

THE STORY PAPER WITH THE HOBBY SUPPLEMENT!

EVERY TUESDAY.

Week Ending

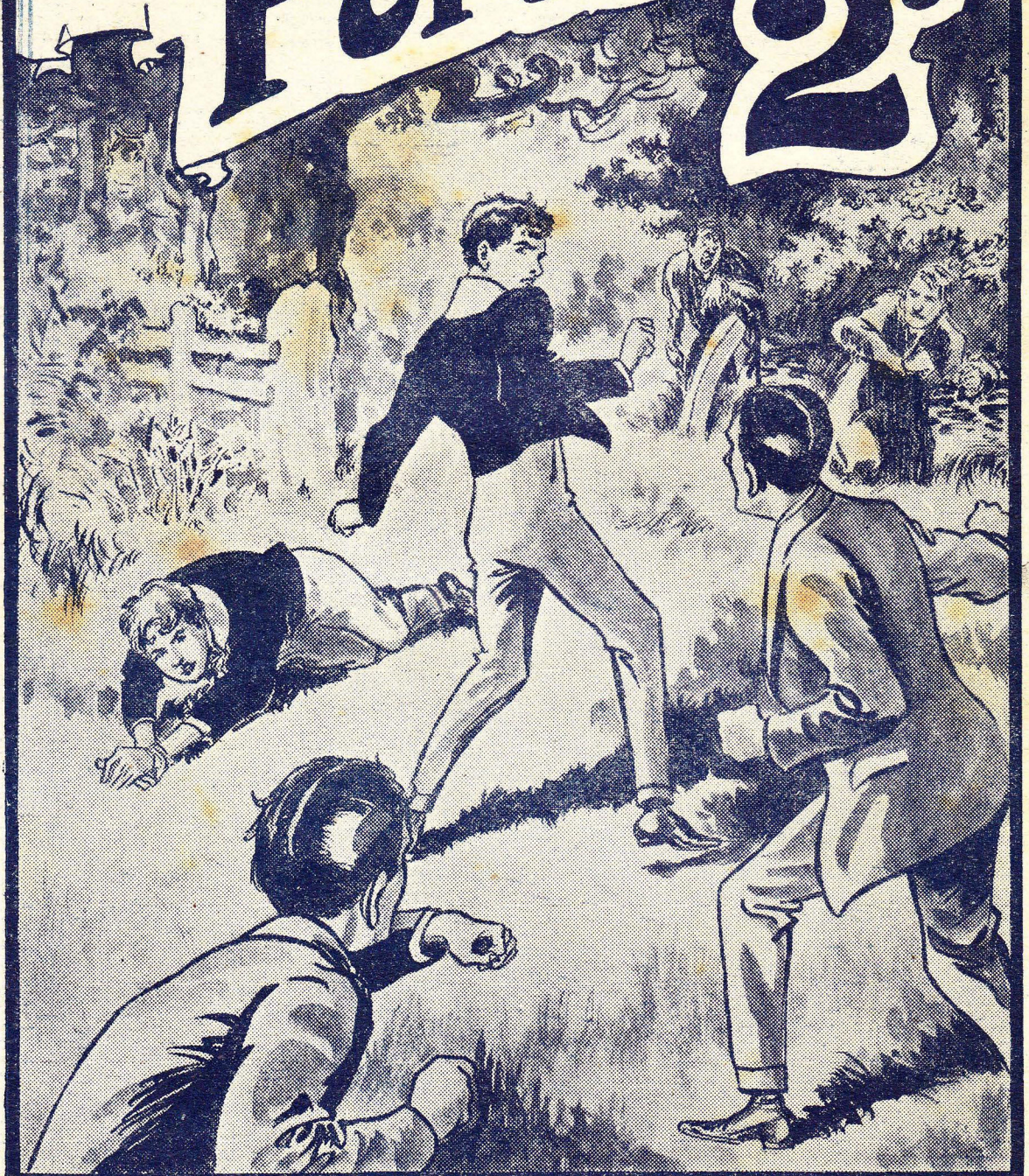
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New Series.

No. 315.

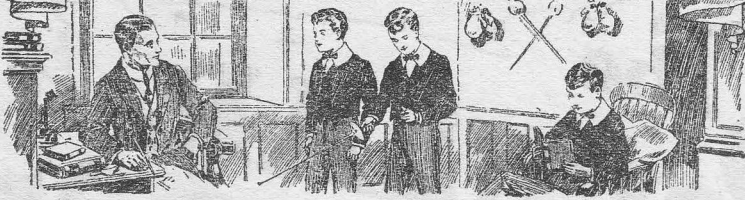
The POPULAR 2^d



WHARTON'S FIGHT AGAINST GREAT ODDS!

Harry Wharton, the unpopular skipper of the Remove, fights over the helpless form of his former chum, and wins back a lost friendship. (A grand episode from the splendid Greyfriars story in this issue.)

A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR



A WORD IN SEASON!

WHAT about choosing a career? That is a question which has to be solved by Popularites the same as others. It is a big problem. A fellow who is about to start life in real earnest is puzzled by the number of chances put before him, but he does not know where to begin. He wants an opportunity of making a fat salary, with good rises at frequent intervals. He wishes to feel that he is a person of importance and of value to the world.

HOW TO DO IT!

You know the old French saying, "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte." But the first step has to be taken, however much it costs. What is more, it is vitally necessary to be certain that the step you take is the right one; you want to know you are on the track which fits your special capabilities. Don't take the wrong road. There is a right one!

SOLVING THE DIFFICULTY!

In these circumstances the main duty is to get to know something about business. You need an insight into the working methods of the world. That's why I strongly urge all my chums to take in "Harmsworth's Business Encyclopedia." This splendid work is now on sale everywhere in fortnightly parts. The price only comes to a penny a day! Get it! You will always be grateful for this bit of advice. The "Business Encyclopedia" makes fascinating reading. It gives you in the most interesting form possible all the useful facts about work and trade, and the chances offered in every direction of the nation's work. It is the short cut to success, and I want my friends to avail themselves of it. Cut out this paragraph. Stick it in your hat! Anyway, remember what I am telling you, and at the first chance buy the opening parts of the "Business Encyclopedia."

ANOTHER GREAT ROMANCE!

Look out for this! Of late years the "Popular" has scored triumph after triumph with its rousing romances of the dim old bygone. But the new serial goes one better than all. It will start in a fortnight's time, and I'll make bold to say that it has every conceivable good quality to recommend it to "Popular" chums. It is written by a crack author, a man well known to my readers.

"THE TREASURE OF BLACK MOON ISLAND!"

By Francis Warwick.

There you have the news in the proverbial nutshell. Mark this well! It is not the Blue Moon, but the Black variety! The yarn deals with a tremendous mystery of the distant past and of a fabulous treasure, the secret of which is the cause of many a desperate fight. For we hear of a gang of desperate adventurers who are all out to acquire the loot, stopping at nothing to compass their designs. There is a character called Christopher Dawn, round whose prodigious exploits the famous author has written a romance which palpitates with excitement and breathless thrills. We get pirates and their sorry victims, the plank-walkers! We hear of golden islands of the South where the graceful palm is reflected in the dancing blue waves. This is the real thing—a brilliant romance plucked out of the past, with all its countless legends of herring-do!

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME.

You will not object if I say a word about our grand programme for the next issue of the always pleasing "Pop." Here goes for it! I have taken immense trouble with next week's "bill"—as per usual. I feel the coming stories are a credit to the old paper. Of course, each issue outstrips its forerunner.

