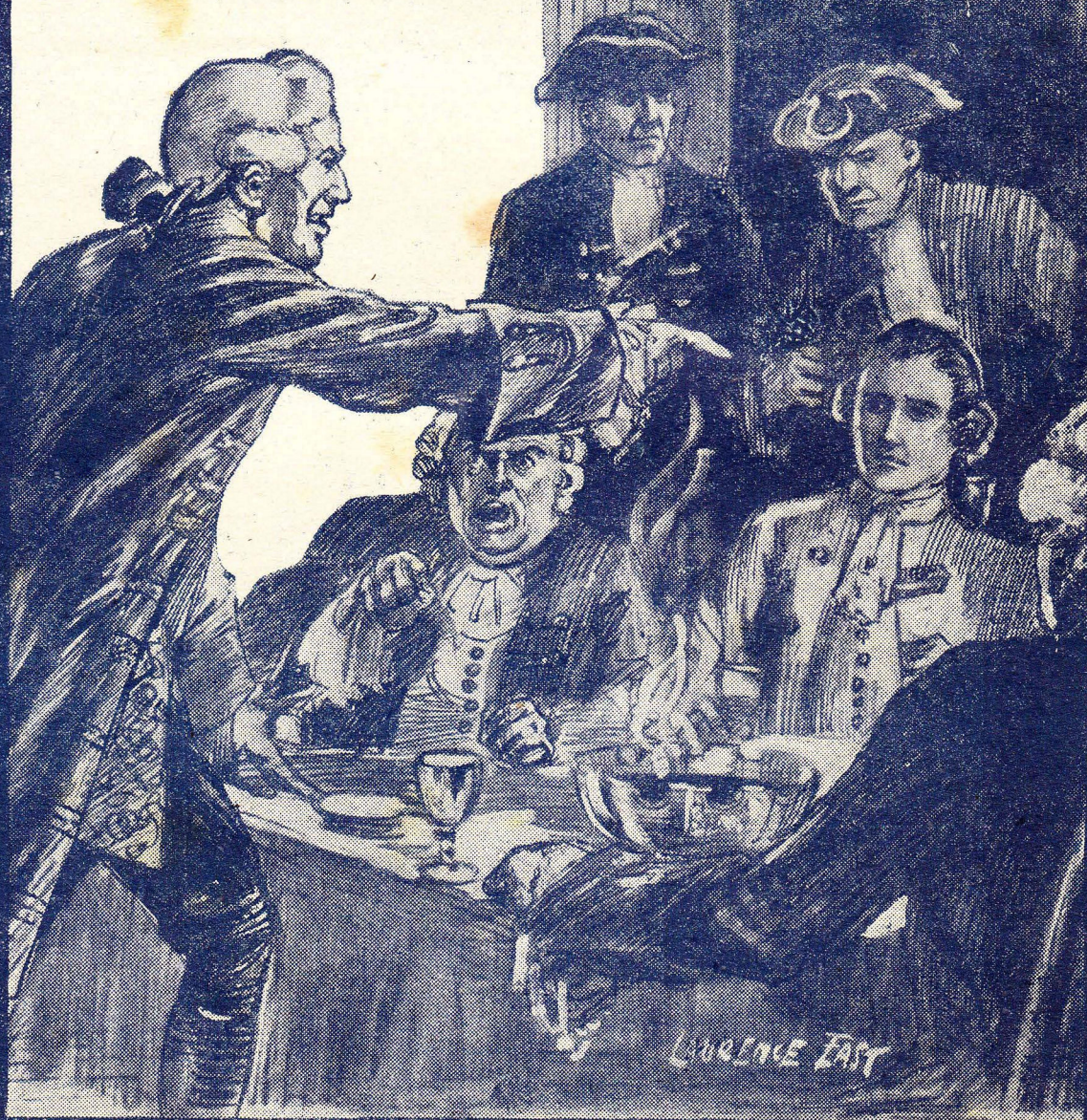


Week Ending
January 24th,
1925.
New Series.
No. 314.

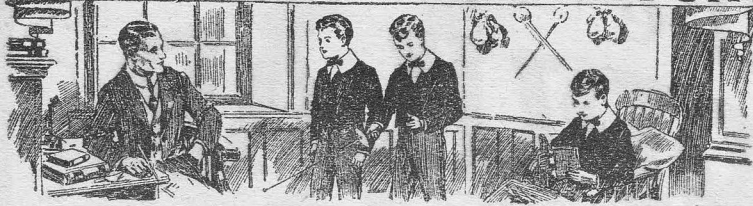
The POPULAR 2^d

Every Tuesday



"ARREST THAT MAN! He is Dick Neville the Highwayman!"
(A Dramatic and Tense Episode from "Dick o' the Highway!" A Wonderful Romance inside.)

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR



BE A SUCCESS!

VERY easy to say that! But how is success to be won? What has the young fellow starting in life to do about it? Of course he is getting on with his job. We all know that. But when he looks out at the future he sometimes feels a doubt as to his powers to win. He knows he wants to strive for greater heights than others. He feels it in him to achieve. It is this notion makes him a shade uneasy. He asks himself whether he ought to be satisfied with the ordinary methods. Is there not something else—something bigger, and outside the old rut? Undoubtedly there is! Now, I have one thing to add here, and I want you to jump to it. You will be grateful for the tip in after years when you are rising hand over fist. Get Part I of "Harmsworth's Business Encyclopedia."

GET IT NOW!

There is no time to be lost! This is a chance in a million! The new Business Encyclopedia is now on sale. The cost will run you into a penny a day. It is a dirt-cheap price to pay for victory. It will pay for it, all the same. The new Business Encyclopedia is written by great men who have conquered. It shows the reader how to do it, how to overcome difficulties which seem gigantic, but which are simple enough if you know the way to go to work. It explains problems, for it is the Book of How to Win. Having said that much I have said all. Make sure of each one of the fort-

nightly parts. This new Encyclopedia will make life fuller and bigger for us all.

"THE RETURN OF PARKER."

By Martin Clifford.

Now for a cut at next week's mammoth "Pop" programme. This St. Jim's yarn is plum-full of thrilling incidents. Parker returns to the school, and what a change is there! Chameleons and leopards can sing small. Parker chums up with the merry "blades," and is hand-and-glove with rank outsiders like Cutts and Mellish. Tom Merry & Co. are much surprised, and with jolly good reason!

"A COOL CUSTOMER!"

Cool he is, this new fellow from the States who comes to Cedar Creek and makes things hum. See the great Thompson Valley yarn for next Tuesday. The lively stranger who strays in from Uncle Sam's land has manners which would freeze the milk. Frank Richards & Co. rise nobly to the needs of the occasion.

"TRUE TO HIS CHUM!"

By Frank Richards.

Next week's yarn of Greyfriars, featuring Harry Wharton & Co., reveals an amazing state of affairs. There has been something in the wind for a long time past. Harry Wharton has caused dismay to his true chums by his hasty actions. He does not seem fit to be a leader. But something happens which gives him a chance to atone for everything.

"CHUMS TO THE RESCUE!"

By Owen Conquest.

A top-hole mystery story of Rookwood, this! Jimmy Silver & Co. win first honours by saving their Form master from the clutches of a ruthless gang of kidnapers. So far, so good! But who are these kidnapers? What is their motive for the dastardly attempt? Everybody is baffled, police included.

A SPECIAL HOBBY SUPPLEMENT.

If space allowed I would say much of next week's grand Hobby Supplement. Unluckily, that is impossible. It is a magnificent issue, anyway, full of clever contributions by experts who know how to handle their subjects.

"DICK O' THE HIGHWAY!"

By David Goodwin.

Don't miss a line of this brilliant drama! We are not far off the thrilling wind-up, and as the great climax draws near the interest gets more intense. Next week Dick Neville has a splendid part to play. You will say once more that it is a superb story.

"POPULAR" SERIALS.

There is just one word I must squeeze in here on the subject of serials. For several years past the "Popular" has been scoring many triumphs with its stories of the old days. Some say the good old days. They were good in heaps of ways, bad in others, same as with all periods. But there was romance to be found in the bygone. Actually you must have about a couple of centuries as foreground, so to speak, to give effect to the real romance. It is time that helps. Now you can take my word for it, the "Popular" is out to keep up its reputation as a serial-provider. The new serial carries on with the "Popular" tradition in a more than usually efficient manner. Look out for fuller information on this matter.

Your Editor.

WIN SUCCESS IN BUSINESS

Fortnightly Parts
1^s/3^D Per Part

This **NEW WORK** will help you to
Tackle a Bigger Job
Earn More Money
Carve out a Big Future for Yourself

Knowledge is the secret of success. When you start in business—any business—it's the little bit of extra knowledge which makes the difference between the boy who stays on junior pay and the boy who climbs from job to job to a big position at the top. This new work will give you much more than a little extra knowledge—it will tell you **all you want to know**, whatever business you take up. Harmsworth's **BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA** will tell you—How to become an Accountant, an Auctioneer, Electrical Engineer, a Shopkeeper, an Architect, or enter any profession you can think of. Once you have decided, or if you have already entered upon a career, it will give you the fullest possible information about every subject connected with it.

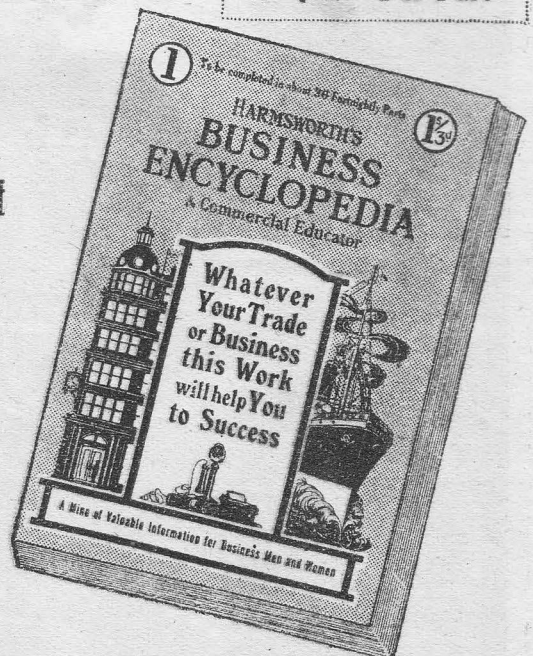
Cabinet Ministers, Treasury Experts, Directors of big Banks, and great Business Men have combined to write the **BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA**. It will be fully illustrated, and the contents will be alphabetically arranged. It is to be issued in fortnightly parts at 1/3 per fortnight. The **ONE PENNY PER DAY** it will cost you may mean hundreds a year to you later on.

HARMSWORTH'S

BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA

On Sale at all Newsagents, Booksellers, and Bookstalls

THE POPULAR.—No. 514.

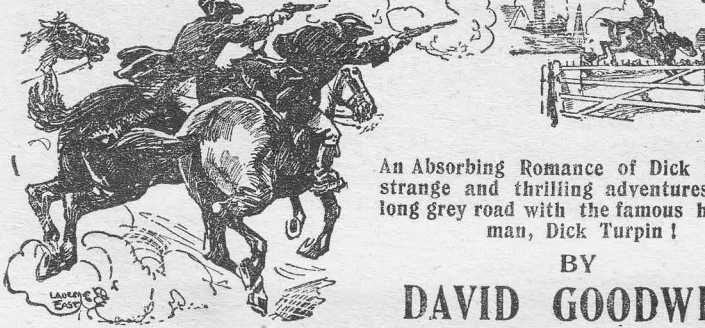


Buy Part I Now

THE SHADOW OF THE GALLOWES!

Dick Neville comes very near to finishing his career on the long grey road of fortune at an early stage, and only just eludes the clutches of his pursuers, the King's Riders.

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 Ralph is installed at St. Anstell's his guardian, Vesey Neville, appears on the scene, and commands Dr. Trelawney to hand Ralph over. But the doctor refuses to do this, and Vesey leaves, vowing revenge. The doctor sees the danger hanging over Ralph now that Vesey has found him; so, with Dick Neville, he goes to one of the governors of the school, a baronet named Sir Henry Stanhope, for advice. But the baronet will not hear what he has to say. "Not now! Come to dinner and tell me!" he says.

(Now read on.)

Their Only Hope!

"**N**AY, but it is of the greatest importance, Sir Henry!" said the doctor eagerly. "I pray you to—"

"I won't hear a word!" cried the baronet, chucking. "Quite impossible at this time of night, and I've some jolly fellows at home waiting for me. Tell me after dinner to-morrow. Good-bye till then, both of you! Don't be late!"

And Sir Henry clattered down the stairs, laughing wickedly, his spurs jingling all the way.

"A very cheery old boy," said Dick, chucking. "He will be rare good company." "No doubt," said the doctor, with a worried air; "but I wish he had listened to me, confound him! I know not what will happen now. And what brings you here, Dick, without a word of warning? It might have been most perilous for both of us."

"I was to blame," said Dick; "but I had made sure of finding you alone, and such an unlucky affair has happened that I thought well to come to you hot-foot without delay. My Uncle Vesey is in the neighbourhood, and it is plain he has tracked Ralph down."

"I know that well," said the doctor grimly; "he was here not an hour ago."

"And what did he say?"

"He ordered me to surrender your brother to him on the instant, and was mighty uncivil."

"If he gets hold of Ralph he will murder him, or get some of his hangers-on to do it, as sure as he murdered my father," said Dick between his teeth.

"We must keep your brother out of his clutches at all costs. But it is a matter

of law, and there, as an outlaw, your hands are tied. Besides, if they capture you, your brother will lose his protector, and become an easy prey to Vesey."

"Where has Vesey gone?"

"Either to the governors of the school, or the magistrates at Hutton. I think the former. Sir Henry Stanhope is the chief governor. That is why I was so anxious to prepare him in some way for what is coming, though, for all his offhand ways, I fear Stanhope is a man of iron when there is need for it."

"I don't know," muttered Dick; "we might deal with a far worse. But it looks ill for us if Vesey lays some lying tale before him first."

"The crux of the matter is this, Dick," said the doctor—"will you take your brother away now that the danger threatens, and try to find a safe harbour for him elsewhere, or shall we fight it out with Vesey here? If you choose the latter, I will stand by you to the end."

"Then let him stay!" said Dick. "There is no place where he could be better, if we defeat Vesey, and it is grave peril for him to ride the country in my company."

"So be it, then!" returned Trelawney; "but, look you, Dick, we are on the edge of calamity, and if I am ordered to give your brother up by the governors, I cannot refuse, by any possibility. So mount and ride, and if there is a way on earth to do it, stop Vesey before he reaches Sir Henry's ear!"

"I'll stop him," said Dick grimly, "with a warrant in each holster! Good-night!"

And a minute later Black Satan cleared the school fence and was lost in the darkness. The doctor sank back in his chair.

Vesey's Plot, and What Came of It!

WHETHER by luck or good management, Vesey Neville kept entirely out of Dick's way next day, nor was the young highwayman able to find where he was staying. Some plan was at work which threw his nephew off the track completely, and while Dick, for once, was off on a fool's errand in the wrong direction, Vesey's coach rolled boldly up to the door of Basing Hall, where Sir Henry Stanhope lived. It was then towards the middle of the afternoon.

"Tell Sir Henry Stanhope that Mr. Neville, of Faulkbourne, waits upon him," said Vesey pompously to the serving-man who opened the great door.

"Mr. Neville, of Faulkbourne?" grunted Sir Henry, when the servant brought him the news. He was pulling on his boots in great haste. "Faulkbourne! Why, that's the name of that amusing young dog who's coming here to-night! What an odd thing!"

"He waits below, sir, and he seems very impatient," said the servant.

"Impatient! Burn him, what's he got to be impatient about?" said Sir Henry, pulling on the other boot. "I don't know him from Adam! I can't see him; I'm very busy."

But at that moment, fearing he was going to be refused, Vesey appeared in the doorway, having prevailed on a servant to show him up.

"Have I the honour—" he began. "Ah, how d'ye do, sir—how d'ye do?" said Sir Henry, snatching up his whip and gloves. "Must beg you to excuse me—can't stop now—most pressing business!"

"Sir, I pray you hear me but a moment!" cried Vesey eagerly. "It is a matter of the greatest urgency!"

"Greatest urgency! Pest! Quite out of the question! Don't think me rude, sir, but all business finished yesterday! I must go now—most important matter—my keeper has a new brace of pointers!"

"For Heaven's sake, listen, sir!" cried Vesey, trying to detain the baronet as he hurried out of the room.

"Couldn't think of it! Come and dine to-night—tell me after dinner—lot of jolly fellows coming—half-past five—don't forget! Good-bye till then, sir!"

And Sir Henry was gone like a whirlwind, leaving Vesey gaping behind him.

"What an extraordinary person!" mumbled Vesey, as he made his way back to his coach. "He shies like a horse at the very sound of business. Well, I must make the best of it, I suppose, and wait till the evening. He will wish he had listened when he hears my news!"

And he drove away.

A little before five that evening Dick Neville and Dr. Trelawney arrived at Basing Hall almost together. They were shown into the large saloon, where Sir Henry welcomed them heartily. Two other governors of the school and half a dozen other guests were there, and Sir Henry's description of them as "jolly dogs" certainly fitted them to a hair.

Dick made himself so agreeable, and amused the company so much, that he soon became the life of the party, and even Dr. Trelawney threw off his scholarly air and began to grow lively.

"There is one more to come," said Sir Henry—"a gentleman who called to-day to see me about something, and as I was too busy to stop, I asked him to join us. Plague me if I can remember his name! Oh, here he is!"

The curtains were swung apart, a servant announced "Mr. Neville, of Faulkbourne!" and Mr. Vesey walked into the room. Sir Henry presented him to several of the guests, who welcomed him, yet looked at him a little askance. His heavy, dark face and gloomy manner were out of place in that jovial assembly.

Suddenly Vesey met Dick's eyes, and the elder man started violently and changed colour. He could hardly believe his senses.

"Mr. Faulkbourne—Mr. Neville!" said Sir Henry, waving them towards each other.

Vesey's face showed a mixture of fear and triumph. Dick looked at him with a cool, ironical smile, and vouchsafed a very slight bow.

"Come, these hangdog servants of mine are a long time serving dinner!" cried Sir Henry. "Let us broach another bottle or so while we are waiting!"

While this pleasing interlude was going on

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

Vesey slipped quietly away. Dick paid no attention to the fact beyond smiling to himself slightly, and just as the banquet was ready Vesey sidled back into the room.

Sir Henry and all the guests went into the dining-hall, and Dick, often as he had dined with country gentlemen upon his travels, sat down to such a feast as he had not seen for many a long day. The fare was admirable, the cooking perfect. There was not a better judge of wines in all England than Sir Henry, and the feast proceeded with jest after jest and story after story. Dick was tacitly voted the most amusing guest that ever put his knees under the mahogany, and the only man there who seemed out of place was Vesey Neville, who sat mum in his seat, fidgety and ill at ease. Presently he glanced towards the door, and half rose from his chair.

"Clear away the rest!" ordered Sir Henry. "Bring on the walnuts and the burgundy, you rascals!"

"Sir Henry," cried Vesey, springing to his feet, "I have to thank you for a most pleasant feast! And now I have a surprise in store. You would not listen to me this morning, but you will be the better pleased now. A rare jest, by my faith!"

"A jest? Then let's have it!" cried Sir Henry, for all the table were looking at Vesey.

"A jest with a sting in the tail," said Vesey. "That free-tongued youngster who sits on your left hand is none other than Dick Neville, the most notorious and red-handed outlaw! A highwayman, sirs—a highwayman!"

A stupefied silence fell upon the table. "Enter men," cried Vesey, waving his arm, "and do your duty!"

Two fully armed King's Riders strode into the room and saluted Vesey.

"Seize that knave there," shouted Vesey, pointing to Dick, "and bind him fast!"

"What, in the fiend's name, is this?" said Sir Henry, springing up, purple in the face. "Stand back there, you rogue!" he cried to the sergeant of the Riders, who was advancing to seize Dick. "Do you hear me?" he added, so fiercely that the man shrank back.

"Od's blood! What do you mean, Sir Henry?" screamed Vesey. "I do assure you the knave is a common robber, and there is a price on his head! I pray you let the men do their duty! I brought them here for the very purpose!"

"Ha! You did?" said Sir Henry, in a voice of thunder, his usual jolly face terrible in its anger, and he turned to the riders. "How now, you dogs? Who gave you leave to tramp into my house, as though it were your barracks? You shall be broken for this!"

"I—I crave pardon, sir!" stammered the sergeant, trembling. "Mr. Neville commanded us here! I thought it was by your orders!"

"You!" cried Sir Henry to Vesey. "You dare to bring armed men into my dining-hall and insult my guests! Blood and hounds! Out with your sword, sir! Make room there, gentlemen, and I will show you the colour of the ruffian's inside!"

And, whipping out his long blade, the old free-eater, beside himself with fury, rushed forward to meet Vesey.

"I will not fight, sir! I cannot fight!" roared Vesey, skipping behind a chair. "I appeal to the company! Plague on it, sir! You cannot mean to shelter a felon?"

"Felon!" cried Sir Henry. "Who says he is a felon? What is your word worth, you black-a-vised rascal? I have no knowledge of his offence; and if he were a highwayman twenty times over, he's a gentleman, odd-rabbit me! And that's more than I can say for you! By the black rood, if you do not draw and face me, my servants shall flog you from the house!"

"I won't!" cried Vesey, drawing his sword, and flinging it on the ground. "I am not a fighting man! I appeal to the company if I have not done my duty before the law!"

"Od's-wounds, sir!" said Sir Adam Vincent, another governor of St. Anstell's. "Tis none of my quarrel, but, if you want my opinion, you are as scurvy a knave as I ever met!"

"And so say all of us!" chorused the others hotly.

"Will you let the outlaw go?" shrieked Vesey.

"Outlaw! I wonder he does not prick you through the ribs for the affront," exclaimed Sir Henry, sheathing his sword with savage contempt—"save that no gentleman would dirty his good steel in the carcass of such a coward!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

"He is Dick Neville," cried Vesey, "and his confounded young brother Ralph, who is my ward, is at St. Anstell's School, and the doctor refused to give him up!"

"I care not if he be fifty times an outlaw!" said Sir Henry. "He is my guest, and my house is my castle! You and your knives of Riders have no right to set foot in it, sir, and I shall do with you as I said! Summon the servants, there!"

"Bravo, Vesey!" said Dick, with a quiet laugh. "You are providing a very pretty after-dinner entertainment!"

Vesey lost all control of himself, and, his fury overcoming his fear at the taunt, he spat out an oath, and struck Dick across the face. The blow was half-guarded, and was a light one; but the young highwayman's eyes blazed like hot coals, and he leaped up.

"Hold!" cried Sir Henry, springing between. "That is enough! We will end the affair here! Sheath your sword, Dick! Sergeant, arrest this man for assaulting a citizen! So it goes best!"

"Nay, let me—" began Dick, struggling to get at Vesey.

"Peace, boy! Remember, you are my guest. This is the best way, believe me. Lay hands on him, men of the Riders! The offence is now yours," said Sir Henry, "and you shall answer for it! Away with him to Hutton cells, and he shall answer to the magistrates in the morning for striking a private citizen! Do you hear, men?"



VESEY FUNKS IT! Whipping out his long blade, Sir Henry rushed forward at Vesey. "I will not fight you!" roared Vesey, skipping behind a chair. "I am not a fighting man!"

(See this page.)

"Ay, sir!" said the sergeant, with alacrity.

And, fearing they were going to get into trouble for their unwarrantable entry into Sir Henry's house, the men hastened to obey his order, and Vesey was dragged, bawling and protesting, out of the room.

"Hark to his bellowing!" said old Sir Henry, shaking with laughter, as Vesey's protesting voice echoed down the hall as the Riders hauled him along. "Pink me, the rogue has no more dignity than honesty! Come, gentlemen, we're well rid of the rascal! Do not let this little matter damp our jollity!"

"I greatly regret, sir," said Dick, rising from his seat, "that I have been the cause of this disturbance in your house, and I think it will be only fitting for me to make my apologies and leave you!"

"Not for one moment!" cried Sir Henry. "There's no apology necessary, and run me through the body if I let you go till the evening's finished! We'll make a night of it!"

"Hear, hear!" cried the rest of the company.

And, filling their bumpers to the brim, they pledged Dick with an uproarious toast.

"But I ought to warn you that the man spoke the truth!" protested Dick. "I am the highwayman, Richard Neville!"

"All the better!" cried the jovial old baronet, who was flushed with excitement and old port. "Gentleman, here's another toast! Long life to Dick Neville, the jolly highwayman, and the best company ever a man had at his board! Rabbit me, I ask no

man's leave as to what guests I should shelter under my roof!"

Dick sat back again in his chair with a laugh, for he saw they had no mind to part with him.

"You are no robber, sir, but a man of honour!" cried Sir Adam Vincent. "And, pink me, if there's any man here finds fault with my words, let him stand out and draw!" he added fiercely, hitching his rapier to hand, and looking round the board.

But the company were quite of his opinion, and cheered Dick again.

"I am vastly honoured!" chuckled Dick. And then he became grave. "But though this is mighty fine, gentlemen, what will be the upshot of it? Vesey Neville will not be long in the cells, and what will be said when it is known you arrested him and let me go free?"

"It is a little awkward, I confess," said Sir Henry. "But, no matter, let the morrow take care of itself! He had no right to bring his confounded Riders marching into my house without a warrant, and a warrant he never had!"

"Nay, that I'll swear to!" cried Sir Adam Vincent. "For I am chairman of the magistrates' bench this week, and I have issued a warrant to no man! Pink me if I'd make a trap of a friend's house, either, even were I asked!"

