Hopkins. "I tell you—"

"You young ass!" said Frank. "I'm not going to make fun of you. I want to know whether we can help you in your trouble, whatever it is."

Hopkins shook his head dolorously. "Nobody can't help us," he said, ungrammatically and feelingly. "We're done for."

"Who's done for, old fellow?" asked Beauclerc.

"Us, at home."

"Trouble at home?" asked Bob.

"Yes."

"Well, you've got three pals to tell about it," said Frank Richards encouragingly. "Go ahead, and we'll see you through."

Hopkins hesitated. He was loth to tell his trouble, which seemed like asking for compassion; but, at the same time, he felt an urgent need of sympathy. There was no doubt of the hearty desire of the three chums to help him if they could, and his hesitation was brief.

"It's the 'omestead," he said slowly. "You fellers know 'ow we are fixed. You 'elped us to get square when we came and settled in this 'ere valley, you remember."

"Yes, rather!"

"We've had bad luck," said Hopkins wearily. "Father 'ad not much capital, you know, and, then, we didn't know the country. Neighbours 'elped, of course, or we'd never 'ave got goin' at all. And then father borrered of Old Man Gunten, at the store in Thompson—"

His voice faltered.

The chums listened in silence.

It was not an uncommon story of a poor emigrant starting with insufficient resources, and being thrown on his beam ends by a single bad season.

"You see, we 'adn't any money be'ind us," explained Hopkins. "Everybody's worked, but it wasn't enough. My brother Bill's got a job down at Kamloops, and he sends 'ome money, workin' on the railroad, or else we'd

never 'ave kep' going so long. Now it's all up. Old Man Gunten is going to turn us out o' 'onse and 'ome."

And, in spite of himself, the tears trickled down the cheeks of the Cockney schoolboy once more.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Friend In Need!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. exchanged glances of discomfort. They were not wholly surprised by Hopkins' story. It was pretty well known that Old Man Hopkins was not making much of a success of his holding in the Cedar Creek clearing. But it was news to them that he was in debt to Mr. Gunten, the wealthy store-keeper of Thompson Town. Mr. Gunten, among his many other vocations, ran a business as a moneylender, and he was reputed to be a very hard-fisted gentleman to deal with.

"But I don't quite catch on," said Frank Richards, after a long and uncomfortable pause. "Has Mr. Gunten a mortgage on the homestead?"

"That's it!"

"And, he's foreclosed?" asked Beauclerc.

"Yes."

"He can't be very keen to get hold of the land," said Bob Lawless. "It's improved, of course; but even improved land can be bought pretty cheap round here. Old Man Gunten would rather see his money, or part of it— Surely your father could make an arrangement with him?"

Hopkins shook his head.

"That's the queer part of it," he said. "Father's offered him the dollars in instalments—which is the best he can do—and he reckoned Mr. Gunten would rather 'ave the money. But he wouldn't. He wants the land."

"What the thump does he want the land for?" exclaimed Bob. "It's not specially good land. In fact, your father's got hold of a poor patch—it's too near the diggings to be good. There's no end of rock in the soil."

"I know. But Old Man Gunten wants it."

"There must be some mistake," said Frank. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Gunten won't accept his money, and that he insists on having his pound of flesh, like Shylock in the play?"

"That's it."

"What good's the land to him?"

"Dunno!" said Hopkins drearily. "But he wants it, and we've 'ad notice to quit. But where are we to go? Father and mother can't camp in the timber, I suppose, like Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones when he was about 'ere. But the notice is up, and if we don't go we're to be turned out."

"When?"

"To-morrow!" muttered Hopkins.

Bob Lawless' face had a very grim look.

"The sheriff won't be very keen on letting his men take a hand in a job like that," he said. "I fancy Old Man Gunten will have some difficulty in getting the order put into execution."

"That aint worth a cent," answered Hopkins. "He's got the law on his side, and he's sendin' his own men."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"It's clear enough," said Hopkins. "He's foreclosed, and the notice was up more'n a week ago; and if the sheriff refuses to help him, he could get some officer up from Kamloops to put us out. He's choosin' to send his own men instead, that's all. It's 'ard lines, but it can't be 'elped."

"It can be helped—and it's going to be helped," said Frank Richards quietly. "Your father and mother aren't going to be turned out, kid. You say he won't take the money a bit at a time?"

"He won't."

"How much is the lot, do you know?"

"Course I do. It's five hundred dollars."

"Blessed if I know what Old Man Gunten's lent five hundred dollars on that patch for!" said Bob Lawless in astonishment. "It certainly isn't worth more than that in the market."

"We thought he was kind, and wanted to 'elp a neighbour what was down on his luck."

"Lot of kindness about that fat Swiss!" said Bob contemptuously. "What have you got in your noddle now, Franky?"

Frank Richards coloured a little.

"We've got some money in the bank at Thompson," he said.

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

"'Ere, stow that!" exclaimed Hopkins, flushing scarlet. "Do you think I was asking you for money?"

"Dry up!" answered Frank. "Listen to me! If your father can pay in instalments, he can pay us, and we'll settle the total sum in advance with Old Man Gunten. You fellows agree—"

"I guess I do," said Bob at once. "Anything to help a neighbour out of the clutches of Old Man Gunten."

"I agree, certainly!" said Beauclerc, with a smile. "The three of us have a good deal more than is needed."

"You ain't goin' to do nothin' of the sort!" said Hopkins stubbornly. "I wasn't askin' you for money."

"We know that, ass!" said Frank. "But we're going to chip in, all the same. I'm going to see your father about it, and he can pay back the money, and get clear of Old Man Gunten at once. And if you raise any more objections I'll punch your head!"

Harold Hopkins grinned faintly. Chunky Todgers came puffing up to the group sitting on the wood-pile.

"Aren't you fellows coming in to dinner?" he asked. "Can't you hear the bell, you jays?"

"Right-ho! We're coming!"

And Frank Richards & Co. started for the lumber school for dinner, Hopkins going with them, and looking much more cheerful, though he still protested that he wouldn't hear of Frank's little scheme being carried into effect.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Too Late!

FRANK RICHARDS spoke to Miss Meadows after dinner; and when Cedar Creek went back to the school room, Frank did not accompany the rest. He led his horse out of the corral, mounted, and rode away down the trail towards Thompson.

Frank had spoken impulsively to Harold Hopkins, but he did not repent of the generous impulse after reflection. Mr. Hopkins was an honest and hard-working man, and he had done his best on his unpromising clearing. Want of capital and want of experience had been against him, and he had failed from no fault of his own. And there was no doubt that if a friendly hand helped him over the present emergency he had a good chance of turning the corner, and no doubt at all that he would pay back the loan with scrupulous honesty. Frank was only thinking of helping a man who was willing to help himself, and able to do so if given a chance.

Frank would have preferred to consult his uncle, Mr. Lawless, if there had been time; but he was certain that the rancher would approve. But there was no time to be lost in seeing Mr. Gunten.

The schoolboy turned off the trail near the town and rode first to the Hopkins' homestead.

In the middle of the clearing, where some of the burnt-out stumps of old trees still showed through the soil, stood a log-cabin. No smoke was rising from the timber chimney as Frank trotted up—there was an air of desolation about the place. Mr. Hopkins was not to be seen at work as usual, and his eldest son was now away from home, working on the railway. Neither were the little Hopkinses to be seen. The windows and door of the cabin were shut.

Frank jumped from his horse and rapped on the door with his riding-whip.

There was a sound of bars being removed within.

"Is that you, 'Aroid?" called out a voice before the door opened.

"No; it's Frank Richards."

"You're welcome!"

The door was thrown open.

Mr. Hopkins stood in the doorway, looking out, with grim despondency marked in his weather-tanned face.

"Come in, Richards!" he said. "Ain't you at school to-day, then?"

"I've got leave from Miss Meadows for the afternoon," said Frank. "I've heard from Harold how matters stand here, Mr. Hopkins, and I want you to come with me to see Mr. Gunten."

The settler stared.

"I don't see—"

Frank Richards hurriedly explained,

Mr. Hopkins shook his head at first, and it was only after considerable argument that Frank succeeded in convincing him; and then he stipulated that Mr. Lawless' consent should be obtained.

"I'm sure about that," said Frank; "and there's no time to be lost, Mr. Hopkins, if Old Man Gunten is going to take the homestead off you in the morning."

"He won't get it easy!" muttered Mr. Hopkins. "It's my 'ome, and I ain't going to give it up easy!"

Frank understood the barred door and windows now.

The settler intended to resist Old Man Gunten's myrmidons when they came to take possession. There was a shot-gun standing by the door, and Frank's face clouded as he saw it. It was quite possible that his intervention had come only in time to prevent a tragedy.

"You must come with me now and see Old Man Gunten, Mr. Hopkins," he said earnestly. "It's the best way. Look here, if you don't come, I shall call on Gunten without you, and run the affair on my own bat."

"You're a good kid, Richards!" said the Cockney settler huskily. "I guess I'll let you 'ave your way if you're sure your uncle—"

"I'm quite sure."

"Every cent will be paid back," said Mr. Hopkins. "You understand that? I can pay it all right, given time. I reckon Old Man Gunten must be out of his senses to refuse my offer; the land's no good to 'im. He could buy a better patch for the money, if he liked. That's why I ain't takin' it quiet—he just wants to turn me out of 'ouse and 'ome for nothing at all, fur as I can see."

"He won't refuse the lump sum," said Frank. "Perhaps he thinks you could raise it if he drives hard enough. Anyhow, you can raise it now, and the old Shylock is going to be choked off. Come on!"

"I'll come!"

The settler secured the door, and fetched his horse from the shed. He mounted, and rode away with the schoolboy for Thompson. They passed the placer claims on the creek, which bounded the Hopkins holding on one side. The "water-rights," owing to its situation on the creek, were about the only valuable thing in the Hopkins holding. But water-rights and all, the holding was not worth five hundred dollars as farming land. The soil was poor and rocky—more suitable, in fact, for a mining fossicker to work on than a farmer.

Frank Richards and his companion rode into Main Street in Thompson, and stopped at Gunten's Store.

The store was the largest business establishment in Thompson; Mr. Gunten was known as the wealthiest citizen of the frontier town, though some of his methods of accumulating wealth were commonly said to be open to question.

Frank Richards knocked at the private door, at the side of the store, and it was opened by a Chinese servant.

He asked to see Mr. Gunten; and the Chinese left the visitors waiting at the door while he went to inquire.

He returned in a few minutes.

"Mr. Gunten no homee," he said.

Frank Richards' eyes glistened.

"I saw him at the window as we rode up," he answered. "Tell him Mr. Hopkins wants to see him on important business."

"Mr. Gunten no see."

"I tell you— Stop!"

The Chinaman was attempting to close the door, Frank Richards promptly put his boot in the way.

"You go away!" said the Celestial. "Mr. Guntee sayee no see!"

"We're going to see Mr. Gunten!" answered Frank grimly. "Get out of the way! We're coming in!"

"No comee—"

The Chinaman broke off with a howl as Mr. Hopkins, losing patience, grasped him and forced him back from the doorway.

The settler took a grip on the Oriental's pigtail.

"Now take me to Mr. Gunten!" he said savagely.

"No takee!"

"I'll twist your pigtail till you do!"

"Yow-ow-ow-owl!" howled the Chinese, as the angry settler proceeded to suit the action to the words.

There was a heavy step in the passage beyond, and the fat and angry face of Mr. Gompers Gunten appeared in sight. He stared angrily and contemptuously at his visitors.

"What the thunder do you mean by kicking up a rumpus at my door?" he demanded violently. "Get out! Let my servant alone and clear!"

"I guess I want to see you about the mortgage," answered Mr. Hopkins, pushing the howling Chinaman aside.

"That's over and done with!" said Mr. Gunten sourly. "You know as well as I do that it's lapsed!"

"I guess I'm ready to pay you in full!" said the settler disdainfully.

"And where are you getting the money?" sneered Gunten.

"That's my business! I can give you an order on the Thompson bank for five hundred dollars, representing principal and interest, and I guess I want your receipt!"

"I guess you can keep your five hundred dollars," returned the storekeeper coolly. "It's too late!"

"You don't refuse the money?"

"I guess I do!"

"Come, Mr. Gunten," said Frank Richards mildly. "You lent the money, expecting it to be returned, I suppose. Mr. Hopkins has the whole sum—"

"He should have brought it two weeks ago if he wanted to keep his holding!" sneered the Swiss. "It's too late now!"

"But you don't want the land!" exclaimed Frank. "You know quite well that it's not worth five hundred dollars!"

Mr. Gunten shrugged his shoulders.

"I know that it's my land," he answered. "If Hopkins wanted to pay he should have paid when the land was his. It's mine now!"

"So you refuse the money?" said Mr. Hopkins.

"I've said so. Now get out!"

"You won't take my 'ome off me so easy," said the Cockney farmer. "I may as well tell you, Mr. Gunten, that I've sent my wife and the nippers to a neighbour's, and I've got a shot-gun ready for any critter that tries to butt into my 'ouse!"

The Swiss storekeeper laughed derisively. "You'd better keep your shot-gun out of sight," he answered. "There's the calaboose for ruffians who let off shot-guns at honest men. Now get out of my house, you loafer!"

That was a little too much for the exasperated settler.

Unless Old Man Gunten had some secret and mysterious motive, he was, apparently, bent on turning the landholder out of his home from the sheer love of tyranny. That was unlikely enough, in a man like Mr. Gunten, who was exceedingly keen on the track of dollars; but there seemed to be no other motive to be assigned. And Mr. Hopkins' patience gave way as his tyrant pointed to the door. He made a savage stride towards the fat Swiss, and struck out straight from the shoulder.

The blow caught Old Man Gunten full on his fat, purple nose, and sent him spinning along the passage.

He came down on his back with a crash on the planks.

The yell he gave rang right across Main Street, and drew three or four passers-by to the open doorway.

Mr. Hopkins glared down at him.

"That's the stuff for your sort!" he panted. "Now get up and have some more; you foreign scum!"

"Help!" yelled Mr. Gunten, showing no intention whatever of getting up. He did not want to be knocked down again by his exasperated victim.

"Come on, boy!" said Mr. Hopkins, turning contemptuously from the fat rascal on the floor.

And Frank Richards and the settler left the house together, the Chinaman slamming the door after them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Holding the Fort!

IT was with a glum face that Frank Richards rode back to Cedar Creek School, to meet his chums there. The result of the visit to Mr. Gunten had surprised and dismayed him.

Cedar Creek School had been dismissed when Frank Richards arrived there, and he found Bob and Beauclerc, and Harold Hopkins waiting for him on the trail outside the gates. Hopkins' face fell as he saw the expression on Frank's.

"What's 'appened?" he inquired.

"It's all serene, isn't it, Frank?" asked Bob.

Frank Richards explained concisely. His chums eyed him in astonishment.

"But why should the foreign rascal have refused the money?" exclaimed Beauclerc. "He couldn't sell the holding at such a figure if he wanted to, and it can't be any use to him personally. Old Man Gunten doesn't go in for farming, excepting by holding shares in the fruit-farms down the valley."

"It beats me," answered Frank.

"And it beats me to a frazzle," said Bob Lawless. "But Old Man Gunten's had the offer of his money, and if he won't take it that's his funeral. He isn't going to turn Mr. Hopkins out."

"I'm afraid of what may 'appen!" faltered Harold. "Father's got his shot-gun 'andy, and there's goin' to be awful trouble when Gunten's men come along to turn 'im out."

Bob gave a low whistle.

"That won't do," he said.

"I'm afraid there'll be trouble," said Frank. "I think Old Man Gunten will very likely act to-night instead of to-morrow, after our visit to him. Whatever his reason is, he's determined on getting his claws on Mr. Hopkins' holding. I was thinking that we'd go home with Hoppy to-night. You could put us up, kid?"

"Course!" said Harold.

"And we'd help to hold the cabin against the rascals, and see that Mr. Hopkins did nothing rash, too," said Frank. "We can send a message home, if you fellows like the idea. Mr. Hopkins will want some help, or he will be turned out!"

"How's it goin' to end?" muttered Hopkins.

"I don't know. But the place has got to be kept in your father's hands, kid; that's the important matter now."

"We'll do it," said Bob decidedly.

"Chunky Todgers hasn't gone home yet, and he'll take a message to the ranch, if we ask him, and tell your popper at the same time, Cherub."

Beauclerc nodded assent.

No more time was spent in words; in a few minutes Chunky Todgers was found and despatched with the message, which was simply that the Co. were going home with Hopkins for the night.

A promise of liberal maple-sugar as a reward made Master Todgers quite obliging, and the chums saw him start off on his fat little pony.

Then they set out at a gallop for the Hopkins' homestead, half fearing that something might already have happened there.

Exactly how the law stood in the matter the schoolboys were only dimly aware; but they knew that in justice, at all events, Old Man Gunten was not entitled to take possession of the place after the offer of the return of his loan in full, with interest. Whether it was tyranny or some hidden motive that actuated him, it came to the same thing; he was to be prevented from having his own way. The chums of Cedar Creek were quite determined on that.

"Hallo! That looks like Gunten's lot!" muttered Bob Lawless, as the chums were passing Thompson at a little distance.

On the trail outside the town they caught sight of six horsemen—all of them exceedingly "tough" characters, and well known as belonging to the Red Dog crowd. One of them, called Dry Billy Bowers, had only recently returned from prison, and all of them were rascals. Old Man Gunten was speaking to them in the trail, and it was pretty clear that he had been busily engaged in gathering them together, and was about to despatch them on their mission.

The Swiss store-keeper caught sight of the schoolboys in the distance, and scowled at them.

"Hurry up!" said Frank. "If they're bound for the homestead, we want to get ahead of them."

"You bet!"

The chums galloped on at great speed. A few minutes later they were on the



THE ATTACK ON THE CABIN! The six ruffians, bearing the trunk, came on with a rush, heedless of the shot-gun that peered from the window. "Stop, or I'll pull the trigger!" shouted Mr. Hopkins. (See Chapter 5.)

bank of the creek, and dismounted in the Hopkins' enclosure.

The door of the cabin was thrown open at once, as Mr. Hopkins recognised them from within.

The settler was alone in the cabin, his family, with the single exception of Harold, having been sent to a friendly neighbour's, to be kept clear of the "trouble."

The schoolboys let their horses loose to graze by the creek, and entered the cabin; in the distance a bunch of riders could already be seen approaching at a trot.

Mr. Hopkins seemed surprised by the arrival of Frank Richards & Co., and he looked very doubtful when he was informed that they had come to aid him in holding the cabin against the enemy.

But he raised no demur.

The door was closed and barred again; already the hoof-beats of the approaching horsemen could be heard.

Frank Richards looked out of a slit between the window shutters.

Dry Billy and his companions were riding up, headed by a ruffian called Keno Kit. Old Man Gunten was not to be seen. Apparently he was too wise to trust himself near the shot-gun of the farmer he intended to evict from his little home.

The Red Dog crowd dismounted, and tethered their horses to a fence. Then they came on towards the cabin.

Keno Kit struck on the door with a heavy pistol-butt, and shouted:

"Anybody at home?"

"I guess I'm at 'ome!" answered Mr. Hopkins, through the door. "What may you 'appen to want, Keno Kit?"

"I guess we want possession of this hyer shebang!" answered the ruffian. "Open this hyer door at once!"

"I'm not opening the door to anybody!"

"I reckon we'll soon burst it in, then!"

"Have you got the sheriff's order?" called out Bob Lawless.

"I guess we don't need it! We've got Mr. Gunten's orders, and five dollars each in spondulies!" chuckled Keno Kit.

"That's not law!"

"Oh, I guess we can manage with any old law! Are you opening this hyer door or are you not?"

"Not!" said Frank Richards & Co. together.

"Then look out for trouble!"

And Keno Kit strode back to his comrades.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Attack on the Cabin!

THERE was a brief consultation among the half-dozen ruffians gathered outside the cabin, but it was very brief. The ruffians were anxious to get their task over, and return to the

delights of the Red Dog bar. They had some of Old Man Gunten's money in their pockets already, and the promise of more; their reward for doing the dirty work of the Swiss store-keeper was to be a "jamboree" at the Red Dog.

"I guess it's plane-sailing!" said Keno Kit. "This hyer shebang belongs to Old Man Gunten now, and he's given instructions for it to be pulled to splinters. It won't take us long, I calculate. Lay hold of a log and bust in the door, to start!"

"You bet!"

And the ruffians laid hands upon a felled trunk near at hand, and raised it in their united grasp, for use as a battering-ram.

They came on towards the cabin door with a rush.

Mr. Hopkins pulled back the shutter of the window by the door, and grasped his shot-gun, his eyes glinting.

Frank Richards caught his arm.

"Don't shoot!" he exclaimed.

"I guess what they're doing is agin the law!" answered the settler grimly. "I'm bound to surrender the house to the sheriff's men, but these ain't the sheriff's men, I guess Mr. Henderson won't have any truck with it. This lot is the Red Dog crowd, and if they attack my house I'm at liberty to fire on them!"

"But—"

"I'll warn them first."

Mr. Hopkins put the muzzle of his gun out of the window, and shouted to the Red Dog crowd.

"Stop!"

No answer was returned, and the six ruffians, bearing the trunk among them, came panting on. There was no doubt that one heavy drive from such a weight would send the cabin door flying into fragments.

"Stop, or I'll pull the trigger!" shouted the farmer.

"I guess you don't dare!" snorted Keno Kit. "Come on, you galoots! We ain't going to be all night about this hyer funeral!"

And they came on with a rush, heedless of the shot-gun that peered from the half-open window.