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There is no stop for the "Pop." That's by the way. Anyhow, the programme for next Tuesday is a shining example of what should be. This booming year of 1925 will prove the pleasant surprise year for Popularites all over the world.

"GLYN'S LATEST!"

By Martin Clifford.

Our St. Jim's yarn shows Bernard Glyn as a flyer. Everybody is astounded by the sight of a graceful glider hovering, bird-like, over the school. The machine descends in the playing-fields. Out of the glider steps Glyn. That's astonishment No. 1. There are more to follow. Glyn is striving to win a handsome little prize which is on offer for a suc-

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Boys!

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PART 1
NOW ON SALE

cessful glider. I can tell you this much—the resourceful inventor is right up to sample. Of course, there is trouble! There's no path of roses for a pioneer inventor. Look out for the doings of certain characters, popular and otherwise. Don't forget the glider race, either!

"THE BUSINESS MAN OF CEDAR CREEK!"

This business individual comes out of the West, and it's his cocksure idea that his stunts are the best. That remains to be proved. One feels sorry that the smart American newcomer to the lumber school stirs up strife. Strife is not porridge, but there you are! There is a big heap of adventure, with misunderstandings thrown in, and the pals of the Backwoods do their bit in cheery style.

"THE FORM MASTER'S FORTUNE!"

By Owen Conquest.

Mr. Bootles, the Form master of the Fourth at Rookwood, is a nice, kindly-minded old gentleman with a perfect disposition. He would scruple to speak ill of a fly behind the creature's back. Now, as a rule, highly coloured adventure gives such a man a miss. Romance does not come flopping along right on top of him. But Fate had her eye on the blameless Bootles. He suddenly finds himself a millionaire. The news is enough to make him giddy. Friends flock round him. G. S. has known this happen in other cases. Next week's yarn rocks with humour, and Jimmy Silver and the Co. pass through some highly interesting experiences. This is an "improving" yarn. It improves with each line, and it is no end excellent at the start!

"THE RIVAL CAPTAINS!"

By Frank Richards.

Strange things have happened on playing-fields before now, but nothing aught like what occurred when Cecil Temple sallied forth with a team to meet Highcliffe. It's a case of Cecil's old jealousy of the Remove, especially Harry Wharton. The tale will tickle you. It shows that you cannot make a footballer out of Temple, any more than you can fashion a convenient silk purse out of the aural appendage of a sow. Sow it is, in a manner of speaking!

"DICK O' THE HIGHWAY!"

By David Goodwin.

Fare thee well, Dick Neville! Good-bye, Turpin! I am sorry to have to announce the wind-up of our grand serial of the knights of the road; but, as the song says, the best of friends must part. Perchance good luck will bring us in touch with the famous characters again. But for the moment it is an revoir! Next week we see the last for the time being of the jolly Turpin of the turpikie, of cut and parry and hot chases across country. There have been innumerable great actions and dare-devil adventures. So the end comes. But with this finish comes the beginning almost immediately of the brilliant story already mentioned.

"THE TREASURE OF BLACK MOON ISLAND!"

Tell your chums about this coming treat. As Dick Turpin passes out of our vision, there enter the splendid fellows who figure in this wonderful new romance.

"FAMOUS FEATS!"

To this stupendous theme the porpoise devotes the new number of his "Weekly." It is all Bunter's idea. He has been swotting up the great deeds of past heroes, and he draws comparisons between these feats and those which stand to the credit of his schoolfellows. It makes a good show. We have heard about Coker's feet. Bunter rattles off the facts. The new Supplement is a scream. When in trouble or the blues, read the "Weekly" for its news. The last line is pure Bunter, but I really think the Owl was justified. His fresh boom will scatter gloom, as Tennyson so beautifully puts it!

OUR COMPANION PAPERS!

"St. Kit's," by Frank Richards, hums along merrily in the "Boys' Friend," the paper which gives that tremendous serial, "The Lion at Bay! In the "Magnet" you will find a topping programme; while the "Gem" is going great guns, as ever, with its long completes and a footer serial by A. S. Hardy.

YOUR EDITOR.

HARRY WHARTON THE UNPOPULAR!

Wharton his high position in the Remove, and worse still, the friendship of Frank Nugent! How can he regain his lost prestige?



True To His Chum!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete story, dealing with the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the well-known tales of Greyfriars now appearing in the "Magnet.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Chance for Bunter!

WHARTON!" Wingate, of the Sixth Form at Greyfriars, beckoned to Harry Wharton as he met him on the stairs.

"Yes, Wingate?" said the captain of the Remove, coming to a halt.

"I want to speak to you," said George Wingate, a serious expression on his handsome features.

"Go ahead!" grinned Wharton. "Am I to be called over the coals?"

"Don't be a young ass!" said Wingate, with a faint smile. "I wanted to speak to you about a story that's going round the school. You've quarrelled with Nugent?"

Wharton's face assumed a bitter expression.

"Well, what of it?" he said, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I don't like to hear it," said Wingate. "And if the facts are as I've heard them, you're a silly, arrogant chump to get your back up over nothing."

"Thank you, Wingate," said Wharton coldly. "Perhaps you haven't heard the facts."

"I've heard that Skinner drew a funny caricature of you that set all the Remove fellows laughing, and that you took offence at it and floored Skinner with a blow that was unnecessarily severe."

"Apparently you haven't been misinformed," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "I did floor him."

"Well, I won't say anything about that," said Wingate. "But there's no need to quarrel with Nugent about it, is there?"

Wharton did not answer.

"Bunter spread the news that Skinner forced you into a fight," went on Wingate. "I've looked at Skinner since, and anyone can see by his face that you half-killed him."

"You are observant," said Wharton.

Wingate restrained the impulse to put his ashpant about this cheeky junior in a lower Form, and coughed.

"That wasn't quite playing the game,"

said Wingate. "You shouldn't have fought Skinner."

"Would you have all the fellows call me a funk?" said Wharton bitterly. "He asked for a fight—forced me to fight him, in fact. Challenged me in front of all the fellows, and attempted to smack my face."

"Well, I admit you were provoked," said Wingate. "I can understand that. But you were a bad-tempered young ass to slaughter Skinner for it."

"That's what Nugent said," muttered Wharton. "I see you side with him."

"I don't side with anyone," said Wingate. "But I don't like to see a good friendship spoiled through silly misunderstanding. Nothing to do with me, of course."

Wharton was silent. His eyes seemed to find something of great interest in the pattern of the carpet. Wingate looked at him a moment and then dropped a friendly hand upon his shoulder.

"Take my advice, old scout, and go and patch up your silly squabble with Nugent."

And with that George Wingate of the Sixth passed on his way.

Wharton stared after his retreating figure for a moment or two, a mocking expression in his face. It was like Wingate's cheek to butt into Lower Fourth affairs—that was his first reflection. But the mocking expression faded out as he reviewed the position. In his heart of hearts Wharton knew that he was in the wrong. He knew that he should never have taken offence at Skinner's caricature, that he should never have been forced into a fight with so weedy an antagonist, that he should never have allowed such a trivial matter to upset the friendship of his oldest chum. Nugent had reproached him for using such unnecessary severity in dealing with Skinner. Other fellows whose caricatures had been drawn by the humorist of the Remove would have joined in the general laugh, and soon forgotten all about it. But Wharton had lost his temper, although he wouldn't admit it openly.