A burst of laughter greeted this.

"Ay, 'tis only because the knave is too white-livered to catch his man in the open!" said Squire Bailey. "He thought to make sure of him here!"

"To come and dictate to me whether a boy should be given up to him from St. Anstell's!" cried Sir Adam fiercely, filling himself another bumper, and growing redder and redder—"me, the chief governor of the school! I would I had spitted him through the ribs!"

"Ah, there's the rub, by your leave, Sir Adam!" said Dr. Trelawney. "You will agree, by what you have seen of him, that our young guest is well able to take care of himself. But 'tis a different matter for his brother, a mere boy of fifteen, who is in my care."

"Why, what, then?" cried Sir Adam. "He has committed no crime!"

"Nay, he has not; but it is a perilous affair for him to be known as brother to an outlaw. And this man Vesey Neville is his guardian, and demands that he be given up. Indeed, he has demanded it of me already, and I refused. He came here to-night to put the matter before Sir Henry, and force me to obey."

"Egad! He'll have time to think it over in Hutton cells!" chuckled Sir Henry. "But what does he want of the boy?"

Dr. Trelawney turned to Dick; but the young highwayman, though he saw the need, hesitated to lay his family history before a roomful of strangers, and Trelawney, seeing this, did it for him. In a few sentences he told the governors of Vesey's persecution, his attempts to murder Ralph and ruin his brother, and how he had so far been thwarted.

"Is this so, sir?" said Sir Henry, turning to Dick.

"It is the truth," said Dick, "though I should not have intruded my private affairs on you. I can look after myself, as the doctor says, but I own I am troubled about my young brother."

"I wish I had broken that black-hearted villain's neck!" cried Sir Henry. "Did you ever hear such infamy, Vincent?"

"He ought to be hung by the heels!" growled Bailey.

"But, look you," put in Sir Adam more gravely, "there is danger in the wind. If this knave is truly the boy's guardian, we cannot prevent his taking him away. I am chief governor and magistrate, but if I refuse, this Vesey can go to Chancery and force me to give the order."

"And that means death for my brother," said Dick, "if once he is in Vesey's clutches."

"What is to be done?" said Sir Henry.

"Here is my plan," said Dr. Trelawney. "Suppose the boy had one of the school foundation scholarships, entitling him to be kept and taught at St. Anstell's independently of anybody? It would be an obstacle to throw in the path of Vesey's claim. With your help, gentlemen, in such a case, I think the school could refuse to deliver him up."

"Egad, that might well be!" exclaimed Sir Henry. "But how is such a lad to win such a scholarship?"

"By your leave," said Trelawney, drawing a paper from his pocket. "The boy is above

the average in wits when he chooses to work, so I have been keeping his nose to his desk of late for this very purpose. He made marvellous progress, and even this day I put him to the test, and the scholarship is his. Now, gentlemen, if you will but put your signatures to it, confirming the boy by your authority as a Foundation Scholar of St. Anstell's, I warrant we shall have no poor chance of keeping Vesey Neville at bay."

Dick leaped to his feet.

"Doctor," he cried, "you have shown us all the way! A thousand thanks to you!"

"The very thing!" cried Sir Adam. "A master-stroke! Come, Stanhope and Bailey, and put your names to this screed, and we will see if we cannot defeat this villain for good!"

Kidnapped!

THE three governors signed the scholarship deed on the spot, and Trelawney, with a grim smile, put it back in his pocket.

"It comes into effect to-morrow," he said, "and if we can but hold Vesey Neville off till noon his chance of lifting his young nephew from St. Anstell's will be gone. And that delay, thanks to the blow which led to his arrest, we have already gained."

"Though, beshrew me," said Sir Adam, "now the port is out of my head, I fancy he will make it hot for some of us. But now we must hold him at all costs overnight. Hallo! Who the mischief is this?"

The curtains were thrown back, and a small, breathless form ran into the room. It was Ralph!

"You infernal young rascal!" cried the doctor. "How dare you leave the school—hey, sir? It's long after 'lights out!'"

"I know it, sir," panted Ralph. "I'll take my whacking for it. But I let myself out of the dormitory window to see if I could find Dick."

"What is it, young 'un?" cried Dick, starting up. "Anything wrong?"

"I came to tell you about Vesey, Dick. He's after us both. I didn't know if you knew. But that's nothing. I saw him a few minutes ago in the hands of the King's Riders. What does it mean? Who arrested him?"

"He was arrested by my order, youngster, for striking your brother in my house," said Sir Henry.

"Ah!" cried Ralph. "Then if someone does not hasten after him he will be free again while you are all sitting here at wine. Four of his bullies have come to his aid, and are trying to rescue him. The two Riders are making a brave stand, but they were well-high overpowered when I saw them."

"By the black rood," cried Sir Henry, springing up, and hauling on the bell-ropes, "we must see to this! Hi, there! Have the beasts saddled and brought here instantly! To horse, gentlemen, and set this matter straight!"

The guests leaped to their feet and ran to the door, Vincent and Bailey at their head, while Sir Henry hurried off to summon his men and give his orders. In less than two minutes Stanhope, Vincent, Bailey, and Dick were mounted and ready.

"Here, young 'un," cried Sir Henry to Ralph, "you come with us and show us the way. That'll save time in talking." And, gripping Ralph under the arm, he swung the boy up in front of him in the big hunting-saddle, and set spurs to his horse.

"Right away by Burton's Spinney!" cried Ralph, in high delight. "That was where I last saw them."

Away swept the four horsemen into the night, their hoofs striking fire from the flint stones, Dick riding beside Sir Henry, and Sir Adam snorting and swearing lustily.



STARTLING NEWS! The curtains were thrown back and a small, breathless form ran into the room. It was Ralph! "Vesey is after us!" cried the boy. "I saw him a few minutes ago with the King's Riders. What does it mean?" (See this page.)

"Now mind, Dick Neville, you're to keep out of this fray!" cried Sir Henry.

"We'll deal with the rascals ourselves."

"Oh, plague on it! I must have a slap at them!" cried Dick eagerly.

"Nothing of the sort! I know best, sir. If you mix in it you'll crab the whole thing, and make it worse for us. At any rate, don't join in unless we need help badly."

Dick was forced to see the reason of this, and reluctantly he agreed. His new friends were men of influence, one of them a magistrate, and Vesey was bringing himself within reach of the law. He, the outlaw, could have no hand in it, but he fervently hoped the others would be so hard pressed that he might join in and strike a good blow. To be out of any fracas that was going was misery to Dick Neville.

"Yonder they are!" cried Ralph, pointing to a knot of dark figures striving together at the edge of the spinney.

"Push on, lads!" cried Sir Henry. "The Riders are hard pressed. Charge!"

A wild thrill of exultation filled Ralph as he felt the wind whistling in his ears and swift hoofs bearing him onward. He saw the two Riders, one with an arm hanging useless by his side, standing over Vesey's handcuffed form, and fighting stoutly with two huge ruffians whom Ralph knew well to be paid followers of his uncle's. Another lay disabled on the ground. But just at that moment two more bullies came running up, and the Riders were in a fair way to being overpowered.

"THE TREASURE OF BLACK MOON ISLAND!"

Amazing New Romance

COMING SHORTLY!

Vesey, who had been shouting to his men to encourage them, bellowed lustily with fright as he saw Ralph's gleeful face over the ears of Sir Henry's horse, and struggled in his bonds.

"Down with 'em! Ride 'em down!" shouted Sir Henry. "Give them the crops of your whips!"

There was a loud howl as the horsemen flung themselves on the ruffians, and two of Vesey's men were bowled head-over-heels. A third was felled by Sir Adam's whip, and the last took to his heels and bolted into the woods.

"Thank Heaven, your honours are just in time!" panted the sergeant of the Riders. "Another minute and they would have murdered us, for the odds were long!"

"Bind those knaves we have knocked down!" ordered Sir Henry. "Make 'em fast!"

The Riders throw themselves on the prostrate ruffians and bound their wrists behind them. They were all able to walk, and were hoisted on to their feet.

"You scoundrel!" cried Vesey to Sir Henry, beside himself with rage at being thwarted just as he had hoped for freedom. "This is more of your work, is it? You are in league with that brat and his outlaw brother, and you think to ride over me with a high hand?"

"Are these your men?" said Sir Henry, pointing to the captives, and paying no attention to Vesey's accusations.

The squire of Faulkbourn checked himself and hesitated a moment. He saw the trap.

"Nay," he cried, with an oath, "they are but honest fellows, who, finding a gentleman in the hands of these King's Riders for no cause, did their best to help him. It is blackmail, and no less!"

"He lies, Sir Henry!" said Ralph coolly. "Those men are paid bullies of his. I know them well."

"You have cooked your goose this time, Mr. Neville, of Faulkbourn," said Sir Henry dryly. "Sergeant, take him to the cells, and these ruffians with him. My men will accompany you, and guard against any further attack."

The prisoners were marched off, Vesey in their midst, a guard of Sir Henry's servants, who had arrived, going with them.

"A very pretty brush," said Sir Henry to Dick as they rode back. "Your uncle has fouled his own nest with a vengeance this time. Be ready to give me your aid, and I think to-morrow we may

rid ourselves of Mr. Vesey Neville, of Faulkbourne."

"Well, Dick, are you wondering what sort of a rope they'll hang you with?"

Dick glanced up, and his face cleared as he saw Black Bess trotting towards him, with Turpin's devil-may-care figure on her back. The young outlaw had been riding to and fro all the morning between Basing Hall and Hutton, chafing because he was unable to hear what was going on at the courts. It was the morning after the banquet at Sir Henry's; the time close upon noon. Dick had been sternly forbidden by the old baronet to show himself near the court-house, for fear of imperiling his young brother's chances.

"Hallo, Turpin! Is it you?" he said. "Here have I been eating my heart out ever since this morning, wondering what is passing at Hutton. We had rare sport last night, but now the affair is coming to a head I am very anxious. I was dining with Sir Henry—"

"Ay, I know all about that!" said Turpin. "I heard it before sunrise, from one of Stanhope's men. I am like to tell you more than you can tell me. What do you want to know, that you are riding up and down like this?"

"I want to know how Vesey comes out of the wars," said Dick, "for I doubt he has the best of us over this affair, for we carried matters with too high a hand. And that's more than you can tell me, though I know you pride yourself on being always abreast of the news."

"Then you're out once more," said Turpin, coolly taking snuff, "for this very morning I saw Vesey turn all the colours of the rainbow, and I'm first with the news, too."

"What! Then where were you?"

"In the Hutton Court-house."

"Od's bodkins! You don't mean it?"

"Why not?" said the highwayman, grinning. "Many a judge who hopes to hang me I have sat and listened to. It gives me many a hint for when my time comes. I left Bess in a cottager's shed, and went to Hutton, with a labourer's smock-frock over my riding-clothes. Ho, ho! They little thought Turpin sat by them, with his pistols under the linen!"

"By the rood, you're a daring rascal!" said Dick, all anxiety to hear what had passed. "How did Vesey fare?"

"Why, he was brought in looking as green and yellow as a half-ripe marrow after his night in the cells. He protested that he was the squire of Faulkbourne; but they clapped him in the dock with his rascals, all in a bunch."

"Ho, ho!" chuckled Dick. "I wish I had refused Sir Henry's advice and gone myself."

"A good thing he has more sense than you," said Turpin, "for you'd have spoiled the whole thing. Well, they read the charges against him, in language that made him wriggle and curse under his breath, and they called on him to answer for having assaulted a citizen in a private house."

"Citizen!" squeals Vesey. "Twas the highwayman, Dick Neville, and Sir Henry Stanhope sheltered him! Where is this citizen who charges me? Bring him forth!"

"So the usher calls aloud for 'Richard Faulkbourne,' and, of course, you were not there. I winked to myself, Dick. Old Sir Henry is no fool; he knew what he was about."

"It seems the prosecutor is not present," said the chairman of the bench, 'so the case falls out.'

"But I have been lying in the cells all night, like a common felon!" squeaks Vesey. "I say it was Dick Neville, the outlaw!"

"If you are not quiet," says the old cock in the chair—Sir Adam Vincent—"I'll commit you for contempt of court! This charge is abandoned, since the prosecutor is not here; but there is a far graver one to follow."

"So the usher reads out a charge of resisting the King's officers, and that the ruffians in the dock had made a murderous attack on the King's Riders, which caused Sir Adam to become tremendously solemn."

"So he had," said Dick. "I saw him put away three bottles myself. These old fox-hunters have heads like timber-baulks."

"It didn't improve his temper," said Turpin; "he scowled at Vesey as if he would eat him; and half a dozen witnesses came up to prove that the ruffians in the dock had made a murderous attack on the King's Riders to rescue Vesey."

"What have you got to say, sir?" thundered the old chairman. "Do you deny that these vile knaves of yours, by your order, tried to rescue you from the officers of the law?"

"Vesey swore they were not his men; they only tried to save him from a wrongful arrest by rascally Riders who had been bribed by Sir Henry. But the ruffians themselves thought they could shelter themselves behind Vesey, so they all owned they had only done what he had paid them to do."

"Vesey nearly collapsed at that, and at first I thought Sir Adam would send him back to limbo. But he couldn't do that; so he sent the ruffians there instead, and sentenced Vesey to the biggest fine he could—twenty-five guineas. Vesey wanted to stay and talk about the wicked highwayman, Dick Neville, and the infamous Sir Henry who had refused to have him arrested; but they took the fine off Vesey—he paid it as if it tore his heart-strings out—and bundled him out of court."

Dick laughed till his sides ached at Turpin's account of the trial, and the two made merry over it. Then Dick suddenly became grave again.

"Did you see where Vesey went when he left the court-house?" he said.

"Nay, I did not. But he'll not trouble you any more for a while; he has too severe a set-back. He'll get nothing out of the Hutton magistrates. In fact, he's at a dead-lock."

"You don't know the knave," said Dick; "he's all the more to be feared for that. He'll play a bold stroke and a new one. I wish I could get some inkling what it may be. Vesey is never at a loss for long."

"What can he do?" said Turpin. "Hark! What comes yonder?"

The two friends listened. The sound of wheels and hoofs beat upon their ears, and soon they saw a two-horse postchaise swinging along the road past them.

"Help—help!" cried a clear, boyish

(Continued on page 28.)

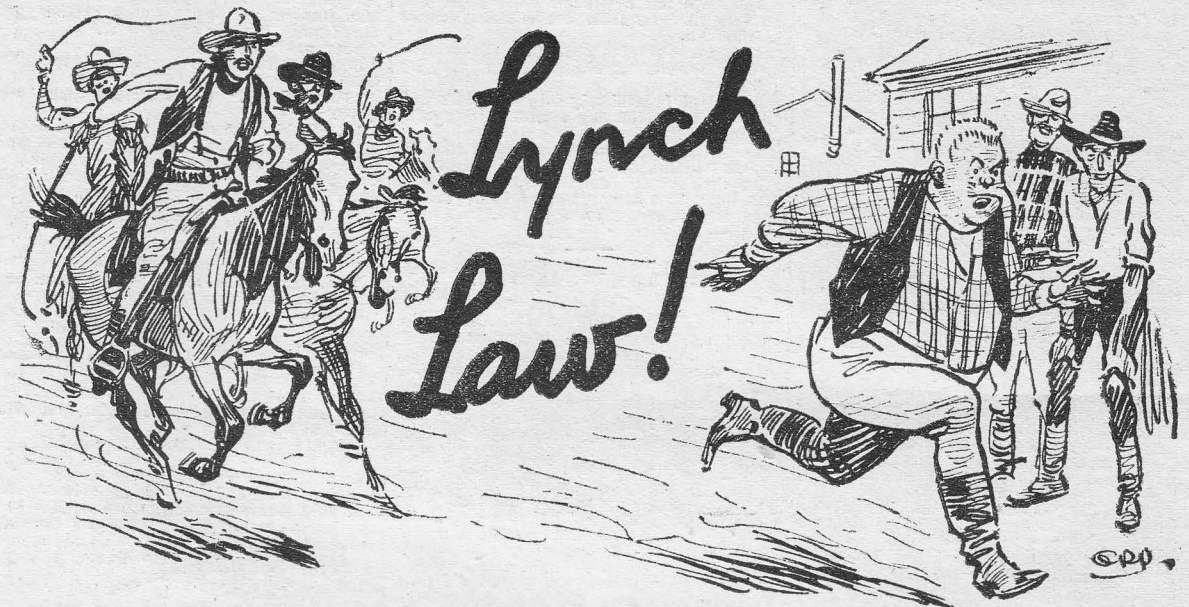


TO THE RIDERS' RESCUE! "Down with them! Ride the rascals down!" cried Sir Henry. "Give them your whips!" There was a wild yell as the horsemen flung themselves on the ruffians and two of Vesey's men were bowled head-over-heels. (See page 5.)

COWBOYS TO THE RESCUE!

hands in dealing with the rascally Swiss, Gunten. They are not men to stand aside and watch the persecution of one of their fellows!

The ranchmen of the Thompson Valley take the law into their own



An Extra-Special, Long, Complete story of FRANK RICHARDS' schooldays in the Lumbet School of the Canadian Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Cowboys to the Rescue!

"I GUESS there's trouble thar!" Billy Cook, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch, bent his head a little, and listened.

From the distance, in the evening shadows, came the echoing of rapid revolver-shots.

Five stalwart ranchmen were riding up the trail on the northern side of Thompson Town, Billy Cook in the lead. And the sound of firing came to their ears from beyond the patch of pine and larch that hid the Hopkinse's clearing from their sight.

"Shootin'," continued Billy Cook. "Jest like young Bob Lawless to land himself in the middle of it. Lucky his popper sent us to look arter him. Get your quirts ready, and come on!"

The ranchmen turned from the trail, following a rough bridge-track towards the Hopkinse's homestead.

They came through the screen of pines, and in the setting sun, a rather startling scene burst upon their view.

The Hopkinse's log cabin was closed up, door and windows barred and shuttered. Within that cabin were Frank Richards & Co., of Cedar Creek School.

At a distance from it, lying in cover among the scrub and tree stumps, were half a dozen roughly-clad men, "bulldozers" every one of them, keeping up a revolver-fire on the shuttered windows.

The pistol-shots spattered on the thick pinewood, without doing any damage beyond scarring the wood. They could not penetrate into the cabin.

Billy Cook surveyed the scene grimly. "That's the Red Dog crowd!" he remarked. "And thar's Old Man Gunten egging them on, by thunder!"

"Old Man Gunten," the storekeeper and moneylender of Thompson, was standing behind a tree, watching the besieged cabin from that safe cover. Neither Gunten nor the Red Dog ruffians observed the cattlemen riding up behind them. They were too busy. It was not till Billy Cook and his companions were close at hand that Mr. Gunten caught sight of them. The fat Swiss storekeeper gave a start at the sight of the horsemen from the Lawless Ranch.

He called out to his men, and the spattering fire of his revolvers ceased. Keno Kit and his gang stared round surlily at the ranchmen.

"Waal, I guess we've arrove in time for the circus, Old Man Gunten," remarked Billy

Cook, drawing rein within a couple of yards of the fat storekeeper.

Mr. Gunten scowled at him. "You're not wanted here!" he snapped. Billy Cook grinned.

"I guess you're mistooked, Mr. Gunten. Keep that shooter down, Keno Kit, or you'll get my quirt round your shoulders before you can say 'No sugar in mine!'"

Billy Cook made a movement with the heavy cattlemen's whip he carried in his hand.

"I guess you've no business here!" snarled Keno Kit, but he lowered the revolver.

"What do you want, Billy Cook?" demanded Mr. Gunten. "What the thunder have you come along here for now?"

"Old Man Lawless sent us along," explained the ranch foreman. "Young Todgers arrove with a message that Bob Lawless and Frank Richards were puttin' up to-night at the Hopkinse's shebang. Old Man Lawless scented trouble, and sent us along to inquire. You see, all Thompson knows that you've got a claim on Hopkinse's farm, and that you're tryin' to get his land off him, and so—"

"If you want to know, I've foreclosed on a mortgage on the holding!" said Mr. Gunten sourly. "I'm here to take possession!"

"The sheriff's the man to put you in possession, if you've got an order from the court at Fraser."

"The sheriff's away, down at Kamloops."

"I guess you'll have to wait till he's home agin, then."

"That's my business!" said Mr. Gunten savagely. "Everyone in that cabin is welcome to walk out if he chooses. But if it's held against me, the proper owner, I'm going to set it on fire!"

Billy Cook shook his head. "I guess not!" he said. "Young Todgers told us that you'd been offered the money due on the mortgage—"

"Too late!"

"You won't take the money?"

"No, I won't!" snapped Mr. Gunten. "I know my own business best, and I choose to take the property."

The ranch foreman looked at him keenly.

"I dunno how the law stands about that," he said. "I guess the sheriff wouldn't be in a hurry to turn a settler out of his homestead when you're offered your dollars. Pr'aps thar's why you're trying to get possession while Mr. Henderson is away at Kam-

loops. Anyhow, this is clear agin the law. You can't take possession with a gang of bulldozers from the Red Dog, without any representative of the court hyer. And you're not going to be allowed!"

"Who's going to stop me?" shouted Mr. Gunten.

"I am!" answered the ranchman coolly. "That's what I'm hyer for! Your bulldozers are going to stand off instanter! I give them two minutes to abquatulate!"

There was a growl among the Red Dog crowd, and they handled their revolvers.

Billy Cook regarded them serenely.

"Two minutes!" he repeated. "Arter that we're goin' to begin on you with our cattle-whips! I guess if you use those shooters you'll be sorry for it arterwards! There's a rope in Thompson for any galoot who forgets that he's in Canada, and thinks he's at home in Oregon, and lets off his shootin'-iron reckless! But take your chiece! Boys, get your quirts ready!"

The cattlemen grinned, and grasped their heavy whips in readiness for the fray.

Keno Kit and his comrades looked at one another.

As a matter of fact, they dared not venture upon reckless shooting, which might have led to fatalities, such fatalities being called, in the Thompson Valley, by the unpleasant name of murder, with punishment appropriate to follow. The manners and customs of the Oregon mining-camps were not safe to practise on the Canadian side of the border.

Old Man Gunten, too, realised that it would not do.

He was a prominent citizen of Thompson, and he had his position there to consider. A pitched battle, with two or three deaths to follow, was a rather too serious matter for the fat Swiss to contemplate. And he had a very keen concern for his own fat, unhealthy skin.

He made a sign to his followers, which gave them the excuse they wanted for "backing down."

The Red Dog ruffians, still growling threateningly, drew off, and started for Thompson.

Billy Cook watched them out of sight, with a serene grin, and then rode on to the log cabin, and smote on the door with the butt of his whip.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot!

FRANK RICHARDS opened the door of the log cabin.

Never had Frank been so glad to see the brawny foreman of his uncle's ranch.

Frank Richards & Co. had come there to help Mr. Hopkins and his son Harold to hold the fort against Mr. Gunten's myrmidons, and they had held it successfully so far. The rattling pistol-shots outside had done no damage. The fusillade had been intended chiefly to scare the garrison into surrender. But if Mr. Gunten had carried out his threat of setting fire to the cabin, the situation of the garrison would have been serious enough. The arrival of the cowboys had changed the aspect of affairs, however.

"Hallo, old Billy!" called out Bob Lawless. "Jolly glad to see you!"

"Never so glad to see anybody!" remarked Vere Beauclerc, with a smile. I suppose Mr. Lawless guessed that trouble was going on here?"

"I guess he did," grinned Billy Cook. "It wasn't very difficult to guess. Anybody hurt?"

"No," said Frank; "only some of those ruffians have some small-shot in their legs from Mr. Hopkins' shotgun."

"And they'd 'ave 'ad some in their 'eads if they ain't cleared off," remarked Harold Hopkins, the Cockney of Cedar Creek. "They ain't taking our 'ome off of us!"

Billy Cook chuckled. Harold's difficulty with the aspirates was very entertaining to the Canadians.

Old Man Gunten had followed the cattlemen to the log cabin, and now he looked in at the doorway with a frowning face.

Mr. Hopkins eyed him grimly.

The Swiss storekeeper stepped inside.

"What may you happen to want?" asked Billy Cook, looking at him.

"Possession of this cabin and clearing," answered the storekeeper. "I can show you the order of the court authorising me—"

"I guess that's of no interest to me," answered the ranchman. "I ain't looking at any of your dockments. But if this was my cabin, I'd take you by the scruff of the neck and fire you in two shakes of a coyote's tail!"

Mr. Hopkins pointed to the door.

"Houtside!" he said.

"The law—"

"Never mind the law," said the settler. "You've been offered your money, and that's enough. Take it, if you like—"

"I refuse to touch it, and I claim my rights here!" said the Swiss savagely.

The settler advanced upon him, and Mr. Gunten backed into the doorway again.

There he stopped, uneasy but defiant.

"If you lay hands on me—" he began.

"I'll do that fast enough."

The settler suited the action to the words at once.

He grasped the fat Swiss, spun him round, and planted a heavy boot behind him.

Old Man Gunten flew out of the cabin under that powerful propulsion, and landed on all-fours two or three yards away, yelling.

There was a roar of laughter from the cattlemen.

"We'll see that galoot back to Thompson," said Billy Cook. "I guess he won't want to go on the war-path agin when we're through with him. Come on, pards!"

As Mr. Gunten scrambled furiously to his feet the cattlemen's whips cracked round him.

"Off you go!" called out Billy Cook.