The farmer hesitated no longer. He aimed low, to catch the ruffians in the legs, and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

There was a chorus of surprised and furious yells, as the small shot scattered among six pairs of legs.

The tree-trunk came to the ground with a crash, as six pairs of hands let go at the same moment.

One end of it jammed on Mr. Billy Bowers' toe, and Dry Billy hopped and danced, letting out a succession of wild howls.

Three of the ruffians turned tail and ran instantly, and did not stop till they were in cover of the nearest bunch of larches.

Dry Billy, hopping and yelling, did not even think of retreat, much less of further attack.

Keno Kit and another drew their revolvers, and turned towards the window with savage looks. They had been stung about the legs by the scattering shot, and they were furious.

Frank Richards dragged Mr. Hopkins back from the window, and Bob slammed the thick pine shutter and fastened it.

Crack, crack! Spatter, spatter!

Two pistol-shots smashed on the pinewood at the same moment.

Frank drew a quick breath.

"That looks like business!" he muttered.

Mr. Hopkins coolly reloaded his shot-gun.

"I guess Colt's bullets won't hurt that pinewood much," he said. "They've got no rifles, and they wouldn't dare to use them if they had."

Mr. Hopkins opened the shutter a few inches.

In the distance, among the larches, Keno Kit and his gang were gathered in a group, engaged in loud and emphatic consultation.

At last Dry Billy Bowers was seen to tramp away in the direction of the town, and it was easy to guess that he had gone to seek Mr. Gunten for further instructions.

"Jolly good thing Old Man Gunten sent this gang instead of the sheriff's men," murmured Bob Lawless. "Firing on the sheriff's posse would have been pesky serious business!"

"He won't get any help from the sheriff," said Mr. Hopkins. "Not that I'd give up my holdin' anyhow!"

"Ear, 'ear!" said Harold loyally.

The garrison of the log cabin waited anxiously. If the sheriff of Thompson arrived on the scene with Mr. Gunten, the chums realised that the matter would assume a much more serious aspect. But the sheriff in an outlying settlement like Thompson held the scales rather of justice than of law, and it was clear that Old Man Gunten had not ventured to invoke his aid—yet, at all events. Indeed, it was probable that if the exact story of Mr. Gunten's dealing with the farmer became generally known in Thompson trouble might arise for the greedy Swiss, from the rough-and-ready citizens of the valley settlement.

Frank Richards watched from the window, finding a sharp look-out for a reckless pot-shot from the Red Dog crowd. The sun was sinking low over the pines when the fat figure of Mr. Gunten came in sight, accompanied by Dry Billy Bowers.

The store-keeper came on towards the cabin—but stopped as the muzzle of the shot-gun peered out at him.

"Hands up, if you come nearer!" rapped out Mr. Hopkins.

With his fat face dark with rage, Old Man Gunten put up his hands as he came on. He stopped outside the window, giving the settler a venomous look.

"I guess I'm hyer to demand surrender of my property," he said, between his teeth.

"I've offered you your money."

"Money be burned!" said Old Man Gunten. "I'm after the property. I give you five minutes to clear out this shebang afore it's set on fire!"

"I give you one minute to get clear before I send a charge of shot at you!" said the farmer grimly.

He put his finger to the trigger. The fat, red face of the store-keeper paled, and he swung round and started to run.

There was a chuckle from the cabin as the terrified Swiss raced and plunged and stumbled away over the rough ground, fear lending him wings. He tripped over a trailing root at last, and came down on his hands and knees, howling. On all fours, the moneylender of Thompson squirmed into the larches for cover, and vanished from sight.

"And now—" muttered Frank Richards tensely.

They waited.

(You must not miss reading next Tuesday's long complete story of Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek, entitled: "Lynch Law!" It is a yarn full of thrilling and breathless incidents.)

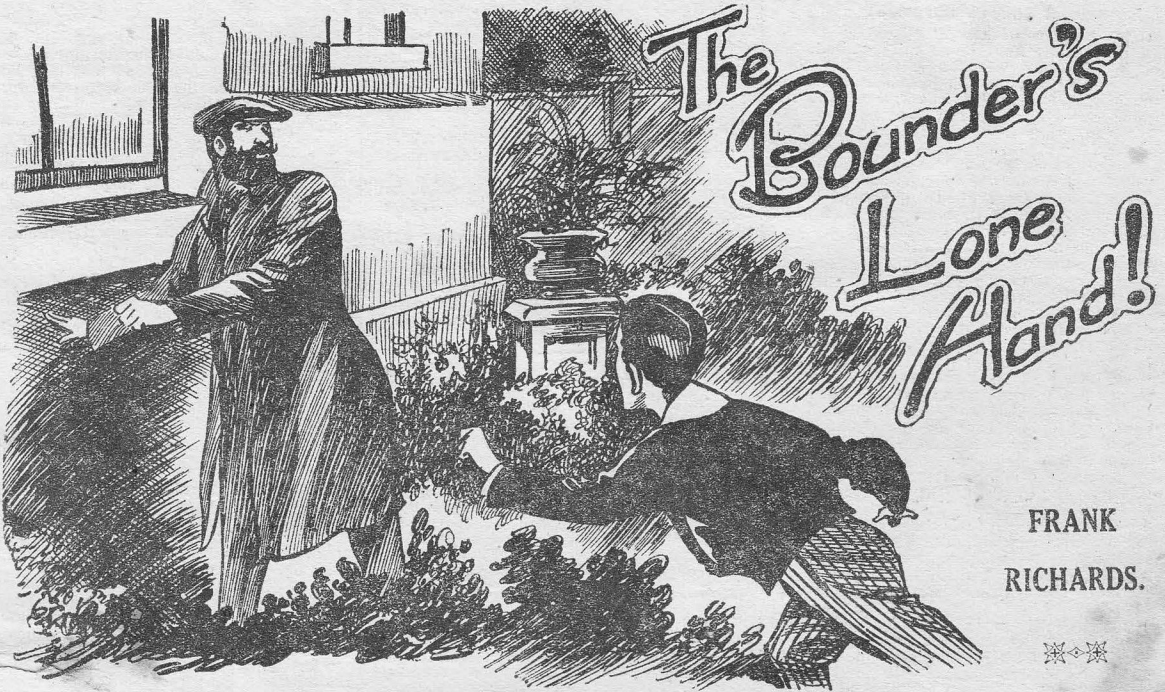
BOOKS OF SPORT, SCHOOL, AND ADVENTURE
Begin the New Year Well by Getting These!

The Boys' Friend Library	No. 745.—DARE OF THE ROVERS. An Absorbing Long Complete Story of Professional Soccer. By RANDOLPH RYLE.
	No. 746.—BEHIND THE WHEEL. A Splendid Tale of a Young Motoring Crack's Adventures on and off the Track. By GILBERT CHESTER.
	No. 747.—SPORTSMAN AND SLACKER. A Superb Yarn of the Ring and the Footer Field. By W. E. GROVES.
	No. 748.—A SON OF THE SWORD. A Dramatic Story of Army Life and Hazard in India. By CAPTAIN WILTON BLAKE.
The Sexton Blake Library	No. 363.—THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST BATTLESHIP. A Powerful Story of Deduction, introducing the Popular Characters, GRANITE GRANT and MILEE JULIE.
	No. 364.—THE CROOK OF MAYFAIR. Another Story of Strong Detective Work and Thrilling Adventure. By the Author of "The Secret People; or, Burning Sands," etc.
	No. 365.—HIS FATHER'S CRIME. A Tale of Thrilling African Adventure and Detective Work in England. By the Author of "Next o' Kin," etc., etc.
	No. 366.—THE MYSTERY OF THE SEINE. The First Extra-Long Story featuring THE THREE MUSKETEERS. By the Author of the Famous Dr. HUXTON RYMER Series.

Now on Sale!

Price Fourpence Each!

A FIGHT WITH THE UNKNOWN! The Bounder is not believed when he tells his chums that disaster overshadows Greyfriars, and things might have been very serious for the old school if Vernon-Smith had not played the Lone Hand!



FRANK
RICHARDS.

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., the Chums of Greyfriars School.

THE FIRST CHAPTER
The Bounder's Bad Luck!

POP! "Oh, my hat!" Vernon-Smith of the Remove uttered that exclamation in tones of dismay.

The flat tyre dragged on the dusty road, and the Bounder of Greyfriars jumped off his machine.

"Well"—the Greyfriars junior whistled softly—"this is a fix, and no mistake!" It was undoubtedly a fix.

It was nearly eleven o'clock. The white, moonlit road was silent and deserted.

For miles the Bounder had had the road to himself. He was still five miles from Greyfriars, and now his tyre had gone.

And he was already late. The Remove at Greyfriars went to bed at half-past nine. Vernon-Smith had had leave to ride over to Lantham to visit his father, who was there on business.

He had had leave till half-past nine; but, with his usual recklessness, he had over-stayed his time. He had not quitted Lantham till half-past ten, and then he had set out for a record scorch home. So long as he arrived before Mr. Quelch went to bed he would get only lines, but if he kept the Remove master waiting up for him there would be trouble with a vengeance.

The junior looked at his watch. "Ten to eleven! Oh, what rotten luck! I might just have done it, with a few minutes over! Quelch goes to bed at eleven!"

But the Bounder did not waste time in repining. It was just bad luck, and he had to make the best of it. It was useless to think of walking the rest of the distance. He turned over the bicycle, and proceeded to remove the tyre. His lamp was nearly exhausted, and he blew it out to save the oil. The clear, bright moonlight gave him plenty of light.

His quick hands proceeded deftly with the work.

Suddenly he gave a start. From the silent park behind him came sudden shouting. There was a rustling and crashing among the trees.

The Bounder detached himself from the wall, and looked up.

On top of the wall, half a dozen yards from where he was standing, two hands appeared, evidently the hands of a climber from within. Vernon-Smith stared at them in amazement.

The hands were followed by a head. A face rose into view, and an elbow was thrown on to the wall.

In the clear moonlight a white and startled face looked over into the road.

The Bounder noted the sharp nose, the keen, steely eyes. The rest of the face was hidden by a thick, black beard.

Then a leg was thrown over the wall, and the man rolled over, held to the wall for a second, and dropped into the road.

He reeled there, panting.

From the park came a clamour of voices.

"This way!"

"Where is he?"

"Quick, the light!"

The fugitive—for such the black-bearded man evidently was—sped away down the road like a hare.

He had not even glanced towards the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith had made a step forward, but the fugitive was gone in a twinkling. For a moment the junior's eyes followed the fleeting form in the moonlight. Then it vanished through a gap in the hedge.

It was gone!

"Well, my hat!" murmured the Bounder, in astonishment. "Who the dickens—what the dickens—"

A man in a keeper's garb tumbled over the wall, followed by a footman.

"Did you see anybody get over the wall?" panted the keeper.

"Yes; a chap with a black beard."

"That's the man! Which way did he go?"

"Down the road, and through the hedge yonder," said the Bounder, pointing.

"What's the row?"

"Burglary!"

With that one word the keeper dashed off, followed by the footman.

The Bounder made a movement to follow. He would willingly have joined in the chase of the fugitive cracksmen.

But he had Mr. Quelch to think of, and he paused.

His tyre was ready now, and he pumped it up. Then he mounted, and pedalled away

towards Friardale. He had been delayed half an hour or more, and half-past eleven was chiming out as he rode through the sleeping village.

Greyfriars loomed up in the distance at last.

Vernon-Smith jumped down, and rang a peal on the bell. He had to wait five minutes before Gosling came grumbling down to the gate.

The Bounder put up his machine, and walked to the School House. He was prepared for a row, and prepared also to meet it with his usual coolness.

There was a light under Mr. Quelch's door, and the Bounder tapped. Midnight had rung out from the clock tower.

The Remove master met him with a glance like a gimlet.

"So you have returned, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have remained up an hour after my usual bed-time."

"I am sorry, sir. I—I had a puncture."

"You should take more care, Vernon-Smith. I suppose you do not think it a Form master's business to lose his night's rest whenever you have a puncture?"

"Nunno, sir! But—"

"However, if your delay is wholly due to an accident—"

said Mr. Quelch, in a somewhat mollified tone.

Vernon-Smith hesitated.

There had been a time when falsehoods came readily to the lips of the Bounder; but Vernon-Smith was not now the Bounder of old.

"It was not wholly due to the puncture, sir," he said. "I could not have got in before eleven, anyway."

"You overstayed your leave?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will take five hundred lines, Vernon-Smith, and stay in on Wednesday afternoon to write them out. You may go!"

"Yes, sir."

And the Bounder made tracks for the Remove dormitory.

He was quickly between the sheets, but it was some time before he slept. He could not help thinking of the incident at Friardale Park, and wondering whether the man had been caught. But he slept at last, and

did not open his eyes again till the rising-bell was ringing out over Greyfriars in the clear wintry morning.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. A Sudden Surprise!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter was quite excited. Harry Wharton & Co. were chatting outside the School House after morning lessons, when the Owl of the Remove rolled up, evidently with news.

"Well, what is it this time?" asked Bob Cherry. "Expecting another postal-order?" "I say, there's news!" said Bunter. "I just heard the carrier telling Gosling. I say, where's Smithy? I wonder if Smithy knows anything about it. He must have been quite near Friardale Park at the time."

"About what?" asked Wharton. "The burglary."

"Eh? What burglary?" "More burglaries?" asked Nugent. "There's been another at Friardale Park," said Bunter. "Old Cripps told Gosling all about it. That's the third—there was one last week at Popper Court, and one the week before at Hardinge House. Now old Griggs has had his turn; but this time the fellow was spotted and chased through the park. Old Cripps says they nearly had him, but he got away over the fields."

Bob Cherry whistled. "I wonder if it's the same chap?" he said. "It's getting exciting! The rotter may come to Greyfriars next."

"Where's Smithy? I shouldn't wonder if Smithy saw something of it. Old Cripps says it happened some time before midnight, and that's when Smithy was mending his puncture there, from what he says. I say, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith came out of the School House, and Billy Bunter hailed him eagerly. He poured out his exciting news in a breath, and the Bounder listened with interest.

"So the man got away?" he asked. "Yes, old Cripps says so. He says the police think it was the same chap who burgled Sir Hilton Popper's and old Hardinge's. Mr. Tozer told him he heard Inspector Grimes tell the sergeant that he believed it was Slippery Jim—"

"Ye gods! What a name!" said Harry Wharton. "Who on earth is Slippery Jim?"

"He's a crackman," said Bunter, with an air of great knowledge. "I saw something about him in the paper at the time of the Popper Court burglary. I say, Smithy, did you see anything of it? You were there, you know. Skinner thinks you were really at the Cross Keys—"

"You fat idiot!" said the Bounder, frowning.

"I suppose you didn't see anything of the affair, Smithy?" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"But I did," said the Bounder seriously. "The chap bolted over the wall while I was there, and I saw him go, and a keeper and a footman after him. I should know him again, too, if I saw him. Chap with a pointed nose and a black beard."

"You really saw him?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, I tell you! I'd have lent a hand in running him down, only I had to get in. I don't know whether he's Slippery Jim or not, but he seems to have slipped away from them all right. And I really shouldn't be surprised if he's got Greyfriars on his list," said the Bounder. "He seems to be a Johnny who's doing this neighbourhood pretty thoroughly. Hallo! Who's that?"

The juniors glanced towards a man who had entered at the gates and was crossing towards the School House.

He was a stranger to them. He was a man of middle age, with a hard, clear-cut face and very keen eyes. He wore the uniform of an Inspector of police, but they knew that he did not belong to the local force.

He came up to the School House, glancing carelessly at the group of juniors. The Bounder's eyes were fixed on his face.

A startled look had leaped into Vernon-Smith's eyes.

The stranger passed into the house, and Trotter came at his ring. The page showed him into the Head's study.

"Well, my hat!" murmured the Bounder.

Wharton looked at him curiously.

"Do you know the chap?" he asked.

THE POPULAR.—No. 513.

"Some giddy detective after the burglar, most likely," said Johnny Bull. "I wonder what he's come here for, though?"

"It's extraordinary!" said the Bounder, in a low voice. "I'd swear that I knew that nose."

"You've met his nose before?" grinned Nugent. "Was it alone, or was the rest of him with it?"

The Bounder did not reply. He hurried into the house, leaving the chums of the Remove considerably astonished.

Vernon-Smith intercepted Trotter as he was coming back, after showing the visitor into the Head's study.

"Who's that chap, Trotter?" he asked.

"Visitor for the 'Ead, sir," said Trotter.

"I mean, what's his name?"

"Inspector Flick, sir," said Trotter, surprised by the Bounder's inquisitiveness.

"Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard. That's wot was on his card, Master Vernon-Smith."

"Oh!" said the Bounder.

Trotter went his way. Vernon-Smith thrust his hands deep into his pockets and walked away, his brow wrinkled in thought.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man from Scotland Yard!

DR. LOCKE rose courteously to greet his visitor, surprised as he was to see him. The Head of Greyfriars had no idea why Inspector Flick, of the Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard, should be paying him a visit.

"You are probably surprised by this call, sir," said the inspector, with a smile. "But I will soon explain. You have doubtless heard of a series of daring robberies carried out in this neighbourhood during the past fortnight?"

"Yes; I have seen the reports in the papers," said the Head.

"The local police have been unable to deal with the matter so far, and I have been sent down from London to investigate. The work is supposed to be that of a certain Slippery Jim, a notorious crackman whose present whereabouts are unknown to the police. You may be aware that last night an attempt was made at General Griggs' house, Friardale Park."

"I was not aware of it."

"The man escaped, unfortunately, though it was a very narrow escape. He was, however, prevented from carrying out his purpose. It is possible, of course, that he has been scared away from the neighbourhood; but I do not think so myself. I may add, that I hope he is not gone."

"You—you hope so?" ejaculated the Head. Inspector Flick smiled.

"Yes; because I hope to have the opportunity of laying the rascal by the heels."

"Ah, yes, I understand!"

"The man is a most dangerous character," continued the inspector. "His system is to take some place of concealment in a certain district, and perpetrate a series of robberies, and then disappear. After he has done with this neighbourhood, he may probably be heard of next in Ireland, or Scotland, or Cornwall. He is a very slippery customer, and though his work is well known to the police, his personal appearance is only known very vaguely, which, of course, adds to the difficulty of tracking him. I have hopes, however, of catching him in the very act, and that is why I am here. You have not yet been troubled by the man?"

The Head started.

"? Oh, no!"

"Yet it is very probable that he will not leave this district without paying Greyfriars a visit."

"Bless my soul!"

"There are, I understand, certain valuables kept on the premises here—"

"Undoubtedly," said the Head. "The old Greyfriars silver is worth upwards of two thousand pounds."

"And doubtless Mr. Jim has accurate knowledge of other valuables here. You would, perhaps, not object to giving me some details of such things, so that I can judge better the probability of his paying you a visit."

"Certainly. I generally have a certain sum of ready money in the safe," said the Head. "About fifty pounds, as a rule. Then I have a number of shares and bonds—especially Anglo-French Loan. Would you advise me to transfer these to my banker for the present?"

Inspector Flick shook his head.

"That is not necessary, sir; and I think probably your safe is more secure than that of the local bank, with Slippery Jim in the neighbourhood."

"That is very probable," assented the Head.

"The bonds you speak of—are they of much value?"

"Two thousand pounds, sir," said Dr. Locke. "I doubt whether this—this disreputable person can be aware, however—"

"Of course, he may know nothing; but it is probable that he has received information. I should like to see the safe, and I can give you an opinion as to its security."

"Certainly. It is in this room."

Dr. Locke rose to his feet, and moved a screen. The iron safe was let into the solid wall of the study. The inspector examined it with keen interest.

"And the key?" he said.

"I keep it always on my watch-chain, Mr. Flick."

"That is very wise. But the lock, of course, would present few difficulties to a crackman like Slippery Jim, and if he knows that the school silver and the bonds are there—"

Inspector Flick paused. "This safe, I presume, contains all the valuables you have mentioned?"

"Yes."

Inspector Flick crossed to the window and looked out into the green quadrangle. He examined the window carefully.

"You think that a burglar would seek to enter that way, sir?" asked the Head.

"Very probably."

"The window is, of course, always fastened at night?"

"Yes."

"It would be easy to cut out a portion of the glass and move the catch from outside, Dr. Locke."

"Eh? I do not quite understand—"

"I mean that if Slippery Jim makes an attempt here, he will make the attempt at this window, beyond a shadow of a doubt."

"You think he knows—"

"That would be quite easy for him. Is there not a history of the school in existence in which a plan of the building is given?"

"Quite so."

"You see, sir, that it is necessary to be careful."

"Undoubtedly. I cannot thank you sufficiently for putting me on my guard in this manner!" exclaimed the Head. "What do you suggest that I should do?"

"Nothing, personally," said Mr. Flick, with a smile. "Now that I am posted, you may leave that to me. With your permission, I shall keep the school under observation, but, of course, in such a way that it will not be known. You would not care for boys to have any inkling of such a thing."

"Very true."

"I have little doubt—or, rather, no doubt at all—that the man will make an attempt here during the week. You need have no alarm, however. I shall be on the watch. My intention is to post myself in the quadrangle at midnight, and keep the house under observation till near dawn. If he comes—I might rather say when he comes—I shall be ready to seize him."

"A very unpleasant task for you, sir."

"My duty, sir," said the inspector, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Yes, I understand."

"As for getting access to the grounds at night, you would doubtless speak to your porter—"

"I will speak to Gosling; but perhaps it would be better for you to have a key to the side gate," said the Head, "then you can come and go as you wish."

"Excellent!"