In his better moments Wharton realised that. But there was an arrogant, overbearing side to his nature that made him look at the matter selfishly. Nugent had turned on his own chum, had upheld the general opinion in the Remove that Wharton had

been as near a bully in his treatment of Skinner as it was possible to be.

And Nugent had thereby lost his claim of friendship upon Harry Wharton. Study No. 1 in the Remove passage, that once sheltered two of the firmest friends, was now changed.

The split in the study was soon known far and wide, and excited a good deal of comment among the juniors.

Wharton and Nugent had been such good chums that it took the Remove quite by surprise. And it was difficult to suppose that anybody could quarrel with so good-tempered a fellow as Nugent, unless he was deliberately looking for trouble.

The Remove agreed that Wharton was to blame, as indeed he was.

Some of the fellows said so; but Wharton appeared to be deaf to remarks made in his presence, and Nugent broke out with unexpected sharpness of temper if anyone uttered a word against his former chum.

The rest of the Famous Five did not know how to deal with the matter.

Johnny Bull proposed knocking their heads together till they found some common-sense—a proposal that made Bob and Inky grin, but which they did not adopt.

Squiff and Peter Todd, and Tom Brown and Vernon-Smith, and some other fellows, tried their good offices with a view of healing the breach; but they might as well have saved their labour. The breach was not to be healed.

The two old chums met without speaking or looking at one another, and they did not meet when they could help it.

As most of their work and play were in common, awkward situations continually arose.

Wharton, as captain of the Remove, could not resign from the footer; but Nugent did not care to play under the circumstances, and he gave up his place in the team.

That gave Wharton a twinge. He felt that he was keeping Frank out of the footer. But he made no sign.

Meanwhile, Wharton had ceased to "dig" in Study No. 1.

The study was Frank's by right of priority. Billy Bunter had been his study-

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mate there before Wharton came to Greyfriars. Nugent would not have insisted on his rights, by any means; but Wharton settled the matter by taking his books and things away. He would not ask any other fellow to let him share his study, however, and he began to do his prep in the Form-room. Vernon-Smith invited him into his quarters; but as Skinner was there also, Wharton could scarcely accept. But after a day or two he settled down in No. 14, with Johnny Bull and Fisher T. Fish.

The chums were completely separated now. In a few days most of the Remove ceased to think about the matter. It was settled that Wharton and Nugent did not chum together, and that was all.

Billy Bunter, meanwhile, was thinking the matter out. Billy Bunter honoured Study No. 7 with his presence, but he was not wholly satisfied there. Peter Todd had a somewhat heavy hand, and he was wont to resort to a cricket-stump when Bunter raided the study cupboard, and scooped all the available supplies at one fell swoop. And on Saturday Billy Bunter rolled into Study No. 1, and bestowed a very friendly blink on Nugent.

"All alone—what?" he asked.
 "Yes, fatty!" growled Nugent.
 "Wharton isn't coming back—what?"
 "No ass!"

"Oh, really, Nugent, you shouldn't call an old pal names, you know!" remonstrated Bunter. "I've come here to speak to you like a pal!"

"Then buzz off!"

"Wharton was always rather a high-handed beast, wasn't he?" pursued Billy Bunter confidentially. "I—say, wh-what are you going to do with that stump?"

"Lick you, if you say another word about Wharton!" growled Frank.

"Oh, really, Nugent! Haven't you quarrelled with the beast? I'm on your side, you know! I'm sticking up for you!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Billy Bunter glared at Nugent through his big glasses. This was a very ungrateful return for his kind sympathy and friendliness.

"Well, if you can't be civil, I'll clear!" he growled.

"Good!"

"Ahem! The fact is, Nugent, I used to be in this study with you before Wharton came."

"Don't remind a chap of a horrid time like that, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, you know, I was going to say that I'm willing to dig with you again! I really couldn't stand it while Wharton was here, but I could get on with you, Nugent."

"You couldn't!" said Nugent grimly. "It takes two to make a bargain, you know. Shut the door after you!"

"Look here, Nugent," roared Bunter, "if you don't want me in the study—"

"I don't! Good-bye!"

"He, he, he! I can take a joke," said Bunter, quite cheerfully. "He, he, he! It's settled that I'm coming back, then?"

"You fat owl!"

"I'm not going to stick with Toddy any longer! He's too mean about grub!" said Bunter. "He kicked up an awful fuss yesterday because I ate all the sardines and finished the cake. I can't stand a mean fellow! Now, you're not mean, Nugent."

"Thanks!" said Nugent, grinning. "But if you ate all my sardines and cake, I think I should kick up a fuss, too!"

"Well, you see, you've got more money than Toddy. He's only the son of a miserable solicitor, or something. You have better feeds in here. Of course, you don't want to feed alone. It's unsocial. I am going to give you my company, so that you won't feel lonely."

"You needn't trouble."

"No trouble at all. I'm coming back," said Bunter. "I shall expect a pretty decent tea every day, that's all. I make no other conditions. Of course, I should expect you to cash a postal-order for me occasionally."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Nugent.

"You'll find me an improvement after Wharton," urged Bunter. "It will be a bit different from having that ratty bounder about. Now, I'm a good-tempered chap; nothing ratty about me. I sha'n't fly out at a word, you know. In fact, you'll be jolly comfy here, with a decent chap like me, instead of a sulky, rotten-tempered, ratty bounder like that—Yarooooooop!"

Billy Bunter was interrupted by the cricket-stump clumping on his fat person. He jumped away with a roar.

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"Wharrer you at? Stoppit! Yoooop!"

Clump, clump!

Billy Bunter made a desperate spring for the door.

Nugent's boot rose in the air and caught the fat junior fairly on the bound. Bunter went through the doorway like a shell from a mortar.

There was a terrific bump in the passage.

Slam!

Billy Bunter sat up and roared:

"Yow-ow! Help! Fire! Murder! Yarooooh!"

Peter Todd looked out of his study.

"Hallo! What's the matter, fatty?"

"Yow-ow-ow! Come and help a chap up, Toddy, you silly, grinning, cackling ass!"

Peter took Bunter by a fat ear and helped him up. Bunter roared still more loudly. Peter's help was not grateful or comforting.

"Leggo, you skinny beast!" howled Bunter. "Leggo my ear, you rotter! Yow-ow!"

"Now, what's the row about?" demanded Peter.

"Ow-yow! It's that cad Nugent—because I wouldn't go back and dig in No. 1 with him!" spluttered Bunter. "I told him I couldn't do it. He fairly begged me, but I felt I had to refuse—"

"Ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you rotter! I refuse to go back to No. 1, if Nugent begs me on his bended knees! Yow-ow-ow!"

"I can see him doing it," grinned Peter. "Bunter, old man, you know I keep a stump for you when you tell whoppers! Wait a minute till I get that stump!"

Peter Todd stepped back into his study. When he looked out again, a few moments later, William George Bunter had disappeared. He had not waited for the stump.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Gives it Up!

ON Sunday morning it was a custom with the Famous Five to take a Sunday walk together after morning chapel. Their Sunday walk generally led them in the direction of Cliff House, and they sometimes walked home with Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends, Phyllis and Clara.

But when Sunday came this time the inseparable five were no longer together. Nugent went out with Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry, and the patient and good-tempered Inky bestowed his company on Wharton. And as it was quite certain that Bob Cherry's footsteps would wander inevitably towards Cliff House, Harry Wharton took another direction, which happened to be towards Highcliffe.