"I-I— Yaroo!" howled the storekeeper, as the ranchman's whip curled round his legs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stand back! I— Yoooooop!"

Four or five long quirts were lashing round the storekeeper's fat legs, and he took to his heels, howling.

The cattlemen rode after him as he started in flight towards Thompson. They kept pace with him, riding round him, cracking their whips, and giving him an occasional cut round the legs, roaring with laughter.

Mr. Gunten was not a sprinter; he had too much weight to carry. But he put on a remarkable speed as he headed for the town.

The cracking whips hunted him all the way to Thompson, and he arrived in Main Street red and panting and perspiring, and babbling with fury.

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

The sight of the fat storekeeper scuttling up the street, with the laughing cowboys cracking their whips round him, drew a crowd at once.

There were yells of laughter on all sides. Mr. Gunten was a prominent and wealthy citizen, but not a popular one. There was no help for him from the chortling crowd in Main Street.

Right up to Gunten's store he was escorted by the ranchmen, with cracking, stinging quirts.

He bolted breathlessly into the store and escaped at last, leaving a mob roaring with laughter outside.

Then Billy Cook and his comrades rode on to the Occidental for liquid refreshment after their efforts, and it was at rather a late hour that they galloped home to the Lawless Ranch across the prairie.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Gold!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. stayed the night in the Hopkins' homestead.

Door and windows were barred, but the night passed without any disturbance. Old Man Gunten and his myrmidons had been effectually scared off by the ranchmen.

The chums of Cedar Creek were up soon after dawn.

They breakfasted with the settler in the cabin, and over breakfast Frank Richards was wearing a very thoughtful look.

Frank was giving the affair a "big think."

The fact that Old Man Gunten had lent more money on the homestead than it was worth in the market, and that he had refused to accept his money with interest added, was very perplexing, and Frank had been trying to think out an explanation of the mystery.

Tyrannical and overbearing as the fat Swiss was by nature, his greed of dollars was his ruling passion, and evidently he had some more powerful motive for his conduct than the mere desire to show his power and "act ugly."

If he refused the offer of five hundred dollars, it could only be because the holding was worth more than that sum to him. Which was very perplexing, because better holdings could have been bought, up and

the Thompson Valley, for less money.

Frank, conning over that curious in his mind, found an explanation at last—assisted, perhaps, by the sound of the miners at work on the creek, the "placer" claims being very near the Hopkins' homestead on Cedar Creek.

"I think I've got it," Frank remarked at last, after a long silence.

"What and which?" asked Bob.

"Old Man Gunten is bent on getting hold of Mr. Hopkins' land," said Frank. "Why?"

"Because he's a pesky coyote," said Bob. Frank Richards laughed.

"He would rather have the money, unless the land was worth more than five hundred dollars to him," he said.

"That's what beats me," said Mr. Hopkins. "This holding wouldn't fetch that if I sold it in Thompson. And I ought to know the value of the land I've worked on."

"There's only one explanation," said Frank quietly. "The land's worth more than you suppose, Mr. Hopkins."

The settler shook his head.

"I guess I know what it will produce," he said. "Of course, with money spent on it for fertilisers and agricultural machinery, it would be worth a lot more. But there's better land down the valley; if Old Man Gunten wants to try farming."

"It's this holding he wants," said Frank, "and it can't be for farming. There's something else."

"What else, then?" asked Beauclerc, with wide-open eyes.

Frank waved his hand towards the diggings along the creek.

"What about gold?" he said.

"Gold!"

Frank Richards nodded.

"Yes. The placer miners are at work just over Mr. Hopkins' border. There's gold close at hand, anyway. Suppose Old Man Gunten has found that there was gold in this land?"

"Pshaw!"

"It's quite likely," said Frank. "There's quartz cropping up in the soil, and it's close to the gold-bearing rocks. The fact is, that's the only possible explanation of Old Man Gunten acting in this way. He's a beast! But he doesn't want to make himself

unpopular for nothing, and lose money by doing it. I've heard that he's planning to stand for the legislature; and turning a farmer out of house and home isn't the way to get votes in the valley, is it? The land's worth more than Mr. Hopkins knows; that's the only way of accounting for what Old Man Gunten is doing. And it can only be worth much if there's gold in it."

"My hat!" said Beauclerc.

Bob Lawless gave a long, expressive whistle.

"Great Scott!" was Harold Hopkins' remark.

Mr. Hopkins sat silent. The simple settler had been puzzled and perplexed by Old Man Gunten's apparently inexplicable determination to seize upon his holding. But he had never thought of that explanation.

He nodded at last slowly.

"It's possible!" he said.

"Have you ever come across traces of the yellow?" asked Bob Lawless eagerly.

"Oh, yes! The soil's mighty poor and rocky for farming. There's traces of gold turned up in half the farms hereabouts," said Mr. Hopkins. "Not enough for pay-dirt, but enough to show. But I've never thought—"

"Great Jerusalem!" said Bob. "That's the explanation, of course! We were jays not to think of it before! You've got to hold on to this land, Mr. Hopkins, like grim death to a nigger!"

"You bet!" said the settler concisely.

"If there's gold in the soil," continued Frank Richards, "it may be no end of a bonanza—in fact, it must be valuable for Old Man Gunten to be so keen on it. You can get one of Mr. Isaacs' surveyors here, Mr. Hopkins, to make an examination and report. And, meanwhile, Old Man Gunten has got to be headed off!"

"We'll take a note to Mr. Isaacs' office on our way to school," said Bob Lawless.

"I guess that's the proper caper!" said the settler slowly. "It's a chance that Richards is right, at least; it makes it all clear, and it was a puzzle before. You'll stay at 'ome from school to-day, 'Aroid, and 'elp 'old the cabin if there's trouble. And I'm expectin' Bill 'ome to-day, too—he ought to be 'ere any minute. I'll write that there note to Mr. Isaacs now."

A little later Frank Richards & Co. called to their horses to start. A big, bronzed young man rode in from the southern trail as they were starting. It was Bill Hopkins, the settler's eldest son, from Kamloops. With three Hopkinses at home, the chums of Cedar Creek felt that the holding would be safe enough if Old Man Gunten recommenced his tactics. They rode away in cheerful spirits to Thompson.

At that hour of the morning Thompson was generally a quiet town; it did not, as a rule, "wake up" till nightfall. But on this especial morning there was unusual excitement in the frontier town.

As Frank and Bob and Beauclerc rode into Main Street they found a crowd gathered there outside Gunten's store. The crowd looked excited, and Bob recognised among them two or three cattlemen from the Lawless Ranch.

"Something's on!" remarked Frank Richards.

"Up against Old Man Gunten, I guess!" said Bob Lawless. "I fancy the burg has heard now about his trying to turn Mr. Hopkins out of his home. There may be trouble for the old rascal!"

"Serve him right!"

"You bet!"

The chums rode on to Mr. Isaacs' office, which was just open. Mr. Isaacs was a gentleman of the Oriental persuasion, who "financed" mining concerns, and did a great business with prospectors on "grub-stakes," and supplied surveyors and engineers for the more important mines, and also lent money at considerable interest—having many irons in the fire. There was no love lost between Mr. Isaacs and Old Man Gunten, whose money-lending activities Mr. Isaacs regarded as poaching upon his special preserves. And although Old Man Gunten often alluded scornfully to Mr. Isaacs as a "sheeney," there was no doubt that Mr. Isaacs was the more honest man of the two.

Mr. Isaacs received the settler's note, and read it with much interest, and smiled and rubbed his hands.

"I guess my man will be with Mr. Hopkins inside an hour," he said. "Goot-morning, young shentlemen!"

Frank Richards & Co. left the office, feeling quite satisfied. Mr. Isaacs' own personal feud with Old Man Gunten was a guarantee

that he would do his best to help the victim of the Swiss storekeeper.

There was a roar of voices in the direction of Gunten's store, and the chums rode back in that direction. They were keenly interested in what was going on there.

The crowd outside the store was thickening.

Cattlemen from the ranches, placer-miners from the creek, "hands" from the quartz-mines, small-holders from down the valley, and all sorts and conditions of "galoots," had gathered in strong force, letting the business of the morning slide while they gave their attention to the affair in hand. And the affair in hand was, apparently, the bringing to order of Mr. Gompers Gunten.

"Lynch him!" was a cry being raised in sections of the crowd, as Frank Richards & Co. came along.

Bob Lawless grinned.

"Old Man Gunten don't look like being popular just at present," he remarked.

"Hallo, you fellows!" Chunky Todgers, on his fat little pony, joined the chums in Main Street. Like them, he was on his way to school, but was letting school stand over for a while. "I say, there's going to be trouble here! The whole town's talking about Old Man Gunten and Hopkins!"

"Looks like it!" said Frank, laughing. "I fancy they're going to rush the store!" said Chunky Todgers. "If the place is wrecked, you chaps, do you think a fellow would be justified in helping himself to some maple sugar?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's been a row last night," continued Todgers. "Some of the citizens cleaned out the Red Dog saloon, looking for Keno Kit and his gang. Those bulldozers are hiding away now. I reckon they'd get strung up if the crowd found them! I say, what do you think Old Man Gunten is feeling like just now?"

The chums of Cedar Creek chuckled.

Old Man Gunten at that moment was probably in the bluest funk of his career.

In his dealings with Mr. Hopkins he had acted within the letter of the law, certainly—as did Shylock when he demanded his pound of flesh. But the letter of the law did not matter much to the rough-and-ready citizens of Thompson.

All they knew was that the greedy money-lender was taking advantage of a legal technicality to turn a hard-working man, with his family, out of house and home, and conduct like that was not popular in the Thompson Valley of British Columbia.

Mr. Gunten, with all his sharpness and cunning, had certainly never foreseen what a storm he was raising about his own ears.

"There'll be bad trouble!" said Beaulerc, watching the buzzing crowd from his horse. "The sheriff's away, too. I say, Frank, this is a rather good time for dealing with Gunten!"

"How do you mean?"

"You offered him the money yesterday to clear up Mr. Hopkins' debt to him, and he refused it."

"Well?"

"Would he refuse it now, with this merry mob under his windows, do you think?"

Frank Richards started.

"My hat! Good for you, Cherub! Come on! We'll go and see Gunten!"

And the chums of Cedar Creek pushed on through the crowd towards the store.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Lynch Law!

"HOLD on!"

"Stop!"

"By thunder——"

Loud and angry voices sounded round the schoolboys as they tried to push through the mob. There was not much room for horses in the crowded through outside Gunten's store.

"Sorry, gents!" said Bob Lawless politely. "Please let us pass! We're going to pay Mr. Gunten what Hopkins owes him. We want some of you to come into the store and see that he takes the money."

"Good for you, young Lawless!" exclaimed Buster Bill, whose red head and beard towered over the crowd. "Let them pass, you galoots! I reckon we'll see that Old Man Gunten takes the money!"

"Hurrah!"

The crowd surged on round the store, with the schoolboys in their midst. Frank Richards & Co. dismounted, and Bob rapped at the door, which was bolted and barred.

"Come down and let us in, Old Man Gunten!" roared Buster Bill.

A window opened above.

At the window appeared the fat face and figure of Gompers Gunten, his face almost as white as chalk.

A threatening roar greeted his appearance. Two or three revolvers cracked in the air, though they were not directed at the storekeeper.

"Go away!" shouted the storekeeper in a quavering voice. "If you touch my store, you'll be fired on!"

"I guess that'll be the last thing you'll do in this hyer airth if you pull trigger on this crowd!" answered Buster Bill contemptuously. "Come and open the door!"

"I refuse——"

"We've come to pay for Mr. Hopkins!" shouted Frank Richards.

Old Man Gunten looked down at him savagely.

"It's too late, as I've told you before!" he snapped.

"I've got an order on the Thompson Bank for the money!"

"Keep it!"

The crowd roared and surged. Heavy blows rained upon the door, and there was a crash of glass as a window smashed.

Mr. Gunten disappeared for a moment, and returned to the upper window with a rifle in his hands.

His hands were trembling too much to hold the rifle very steadily, however.

But the sight of the weapon was enough for the crowd in the street. A dozen revolvers glistened in the morning sunshine.

"Put down that gun, or we'll riddle yer!" roared Buster Bill.

Bullets were flying now, though as yet they only spattered at random on the walls of the store.

But it was clear enough that if Old Man Gunten used his unlucky rifle it would be, as the cattleman said, his last action on the earth. He realised it himself, and he dropped the gun out of sight.

"I—I guess I'll come down!" he gasped.

"Git a move on, then, afore we smash in the door, and your durned store along with it!" growled Buster Bill.

In a few minutes there were sounds of bars and bolts being removed within.

Old Man Gunten, with mingled fury and fear in his heart, had bowed to the inevitable. He had to open the door or see it broken in, and he chose to open it.

The instant the door opened Frank Richards & Co. were swept inside in a surge of the mob.

Mr. Gunten was swept back by the rush into the room behind the store, which was soon crowded, as well as the store itself, with a shouting mob.

"Order hyer!" roared Buster Bill, making his powerful tones heard over the din.

"Order, you galoots!"

"Lynch him!"

"Ride him out of town on a rail!"

"Hurrah!"

"Order, I say!" shouted the big cattleman, shoving back the too-eager citizens who were crowding round the terrified storekeeper.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen——" panted Mr. Gunten.

Buster Bill succeeded in restoring something like order. Mr. Gunten sank, trembling, into a chair at the table, and the Thompson men surrounded him, leaving him a little room. Buster Bill was master of the ceremonies, emphasising his commands by brandishing a big Navy revolver.

"Now, then, young Lawless——"

"Here we are!" said Bob cheerily. "Mr. Gunten, Frank Richards has come to pay you——"

"I—I——"

"I'm ready," said Frank. "I offered you the money yesterday, Mr. Gunten, and you refused it. Here's the order on the bank for five hundred dollars, the sum with interest that Mr. Hopkins owes you on the mortgage. Will you take it?"

The fat Swiss breathed hard.

Strictly speaking, he was within his rights in refusing the money, as the time allowed for payment had lapsed. But with a crowd of angry men round him to see fair play refusal was difficult.



HOLDING UP GUNTEN! Mr. Gunten appeared at the window with a rifle in his hands. The sight of the weapon was enough for the crowd in the street. A dozen revolvers glistened in the sunshine. "Put down that gun!" shouted Buster Bill. (See Chapter 4.)

"I—I claim my rights," he said feebly. "The money wasn't paid on time, and the holding's mine!"

"What do you want with it?" asked Frank.

"That's my business!"

"You happen to know that there's gold there, of course!"

Mr. Gunten jumped.

Frank Richards had spoken at a venture, hoping to take the fat rascal by surprise; and he had certainly succeeded.

Old Man Gunten stared at him blankly, with drooping jaw and wide-open eyes.

Frank Richards did not need an answer. The answer was to be read plainly enough in Mr. Gunten's startled face.

His eyes glistened as he looked round on the surprised faces of the Thompson men.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you hear that? Old Man Gunten found out that there's gold on the Hopkins' holding, and he lent Mr. Hopkins money to get him into his clutches. Now he refuses payment because Mr. Hopkins couldn't raise the money quite in time. That's his game, and you know what to think of it."

Buster Bill looked round.

"Get a rope from the store, some of you galoots!" he called out.

"What are you doing to do?" shrieked the Swiss.

"Hang you over your own door!" answered Buster Bill coolly. "That's the stuff you want, you foreign trash!"

"I—I—"

"Lynch him!"

The store rang with the threatening shout, and rough hands were laid on the scheming storekeeper on all sides.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Luck of the Hopkinses!

OLD Man Gunten staggered to his feet, his face white as ashes.

"Stop! I—I— Gentlemen, stop! I guess— Mercy!"

"Lynch him!"

Frank Richards & Co. drew nearer to the wretched schemer. Rascal as Gompers Gunten was, they certainly did not wish to see him lynched by the angry crowd. Fortunately, Buster Bill interposed. For the moment it looked as if all Mr. Gunten's cunning schemes would end at the end of a rope over the doorway of his store.

"Hold on! Now, Mr. Gunten, jest you give us the frozen truth, if you know what's good for your health!" said the big cattleman. "Is there gold on the Hopkinses' holding?"

"I—I—"

"Lynch him!"

"Yes!" gasped Mr. Gunten. "It's—it's true! Mercy!"

"You pesky polecat!" said Buster Bill, in great disgust. "You've found out the holding's worth a fortune, and you want to rope it in for five hundred dollars!"

"The—law—"

"Now, you can do the fair thing, or you can dance at the end of a riata!" said Buster Bill. "Hyer's young Richards with your money, and there's a pen and ink! You're going to be paid, and you're going to put it in writing fair and square, to see old Hopkins clear before any court in Canada. You're got your own free choice, remember; but you'll be lynched if you refuse! Is that clear?"

It was clear enough for the hapless plotter. Old Man Gunten's cunning scheme had ended in disastrous failure; and with the rope very nearly round his fat neck, he was only too glad to see his money again and escape with a whole skin.

He grabbed the pen.

The document he drew up was comprehensive enough, and satisfied even Frank Richards & Co., who scrutinised it with the greatest care, knowing the slippery nature of the rascal they had to deal with. Buster Bill and five or six of his comrades signed it as witnesses in a remarkable variety of "fists."

Then the order on the bank was handed over, and received with a shaking hand by the storekeeper.

"I guess that lets us out," remarked Bob Lawless. "We'll ride back to Hopkins' cabin before we go to school, Franky. Thanks very much, Mr. Gunten! How does it feel to be honest for once in your life?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A bitter scowl was the storekeeper's only reply.

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

Frank Richards & Co. returned to their horses, and mounted and rode away in the greatest spirits.

They left a worried and terrified rascal behind them.

Mr. Gunten's rascality had roused the Thompson men, but his tardy act of justice was not sufficient to quieten them. Like the hapless magician of old, he had raised a spirit he could not quell.

There was already wrecking going on in the store, and tins and packets and all kinds of goods were being pitched recklessly into the street, and there was hardly a window left whole in the building. And some of the more lawless spirits in the mob were still demanding lynching.

Old Man Gunten had signed away his unjust claim, but it looked as if he would have to pay the penalty of his rascality after all. The damage already done was not to be covered by five hundred dollars. But Buster Bill's bull-force dominated the crowd.

"Gents!" bawled the big cattleman. "Old Man Gunten he-played up, and he's goin' to keep his neck—til next time. But he's wasted the time of a hundred galoots hyer, and he's tried to swindle a feller-citizen. The drinks are on him!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a shout of applause at once.

"I agree—I agree!" panted Mr. Gunten, glad of the loophole of escape. In mortal fear of his worthless neck, he was only too glad to be let off for "drinks."

Old Man Gunten is askin' all of us to the Occidental to lieker up!" continued Buster Bill. "Is that kerreet, sir?"

"Quite—quite!"

"Then come along!" said Buster Bill.

He took Mr. Gunten by the arm, and led him from the store, accompanied by a laughing and good-humoured mob now.

The Thompson men were thirsty after so much shouting, and they followed Mr. Gunten and Buster Bill to the Occidental like lambs. In the bar-room of the Occidental Mr. Gunten grinned as cordially as he could. In the Western phrase the "drinks were on him," and he was not let off lightly.

But when he limped back to his damaged store at last, he was glad to find himself alive and well—and glad that he had had to pay no more heavily for his rascality. And it dawned upon his mind that honesty, after all, was the best policy—at least, in a town like Thompson!

Frank Richards & Co. were late at school that day, and they bore with becoming meekness the censure of Miss Meadows. They were thinking quite as much about the Hopkins' holding, and the investigations there of Mr. Isaacs' man, as about their lessons.

But it was not till a couple of days later that Mr. Isaacs' man made his report.

When that report was made it was, as Bob Lawless expressed it, a "regular sock-dolager."

From Old Man Gunten's confession it was already known that there was gold in the holding. The storekeeper had made the discovery long since, and had laid his cunning plans for getting possession of the land.

The surveyor's report confirmed that confession, and set all doubts at rest.

Where Mr. Hopkins' plough had scratched the scanty, stony soil for a bare living, rich veins lay deeper down, and the outcrop was so promising that Mr. Isaacs was ready to "go in" with the farmer to develop the mine. And when Harold Hopkins turned up at Cedar Creek School again he came with a beaming face.

"It's jest orl right!" said Hopkins gleefully. "Jest a bit of orl-right, and no error. We're going to roll in it, you can bet. You'll see me in a silk 'at yet, like the one you wore when you first came to Cedar Creek, Frank Richards! Old Isaacs is advancing the money to work the lode, and poppers' got your five hundred dollars ready for you, Frank. We're all going to be blessed Cresshuses!"

It remained to be seen whether the Hopkins would be transformed into Cressuses; but Frank Richards & Co. and all Cedar Creek cordially hoped that it would come to pass.

THE END.

(There will be another stirring long complete story, dealing with the adventures of Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek, in next week's special issue.)

IN THE TOILS!

by The Editor.

ONE of my most enthusiastic readers of the "Popular" sends me a graphic account of an amazing adventure which befell him some time back during a visit to the wonderful Amazon country.

Some months back he was bitten once again by this desire to cross the seas, and he secured a passage in an interesting little tramp steamer bound for Monte Video. But on its way to the land of the pelicans the vessel touched at several South American ports, including Bahia. From this Brazilian port my chum went right up-country. As we all know there is little more than a fringe of civilised country in Brazil. The coast cities are brilliant. Up country you get the wilderness. A pretty wonderful wilderness it is. My correspondent can handle the Portuguese language, and had no difficulty in finding means to visit the forests of the interior. He tells me, in the course of his long letter, that one day he was surprised by hearing cries of distress coming from the jungle as he sat in his boat. He had made the boat fast, and was thinking of having a meal, when the piteous call from something in distress fell on his ear. The sound came from quite near at hand, and my chum made his way through the thick vegetation which grew down to the shore. Up the sloping ground he went—a quarter of a mile it must have been. Then suddenly he came upon a scene which for sensation eclipsed all the many adventures he had met with on the voyage out.

Just ahead of him he saw a dense bush, which he immediately recognised as the octopus plant, which preys on animals, dragging the unwary into its toils. Right in the centre of this bush, with its deep crimson, waxy flowers, and its lithe and sinuous tentacle-like, coiling tendrils, my chum saw a quaint little brown monkey. The poor little creature was fighting for its life.

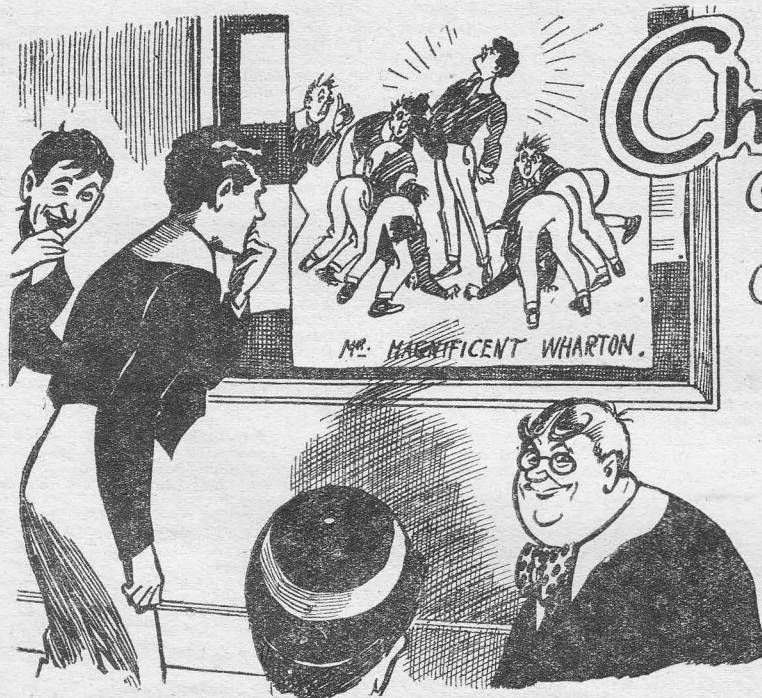
It was, as the narrator points out, impossible to avoid a shrinking. The spectacle was horrible, but he overcame his scruples, and dashed forward, his big jack-knife in his hand. The little simian heard his approach, and turned and gazed at his rescuer. Succour had arrived only just in time. The tiny victim was abandoning the struggle. The air was filled with the weird, swishing rustle of the moving tendrils, and the monkey was being slowly drawn inwards. Mr. chum slashed with his knife at the curling tentacles, and then he made a grab and managed to draw the monkey out of danger. It was panting hard, and there was a strange hunted look in its eyes. In a minute, however, it had partially recovered, and leaped on to my chum's shoulder, rubbing its funny little head against his ear.

The next second it leaped again, catching at a branch of a towering tree. In a second it was up and away into the leafy sanctuary, chattering as it went.

But in that spell of time its rescuer's attention was off the peril of the Southern forest. He had cause to regret his carelessness the moment after, for suddenly he felt the soft pressure of a coil of creeper round his leg. He was jerked back, and he almost fell. Just saving himself, he swung round and cut at the tendril which had laced itself about his thigh and lower leg. The tendril was tough, but he managed to sever the strand. The danger was not over, however. A huge tentacle from the hideous octopus plant dropped from the top of the bush and fastened, vice-like, on his shoulder, swinging him towards the centre of the plant.

He fought savagely, and, as he realised, well-nigh hopelessly, for life and liberty. His left arm was pinioned by a writhing tendril of the thickness of a garden hose-pipe. But his right hand was free, and he fought on, slashing madly at the soft strands which had him in their power. He was being steadily sucked in by the monstrous plant. There was no help at hand. All rested on himself. There was a mist before his eyes; but, though his senses were almost inert, he struggled on, hacking at the fleshy tentacles until at last the pressure was relaxed, and he staggered out of captivity, a free man. He tells me that he hardly knew how he managed to regain his boat. One can well believe that!