"But in case of meeting with such a desperate character, you will require help—"

"Naturally. I shall have three reliable men posted outside the school walls, who will come in if I whistle. Until they are required, they will keep their distance. I am aware that you would not desire anything in the nature of police business going on here, so far as it can be avoided."

"That is true, Mr. Flick. Thank you very much!" said the Head gratefully.

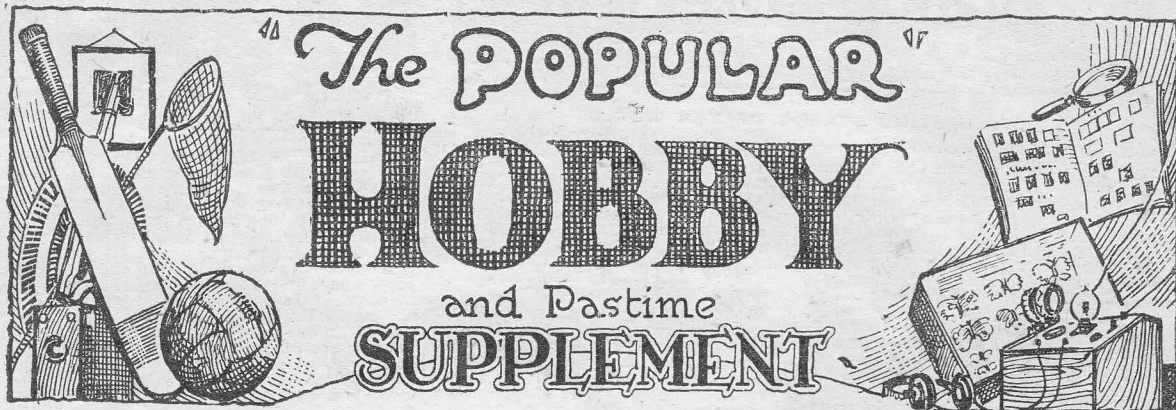
He felt relieved by this delicacy and tact on the part of the inspector.

When Mr. Flick took his leave, the Head walked to the lodge with him, and explained to Gosling, and handed the key of the side gate to the inspector. He returned to the house much relieved in his mind. If Slippery Jim paid Greyfriars a visit, the man from Scotland Yard would be on the spot.

(Continued on page 17.)

AN "ALL WAVE" CRYSTAL SET!

A special article by our wireless expert this week, dealing with the making of an "all wave" crystal set!



The RADIO DEN

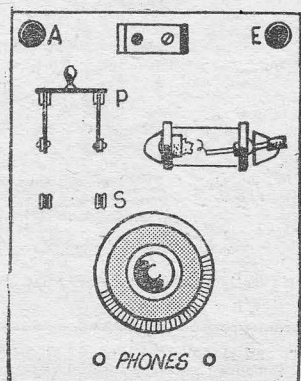
No. 4.—AN "ALL WAVE" CRYSTAL SET.

THE increase in the number of radio stations during the past few years has caused a congestion which could only be relieved by using a very wide band of wave-lengths. This is now being done, and in order that a listener can be "in the running," his set must be capable of tuning to any wave length above a hundred metres and below 3,000. The obvious thing to do some might think, would be to wind a coil that would tune to 3,000 metres, and tap the coil so that any part of it might be used at any time. The great disadvantage, however, would be in what are known as "winding" losses. When listening-in on a low wave-length, a large part of the coil would be out of use without being really out of circuit, and this causes a surprising "fall off" in signal strength. This is a point which should be well remembered, and you will see what exactly happens by referring to Diagram 1.

However, dead-end losses needn't worry us in considering the "all wave" crystal set I am describing this week. Here we have a set into which any size coil can be plugged, being sharply tuned with a condenser. Diagram 2 shows a general view of the set, and construction is a matter of extreme simplicity. Leaving out the question of plug-in coils—which I will deal with later—the components required are

- One variable condenser of .0003 capacity.
- One crystal detector.
- One coil plug for panel mounting.
- Four terminals.
- One yard of tinned copper wire.
- One double pole double throw switch for panel mounting.
- One piece of 1/4 inch. ebonite, 8 inches by 6 inches. Containing box.

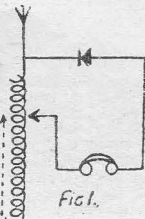
The variable condenser should be of reliable make. The one in my model of this set is an "Ormond," but any other well-known make will do—preferably of the "one hole fixing" variety, as this will save a lot of drilling. There are so many different models of crystal detectors on the market nowadays that it is difficult to make a choice, but I always advise a detector in which the crystal is enclosed in a glass casing. The switch should be a small one, as small as you can get it. A large one will look unsightly on this set. When buying the coil plug, make sure that it is suitable for panel mounting. The one I used is so constructed that the two



This diagram shows the top of the panel when the set has been assembled.

plug connections have long projecting bolts which go right through the panel, and when the nuts are tightened up the plug is well secured. Two of the terminals should be P.O. and the other two of the "telephone" type. No. 20 gauge is best for the connecting wire. The containing box can either be bought or knocked together out of spare wood. The box should be about three inches deep, in order to accommodate the variable condenser.

Marking out and drilling the panel should present no difficulty, but balance your components well. See that the variable condenser is centred nicely, the crystal detector mounted straight, and the terminals well placed. Two nuts to each terminal is certainly an advantage, and one can be used to fix the terminal in place, and the



The cause of "dead end" loss. The dotted line shows portion of coil not in use, and which has the effect of reducing signal strength.

condenser in one of two places, either across the aerial and earth connections (which puts it in parallel) or between the aerial and the coil (a series connection). When the condenser is in the first position, it increases the wave-length range of the coil in use, and in the second position it decreases it. Thus we are able to make a certain coil cover wave-lengths above and below its natural one—a very useful thing when we are listening to a station which is on the "fringe" of the coil's natural wave-length.

The diagram should make the wiring-up quite clear to you, and when completed the set is ready for test.

Now regarding the tuning coils for this set, any kind of plug-in coil will do. You can buy the best make of duo-lateral coil (costing on an average of 5s. each) or you can buy a shilling set of basket coils, and a number of coil mounts, and mount the coils yourself. In the latter way you will get a good set of coils to cover a wide band of wave-lengths at a cost equal to that of one of the former kind. I leave you to choose.

Different aerials will mean different coils for a certain station, so you must decide by experiment which of your set of coils is most suitable for the local B.B.C. station, which for 6,000 metre shipping signals, and so on.

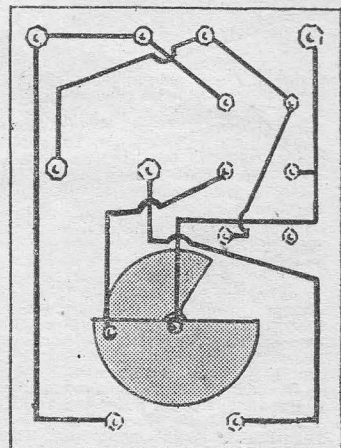
If there is anything further you wish to know about this set, or any other wireless matter, just drop a line to me, c/o The Editor of the POPULAR, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, giving details of the advice you require. I shall be delighted to help you.

I might take this opportunity of saying a word or two about crystals.

In the early days of radio, when crystal was scarce, we had

sometimes to search a dozen shops in order to get the tiniest piece for our sets. Nowadays the windows of radio stores are crowded out with myriads of different crystals trading under different names ending with "ite" and it is perhaps a little difficult to know what to use. Some makes of crystals are without doubt "dud."

The only safe way is to buy only those makes that have a reputation—you must have heard some of your friends mentioning the kind they use and from which they obtain good results. Get their opinion on the matter and go by what they say. That will count more than any advertisements.



Under-view of panel showing special wiring. Where one wire is arched over the other no connection is indicated.

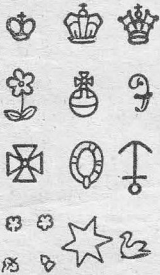
The Stamp Collector

INTERESTING STAMPS OF THE WORLD!

WATERMARKS.

If you take one of our familiar penny stamps of to-day, and turn it over on its face on the table you will see that there is a device worked in the paper, and which is something quite independent of the stamp design. This is the watermark, a term which hasn't much to do with water; the mark is caused by little bits of wire fashioned into letters or designs on the gauze mould or cylinder, which gives paper its texture during the process of manufacture. The effect in finished paper is to show the design reproduced in colourless semi-transparent facsimile.

Most postage stamps have special watermarks, because governments have generally recognised that these marks in paper are not easily imitated, and so they are regarded as safeguards against forgery. But we must not jump to the conclusion that a stamp without a watermark is a "fudge." Some stamps never had any watermark, and it sometimes happens that stamps which are



A few well-known stamp watermarks.

normally printed on watermarked paper get printed on paper that is without such marks. This may occur as an accident, plain paper getting mixed up with watermarked paper. Or, as in the case of the present 1d. green and 1½d. red stamps of Australia, the supplies of watermarked paper ran out, and before fresh supplies could be got from England, the Commonwealth printer had to print about twenty millions on plain paper.

Watermarks in stamps are of great variety. Among the earlier watermarks of Great Britain are crowns of various styles, the heraldic "emblems" (rose, thistle and shamrock), a spray of rose, an orb, Maltese cross, anchor, and now we have a crown accompanied by the royal cypher of King George—"G.V.R." Among the British possessions we get watermarks of an elephant's head (India), pineapple (Jamaica early issues), turtles (Tonga), conch (Travancore) and many crowns and stars, sometimes above and sometimes alone, and sometimes with initials, such as A (Australia), Q (Queensland) and NZ (New Zealand), while quite a large number of colonies have had their stamps through the Crown Agents for the Colonies in London, and many of these have the "crown" over initials "CC" (Crown Colonies), or "CA" (Crown Agents).

BECHUANALAND. Under this name there was formerly a Crown Colony, since annexed to Cape Colony, and the present Bechuanaland Protectorate. The stamp issues comprise Cape of Good Hope and Great Britain stamps over-printed "British Bechuanaland" for the Crown Colony, and further over-printed "Protectorate" for use in the latter. From 1897 ordinary English stamps have been used with the simple overprint "Bechuanaland Protectorate."

BELGIAN CONGO. The great Belgian possession in the Congo has had some beautiful and fascinating stamps. Those of 1894 and onwards are handsome miniature engravings, showing the Port of Matadi, the Stanley and Inkisi Falls, the bridge of the M'poro, and elephant hunt, and a picture of Morangi, chief of the Bangala tribe of the

Upper Congo, and his wife. Later we get pictures of coconut trees, a native canoe, a native village, and a quaint stern-wheel steamer which is a type of vessel that is navigated on the waters of the Upper Congo. The present stamps are also real works of art, and show types of the natives, basket-making, an elephant's head, native archery, weaving, and there are others to come.

BELGIUM. Our great-little ally in the War has had stamps since 1849, the first being fine portraits of Leopold I, favourite old stamps we call "the Epaulettes." Then there were portraits of the second Leopold, and most of the stamps of his reign are plentiful and cheap. The present King Albert has been pictured in many guises on the stamps since 1912, but the favourites are those showing him in the familiar tin hat of the trenches (roi casque, is one posh name for these beautiful portraits). During the War there were Red cross stamps and some fine pictorial stamps showing historic places such as the Cloth Hall at Ypres, the College of Dinant, the University of Louvain, the Town Hall of Furnes. In 1920 there was a little set of three stamps illustrating ancient sports, issued in connection with the Olympic Games of that year.

BENADIR is now better dealt with under the modern style of "Italian Somaliland," and **BENGASI** comes under "Libia."

BENIN is a French West-African Settlement at the mouth of the river of that name. The familiar type of French colonial stamps appropriately over-printed "Benin," or "Golfe de Benin," were used here until they were superseded by general issues for the present colony of Dahomey.

BERGEDORF. A town in Germany, capital of a small district of the same name. In the early days of stamps, Bergedorf, like Hamburg and Lubeck, conducted its own postal affairs, and issued the curious heraldic design stamps on November 1, 1861. They showed the arms of Hamburg (a castle) and of Lubeck (a double-headed eagle), each divided in half vertically, the half of one being here joined to the half of the other, to denote that Bergedorf was conquered by the two Hanse towns in question. The stamps are rarer used than unused.

A WONDERFUL COLLECTION.

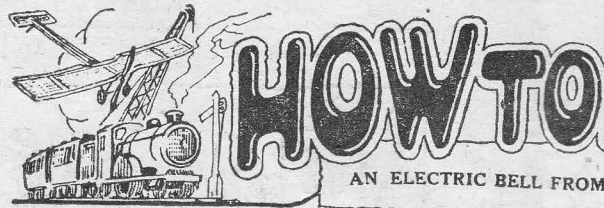
I always like to remind my young collector friends that they are part-owners of the most wonderful collection of stamps there is. If you and I cannot get the big rarities for our very own collections at least we have the satisfaction that most of them are in the great collection which was bequeathed to the British nation by the late Mr. T. K. Taping, M.P.

You can see this collection any day in London at the British Museum, and it is quite easy to examine any part of it. The album pages are arranged in glass-sided slides, vertically, and as there are 4,752 well-filled pages to look through you could spend delightful hours on many visits without exhausting the interest to be found in the stamps.

There are more than 100,000 stamps and their value at present prices would be nearly £250,000. All the stamps actually collected by Mr. Taping were of issues prior to the year 1890; he started collecting at the age of ten. While at Harrow a relative gave him a present of £100 on the curious condition that the money was to be spent, not banked. He spent it carefully and judiciously on stamps for his collection.

Later on he acquired some of the finest collections that came on the market, and amalgamated them with his own. In his lifetime he was the British rival to the famous Ferrary, whose collection is being dispersed by auction in Paris, where the portions sold have already

(Continued in next column.)



AN ELECTRIC BELL FROM

THE electric bell shown at Fig. 1 can be made at a trifling cost, and will be as effective as a ready-made bell. First provide two 1½ in. by 3-16 in. iron bolts with fitted nuts as at Fig. 2, and then make two paper tubes 1½ in. long to fit on them. This is done by cutting two lengths of drawing paper 4 in. by 1½ in., and wrapping them round one of the bolts as tightly as possible and coating the last 1 in. or so with secotone. Four cardboard disks 1 in. diameter are now cut from a piece of thick cardboard with a centre hole of the same diameter as the outside of the tubes. These disks are now glued on the ends of the tubes as at Fig. 3 to form bobbins.

The next stage is to provide a simple winding machine so that the wire can be wrapped evenly on the bobbins. This is made by fitting a length of round wood inside the tubes to project each end, mounting the spindle on a stand with upright slots as at Fig. 4. Nails are driven in the sides of the uprights and a wire handle formed on one end. Thirty yards of No. 26 double cotton covered wire should be obtained and divided into two lengths, one of the lengths being wound round each bobbin.

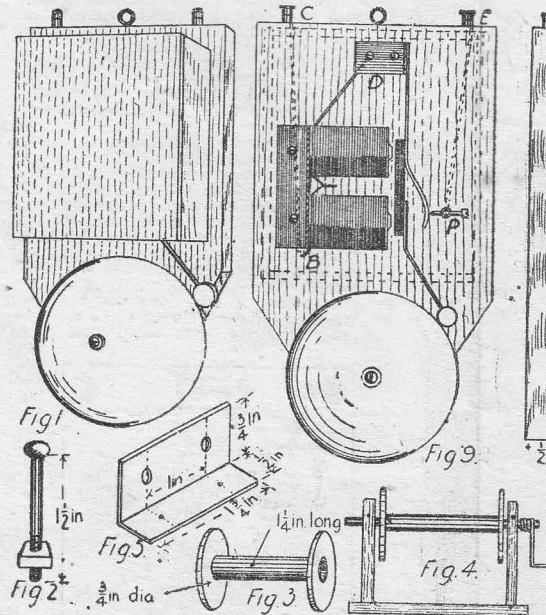
To begin with, leave about 2 in. free and wrap by hand four or five rounds close together, and then turn the handle and guide the wire until the tube is evenly covered. Cut a strip of paper, coat one side with secotone, and cover the winding, and then proceed with the winding in the opposite direction. When another layer has been wound, cover with paper as before, and continue in this way until the bobbin is filled, leaving a few inches over. Treat the other bobbin in the same way, the last layer being covered with paper as usual. The next step is to provide a piece of No. 16 S.W.G. sheet brass or iron 1½ in. by 1½ in., holes are drilled in the narrow side to

take ½ in. screws, and in to take the bolts, with cent as at Fig. 5, which shows to shape.

The ends of the bolts are leave a flat surface of about the bobbins are pushed on bolts are placed through bracket and secured with nuts the wires of the coils so the current going round the coil imaginary S, going round opposite direction to that coil.

The baseboard is now made of ½ in. wood to a length of a centre line is drawn and ¾ in. diameter is drawn around. A line is drawn on the edge from the top, and from it, tangent, draw lines to touch the waste is now sawn off and a chisel, finishing smooth with paper. The magnet is attached to the left hand edge, and the down from the top.

The armature A is now piece of iron 1½ in. by ½ in. Any piece of soft iron will cupboard bolt is quite suitable should be quite suitable. A broken spring from an alarm clock is found useful. Break off a long, hold it in a gas flame hot, and let it cool slowly in oil. Straighten out the spring to the shape shown at Fig. heat it up to a blue colour water. A piece of brass or iron to the form of a hammer the hammer from an old alarm



The electric bell, as shown above, can be made at a trifling made bell.

fetched £365,000, and there is a lot more still to be sold. But now that the Ferrary collection has been broken up the Taping collection is the greatest general collection of stamps in the world.

Here you will see the 1d. "Post-Office"

Mauritius, used, still on the which it was posted; the 2d. same issue is unused. The cents British Guiana of 1851 great rarity, and each of the of the "Woodblock" Cape

HOW TO MAKE

PHOTOGRAPHY



FROM ODDS AND ENDS!

and in the wide side with centres 1 in. apart, as shown the metal bent bolts are now filed off to about 1/2 in. diameter, pushed on and then the through the holes in the with nuts. Connect up coils so that the electric id the coils will trace an g round one coil in the to that in the other

s now made from a piece drawn of 5 1/2 in. by 3 1/2 in. and a curve of drawn at the bottom, n the edges 3 1/2 in. down d from the marks obs to touch the curve, wn off and trimmed with noth with file and glass- et as at Fig. 6 is now baseboard so that the gle plate is 3/8 in. from 2, and the top is 1 3/8 in.

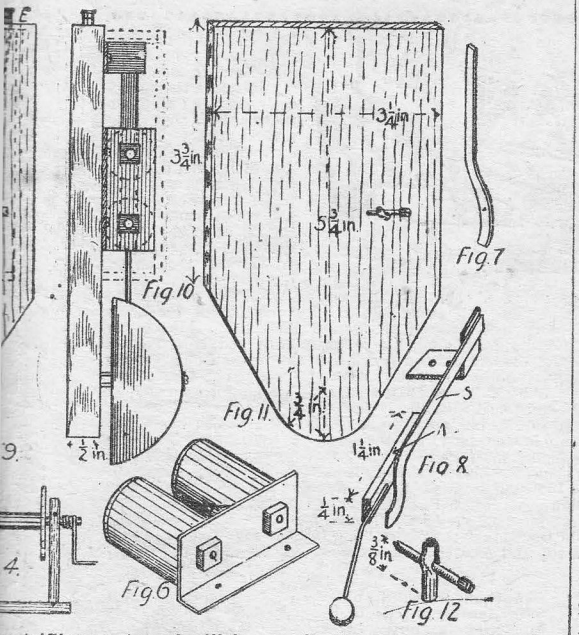
is now made from a 1. by 1/2 in. by 3-16th in. iron will do—a broken uite suitable. The faces The armature on spring steel: here an alarm clock will Break off a piece 2 1/2 in. gas flame until it s red slowly in order to soften the spring. Now bend 3 at Fig. 7, and then colour and plunge in ass or iron is now shaped a hammer, or perhaps an old alarm clock can

A 1 1/2 in. length of wire should be used to attach the hammer to the armature, the end of the wire being flattened out and soldered on as at Fig. 8. The armature is now soldered about half-way along the spring, and then the end of the spring is soldered to a brass bracket as shown. The bracket is made from a strip 1 1/2 in. by 1/2 in. with two screw holes, and is screwed to the base board so that the armature is about 1-16th in. away from the bolts. This is shown in the plan at Fig. 9, and is on a line with them as indicated in the side view at Fig. 10.

The contact screw and pillar shown in position on the base at Fig. 11 is made from a small machine screw and a length of tube respectively as at Fig. 12. The pillar can be made from a 3/8 in. length of 3-16th brass tubing slotted down the centre with a thin file and then pressed against the sides of the screw while the screw is being rotated, sufficient thread will be formed to allow of adjustment. The point of the contact screw should be 1/2 in. in front of the pillar, and at the full size of the bend.

The pillar is held in position with a small screw just large enough in diameter to grip the inside. Any suitable bell can be used; it should be secured to a short wooden pillar screwed on from the back and attached with a screw from the top with a washer under. The connect up, the wire from the coil is carried through a hole in the base at B to a terminal at C, and the other is taken to the bracket of the armature spring as at D. A wire is fastened from the other terminal E to the contact pillar D. Adjustment is made with a battery and then a case of thin cigar-box wood made to fit over and is attached with hooks and eyes. The bell is improved by a small piece of platinum soldered to the end of the contact screw.

THE END.



a trifling cost, and will be as effective as any ready-made bell.

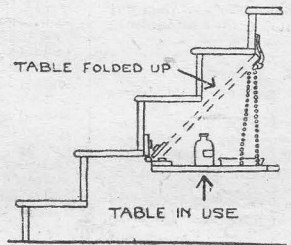
ill on the envelope on 1; the 2d. stamp of the used. The circular 2 na. of 1851 is another each of the rare errors "Cape triangular

stamps is to be seen (slide 144). One page that always fascinates me is in slide 398, showing twelve of the first issue of Hawaii (the Sandwich Islands); a cheque for £10,000 would not be sufficient to procure a similar set.