In the lane he met Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, and chatted with them for some time, and on his way home he fell in with Ponsonby & Co., his old enemies. It was a rule with the Greyfriars chums never to enter into a rag on Sunday, but Ponsonby & Co. were not so particular; and, as they were in force, they became warlike at once. There was a scrap before Wharton and Hurree Singh got clear of the enemy, and they returned to Greyfriars in a somewhat dusty state.

"Our luckfulness is out!" the nabob remarked, as he mopped his nose. "If our esteemed chums had been with us the atrocious and ridiculous Ponsonby would have been mopped up terrifically!"

"Yes, I wish Bob and Johnny had been there!" said Harry.

"I also wish the esteemed Franky had been there," said the nabob gently.

And Wharton made no reply.

Bob Cherry and his companions came in cheerfully for dinner. Hazel came in with them, and after dinner Hazel sought out Wharton.

"Marjorie asked after you," he said.

Wharton nodded.

"She doesn't know you and Nugent have been rowing," said Hazeldene. "Of course, it's no business of mine. But it's rather awkward. You know Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis are coming over on Wednesday to tea?"

"Yes."

"Well, they generally have tea in your study. It seems that you've changed out. I suppose you'll be there?"

Wharton coloured.

"No," he said, after a pause.

"Well, it's your own business," said Hazel carelessly. "The girls will think you and Nugent a pair of asses!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Hazel coolly. "I shouldn't wonder if Phyllis jaws you. She does jaw a chap, you know. And I suppose you can hardly punch her nose."

"Don't be an ass!" exclaimed Wharton irritably.

"Not at all. But Phyllis isn't in the Remove, you know, so you can't knock her down, can you?" said Hazel agreeably.

And he walked away before Wharton could make any rejoinder.

Wharton drove his hands deep into his pockets and strode away. It was an uncomfortable situation. Matters had changed in Study No. 1 since Marjorie & Co.'s last visit, and it was certainly awkward. He was no longer on speaking terms with his former chum, and he could not join the usually merry tea-party in Study No. 1. Under the circumstances, he could not sit at the same table with Nugent—the situation would be altogether too awkward.

The quarrel, in fact, made matters uncomfortable all round. The girls would wonder at his absence. They would soon see that something was wrong. Phyllis had chipped in once when there was a misunderstanding between Wharton and Bob Cherry, and had set the matter right. His quarrel with Nugent was quite a different matter, and he shrank from any comment on the subject. But it was impossible for things to go on as they had gone before.

Marjorie & Co. would think them a pair of silly fellows. He knew that, and it was not a gratifying reflection. They would think the two had quarrelled about nothing, or next to nothing. After all, what was the quarrel about? Nugent had considered that he had acted badly towards Skinner. His own conscience was not quite easy on that subject. If Skinner had been a different kind of chap—if he had been a decent fellow, like Squiff or Tom Brown or Linley—Wharton would have told him frankly that he was sorry.

But to humiliate himself to a rotter like Skinner was too bitter a pill. Skinner would make it as humiliating as possible for him; he would consider it a triumph, and crow over it.

Billy Bunter joined him as he paced restlessly under the elms. The fat junior came up, with an agreeable grin.

"I say, Wharton—"

"Oh, don't bother!" said Harry crossly. He was usually very patient with the Owl of the Remove, but his temper was sore now.

Bunter jumped back in alarm.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed.

Wharton burst into an angry laugh.

"You young ass, what are you afraid of?" "Of course, I'm not afraid of you or anybody," sniffed Bunter; "only spectacles do get in a chap's way in a scrap. Otherwise I'd lick you fast enough, if I had any of your cheek! And if you think you're going to punch me like you do Skinner, you're jolly well mistaken! I'm not a chap to be bullied, I can tell you!"

Wharton controlled his temper with an effort. It was not agreeable to be regarded, even by a duffer like Bunter, as a fellow who could not be approached without caution—like that famous King of Prussia, whose amiable habit it was to lay his cane about everybody who came within reach.

"Pax, you know!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've really come here as a pal, Harry, old chap. Don't get waxy, you know. That's all, Nugent—"

"What!"

"That rotten worm, Nugent—"

"Shut up, you fat cad!"

"He wanted me to go back into No. 1, you know," pursued Bunter. "Simply begged of me. But I had to refuse. 'No, I told him; I'm not coming back without Harry!'"

"Oh, do dry up!"

"He got an idea," said Bunter confidentially. "You can lick Nugent, you know. Don't walk away while I'm talking to you, Wharton." Bunter toddled after the captain of the Remove. "This is my idea, Harry, old chap. You can lick Nugent. I'll come with you, and hold your jacket. Then we'll turn the beast out of the study, and we'll have it—see?"

Wharton walked on at a pace Billy Bunter found it difficult to equal. The Owl's little fat legs were going like machinery.

"I say, Wharton, what do you say? We'll have Study No. 1, you know, and Nugent can go and eat coconuts! Of course, I should expect something decent for tea. It will be a bit hard parting with Toddy, who's

so attached to me, but really I think I'd rather dig with my old pal. And I'm willing to agree to an arrangement for whacking out our remittances. I'll go halves with you with all my postal-orders, and you'll divvy up your remittances with me. That will be ripping, you know, and fair on both sides. Wharton, you beast, I can't keep up with you! I say, old chap— Yah, you beast!"

Billy Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air. He could not stay the pace. He shook a fat fist after Wharton as he disappeared out of gates.

"Yah! Rotter!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Bob Cherry's cheery voice.

Bunter blinked at him.

"That rotter Wharton—" he began.

"Oh, yaroo! Beast!" Bob Cherry sauntered away, leaving Bunter to extricate himself from his hat. And, although the split in the study continued, neither Wharton nor Nugent had the honour of chumming up with William George Bunter.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Marjorie's Counsel!

"MARJORIE!" exclaimed Wharton.

It was Wednesday afternoon.

There was a footer-match on that afternoon between the Remove and the Third. The heroes of the Third were very small beer in the footer line, and the captain of the Remove had announced his intention of standing out of the match.

Sampson Quincy Ifley Field had undertaken the task of captaining the Remove, and Frank Nugent was in his team. The rest of the Co. were in the eleven, and Harry Wharton had gone out for a ramble on the cliffs. Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis were coming over later to see the match, and Wharton had not expected to see anything of them.

But as he walked down the road by the cliffs he caught sight of Marjorie ahead, and hurried to overtake her.

The girl greeted him with a bright smile.

"I thought you were going over to Greyfriars?" said Harry.

"Yes; I'm going back to Cliff House for Phyllis and Clara now," explained Marjorie. "I've been to the village to see Mrs. Chirpey. The match hasn't begun yet, as you are here?"

Wharton coloured.

"I'm not playing this afternoon," he said. "It's only a fag match, anyway. Tubb & Co. will be jolly pleased to see you watching their footer, though."

"Then are you going to be an onlooker?" smiled Marjorie.

"Well, no. I shall be away this afternoon."

Marjorie gave him an odd look. It occurred to Harry that Hazeldene had been talking. Hazel did not conceal his opinion that Wharton was to blame in the late dispute, and probably he had aired his views at Cliff House. Not that it mattered, as Marjorie would certainly have learned it all at Greyfriars that afternoon.

Wharton walked by her side, flushed and uncomfortable. Marjorie did not speak.