A SPLIT IN THE CO.! Even the best fellows can make mistakes. Wharton acts hastily, and his burst of temper brings down the resentment of the whole form, and even of his closest pals!



Chums Divided!

A Dramatic, Long, Complete Story of HARRY WHARTON & CO., of Greyfriars School.

BY FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the famous stories of Greyfriars now appearing in the "Magnet.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Quite Unappreciated Joke!

"HERE he comes!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shut up, you chaps!"
 "Rot! Ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton paused in surprise. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove had just come in from the footer-field. His face was ruddy and good-humoured. A number of juniors were gathered before the notice-board in the hall. They were evidently in a state of great merriment.

Skinner was chuckling, Snoop was cackling, and Bolsover major was roaring. A dozen other fellows were grinning, as if over a particularly good joke. Billy Bunter, the fattest junior in the Remove, was cackling with such energy that he seemed in danger of apoplexy.

Wharton looked at the juniors, and they looked at him. Some of the fellows left off laughing, but not Skinner & Co. Some of them looked sheepish as Wharton came up, but Skinner & Co. did not look sheepish. There was nothing sheepish about Skinner & Co. They cackled more loudly than ever. Frank Nugent, who was in the crowd, turned a little red. He had been grinning like the rest.

"Hallo! What's the joke?" asked Wharton, in surprise.

It was pretty evident that the laughter was connected with himself—that he was, in point of fact, the joke.

As he realised that, the good-humoured expression faded from Wharton's face. He did not exactly enjoy being laughed at.

"Nothing," said Nugent hastily. "There's nothing to cackle at. Tea's ready in the study, Harry."

Nugent slipped his arm through his chum's as he spoke. But Wharton did not allow himself to be led to the stairs. He remained where he was, all the more determined because it was clear that Nugent did not want him to discover the "joke," whatever it was.

"No hurry," he said quietly. "If there's such a ripping joke on, I may as well share it. What is it, Skinner?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Skinner airily.

"What is it, Bolsover?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major.

Wharton reddened.

"Can't any of you answer?" he rapped out.

"It must be jolly funny to set you cackling like a lot of old hens!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter.

"Ain't it true to life—what? He, he, he!"

"What do you mean, you fat duffer?"

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, make room and let Wharton see it. It does a chap good to see himself as others see him, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come on!" said Nugent uneasily.

"Don't waste time on those grinning asses, Harry!"

"You were grinning yourself when I came in," said Wharton tartly.

"W-w-was I?"

"Yes, you were!"

"Well, why shouldn't Nugent grin?"

chuckled Bolsover major. "Nugent couldn't help grinning, Mr. Magnificent Wharton!"

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

"It's only some rot of Skinner's," said Nugent.

"Nothing to take any notice of."

Wharton did not heed. He pushed his way through the crowd of juniors to the notice-board. Then he saw what had excited the merriment of the Removites.

There was a sheet of paper pinned on the board among the school notices. But it was not a notice. It was a caricature. Wharton's brow darkened as he looked at it. It was evidently meant to represent himself, and there was no doubt that it came from Skinner's skilled hand.

It was a pen-and-ink sketch of Wharton, and the amateur artist had hit off the likeness very cleverly.

But while retaining the likeness to Wharton's handsome features, he had imbued the countenance with an expression of lofty pride and disdain. The lip was curling, the nose was elevated, and the whole expression was that of a person who did not consider the earth quite good enough for him to walk on. The figure, very cleverly drawn, represented the junior strutting, amid a crowd of fellows who were bowing down till their foreheads touched the ground. Under the picture was scrawled:

"MR. MAGNIFICENT WHARTON."

Harry Wharton was generally popular in the Remove; but he had his enemies, and his enemies held it chiefly against him that he considered himself monarch of all he surveyed. It was true that some fellows found it difficult to get on with Wharton, but they

were generally cads like Skinner and Snoop. True enough, there had been a time when his uncertain temper had tried the patience even of his best chum, Frank Nugent, but that time was long since past. But it was quite in Skinner's style to rake up old troubles and perpetuate them if he could. Skinner was up against Study No. 1 all the time.

Had Wharton been in his usual cheery mood he would probably have laughed at the caricature, though perhaps in a rather annoyed way.

But his temper was already a little on edge from the laughter that had greeted him and from the fact that Nugent himself had been grinning at the ridiculous representation.

It was evident that a good many of the fellows considered that there was a likeness between the captain of the Remove and the strutting, swanking duffer in the picture. It was not pleasant to find that anybody discerned even the faintest shadow of a likeness.

Wharton did not laugh.

His eyes gleamed as he looked at the caricature, and the juniors, noting the gathering signs of wrath, grinned the more. It was immensely amusing, especially to Skinner & Co., to get Wharton's rag out. Wharton was not easy to draw as a rule. But he had been drawn quite easily this time. He looked round with glinting eyes at the grinning circle.

"So that's meant for me?" he said quietly.

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Isn't it a good likeness?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, was some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as others see us!" quoted Ogilvy, and there was a fresh roar.

Wharton looked directly at the Scottish junior.

"So that's what you think of me, Ogilvy?"

"Well, not exactly," grinned Ogilvy. "But there's a likeness, you know. Anyway, it's funny."

"A really good likeness!" roared Bolsover major. "And it's dashed funny."

"I don't call it funny!"

"You wouldn't. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's rotten caddish," said Wharton, "and I think the fellow who did it and stuck it there is a rotten cad!"

"Thanks!" yawned Skinner.

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

"So it was you?"
 "I felt called upon to pay my tribute to the Great One and Only," explained Skinner humorously, while the juniors chuckled. "I hope you don't see anything to be offended at in that likeness, Wharton. I did my very best to catch the likeness. These chaps seem to think it's a good portrait. But if you can suggest any improvements, I'm willing to make any alterations."

Wharton did not reply, but, with a flushed face, he reached up to tear the offending paper from the board.

Skinner started forward.

"Let that alone! That's my property!"

Wharton did not heed. He tore the paper down, and Skinner caught his arm.

"Give it to me!"

"I'll give you something else, you cheeky cad!" exclaimed Wharton, his temper breaking out. "Take that!"

"That" was a drive with his right, and it caught Skinner on his pointed nose, and flattened the point considerably. Skinner gave a muffled yell, and went over backwards, and landed on the floor with a crash.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Quite in the Wrong!

"AH! Oh! Ah! Ow!"
 Skinner sprawled on the floor, gasping. A red stream ran from his nose. In the haste and anger of the moment Wharton had hit really hard without intending it, and Skinner was hurt. The athletic captain of the Remove would never have thought of using strength against the weedy, unfit slacker if he had been cool.

There was a murmur from the crowd of juniors. They were not laughing now.

"Shame!" hooted Snoop.

Wharton turned on him fiercely. He was sorry for the hasty blow as soon as it had been struck, but he was too angry to think of admitting it.

Snoop dodged back hastily behind the burly form of Bolsover major.

Wharton made a movement forward, and Bolsover stood solidly in his path. The bully of the Remove was sneering, and he had his hands up. It was a rare chance for Bolsover. Certainly he would have knocked Skinner down without a moment's hesitation for a smaller offence. All the same, it gratified him to be put in the position of defending the weak against the strong—quite a new role for the Remove bully.

"Hands off!" said Bolsover major coolly. "You're not going to touch Snoop! Hit a chap your own size!"

"Dash it all, Wharton, keep your temper!" said Tom Brown tartly. "You shouldn't have let out like that. It's only a joke."

Skinner sat up. Russell and Ogilvy helped him to his feet. Skinner dabbed his nose savagely with his handkerchief.

"You beastly rotter!" he gasped. "You took me unawares!"

Wharton crimsoned.

"I didn't mean to—"

"Liar!" howled Skinner.

Nugent caught the captain of the Remove by the arm as he made an angry stride towards Skinner.

"For goodness' sake, let it drop, Harry! There's nothing to row about!"

"Not being called a liar?" exclaimed Wharton savagely. "Let me go!"

"But look here—"

Wharton shook off Nugent's detaining hand angrily. He strode up to Skinner.

"Now, you cad, you say I hit you unawares! Well, I'll hit you when you're looking, if you like! Put up your hands!"

Bolsover major shoved in between them.

"Stand aside!" shouted Wharton.

"Rats!"

Wharton's eyes blazed.

"Will you get aside?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'll jolly soon shift you!"

"Go it, Bolsover!" sang out a dozen voices, as Wharton rushed at him.

Not a voice was raised for the captain of the Remove.

There was a sudden shout from the passage.

"Cave!"

"Look out!" exclaimed Nugent. "It's Quelch!"

Wharton and Bolsover were fighting, hammer and tongs, and they did not even hear. In the excitement of the moment both parties had forgotten that they were within hearing of their Form-master's study.

The POPULAR.—No. 314.

Mr. Quelch strode on the scene, with a thunderous brow.

"Wharton! Bolsover! Cease this instantly!" he thundered.

"Harry!"

"Chuck it, you duffers!"

The two juniors, flushed and excited, separated.

They stood glaring at one another, panting for breath, while Mr. Quelch glared at both of them.

"Now, what does this mean?" exclaimed the Form master. "How dare you fight in the House within a dozen paces of my study door!"

The culprits did not reply.

"It is disgraceful!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"All the more as you, Wharton, are head boy in the Form!"

Wharton did not speak.

"I must know who began this!" said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton set his lips. He did not regard himself as the aggressor in the conflict. Bolsover did, and so he did not speak, either.

"You have been fighting, too, Skinner!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir."

"What! Your nose is bleeding!"

"Wharton attacked me!" said Skinner sullenly. "I'm not strong enough to fight him, and Bolsover took my part."

It was true enough, in a way, though it did not quite correctly represent how matters stood. But it placed the captain of the Remove in a decidedly unfavourable light. Mr. Quelch's brow grew darker.

"Is that correct, Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"In a way, I suppose it is," said Harry, biting his lip. "I knocked Skinner down, and Bolsover meddled."

It was not a very judicious reply to make to an angry Form master.

"Bolsover did quite right to meddle, as you call it, if you were ill-using a lad weaker than yourself!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "I am surprised at you, Wharton!"

I should never have expected this of you! Whatever cause of offence Skinner gave you, you had no right to strike him!"

Wharton knew that well enough.

"You will take five hundred lines, Wharton! Disperse now, my boys, and kindly let there be no further disturbance."

The Form master rustled away, frowning. The crowd of juniors broke up, some of them grinning. Skinner went away to bathe his nose. Bolsover major gave Wharton a triumphant, jeering look which very nearly brought about a renewal of hostilities on the spot, though Mr. Quelch had hardly reached his study.

But the captain of the Remove controlled himself with an effort, and went up the stairs to the Remove passage.

A laugh from Bolsover and Snoop and Stott followed him, and it made his ears burn. He turned back on the stairs.

"Come on, Harry!" said Nugent anxiously, catching him by the sleeve.

Wharton shook off his hand angrily.

He was angry with Nugent, angry with himself, angry with everybody. He realised quite clearly that he had not acted well, and that he had placed himself in the wrong. But the condemnation he saw in most faces only made him the angrier.

He did not return to the lower hall. He went on to the Remove passage and into his study. Frank Nugent followed him in in silence, and with a somewhat contracted brow.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Strained Relations!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry looked into the study, and greeted the juniors with his usual exuberance.

Bob was in blissful ignorance of anything being up, and he did not notice for the moment the glum silence that reigned in Study No. 1.

"Finished your tea?" he asked. "Buck up, anyway! Coker of the Fifth is holding a giddy rehearsal in the Rag. The Fifth Form Stage Club is going strong. And I was thinking that some pea-shooters at the window would help them along—what!"

"Good egg!" said Nugent.

"Johnny Bull's getting a squirt filled with ink in case we come to close quarters. Come on, Wharton! You're coming?"

Wharton hesitated.

"Nothing the matter, is there?" asked Bob, looking from one to the other.

It dawned upon the cheery Bob at last that something was wrong.

"Nothing," said Nugent quickly.

"Oh, nothing!" said Wharton.

"Was it one of you chaps gave Skinner his nose?" asked Bob. "I've just seen his nose. It's a corker!"

"I did," said Harry curtly.

"Good! I dare say he asked for it!" said Bob.

"Nugent doesn't think so," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip.

"Never mind about that," said Nugent. "It's not worth jawing about, anyway! Let's go and rag Coker!"

"Yes, come on!" said Bob, seeing that trouble was in the air, and anxious to ward it off. "Coker would make a cat laugh, and we get a ripping view from the window!"

"I do mind about it!" said Wharton obstinately. "Skinner was a cheeky cad!"

"Of course; he always is!" agreed Bob pacifically.

"He drew a rotten picture of me!"

Bob chuckled.

"That picture on the board?" he asked.

"Oh, you've seen it?"

"Yes, I saw it. It was cheeky, of course, and all rot, but it was funny, wasn't it?"

"It didn't strike me as funny."

"Oh, come, it was funny enough, and Skinner knows how to draw, too," said Bob.

"Some of his caricatures are jolly nearly as good as the pictures in comics. He drew me once with feet like a giant; but I didn't mind. I know I've got good-sized feet—better than Skinner's stumpy hoofs. Surely you didn't give him that nose for drawing a comic picture?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, it's no bizney of mine," said Bob, though his expression changed a little. "Let's go and rag Coker!"

"So you agree with Nugent?"

"Eh? What's the good of jawing? Coker will be getting through that rehearsal if we don't buck up!"

"Hang Coker and his silly rehearsal!" exclaimed Wharton irritably.

"Well, we can't hang him, but we can rag him," said Bob amicably. "The window's open, you know, on the quad, and we can get in a volley before they know we're there. Then Coker's Hamlet will have a sad ending, after all!"

"Skinner was a cheeky cad!" said Harry. "He caught hold of my arm when I was taking down his foolery from the board, and I hit out!"

"Well, he deserves it for a lot of other things," said Bob.

"He deserves it for that!"

"What a chap you are to argue, Wharton!"

"Oh, it's my rotten temper, of course!" said Wharton. "I can see that that's in your mind. But I think a chap in my own study might stand by me, and not join those cackling cads against his own pal!"

"What's the good of jawing?" said Nugent. "You were hasty, and that's all about it!"

"I wasn't hasty!"

"Well, you weren't, then," said Frank impatiently. "Is that satisfactory?"

Wharton threw himself into his chair again, his brow very dark.

"Come on!" said Bob anxiously.

"For goodness' sake, don't play the giddy ox!" exclaimed Nugent. "I suppose I'm not bound to approve of everything you do. You know jolly well that you oughtn't to have knocked Skinner down, as he's a weedy rotter, and can't stand up to you! It isn't the game to hit a chap who can't tackle you!"

"So I don't play the game?"

"I don't say that, and you know it. If you want it quite plain, I think you ought to tell Skinner you're sorry!"

"I'm not sorry!"

"Well, you ought to be!" said Nugent tartly. "You stand any amount of cheek from Bunter, because he's a fat idiot. Why couldn't you keep your temper with Skinner over a harmless joke?"

"It wasn't a harmless joke! It doesn't amuse me so much as it amuses you and Bob, you see!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Bob uncomfortably. "What's the harm in grinning at a joke? I saw you grinning over Skinner's picture of me with feet like a Hun!"

"That was different."

"Well, I don't see it. And since you've asked me whether I agree with Nugent, I do. It was altogether too thick to knock

(Continued on page 16.)

BILLY BUNTER'S WEEKLY



ASSISTED
BY HIS
FOUR FAT
SUBS.



EDITED
BY
*William
George
Bunter.*



IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN!

By Billy Bunter.

MY DEAR READERS,—This week I am in my element, for I have to deal with a toppick which is very dear to my hart. Cookery is my "forty," as they say in France. I never had to learn the cullinary arts, for I am a born cook.

When I look around, and see the appalling iggerence of the Greyfriars fellows in the matter of cookery, it makes me shudder. I don't beleve there is a single fellow in the Remove barring myself who knows how to cook a dinner.

Take Bob Cherry, for instance. He can play footer—after a fashion. He can run, he can box, he can swim, and he can perform Jimmynasticks, but he can't cook! Dress him up in a sheff's attire, and send him into the school kitchen, and ask him to prepare dinner for three hundred fellows, and he will ring his hands helplessly.

Our cistern of education is all wrong. They teach a fellow Lattin and Greek—dum langwidges which are no good to him either now or afterwards. They teach him jography and histery and mathmatticks. But they would never dream of holding cookery lessons in the Form-room.

Time after time I have pointed out to the orthorities that a chap who can't cook is a worthless member of Sossiety. What's going to happen to him if he goes on a camping-out eggspedition, and has to cook his own grub? He'll be absolutely done.

Sooner or later the Head will wake up to the fact that cookery lessons ought to be part and parcel of the school Reggie Mee. Meanwhile, the fellows are being left to wallow in iggerence.

The futurists tell us that in years to come there will be no cookery, bekwawse we shall take all our food in tabloid form. Fancy sitting down to a dinner of mizerable little tabloids! Give me the good roast beef of Old England! I'm not a gluten by any means, but I do like my meals to be solid and substantial. The mere thought of tabloid-feeding sends cold shivers down my spine.

Can you imagine what the kings and trenchermen of the past would be like if they lived on tabloid foodstuffs? Take old King Alfie. I know a lot about him, for he is a fellow after my own heart. He would sit down at the board soon after rising in the morning, and, with a gathering of good, all-round trenchermen, carry a feast right through the day without a stop and far into the night, and without feeling tired or uncomfortable. It does my heart good to read about this jolly chap.

Who was Baron Bunturrede Bunturre? The famous trencherman of the fourteenth century. He and his followers sat to feed at the beginning of the week, and were still hungry five days after. That's going some! I wish I could follow the example of my ancestors, and there would not be a happier fellow in the world than

Your sluseer pal,

YOUR EDITOR.

A DINER'S DIARY!

(Some extracts from the diary of Samuel Bunter.)



MONDAY.

Overslept, and came down late for brekker. The rashers were cold, and some mizerable little sneek-theef had perloined my eggs! I felt famished all the morning, and fainted three times in the Form-room, owing to lack of nurrishment. But I had six helpings of pie for dinner, and that pulled me together again.

TUESDAY.

A dreadful day. Woke up with toothake, and had to go to the dentist's and have it distracted. Consequently, I was unable to eat anything more solid than bred-and-milk. I'm so weak and famished this evening that I can scarcely hold a pen!

WEDNESDAY.

Back to the normal diet to-day, thank goodness! Pork chops for dinner. I love pork chops, and I ptfied into them with relish—and apple-sauce! This afternoon I was walking along Courtfield High Street when a kindly old gent—whose name must have been either Phil Anthropist or Ben Evvolence—took me into the bunshop and stodd me a ripping feed. I shall bless him till my dyeing day!

THURSDAY.

Dicky Nugent reseeded a tuck-hamper from the old folks at home, and we had a glorious spread in the Second Form dorm. I ate half the contents of the hamper, and the other half was divided amongst the remainder of the fellows.

FRIDAY.

I went into the school kitchen and told the cook a tail of woe. I kidded her that I had missed brekker and dinner through being late, and she took kompassion on me,

(Continued on col. 3.)

DINING-HALL DITTIES!

By Dick Penfold.

THERE was a young fellow named Skinner.
Who couldn't demolish his dinner,
Like the famous Jack Sprat
He wouldn't eat fat,
And now he's perceptibly thinner!

Though Bunter declares he's no glutton,
He loves a good meal of roast mutton,
One day, in his greed,
He devoured such a feed,
He exploded and burst every button!

An amateur cook named Dick Rake
Was given some dumplings to bake.
They weren't a success,
For he quite failed to guess
The number of minutes they'd take!

A weedy young fellow named Snoop
Had a rooted aversion to soup.
With a fierce Hymn of Hate
He threw down his plate,
And now he has gone through the hoop!

A fag in the second named Gatty
Could never stand meat that was fatty.
If it chanced to be lean
He would say, "All serene!"
If fatty, then Gatty was ratty!

A burly Fifth-Former named Potter
With fury grew hotter and hotter.
"Some villain," said he,
"Has put salt in my tea.
I'll flatten his features, the rotter!"

(Continued from previous column.)

and let me spend a happy half-hour in the larder. I came out feeling like a toy balloon that's been blown up to bursting-point!

SATTERDAY.

Our fags' eleven happened to be playing at St. Jim's. I accompanied the team as sixth reserve, and took part in the hansom spread that was provided by the St. Jim's fellows. Taking the ruff with the smooth, this has been a jolly good week in the matter of grub!

ANOTHER SPECIAL

HOBBY SUPPLEMENT

(Written by Experts)

NEXT WEEK!



My Favourite Dinner!

"One man's meat is another man's poison." The truth of this adage is borne out by the views published below.

BILLY BUNTER:

My favorite dinner is rather a complicated affair. It starts off with a plate of tomatoe soup, followed by "horse doovers." Then comes whitebait or a Dover Soul, followed by what the French call "on-tray." But it needn't be on a tray. Personally, I prefer it on the table! After the "on-tray" I like a young spring chicken—a whole one—with stuffing and bread sauce and several kinds of vegetables. By this time I am getting nicely into my stride. For dessert, there's nothing to beat a jam roly-poly pudding, unless it's a dish of apple-dumplings. Then I like a few tasty jam-tarts to wind up with. After such a dinner I feel fighting fit, and fear no foe in shining armor! But such dinners come my way very seldom—more's the pity!

ALONZO TODD:

My Uncle Benjamin has urged upon me the necessity of eschewing—not chewing!—such things as chops and steaks, and becoming a fruitarian; that is to say, a person who derives all his nutrition from the kindly fruits of the earth. I have adopted this plan, and I can honestly say I feel much better for it. What choicer meal could you have than a handful of seedless raisins, or a rose-red apple carefully peeled and dissected? I shall avoid meat in future, and I have no doubt that by so doing I shall develop into a big strong man like Sandow!

DICK PENFOLD:

"Man wants but little here below,"
So runs the ancient ballad;
The finest dish that I could wish—
A little lobster salad!

LORD MAULEVERER:

My favourite dinner consists of thin clear soup, because you don't have the beastly fag of carving it! When it's tough chicken or tough rabbit for dinner I groan inwardly, because I know what a spell of hard labour awaits me! I shall have to employ a fag to do all my carving for me, and then feed me with a spoon. That seems quite a capital idea, begad!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

"Wot I says is this 'ere. I don't believe in all these foolish fads an' fancies. One meal's as good as another, that's wot I says. Everythin' comes alike to me. Whether it's duck an' green peas for dinner, or jest a modest snack of bread an' cheese, I'm quite contented. I'm wot they call a philosopher. Matter of fact, solid food don't interest me werry much. Liquid food is more in my line! I drank a lovely dinner of 'ome-brewed ale to-day!"

FELIX (the kitchen cat):

I am very fond of fish cutlets, and I have a strong partiality for stewed rabbit. As for mice, I wouldn't give a "Thank you!" for them, dead or alive! Too much fag to catch mice, when so many lovely snacks can be had in the school kitchen. I'm getting awfully fat this winter. It's a case of

"Felix keeps on stuffing,
Keeps on stuffing still!"



"DINNER FOR THREE HUNDRED!"

An article describing some of the trials and tribulations of my daily round.

BY THE ST. JIM'S COOK.

HOW would you like to have to prepare meals for three hundred hungry schoolboys?

It is a colossal task, and, although I have plenty of assistance in the school kitchen, I am frequently driven off my head with worry.

The three hundred boys at this school have varying tastes. A dinner which is delicious to some is regarded with loathing by others. I don't think I have ever yet cooked a dinner which has given universal satisfaction.

Last Wednesday I made some curry. It was a bitterly cold day, and I considered that curry would go down well. But directly dinner was over my kitchen was invaded by a horde of grumbling schoolboys.

"I am sowwy to have to lodge a complaint, ma'am," said Master D'Arcy, "but the curwy was the absolute limit! You may be a hot-stuff cook, but I'd watah you didn't make any 'hot stuff' in future!"

"Hear, hear!" said Master Blake. "I took a spoonful of the beastly stuff, and it burnt my tongue so badly that I

had to drink about three pints of water to cool myself down!"

"Next time it's curry for dinner, ma'am," said Master Lowther, "give us fair warning, so that we can escape the terrible ordeal by running away from St. Jim's!"

The only boy who expressed his delighted approval of the curry was Master Koumi Rao, who comes from India. Curry is a favourite dish in India. I heard from a reliable source that Master Koumi Rao devoured six helpings.

Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding is a dinner that finds favour with many. Others prefer roast lamb and mint sauce. Whenever it happens to be beef for dinner I get called over the coals by the lamb-lovers, and when it's lamb for dinner the beef-lovers swarm into the kitchen and tell me in blunt language what they think of me!

I always have great difficulty in arranging the desserts. Some boys, like Master Bunter, are crazy on plum-puddings and dumplings. They eat several of them at one meal—I don't wonder that their figures are round, just like the pudding they eat. Many of the boys, and especially the seniors, like fruit, cooked or otherwise. They must think it is more dignified to toy with an apple than dig into the depths of a dumpling, or explore the mysteries of the jam-turnover.

Personally I would sooner serve the boys who like fruit, for that is a dessert that requires less work. Do not think

that by this remark I do not like working. The kitchen is my palace, my kingdom, and I am never so happy as when I am working in it. But one does like to serve a light dessert after a heavy dinner that has taken many hours of preparation and cooking.