SOME USEFUL DARK-ROOM HINTS!

YOUR choice of a dark room will probably lie between the scullery and the bath-room, or possibly the cellar. You will, therefore, need some method of blocking out the daylight from the window.

A simple way of arranging this is to make a framework of light wood similar to that on which an artist stretches his canvas. Over this framework tack a double thickness of thin, tough brown paper; add another thickness if two does not make the screen lightproof. The framework should fit tightly into the window frame; any other gaps stopped by tacking strips of red fabric to the edge of the frame, so that they overlap and cover the openings.



A simple and useful dark-room built under the stairs.

Another plan is to fit the window with a roller spring-blind of lightproof material and to block out light around the edges by tacking wide strips of cardboard to the edges of the window frame, so that the blind runs in a sort of groove.

If you use the bathroom, arrange a cover of some kind for the bath as some photographic chemicals are highly injurious to the skin and should not be allowed to drip into the bath. For this reason the bath should be thoroughly scoured after use for photography.

If you have a cupboard under the stairs, you might be able to use this for developing and fixing and do the washing of the prints in the kitchen. A very convenient table, which folds up when not in use, can be made quite simply and attached to the underside of the staircase, as shown in the sketch.

The table is made from three or four boards fastened on the underside with battens. The table-top thus formed is attached to the corner of one of the steps at a suitable height by hinges so arranged that the table folds upwards towards the stairs. When in use it is supported by a chain passing from each front corner to a hook in a higher step. When not in use the table is held out of the way by a loop of cord slipped over a small knob or peg on the underside of the table-top.

Those readers who are able to have a work-bench of their own, should arrange for it to be of a convenient height for working and provided with a few roomy drawers, in which to store materials out of the light and dust. Some shallow drawers for plate-boxes, packets of paper, scissors, and other materials would be useful. A wall cupboard which can be used exclusively for storing chemicals is an important necessity. Chemicals should never be stored amongst other articles, particular foodstuffs. All bottles should

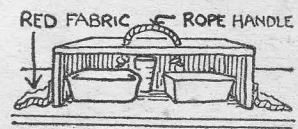
be plainly labelled in waterproof ink, and, as an additional precaution against accidents, the labels should be varnished so that they will not become obliterated or washed off.

Plain wood benches are quickly stained by developers and other chemicals which crystallize on the surface. To prevent this a good plan is to coat the bench with paraffin wax. Rub a cake of the wax over the wood until a thin layer has been applied. Over this pass a heated flat iron so that the wax melts and soaks into the wood. When dry, this surface will withstand most liquids and any liquid spilt may be more easily wiped off.

A simple dark-room lamp can be made from a wooden box, as shown in the sketch. First remove the lid of the box and cut off a strip of wood from the side which is to form the top (A in the sketch). Then make a groove down the sides and along the bottom of the box following the dotted lines marked C. Into this groove slides a piece of ruby glass. It should fit as closely as possible so that no light filters round the edges or through a gap at A. If necessary, a piece of ruby fabric should be tacked to the top of the box so that it overhangs the gap A.

To form a ventilator cut a circular hole in the top of the box and cover it with a chimney made from a cocoa-tin. The type of thing required is indicated clearly by the sketch. The gaps marked E are holes for ventilation. The top of the chimney, the bottom of the tin. A closed chimney is necessary to prevent a circle of light from being cast on to the ceiling of the room.

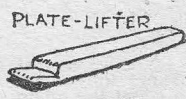
Three nails in the centre of the floor of the lamp support a candle, or a small oil lamp may be used. A piece of bright tin or white pot placed in the back of the box at D will serve as a reflector. A loop of tape may, if desired, be attached to the top of the ruby glass by means of passe-partout binding to act as a handle by which to lift the glass out of the groove.



If the dark-room is in use whilst you are at work, make one of these covers so that the light can be let in without danger.

If there is a possibility of anyone entering the dark room whilst you are at work, it will be advisable to make a cover for your dishes, so that you can let in the light without danger. This can be improvised from a box large enough to cover the number of dishes in regular use. Provide the box with a rope handle, as shown, and around the bottom edge tack a fairly wide strip of red fabric which will trap any light which might otherwise creep under the box owing to unevenness in the bench surface.

A useful implement known as a plate-lifter can be made by filing an old toothbrush handle to the shape shown, taking care not to leave any sharp edges. The knotted end of the implement is inserted under plate in the developing dish and used as a lever to lift the plate out of the liquid. This saves having to dip one's fingers into the chemicals too frequently, and so prevents stained finger-nails.



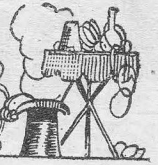
THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

You can make a lamp from a wooden box. This lamp will cost you a few pence.



The Conjuror's Corner

By "The Wizard"



WHICH CARD WAS IT?

Borrow your host's pack of playing cards (then there will be no question of "prepared" cards), shuffle them, and divide into two. Hold a half in each hand and invite any member of the party to select one card from the centre of one of the half packs.

He is to show it to everyone in the room except yourself, and then replace it on top of the half-pack from which he took it.

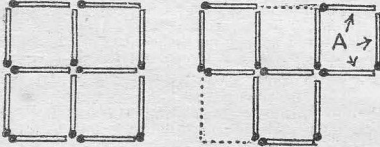
Then, after shuffling the two halves together, you guarantee to produce the selected card although never having had a glimpse of its face.

The secret of this trick is that the value of the bottom card in the half-pack from which the selected card was *not* drawn must be noted. This half should then be placed on top of the chosen card as soon as the latter is returned to the top of its own half-pack.

Upon the whole pack being shuffled, the conjurer must remember to keep the centre cards in the same position by moving the outside ones only. Then, to find the selected card, he has merely to deal out the pack until he comes to the card he alone noted and to indicate the one following it.

THE THREE SQUARES.

Borrow a box of matches from a member of the audience (it is always a good plan to borrow such articles as you may require; then all know there is no "fake" about them). Twelve of the sticks should then be arranged in the form of four squares, as shown in the first illustration.



is to remove three of the sticks and then replace them so that only three squares are formed, and each the same size as those formed originally.

All twelve matches must be used for the solution. This is how to do the trick:

The two bottom left-hand corner matchsticks, and the one forming the top of the higher right-hand square, are removed and placed as shown at A in the second sketch, thus completing another square. But the removal of those three matches has done away with two of the first squares, thus leaving three.

The puzzle now

THE OBEDIENT RING.

Start off with a lot of patter explaining to the audience how, after many years of patient training, you have managed to get a ring to obey your every command.

Producing a black wand, slip a ring (which you call "Archie") over the top and let it slide down.

"Now, Archie," you say. "Climb half-way up the wand."

Immediately the ring commences to do so!

"A little higher, please, Archie!"

Archie obeys.

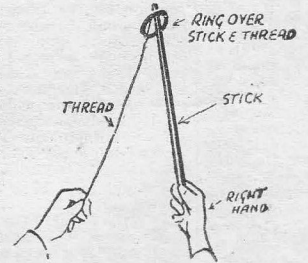
"Now back to the bottom—up a bit—down two inches—up four inches—jump off the top, you little beggar!"

And Archie, eager to show his training, does just what you wish.

There is nothing faked about either the ring or the stick. But in a groove at the top of the stick you must previously tie a length of black thread, and then hold the other end in your left hand, as shown in the sketch.

Thus the ring goes over the thread as well as the stick. So to make it rise, you push the wand farther away from you; whilst to make it descend you bring it nearer.

The left hand holding the cotton can be held quite innocently just by the lapel of your jacket.



MONEY MADE HERE.

Borrow three pennies and place them on the table near the edge. Then ask someone to hold out a hat for you.

Form your left hand in the shape of a cup, press it against the edge of the table, and then, with the fingers of your right hand, separate the coins into the "cup" one at a time.

Next, hold your hand over the hat and let the coins fall separately.

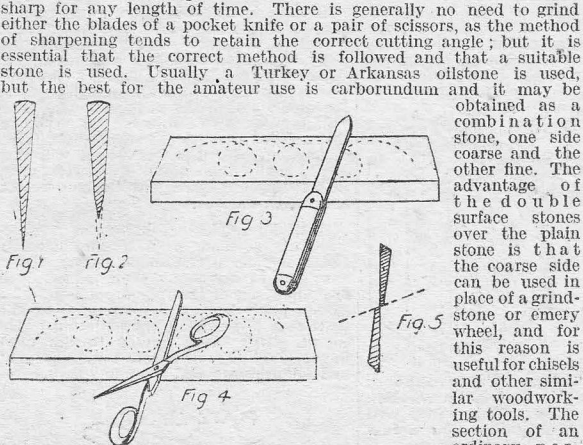
To the astonishment of the audience, four pennies will fall!

What you did before the show, you see, was to stick an extra penny just beneath the edge of the table with a piece of gum, and remove it with your left hand when performing the trick!

ALTHOUGH there are several gadgets obtainable in the shops for sharpening knives and scissors, there is nothing to equal the oilstone for ordinary steel blades. Many table and pocket knives and pairs of scissors are now made of stainless and rustless steel, but this material does not take a keen edge and will not keep sharp for any length of time. There is generally no need to grind either the blades of a pocket knife or a pair of scissors, as the method of sharpening tends to retain the correct cutting angle; but it is essential that the correct method is followed and that a suitable stone is used. Usually a Turkey or Arkansas oilstone is used, but the best for the amateur use is carborundum and it may be obtained as a combination stone, one side coarse and the other fine. The advantage of the double surface stones over the plain stone is that the coarse side can be used in place of a grindstone or emery wheel, and for this reason is useful for chisels and other similar woodworking tools. The section of an ordinary pocket-knife blade is shown at Fig. 1; it will

THE HOME HANDYMAN

HOW TO SHARPEN KNIVES AND SCISSORS!

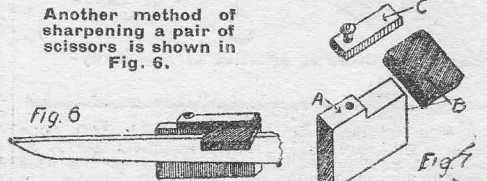


Although there are several gadgets obtainable for sharpening knives and scissors, there is nothing to equal the oilstone for steel blades. Fig. 1; it will

be seen that the section shows a very acute angle, and it is necessary to retain this angle. On examining a blade that has been sharpened several times by an inexperienced amateur, it will be seen that the edge has been provided with a second angle much less acute as at Fig. 2. It will be found that the more obtuse or thicker the angle, the less efficient it will

be. The oilstone should be liberally coated with thin oil and the knife blade laid quite flat as at Fig. 3. The passage of the blade along the stone is indicated by the dotted lines, each side of the blade being moved spirally along the stone in turn and kept flat all the time. If the blade has been previously sharpened in the wrong manner, the surface must be rubbed down on the coarse side of the stone. A final finish is given to the edge by stroking it on a strip of leather slightly moistened with oil. Scissors are sharpened differently, as indicated at Fig. 4, but apart from the position of the blade, the method of rubbing the blade on the stone is the same. The two angles of the blades must meet at every part of the cut, as at Fig. 5, and to ensure this, the blades are bent inwards. The hinge should be tight, but not too tight to move easily. Another method of sharpening scissors is shown at Fig. 6 and consists of rubbing the cutting edges against a short piece of very smooth, flat file. A small brass block, A is filed at the top to take the piece of file B as at Fig. 7, a brass cap, C is fitted on top and secured with a screw, but the angle at the top of the block must be the same as that of the scissors blade. Instead of a set screw as shown, a small bolt can be used, a suitable hole being drilled through the block. In use the scissors blade is held flat against the block and close up to the file.

Another method of sharpening a pair of scissors is shown in Fig. 6.



In use the scissors blade is held flat against the block and close up to the file.

"THE BOUNDER'S LONE HAND!"

(Continued from page 12.)

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Bounder on the Watch!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Who's that?" murmured Bob Cherry sleepily. It was past eleven o'clock, and the Remove dormitory was still and silent.

There had been a great deal of talk on the subject of the mysterious cracksmen who was devoting his attention to the neighbourhood before the juniors went to sleep. Many of the fellows had an idea that Slippery Jim might favour Greyfriars with a visit, and some of the fellows had taken cricket-stumps to the dormitory, to be ready in case of need.

Bob Cherry woke up suddenly when eleven o'clock tolled out. The talk on the subject of the cracksmen was still running in his mind, and he sat up in bed as he heard a movement in the dormitory.

"Who's that?" he repeated, looking round him in the gloom. "Who's out of bed?"

"Don't make a row!" said a whispering voice.

"Smithy?"

"Yes. Dry up!"

Bob Cherry blinked at the Bounder in the dimness. He could make out that Smithy was dressing himself.

"What's the little game?" asked Bob, in wonder. "You're not going out?"

"Yes."

Bob Cherry grunted.

"Not the old game again?" he asked.

"No, you ass!" growled the Bounder.

"I'm going to have a turn in the quad, that's all."

"Well, you must be a blithering ass!" said Bob Cherry.

"Pretty time of night to take a turn in the quad—I don't think!"

"I've got a reason."

"The giddy burglar!" yawned Bob. "Are you going to watch for him?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you must be a thumping ass! Suppose he comes—what are you going to do?"

Bob chuckled. "Are you going to understudy Bunter—stride up to him, and fell him to the earth with one terrific blow, if he'll let you?"

"Oh, rats!"

The Bounder finished dressing, and moved quietly to the door. Bob Cherry yawned, and put his head on the pillow again.

The remote chance that the burglar might come to Greyfriars did not seem to Bob a sufficient cause for remaining awake.

Meanwhile, the Bounder had gone to the lower box-room, and let himself out by the window.

He reached the ground, and hurried round the School House into the big quad.

Lights still glimmered from two or three windows in the great facade of the School House.

Mr. Quelch, Mr. Prout, and the Head were still up. The other windows were dark.

The Bounder settled himself among the elms in the quad, concealed by the thick shadows of the trees, and watched the house.

Mr. Prout's light was soon extinguished, and then Mr. Quelch's. Only the light in the Head's study still glimmered out into the gloom.

At half-past eleven that light was also gone, and the house lay in unbroken blackness.

Quiet and still, the Bounder waited patiently.

There were strange thoughts and suspicions at work in Vernon-Smith's mind. Never had he been more alert than he was when midnight sounded out from the old clock-tower of Greyfriars.

From where he stood he could see the window of the Head's study—a pale glimmer in the dimness of the night.

He watched patiently, tirelessly.

One, two had boomed out dully into the night. All Greyfriars had long been sleeping.

But the Bounder started suddenly, and his eyes gleamed as he heard a soft and stealthy footstep in the silence.

He clenched his hands hard.

Guided by a strange suspicion—a suspicion so strange and almost incredible that he

doubted it himself—he had taken up his watch. But that stealthy step banished doubt from his mind. There was someone in the quadrangle—someone who moved with creeping steps. Who was abroad in the quad at two o'clock in the morning? The blackest of black sheep of the Sixth would not have stayed out till that hour.

The Bounder watched, with glinting eyes. Against the darkness of the house, close to the Head's window, a darker patch of shadow appeared. It was a moving form.

It stopped below the window, and the pale glimmer of the glass was shut off by the interposing figure.

The Bounder's heart beat hard. His hand slid into his pocket, and closed upon a short, heavy life-preserver. He had not come unprepared. Few fellows would have cared to tackle the midnight marauder alone, unaided; but the Bounder's nerves were of steel, and he did not feel the slightest doubt or hesitation. He only waited to make sure.

There was a low scratching sound from the direction of the window.

Vernon-Smith knew what it meant as it reached his straining ears in the stillness. A diamond was cutting at a section of the glass, to enable the intruder to reach the catch within and open the window.

There was no doubt now.

The Bounder left his shelter and tiptoed towards the house. With unflinching determination he approached the dark figure crouched on the broad sill of the study window.

The scratching ceased suddenly.

The crouching man looked round sharply, suspiciously. A glimmer of starlight fell on his face, and the Bounder recognised the sharp features, the big, thick, black beard of the man he had seen the previous night.

It was Slippery Jim!

Cautious as Vernon-Smith had been, the keen ears of the thief had detected some slight sound, and he had taken the alarm.

There was a soft thud as he leaped down from the window-sill.

His glance swept round quickly, suspiciously, into the gloom.

The Bounder was within six feet of him. He threw caution to the winds then, as he saw that the man was alarmed.

"Help!"

His voice rang out with startling clearness through the silence. And as he shouted he leaped forward and hurled himself upon the cracksmen.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Limelight!

"HELP!"

That loud, ringing shout reached many startled ears in the dormitory. In the Remove dormitory Bob Cherry started up in bed.

"Help!"

For a second time the shout rang out from the quadrangle.

"Smithy!" he gasped. "Smithy's yelling for help! Come on, you fellows!"

Bob tore out of the dormitory in his pyjamas. There was a sound of opening doors and a buzz of voices.

In the quadrangle, Vernon-Smith had no time to shout again. He was grappling with the cracksmen and struggling for his life.

With savage strength the cracksmen bore him to the ground, in spite of his furious resistance. In the struggle the black beard had come off and the stouch hat of the ruffian was trampled under foot.

The Bounder crashed to the ground with a concussion that knocked the breath out of his body. The cracksmen dragged himself away from Vernon-Smith's relaxing hands, and leaped, panting, to his feet.

As the Bounder gasped on the ground, the cracksmen fled across the quadrangle to the wall.

Vernon-Smith raised himself on his knees, the life-preserver still in his hand. With a steady hand, panting as he was, he hurled it.

There was a yell of pain from the fleeing man, and he reeled for a moment. The missile had found its billet, and it crashed to the ground as the running man staggered. But the rascal ran on, and as Vernon-Smith scrambled up he heard him at the school wall. He had reached the little gate set in the thick wall at a short distance from the big bronze gates of the school. But he paused there only a moment, and then

ran along the wall and climbed it with desperate haste.

Vernon-Smith, guided by the sound, rushed after him, in time to hear him drop into the road.

He turned back with angry disappointment.

Slippery Jim had justified his name once more. He was gone. For a moment the junior heard the rapid patter of footsteps on the hard road outside, and then there was silence.

The big door of the School House had swung open. Wingate of the Sixth, half-dressed, was in the quadrangle, and after him came Bob Cherry, the Head, and Mr. Quelch, the latter carrying a lamp.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Was it you who called, Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"What—why—"

"It was the burglar, sir!"

The Head looked at him very sharply.

"What do you mean? Where is he?"

"He's gone, sir! I found him in the quad, trying to get in at your window," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "I went for him—"

"This is most extraordinary, Vernon-Smith! What were you doing out of your dormitory at such an hour?"

"I was keeping watch, sir."

"Bless my soul! How dare you do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "Probably you have been frightened by a shadow. There is no sign of a burglar here!"

"Look at this, sir," said Bob Cherry.

He picked up the thick black beard from the ground.

"And this!" said Harry Wharton. It was the slouched hat the cracksmen had worn.

"Somebody has been here, sir."

"Looks like it, sir," said Wingate.

All eyes were turned on Vernon-Smith in the quadrangle now.

The Bounder set his lips hard. He had failed in his self-imposed task, and now he had to face the music.

Dr. Locke frowned.

"You should have done nothing of the sort, Vernon-Smith. You have very probably interfered seriously with the arrangements made by the police."

The Bounder bit his lip.

Had the cracksmen been captured, the Bounder would certainly have been the cynosure of all eyes, and his cool proceeding in taking the task upon himself would have been excused. But the cracksmen had not been captured, and the master was not at all convinced that the cracksmen had been there at all.

"Dr. Locke! I—I—" he began.

"Enough! You have done serious wrong in leaving your dormitory and exposing yourself to danger, Vernon-Smith, even if your story is true. You will go back to bed at once, and if you leave the house at night on any future occasion I shall punish you severely—most severely. If, indeed, the burglar was here, you have probably prevented his capture by your foolish interference. In every way you have done harm by your reckless and impertinent action. My boys, go back to bed. I am sorry you have been disturbed owing to this reckless lad."

The Bounder, with feelings too deep for words, strode into the house. The fellows made their way back to the dormitories, excitedly discussing the strange happening.

Mr. Quelch carefully locked and chained the door before returning to bed. And in Greyfriars the general opinion was that Vernon-Smith of the Remove had played the "giddy ox" for the sake of getting into the limelight and that the cracksmen had never been near the school at all.

After breakfast in the morning Vernon-Smith was called into Mr. Quelch's study.

The Remove-master questioned him closely as to the happenings of the previous night, and he seemed somewhat impressed by the Bounder's statements.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Vernon-Smith," said Mr. Quelch, at last.

"You must see for yourself that you have acted in a most reprehensible manner. Certain precautions have been taken to guard the valuables here, and to effect the capture of the burglar if he should pay us a visit. It is very likely that your

THE POPULAR.—No. 113.

interference has had the most unfortunate results."

"May I ask one question, sir?" said the Bounder. "Is it Inspector Flick who is taking the precautions you speak of?"

Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows. "I do not see how you know anything about Inspector Flick, Vernon-Smith. However, I may tell you that the whole matter is in his hands. I trust you will see that help from a junior in the Lower Fourth is not required. I must ask you, Vernon-Smith, to give me your promise not to leave the house again at night. I am willing to credit you with disinterested motives, but you have done nothing but harm, and, in any case, your conduct was outrageously impertinent."

"I promise, sir," said the Bounder submissively.