"I—I"—Wharton broke the silence at last—"I suppose you've heard that—that Nugent and I are not on good terms now?"

"Yes, I heard."

"It's nothing, you know, only a row." Marjorie smiled slightly.

"But you were such good friends," she said.

"Yes, we were. Nugent was jolly decent to me when I first came to Greyfriars," said Harry. "I had a bit of trouble at first, and he stood by me like a brick. We've been chums ever since."

"Isn't it rather a pity for it to end like this?" said Marjorie softly. "I am sure Frank can't have done anything, really, to make all that difference."

Wharton's face softened a good deal. Marjorie did not assume that Nugent was in the right—as a matter of course, as all the

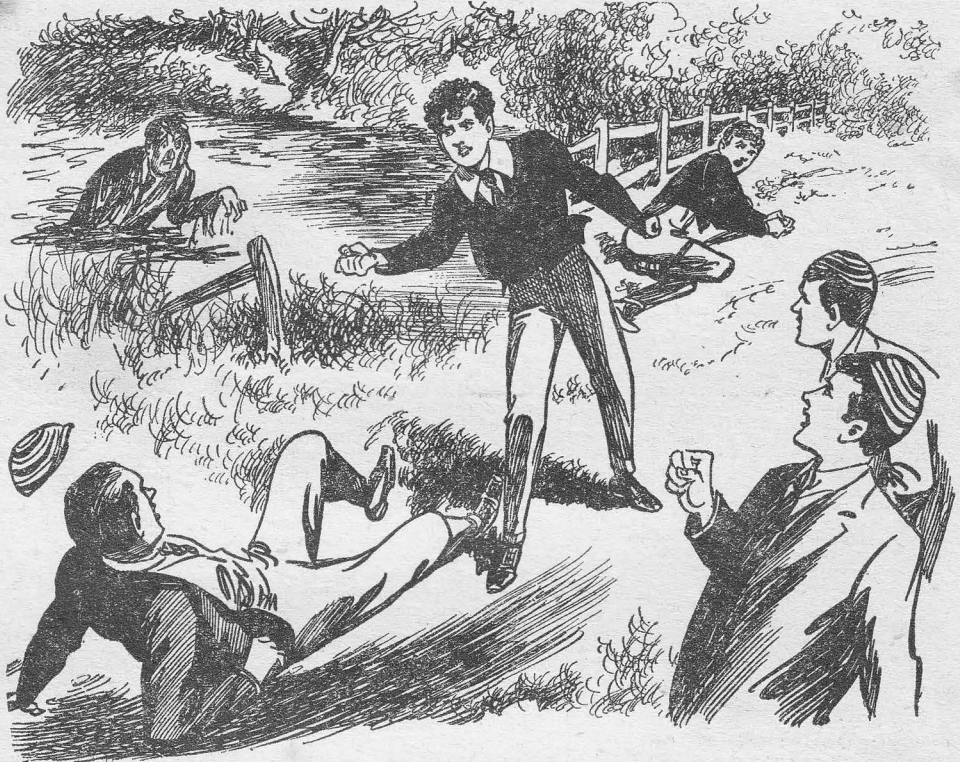
"You asked me to advise you, you know," added Marjorie hastily.

"Of course," said Harry. "But—but that's what Nugent thought. I had a scrap with Skinner afterwards, and he was rather hammered. Nugent thought I was too hard on him. I didn't really mean to be, but—but I was savage. I—I know I was wrong," he added, lowering his eyes.

Marjorie did not speak.

"Now I've made you think the same as Nugent does, that I'm a quarrelsome, bullying rotter!" said Wharton bitterly.

"I shouldn't ever think such a thing of



ONE AGAINST FIVE! Ponsonby and Drury were up again, and coming on. Wharton had to turn and face them. There was no time to release his chum. He hit out desperately, and the Highcliffians went down again. (See Chapter 5.)

Remove fellows did. In fact, it did not seem to occur to her that Wharton was in the wrong. The captain of the Remove gave her a grateful glance.

"Nugent hasn't done anything," he said quickly.

"But you haven't?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then the quarrel is all about nothing?" said Marjorie, laughing. "Haven't you better make it up at once?"

"It isn't exactly like that, either," said Harry. "If—if you're interested, Marjorie, I'd like to tell you, and—and ask your advice."

"Of course I'm interested, Harry! I was very sorry to hear that anything of the kind had happened."

"There isn't really anything in dispute," said Harry, colouring again. "It was really Skinner's fault. He was making game of me, and I lost my temper, and—and hit out. I—I know I shouldn't have done it, as he's a weedy beast!"

"You shouldn't Harry!"

"No; I know I shouldn't. But I did, you know!"

"Well, if you were sorry afterwards—"

"I was, in a way."

"Then you only had to tell Skinner so."

"But—but Skinner isn't the kind of fellow a chap can speak to like that. He would take advantage of it. He isn't like Bob, or Squiff, or—Nugent."

"That makes it harder, of course; but you ought to do what is right in your own eyes, even if it is hard."

"Oh!" said Harry.

you, Harry, and I am sure Nugent doesn't. But I wish you hadn't fought Skinner! He isn't a match for you."

"But I hadn't any choice. I refused at first, and he struck me. Nugent thought I ought to stand it, because I had struck him. Of course, I couldn't."

Marjorie was silent.

"You agree with Nugent, then?"

"Well, yes. It was no worse for you than for Skinner, was it?"

"If I say I think it was, you'll think that I look on myself as a little tin god. That's how Nugent put it."

"But there wouldn't be anything else for me to think, Harry."

"Oh!" said Wharton again.

They walked on in silence for some time. Cliff House came in sight. The captain of the Remove halted.

"I hope you are not offended, Harry," said Marjorie, stopping, too. "You asked me to speak, you know."

Wharton smiled grimly.

"Yes, I asked for it, and now I've got it!" he said. "Of course, I'm not offended, Marjorie. You think I've been an ass, and I think so, too. I suppose it's my beastly temper. Perhaps I am rather a conceited duffer, as Skinner says."

"I don't think so," said Marjorie, smiling. "But I think you have been very quick to take offence."

"Oh, don't!" said Harry, wincing. "That's the same as saying I am touchy. A touchy fellow is horrible."

"Well, touchiness isn't pleasant, but it is easy to make up for being hasty," said Marjorie. "I wish you would set the matter right with Frank."

"And admit myself in the wrong all along the line?"

"Yes, if you feel you are in the wrong!" "I suppose I am," said Harry uneasily.

"But—but I can't eat humble pie to Skinner. He would crow."

"Would it hurt you very much if a mean fellow crowed?"

"I—I suppose it wouldn't, if you come to that. I suppose I'm a bigger ass than I supposed," confessed Harry. "I—I—I'll tell Skinner I'm sorry! I suppose I ought to, and if he crows, let him! After all, I can stand it!"

"Of course you can!" said Marjorie. "And then Frank—"

Wharton made a restless movement.

"I can't ask him to make it up," he said. "He was down on me!"

"But he wouldn't be down on you if you made it right with Skinner."

"N-no! But—but I—I can't!" said Harry. "If he shows that he's willing, I could. But—but I can't speak first!"

"That is wrong, Harry," said Marjorie gravely. "I don't like to hear you talk like that."

There were footsteps on the road, and Ponsonby & Co. of Highcliffe came sauntering down from the cliffs.