My most frequent visitors are Master Wynn and Master Trimble. They are always complaining that they never get sufficient food to keep body and soul together. Master Trimble declares he is wasting away to a shadow; but I can see no outward and visible signs of it!

It is useless for boys to come and beseech me to provide them with a secret "spread" in the kitchen, when they have just eaten an enormous dinner in the dining-hall. The school food is excellent, both as regards quality and quantity—and no boy has a right to complain.

Believe me, the life of a cook at a public school is not a bed of roses. My assistants frequently go on strike, and leave me to bear the whole burden myself.

I have written this article while the apple dumplings are cooking for to-day's dinner. I have a horrid fear that they are overdone, and that the pastry is scorched. So I must hurry up and finish.

I consider that a school cook ought to be paid a very big salary, because of the tremendous importance of her work. They say that the pen is mightier than the sword; and in my opinion! the rolling-pin is mightier than both!



Cooking for Loder!

By S. Q. I. FIELD.

"IS Bunter here?" Loder of the Sixth looked into Study No. 7 in the Remove passage. There was no response. The study appeared to be untenanted. Just as Loder was about to withdraw, however, there was a muffled sneeze from underneath the table.

Billy Bunter had heard footsteps approaching, and his trained ear had told him that those footsteps were Loder's. Fearing that Loder had come for his impot, which had not yet been written, Bunter had promptly taken refuge under the table.

Hearing that muffled sneeze, the prefect took a quick stride towards the table.

"Come out, you young sweep!" he roared.

"Ow! I—I'm not here!" groaned Bunter.

Loder groped under the table, and his hand came into contact with a fat leg. He tugged at it, and the rest of Bunter's anatomy came into view by instalments.

"Why were you hiding, you young idiot?" demanded Loder. "You've nothing to be afraid of. I'm not going to eat you!"

"I—I thought you'd come to collect the impot," stammered Bunter, scrambling to his feet. "It—it isn't quite finished yet, Loder."

"Never mind the impot," said Loder. "Cut it out. I've something more important for you to do. They tell me, Bunter, that you're rather a dab at cooking."

Bunter brightened up at once. He fairly beamed at the prefect.

"Yes, I'm a jolly good cook, Loder," he said. "I can cook anything from a tadpole to a four-course dinner."

"Well, I'm having a little dinner in my study," explained Loder. "Carne and Walker are coming along. Do you think you could make a rabbit-pie for the occasion? I've spoken to Mrs. Kebble, and she says you can have the use of the kitchen, and she'll supply the ingredients."

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'll make you a really ripping rabbit-pie, Loder. A perfectly priceless pie that will melt in your mouth. And what would you like to follow? Apple-dumplings?"

"Can you make apple-dumplings?" "Can a duck swim? I'll make you a delicious dinner. You'll vote it the finest feed you've ever sat down to!"

"Go ahead, then," said Loder. "See that everything's ready by seven o'clock. And mind you don't help yourself to any of the grub after it's been cooked. If you do there will be trouble!"

"Oh, really, Loder! I'm not in the habit of sneaking another fellow's grub. You can safely leave everything to me. That rabbit-pie will be all ready for carving at seven o'clock. I'll get busy right away."

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the study.

On his way to the school kitchen he encountered his minor Sammy.

"I say, Sammy, what would you say to a first-class feed—rabbit-pie, with apple-dumplings to follow?"

"I'd say 'Thank you very much!' said Sammy. "But what are you getting at, Billy? You know jolly well there's no chance of a feed."

"Yes, there is—honest Injun!" said Billy. "Be outside Loder's study a few minutes after seven, and you'll see that I'm not kidding."

"All right!" said Sammy, his eyes sparkling at the prospect of rabbit-pie and apple-dumplings. "I'll be there!"

Billy nodded cheerfully to his minor and went along to the kitchen. Arrived there he peeled off his coat and rolled up his sleeves and donned a white apron.



Walking to the window, Bunter saw the terror-stricken seniors heading for the gates.

He found all the ingredients ready to hand, as Loder had promised. He had the kitchen to himself for the time being, and was able to set to work without interruption.

Billy Bunter was a splendid cook. He did not need to consult any of the dog-eared cookery books which stood on the kitchen shelf. Bunter had nothing to learn from Mrs. Beeton.

Within a couple of hours Bunter had made the pie—a perfect peach of a pie, as he expressed it.

The apple-dumplings had also been prepared, and they were done to a turn. Billy Bunter removed his apron and put on his coat and carried the pie and the dumplings on a tray to Loder's study.

It was now seven o'clock, and Loder and his guests had arrived. They were famished; and the sight of that pie was particularly pleasing. The savoury odour it emitted was more to be desired than all the fragrant perfumes of the East.

"Oh, good!" said Loder, in tones of great satisfaction. "That pie's as near perfection as it's possible for a pie to be."

Loder carved the pie and served por-

tions to Carne and Walker. Then he treated himself to a generous helping.

Billy Bunter lingered in the doorway. He waited until each of the seniors had eaten a few mouthfuls. Then he spoke.

"What does it taste like, Loder?" "Top-hole!" mumbled Loder, with his mouth full.

"Don't you feel a pain?" "Eh? Why should I feel a pain?" asked Loder, in alarm.

"Well, some people can't stand rabbit unless it's fresh. It gives them severe internal pains. I've even known fellows to be poisoned through eating stale rabbit."

The three seniors dropped their knives and forks with a clatter. They stared at Billy Bunter with horror-stricken eyes.

"You—you mean to say this rabbit isn't fresh?" asked Loder, aghast.

"Fresh? I should say not! I saw this same rabbit hanging up in the kitchen at the back end of the term."

The seniors were on their feet now. They had turned quite pale.

"We—we've been poisoned!" gasped Carne. "I'm beginning to feel awfully queer inside!"

"Same here!" groaned Walker.

There was nothing wrong with the three seniors, really. It was auto-suggestion that was making them feel queer. Bunter had told them that the rabbit had been hanging about all the term, and they at once imagined they were ill.

Loder gave Bunter a glare that was almost homicidal.

"You young villain!" he roared. "Do you realise what you've done? You've poisoned us!"

"Oh, really Loder——"

"I'm going to the doctor at once!" said Loder.

Loder rushed out of the study, and Walker and Carne followed hard on his heels.

Walking to the window, Bunter saw the seniors heading for the school gates. He chuckled softly, and then, going to the door, he glanced out into the passage. Sammy was there.

"It's all serene!" said Billy gleefully. "Step inside, Sammy, my boy, and we'll have the feed of our lives!"

And they did. The rabbit-pie disappeared as if by magic, and the apple-dumplings went the way of the pie.

An hour later Loder & Co. returned from Friardale. They had been to see Dr. Short, who assured them that there was no question of their having been poisoned.

Then it dawned on Loder that the affair was nothing but a clever ruse on Bunter's part to get the seniors out of the way.

Loder spent the rest of the evening looking for Bunter. But the Owl of the Remove, wise in his generation, had hidden himself from mortal ken until bedtime.

CHUMS DIVIDED!

(Continued from page 12.)

Skinner down. You might have pulled his ear. But you really hurt him!"

"I didn't mean to hurt him," said Wharton, flushing. "I suppose you'll be calling me a bully next!"

"Well, you did hurt him, and he'll be wearing that nose for a week. But, for goodness' sake, don't let's begin ragging over a worm like Skinner! Let's go and help Coker with his rehearsal!"

"Hang Coker!"

"You're not coming?"

"No!"

"Well, don't, then!" said Bob tartly; and he left the study.

Nugent made a movement to follow him, but hesitated.

"Better come along, Wharton!"

"I'm not coming," said Wharton grimly. "You've as good as called me a bully, and you say I don't play the game. I expect you to take that back!"

Nugent paused.

"You put the words into my mouth," he said. "All I said was that you acted hastily, and that you ought to tell Skinner you're sorry!"

"Well, until you think differently, you needn't trouble to speak to me again!" said Wharton savagely.

Nugent looked at him. His own temper was very patient, but it was rising now; but he checked the words on his lips. He did not wish the breach to go any further, if it could be helped. He quitted the study without another word.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Mischief Makers!

"**W**OW-OW! Wow!"

Thus Skinner, as he sat in his study and rubbed his nose tenderly.

His nose had swollen a little, and it was very red and very tender. Harry Wharton had hardly realised how much force he had put into the blow; but Skinner, naturally, had fully realised it.

Bolsover major and Snoop and Stott had come to sympathise, but sympathy did not help his painful nose.

"Well, how are you feeling?" asked Bolsover major.

"Rotten!" growled Skinner.

"How's your nose?" asked Snoop.

"Look at it!"

"We've been talking about it," said Bolsover major. "We're your friends, Skinner. We're not going to see you treated like that."

"Certainly not!" chimed in Snoop.

"Who's Wharton, to take it on himself to knock down a chap at his own sweet will? Might have been me!"

"Or me, or Bolsover!" observed Stott.

"Not me!" said Bolsover. "Wharton would think twice before he punched my nose. He punched Skinner's nose because Skinny takes it lying down."

"Well, he did lie down, and no mistake!"

"He, he, he!"

"What can I do?" growled Skinner. "I suppose you don't think I can lick the beast, do you? He can make rings round me!"

"You can try."

"Oh, rot!"

"It isn't rot!" said Bolsover major. "That's what we've come about, Skinner. You can't be treated like this. I suppose Wharton isn't Grand Panjandrum and Brother of the Sun and Moon, like the Emperor of China. He hadn't any right to punch your nose, I suppose. You've got to call him to account."

"Oh, rot!" growled Skinner. He began to have a glimmering of the purpose of this friendly visit, and it made him uneasy.

"Now, look here, Skinner. Wharton knocked you down, didn't he?"

"Yes!" snarled Skinner.

"You can't take it quietly."

"I prefer to say nothing about the matter. You know I can't tackle him."

"Yes, you can. And I'll be your second."

"We'll all back you up, Skinny!"

Skinner gritted his teeth.

"I'm jolly well not going to fight Wharton, if that's what you mean! After all, I don't

suppose he really meant it. He was in a temper."

"Turning the other cheek—what?" sneered Snoop.

"You've been knocked down," roared Bolsover major, "and I can jolly well tell you, Skinner, that if you take it quietly, you'll jolly soon be knocked down again! If you like it, I'll give you some of it!"

"Look here—"

"You won't get hurt much," said Bolsover contemptuously. "You'll fight with the gloves on. What are you afraid of?"

"I—I'm not afraid!" mumbled the unhappy Skinner. "But—but—"

"But—but!" mimicked Bolsover. "A fellow punches your nose, and you're not afraid; but you let him do it. You'll have every fag at Greyfriars punching your nose after this, if you don't stand up for yourself. We're your friends, and we're not going to see you disgrace yourself. I know I'm not going to pal with a funk, for one!"

"I'm not a funk! But—but I can't tackle him!" said Skinner desperately. "He knew I couldn't tackle him, or he wouldn't have done it."

"You've got to stand up for yourself. Suppose Loder of the Sixth punched Wharton's nose, do you think he'd take it quietly? He's got no more chance against Loder than you have against him. But he'd fight till he was knocked into a cocked hat rather than have his nose punched. A chap is supposed to consider his personal dignity a bit, even if he gets a licking for it. Wharton will lick you right enough, but you'll have shown that you're not a fellow to be knocked about without some trouble to follow."

"That's all very well. But—"

"Oh, don't keep on butting like a billy-goat!" said Bolsover major impatiently. "Tackle Wharton, like a decent chap. You might lick him—after all, you're a bit bigger than he is—if you've got the pluck. But if he licks you, you'll have everybody on your side. The fellows will say you couldn't have done more. And it will be up against Wharton, fighting a chap who's not his match. It's enough to bring him off his perch."

Skinner shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He realised the cunning of Bolsover's little scheme. It was such a scheme as he might have thought of himself, with another fellow as principal. But he was to get the licking in the scheme, and that made all the difference.

"Still, if you like to have your nose punched, that's a different thing!" said the bully of the Remove scornfully. "I'll jolly well punch it myself, if that's the case. As a matter of fact, you're my pal, and you've got to fight Wharton, or else fight me! You can't disgrace me by backing down."

"You want to use me to score over Wharton," growled Skinner. "I'm jolly well not going to be used!"

"Oh, have a little pluck, do! I suppose you're not a worm, to be trodden on whenever Mr. Magnificent Wharton pleases?"

"I'm not a punch-ball, to be thumped in the gym!"

"You'll be thumped in this study if you don't show a bit of pluck! You'll have fags in the Third pulling your ear next. Have a little pluck!"

Skinner crimsoned.

"I'm not afraid of him, hang him! Only—"

"Well, give me a message for him, and I'll take it," said Bolsover major. "Suppose you agree to let the matter drop if he apologised? That's fair. You can't do less."

"Nothing less than that," said Snoop. Skinner gritted his teeth. He was in the hands of the Philistines. Bolsover major did not mean to let that opportunity pass for scoring over the fellow whom he regarded as his rival.

Skinner reflected that he might as well be licked by Wharton as by Bolsover major—for that was really his choice.

And certainly there was a revengeful satisfaction in placing the captain of the Remove still more hopelessly in the wrong, and exhibiting him in the light of a bully.

A victory over Skinner would not rebound to Wharton's credit, while a fight would certainly give Skinner a leg-up. It would show pluck. Not many fellows in the Remove were keen to face Wharton in a serious contest, though there were plenty who would have been ready to do so for good cause.

Skinner had cause enough—there was no doubt about that. He would be licked, but he would fall with glory. But it was the licking that Skinner disliked!

But he made up his mind.

"Well," said Bolsover, who had been watching Skinner's face with considerable amusement, "you're going to take it on?"

"Well, I suppose it's up to me!" grunted Skinner ungraciously.

"Of course it is! Shall I take him a message?"

"Give him the chance of saying he's sorry!" said Skinner uneasily.

"Oh, I'll do that, of course!" grinned Bolsover. "If the Great Magnificent chooses to climb down, all serene!"

And Bolsover & Co. left the study, leaving Skinner in a very anxious frame of mind.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Declined!

HARRY WHARTON'S brows contracted darkly as Bolsover major stamped into the study and delivered Skinner's challenge.

There was an uncomfortable silence in the study.

Frank Nugent looked out of the window. Bob Cherry began to hum a tune. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh looked very uncomfortable. This sudden news had put a damper on the success of the raid upon Coker & Co.

Bolsover major looked round with a jeering expression. Skinner's challenge was extremely unwelcome in the study. For that reason it afforded the amiable Bolsover a keen pleasure to bring it there. Bolsover's fixed opinion was that Wharton badly wanted pulling down off his perch. He was prepared to do anything he could towards that very desirable end.

"Well," said Bolsover, "you're not in a hurry to speak, Wharton! I suppose you're going to meet Skinner. Of course, you can apologise if you like."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, and you know it!" said Wharton tartly.

"Then you'll meet Skinner in the gym?"

There was a pause.

"No, I won't!" said the captain of the Remove at last.

"You won't?" ejaculated Bolsover major.

"No; I don't want to fight Skinner."

"Don't you think that you ought to have thought about that before you knocked him down?"

"That's my business, not yours!"

Bolsover major snorted.

"All serene! You punch a fellow's nose, and you refuse to fight him afterwards! I suppose a common or garden member of the Form isn't quite fit for you to lay your dirty fingers on—what? The idea is for Remove chaps to be knocked over like skittles whenever Mr. Magnificent Wharton is in a temper—hey?"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!"

"Well, you can't run the Remove on those lines!" said Bolsover major emphatically.

"If you punch a chap's nose, you'll have to answer for it! You can't refuse Skinner's challenge!"

"I do refuse it!"

"I suppose you're not afraid of Skinner?"

Wharton laughed involuntarily. He did not think that anybody at Greyfriars would suppose that he was afraid of Skinner.

"You can think so if you like," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

"I dare say the fellows will think you're funking."

"Let them!"

"You don't care twopence what the Remove thinks, I suppose?" snorted Bolsover.

"Not three-halfpence!"

"So that's your answer?"

"Yes. And I don't believe Skinner wanted to send me a challenge, either! Some mischief-making cad has egged him on to do it!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

Bolsover major turned crimson.

"Well, the matter won't end here!" he said. "I'll take your answer back to Skinner. Skinner's my pal, and I'm seeing him through! I dare say you'll make up your mind to fight him when he tweaks your nose in public!"

And Bolsover major stamped out of the study, disappointed and furious. Silence followed his departure. Wharton looked round at his friends.

"I suppose you fellows don't think that I ought to fight Skinner?" he asked. "You know that weedy waster can't stand up to me."

"That's true enough," said Bob.

"What do you think, Nugent?"
Nugent made an uncomfortable movement.
"You oughtn't to fight him," he said.
"Skinner's no match for you, but—"
"Oh, out with it!"
"You ought to tell him you're sorry, and let the matter end."
"Apologise, you mean?"
"Well, yes."
"And when should I hear the end of it if I apologised to a crawling worm like Skinner?" growled Wharton.
"That isn't the point. It's up to a chap who's in the wrong to admit it."
"So I'm in the wrong?"
"Yes, I think so. Ask the other fellows."
"I can see you're all against me!" said Wharton bitterly.
"Well, I think you're an ass!" said Johnny Bull, who was famous for his remarkably candid speech.
"Same here," assented Bob.
"The samefulness is terrific!"
Wharton gave his chums a dark look, and left the study without replying. The four looked at one another grimly.
"What a blessed storm in a teacup!" growled Johnny Bull.
"Oh, blow Skinner!" said Bob Cherry.
"I've a jolly good mind to go and give him another on the same spot!"
Nugent did not speak.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh went along to their own quarters, and Nugent was left alone. He was in a very uncomfortable mood.

Wharton did not return to the study. There was a breach between the two chums now, and Frank had a miserable feeling that the split in the study would widen instead of healing.

He looked round frowningly as footsteps neared the door. Skinner, with his arm linked in Bolsolver major's, appeared there, Snoop and Stott bringing up the rear.

"Wharton here?" demanded Bolsolver, looking round the study. "Hallo! Where has he hidden himself?"

"He hasn't hidden himself, and you know it!" snapped Nugent.

"Well, where is he? Skinner wants to see him—don't you Skinner?"

"Ye-es," said Skinner, not at all enthusiastically.

"Find out!" growled Nugent.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Bolsolver major. "We'll find him! We'll see whether he won't fight a chap after punching his nose!"

Bolsolver & Co. marched off downstairs to look for the captain of the Remove. Frank Nugent, after some moments' hesitation, followed them.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Fight!

HARRY WHARTON was in the junior Common-room. He had sat down to play chess with Mark Linley when the enemy arrived. His face was still very moody. His temper had placed him in a false position, and he realised it; but he was not prepared to extricate himself from it by undergoing the humiliation Bolsolver had planned for him. He could not lick Skinner without discredit to himself, yet it was impossible to avoid the challenge if Skinner persisted in it. And Skinner was quite under Bolsolver's thumb, and the bully of the Remove was determined not to let the matter drop. And the feeling that the general opinion was against him only added to the angry obstinacy in Wharton's breast.
"Here he is!" announced Bolsolver, as he led his flock into the Common-room.
"You're wanted, Wharton!"
Wharton's eyes were fixed on the chess-board, and he kept them there.

"Perhaps the Magnificent One will kindly give us his noble attention for a few moments?" suggested Snoop.
And there was a laugh.
Wharton did not look up.

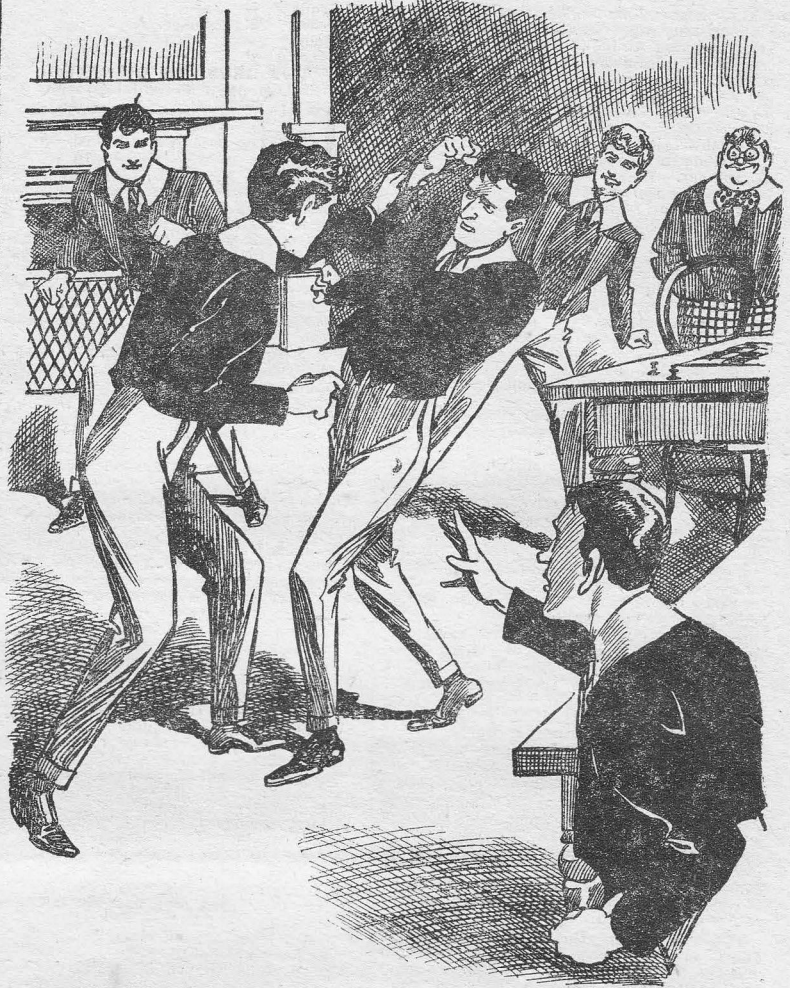
"Wharton!" roared Bolsolver.
No answer.

"Skinner wants to speak to you!"
"Can't Skinner speak for himself?" suggested Vernon-Smith. "Has Skinner engaged you as his trumpeter, Bolsolver?"

"You shut up, Smithy! Skinner has challenged Wharton, and Wharton isn't going to funk it!"

Wharton looked up at last.
"If you've come here looking for trouble, Bolsolver, I'm your man!" he said quietly. "I'm ready to step into the gym whenever you please!"

"You can't get out of it like that" said



THE HEROISM OF A SNEAK. "Will you fight me, Wharton?" said Skinner. "No!" muttered Wharton. "Then take that!" Skinner's fist lashed out at Wharton's face. Wharton's hand whipped up like lightning, and Skinner's wrist was caught before the blow reached its mark. (See Chapter 6.)

Bolsolver coolly. "Skinner's the injured party! Look at his nose, you fellows!"

"Well, it does look a picture!" grinned Hazeldene.

Skinner rubbed his nose and scowled.

"Speak up, Skinner!" chimed in Trelnee.

"I've sent you a challenge, Wharton!" said Skinner.

Bolsolver major had pinched his arm as a hint to get to business.

"I've refused it," said Wharton.

"You punched my nose."

"You asked for it!"

"You're going to fight me for it!"

"Well, I won't!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Ogilvy. "You can't refuse, Wharton. What the dickens! You can't punch fellows' noses as you please!"

"You'll have to fight Skinner if he insists!" said Russell. "You should have kept your paws to yourself, you know!"

"When I want your opinion I'll ask for it, Russell!"

"I'll give it to you without being asked!" exclaimed Russell angrily. "You're acting like a cheeky bully!"

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Billy Bunter. "Really, Wharton, I'm surprised at you! I should advise Skinner to punch your nose, as you did his! In Skinner's place, I should certainly lick you, Wharton!"

Wharton laughed; he could not help it. The fat and unwieldy Owl of the Remove was not likely to lick anybody.

"Go it, Skinner!" said Bolsolver major encouragingly, and giving the unfortunate Skinner's arm another twist by way of further encouragement.

"Look here, Wharton, you've got to fight or apologise!" said Skinner.

"I won't do either!"

"Well, I'll give you the coward's blow, then!" gasped Skinner.

Wharton's eyes glistened.

"You'd better not, Skinner!"

"Will you fight me?"

"No!"

"Then take that!"

Skinner's fist lashed out at Wharton's set face. Wharton's hand whipped up like lightning, and Skinner's wrist was caught before the blow could reach its mark. Skinner struggled to free his hand, but he could not.

He lashed out with the other hand, and his other wrist was caught in a grip like a vice. Then Skinner was helpless. He wriggled and struggled in Wharton's grasp, but in vain, and there was a howl of laughter from the juniors. The dramatic coward's blow could not be struck under the circumstances.

Wharton looked grimly at Skinner's flushed, furious face. The humiliation of his position, held like an infant in a stronger grip, roused Skinner to fury, and he forgot his desire to avoid the fight. He struggled desperately to release his hands.

"Let me go, you rotter!" he shouted.

Wharton smiled contemptuously.

"Help me, Bolsolver, you rotter!" panted Skinner.

"Let him go, Wharton!"

"Mind your own business!"

"Then I'll jolly well make you!"

Bolsolver major made a grasp at Wharton, and he had to let Skinner go. He turned to Bolsolver angrily, and as he did so Skinner struck him full in the face. The blow caught, him by surprise, and he reeled back over his chair and rolled on the floor.

There was a buzz as Wharton went down. Skinner, almost scared at what he had done, stood blinking at him.

Wharton scrambled to his feet, his face white with rage.

"We're even now!" said Skinner, backing away. "I'm willing to let it drop if you are!"

"That's fair!" grinned Russell.