"Very well. I shall now let the matter drop. You may go."

The Bounder went. "I've promised not to go out of the House at night again burglar-hunting," he told Wharton, who asked him the result of the interview.

"That's good enough," said Harry. "Better leave it alone."

"But I haven't promised not to leave the dormitory," said the Bounder coolly.

And he walked away without further explanation. Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders. Vernon-Smith was obstinate, and intended to have his own way; and he would not escape so cheaply next time. But it was of no use arguing with the Bounder when his mind was made up.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Catching the Cracksmen!

HARRY WHARTON remained awake for some time after the rest of the Remove had fallen asleep that night. The captain of the Remove was uneasy in his mind.

He knew that Vernon-Smith had not abandoned his scheme of going for the mysterious cracksmen, and he was uneasy on the Bounder's account.

Wharton was still awake when twelve o'clock sounded dully through the night.

Then he heard a slight movement in the dormitory. He sat up in bed, peering through the gloom.

"Is that you, Smitty?" he whispered.

"Yes. Quiet!"

"You're going out?"

"Only downstairs," said the Bounder

calmly. "I've promised not to go out of the House, and you know I keep my word."

"Quelch would be just as ratty at your going out of the dorm," said Harry. "I wish you'd chuck up the idea, Smitty. It means an awful row if you're found out."

"I'm chancing that."

Vernon-Smith had been dressing while the whispered talk went on. He did not put on his boots, however. In his socks he crept quietly to the door, and opened it almost without a sound.

Wharton impatiently laid his head on the pillow again. Vernon-Smith closed the door and stepped cautiously and quietly down the passage.

At that hour all Greyfriars was sleeping. He descended the stairs without a sound, and crept along the wide corridor upon which the Head's study opened.

All was darkness.

The windows were all covered with thick, dark hangings, and not a gleam of starlight penetrated. The Bounder groped his way along, and stopped at the door of the study. Silently he turned the handle, after a pause to make sure that the study was dark and untenanted.

Blackness reigned within the room. Even the iron-nerved Bounder's heart beat a little faster as he entered that sacred apartment. But he did not falter. He closed the door quietly behind him, and stood for some minutes motionless in the darkness, peering about him.

Vernon-Smith groped in his pocket. He drew out a thick, strong cord, the end of which was fashioned in a slip-noose.

Then he flattened himself against the wall close to the side of the window, with the hangings concealing him. There he waited, with the looped cord in his hand, his eyes gleaming in the dark, and his heart beating fast.

It was not a pleasant vigil.

The minutes passed slowly on leaden wings, and it seemed an age before he heard the dull stroke of one from the clock-tower.

One o'clock. The house was deeply silent and still. In all the vast building only the Bounder of Greyfriars was awake—watchful as a cat in the dark.

Was the man coming?

Through the failure and the alarm of the previous night, had he, perhaps, taken the alarm, and put off his intended visit to the school?

Two o'clock!

The Bounder was tired, and his eyes grew heavy, but he did not relax his vigilance. There were pins and needles in his cramped

limbs as he stood motionless between the dark hangings and the wall, beside the window. But he bore his discomfort with grim determination.

A sudden shadow darkened the glimmer of the starlight on the panes.

The Bounder drew a quick, silent breath, a thrill running through him from head to foot.

Outside the glass a figure, crouching on the broad window-sill, was silhouetted against the starlight.

The Bounder did not move, he did not utter a sound. The slightest sound would have alarmed the man without.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

Faintly in the silence of the night the sound came in to the straining ears of the hidden junior.

It was the scratch of a diamond on the glass.

Faint, but steady, unceasing, the diamond cut its way through the thick glass. Not a tremor did the Bounder feel now, though every moment the desperate cracksmen was nearer to his entrance—every fleeting second brought the crisis closer.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, scratch!

The scratching sound suddenly ceased. Silence fell, and then there was a movement without.

A section of the glass had been removed, close to the fastening of the sash. A few moments more, and the fastening would be pushed back, the window opened, and the cracksmen would be within the room!

The Bounder watched tensely.

A hand came through the opening—a strong, sinewy hand, groping for the catch.

Then the Bounder moved.

With the quickness of a flash he snatched at the hand, and grasped it, dragging it farther through the opening.

There was a startled, stifled cry without.

The Bounder's other hand closed on the wrist, dragging it down. Outside, the man was struggling madly to withdraw his hand.

But it was dragged down over the sash ruthlessly, with such force as almost to break the wrist. And a second later the slip-noose was slipped over the hand to the wrist and drawn tight. Then, with both hands the Bounder grasped the cord and dragged on it hard, and the whole arm of the trapped cracksmen came crashing through the shattered glass.

Vernon-Smith pushed through the hangings, still dragging with all his force upon the cord, and he took a turn of the cord round the handle of the door as he dragged it open, and knotted it there with steady fingers.

Then he stepped into the passage.

"Help!"

His voice rang through the startled House.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Caught!

"**H**ELP!"

In every corner of the building rang the Bounder's cry.

Outside, on the broad sill, the imprisoned cracksmen was struggling furiously. His arm was drawn through the window, held at length by the taut cord, and he was a helpless prisoner. Savage curses came from his lips. There was a loud crash of breaking glass as his left hand smashed through a pane in a frantic endeavour to reach his right and release it from the thrall.

But the Bounder had leaped back to the window.

As the left hand clutched at the imprisoned right, Vernon-Smith grasped at it by the wrist, and he held on to it with both hands, dragging it down.

Through the smashed pane a furious, black-bearded face glared at him with eyes that seemed to burn with rage.

The Bounder held on grimly.

"Help!" he shouted again.

There was a clattering of footsteps in the silent house—a buzz of voices. A light gleamed in the passage without—the electric light had been turned on.

Mr. Quelch, in his dressing-gown and slippers, with an angry face, strode into the study.

"Vernon-Smith! Is that you again? How dare you! Why—what—"

The Remove master almost staggered.

He had switched on the light in the study as he entered.

The sudden illumination revealed a startling sight.

Free! **MAGNIFICENT**
PHOTOGRAVURE PLATE
of **H.M.S. EREBUS**
MONITOR.
GIVEN AWAY
WITH THIS WEEK'S
Magnet Library



"What—what—" stammered Mr. Quelch. "I've got him, sir!"
 "Bless my soul!"
 "It's the crackman, sir," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "He can't get away. I've got him. But somebody had better go round—"

"Good heavens!" stammered Mr. Quelch. Wingate and Gwynne and Loder of the Sixth hurried into the study with pokers in their hands, followed by Harry Wharton and Co. They gasped at the strange sight at the window.

"Well, by Jove!" ejaculated Wingate. "Vernon-Smith—"

"A burglar!" exclaimed Loder. Mr. Quelch recovered himself. "Follow me!" he exclaimed. "The man must be secured at once. Undoubtedly it is the burglar! Follow me!"

Mr. Quelch hurried out of the study, followed by the three Sixth-Formers, Mr. Prout and Mr. Capper joined them in the passage, and Coker and Blundell of the Fifth. Mr. Quelch hurriedly unfastened the door, and the whole party rushed out into the quadrangle.

Mr. Quelch and his companions gathered round the window. The escape of the crackman was cut off now, even if he had been able to get loose from the cord in the study.

"We've got him, sir!" said Wingate cheerily. "Now, my man, the game's up! Better take it quietly!"

"Secure him!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Let me bind his hands first, sir," said the Bounder, through the window. "He's most likely got a revolver in his pocket."
 "Quite so—quite so!"

"Hold on to his paws, you fellows!"
 "We've got him," said Wharton.
 "The holdfulness is terrific, my ludicrous Smithy," assured Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "He cannot get awayfully unless he leaves an esteemed arm here behindfully."

The Bounder dragged a whipcord from his pocket, and coolly slipped it round the wrists of the crackman. With a hard and steady hand he drew it tight and knotted it.

Slippery Jim was a helpless prisoner now. Then the Bounder cast off the cord that held the ruffian to the study door. Outside, Wingate and Gwynne and Loder grasped him, and hauled him down off the window-sill, with a bump, to the ground.

"Bring him into the house!" said Mr. Quelch.

The crackman was struggling. But with the grip of the three big Sixth-Formers on him, and his hands tightly bound, his struggles were of no avail. He was marched into the house, and the three prefects brought him into the Head's study, followed by Mr. Quelch. The Head had now arrived on the scene, in a state of great agitation. He stared at the sullen, savage-faced ruffian, and at the captors, and at the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"That—that—that is the burglar!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "He is captured, owing to Vernon-Smith. It was Vernon-Smith who gave the alarm."

"Indeed! What were you doing out of your dormitory, Vernon-Smith?"

"I was waiting for him to come, sir. When he put his hand through the glass to open the catch, I slipped a slip-knot over it, and held him. Otherwise he would have got away."

"Really, Vernon-Smith, you are an extraordinary boy!" exclaimed the Head. "You have once again been guilty of recklessness and disobedience, but in the circumstances I do not see how I can punish you. You have certainly acted with great courage. This rascal must be handed over to Inspector Flick at once. Wingate, perhaps you will be kind enough to seek him. He is somewhere about the school, keeping watch—"

The Bounder burst into a laugh.

"Vernon-Smith!" said the Head sternly. "Wingate won't be able to find Inspector Flick, sir," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "No good looking for him!"

"Wha-at?"
 "Look!"

Vernon-Smith stepped to the crackman and caught the thick black beard with his hand. It came off in his grasp, revealing a hard, clear-cut, clean-shaven face.

The Head uttered a cry of amazement. "Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. Bob Cherry gave a yell.

"Inspector Flick! Oh, my only aunt!"
 "Inspector Flick!" murmured the Head dazedly. "What—what—"

"He is no more Inspector Flick than I am Inspector Grimes," said Vernon-Smith coolly.

"He is Slippery Jim, the crackman. He came here in a police-inspector's uniform to get information about the crib he was going to crack!"

"Good heavens!"
 "I know his face," continued the Bounder, enjoying the sensation he had caused. "It was the same face I saw over the wall at Friardale Park on Monday night, but without the beard. He came here in an inspector's uniform, with a Scotland Yard inspector's card. But I knew him!"

"This is—is—is astounding!" gasped the Head. "I—I suppose it—is as you say, Vernon-Smith! Certainly I should not have believed you if you had told me that you recognised the—the inspector as—as a burglar! Really, it is very astounding! Even now I can scarcely credit such effrontery!"

"You are an extraordinary boy, Vernon-Smith! It appears that you have saved me from a very serious loss. The house is not, as I supposed, under the observation of the police. Bless my soul! I even gave that wretched man a key to the side gate!" exclaimed the Head, in agitated tones. "And—and actually pointed out the safe to him, and—and gave him a list of the valuables! Bless my soul!"

"It is very fortunate, after all, that Vernon-Smith intervened in the matter," said Mr. Quelch, with a kindly glance at the Bounder.

"Yes, yes, undoubtedly!"
 "This rascal had, in fact, cleared the ground of any possible danger to himself by coming here as a detective, and being allowed to make what arrangements he pleased," said the Remove master.

"That was his object, of course, sir," said

the Bounder. "I shouldn't wonder if he's played the same game in other places!"

The sullen crackman had not spoken a word, but his look as it dwelt on Herbert Vernon-Smith showed what his feelings were. "Mr. Quelch, will you see that man placed in security while I telephone to the police-station?" said the Head.

"Certainly, sir!"
 "My boys, you may go back to bed, Vernon-Smith, you have done very well indeed, and saved me from a serious loss. I excuse you for having taken the matter into your own hands, and I thank you! You may return to your dormitory!"
 "Yes, sir."

The Bounder walked out of the study in great spirits. He had been justified at last, and it was the hour of his triumph. Bob Cherry clapped him on the back in the passage.

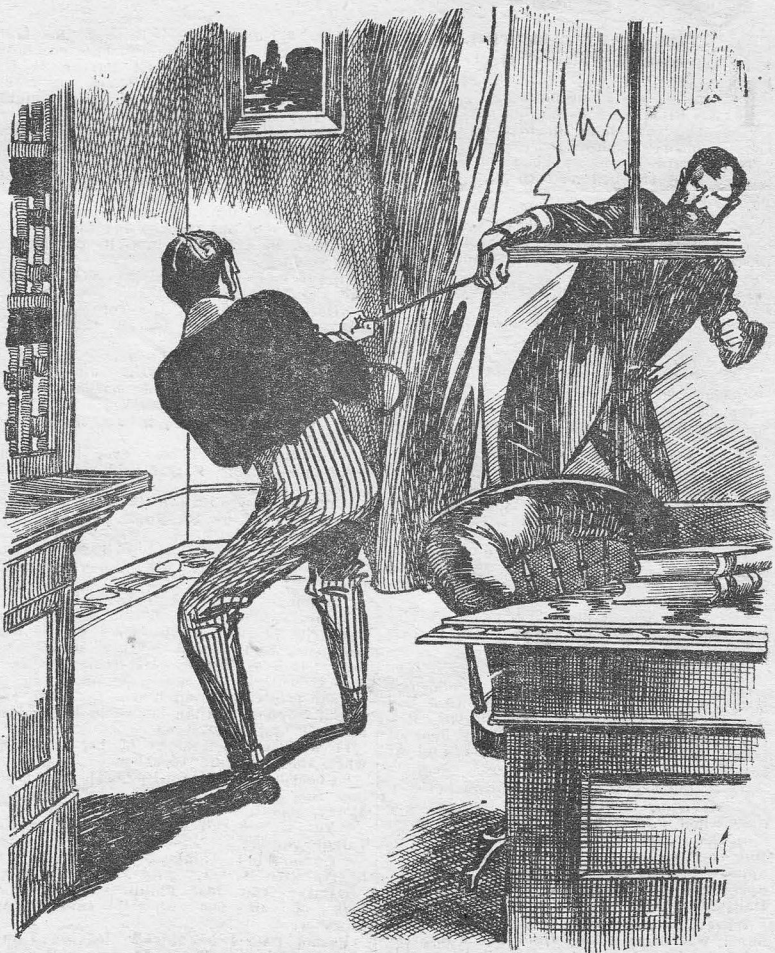
"Good old Smithy!" he exclaimed. "Here, shoulder-high, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "Oh, don't play the giddy ox!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Bow-wow! Shoulder-high!"
 The grinning juniors closed round the Bounder of Greyfriars, and he was hoisted into the air. On the shoulders of Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Squiff he was borne up the staircase and back to the Remove dormitory, the hero of the hour.

THE END.

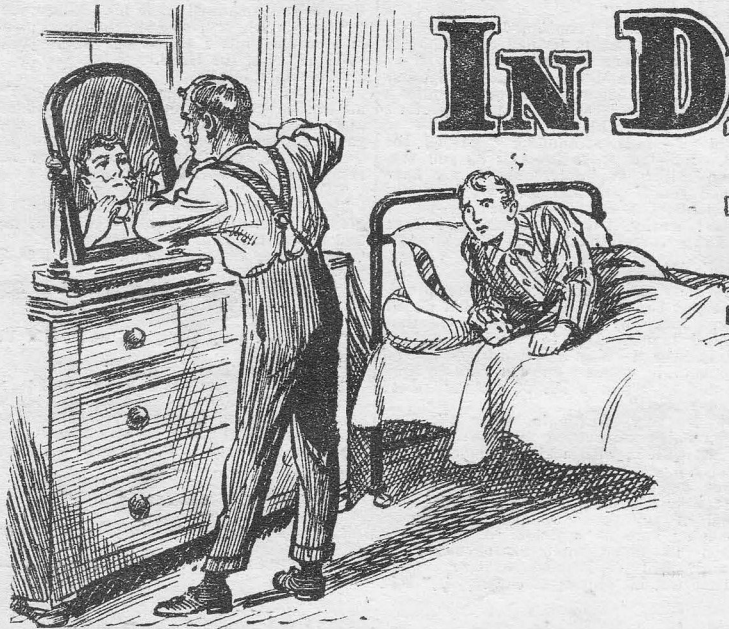
(There will be another long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, entitled: "Chums Divided!" in next week's issue.)



THE BOUNDER'S CATCH! The Bounder's hand closed on the wrist of the man, dragging it down. And a second later the slip-noose was slipped over the wrist and drawn tight. Then with both hands Vernon-Smith grasped the cord and dragged on it hard, and the whole arm of the crackman came crashing through the window. (See Chapter 6.)

WHO IS PARKER?

Tom Merry & Co. have come to regard Parker, the strange new boy, with favourable eyes. In spite of the fact that he carries about him an air of secrecy, he is quite a decent fellow!



IN DEADLY PERIL!

A Splendid Long Complete Story of TOM MERRY & Co., the cheery chums of St. Jim's, introducing a new character, Parker the mysterious.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

(Author of the famous stories of St. Jim's now appearing in the "GEM" every Wednesday.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mellish Tries it On!

TALBOT, of the Shell of St. Jim's, awoke early one morning. Birds were twittering outside, and the sun shone in brightly through the dormitory windows.

Talbot turned over on his right side, and noticed that the bed next to him that way was empty.

It had been empty since the beginning of term—until last night. But Parker, a new boy, who had arrived at the school the previous day, had slept in it then. Where was Parker now?

Talbot sat up and saw the answer to his own unspoken question.

Parker stood in front of a looking-glass, and he was shaving!

And Parker needed it! The reflection of his chin in the glass showed it quite bristly.

He was working away industriously with a safety razor, taking the most minute care.

There were other fellows at St. Jim's who needed the services of a razor at times. But they hardly needed those services daily, and this fellow evidently did. Moreover, they did not sleep in the Shell dormitory, as Parker did.

Kerr had already ventured on the guess that Parker was considerably more than fifteen. Talbot felt sure that the truth was beyond that.

The fellow was a man, not a boy at all! But why had he come to St. Jim's in this masquerade?

That was a complete puzzle.

One fellow at St. Jim's had found out about this strange new boy, and that boy was Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth. Mellish managed to find out a great deal of things about other people by listening at keyholes and round corners.

He had overheard a conversation between two strangers in the village the previous day, when Parker had come to the school, and these men were talking about Parker. But they called him Parker-Roberts, which appeared to be his real name. And he was a reporter of the famous newspaper, "The Daily Messenger."

What Parker-Roberts, to give him his real name, was doing at St. Jim's was a mystery even to Mellish. He had only been able to discover the new boy's name and identity, but as to his strange intentions he could not think or find out what they could be.

Mellish wished he could speak to the two men in the village, who seemed to know a great deal about Parker. He knew their names as Rusty and Smiler, but, apart from

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

that, he did not know where they came from and why they were watching the new boy.

Now as Talbot watched Parker at the mirror, he felt sure that there was something big behind the mystery. His thoughts went very near the truth.

"Well, after all, it's no affair of mine, and I don't believe there's any harm in the chap," Talbot told himself.

Yet he could not help feeling vaguely uneasy.

He waited until Parker had finished operations and put the shaving tackle away, and then he stretched himself and gave a loud yawn.

Parker looked round with something very like a guilty start.

"Hallo!" he said. "It's Talbot, I see. I suppose you are, like me, in the habit of waking early?"

"Yes, I'm often awake before the rest," said Talbot. "Feeling stiff and sore this morning—eh? Grundy does barge rather."

The latter part of the remark was in reference to the footer practice match the previous day.

"I don't think I was ever stiffer and sorer in my life!" Parker said, with evident feeling.

"Would you care to be shown round? You didn't see all St. Jim's yesterday, you know."

"I should be greatly obliged to you. Talbot—that is, if it's not too much trouble."

"Oh, none at all! I shall like it."

There was no other fellow in the Shell, with the possible exception of the learned Skimpole, who was as mature in his ways and speech as Talbot. His early life, half-forgotten as it was now, had made him so. Parker probably found him a far more congenial companion than he would have found most of his class-fellows.

It was still well short of breakfast-time when they came in together.

"Cheer-ho, Talbot! Up with the giddy lark this morning, weren't you?" said Tom Merry, meeting them.

"Yes, if you call Parker a lark," replied Talbot, smiling.

"I shouldn't think of taking such a liberty with Parker," said Tom.

"Rats! Our dear Philip is the greatest lark of all the ages!" said Monty Lowther.

Parker passed on quickly, leaving Talbot with the Terrible Three. A dose of Lowther before breakfast was really more than Parker felt equal to.

Someone stopped him—a fellow he did not know. It was Mellish, whose compulsory footer on the previous afternoon had been put in with a lower grade of players than that in which Parker had been tried.

"I say, I want to speak to you, you know," said Mellish nervously.

Mellish had taken counsel with Croke. Croke had agreed with Mellish that it was a great pity that they had not the wily Levison to aid them. Racker was best out of it, Croke said. He was not likely to help in such a scheme, having plenty of money without practising blackmail. And, on the whole, Croke thought Mellish had better open the ball himself. He—Croke—would come in later.

The very mention of blackmail had made Mellish feel nervous, though he was under no delusion as to what his scheme really meant.

But Percy Mellish was very hard-up, and just a little bit vain of having thought out a scheme all on his own. And Parker's appearance was not by any means terrifying. So Mellish had nerved himself to the playing of a lone hand.

"I haven't the—er—pleasure of knowing you, and I happen to be rather pressed for time just now," said Parker. "If you have any business with me—which would seem rather unlikely, I should suggest that it will not spoil by keeping until later."

That nettled Mellish. "Oh, you think so, do you—Mr. Parker-Roberts?" he said.

The face of Parker went red, and the eyes of Parker had a glint in them which made Mellish feel decidedly uncomfortable. What a rotter Croke had been to shirk his share! That was Mellish's first thought.

He had never been used to putting through things on his own, and it is not easy for the jackal to play a lion-like part.