The Highcliffe fellows raised their hats to Marjorie, looked at Wharton with supercilious smiles, and passed on. Wharton's cheeks flushed, but he gave no other signs of having observed the Highcliffian insolence.

Ponsonby & Co. disappeared down the lane towards Greyfriars, laughing amongst themselves. Wharton could guess that they were discussing the encounter of a few days before, when he and Hurree Singh had decidedly the worst of it.

"I must go," said Marjorie. "Clara and Phyllis will be waiting for me. Good-bye, Harry!"

"Good-bye, Marjorie!"

The girl ran off to Cliff House. Wharton, with a moody brow, turned and strode away. He was feeling dissatisfied and uneasy. He had asked Marjorie for counsel, and she had given him good counsel; but it was a difficult matter to make up his mind to act upon it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. In the Hands of the Enemy!

"NUGENT, by gad!"

"And alone!" grinned Gadsby. Ponsonby laughed merrily.

"Our luck's in!" he remarked.

"It's jolly queer, too! Those rotters are generally together, and then it's too much of a fog to tackle them."

"Absolutely!" yawned Vavasour.

"But we gave his Highness Wharton and the nigger something to remember us by the other day," grinned Monson, "and now here's Nugent walking into our arms like a dear, good little boy."

Nugent was walking along the lane with his hands in his pockets and a moody expression on his handsome face. He had not chosen to play in the match with the Third. His aid was not needed in so easy a game, and Micky Desmond had willingly taken his place. Frank was not in a happy mood that afternoon.

The split in the study weighed on his mind. There was nothing he could do to heal it—Wharton had chosen to quarrel with him, and Wharton was in the wrong. Nugent could not change his opinion of the Skinner affair, if he wanted to—right was right, and wrong was wrong. He had been very patient, but he could not pretend to approve of what he condemned—that was too much even for his best chum to ask.

But he felt the break in his old friendship keenly. He wondered, too, whether he had been a little to blame—whether he might not have been more tactful. Yet why should he always have the task of dealing warily with another fellow's temper lest there should be trouble? If a fellow could not control his temper he must be prepared to lose his friends.

But he was miserable, all the same. When he caught sight of the Highcliffe fellows, he was quite close to them. They were watching him with grinning faces. Nugent was in no mood for a row with Ponsonby & Co., and he would have passed on

unheeding. But Ponsonby did not mean him to escape so easily. He made a sign to his followers, and they lined up in Nugent's way. The Greyfriars junior had to halt.

"Let me pass!" rapped out Nugent angrily.

"Not so fast, dear boy!" smiled Ponsonby. "It's quite a time since we had the pleasure of seeing you. Don't tear yourself away at once!"

"Such a pleasure seein' you, old scout!" grinned Gadsby.

"In fact, we can't bear to part with you!" said Ponsonby. "We don't intend to, really! Now, don't be a naughty, rough boy, and push against your old pals. You may get hurt, you know."

The Highcliffians promptly collared the Greyfriars junior, who had made to thrust his way past.

"Let me go!" shouted Frank angrily.

"Hold the cad!" said Ponsonby calmly. "He's goin' through it before we let him go! How kind of him to seek us out in a lonely spot! What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent hit out fiercely. He knew that a ragging was intended, and that he had to fight his way out. But the odds of five to one were rather too heavy for him. Gadsby and Monson grasped his arms, and Drury threw an arm round his neck. Ponsonby gripped him by the collar. He struggled in vain!

"Naughty, naughty!" grinned Ponsonby. "Don't wriggle, dear boy. I shall twist your collar if you do, like that—"

"Oh, you rotter!"

"And pull your ears, like that!"

Nugent panted with rage. He was firmly held, and Ponsonby was at liberty to pull his ears, which he did with great enjoyment.

The Highcliffe nuts were grinning with glee. Ponsonby felt in his pocket, and drew out a whipcord.

"Put his paws together!" he ordered.

He bound the whipcord round Nugent's wrists, knotting it with cruel tightness. The Greyfriars junior was helpless now.

"Now jerk up his leg—bend it at the knee!" said Ponsonby. "We're going to make him hop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gadsby still struggled, and his knee smote Gadsby on the nose as he stooped to grasp it. Gadsby gave a roar, and toppled back, clapping his nose in anguish.

"Oh! Ah! Ugh! Yah! Ooooh!"

"Pin him!" yelled Ponsonby.

Gadsby's nose had received a hard knock, and it streamed red. He sprang at Nugent, and struck him savagely, and the Greyfriars junior fell to the ground.

"Here, cheese that, Gaddy!" muttered Drury.

Ever Drury was a little disgusted at hitting a fellow whose hands were tied.

"Look at my nose!" howled Gadsby. "I'm goin' to give him some more!"

"Hands off!" said Ponsonby.

"Look here, Pon—"

"Hands off, I tell you! We're goin' to make the cad hop!"

Gadsby growled, but he did not strike again. Nugent's eyes were blazing at him from the ground. His right leg was bent at the knee, and tied securely. Then he was dragged up, standing on one leg.

He had to hop to keep himself from falling. A fall on the hard road, with his hands tied, would have hurt.

"Now, hop it!" chuckled Ponsonby.

"You rotten funks!" shouted Nugent.

"Are you going to hop it?"

"No, hang you!"

"Then we'll help you! Stir him with your boot, Gaddy!"

"What-ho!" grinned Gaddy.

Gadsby's boot clumped on Nugent from behind. The nuts stood round chortling. With Gaddy's boot behind, Nugent had to "hop it," as Ponsonby commanded. He hopped desperately along the road to escape the savage lunges from Gadsby, and the Highcliffians roared with laughter.

"Make him hop into the ditch!" said Vavasour.

The young rascals were warming to the work now. With all the outward polish of manner they cultivated sedulously, Ponsonby & Co. were at heart thorough hooligans. Ponsonby would never have dreamed of using the present participle without dropping the "g"; but upon more important matters he was not nearly so particular.

"Yas, into the ditch with him!" said Gadsby. "Go it, you Greyfriars cad! Hop it!"

Nugent hopped desperately.

"All together!" grinned Ponsonby.

"Oh, you rotten cads!" gasped Nugent.

"If a few of our fellows were here—"

"But they're not," said Ponsonby cheerily; "and if they were we'd serve them all the same. Hop it! You're goin' into the ditch, and you may as well make up your mind to it. We're goin' to teach you Greyfriars cads your place, or we'll know the reason why! Now, then, in you go!"

"Kick the rotter in!" said Vavasour.

There were five boots hammering on Nugent now, as he hopped on the verge of the ditch by the roadside. There was no escape for him. He struggled to keep out of the ditch, but he had no chance.

But as the young ruffians were driving him fairly over the edge a figure appeared round the bend in the lane.

It was Harry Wharton!

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove caught sight of the group. Nugent saw him at the same moment.

Wharton halted a moment.

"Ware Greyfriars cads!" murmured Gadsby.

Nugent did not call out. If any other Greyfriars fellow had appeared in sight he would have shouted "Rescue!" But he did not call to Wharton.

The five Highcliffians faced round towards the new-comer, expecting interference at once. They were still five to one, for Nugent could not join in a tussle with his hands tied.

"We'll serve him the same!" grinned Ponsonby. "The cad's alone! This is luck!"

"Yes, rather!"

"You rotters!" shouted Wharton.

He thought he knew Ponsonby & Co. pretty well, but he had never expected to see them amusing themselves with such brutality as this.

He came right on.