Wharton made no reply, but he rushed at Skinner. Frank Nugent caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

"Let me go!" shouted Wharton.

"Hold on, Harry!"

"Let me go!"

"Hold on, I tell you! Let the matter drop here!" said Frank.

Wharton glared at him.

"You may be funk enough to take a blow in the face, but I'm not!" he shouted.

"It's no more than you expected Skinner to take."

"Oh, don't talk to me!"

Wharton shook off Nugent's grasp, and rushed at Skinner.

"Now, put up your hands, you cad! I'll fight you now—till you can't stand!"

"Not here!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"You'll have Quelch in if there's a row! Come into the gym!"

"I'm—I'm going to have the gloves on!" stammered Skinner. "I'm not a rotten prize-fighter! I—I'm not going to fight without gloves!"

Wharton laughed scornfully.

"Come into the gym, then, confound you!"

"Come on, Skinny!" said Bolsover major.

"I'm going to be your second."

Bolsover marched Skinner off triumphantly. Harry Wharton followed, with a black brow. Nugent joined him.

"I suppose I'm going to be your second?" he said quietly.

"You can please yourself about that!"

"Then I'll be your second, Harry."

Wharton growled, and made no other reply. The party arrived in the gym, followed by about half the Remove.

The famous Co. were all on the spot now, but for once Wharton's chums could not feel proud of their leader. The look on his face showed that there was a bad time in store for Harold Skinner, and it would not be a pleasant spectacle to see the athletic captain of the Remove hammering a weedy slacker who was not half his match.

The two juniors threw off their jackets and donned the gloves. Skinner's expression was the reverse of joyful. He looked a good deal as if he was going to execution; and, indeed, if he had been capable of licking anybody, he would rather have licked Bolsover major for getting him into this scrape than Wharton.

Vernon-Smith, who was appointed time-keeper, took out his watch.

"Ready?" he asked.
 "Ye-es!" said Skinner.
 "Time!"

**THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
 Broken Friendship!**

TIME!

The fight began. The Removites looked on with keen interest, curious to see what kind of a fight the black sheep of the Form would put up against his athletic opponent. Skinner, finding himself fairly in for it, did his best. He started the attack. He got home a couple of blows, and then he found himself, as it appeared to him, the centre of a whirlwind.

Blows rained on him, and he was knocked right and left. Before the two minutes allowed for the round had expired Skinner went to the floor, gasping.

Vernon-Smith, grinning, began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

Skinner staggered up.

"Hang you, I'm not done yet!" he snarled.

He rushed at Wharton. His blows were brushed aside, and a hard glove smote him on the chin and hurled him backwards.

"Time!"

Bolsover major dragged Skinner up, and made a knee for him. Skinner sank on it, blinking and gasping.

"I—I can't go on!" he stutted.

"Yes, you can!" growled Bolsover. "And for goodness' sake put a bit more beef into it! You've hardly touched him yet!"

"Grooh! Ow, my chin!"

Wharton had stepped back, but he did not go to Nugent. He caught the look on Frank's face, and read the condemnation there. His face flushed with anger. He waited grimly for the next round.

"Time!" said Vernon-Smith.

Wharton stepped up quickly. Skinner left Bolsover's knee with visible reluctance and toed the line.

"Go it, Skinner!" said out Snoop encouragingly.

The second round began.

Skinner attacked desperately, eager to get it over. He did not have long to wait. A drive straight from the shoulder knocked him off his feet, and he went down on his back with a crash. There he lay, dazed.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—"

"Buck up, Skinner!"

"Get a move on, old chap!"

"Eight, nine—out!"

The Bander slipped his watch back into his pocket. The fight was over; the defeated champion had been counted out, much to his relief. Bolsover major snorted with disgust.

"Call that a fight?" he growled.

Skinner groaned.

Bolsover jerked him to his feet.

"You're not hurt! Get your jacket on! Call that a fight? Br-r-r-r!"

"Ow-ow! Wow!" mumbled Skinner.

Nugent held Wharton's jacket for him. Wharton slipped it on, and, without a word to his chum, strode out of the gym.

There was no satisfaction in the victory for Wharton. He was angry and disturbed and lit at ease when he returned to his study and strove to centre his mind on his preparation. His look was so forbidding when Nugent came in that Frank did not speak, but sat down quietly to his work.

It was not easy for Wharton to concentrate his mind upon work in his present mood, but by sheer force of will he did so. Work was finished at last, and he rose to his feet.

Nugent put aside his books.

It was Nugent's intention to say nothing of his thoughts, and to allow everything to go on as before, if he could. But he was aware that that would not be easy. His unspoken condemnation, which he could not help, had its influence, and he did not expect his chum to endure it patiently. And it was hardly possible to chat in the old cheery way as if nothing had happened. Nugent made the effort, but it could hardly be called a success.

"Coming down to the Common-room?" he asked.

Wharton paused before he replied.

"We'd better have this out!" he said abruptly. "We can't dig in this study together scowling at one another!"

"I wasn't aware that I scowled."

"Do you think it isn't plain enough what you're thinking?" exclaimed Wharton scornfully. "I expected you to stand by me as my friend, and instead of that you've joined with all the rest!"

"If all the rest are down on you, Harry, that ought to be a pretty plain hint that you've put yourself in the wrong!"

"I don't admit it for a moment!"

"Well, there's no need to quarrel about it. Let the matter drop."

"That's impossible. You think I treated Skinner brutally in hammering him after he had struck me?"

"You had struck him."

"That's different."

Nugent's eyes gleamed.

"If you think that's different, Wharton, it's because what Skinner & Co. say about you is true—that you look on yourself as a little tin god. You seem to be trying to justify everything they say about you!"

"Well, you don't want to pal with a little tin god!" said Wharton bitterly.

"I'll get out of the study, if you like!" said Nugent tartly. "It isn't particularly agreeable here!"

"You won't! It was your study before I came to Greyfriars! I'll get out!"

Harry Wharton walked out of the study as he spoke, without giving his chum time to reply.

Nugent looked after him in silence, his eyes glittering and deep anger rising in his breast.

There had been little disagreements in the study before, but it had never come to this. But if Wharton could throw over an old friendship as lightly as that, his friendship was not worth keeping, and it could go.

When the Remove went to the dormitory that night Wharton and Nugent did not speak. Skinner, though still feeling somewhat sore, grinned as he noted it. It was a revenge for him, at least. He was glad to see the split in Study No. 1. But it was distressing to the members of the famous Co., so long shoulder to shoulder, and now divided. And the position was awkward for Bob and Johnny Bull and Inky, who were still on chummy terms with both the parted friends. If the breach continued, it looked as if they would have to take one side or the other; it could scarcely be avoided. And that would be the end of the Famous Five. Moreover, there was little doubt which side they would take.

THE END.

(There will be another topping long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, entitled: "True to His Chum!" in next week's issue. In this grand story a great chance comes to Harry Wharton to regain his lost popularity in the school.)

ANSWERS
 EVERY MONDAY PRICE 2

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 MILLE 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 of 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!

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

SCHOOLBOY OR CHIEF REPORTER?

In which new light is shed upon the mystery of Parker, the amazing new boy of St. Jim's, and several things are made clear!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Wager!

PERCY MELLISH, the sneak of the Fourth of St. Jim's, was looking very pleased with himself as he emerged from the School House and made his way across the Close.

Mellish had a great deal to think about just then, and those thoughts were pleasant ones. He was going to see two men, acquaintances he had made a few days ago, and their business dealt with Parker, the strange new boy. Parker had only recently come to St. Jim's, but he had made a name for himself very quickly.

These two men with whom Mellish had made an appointment were very interested in Parker; so interested, in fact, that they had, on two occasions, made attacks upon him that had only been frustrated in time by Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.

Why these worthies had attacked Parker was a mystery to Tom Merry & Co., although Mellish could have told them a great deal about Parker. For one thing, Parker was not a boy. He was a reporter, named Parker-Roberts, of the "Daily Messenger." That much Mellish had been able to find out for himself, but he did not know why Parker-Roberts was down at St. Jim's. He knew there was something deep in the mystery, and he hoped to find out something that day from his friends Smiler & Co. in the village.

He was going to see his friends and patrons, Messrs. Smiler & Rusty, now.

There was a sovereign to be earned—or, at least, to be obtained—easily, and Percy Mellish meant to have that sovereign.

Messrs. Smiler & Rusty had not cleared out immediately after their assault upon Parker in Rylcombe Wood.

Their victim had not recognised them, they were sure. It was a very odd chance whether he would have done so had he seen their faces. They knew him; but, then, lots of people knew P. I. Parker-Roberts, of the "Daily Messenger," whom that gentleman did not know.

If he had been going to report to the

police, he would have gone back to Rylcombe at once, Smiler argued.

And if they went back to "the smoke" without bringing off their job, the Big Boss would come down heavily upon them, Rusty opined.

So, taking one consideration with another, they decided to stay and have another shot. Therefore, their snoring of Percy Mellish to play the spy.

Mellish had expected to have to walk past the Green Man in the hope of seeing them at that high-toned hostelry.

But he came upon them before he reached the village, as they sat on a heap of stones, Smiler with a Woodbine between his lips, and Rusty chewing the eternal quid.

"Hallo, old pal!" cried Smiler. "You ain't never goin' to pass us without a word, are you?"

Mellish jumped off his bike.

"I didn't know you at first," he said. Smiler grinned, and gave Rusty a nudge.

"We're slap-up toffs now, ain't we?" growled Rusty.

"Congrats!" said Mellish, not quite knowing what to say. "Was it a legacy, or something of that kind?"

"That's the k'rect card," answered Smiler.

He pulled out a handful of silver, with the gleam of gold—rare sight in these days—among it. Mellish's eyes glistened with greed.

"Sit down alonger us, an' 'ave a talk," growled Rusty.

Mellish glanced round nervously. The Fourth and Shell were safe, but seniors or fags might happen along the road.

"'Ere, this is nigher the ticket!" said Smiler, getting up and opening a gate hard by.

The three passed into the field beyond. Mellish, feeling very nervous, stood his bike out of sight behind the hedge, and they settled down together in the lee of a stack.

"'Ave a fag, Mister— Now, it's a rummy thing, but I clean forget your name," said Smiler.

"Thanks!" said the sneak of the Fourth. "My name's Mellish—Percy Mellish!"

FOUR TO THE RESCUE!

A Thrilling Long Complete story of Tom Merry and Co., the chums of St. Jim's.

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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

"An' how's Master Parker gettin' on?" said Smiler, in his oiliest tones.

Rusty grinned. There was no excess of oil about Rusty.

Mellish blew smoke down his nose, and coughed a little. The cigarette Smiler had given him seemed of a stronger kind than those he had been in the habit of smoking.

"An' how's Master Parker gettin' on?" asked Smiler.

"Mr. Parker-Roberts of the 'Daily Messenger,' you mean, don't you? Oh, I know a thing or two!" said Mellish boldly.

Smiler looked at him with well-pretended admiration.

"Well, if you ain't a knock-out, Mister Percymellish!" he said.

Mellish was so pleased that he drew smoke the wrong way, and began to cough and splutter.

Smiler, in most friendly fashion, patted him on the back. Rusty only smiled unpleasantly.

"Will 'appen sometimes, even to a seasoned smoker, like wot I can see with 'arf an eye you are," said Smiler sympathetically. "An' 'ow did you find out P.-R.'s iden-ti-fi-cation—eh, Mister Percymellish?"

But Mellish had no intention of giving away that secret.

"I'm not going to tell you that," he replied. "But as we're all on the square, I thought it was only fair you should know it."

"Ah, there's nothin' like bein' all on the square! That's us, ain't it, Rusty, old pal?"

"Not 'arf!" replied Rusty, getting nearer the truth than his friend.

"We're thinkin' about takin' a little bit of a 'ouse somewheres this way, with a garding for Rusty to dig in," Smiler said.

"Oh!" said Mellish.

It was not for conversation about the plans of Messrs. Smiler & Rusty that he had come.

"'Ad the police up at your show lately, Mister Percymellish?" asked Smiler.

"Police? My hat, no! Why should we?"

"Dunno! Does 'appen sometimes—even in the most respecterable establishments. Don't it, Rusty?"

"Don't arsk me!" creaked Rusty. "I don't know nothin' about the perlice, nor more I don't want!"

"I dessay it was on'y a silly bit of talk," said Smiler thoughtfully. "Folks will talk in these peaceful, little, quiet places. Nothin' ain't 'appened to no one there, I don't suppose, then?"

"Not that I've heard of," answered Mellish. "And I should be sure to hear."

"Ah, so you would, bein' that sort!" Smiler said.

Mellish felt reasonably doubtful whether that was exactly a compliment. It was very much the sort of thing fellows in his own Form had said to him at times, and most certainly it had not been meant in a complimentary sense, then.

But he wanted to get to business.

"I've heard out when P.-R.'s going to town," he said.

"Good! An' when might it be?" returned Smiler, taking care not to appear too eager.

But Mellish had seen the gleam in Rusty's brutal eyes, and a vague feeling of alarm took hold of him.

"Look here, I want to know first what—that is, why you're so interested in the chap!" he said.

"Qui' ri!" replied Smiler, slapping him on the knee. "Tell the young gent all about that bloomin' bet, Rusty!"

"Tell 'im yourself!" creaked Rusty. "I ain't got so much wind to spare as you 'ave!"

"Well, this is the size of it. Mind, you're a-'earin' of this in strick confidence, Mister Percymellish!"

"Oh, that's all right, of course!" said Mellish.

"Well, I dessay you've guessed already, bein' so cute, that me an' Rusty ain't down 'ere not 'olly for our 'ealths!"

"Oh, I know that!"

"You would—that's you! Sharp as a razor, you are, Mister Percymellish! Well, there's a bet 'agin' on to it!"

"You said that before."

"So I did. Snakes, you're a sharp 'un! It's about P.-R. bein' 'ere at school, you know. There 'e is up at the school, jest like the rest of you, ain't 'e? In 'is little Eton jacket an' 'is little turn-down collar, jest like a good little Tommy—make -room -for -your -uncle! Lumme, it don't 'arf make me laugh to think of it! An' 'im wot 'e is—the deepest bloke anywheres this side of the Channel."

"You don't mean that he's done anything? Oh, no, it couldn't be that, of course!"

"Police job? No, that ain't P.-R.'s line. Too fly for that. 'E'd sooner 'elp the bluebottles!"

"Special crime investigator! Bah!" creaked Rusty, spitting.

Again Mellish felt that vague thrill of fear. He did not like Parker at all, but he did not hate him enough to want anything serious to happen to him.

"Our boss—"

"Who is he?" asked Mellish.

"Ah, that's a question as I ain't allowed to answer! But never mind that. 'Im an' P.-R., they been up against one another some time. An' now they've got a bet on. If P.-R. can stay 'ere at school without bein' twigged as not bein' a boy at all, but a growed man—same as me an' Rusty 'ere—then P.-R. wins a sum of the right stuff as would fair astonish you. Contrariwise, if 'e's spotted, our boss mops up the whack. See?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

Mellish did not quite see, but he believed.

It was a fairy-tale, of course. The only truth in it was what Smiler had said as to the relations between his employer and Parker.

The Big Boss—very few people knew him by any name but that—was one of those spiders of crime who build their webs far and wide. As Special Crime Correspondent of the "Daily Messenger," P. I. Parker-Roberts had found out a great deal more about the Big Boss than that scoundrelly potentate cared for.

This new scheme of Parker-Roberts'—the staying as a boy among boys at St. Jim's—appeared to the Big Boss to offer his understrappers a far better chance of putting the too active journalist out of the way for a time—for the plan stopped short of murder—than was likely to present itself while he was in London, where the whole police force knew him as a powerful auxiliary, and watched after his safety as that of a good friend.

So Messrs. Smiler and Rusty had been sent along, and had found the traitorous tool they needed in Percy Mellish.

"How long has he to stay here to win?" asked Mellish.

"That's mo'n I'm exac'ly authorised to tell you, young sir. But 'elp us, an' you're on for a share of the 'oof! 'E's a free-'anded bloke, our boss."

"How much is the bet?"

"A cool thou! One thousand jimmy-o' goblins!"

Mellish felt almost stunned. To think of Parker—Parker of the Shell—being able to make a bet of £1,000!

"And what do I stand in?" demanded Mellish, greed conquering his astonishment.

"Well— Shall we say a tenner?"

"I think we'd better say twenty-five," answered Mellish, his voice trembling with excitement.

"You're a 'ard bargainer, Mister Percymellish! But done with you—for two tenners!"

"Right-ho!"

That the boss of Messrs. Smiler and Rusty was certainly not playing the game occurred to Mellish. But that was not his affair, he told himself. Of course, the fellow wanted to win all that money. And Mellish really had no special predilection towards playing the game.

It would serve Parker right for coming to St. Jim's under false pretences, and being sarcastic and contemptuous to better fellows than himself!

"Now, about this 'ere little trip to town?" said Smiler oilyly.

"I shall want something on account before I tell you about that."

"Two quid do you, Mister Percymellish?"

"Make it five, can't you?"

"No go! Ain't got so much in 'and of the boss' chink. An', of course, we want our own oof for the little place we're a-thinkin' of takin'—where you'll be a welcome guest any time, Mister Percymellish!"

Not if he knew it, Mellish thought.

He took the two pounds, he gave his information, and he went.

"That's a slimy 'un," said Rusty.

"'E's the sort that suits me!" replied Smiler, looking very ugly. "It's easier to do down the chap wot thinks 'e knows such a perishin' lot—easier every time, Rusty, old pal!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Parker-Roberts, of the "Daily Messenger."

"THERE 'e goes, bless 'im!" said Smiler viciously.

"'Oo?" inquired Rusty, out of a mug of beer.

"W'y, P.-R., of course! 'Oo else, timber-'ead?"

"So 'e's reelly goin' up to town?"

"Looks like it. He's got a bag with 'im!"

"That's all right, then, though I more'n 'arf fancied your nice young friend at the school was playin' it on us."

"'E better 'adn't!" snarled Smiler, who seemed in a very bad temper.

"Keep your wool on an' your pecker up, mate!" growled Rusty. "We'll bring it off to-night, you bet—if 'e comes back to-night. But I don't trust that there Mellows, or wotever is silly name is—not a yard, I don't!"

The two worthies were in the Green Man. Parker had just passed on his way to the station. He had obtained leave to go up to town, but only on condition that he returned the same night.

In the circumstances, however, that suited Parker very well. He felt that to leave St. Jim's from Saturday to Monday, with matters in their present condition, would be too much like a base desertion of D'Arcy, who, in loyalty to him, had thrown over his older friends.

Parker did not know how often Arthur Augustus had had positively final raptures with Blake, Herries, and Digby before—final raptures which were healed within a few days. It was not in any one of those four staunch chums to bear malice.

Both Parker and D'Arcy would be missing footer that afternoon. Parker regretted it. He had grown very keen on the game. D'Arcy, though he had always been keen, did not regret it at all.

Gussy was expecting a flying visit from his brother, Lord Conway, home on short leave from abroad. And Gussy's one regret was that he would not be able to introduce his new chum to that gallant officer.

Parker did not share that regret. He had reasons of his own for not desiring to meet Lord Conway.

It was to the "Daily Messenger" office that Parker was going. He started as Parker of St. Jim's, a rather old-looking, but chubby boy in an Eton jacket. When he reached London he had become P. I. Parker-Roberts, a still chubby, but a most un-schoolboy-like individual in a blue serge lounge suit.

He had been thinking hard on the way.

Among the thoughts that had passed through his mind had been this—the arrangements made for his speedy return to town in the event of his being wanted there in a hurry were scarcely satisfactory. He had far more difficulty than he had anticipated in getting permission to go.

And P. I. Parker-Roberts was too valuable an asset by far to the "Daily Messenger" to be tied up, so to speak.

He remembered very clearly why things had been left like this. It had been agreed between him and the great man who ruled the destinies of the "Messenger" that there would be no difficulty in his cutting loose altogether at any moment he chose. His mission was not of such importance that it could not be left incomplete.

But now—well, Parker did not want to cut loose in a hurry.

He had not grown fed-up with St. Jim's yet. He knew that his staying

long there was **out** of the question. But another fortnight or three weeks—that should be possible. He would be willing to let it rank as a holiday.

Parker-Roberts took a taxi from the terminus to the great building in which the "Messenger" had its home, nodded to the grey-moustached commissionaire, and ran up the wide staircase to the chief's room on the first floor. Few people entered that sanctum, but the man on guard by the door let him in at once.

"Why, boy!" said the man with the strong, clean-shaven face and the grizzled hair, of whom the whole staff stood in awe.

"Here I am, chief!" said Parker.

"And looking uncommonly fit, too! But you've sent no copy along, you young dog! I had really been hoping to make something of a splash with your revelations as to life at a public school."

"But that wasn't the only reason why I went down there, was it, sir?" said Parker quietly.

"Well, no—not the only one; but the chief one."

"The other being to enable both of us to find out how far our views of the public school system were right, and how far wrong."

"That's so. But that was rather a side-issue. Like you, I am not a public school man, and I have always held that the system is, on the whole, unsound."

"We were in complete agreement on that score till I came back from abroad," said Parker-Roberts quietly.

"Yes; you ratted a bit then. I'm not surprised. You almost made me rat, too. Those splendid youngsters! But still, I'm not convinced that the system made them, and you were not, either. It might have been in spite of the system. What do you think now?"

"I am not sure, sir. I'm shaken—I don't mind admitting that. I want to go back and make more sure. But I cannot promise you as much as a single par out of it all. Does that get your goat?"

St. Jim's would have been astonished to hear that expressive Americanism from the precise Parker. He spoke far less stiffly here, in familiar surroundings, than there.

"It does not, boy. In thirty years spent in the wicked newspaper world you are the most entirely reliable person I have ever struck, and I bank on you every time. Do as you like. You remind me of a Biblical character—the Prophet Balaam, who went out to curse Israel, but stayed to bless."

"And it really is a trifle like that, sir."

The chief looked keenly at his young aide.

"Then why not admit we were wrong, drop the whole affair, and come back here at once?" he asked.

"But I want to go back there, sir! It's doing me good! The Army took some of the pedantic rubbish out of me. This is going to take the rest, I think. Besides, it's a holiday, and I needed one."

"You deserved one, at least. Well, boy, you're wanted here, but not so badly at the moment that we cannot spare you. The time may come, though—and that soon—when I shall ask you to drop the schoolboy and put on the man again at a moment's notice."

"A request from you is a command to me, chief!"

"By Jove, boy, I wish you were the son I never had! And that's a thing I have never said before to anyone, or thought of anyone. Now tell me something of your experiences. You have any amount of good copy, I know, if you aren't going to use it."

Parker-Roberts proceeded to tell of some of the things that had happened to him. He would have kept back the Rylcombe Wood incident, but it was impossible to do justice to the Terrible Three without telling it. The story made the chief look very grave. He knew a good deal about that prince of scoundrels whom his followers called the Big Boss.

But the older man had lots of confidence in the younger one's ability to keep his own head against any dangers that might threaten it. And, in any case, there was no certainty that London

you will rank as an old St. Jim's boy after this, Philip."

"And, on the whole, I shall regard it as a distinction, sir—if the school does not discard me, as it probably will when the truth is known."

"Perhaps the truth need never be known. Been caned yet, boy!"

Parker-Roberts laughed.

"Very nearly. It was the escape of my life!"

"Now see here! You have been running with the wrong mob, as they say in Australia. Your experiences have been with anybody but the goats, save for this slimy young Mellish. Why not make yourself agreeable to some of the other type, and learn their little ways?"

"But that won't be much of a holiday, though I grant it should make better copy—if this ever comes to copy."



THE DARING OF D'ARCY. "Help! Help!" came the cry. A terrific struggle was going on in the next compartment. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first on the footboard. There was just enough light to see two figures holding down a third. (See Chapter 3.)

was safer for an enemy of the Big Boss than Sussex.

It was curious that Parker-Roberts found himself summing up the fellows with whom he had come most into contact with far greater clearness than he had been able to do when near them. Perhaps distance helped.

"I should like to meet your Terrible Three, and, more even than them, this young Bayard of a D'Arcy," said Mr. Malleston gravely. "Talbot, too—though I can't agree with your headmaster in keeping a young burglar, however thoroughly reformed, among his flock. But this juvenile blackmailer—"

"Such a poor little, mean little, two-penny-halfpenny blackmailer, sir! Don't let him prejudice you against us!"

"You say 'us' as if—"

"And you said 'my headmaster,' sir!" Mr. Malleston laughed.

"Well, he is that, there's no denying."

I'll do it, of course. Parker the Prodigal shall go on the bill. But I really shall not enjoy the society of Cutts, Crokee, Racke, and the rest of the gay dog gang."

"Is that a son of Racke, the contractor, of Racke & Racke?"

"It is."

"The father is a simply unspeakable outsider."

"The son, sir, can give his sire points in that respect, I think," replied Parker drily.

"H'm! I wish you joy of him, then! Come along and have some lunch. It is a trifle late; but I have not yet been out, and I have not given up eating entirely, in spite of the doctor's warnings. You have had none yet, I suppose?"

"I have not, and I'm quite ready. By the way, speaking of eating, I have a story of St. Jim's to tell you that ought to amuse you."

It did not fail to amuse Mr. Malleston, for it was the story of Fatty Wynn's great eating powers, and the feeds he had been to.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Four to the Rescue!

TWIGGEZ-VOUS, Kerr?" said Figgins, nudging the Scot in the region of the fifth rib.

The New House Co. were on the platform at Wayland Junction. They had been over to Wayland to see a relative of Kerr's, and now were at the station ready to catch the last train back to Rylcombe.