But it seemed to Mellish that he had the whip-hand, for if Parker "turned nasty" he could tell what he knew. He would not tell how he had come to know it, of course.

"That's your right name, I believe?" he said, with all the boldness he could muster.

Now, Parker had a mission at St. Jim's, and he did not intend to allow it to be cut short by a rat like this. He saw that he would need to parley with the rat—to buy him off, probably. Parker did not like the notion but, whatever his age might be, he was at least old enough to know that one cannot always do as one likes.

"You seem to be labouring under some absurd delusion," he said. "It had better be discussed in private, if there is any necessity to discuss it at all."

Mellish felt that the first hit was his, and waxed bolder.

"Come along to my study," he said. "We can talk all right there."

It was Parker who closed the door and locked it carefully; and Mellish did not fancy that. It seemed like taking the direction of affairs too much out of his hands.

Nor was he made to feel easier in mind when Parker took a seat upon the table and swung one leg in a careless way.

Mellish felt younger than usual, and more innocent than he had any right to be feeling, considering that blackmail was his game.

"Now, in the first place, I may as well know to whom I'm talking," said Parker coolly.

"My name's Mellish. I'm in the Fourth." "Oh! Not in the Shell?"

"No. Everybody ain't in the Shell." "I am inclined to regard that as rather a good thing, on the whole," said Parker. "I really don't think you would improve the tone of the Shell."

"Look here, you needn't come that sort of superior talk with me!" snarled Mellish. "I suppose that you think, because you're a man and I'm only a boy, you can bounce me. But you can't."

"Think not, Mellish?" said Parker, very coolly, very quietly, but in a way that made Mellish very uneasy. "That's one of your little mistakes!"

"Oh, I dare say you can lick me, if it comes to that," said Mellish unpleasantly. "But that will hardly suit your book. You're twice my age, and you ought to be able to lick me. But that ain't the point, you know."

"You are a very well-grown eight, I must say," said Parker coolly. He did not—as Mellish noted—say that he was no more than sixteen. He only implied it.

"Eight—and the rest!" sneered Mellish. "And what, precisely, is the point?" asked the queer new fellow.

"What's the silly use of pretending you're a boy? You don't talk like a boy or behave like one."

"My objectionable young idiot, do you not realise that there is more than one type of boy?" rapped out Parker.

"I dare say there may be," said Mellish sullenly. "But you ain't any of them!"

And Parker may have realised that these words were true, though spoken by one who did not deal in truth as a staple commodity. Mellish grew bolder.

"You can wangle your explanations to take in chaps like Tom Merry and that donkey of a D'Arcy, I dare say," he went on. "But I'm not their sort."

"Most certainly you are not! Anything more widely different I should find it hard to imagine."

"That's meant for an insult, Mr. Parker-Roberts, of the 'Daily Messenger'; and I'm not going to be insulted by you!"

Mellish had shown his full hand now, and felt rather afraid when he thought of his own boldness.

But it was plain to him that the shaft had gone home.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Blackmail!

JUST for a moment Parker's jaw dropped, and his face paled.

He was not quite sure what he had expected, but he knew that it had not been exactly this. The rat knew more than he had imagined.

"And where, may I ask, did you find this particular mare's-nest?" he said.

"Never mind where I found it!" cried Mellish exultingly. "I know it's the straight griffin—direct from the horse's mouth. You can't take me in, not if you lie till you are black in the face!"

"I have no taste for your favourite amusements," replied Parker dryly. "The gentleman to whom you refer is a member of the staff of the 'Daily Messenger.' That fact I do not seek to contradict. But the further fact of his having a younger brother—"

"Oh, you can't bluff me like that! I know better," said Mellish.

But he did not feel quite as sure as he had felt. Suppose those two roughs had made a mistake?

No, it wasn't good enough. This fellow was no boy, and no one to whom he had talked as he had talked to Mellish would believe him one.

"Rats!" said Mellish boldly, before the other had had time to speak again.

"The precise meaning of 'rats' being—"

"Walker about your younger brother! You're yourself, and nobody else!"

"A position I share with the rest of humanity," replied Parker, looking older and speaking more dryly than ever. "You are an exception at this moment, Mellish, I think. For you aren't naturally bold, and

in tackling me thus you are scarcely your real self. But that is of little consequence. You are not a subject of sufficient interest to be worth prolonged discussion, are you?"

"I'm not a swindler, anyway!" snarled Mellish. "I'm not here under a beastly false name! Everybody knows all about me."

"Which makes me wonder why you are still here. But I do not think that the school in general knows quite all about you. Even as much as it knows probably does not conduce towards your personal popularity."

The sarcasm went home Mellish writhed. He was not scoring. Crooke would laugh at him, and tell him that he was an ass to attempt playing a lone hand that would have required all Ernest Levison's skill.

Parker was to have been taken in and fleeced. Well, Levison might perhaps have been able to fleece him. Mellish felt that he was not getting on very fast with that delicate operation.

"Well, Mellish, what are you going to do about it?"

Mellish took heart from something he thought he read upon Parker's face.

"I don't know that I want to show you up," he said. "That wouldn't do me any particular good. Of course, you haven't come here for any real harm."

"How do you know that, Mellish?"

"Oh, it stands to reason! Why should you?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Well, I shouldn't say you're that sort of chap."

"I don't think I am that sort of chap, Mellish. On the whole, I have always regarded myself as tolerably decent. But as far as my coming here is concerned, you really seem to afford a certain amount of justification for it. I hadn't expected to meet anything quite as low as you at a public school. Bullying, I was prepared for, and I understand that there is some of what is, I believe, called 'pub-hunting.'"

He paused. Mellish felt his flesh creep. This was an uncanny chap. How came he to know anything about the Green Man?

Levison's more acute brain might have deduced the true object of Parker's coming to St. Jim's, from that speech. Mellish never even guessed at it.

"But I really had not anticipated finding a blackmailer at St. Jim's!"

"Who's a blackmailer?" spluttered Mellish, in weak wrath. "Did I say anything about making you pay blackmail?"

"Not in so many words—admitted."

"Well, then?"

"But that isn't the blackmailer's usual way. I have seen something of the mood, and I know."

"That's no concern of mine! It doesn't matter to me what beastly rotters you've got mixed up with!"

"Softly, softly, Mellish! You go too fast. Now, I should incline to label you as rather a promising specimen of the blackmailing genus. What but blackmail could you have meant by saying that it would be of no benefit to you to expose me?"

"I only meant—"

"That you would refrain from exposing me if I made it worth your while? But what is the inevitable inference, from that, my young criminal, eh?"

Parker caught Mellish by the shoulder, and scanned his face with keen, hard eyes.

"I—I— Look here, you know, it would be much better for both of us to be friendly!" bleated Mellish. "I'm beastly hard-up, and—and that makes a chap do things he's not very keen on. I don't ask you to pay me anything, really. Lend me a quid for a few weeks; that will do me. And I give you my word of honour that I won't let out a thing about you!"

"I like not the security," said Parker. "But I don't want this absurd story of yours to get wind, for reasons that are no concern of yours. You shall have a sovereign, though not as a loan, and only on conditions."

Mellish felt immensely relieved, and began to imagine himself a born diplomatist.

"Sit down. Take pen and paper. Write as I dictate," ordered Parker; and there was a snap in every word.

Mellish did as bidden.

"What is your Christian name?"

"Percy."

"Ah! A good old name of the brave old days descended to base uses! This is what you are to write: 'I, Percy Mellish, do

hereby acknowledge the receipt from Philip Ignatius Parker of the some of £1 sterling, paid me in order that I shall not disclose his supposed identity—"

"With Mr. Parker-Roberts, of the 'Daily Messenger,'" shall I put?" asked Mellish, putting his tongue in the cheek farthest from Parker. Mellish was feeling much bolder now.

"With nobody. Put a full stop, you young sweep!"

"After 'nobody'?" Mellish inquired. He was under the gross delusion that he could afford to trifle with Parker.

Ernest Levison would have known better than that, for he would have discerned the pitfall in that paper.

But Mellish was soon to understand.

"I shall not put up with another word of your impudence!" rapped out Parker. "Sign, date, and blot. Here is your sovereign."

A pound-note passed from hand to hand. The feel of it was very grateful and comforting to Mellish. But not so were the words from Parker which followed.

The queer new fellow put the paper carefully in his pocket.

"Now, Mellish," he said deliberately, "I suppose you realise the fact that you are quite at my mercy?"

"By gum, though, I don't see that!" said Mellish, in dismay. "I—I— It seems to me that you are at mine, come to that."

"Does it? That shows only the limitations of your intelligence. I am doing nothing illegal here. Discovery for me could mean no more than some slight unpleasantness, of no real moment."

"Well, what have I done? Borrowed a quid from you, that's all!"

Parker tapped his breast-pocket.

"I have only to show this paper to Mr. Railton or the Head, and your hours at the school would be numbered," he said. "It is a confession that you have practised blackmail!"

"I—I— Here, you give me that paper back, and take your beastly money!" burred Mellish, licking lips gone suddenly dry.

"Certainly not. Until my mission here is completed this will hang over your head, so it behoves you to be on your best behaviour. And, by the way, I can see no reason why we should know each other. In future you will be good enough not to address me unless I speak to you first!"

Parker of the Shell—who was also P. I. Parker-Roberts, of the 'Daily Messenger'—unlocked the door and went out, just as the bell for breakfast clanged along the passages.

Mellish groaned. He had intended to do a stroke of work before breakfast, and he had done it; but he did not feel too well satisfied with it now that it was done.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Parker's Peril!

"THERE 'e is!" hissed Smiler, in the ear of Rusty.

"All right, cocky! I s'pose I know Parker-Roberts when I see 'im without you blowin' a blessed 'urricane down my ear-hole!" growled the amiable Rusty.

"'Wot are you goin' to do? That's the question."

"I'm goin' to 'ave another pint," answered Rusty, with the air of having disposed of the question in a manner that could not fail to prove satisfactory to the questioner.

These two worthies had taken up their quarters in the village at the cottage of an aged widow whom Rylcombe knew as Mother Gamm.

They did not trouble Mother Gamm much at such times as the Green Man was open. And when that respectable establishment had closed its doors they still hung about on the watch.

But up till now their watching had been in vain.

Parker had come down to the village to get a pair of footer-boots. Those he had found in his trunk—packed with the rest of the things by a firm of outfitters, to whom a general order had been given—did not fit him comfortably. And Parker, though he was surprised at himself that such should be the case, had taken quite keenly to footer.

"Look 'ere, we can't afford to let this

chaust slip!" said Smiler in Rusty's ear. "He's middin' sure to go back through the wood—it's a short cut to the school, you know. Wot we've got to do is to lay wait for 'em. I've got the black masks in my pocket."

Parker was still in the boot-shop when the two, after a hasty drink, hurried out of the Green Man, and took the road to the wood.

Outside a grocer's shop stood three bicycles. Inside could be seen three juniors.—The Terrible Three.

"Some more of 'em," said Smiler doubtfully. In times of action Rusty became the senior partner of this firm, for Smiler was not so bold, as cunning. "But they'll be goin' back by the road, as they've got their bikes."

"Come on!" growled Rusty. "I never didn't see such a slow chap as you in all my puff! Don't 'ang back now, or it's me wot will 'ave a tale to tell the Big Boss!"

They hurried off in the direction of Rylcombe Wood.

The Terrible Three were buying pepper. Their order rather surprised the grocer, never before had he seen three boys with such a big appetite for pepper. They were buying enough for all St. Jim's.

But it was not for all St. Jim's that they bought it.

It was for the benefit of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and those who were supporting him in a certain project.

Two Grammar School boys came strolling up the street—Carboy and Gustave Blanc, more generally known as Mont Blanc.

They saw Parker at the bootmaker's. Carboy's eyes glistened.

"That's the bounder we pumped on," he said—"the chap that kicked Gordon Gay in the ribs!"

"Zit was an accident," replied Mont Blanc.

"Yes; but what we're going to do to him wot'll be, poodle. I vote we wait and interview him. He seems to be all on his lonesome."

"Non, I zink not. I zink he is not all by himself alone. Zee, zee, are bikes by ze door of ze—ze epicier's—how you call 'et?—ze grocaire's, ees eet not?"

"Half a jill! Let's scout!" said Carboy.

He peeped in at the door of the grocer's shop. The next second he was busy with the machines left outside.

He did not use a pin. That would have been a low trick, as he told the grinning Mont Blanc.

He whipped off the cap of an inflating-valve, pulled out the plunger, and removed from it the little sheath of rubber. Three times he did this, and three back wheels were rendered as flat as pancakes, and, moreover, quite incapable of being pumped up until the loss of the rubbers was discovered.

Then he and Mont Blanc hurried across the street into the safe shelter of the post-office.

There Carboy opened his hand. The French boy grinned, but Carboy looked quite serious.

"We're poor, but honest," he said. "I can't keep these, of course. Get a registered envelope, Mont Blanc."

"Here zey come! Now ze fun begins! Tom Merry is vair' mooch surprise; an' Lowthair, he ees not at all please; an' Mannairs, he eez ze most agranoyed of zem all! Zey look oop ze street, an' zey look down ze street—"

"Duck your napper, you silly chump, or they'll be looking across the street and spotting us! No; they're going into the repairer's!"

Mont Blanc rubbed his hands gleefully. "Now, you bear witness, poodle!" said Carboy impressively. "These things don't belong to me, do they?"

He showed the three little pieces of rubber tubing in his hand.

"Non! Zey belong to Tom Merry & Co.!" grinned the French junior.

"Well, I'm honest, I am. It wouldn't be at all the straight thing for me to keep them, nor yet to chuck them away," said the virtuous Carboy. "I'm going to send them on to their proper owners, circumstances not allowing of their being returned at this moment. And, to make sure that they get them, I shall put them in this registered envelope—see? Got a scrap of paper? We may as well send our compliments with them. Nothing like being really polite!"

Mont Blanc ducked his head. The Terrible Three POPULAR.—No. 313.

Three had come out of the repairer's shop rather disgruntled. The repairer had discovered what was wrong, and his knowing smile had not pleased them. Moreover, he could not supply at once the rubber washers. He had none in stock. Perhaps to-morrow, perhaps on Monday—some time, anyway.

"Some of the Grammar School crowd, I'll bet!" said Tom.

"Let's have a hunt round and see if we can spot the rotters," suggested Lowther. Manners gave a growling assent.

They passed the boot-shop, and saw Parker, who was still there.

"I say, Tom, do you think it could have been that chap?" said Manners.

"Oh, not likely!" said Tom.

"Can you imagine our Pignacious descending to such puerile tricks?" asked Lowther. "I wouldn't trust him," said Manners.

"The chap's a beastly intruder, anyway!" "Still, even to a beastly intruder there are limits," Lowther said blandly. "Pignacious is quite incapable of such a dreadful deed."

"We don't want the bounder, anyhow!" growled Manners, who still resented the intrusion of Parker.

"We do not!" agreed Lowther. "But the chap's not an absolute Prussian. He's a deep one. We don't know all about dear Philip yet. But we know that he would not do this sort of thing."

Tom Merry agreed. Manners, finding himself in a minority of one, shut up. He did not wholly dislike Parker. The fellow would have been bearable in another study, Manners thought.

Carboy got his receipt for the registered letter, and put it into his pocket. Then, foregoing the proposed interview with Parker, he and Mont Blanc made themselves scarce while the Terrible Three were searching for them at the other end of the street.

The Terrible Three drew blank, of course. When they returned Parker had also vanished.

Tom Merry looked at his watch. "No time to spare, children," he said. "Keep up with your Uncle Tommy if you can, and put your best feet foremost if you mean to be in by the time dinner is served, my lord!"

They hurried off, and naturally took the short cut through the wood.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Rescue!

PARKER was already some distance ahead. He had no notion that his study-mates were in Rylcombe, and compelled by Grammarish machinations to return on foot, or he would have waited for them.

He had already quite a high opinion of Tom Merry, and was beginning to think better of the humorous Lowther and the somewhat surly Manners. He thought of Manners as surly, for he had seldom yet seen him otherwise.

By the time they entered the wood he was well into it, and out of sight along one of the bends of the winding path.

They rounded the bend. "There's the dear Pignacious!" said Lowther. "Shall we call to him to wait for his kind uncles?"

"Rats!" said Manners. "We don't want the bounder's company!"

"Oh, look out, Parker!" yelled Tom Merry with all the strength of his lungs.

Two rough-looking fellows, with black half-masks upon their faces, had stolen out of the undergrowth in rear of the unconscious Parker.

He whipped round just as the burlier of the two roughs struck at him with a heavy club.

His arm went up to shield his head. The Terrible Three saw the arm drop as if broken, and yet there remained force enough in the blow to send Parker to grass.

"Rescue!" yelled Lowther.

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

"We're coming, Parker!" howled Manners, forgetting all his resentment against the intruder.

It was not Tom's fault that the warning was not in time. Even as it was, it had saved Parker something, for the full force of the blow had failed to reach his head.

And their nearness had at least the effect of preventing a second blow.

As they rushed forward the two roughs made a bolt for cover.

But Rusty had looked too long upon the beer, even as Smiler had warned him he might do.

He lurched, and clutched at Smiler, who had very nearly reached cover. Smiler was one of the retiring type.

They went down together with a crash. They struggled up, using highly improper language to one another, just in time to be too late!

For the Terrible Three piled in upon them as one man.

Smiler went down again, with Manners and Lowther on top of him.

Rusty caught Tom Merry by the collar, and slung him into the bushes.

Tom was up again in a second, but in that second Rusty had kicked Manners viciously on the hip, and Smiler had shot Lowther off his chest, and was scrambling to his feet.

"Ow! You foul brute!" yelled Manners, badly hurt.

But he was not so much hurt as to be put out of the fight.

He grabbed Rusty's leg and pulled the rough over.

Lowther thrust his right hand into his pocket. When he brought it out it had a yellow papered package in it. Using both hands, he broke the package across, and hurled it full into the ugly face of Rusty.

"Yow! Yah! Yow! Yah! You've blinded me—atishoo!"

"A-tish-oo!" echoed Tom Merry, taken with a violent fit of sneezing.

"Oh, hang it all, Monty! I got as much of it as that rotter did—atishoo-hoo-soo!" complained Manners.

"Couldn't—atish-ish-hoo-hoo!—help it, old chap!" said Lowther. "I've—atishoo!—got—some—atishoo!—too!"

"A-tish-oo! Come off it, won't yer? This is—atishoo!" howled and sneezed Smiler.

"Oh, lumme—atishoo!"

But Smiler struggled up, and Lowther's attempt to stop him was made in vain.

Sneezing violently, Smiler plunged into the thick undergrowth, and in a moment was lost to sight, though not to sound, for they could hear Smiler sneezing and the boughs cracking as he forced his way through.

"Look out, Tom! Atishoo! Look out!" Rusty was up and swinging his club.

"I'll kill the—atishoo-hoo!—lot of you!" he raved. "I'm blinded for—atishoo!—life! Ah, would yer?"

It did not appear that Rusty was quite blind. He saw the rush Tom made for him, and his club came down heavily. Tom stumbled and fell, and by that lucky fall escaped the full force of the savage blow.

Rusty bolted.

Manners and Lowther were in no condition even to attempt to hold him. With one hand to his eyes—which really must have been smarting a good deal—the burly brute made for cover.

They let him go, for they had no choice in the matter. They could not even pursue. They were in the throes of a very paroxysm of sneezing.

Suddenly Parker sat up.

Even in the midst of their sneezing the three were delighted to see that. The blow he had taken had looked a very heavy one, and they had been by no means certain that it had not killed him.

And the first thing Parker said—or, rather, didn't say, for to sneeze is scarcely to speak, was:

"Atishoo-hoo-hoo!"

It had become a chorus of four—but a chorus woefully out of time and tune.

And they sneezed till the tears ran down their cheeks, and then they sneezed still more, and cried again, and sneezed yet more, till Tom Merry managed to gasp out:

"What a ja—atishoo! Are you—atishoo!—much hurt, Parker, old scout?"

"I am not—atishoo!—seriously—atishoo!—hurt, Merry. But if you mean that this thing is a joke—atishoo!—all I have to say is—atishoo!"

"That, Pignacious, is—atishoo!—about all any of—atishoo!—can say!" gasped Lowther.

"I do not agree with you!" snapped Parker.

He took out his handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and then blew his nose with a sound like unto the sound of a trumpet.

This seemed to have some effect, for he did not sneeze again for quite a quarter of a minute.

The Terrible Three, not at all above taking

a hint, took this one. They trumpeted as one man.

"And down go the walls of Jericho!" said Lowther. "Atishoo!"

"It wouldn't be a bad plan to—atishoo!—move and get away from it," suggested Manners.

"You're right, old chap," said Tom. "There's no hurry otherwise, of course, for we're bound to be late for dinner, and we may as well be hanged for a lamb as a sneaking-pig."

"And it's no good even thinking of going after those rotters," said Lowther. "They'll have got clear away before this."

Parker moved forward on hands and knees, and proceeded to inspect carefully a little heap of brownish-yellow, greyish stuff which lay upon the grass.

He even took up a few grains of it and placed them in close proximity to his nose, with the natural result—that he was obliged to start sneezing again.

"This is—atishoo!"

"Not at all," said Lowther blandly. "It is but that which produces atishoery, so to speak."

"It is pepper!" said Parker, with some indignation.

"Giddy Herlock Sholmes you are, ain't you, Parker?" said Manners, with a grin.