Ponsonby & Co. did not need to attack him. He did not wait to be attacked. He came on like a whirlwind, and in a second the Highcliffians—five to one, as they were—were getting all the fighting they wanted, and a little more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Fight Against Five!

HARRY WHARTON'S eyes were blazing as he rushed upon the Highcliffians.

He had forgotten the terms he was on with Nugent. All he realised was that his old chum was in the hands of the enemy, and was being brutally used. That was enough for him.

Nugent, quite exhausted, sank down by the roadside, his aching leg giving way on the verge of the ditch. He struggled with the cord on his wrists, but he could not get loose. The fighting was left to Wharton.

And the captain of the Remove seemed equal to it.

With the first rush he had knocked Gadsby flying, and the unfortunate Gaddy went headlong into the ditch with a terrific splash.

Then his right, which seemed as hard as iron, caught Ponsonby under the chin and fairly lifted him off his feet. Ponsonby crashed down on his back, and lay gasping, feeling as if his chin had been driven up through his head.

Then Wharton was struggling with Vavasour, Drury, and Monson.

The odds were three to one, but the three were slackers, and by no means of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Vavasour backed out of the conflict at once, keeping behind his companions, quite satisfied with one hard punch that made him dizzy.

Gadsby and Monson fastened on the captain of the Remove like cats, striving to drag him down, and yelling to their comrades to come on.

But Ponsonby was still lying dazed, and Gadsby was struggling out of the ditch, while Vavasour was keeping out of reach. For the moment Wharton had only two foes to deal with.

The struggle was what Hurree Jamset Ram Singh would have described as terrific.

The three combatants lost their footing and rolled in the road. Drury undermost, Wharton over him, and Monson sprawling on Wharton.

Wharton wrenched himself loose, and leaped up, with Monson in his grasp.

He exerted all his strength, and hurled Monson into the ditch, where he landed with a splash and a yell.

Drury staggered up just in time to catch a drive fairly in the eye, and he went down again as if he had been shot.

Wharton panted. For the moment he was unassailed.

He ran to Nugent.
"Franky, old man—"
"Look out, Harry!"

Ponsonby and Drury were up again, and coming on. Wharton had to turn and face them. There was no time to release his chum.

"Back up!" yelled Ponsonby. "Vavasour, you funk, come on!"
"I—I'm comin'!" stammered Vavasour.

"Gaddy—Monson, back up!"
"Grooooooh!" came from Gaddy and Monson.

They were crawling miserably out of the ditch, drenched to the skin, and smothered with mud, and with all the fight taken out of them.

Nugent watched, panting. He could not get loose; he could not help Wharton. But never had he felt prouder of his old chum than at that moment!

Drury went down, his other eye closing up, and Wharton struggled in the grasp of Ponsonby and Vavasour. Vavasour reeled away from an elbow that crashed into his ribs, and retired, panting. Then Wharton was struggling with Ponsonby, and Pon, after a savage resistance, went into the ditch.

Wharton made a rush at Vavasour, and that courageous youth, with a howl, fairly fled down the road.

Drury panted on the ground.
"Keep off, you rotter!" he gasped, as Wharton turned on him. "I give you best! Keep off!"

Wharton gave him hardly a glance. He ran to Nugent again, and this time he was not interfered with. He opened his pen-knife and cut the whipcord, and helped Frank to his feet.

"Hurt, old chap?"
Nugent grinned breathlessly.
"Yes, a bit. Never mind! Go for those cads! I can help you now. Shove that rotter into the ditch!"

Drury did not wait to be shoved into the ditch. He fled down the road after Vavasour.

Gadsby and Monson backed away, dripping mud and slime. Ponsonby struggled out of the ditch, muddy from head to foot.

Wharton burst into a laugh as he looked at the three dragged young rascals, no longer looking like the elegant nuts of Highcliffe.

With furious looks, they tramped away, not at all desirous of continuing the conflict, though the odds were still on their side.

"By Jove! You did pile it on, Harry!" said Nugent. "You've had a knock or two, too."

Wharton passed his hand over his face. He had not escaped unscathed. One of his eyes were closing, his nose was swollen and streaming red, and there were cuts and bruises on his face.

"That's all right," he said.
There was a pause.

In the excitement of the combat the two juniors had quite forgotten that they were not on speaking terms—that they were no longer friends.

Nugent broke the silence.
"Thanks very much!" he said. "It was ripping of you, considering—"

Wharton flushed.
"Did you think I'd leave you in their hands, Frank, because— Oh, hang it! I—I've just seen Marjorie. She gave me some good advice."

"Did she?" said Nugent, in wonder.
"Yes." Wharton's face was crimson.
"Franky, I've been an ass! I—I don't mind admitting it. I—I suppose that's enough for me to say?"

Nugent's face brightened.
"More than enough," he said. "I didn't want a row!"

"Well, I didn't, either, if you come to that. But—but I was in the wrong about Skinner, and—and I'm going to tell him I'm sorry."

"Good for you!" said Nugent. "If you think so yourself—"
"I do think so now! And—and it was fat-headed to cut up so rusty about his silly picture," said Harry. "Let's get back, Franky. You look done up, and my nose wants bathing."

There was a whir of bicycles on the road as the two chums, reconciled now, reached the gates of Greyfriars. They looked back,

and Marjorie and Clara and Phyllis alighted from their machines at the gate.

"My hat!" ejaculated Clara. "What have you boys been doing with your faces?"

The juniors laughed.
"Not—not—" began Marjorie, in alarm.

Wharton understood what she was thinking, and he interrupted hastily.
"We had a row with some Highcliffe chaps," he said. "It wasn't really our fault. Such things will happen, you know."

"Oh!" said Marjorie.
"There were five of the rotters," said Nugent. "They tied up my hands, and then Harry came up and mopped them up. I wish you had seen him!"

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton, colouring.
The juniors and the Cliff House girls walked in together.

"Then it is all right now, Harry?" Marjorie asked, in a low voice.

Wharton nodded and smiled.
"Yes. I've taken your advice."
"I'm so glad! I don't think you will be sorry for it, Harry."

"I'm jolly glad, Marjorie!"
Wharton and Nugent went into the School House to repair damages. They needed it badly.

About ten minutes later they joined their friends on Little Side, looking much less dusty and damaged, though their faces still showed very plain signs of conflict.

"Hallo! You two silly chumps stopped playing the giddy ox?" asked Johnny Bull, as he came off the field at half-time.

Wharton laughed.
"Yes, exactly—or, rather, I've stopped playing the giddy ox, and Nugent has agreed to look over it."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Nugent. "It was my fault as much as yours. It's all right now, Johnny!"

"Good!" said Johnny Bull. "My idea was to jam your silly heads together till you made it up—only Bob and Inky didn't see it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The cloudfulness has rolled by!" remarked Inky. "I am terrifically overjoyed, and the congratulatefulness is great! I felicitate my esteemed and ridiculous chums wholeheartfully!"

The clouds had indeed rolled by, and the famous Co. were united once more, much to the satisfaction of their friends.

Harold Skinner had the surprise of his life that afternoon.

He was lounging under the elms with Bolsover major and Snoop, when Harry Wharton came up. Skinner looked a little uneasy, and Bolsover major looked truculent. But the captain of the Remove soon showed that he was not on the warpath.

"I want to speak to you, Skinner," he began quietly.

"You needn't trouble!" said Skinner.
"I want to beg your pardon!"
"Eh?"