"I spot him!" replied Kerr.

"What are you two asses burbling about?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Never mind, old chap!" said Figgins. "Your eyes are so bunged up with fat that I don't suppose you even noticed the London train comes in. It isn't to be expected."

"I did, then!" answered Fatty. "And I saw D'Arcy and his brother go to it. I suppose Lord Conway's going on somewhere down the line; but there's nothing in that. We knew he was coming."

"He ain't quite asleep, Figgy," said Kerr. "All the same, he's missed what you meant."

"Never mind, as long as I didn't miss my supper," Fatty said, with a sigh of sweet reminiscence. "I hope it won't be long before your aunt asks us all over here again, Kerr. She does know how to give a chap the right sort of meal, and no mistake!"

"Wonder what Parker's up to in those trousers, Figgy?"

"Parker? I haven't seen Parker!" said Fatty.

But Kerr and Figgins had. Parker had got out of the train from London, still wearing the blue serge suit he had changed into on his way up. He had not meant to show himself in it at Wayland, but there had been no chance of making a change on the first part of the journey. It would be rather a rush to get it done in the few minutes between Wayland and Rylcombe; but he would have to try, and he naturally wanted a compartment to himself.

So he had tried to avoid D'Arcy, but had not quite succeeded. They passed one another. Arthur Augustus did not see Parker at first, but his brother did, and Lord Conway ejaculated:

"Why, I'm hanged if that isn't old Chubby! Hi, Chubby, old top!"

But Parker paid no heed. He was meant, he knew, but he pushed on. Anywhere else he would have been only too pleased to renew his acquaintance with Lord Conway, but not in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's, and not with Gussy present.

"Who is Chubby, Conway?" asked Gussy.

"Fellah I met abroad, and before that, in the War—no end of a good sort, and as plucky as they make 'em, though a bit queer in some ways. There he is, Gus!"

"That? Oh, you are undah a delusion, Conway! That is Parkah, one of our chaps!"

"Must be a relative, then, Chubby's name is Parker-Roberts. I should like to have a word with Parkah, but there isn't time. Friend of yours, Gus?"

"Yaas; an' one of the vewy best!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

Had there been a minute of two to spare, Gussy would have hunted Parker down, without the slightest suspicion that in doing so he would have been annoying Parker extremely. But there really was no time to spare at all.

Gussy had failed to notice the difference in dress. He was not so apt to notice such little things as the acute Kerr, who had real defective instincts.

Parker spotted a compartment in the branch-line train in which the lamp was burning so low that it looked like going out altogether. He got in there, as it seemed to him likely that he might have it to himself. He had not noticed Figgins & Co., and he did not wish to see Gussy till he had changed.

Even before the train moved out he had begun to unpack his bag in readiness. He heard the whistle of the main-line train go, and knew that in another minute or two the branch-line would be off.

"Hallo, Gussy, old scout! Come along with us!" spoke Figgins, from somewhere close by.

Parker heard, and realised that there were more St. Jim's fellows about besides Gussy. He got as far back as possible, and pulled his overcoat up. It was quite a mild night, and to that fact was due his having had the overcoat unbuttoned, thereby allowing Kerr to spot his unorthodox garb.

"Thanks, Figgy! But my friend Parkah is somewhat about, an' I am looking for him."

"Oh, confound it!" groaned Parker.

"Better slip in here. There's the whistle!" said Kerr.

Parker breathed a sigh of relief. But just as the train began to move, his compartment was invaded by Messrs. Smiler and Rusty.

He did not know them. It was only because he did not want anyone in there that he resented the intrusion. He was not thinking in the least of the Big Boss and his myrmidons.

As if the starting of the train had been too much for it, the lamp flickered out before the journey had fairly begun.

To Parker this seemed rather a bit of luck. He would change in the darkness.

He pulled off his overcoat and coat at once, and had his waistcoat half-way off, when he felt himself seized.

And while he struggled, badly handicapped by the waistcoat, a cloth was pressed against his face, and he recognised the sickly scent of chloroform.

He dodged, eluding the cloth. He got his arms free. He struggled hard, trying to reach the communication-cord.

But he knew his chance was small, and, much as he hated doing it, he lifted up his voice in a call for help.

"Help! Help!"

"What was that?" said Kerr, in sudden alarm.

"Help!" came the voice again, more muffled now.

"Must have been the wind," said Fatty sleepily.

"Shurrup, Figgy!"

"I heard! It was Parkah, an' he called for help!"

"He must be in the next compartment! We'll have to—"

But Figgins never finished his sentence. Already Kerr had the door open, and Arthur Augustus, pushing past Kerr, was first on the footboard.

"I say, you chaps, that's no end dangerous! You'll—"

But Fatty's warning went unheeded.

And Fatty, though he might see the danger more clearly than they, or dread

it more, was every bit as plucky as the other three.

Fatty followed. Fatty groaned, but he followed.

There was just enough dim light to see two figures holding down a third on the seat.

The third figure must be Parker—no doubt of that!

Gussy, Kerr, and Figgy fairly hurled themselves on the scoundrels. Fatty would have done likewise, but there was really not room left for Fatty to lurch himself.

The figure on the seat writhed and sat up. It is not so easy to chloroform anyone who knows what is being attempted against him, and, though Parker felt queer, he had not been made insensible.

The train began to slow down, nearing Rylcombe. One of the rascals, with a savage oath, brought up his knees sharply, took Figgins under the chin, and sent him sprawling. He carried over Gussy with him.

"Hang on, Kerr!" yelled the undaunted Figgy.

Gussy could not yell; he could only gasp, for one of Figgy's elbows was trying to get into his mouth.

But Rusty had got his hands to the Scots junior's throat, half-throttling him. Now he flung him away, kicking at him viciously, and made a leap for the door. Figgins clutched at his leg, but in vain.

"Ow-wow!" howled Fatty Wynn, and tumbled out, with Rusty on top of him.

The train had now slackened speed to such an extent that to jump out was not very dangerous. Yet only sheer necessity would have made Smiler do that.

But it was a choice between being made prisoner, and jumping. And Smiler, quick to decide, in spite of his fear, chose the lesser evil.

He jumped.

Figgins would have gone after him, but Kerr and D'Arcy both lay on the floor, and Figgy did not know how much injury either they or Parker had sustained.

"Poor old Fatty!" he groaned.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Very Mysterious Indeed!

THE lights of Rylcombe Station, dim but welcome, showed. The train came to a standstill.

Arthur Augustus got up gasping. Kerr lay on the floor and gasped.

"What's it all about, Parkah?" asked Gussy.

"Never mind that for the moment. Help me to get these things into my bag!" replied Parker sharply.

"Do you chaps know that poor old Fatty's on the line somewhere—shot out?" asked Figgins.

They had not known it, as their faces showed him at once. There was horror on both.

"Oh, he isn't likely to have been settled! I'll run back and pick him up. Get some clothes on, Parker. And you, Gussy, look after Kerr!"

"I'm all right!" gasped the Scot.

But Figgy was already out and speeding down the platform.

The stationmaster was not in view. A sleepy booking-clerk, of tender years, stood by the booking-hall door, and a sleeper porter, who might have been his grandfather, was toddling to the guard's van. Neither noticed anything amiss.

"I say, I'd be much obliged if you fellows wouldn't tell the stationmaster anything about this!" said Parker.

"But weally——"
"That's a queer thing to want, Parker! Of course——"

"Hurrah!" yelled Figgins. "Here's good old Fatty!"

"That makes it poss to keep it dark; but——"

"Please do as I ask you, Kerr! I have my reasons!"

The porter had at last noticed something.

"Allo, young gents!" he said. "That there won't do nohow! You'd no right to go off the platform!"

"All serene, old bird!" said Figgins, pressing a florin into the horny palm of the porter. "I dropped something out of the train, that's all. It wasn't a very valuable article, was it, Fatty? But I thought I'd better go back and fetch it!"

The article meant by Figgy was Fatty Wynn. But the porter, looking at the dusty and red-faced Fatty, saw a gleam of gold in his hand.

"Ish'd call a gold watch a pretty wallible article myself!" he said. "You'd uncommon luck in findin' of it ag'in!"

Then Figgy saw.

"Where did you get that?" he asked.

"Dunno! Must have been one of the robbers". It was in my hand, that's all I can tell you, Figgy."

"Rot! It's Parker's I suppose! Let's have a squint at it!"

Fatty handed over the watch. He was glad to give it up, for he needed both hands to feel himself all over, to make sure how many places he was broken in.

Figgins' eyes were quick. Even in the dim light they could read the inscription on the back of that watch.

"Whew!"

That was what Figgins said as he read it. For the inscription said that the watch had been presented to Mr. P. I. Parker-Roberts by the members of a certain London Police Division, in recognition of his gallantry in going to the aid of a constable of the division when attacked and got down by several burglars, and effecting a notable rescue.

And Figgins' mind was quick, as were his eyes. Doubt as to the identity of P. I. Parker-Roberts with Parker of the Shell might come later, but in that moment of discovery Figgy felt no doubt whatever.

"What's the row?" asked Fatty. "I can't help it if it ain't Parker's watch, you know. I didn't try to bag it. And, anyway, a scamp like that deserves to lose it!"

"It's Parker's all right!" said Figgins gruffly.

"Are you much hurt, Fatty?" asked Kerr anxiously.

"I ain't dead!" replied Wynn. "That's as much as a chap can expect!"

But, apart from quite a choice assortment of bruises, Fatty was really not hurt. He had suffered no more than Kerr and D'Arcy.

"Your watch, I think, Parker?" said Figgins. "Fatty grabbed it from one of those rotters as he fell!"

"Thanks very much, Wynn! And thank you all, most sincerely. Nothing could have been pluckier than the way in which you came to my help!"

"The scoundrels meant to rob you, Parker!" said Kerr. "Thundering cheek, I call it!"

"Look sharp there, please!" piped the youthful booking-clerk. "I ain't paid to stand here all night!"

They passed out. The stationmaster was still invisible, and it hardly seemed worth while to have him called out. He could do nothing, it was evident. Fatty had seen both scoundrels get up and run away.

"We shall have to report this to Crump!" said Figgins. "Not that Crump's a ha'p'orth of good, of course. But——"

"Then why report?" asked Parker coolly.

"Don't you want it reported?" snapped Figgins.

"I do not, I have already said so. But you did not hear that, of course!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Parkah——"

"See here, D'Arcy, if this is reported it will very probably mean the stoppage of all leave after dark, I take it?"

The Ladder of Success!

ARE YOU PROGRESSING
STEADILY IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION?



LET
"HARMSWORTH'S
BUSINESS
ENCYCLOPEDIA"
BE YOUR GUIDE

BUY A COPY OF
THIS WONDERFUL
NEW WORK.

PART 1
NOW ON SALE
AT ALL NEWSAGENTS.

"Yaas, Parkah, I am afwaid it will. But——"

"None of us can begin to identify those two men. What, then, is the use of saying anything?"

"H'm! There's something in that!" said Kerr.

"There's a good deal in this bizney, I fancy!" said Figgins drily.

Parker recognised in Figgy's tones a latent hostility that none of the other three showed. But what Parker chiefly wanted at that moment was his own way.

He had it. To three of the four, the affair seemed a plain case of attempted robbery. And even Figgins did not know what else to make of it. But somehow Figgy did not believe that it was mere robbery.

He had seen the inscription on the watch, and he smelt a rat.

If this had happened before Gussy's gas-party, Figgins might have tackled Parker straight out on the subject. But he would not do that now. He resolved to take counsel with Kerr and Fatty before doing anything.

Figgins talked little on the way back to the school. Parker also had little to say, though he made them all—with the possible exception of Figgy—feel much more friendly disposed to him by what he said. They liked the coolness he had shown, too.

Fatty did not chatter, but only groaned from time to time. And Kerr was not garulous. But Arthur Augustus talked enough for five.

The New House Co. had a long talk on the next day. They cut footer to talk. And after they had finished their consultation they went across to the School House to see Parker.

But they did not see him. The Terrible Three, coming in ruddy and warm from the footer-field, told them they had very little chance of seeing him for a fortnight or so.

A wire during the morning had fetched Parker out of the Shell class-room to go at once to town. Something Mr. Linton had let fall gave the Shell the impression that a relative of Parker's had been taken ill suddenly. It was Parker who had told Tom Merry that he might be away a fortnight.

"My belief is that the chap will never come back at all!" growled Figgins.

But he would not explain why he believed so, and the Terrible Three had not heard the story of the night before. Parker had asked the four who had come to his rescue to keep that dark.

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "We'll see old Pignacious again, you bet! Why, I'd more than half promised the chap that he should play right-half in one of the less important matches, and he's as keen as mustard about it!"

But P. I. Parker-Roberts had no relative living nearer than a second cousin, whom he had never seen. That wire had come from the "Messenger."

Parker-Roberts was urgently needed. But he meant to come back to St. Jim's. He had still the role of Parker the Prodigal to play there.

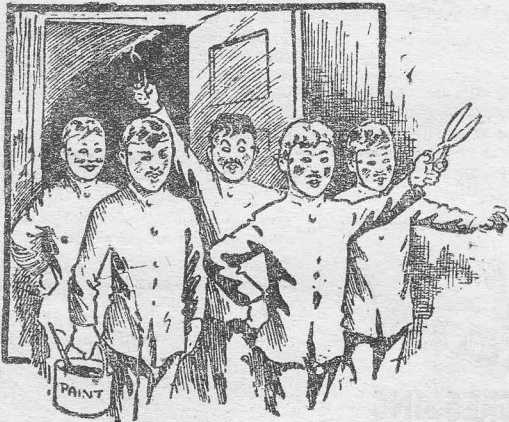
THE END.

(Look out for "The Return of Parker!" by Martin Clifford, next week's grand, long, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 514.

ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE SECRET SOCIETY!

Knowles of the Sixth scorned the idea of the Rookwood Secret Society, and refused to believe that they were strong enough to interfere with him, a prefect. But he soon found out his mistake when he became the next victim!



KNOWLES Toest the Line!

A Splendid Long Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood and the Amazing Secret Society.

By
Owen Conquest.

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

THE FIRST CHAPTER. On Suspicion!

"DODD!" Knowles of the Modern Sixth stood in his study doorway, and shouted.

Tommy Dodd of the Fourth looked round, but he did not approach. Knowles did not look safe to approach at that moment.

Evidently something had occurred to rouse the ire of the Modern prefect. His brows were darkly knitted, and his eyes glittered under them. He had his asphalt in his hand—an additional reason for not approaching him in a hurry.

"Do you hear me, Dodd?"

"Yes, Knowles," answered Tommy meekly. "Come into my study," said Knowles harshly.

Tommy Dodd hesitated.

He was bound to obey a prefect's order, but he did not like Knowles' look, and still less did he like the look of the asphalt. He decided that it would be less risky to disobey than to obey, so he cut along the passage to the open doorway to the quad.

"Dodd!" shouted Knowles angrily. "Come here, I tell you! Stop him, Catesby!"

Catesby of the Sixth, unluckily for Tommy Dodd, was just coming in. He caught the junior by the collar.

"Bring him here," said Knowles.

"Come along, you young sweep!" said Catesby.

Tommy Dodd submitted to his fate. There was no arguing with a Sixth-Former who had a grasp on his collar.

"All right, Catesby; anything to oblige," murmured Tommy.

And Catesby led him by the collar into Knowles' study. Knowles fixed an angry and savage look on him.

"Why didn't you come in when I called you?" he demanded.

"You looked too dangerous," said Tommy, eyeing the prefect warily. "But here I am! What do you want?"

Tresham and Frampton of the Sixth were in the study. Both of them were looking rather disturbed.

"What's the trouble?" asked Catesby.

Knowles, with a scowl, pointed to a slip of cardboard that lay on the study table. On the card was daubed, in big letters, with a brush, "BEWARE! The R. S. S. is on your track! TREMBLE!"

Knowles of the Sixth was not trembling, as the mysterious message bade him. But undoubtedly he was in a very savage temper.

"The R. S. S.," said Catesby. "That stands for the Rookwood Secret Society, I suppose?"

"Yes—a trick of those cheeky fags!" said Knowles, between his teeth. "They've already

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

frightened Carthew of the Classical Sixth out of his nerve; but it won't have the same effect here. Dodd, did you put that card on my table?"

"No."

"Do you know who put it there?"

"How should I know, Knowles?"

"I believe this secret society bizney is a stunt of the Classical fags," said Catesby. "I believe Jimmy Silver's mixed up in it."

"I don't see how a Classical could dodge in and out of this house without being noticed," said Knowles. "I want to know whether any Modern fags have a hand in it. Answer me, Dodd."

"But I've nothing to say!" protested Tommy Dodd.

"Do you know anything about this card?"

"That—that card?"

"Yes; answer me at once," said Knowles, taking a harder grip on his asphalt. "Now, then, what do you know about it?"

"It—it's a card."

"What?"

"Made of pasteboard," said Tommy.

Knowles stared at him for a moment.

"Are you trying to pull my leg, you young rascal?" he ejaculated.

"You asked me what I knew about it," said Tommy Dodd meekly. "I'm telling you, Knowles."

"Do you know who put it in my study?" asked Knowles, breathing hard.

"I know who might have," said Tommy Dodd after some reflection.

"Who, then?"

"Mr. Manders!"

"What?" roared Knowles.

"I don't say he did, you know, but he might have—anybody might have," argued Tommy Dodd. "The Head might have, if he felt so disposed."

Catesby grinned, and Tresham and Frampton exchanged a glance. It was easy enough to see that Tommy Dodd was avoiding a direct answer. From which it was not difficult for the Modern prefects to deduce that Tommy knew more about the Rookwood Secret Society than he cared to admit.

"I shall take it for granted, Dodd, that you put this card in my study if you don't speak out," said Knowles grimly.

"I can't help what you take for granted, can I, Knowles?"

"I'm going to give you a licking, as a warning."

"You're going to be a beastly bully, as usual," retorted Tommy Dodd. "I can't help that."

"I'll let you off on one condition," continued Knowles. "I'm quite certain that you know all about this gang of fags that calls itself the Rookwood Secret Society. Give me their names, in a list, and I'll let you off the licking, and excuse you fagging for the rest of the term."

Tommy Dodd's lip curled.

"Well?" snapped Knowles.

"Nice weather, isn't it?" said Tommy calmly.

"What?"

"But I think we shall have some more snow."

"Will you answer me?" roared Knowles.

"It will be rather rotten for the footer, but we shall get some snowballing," continued Tommy Dodd.

Knowles bit his lip hard.

"Shove him across the table," he said. "When he's had a dozen with the cane he won't be quite so funny. Up with him!"

To Knowles' surprise, Frampton and Tresham did not move; and Catesby released his grip on Tommy Dodd's collar.

Knowles stared at them.

"Don't you hear me?" he bawled.

"We're not deaf," remarked Frampton.

"This is bullying," said Catesby.

Knowles jumped.

It was the first time he had ever heard Catesby utter a word against bullying. He fairly blinked at the speaker.

"Wha-a-at?" he stammered.

"I'm not having a hand in it," said Catesby, and he quitted the study without waiting for Knowles to reply.

"By gad!" stuttered Knowles. "Catesby in a funk! Are you fellows in a funk, too—frightened by fags, like Carthew?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tresham uneasily. "There—there's such a thing as—as justice."

Knowles did not answer that. He made a rush at Tommy Dodd, grasped him with his left hand, and plied the cane with his right.

Lash, lash, lash!

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Wooooop!" roared Tommy Dodd, wriggling wildly in the prefect's grasp, as the lashes fell.

"Draw it mild, Knowles!" exclaimed Frampton.

"Don't talk to me, you funk!" hissed Knowles.

"Well, we disapprove of this!" said Frampton, and he followed Catesby's example, and quitted the study. Tresham hesitated a moment or two, and then walked out after Frampton.

Knowles laid on the cane unheeding. Tommy Dodd struggled and roared and kicked; and a hack on the shins only seemed to intensify Knowles' wrath. He did not release the junior till he was quite breathless. Then he twisted him to the door and pitched him into the passage.

"There!" he gasped. "Now—"

"Yah! Bully!" howled Tommy Dodd.

Knowles made a furious stride towards him, and Tommy fled for his life. The Modern prefect stepped back into his study, picked up the card from the table, and tore it into a dozen pieces. The mysterious warning of the Rookwood Secret Society had certainly failed to do its work upon this occasion.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Secret Society Meets!

JIMMY SILVER came into the end study, on the Classical side, with a smiling face.

The end study was rather crowded. Jimmy's chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, were there, and Putty Grace and Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn and Oswald and Mornington, as well as Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle of the Modern Fourth.

It was evidently a meeting. Chestnuts were baking on the grate, and the meeting disposed of them with satisfaction while they chatted.

"All here?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he came in.

"All excepting Doddy," said Cook. "He's late."

"Trust a Modern to be late!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Rats!" rejoined Tommy Cook cheerfully.

"I've just seen Carthew of the Sixth!" remarked Jimmy Silver, his smile widening.

"Any trouble?" asked Putty of the Fourth.

"Trouble? No trouble with Carthew of the Sixth these days. He said—What do you think he said?"

"Give it up!" said Raby.

"He said, 'Good-afternoon, Silver!'" grinned Jimmy, "as pretty and polite as you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What did I tell you?" chuckled Putty Grace.

"Didn't I tell you the Rookwood Secret Society would work the oracle? Carthew has had enough."

"And he doesn't want any more," chuckled Jimmy. "I suppose he suspects that I'm in the game, but he can't prove it. He's getting so mighty civil that we hardly know him. He hasn't even cuffed his fag for two or three days."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He wouldn't be happy till he got it, and he's had it now," remarked Putty. "It's the stunt of the season. We shall bring Knowles to heel in time."

"Knowles is rather a harder nut to crack than Carthew, though," remarked Newcome dubiously.

"We'll crack him, all the same," said Mornington.

"You put the card on his table, Doyle?"

"Sure and I did!" grinned Doyle.

"There'll be a row when he finds it there, I'm thinking. Hallo, here's Tommy!"

Tommy Dodd came into the study. He was looking very flushed, and he seemed to limp a little. It needed only a glance from the members of the Rookwood Secret Society to see that the hapless Modern junior had "been through it."

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd sank into a chair, and immediately jumped up again, with a dismal ejaculation.

"Sit down, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I—I'd rather stand for a bit," said Tommy Dodd, with a wry face. "I—I've got a pain!"

"What's happened?"

"Knowles found the card on his table!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "He called me in to ask questions!"

"But you didn't put it there, bedad!" said Doyle.

"Knowles took it for granted. He guesses I'm in this stunt, and he pitched into me on suspicion!" groaned Tommy. "Ow! I've had a fearful licking! Yow-ow-ow!"

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"Time for the secret society to get to work again," he said. "Knowles is next on the list, you fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Feel very bad, Tommy?" asked Cook sympathetically.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Tommy Dodd's reply indicated that he felt very bad indeed.

"Never mind. We'll make Knowles sit up for it!" said Conroy comfortingly.

"Knowles doesn't play the game," said Jimmy Silver. "He's no right to take things for granted, or to ask a fellow to convict himself. He doesn't know the meaning of fair play. Old Bulkeley wouldn't do that. But the secret society is going to teach him a lesson—"

"Carthew's caught on already," said Putty Grace, "and I think that Catesby and Frampton and Tresham don't want any more."

"I know they don't!" said Tommy Dodd, with a faint grin. "They refused to have

a hand in licking me in Knowles' study. Catesby said it was bullying—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And Tresham and Frampton didn't approve—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd chuckled, but his chuckle ended in a dismal groan. He was feeling very sore.

"They're all learning their lesson," said Jimmy Silver. "It's only Knowles who's got to be made to understand. And Knowles is to be the next victim of the R.S.S."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Cheap Hair-Cut!

THE door of Knowles' study was thrown open quite suddenly, and a crowd of curious-looking figures rushed in, and the door was instantly closed again, and the key turned in the lock. It was ten o'clock, and nearly everybody was in bed.

The sudden invasion of the study had taken hardly more than a second.

Knowles blinked at the invaders. That they were juniors was clear enough from their stature. But they were quite unrecognisable. Each of them had a Guy Fawkes mask on his face, securely tied on with string, and wore overalls over his clothes.

The overalls had evidently been borrowed from the laboratory on the Modern side.

Their aspect was extraordinary, and rather alarming. The last to enter locked the door.

"What—" stuttered Knowles.

He realised in a flash that he was in the presence of the Secret Society of Rookwood—or some of its members, at least.

The disguised juniors did not speak. Five of them rushed straight at Knowles. He put up a terrific fight as his assailants rushed him down, and shouted for help at the same time.

But he had time for only one shout.

Two of the juniors staggered away under his hefty blows, but the others were on him, clinging to him like cats, and Knowles came to the floor with a crash. As he sprawled there, they all scrambled on him, and he was pinned helplessly to the carpet.

A knee on his chest held him down, and a hand was clapped over his mouth, choking back his attempt to yell.

But they were not quick enough.

One more long yell escaped the hapless Sixth-Former before he was effectually gagged with an oily rag, which, from its taste, had been picked up in the bike-shed, and which excellently served its purpose.

Almost immediately footsteps sounded in the passage outside. The one shout that Knowles had uttered had evidently been heard in the other Sixth Form studies.

"Knowles!"

It was a whisper from the leader of the masked party. Steps were approaching the study. It was locked, but the invaders were shut in, and there was no escape for them.

"Knowles, tell them it is all right. You catch on?"

"Yes," breathed Knowles.

The gag had been removed from his mouth, but he dare not shout out for help.