"Shush, Manners! Be not unmannerly. To smell the pepper when it would have been easy to look at the label is quite in the most approved Herlock Sholmes manner. Is it not so, my dear Jotson? There is the label. Parker. Somebody-or-Other's Perfect Pepper—Parker's Perfect Pepper; Parker's Perfect Pepper for Pale Prigs. Warranted to—"

"But what were you doing with pepper in your pocket?" asked Parker, turning upon Lowther in quite his most grown-up manner.

There was a snap in the question, as if he who asked it was a master, with a right undisputed to an answer.

"Jolly lucky for you the pepper was there, I should say!" growled Manners.

"That is true," Parker replied, in rather a different tone. "Yes, that is undoubtedly true. I forgot for the moment that you all came to my rescue with unhesitating gallantry. I hope you will believe that I am deeply and honestly grateful to you!"

He spoke with feeling, and without his customary stiffness; yet his tone was very unboylike.

"Nothing in it," said Tom. "You'd have done the same for us, like a shot. I say, you've had a nasty whack!"

Parker had put up his hand to his head. There was blood on it when he brought it away.

"Oh, I don't think it is serious!" he said. "Merely a slight extravasation of the skin."

"I should call it a clump on the napper, and a jolly painful one!" said Manners.

"That is not what I should call it. And I really fail to perceive how it can be called jolly, Manners," answered Parker, quite in his usual style.

"Can you toddle?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, of course I can!"

Parker got to his feet. But he was very unsteady upon them. His head felt as if it were still whirling, and he was glad to take Tom Merry's offered arm.

**'THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Parker is Mysterious!**

"**W**HO were the rotters?" asked Lowther.

It was a very natural question. But Parker seemed to resent it.

"How should I know?" he asked snappishly. "They did not leave their cards, I believe."

"My dear man, there's no need at all to get your wool off! I only supposed that, as they appeared to be lying in wait to bash you, they might quite possibly be merchants who don't exactly love you. And a chap generally knows his enemies, even if he may be in doubt about his friends."

"That, Lowther, is a philosophic truth the correctness of which I am not prepared to deny. But I fail to see that there is sufficient evidence that this was an ambush. May the scoundrels not have been mere ordinary footpads?"

But the tone in which the question was asked seemed to suggest that Parker scarcely believed in this theory.

Tom Merry did not believe in it, either, and he said so at once.

"It won't do, Parker!" he said. "For anybody to be lurking in these bushes waiting for somebody to waylay isn't very likely. But if they did, would they choose a school-boy? And the way that chap whacked at you looked a jolly sight more like murder than robbery, to me."

"They were two to one—two men to a boy," Manners said. "They'd have stopped you and cleared you out, if that had been their game."

"In short, Parker, there's a mystery behind this, and you know more about it than you've let on yet," said Lowther.

Parker put up his hand to his head again, and looked very thoughtfully at the fresh blood on it when he brought it away.

"Let me tie it up for you," said Tom Merry. "I've a clean handkerchief in my pocket."

"Having failed in this attempt, I think they will make themselves scarce," said Parker. "Yes, I should say I was safe enough—absolutely safety is not a thing to be expected."

"Do you know the brutes?" asked Tom bluntly.

"I did not recognise them, Merry."

"But you've got a good notion who they may be?"

"Scarcely even that."

"You've got some notion about it! You aren't half as much surprised as an ordinary chap would be if the thing had happened to him!"

That was true. Parker had a queer way of taking it, as if it were all in the day's work. The three could not help fancying that something very much like this must have happened to him before.



PARKER'S PERIL! "Look out, Parker!" yelled Tom Merry. Two rough-looking fellows, with masks upon their faces, had stolen out of the undergrowth in the rear of the unconscious Parker. He whipped round just as the burlier of the two roughs struck at him with a heavy club. (See Chapter 4.)

Parker stood in silence while the bandage was applied. He seemed to be thinking hard—debating how much he might safely tell them. Lowther fancied.

And Lowther fancied, too, that he might have told more had he been dealing with Tom alone.

He did not tell anything at once, however. It was Manners who spoke next.

"What shall you do about it?" asked Manners.

"What can I do?" returned Parker, with a touch of irritation.

"My hat! There are several things that might be done!" said Tom. "Informing the police, for one."

"I should not think of doing that. I absolutely refuse to report it, or allow anyone else to report it to the police! What would be the use? Those scoundrels will clear off at once—there can be no doubt as to that—and of what avail would it be to set a fat lout like that constable I saw the other day to track them down?"

"We agree in one thing at least, Parker," said Monty Lowther. "I am free to confess that Crump, with all his shining merits, modestly hidden, is not precisely my ideal sleuth-hound."

Parker smiled faintly.

"The best plan will be to forget the whole affair as speedily as may be," he said.

"Do you think it is safe to have those chaps about on the watch to do you in if they get half a chance?"

They did not wish to appear unduly curious; but it was only natural that they should want to know more than he had yet told them.

"Will you be good enough to believe me if I tell you that, while I have a tolerably clear notion as to the person behind this attempt, the men who made it are, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complete strangers to me?" said Parker.

He was less than ever like a boy now. There was nothing in his manner to suggest that he addressed them as inferiors; but there was something which made them feel very young beside him.

"Of course we will!" said Tom heartily. "And we really don't want to pry into your secrets, you know. I suppose you will admit that this sort of thing is enough to make any chap feel curious?"

"I admit that. I admit, further, that your aid to me in a very tight corner gives you the right to ask questions. I only regret that I cannot possibly make a full disclosure of all that I know and suspect—and even that would not make plain the whole story. I promise you that you shall have a full explanation before I leave—that is to say, in a few weeks' time. And now, may I ask you all to promise me that you will not tell this story at St. Jim's?"

They promised that. But they were not satisfied. The most curious thing of all was that Tom Merry found himself dwelling upon

that uncompleted sentence of Parker's—"before I leave." What could he have meant by "before I leave St. Jim's"? It was not long since Tom had regarded Parker as a mere intruder; Lowther and Manners had not yet ceased to look upon him as such. But Tom realised now that he would be sorry to see Parker go.

For all his unboylike ways, for all the mystery attaching to him, Parker was one of the right sort, and most certainly he had any amount of pluck.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Mellish in the Toils!

PERCY MELLISH was not satisfied. The sovereign he had screwed out of Parker had only whetted his appetite.

Two or three days had passed, and the memory of how Parker had dealt with him had grown dimmer.

He had not scored to the extent he had hoped that time. But just give him another chance! Hang that blessed paper! Parker wouldn't dare to use it. It suited his purpose to be at St. Jim's, and to use that paper in order to show up Mellish must mean his going.

"You ought to tackle the sweep again," said Crooke, who was all in favour of bold measures—for Mellish.

"Why don't you tackle him yourself?" asked Mellish.

"It wouldn't wash. Didn't you give him your word of honour that you wouldn't let on to a single, solitary chap?"

"Oh, he didn't take any notice of that!" said Mellish.

Mellish knew how very little his word of honour meant, and he was quite right in his guess that Parker valued it no higher than he did.

"You ought to have found out more about those roughs, you know," Crooke said.

"It's all what I ought to do," snarled Mellish. "Why don't you chip in and do something, instead of slinging a lot of rotten advice at my head?"

"Because I don't choose, for one thing," Crooke replied roughly. "I'm not going to have you landing me in a ghastly mess by your bungling—don't you think it! But there ought to be a heap more in this than you've got out of it yet; and when I see any sign that you are handling the bizney as if you meant bizney—well, then I'll stand in with you."

"I wonder whether those two chaps are hanging around Rylcombe still?" said Mellish.

"I can tell you that. They are," replied Crooke.

"How do you know?"

"My hat, what's that matter? Lodgey told me. I had a talk with him yesterday. They're at the Green Man a goodish bit, you know."

"Is Lodgey on to their being after Parker?"

"No. And I didn't tell him. He'd have been trying to make his own profit out of it if he knew. And he wouldn't leave many pickings for us, you bet!"

"See here, Crooke, what do you think I'd better do?"

"Find out more about why this chump Parker is here. Pump those two roughs. You're crafty enough, Mellish; you could do it."

Mellish had not so much confidence in his own craft. Again he wished that Levison—the Levison of old—had been with him in this affair instead of Crooke, who had very little more pluck and rather less brains than he himself had.

"I might toddle along to Rylcombe and see if I can come across them," he said doubtfully. "Of course, it would be useful to know a bit more. But as for pumping them, that won't be so easy, I guess."

"Two louts like that!" sneered Crooke.

"Why don't you have a shot at them yourself, as you know they're such louts?" asked Mellish hotly.

But Crooke only shrugged his shoulders. He was not on.

Mellish wandered out, uncertain what to do. In the quad he happened to pass Talbot and Parker.

They were talking. Perhaps Mellish could not have helped catching some of the words spoken, but it is a fairly certain thing that he did not try to avoid hearing. He passed very slowly, and Parker did not observe him.

THE POPULAR.—No. 313.

If Talbot did, he paid no heed. He knew nothing of Mellish's interest in the new fellow.

"Leave for the week-end?" Talbot said. "Well, I don't know. It is given at times, if there's urgent need; not unless, these days. The Head is not very keen on giving permission."

"I shall have to do my best to conquer his opposition," Parker replied. "My errand is really an urgent one."

"Get your people to wire to him," suggested Talbot.

That was all Mellish heard, and at the moment he did not look upon it as of much importance.

He noticed that Parker's hair was cut short in one place, and that his head just there was adorned with sticking-plaster, and he vaguely wondered how and by whom he had been hurt.

But the Terrible Three had kept Parker's secret well. All four had been late for dinner on the day of the attack, of course—very late, for Parker had needed repairs before he could go in. But this had only entailed two hundred lines of Virgil each. Only six people knew as yet of that assault in Rylcombe Wood.

Mellish wandered out of the gates and along the road to Rylcombe.

Just before he reached the village he encountered Messrs. Smiler and Rusty.

He would have turned back had he seen them in time, for his heart failed him at the pinch. But they were too close upon him.

He thought of walking past without speaking, but Smiler would not allow that.

"Hallo, young gent!" he said cheerfully.

"How's everything?"

"Oh, pretty well—all serene!" answered Mellish, smiling weakly.

"Master Roberts—goin' on all right—ho, is he?"

"Oh, yes, I think so! He seems to have found his feet."

"I said Roberts, didn't I? Oughter been Parker, so it 'ad. Queer thing, one young gent 'avin' two monikers like that! But I dessay you can explain it, sir, bein' a scholler?"

"No, I can't," said Mellish, realising that he must go warily; for it would not do to have these two ruffians suspect that he had spied upon them.

"Ah! But maybe 'e ain't no pertikler friend of yours?"

Mellish forgot his caution in a rush of rancour against the fellow who had made him feel so young and so cheap.

"I hate the beast!" he said viciously. He did not see the nudge that Smiler gave Rusty.

"Now, that's a middlin' queer thing, too," said Smiler thoughtfully. "A nice, affable-spoken young gent like him."

Rusty said nothing. He chewed on. But Mellish saw something in his face that would have told him Rusty did not love Parker, even had he been ignorant that these men had shadowed the new boy to Rylcombe.

"He's a rotten outsider!" said Mellish, summoning up all his boldness. "And I don't believe you're any friend of his, whatever you may say!"

Smiler grinned. A very ugly grin it was, too.

"We're interested in 'im," he said. "That's enough to be goin' on with, I reckon. If you was to get more friendly like with me an' my pal Rusty 'ere, we might tell you more. 'Cos it would suit us very well, on the 'ole, to 'ave someone up at the school—well, lookin' after our interests, as I might say."

"That would depend on whether you could make it worth my while," said Mellish, walking open-eyed into the trap set for him.

Smiler knew a good deal of human nature in its worst aspects. He had already sized up Mellish as a greedy, unscrupulous young rascal, without pluck or conscience. He might have preferred a bolder aide. But an indifferent tool was better than none.

"It might be," he said cautiously. "I don't mind tellin' you this much—there's oof in the game we're playin', me an' my pal, Rusty."

"Shouldn't be in it else."

Rusty creaked out those few words, and spat. Mellish felt rather afraid of Rusty, but not at all of Smiler. Had he only guessed it, Smiler was by far the more dangerous villain of the two.

"And I should want to know a bit more," said Mellish.

"Naturally you would, a sharp young blade like you! But there's no reason as you

shouldn't know it all, s'long as we feel sure we can depend on you. Like to 'ear it now?"

Mellish glanced up and down the road. He did not want anyone from St. Jim's to see him talking to these two.

Smiler noted that glance, and read its meaning.

"Another time would be best, I dessay," he said, "an' not quite so public a place. Look 'ere, it won't 'urt you to tell me this: Is Parker, or Roberts, or wotever we ought to call the feller, stayin' long at St. Jim's?"

Mellish opened his eyes widely.

"Years, for all I know. Why shouldn't he?" he returned.

He had not forgotten that he was not supposed to be aware of Parker's real identity.

"Oh! That's a rum 'un—eh, Rusty? 'Ow'll they get along without 'im up in town?"

"He's going to run up to town," said Mellish. "I heard him talking about it."

"Oh, an' when might 'e be goin'!" asked Smiler, eager for the answer, but speaking in quite a casual tone.

"This week-end, if he can get leave."

"Saturday, I suppose."

"Look 'ere, if you can find out for us wot train 'e goes by, an' wot train 'e'll be comin' by—"

"Well?" asked Mellish, as Smiler paused.

"A couple of quid, cocky! Does that meet your voos?"

"Yes," said Mellish. "Of course, it isn't a fat lot. But, then, it's nothing much to do. Anybody might know a thing like that."

"Right you are, young-feller-me-lad! Bring the information, an' the dibs is yours. Also, I'll tell you all about Parker-Roberts, an' why 'e's 'ere. There's a bet 'angin' on to it; that's all I need say now."

"Right-ho! Depend upon me," said Mellish.

Then he saw St. Jim's caps in the distance.

"I must hook it!" he said, and stepped out briskly towards Rylcombe.

"Ooked 'im fair, Rusty!" said Smiler, with a grin of exultation.

"Mind 'e don't do yer down, cocky!" growled Rusty, and spat again.

Rusty had also some knowledge of human nature, and he did not trust Mellish.

But Smiler knew himself too cunning for that young rascal.


Mellish was in the toils! Greed and rancour had caused him to play the traitor—whereof were to come danger to Parker and no little discomfort to Mellish himself—as will be told in a later story.

THE END.


(You must not miss reading next week's thrilling long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, entitled: "Four to the Rescue!" by Martin Clifford. It is a great story!)

① To be completed in about 36 fortnightly Parts ②

HARMISWORTH'S
BUSINESS
ENCYCLOPEDIA
A Commercial Educator



Whatever
Your Trade
or Business
this Work
will help You
to Success



A Mine of Valuable Information for Business Men and Women

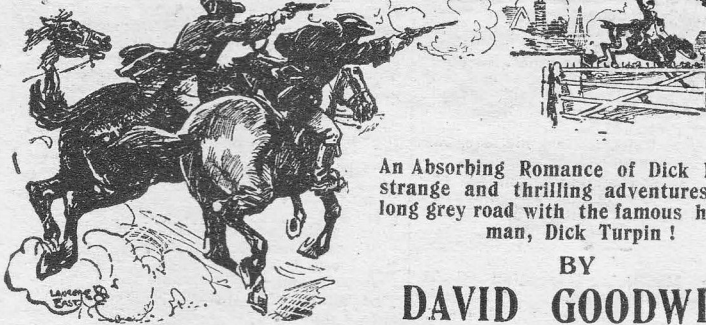
Part 1—Thurs. Jan. 15

Order a Copy TO-DAY!

A PLOT AGAINST TURPIN!

Dick Neville is given a chance to repay his comrade, Turpin of the Road, for the gallant way he has stood by him!

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 Faulkbourne, 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.

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 visits 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 for having 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 price on his head, and that one of the boys at the school, a sneak named Dirkley, has tried to denounce Neville to the authorities.

Soon after Dick installs his brother at St. Anstell's he meets Lord Malmaison at an inn, and the latter makes Dick a fine offer if he will bring Turpin into his hands. Dick pretends to agree to this, and, after planning the supposed trap, sets out to find his comrade of the road. (Now read on.)

A High Position for Lord Malmaison!

TEN minutes later Dick was riding Black Satan up the slope among the pine-trees in the outer night, looking about him keenly, and soon he saw a horseman approaching. He drew back among the trees, and soon saw it was his old comrade who approached. Just as Black Bess and her rider came abreast him, Dick spurred out across the outlaw's path.

"Stand and deliver!" he cried, laughing. "Ods blood, Dick, is that you?" said Turpin. "Never play such a trick as that in the dark, boy! Another second, and I should have emptied my pistol into you!"

"Then keep the charges in them, and see well to the priming, for you will need them soon!" said Dick. "Turpin, my boy, think you are worth a thousand guineas?" "What new grip is this?" said the outlaw, grinning.

"I am offered that sum to give you up," said Dick, "and a free pardon besides. What think you of the bargain?"

"A better offer than I'm ever likely to get for you!" grunted Turpin.

"I have made all the arrangements," said Dick. "My men are ambushed, and you cannot escape them."

And with that he told his comrade all that had happened since he dined at the Three Crowns.

"I thank my stars," said Turpin, "that this night yonder attorney lit upon a gentleman by mistake to take his offer! I know no other comrade who would not have sold me at the price, and the plot is so well laid there were not a chink to crawl out by. Dick, your hand once again!"

And never did the two outlaws grip more warmly.

"But a truce to sentiment!" said Dick. "How could I have done otherwise? We have now to go and deal with those knaves. One thing I must claim, as they are my

prisoners—you will not shed their blood. They are well fooled as it is."

"Oh, if you choose, let that go," said Turpin, rather grumpily, "though a bullet piece would make them surer! But I shall deal with Malmaison!"

"Come, then!" said Dick. "I have fastened them all securely, and the fiend himself could not get out of those chests. What grudge has Malmaison against you, Turpin?"

"Grudge!" cried Turpin. "Why, the villain owes me more guineas than I am ever likely to hear of—a fat booty! I was leagued with him in a great pillage on the Border last year, for you must know the fellow, though of high-rank, has squandered his revenues so far that he resorts to very dirty ways of filling his coffers. He put this plunder in my way, arranging that a banker's coach with its bullock should fall into my hands. I did the dirty work and faced the danger, and then he robbed me of my share of the booty, all but a few guineas, and would not divide. I swore to be even with him, and, knowing I keep my word, he was afraid. So he hatched this plot to get rid of me."

"And my grudge against him is that he thought I was as big a knave as himself and would sell my comrade for money," said Dick. "But here we are at the door of the ambushed room. Watch while I give the signal, and you will see some fun!"

Turpin cocked his ear expectantly, a sly grin on his face, and the two walked into the room, talking as they went.

"Neville, my boy," said Turpin, nudging Dick, and speaking loudly, "I have left my pistols in the holsters. 'Twere better I went back and fetched them."

"Nay," replied Dick, following his lead, "you will not need them here; and I have mine. There are no enemies to fear."

"That is well," said Turpin; "for, in truth, I am not too easy in this neighbourhood,

for my Lord Malmaison fives not far away, and we are at loggerheads. A very muddy-minded and treacherous rogue is that same Malmaison, Dick, though not quite so unclean as his rascally retainers, who he has set to persecute me when I come hereabouts."

"Ah!" said Dick. "Are they very knavish fellows?"

"As villainous and unwashed a set of louts as any in England!" replied Turpin, grinning hugely, as he thought of the men in the chests who were listening. "A cowardly, skulking, chicken-robbering, chicken-stealing set of gaolbirds as ever disgraced a country!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Dick. "Very like, Turpin—very like. But now, Turpin, to business!"

The moment the words were out of his mouth there was a loud thump under the lids of all three chests, a scuffle, and a chorus of smothered oaths. Then, finding themselves fastened in, the hidden retainers became panic-stricken, and banged their heads against the lids in their efforts to get out.

"Treachery!" they yelled. "Help! We are betrayed!"

Turpin and Dick leaned against the wall and laughed till their sides ached. Howls and bellows came from the chests, that rocked where they stood with the struggles of the inmates, and the lighter of the three fell right over and floundered across the floor like a tinder-box with a mouse in it; but the solid oak tops and stout fastenings would not give way. Then, gathering their wits together, the boxed-up prisoners ceased their outcry and became silent, waiting anxiously.

"So these are the curs you told me of!" cried Turpin, wiping the tears from his eyes, for the antics of the middle chest had been funny in the extreme. "You have trapped them very prettily, Dick!"

"Pretty well, I think," said Dick. "And now what shall we do with them?"

"Why," said Turpin, with a wink, "I propose we build a fire there on the hearth, and do you take yonder old iron kettle in the corner and fill it with oil from the cellar—for I know there is a barrel there—and we will boil it, and pour it into yonder chests through a hole in the lid, all hot! I have read of such a merry jest in the 'Arabian Nights,' if I mistake not, and it should prove very pretty sport!"

At this the prisoners, who had been listening anxiously, burst forth into fresh howls and lamentations.

"Oh, pray spare us, good sir!" came the howlings, muffled inside the chests. "Do not torture poor retainers, who were but paid to do their master's bidding! Oh, pray, do not pour in the oil!"

"Come, Dick, fill the kettle," cried Turpin, "and we can pass the time with a little pistol-practice at yonder chest while it is boiling!"

"I'll bring back my lord with me, too!" said Dick, grinning. "We will make him build the fire and hold the kettle!"

Such a hubbalooboo did the captives raise when Dick went out that it was plain they really thought he was going to fetch the oil to scald them with, and that the outlaws were going to torture their prisoners to death. However, Turpin amused himself with the retainers for a while, and soon Dick came in again, driving Malmaison before him at the pistol's point. The peer's face was the colour of a fish's belly, and his fat legs shook beneath him.