"If they come in and catch us here, old pippin, we're going to pinch your nose with these!"

So saying, the Grand Master produced a dangerous-looking pair of pincers, and snapped them threateningly before Knowles' face.

Knowles shivered.

"I'll do my best!" he muttered.

"Mind you do!"

The door-handle turned, and then there was a knock.

"Knowles!" came Catesby's voice from outside.

"Hallo!" called back Knowles, in faltering tones, his eyes on the pincers that were ready to pinch his nose.

"Did you shout?"

"Eh?"

"Somebody shouted for help!" exclaimed Catesby irritably. "Is anything up here?"

"What—what should be up? It's all right!"

"Can't you open the door?"

"I'm—I'm just turning in."

"Well, what the blazes did you yell for?"

exclaimed the Sixth-Former in the passage, in annoyance and astonishment. "I heard you in my study!"

Knowles could not explain that it was he who had yelled, and why. It was a case of least said soonest mended, with a pair of pincers just touching the bully's nose.

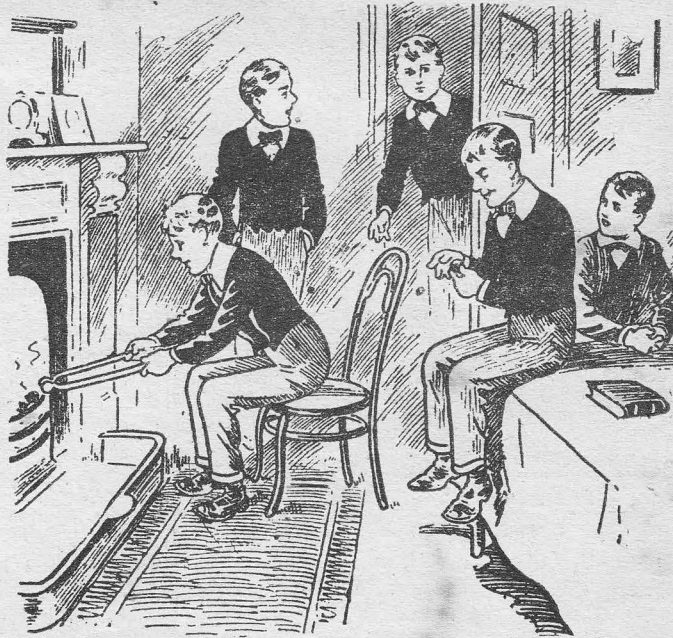
"I—I was dreaming, I think," stuttered Knowles at last. "I—I fell asleep in my chair, and I—I think I was dreaming—"

"Well, you are an ass!" said Catesby.

And his footsteps were heard returning to his own study.

There was a soft chuckle from under the Guy Fawkes masks as the footsteps died away. While the prefect was at the door the secret society members had kept as still as mice, hardly breathing. But he was gone now—surprised, but far from suspecting what was going on in Knowles' study.

Knowles bit deep into the oily rag in his



A MEETING OF THE R.S.S. "You put the card on Knowles' table, Doyle?" asked Jimmy. "Sure! Hallo, Here's Tommy!" Tommy Dodd came into the study. He was looking flushed, and it needed only a glance from the members of the society to see that he had "been through it." (See Chapter 2.)

rage. He had felt assured that the game was up with the ragers as soon as Catesby knocked at the study door. He had lied, perforce, and turned away the only hope of assistance, while all the time wanting to shout at the top of his voice.

Now he was at the mercy of the secret society, and he knew that there was little mercy he might expect. The members of this unruly band had never as yet failed to carry out their threats, and Knowles had not much hope of their weakening in this instance. He was just beginning to realise why Carthew of the Classical Side, and Tresham, Frampton, and Catesby on the Modern Side, had altered their behaviour as regards bullying since the advent of the secret society.

Who were they? His eyes glittered at them, but could not penetrate the disguises. The Guy Fawkes masks and the overalls completely concealed clothes, forms, and features. Their looks told him nothing, and they might be in the Shell, the Fourth, the Third—they might be any of a hundred and fifty fellows.

He suspected that Jimmy Silver was one of them, but it was the barest suspicion. For aught he knew, Jimmy might be fast asleep in the Classical Fourth dormitory at that moment. He had listened to the Grand Master's whispering voice eagerly, but he could not recognise it—the forced huskiness of the tones baffled him. Knowles, as he lay on the study carpet, quivered with rage, but still more with apprehension. He began to understand Carthew's tame submission.

What was going to happen to him now? He watched the masked juniors in growing uneasiness.

Only a soft chuckle broke the stillness of the room.

"All serene now?" said the Grand Master.

"What-ho!"

"And now for Knowles!"

"Now for Knowles!" repeated the members in hoarse voices.

Knowles shivered a little as they surrounded him. The fury in his face was changed into something very like fear.

"Put him in the chair!"

Knowles was placed in a chair. He could not move hand or foot to resist, and his jaws ached with biting at the oily rag in vain. Only his eyes were eloquent.

"Knowles"—the Grand Master's voice was very deep—"do you know into whose hands you have fallen?"

Knowles glared.

"Nod your head for 'Yes,' and answer."

Another glare.

"Pull his ears till he answers!"

"You bet!"

A muscular finger and thumb fastened upon Knowles' right ear, and it was mercilessly twisted. Knowles would have given a fearful howl if the oily rag had not stopped it. As it was, he gave utterance to a faint, anguished gurgle.

"Will you answer now?"

Knowles nodded hastily.

"Good! Just in time to save your other ear!" said the Grand Master approvingly.

"Do you think we shall teach you manners in time, Knowles?"

Knowles bit savagely into the gag.

"No answer? Pull his other ear!"

Gurgle.

"Will you answer now, prisoner in the chair?"

Knowles nodded.

"Do you think we shall teach you manners in time, Knowles?"

The Grand Master repeated his question. Nod again. Knowles had had enough persuasion, and he was prepared to nod like a Chinese mandarin, if requested.

"That's better! Now, do you know into whose hands you have fallen?"

Nod.

"This afternoon you bullied a junior in the Modern Fourth. Do you remember?"

Knowles had an inward struggle, but finally he nodded. He knew what would happen if he did not.

"You remember acting like a beastly bully?"

Nod.

"The rotter realises what a rotter he is," said the Grand Master.

"That's something! You realise what a rotter you are, Knowles?"

The hapless Knowles nodded.

"Are you properly ashamed of yourself?"

Nod.

"Good! We're getting on! Do you think that the lesson we're going to give you will do you good?"

Knowles wriggled in his bonds in a desperate and frantic effort to get loose. He would not have thought of counting the odds if he could have got his hands free just then. But he sank back in the chair, exhausted by the futile effort, and as he did so a hand from under an overall gripped his ear, and pulled hard and long.

Knowles writhed in a perspiration between rage and pain.

"Do you think the lesson we're going to give you will do you good?" repeated the Grand Master calmly.

Knowles nodded, creaking.

He was experiencing a severe form of bullying now. The secret society were evidently proceeding on the system of making the punishment fit the crime. Whether it was doing Knowles good was another question. Certainly, it was not improving his temper or adding to his stock of the milk of human kindness.

"Good again! I hope, for your own sake, Knowles, that the lesson will do you enough good to cure you! Eyebrows first!"

A shudder ran through Knowles as scissors were produced and glided over his eyebrows, clipping them off close to the skin.

Knowles' aspect was extraordinary without any eyebrows.

"They'll grow again!" said the Grand Master cheerfully. "You'll look a bit of a sketch, Knowles, until they grow; but they'll grow all right. While they're growing you'll have time to reflect upon your sins. You'll have lots to reflect on. Meantime, you'll furnish a little harmless and necessary entertainment to the fags. I'm sure the Second Form, at least, will be no end interested in you in this state, and will think it funny!"

There was a chortle from under the cardboard masks.

"Now for his topknot!"

Knowles wriggled spasmodically. If his tongue had been free he would have pleaded for mercy; he was reduced to that. But he could not speak. He shuddered as the scissors glided over his head and his hair fell in a shower.

Knowles, who was rather a dandy, prided himself on his hair, which was always beautifully brushed and parted. The scissors made havoc with it. The Grand Master, whoever and whatever he was, was evidently not a skilled hair-cutter. He cut in jags and gashes, and hair came off in chunks, leaving thick patches in one place and bald spots in another. The sufferings of the hapless Knowles were acute. How long would it take for his hair to grow again? What would he look like while it was growing? Carthew's celebrated black eye, at the beginning of the term, was nothing to this—nothing! He would have to hide himself in the sanatorium, under the pretence of illness; he would have to keep somehow out of sight of Rookwood. He could not see himself, but he could feel the scissors snipping and see the hair falling. He knew that already he would cause howls of laughter if he appeared in public, and the amateur barber was not finished yet.

Snip, snip, snip!

The scissors were very busy. Hair lay all around Knowles in the chair, and he had a cold feeling on top of his head.

Snip, snip, snip!

"There, I think that will do!" said the Grand Master of the Rookwood Secret Society at last. "There isn't much more to come off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! What a beauty!"

"You can thank your lucky stars, Knowles, that you haven't reached an age when the hair doesn't grow again. Suppose you had!"

Knowles did not need to suppose that; he was horrified enough already. Even if he found out these young rascals, and had them punished, that would not restore his shorn locks. Nothing but the slow process of Nature could do that, and that process was very slow.

He sat with a stony look on his face. All the ferocity had been taken out of him now. He only wondered dismally whether the secret society was finished yet.

"That'll do. We're leaving you now," said the Grand Master.

Then the Grand Master tiptoed to the door and unlocked it, and peered out cautiously into the passage. The Sixth Form corridor was deserted. Most of the Sixth were gone to bed.

"All serene."

Noiselessly the seven members stepped out of the study, and the door was drawn shut and closed quietly.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Nice for Knowles!

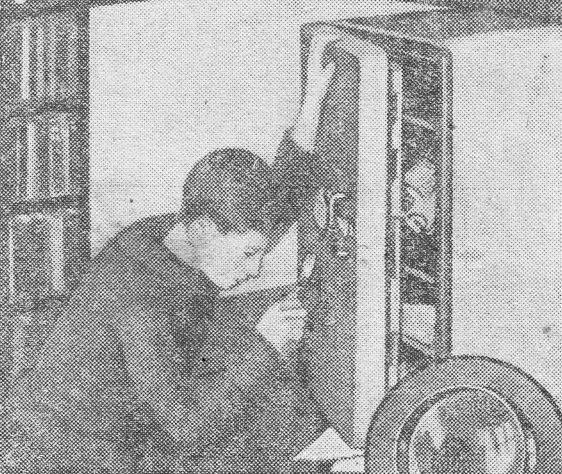
AFTER much struggling and wriggling in his bonds, Knowles managed to free himself, and, jumping to his feet viciously, turned up the light, and looked into the glass. He scowled ferociously at his image reflected there. How was he to appear in public in this state?

He couldn't—he knew that he couldn't. Even for the sake of vengeance on the secret

A FASCINATING FREE GIFT!

Here is a small reproduction of the cover of the superb 20-page Detective Book given away with every copy of—

The Boys' Friend Detective Book



CONTENTS.

Articles on "The Art of Shadowing," "Clues and How to Detect Them," "Ciphers and Signals," "Finger Prints," etc.—and heaps of interesting real photographs.

—"THE BOYS' FRIEND"
NOW ON SALE.

Be sure you get it, chums. It will delight you!
THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

society he would not meet the grinning looks of all Rookwood in his present weird state.

There was a tap at the door, and he spun round. Quick as thought he caught up a muffer, and wound it over his head, low over his forehead to cover up the missing eyebrows. Frampton opened the door and looked in.

"Oh, here you are!" he said.

Knowles muttered something indistinctly. "Anything wrong with your head?" asked Frampton.

"My—my head? No!"

"What have you got it wrapped up for, then?"

"A—a slight cold," mumbled Knowles.

Frampton eyed him very curiously. He could see that something very unusual had happened, and that Knowles did not intend to tell him what it was.

Even to his chum's eyes, Knowles did not care to reveal his disfigured looks. Much less would he have revealed them to the whole school.

"You've caught a cold?" asked Frampton. "J—j—just a trifle," stammered Knowles. "N—n—nothing much! Good-night! I'm going to bed!"

"By the way, what does Carthew say about the secret society?"

"Hang Carthew!"

Knowles almost pushed Frampton out of the study, closed the door on him, and locked it. Frampton whistled softly in the passage, and looked in at Tresham's study before going to his own.

"Something's up with old Knowles," he remarked. "I fancy he's fallen foul of the secret society; looks as mad as a hatter."

Tresham grinned.

"Is Carthew backin' him up?" he asked.

"He said, 'Hang Carthew!' so I fancy not. Looks to me as if the fags have done something to him," said Frampton. "He's got his napper wrapped up, and says he's got a cold; but he jolly well hasn't! They threatened to shave Carthew, before he knuckled under. I wonder if they've shaved Knowles?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Old Knowles was always so jolly cocksure," said Frampton. "My idea is, leave the little beasts alone!"

"Mine, too!" agreed Tresham.

And it is probable that Knowles, as he restlessly paced his study, and occasionally glared at his awful reflection in the glass, was coming to the same conclusion.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Knowles Toes the Line.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. came down cheerfully in the morning. Perhaps one or two of the cheery juniors showed slight signs of having been awake unusually late. But they were very merry and bright, and when they met the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth in the quadrangle there was a general chortle.

"Something's happened to Knowles," said Tommy Dodd.

"I believe so!" said Jimmy Silver. "I've heard—ahem!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've heard that he was shaved in his study last night. Of course, I can't say anything official. But I believe it's true."

"I believe so, too," remarked Putty of the Fourth, speaking for a moment in the deep, husky tones of the Grand Master.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He hasn't come down," said Tommy Cook. "He's keeping his bed, and it's said he's got a cold."

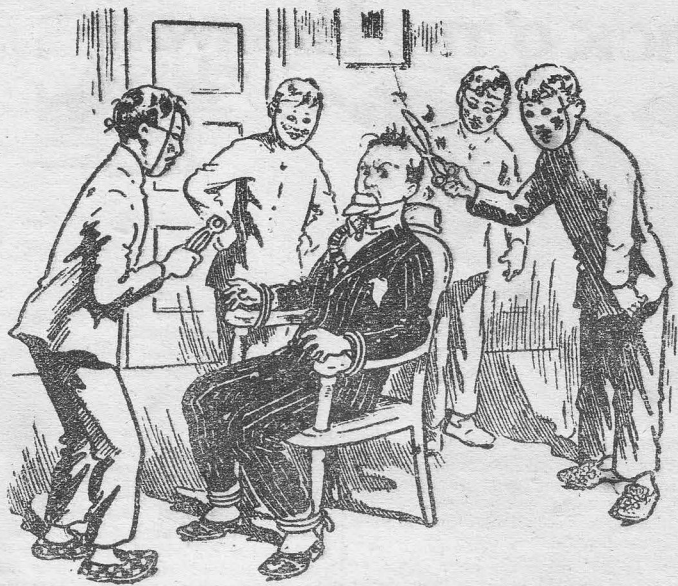
"Keeping his head well wrapped up, anyhow," said Tommy Dodd. "Towle's seen him, and he says Knowle's head is muffled up all over—can't see anything above his eyelashes. Something may have happened to his eyebrows."

"I wonder if he's going to the Head?" said Jimmy Silver musingly. "If so, the Rookwood Secret Society will have to lie awfully low and say nuffin. The Head will be in a rare wax if he sees Knowles looking like that."

"I fancy he won't care to face the Head," grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "He won't face anybody like that! Two to one he's going to have a long, obstinate cold—long enough for his fur to grow again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite interested on that subject. They were very well aware that the Rookwood Secret Society had taken risks in dealing with Knowles so drastically, and that if the Head made a strict inquiry, it was possible that something might



IN THE HANDS OF THE INVADERS. Knowles shuddered as the scissors glided over his head. Snip, snip! The Grand Master, whoever he was, was evidently not a skilful haircutter. He cut in jags and gashes, and the hair came off in chunks. (See chapter 3.)

come out—in which case it was undoubted that severe floggings would be the order of the day. But if that should happen, they were quite decided that Knowles should have another and more severe lesson, and they thought it probable that Knowles was aware of that.

They learned, after morning lessons, that Knowles had not appeared in the Sixth Form room that morning. That the Modern prefect was confined to his room with a cold was soon known all over Rookwood.

But the nature of his cold leaked out somehow or other. By the next day Tubby Muffin knew all about it, and was spreading the news far and wide. That morning Knowles was shifted into the sanatorium—his story of a cold being taken in good faith by the Head.

Bulkeley of the Sixth called Jimmy Silver to him that morning. He eyed the captain of the Fourth very grimly.

"Have you heard this about Knowles?" he demanded.

"That he's got a cold?" said Jimmy innocently. "Yes, Bulkeley."

"I hear it's being said that his hair was cut by a gang of fags."

"Not really?"

"Yes, really!" snapped Bulkeley.

"That was kind of them, then, wasn't it?" said Jimmy. "It will save him eightpence at the hairdresser's."

Bulkeley looked at him very hard. But there was nothing to be read in Jimmy Silver's innocent face, and the captain of Rookwood turned away.

Jimmy smiled serenely.

It was clear, by this time, that Knowles did not intend to lay a formal complaint of the outrage before the Head. He wanted, as far as possible, to hush up his humiliation, and he feared the future vengeance of the Rookwood Secret Society. He had sneered scornfully at Carthew and Frampton and the rest, but he had followed in their footsteps at last. They had had enough, and Knowles had had enough, too.

"I've got an idea," Jimmy Silver remarked to his chums casually, "that there won't be so much bullying from Knowles & Co. after this. Some fags, called the Rookwood Secret Society, seem to have taken some of the Hannishness out of them. It's rather mysterious, but whoever they are they—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whoever they are, we owe them a vote of thanks," said Jimmy Silver. "Probably the Rookwood Secret Society will disappear now, leaving only a pleasant recollection to Knowles & Co."

"Very pleasant!" grinned Lovell.

"We must see him the day he comes out of sanny. I'm really quite interested in the progress of his bad cold."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a couple of weeks before Knowles

came out of sanny—so obstinate and prolonged was his "cold." When he emerged one morning, the Fistical Four met him with a polite greeting. Knowles' eyebrows looked very thin, and his hair was exceedingly closely cropped. A blaze came into his eyes as he sighted Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Good-morning, Knowles!" said Jimmy.

"Hope you're better!" said Lovell.

For an instant Knowles seemed about to spring, like a tiger. But he didn't. He had learned his lesson.

"Good-morning!" he answered quite civilly.

"Much better, thanks."

"So glad!" murmured Jimmy.

Knowles walked on hastily. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged blissful glances.

Jimmy Silver dropped into Bulkeley's study that evening. The captain of Rookwood met him with a rather grim look.

"You were speaking to us the other day, in the end study, about some queer organisation called the Rookwood Secret Society, Bulkeley," began Jimmy softly.

"Well?"

"You hinted that you'd like it to come to a stop?"

"Yes."

"Well, I hear," said Jimmy cautiously—"I hear that it's all over now. This—ahem!—isn't official, of course."

"Of course not!" said Bulkeley sarcastic ally.

"Ahem! But I hear that there isn't any secret society now," said Jimmy. "It's all over and washed out! I thought you'd like to know, Bulkeley!"

And Jimmy quitted the study. Bulkeley stared after him, and his hand strayed to his aspirant; but he withdrew it, and a smile broke over his face. He was not quite sure that the Rookwood Secret Society hadn't been a useful institution while it lasted—though he was glad to hear of its demise.

Nothing more was heard at Rookwood of the secret society. Knowles & Co., grown wise by experience, were willing to leave the matter where it was. And where it was it remained—a mystery to most of the Rookwood fellows. And those to whom it was not a mystery wisely kept their own counsel. On the Modern side, Tommy Dodd & Co. found Knowles much more tolerable than of old; and on the Classical side, Carthew, for the rest of that term, sedulously avoided trouble with the end study. The Rookwood Secret Society was dead and buried, but it was not forgotten. The juniors had been victorious, and it was, as Arthur Edward Lovell slangily observed, "Some victory!"

THE END.

(You must not miss reading "Chums to the Rescue!" next Tuesday's grand long complete story of the Rookwood chums.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 314.

DICK O' THE HIGHWAY.



(Continued from page 6.)

"Don't shoot!" cried Dick to his comrade. "You may hit Ralph!"
 "On, on!" screamed Vesey to his postillion. "Two hundred guineas if you outdistance them!"

The postboy plied whip and spur to such purpose that the chaise seemed to fly through the air.

"'Od's death!" shouted Turpin, spur-ring forward. "The gravel-pits! Catch the horses, or the boy's lost!"

Right ahead yawned the mouth of a deep, sheer-falling pit, its edge fringed with bushes and the frantic chaise horses dashed straight towards it. With his heart in his mouth at this new danger Dick crammed the spurs into Satan's sides, and made one desperate effort to reach the chaise in time.

But he was too late. Right to the pit's brink dashed the chaise and horses, despite Dick's desperate attempt to clutch the leader's head, and as the two pur-

suers reined their mounts back upon their haunches on the very edge, the chaise plunged over into the yawning pit.
 "My brother!" cried Dick, in agony.
 "He is lost!"

A scream came from one of the horses as it found itself hurtling downwards, a wild, ringing cry from inside the chaise as it disappeared. Then a moment's silence, and a terrific crash, followed by silence once again.

They flung themselves from their mounts and hurried down the slope to the pit's bottom. It was years since the place had been worked, and the great hollow was a honeycomb of holes, crumbling caverns, and mounds of gravel, grown over with tangled bushes and briars.

The wrecked vehicle lay on its side in the middle of a juniper-bush, which it had crashed flat to the ground, and the horses lay atop of each other, one with its neck broken, the other still alive, but breathing its last.

Dick flew to the chaise and flung its door back. The whole vehicle was buckled and cracked like a wrecked vessel, and inside Dick saw only one form—his brother.

(There will be another thrilling instalment of this powerful highwayman serial in next Tuesday's issue. Look out for it. Don't forget that another wonderful romance of the old days is on the way!)

voice, as a head and shoulders were thrust out of the chaise window.

"'Od's death!" cried Dick, clapping the spurs to Black Satan, and galloping off at full speed after the vehicle. "'Tis Ralph! That's Vesey's chaise, and he's carrying the boy off!"

"Dick, Dick!" cried the boy.

"Look out for a foul shot!" cried Turpin; and the words were hardly out of his mouth when a spurt of smoke leaped from the window, and a pistol-ball, aimed at Dick's horse, grazed Black Satan on the flank.



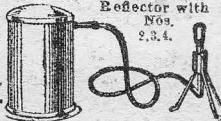
YOURS for 6^d.

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

SIMPSON'S (BRIGHTON) Ltd. (Dept. 122)
 94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.

ACETYLENE SETS FOR HOME CINEMA MACHINES

No. 1.	25 cp	3 3
No. 2.	50 cp	4 3
No. 3.	100 cp	5 6
No. 4.	500 cp	12 6



Send p.c. for New Illustrated List. Machines from 7/6. Films from 1/- 100 ft., post free.

FORD'S (Dept. A.P.), 15, Red Lion Sq., London, W.C.1. Entrance Dane Street. Enquiries promptly attended to.



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.

BLUSHING

FREE to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment, and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to—

Mr. A. TEMPLE (Specialist), Palace House, 128, Shaftesbury Av. (2nd Floor), London, W. 1.

FREE PRESENTS FOR ALL SEND NO MONEY—WE TRUST YOU.

For selling our High Grade Picture Postcards at 1d. each to your friends we give these Presents **ABSOLUTELY FREE**—Bicycles, Wireless Sets, Gramophones, Footballs, Tennis Racquets, Jewellery, Toys and Games, Razors, Fountain Pens, Watches, Clocks, etc., etc. Write to-day for a selection of 72 Cards and Presents List. Overseas Applicants must send P.O. 1/6 (not stamps) to cover cost of packing and postage. This can be deducted from Cards sold.

The PREMIER CARD CO. (Dept. A.), 8, Christopher St., London, E.C.2.

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER.

Printed and published every Tuesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada).—Saturday, January 24th, 1925

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 15½ 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: 521, Coventry Road; Bristol: 121, Victoria Street; London, S.W.1: 55, Whitehall; Manchester: 289, Deansgate; Newcastle-on-Tyne: 116, Eye Hill; or Southampton: 6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park.

MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parcels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/-.—T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Rd., London, N. 1.



DON'T BE BULLIED

Special offer. **TWO 4LLUS. SAMPLE LESSONS** from my Complete Course on **JUJITSU** for four penny stamps, or a Large Illus. Portion of Course for P.O. 3/6. Jujitsu is the best and simplest science of self-defence and attack ever invented. Learn to take care of yourself under ALL circumstances. **SEND NOW.** (Est. 20 years.)

"**YAWARA**" (Dept. A.P.5), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex

PR METAL TWEEZERS THE "QUALITY" **FREE!** PACKET, 100 GUMMED TITLES OF COUNTRIES AND 50 DIFFERENT STAMPS. Request Approvals. **LISBURN & TOWNSEND, London Road, Liverpool.**

FREE FUN!—Ventriloquist's Instruments given FREE to all sending 6d. (P.O.) for Amusing Novelty and List of Novelties, Magic Tricks, etc. Large Parcels Magic Tricks, 2/6, 5/-.—**P. FEARING, Travancore, Colwyn Bay.**

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-Nibbed 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 gilt letters on either pen for 1/- extra.**
Lever Self-Filling Model with Safety Cap, 2/- extra.