"So, my lord marquis," said Turpin, sitting on a corner of the table, "you have arranged a little entertainment for our benefit? We are in your debt for a very pretty evening's amusement, which I shall take leave to call 'The Dancing Chests; or, The Wicked Highwaymen and the Marquis in the Cupboard!'"

Turpin's eyes were light, but there was a terrible gleam in them as he looked at Malmaison, and the peer shuddered.

"I call to mind," said Turpin, "that we arranged a little matter together not long ago, which turned out very profitably—at least, for you, as up to the present I have not noticed any share of the profits coming my way!"

"I have it all ready for you!" said Malmaison hoarsely. "I—I will find it somehow! I swear you shall have it—I meant it for you all the time! I—I was going to give you my note-of-hand!" stammered the marquis, as Dick clapped the pistol to his head and rapidly sought the man's pockets for his promised fee. "I vow, upon my honour!"

"Who would take your note of hand?" cried Turpin. "You knave, you promised it in notes or gold! Do you not find it, Dick?"

"Nay, there's nothing here save a dozen or so of guineas in a purse!" exclaimed Dick. "Not a thing else about him!"

"I might have known it!" exclaimed Turpin, jumping off the table. "I smell a double treachery here, Dick, which we will score against my lord if it be so! Keep him there, and we will soon find out. Which of these chests is the one with the single rascal in it?"

"Yonder," said Dick, pointing it out. "We shall get the truth from this fellow, which my lord dare not tell?" said Turpin, undoing the hasp. "Come out, my beauty!"

He flung back the lid, and hauled the retainer out by the scruff of the neck, knocking the weapon out of his hand, and snatching the knife from the man's belt. Then, forcing the fellow back against the wall, Turpin clapped a pistol to his ear.

"Now, my gay ruffler," said the highwayman, "tell me what your orders were, or I blow you to kingdom come! Why hasn't my lord the gold about him? The truth, now! A lie will be your death-warrant!"

"Oh, spare me, sir!" quavered the man. "Twas none of my doing! Nay, I will tell! We were to have crippled you with a bullet and bound you fast!"

"I know that, dog! What of young Master Neville here?"

"My lord was to pretend to write the petition for a free pardon for him at the table here, and while Master Neville read it we were to fall upon him and bind him likewise, thus securing both for the gallows!"

"A very pretty plan, my lord!" said Dick contemptuously, his eyes glittering as he looked at the trembling marquis. "Come, Turpin, what shall we do to this noble out-purse?"

"Why," said Turpin coolly, hauling the retainer back into the chest and fastening the lid on him again, "he deserves death; but, since you have these foolish scruples about killing a prisoner, I suggest throwing him down the well and letting him take his chance there! There is nothing to be got out of him!"

"Spare me!" shrieked the marquis hoarsely. "You will not murder me? I am a man of great position, and highly placed!

There will be a great hue-and-cry after me!"

"Highly placed, by the powers!" cried Dick, with a fierce laugh. "Come, Turpin, he says true! We'll place him higher than Haman! A well is no place for a marquis! We'll tie him to the vane on the tower!"

"Very well thought of," cried Turpin, "though, pink me, if it isn't better than he deserves! Up with him!"

They swung Malmaison up by the heels and shoulders, and bore him, protesting in terrified tones, up the dark stone staircase till they came out upon the square turret of the tower, whence all the county lay shimmering below them in the moonlight. They brought with them the rope with which Turpin was to have been bound and they lashed the fat marquis to the vane-post and weather-cock that crowned the little spire in the tower's centre, and left him there, grieving in loud wails, against his fate, surprised that his life was spared.

And the two comrades mounted and cantered away through the woods, leaving my Lord Malmaison to await the rising of the sun.

Mr. Vesey Neville's Reception at St. Anstell's.

DICK NEVILLE has bound me in honour. I would not try to escape the obligation even if I could. But how, in the name of all the powers, am I to stop that young talebearer's mouth?"

Dr. Trelawney muttered to himself as he walked up and down the study floor, an anxious frown on his face. His thoughts were gloomy enough. Just then there came a knock at the door.

"A note for you, sir," said the serving-man, bringing a small sealed letter on a salver. "It was brought by a gentleman, who rode away without leaving his name."

As soon as the servant had gone the doctor tore open the missive, and as he read it his brow cleared, and the anxious look gave way to a grin.

"Dirkley is out of the running," ran the note. "He will not trouble you again. Some fine new friends of his have taken him away in a caravan, and I gave them my blessing. They will make a gipsy of him—perhaps a man. Who knows?"

"I trust you will agree he is no loss to St. Anstell's, and that this removes our chief obstacle.—Yours, R. N."

The doctor gave a long, chuckling laugh, and thumped the table with his hand, which was improper of him, under the circumstances; but he could not help it.

"By George, that young rider is bad to beat!" he exclaimed. "I wonder what hand he had in the affair? And to think his life, and perhaps his brother's, hung upon the words of that evil little rascal Dirkley! Nothing better could possibly have happened, and the school is well rid of Dirkley. He was the worst influence for the boys that ever I had in St. Anstell's."

The doctor put Dick Neville's note in the fire and burned it carefully.

"I cannot fail a man who saved my silver, and then my life," he mused, watching the note burn. "Yet, to think that it is my duty, from the law's point of view, to give him to the magistrates to be hanged! We are treading on dangerous ground."

Dr. Trelawney wrinkled his forehead.

"I would have done it for no other man. But I feel this young fellow will see to his part well, and help overcome the difficulties. This affair with Dirkley proves it. Very sure I am, too, that Dick Neville is more sinned against than sinning. However that may be, I owe him my life."

"And this young brother of his—I should be loth to lose him. There isn't a higher-couraged boy in the school, though he's always in hot water. He is marvellously quick at his work, too. What was it his brother said about this uncle who is trying to get hold of him? He hinted at great danger. There is some mystery here, and I cannot do anything unless I know what the trouble is. I'll see the boy."

He rang the bell and summoned Ralph, who turned up in a stock and collar that looked none the better for a four-handed boxing-match, composed of Conyers, Hilton, Assheton, and himself, in which Ralph had been embroiled when the gatekeeper summoned him to the study.

"Come here, Faulkourn," said the doctor. "I have a few words to say to you, and I want you to be perfectly frank. You understand there is some trouble connected with your stay here—some danger, too, I may say?"

Ralph became grave. "Yes, sir," he said. "But my brother—"

The doctor held up his hand. "Stop!" he said. "I have nothing to do with that. I wish to hear nothing about it. There is another matter. I understand you have an uncle?"

Ralph's lips tightened and his eyes flashed.

"Yes, sir," he said dryly, "I have an uncle."

"Quite so," said the doctor. "It has been suggested that you are in some danger from that direction. Now, what does it mean? My boy, you must tell me everything, and perhaps I can help you. If this is true, I cannot remain in the dark about it. Come, Ralph, tell me the whole truth."

"I will, sir," he said. "My uncle is Vesey Neville, now in possession of Faulkourn, which should rightly belong to my brother. My father was weak in health and in mind before his death, and Uncle Vesey was in constant attendance on him. I am telling you the plain facts. My father died while in Uncle Vesey's hands, and when the will was proved it gave the estates to Uncle Vesey himself."

"How my brother was outlaid by Vesey Neville's influence, after a mad prank in which he rode off on one of the coach-horses, you already know. Dick has discovered that without doubt Uncle Vesey wants to put us both out of the way, to prevent any claim on the estates. My uncle then took me to Duncansby School, near Durham, where he left me in charge of the schoolmaster, Callard."

"Gracious heavens!" muttered the doctor. "That vile piece! I have heard of it. Yes? Go on."

And as clearly and shortly as possible Ralph told the story of the horrors he had endured at the hands of Callard, and how Dick was no more than in time to save his life. The doctor's usually calm temper became heated to boiling-point as he listened.

"The very fact of your being sent to Duncansby is enough!" he exclaimed, when



AFTER MANY DAYS! As Dick rode among the trees he saw a horseman approaching. He drew back in the shadows and soon saw it was Turpin who came towards him. Just as Black Bess and her rider came abreast him Dick spurred out across the outlaw's path. "Stand and deliver!" he cried. (See page 25.)



TRAPPED! "We shall get the truth from this fellow, which my lord dare not tell," said Dick Turpin, undoing the clasp of the chest. "Come out, my beauty!" He flung back the lid and hauled the retainer out by the scruff of the neck. (See page 26.)

Ralph had finished. "It condemns the sender! That vile place should be swept from the face of the earth! Your uncle must fear you both greatly to take such means. And he is right to fear, the rascal! If you and your brother were free to act!"

"We have given him some trouble, it seems, sir," said Ralph. "Dick is more than a match for him."

"And this man who enjoys your estates, and is responsible for the outlawing of your brother, wishes to rid himself of you by means fair or foul? It seems incredible. Yet it is true, true, on the face of it. But you have found a haven from him here."

"I hope so, sir," said Ralph. "But he will leave no stone unturned to find me and get me into his hands again. He is my legal guardian."

"That is a danger, and a grave one," muttered Trelawney. "He can claim you, with the law on his side."

"What I fear most, sir, is that when he has me, he will use me as the bait to trap my brother. It is the one snare that Dick would fall into; he would care nothing for the danger."

"Ay, your uncle can claim you," said the doctor. "Yet you are under my charge here, and, though I fear he has right on his side, I might find a way. But I fear the worst. Your uncle is now a man of influence and wealth."

"And is he to take me away from here, to rid himself of me at his will?" said Ralph desperately. "Will the law give me up to him, to be his victim?"

"It would," said the doctor, his brow dark and gloomy. "The law in England is often a useful aid to a wealthy and clever villain. As to your own complaints, you can prove nothing against him. Nay; the law would deliver you up to him as we throw a bone to a dog!"

"But I am in your charge here, sir!" cried Ralph. "I am under your care. Can you do nothing to keep me from him?"

The doctor shook his head grimly. "I see no way," he said, "though I would do my utmost. The best thing we have to hope for is that he does not come to claim you. He lost trace of you at Duncansby, of course, and I see not how he can find out where you are. He may think you dead."

"Ay!" cried Ralph. "True, sir, it is unlikely he will ever find me here, and until he does—"

A double rap sounded on the door. The doctor answered, and a servant entered.

"Mr. Vesey Neville, of Faulkbourn, sir," he said, "desires to see Dr. Trelawney."

Ralph started, and set his teeth. A desperate glitter came into his eyes, but he gave no sign of fear. The man of the world, Dr. Trelawney, did not move a muscle. The worst had come.

"Desire him to step up," he said to the servant.

The man departed. As the door closed the doctor threw open the other on the far side of the room.

"Go!" he said quickly, in a low voice. "Descend by the back staircase. Do not leave the school, but trust to me. I will do what I can."

Ralph vanished in a moment, and the door was hardly shut on him when the other opened again, and Vesey Neville was shown into the room.

He looked flabby and fat, and his dark eyes shone more threateningly than ever. His rich clothes sat uneasily on his big body.

"Dr. Trelawney?" he said, in a curt, inquiring way.

The doctor bowed coldly.

"What is your pleasure with me, sir?"

"Pleasure!" echoed Vesey, with a short laugh. "I know not if it be pleasure to you, but 'tis very little to me. I believe you have a young ward of mine as a pupil in this school?"

"What is his name?"

"Ralph Neville."

"I have no such name on my books," said the doctor coldly.

"Like enough," returned Vesey, "he is sailing under false colours, and what name his brother has hit on for him I do not yet know! But he is in your school, and I am about to take him back with me."

"Indeed?" said Trelawney quietly.

"Ay, indeed!" cried Vesey, giving the table a rap with his hand. "I warrant I'll not let the young rip slip through my fingers a second time! I am his guardian, sir. Now, will you be kind enough to deliver him to me, for I must be going on my way? My coach awaits me outside."

"And how do you propose that I should find a boy—if, indeed, he is here—whose name in the school you do not know?" said the doctor calmly. "You had better furnish me with more particulars."

"Why, hang it, sir, he is a slim young villain of sixteen or less, with yellow-brown hair, and features of a delicate sort, and a proud, supercilious way about him!" cried Vesey impatiently.

"That description does not help me," said Trelawney, who became more cool as Vesey grew more excited.

"Well, then, sir, parade all of them together in your hall, and I will soon pick him out!" shouted Vesey. "Od's fish, man, don't beat about the bush!"

"If you return on Wednesday you will see the boys on parade in the quadrangle," said Trelawney, putting the tips of his fingers together. Vesey did not see the growing storm in his eyes. "It is not my custom to call out four hundred boys, at the instance of a stranger, at eight o'clock at night."

"Now, look ye here, schoolmaster," said Vesey savagely, bringing his fist down on the table, "you are trying to make a fool of me, and you had better leave it, or if—"

Dr. Trelawney rose abruptly.

"You have said enough, sir," he said, in a biting voice, fixing his eyes on Vesey's, his words dropping out like pistol-bullets. "I am not accustomed to this manner of address. Do you hear me?" he added, in a voice that made Vesey jump. "Comport yourself as nearly in the fashion of a gentleman as you can while you are here, or, by the black rood, I will call my men and have you thrown out!"

Vesey gasped and turned white. Full of his own new majesty as a landed gentleman, he had thought to treat the mere dominie with a high hand, and the doctor's mild voice had deceived him. But now he had roused the blood of the fiery Cornishman, and Trelawney's anger burst from him. And, as we know already, Vesey had no stomach for fighting.

"Well, well, sir!" he said, swallowing his choler, and speaking in a lower tone. "I had no wish to affront you, and you will make allowance for a man who has to dance across country after a disobedient young cub on such a cold night as this. But I must have that boy, if it please you, sir," he added lamely. "You will be glad enough to be rid of him, for he will do your school great discredit. He is brother to the notorious rogue and outlaw Dick Neville, and this brother it was who brought him here."

"This, if it is true, certainly seems somewhat awkward," said Trelawney very calmly.

"Yes, sir, a devilsn ugly affair for you, the governors of the school learned how you had admitted a highwayman's brother," said Vesey sharply. "Now, sir, you will see that it is important I should take the lad away from such perilous guardianship as that brother of his. Will you give him up?"

"No, sir, I will not!" "Then I shall apply to the governors of the school for his surrender!" cried Vesey hotly.

"Moderate your voice, sir," said the doctor. "I see you carry a sword at your side, and I shall call upon you to use it if you address me in that manner again."

Vesey subsided uneasily. "As to the governors," said Trelawney, "I shall abide by their decision, not by yours."

"You will have no choice!" exclaimed Vesey. "Come, sir, why this beating about the bush? The boy is best with me. I am his guardian."

"Your authority, I think, has ceased," said the doctor dryly, "since you gave him into the charge of Mr. Stephen Callard, at Duncansby. I know something of Duncansby," he added, fixing Vesey with his eye. Vesey started and changed colour.

"I think you know more of this business than you choose to say," he returned, in a low, savage voice. "So much the worse for you. I go now to apply to your superiors. Good-night to you, sir! We will see who wins!"

The doctor bowed grimly, and Vesey strode out of the room.

The Governor of St. Anstell's.

INDIFFERENT as he had shown himself before his visitor, Dr. Trelawney felt very uneasy and disturbed as he heard Vesey Neville's coach-wheels roll away into the night. All his hopes of keeping Ralph's whereabouts from his powerful relation had been dashed to the ground just as they were at their highest, and the outlook was very black.

"It looks as though Dick Neville and his brother and myself are all in plaguey hot water together," he muttered. "It's plain there's no peace for those who get on the wrong side of the law, and there are

troublesome times coming for me." The front gate bell rang. "Now, who can that be?"

"Sir Henry Stanhope prays you to excuse the lateness of the hour, and would be glad to see you," said the servant.

"The chief governor of the school," muttered the doctor; "now for it! But surely that confounded rogue Vesey cannot have seen him yet? Show Sir Henry up," he added aloud to the servant.

The doctor wondered what was coming. Sir Henry was an old acquaintance, and a great landowner in the neighbourhood. Dr. Trelawney could never quite make him out. The baronet, who was very popular, always seemed to Trelawney to be poking fun at him, as, indeed, he did at everybody. Yet at bottom the doctor knew him to be stern and fierce when need came.

"Ha, Trelawney, how are you?" cried Sir Henry, stamping into the room. He was a cheery-looking, red-faced man of fifty, bluff, handsome, if rather stout, and with twinkling grey eyes. "Pest on it! What a pinching night! If this frost lasts, every hunter in the country will be growing fat in his stall. I looked in, in passing, to beg you to dine with me to-morrow night."

"To-morrow?" said the doctor. "Ha—hum! I fear I shall be busy judging the boys' examination-papers till midnight."

"Oh, burn the examination-papers!" cried Sir Henry, with a guffaw of laughter. "Give all the young rips a holiday, and come and shoot my coverts, and we'll dine afterwards. The south spinneys are as full of woodcock as a dumpling is of currants!"

"I fear it is impossible on such short notice," said the doctor, though he looked very regretful. "Besides, with such responsibilities, I have to deny myself many worldly pleasures."

"Well, you'll dine, at any rate," said Sir Henry. "Vincent and Bailey are coming, and half a dozen others—jolly dogs, every one of them." And Sir Henry, chuckling and taking a huge pinch of snuff, gave the doctor a poke in the waistcoat.

"Never thought of seeing you in a white tie then," chuckled Sir Henry. "You were more coloured than plain in our Oxford days, my boy! Now, sir, I'm going to take no refusal, or, pink me, I'll call you out!" "Very well, I shall be delighted," said the

doctor, laughing in spite of himself, when there came another knock at the door, and who should the manservant show in but Dick Neville himself.

The doctor's face was a picture of consternation; but Sir Henry, who took a sharp glance at Dick, and liked the look of him, broke in:

"A friend of yours, doctor?" he asked.

"Present him to me, Trelawney!"

"Mr. Faulkbourne—Sir Henry Stanhope," said the doctor. "Plague take it!" he muttered to himself, as once more a servant appeared at the door. "I am besieged with visitors to-night!" He raised his voice again.

"I pray you to excuse me, gentlemen; I shall not be long away."

And with a warning glance at Dick the doctor went out to attend the matter which summoned him. He was away longer than he expected—nearly half an hour, in fact—and when he returned to the library he found Dick Neville and Sir Henry walking up and down arm-in-arm, and laughing with great zest.

"Pink me!" cried Sir Henry. "Your young friend is the most entertaining dog I ever met, Trelawney! I have asked him to join us to-morrow night—run me through the body if I'll take any refusal!"

"I shall be charmed, Sir Henry!" said Dick.

The doctor looked the picture of astonishment, but his face cleared. This was not at all an unlucky affair, he saw. It might simplify matters.

"We shall be a most jovial party," said the doctor; "but, Sir Henry, I shall be glad to see you in private for a few minutes before you depart. There is a most grave matter which I must put before you—I know not how you will take it."

"A grave matter!" exclaimed Sir Henry, clapping on his hat and making for the door. "I'm off! Plague it, man, it would spoil my night's rest to have weighty business hung at me this time of the evening! Two mornings a week I give up to matters of business, and a plaguey waste of time it is when a man might be hunting. I never deal with grave affairs except then!"

(There will be another splendid long instalment of our thrilling Highwayman Serial in next week's issue.)

YOURS for 6^d.



This handsome full-sized Gent's Lever Watch sent upon receipt of 6d. After approval send 1/- more, the balance may then be paid by 6 monthly instalments of 2/- each. Guaranteed 5 years. Chain Free with every watch. Ladies' or Gent's Wrist Watches in stock on same terms. Cash returned in full if dissatisfied. Send 6d. now to—**SIMPSONS (BRIGHTON) Ltd. (Dept. 122)** 94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.

HEIGHT COUNTS



in winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Wonderful results. Send P.C. for particulars and our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS FILMS AND ACCESSORIES



OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED LIST NOW READY. Send postcard for copy, post free. MACHINES 7/6 FILMS from 1/- per 100 feet, post free. **FORD'S (Dept. A.P.), 13, RED LION SQ., LONDON, W.C. 1.** Entrance Dune Street.

FREE FUN!—Ventriloquists' Instruments given FREE to all sending 7d. (P.O.) for Sample Magic Trick and List.—**P. FEARING, Travancore, Colwyn Bay.**

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, **UNION JACK SERIES, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.

THE FINEST CAREER FOR BRITISH BOYS.

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Ages 15 to 17 years.

- Men also are required for
- STOKERS Age 18 to 25
- ROYAL MARINE FORCES " 17 " 23
- GOOD PAY ALL FOUND.
- EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M., Birmingham: 621, Coventry Road; Bristol: 123, Victoria Street; London, S.W.1: 55, Whitehall; Manchester: 33, Deansgate; Newcastle-on-Tyne: 115, Rye Hill; or Southampton: 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park.

CHOOSE 75 STAMPS FREE from large pkt sent APPROVALS. Send postage. Genuine applicants only.—**B. L. COORN, 10, Wave Crest, Whitstable, Kent.** Ask for Gift No. 5.

STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON, W.C.1.**

HEIGHT INCREASED 5/- Complete IN 30 DAYS. Course. No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Full particulars and Testimonials, stamp.—**Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. S.), 10, Ludgate Hill, London, Eng.**

CUT THIS OUT

"The Popular." **PEN COUPON.** Value 2d. Send 7 of these coupons with only 2/9 direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4. You will receive by return a splendid British-made 14ct. Gold-Filled Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (fine, medium, or broad nib). If only one coupon is sent the price is 3/9. 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 6. (Pocket Clip, 4d.) Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. *Special New Offer—Your own name in gift letters on either pen for 1/- extra.* **Lever Self-Filling Model Safety Cap, 2/- extra.**