Skinner jumped. A dozen fellows who heard Wharton speak stared at him in surprise. It was indeed a genuine surprise from the fellow who was supposed to regard himself as a "little tin god."

"I was a duffer to cut up rusty about that silly picture," went on Harry, evidently determined to go through with it, his cheeks colouring a little as he spoke. "It was rotten of me to hit out as I did! I ask your pardon for that. I can't do more than that, can I?"

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Skinner. "I say, what's the little game?"
"The—the what?"

"This is rather a surprise from Mr. Magnificent Wharton, you know!" sneered Skinner. "The Great and Magnificent One does not usually condescend to waste good manners on common mortals! What's the game?"

"He, he, he!" cackled Snoop.
Wharton's flush deepened.

"I'm speaking sincerely enough," he said. "I'm sorry, that's all. And you can stick your picture up in the Common-room if you like. I sha'n't say a word about it. You can paper the Common-room and the hall with them, if you like, so far as I'm concerned. And if you like to look over what's happened, there's my hand on it!"

He held out his hand.
"Well, that's decent enough!" said Bolsover major, though rather grudgingly. "That's all a chap can do, Skinner!"

Skinner shrugged his narrow shoulders. He did not take Wharton's hand, and it dropped again.

"You see, I don't believe in these scenes!" jeered Skinner. "I suppose there's some little game on, and I don't quite catch on to it! Anyway, you can go and eat coke, and be banged to you!"

Wharton turned away without replying.
When the chums of the Remove came into the Common-room that evening there was a new adornment on the wall. It was an enlarged edition of Skinner's famous caricature of Mr. Magnificent Wharton. He had taken the captain of the Remove at his word, and some of the fellows were curious to see the result.

But there was no result.
Harry Wharton glanced at the picture, smiled, and took no further notice of it.

"Jolly good picture, Wharton—what?" sniggered Snoop.

"Jolly good!" agreed Harry. "Skinner can draw!"

Harry Wharton had set himself right in the eyes of his friends. That evening he took up his old quarters in Study No. 1, and there was never likely to be another split in the study.

THE END.

(There will be another topping long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars, entitled, "The Rival Captains!" by Frank Richards, in next week's issue. Look out for it.)

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Mystery of Parker.

"OLD Parker's back!" said Fatty Wynn, entering the study in the New House of St. Jim's which he shared with Figgins and Kerr. "Who says so?" demanded George Figgins. "I do, chump!" said him myself, in the tuckshop!"

Fatty had just come in laden with provender. That sort of thing was quite in Fatty Wynn's style. When he had a remittance—as he had had that day—Dame Taggles was sure to have a visit from him before long.

But that sort of thing had not been at all in Parker's style, so far as St. Jim's knew yet. Neither Figgins nor Kerr had ever seen Parker in the tuckshop. More, the Terrible Three, whose study he shared, had told other fellows that Parker didn't care a scrap for pastry or cakes or anything of that kind.

After about ten days at the school, during which he had attracted more attention than any new fellow who had come into the Shell for a long time past, Parker had been called away, and had been absent fully a fortnight.

Some of the fellows thought he would never come back. Figgins and Kerr were among those who held this opinion, for they suspected that Parker was not what he seemed.

And they had their reasons.

Within a very short time of Parker's temporary absence—in fact, only the night before he went—Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the School House, on their way back by rail from a visit to Wayland, had rescued Parker from serious danger. He had been set upon in the train by two ruffians, whose names were Rusty and Smiler, who tried to chloroform him. The four, by way of the foot-board, and at considerable risk, had gone to his rescue.

Fatty had been tumbled out with one of the scoundrels, and had snatched from him, almost unconsciously, a gold watch and chain, which turned out to be Parker's property.

But the queer thing about it was that, if the watch really belonged to Parker—and there seemed no reason to doubt that—then Parker was not really Parker at all, but P. I. Parker-Roberts, a well-known journalist, on the staff of that great paper, the "Daily Messenger."

Figgins had seen on the watch an inscription which gave away this fact. He had told his chums; but Fatty, who was feeling the effects of his tumble from the train, had gone to sleep almost as soon as he began, and they had let him sleep on. It did not matter much. It was the counsel of Kerr that Fatty wanted—not that of Fatty.

Now Figgins and Kerr looked hard at one another. Fatty, not in the least perceiving the excitement caused by his news, went on emptying paper bags, his eyes dwelling lovingly upon the contents of each as each was emptied.

"The chap's a rank impostor!" said Figgins, with a suddenness that gave Fatty quite a start.

"Who is?" he asked.

"Parker, of course! Only his name isn't really Parker, the sweep!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Figgy!" said Kerr. "It's not quite so bad as all that, you know."

"He's here under false pretences, anyhow," said Figgy.

"But that don't necessarily mean that he's up to any harm, old man."

"He's not up to any good, I'll bet!"

"Oh, I dunno, Figgy!" said Fatty.

"Lowther was with him, and they were giving no end big orders for to-morrow. It was Parker's treat, I'm sure; he kept asking Lowther what he ought to get. The chap didn't seem to know a thing about grub, really. Extraordinary, I call it!"

"For to-morrow—eh?" said Kerr. "They must be going to have a spread in Tom Merry's study to celebrate Parker's coming back."

"Hope they'll ask us!" said Fatty, with his mouth full.

"I shouldn't go," said Figgins.

"Oh, rot! I know jolly well I should! So would you, wouldn't you, Kerr?"

"I might be tempted," replied Kerr, with a grave face but twinkling eyes.

"The chap's a bag of mystery, but I don't think he's a villain."

"What's he here for? That's what I'd like to know!" said Figgins darkly.

"Why, what are we all here for?" asked Fatty.

"Oh, shurrup, you ass! Now, then, Kerr!"

"I shouldn't mind knowing myself," said Kerr. "But I don't see how we're going to find out."

"You're a bit of a 'tec, aren't you?"

"What-ho! Old Kerr is as good as Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee rolled into one!" said Fatty enthusiastically.

"Not quite, old scout. I've done a little thing or two in that line, Figgy. But I can't see my way to shadowing our friend, Pignacious Parker. We shall know all about it some day, perhaps. And even supposing we don't—well, what then?"

But Figgins was not to be satisfied so easily.

"Fathead!" he growled. "Is it likely that a grown man—and a journalist, too—would be here disguised as a boy if he wasn't jolly well up to something?"

"Journalists," said Kerr, "ain't criminals."

"You chaps are talking riddles to me," put in Fatty.

"Get on with your grub, you barrel of lard! Gorging's all you're good for!" said Figgins crossly.

"It's what was on the watch you're going by, I know, Figgy," said Kerr. "Tell us again what it was, and we'll see if we can make anything out of it."

"Figgy wouldn't ever have seen the watch if it hadn't been for me," said Fatty. "It seems as if I am some use, after all."

"Of course you are, old chap," said Figgins, relenting—for Wynn had spoken in rather an injured tone. "You've just stood a spread that was good enough for a king, and you bucked up like a Trojan that night. But do let us get on with the washing!"

"Go on, Figgy! What was on the ticker?"

"Can't remember the exact words, but it said that it had been presented to P. I. Parker-Roberts, of the 'Daily Messenger' by some force of bobbies or other for his pluck in rescuing another bobby when attacked by burglars."

"My hat, that ain't any very black mark against him, anyhow," said Kerr. "I could just see old Parker doing it, too! He's a jolly cool one!"

"But if he's that chap, what's he want at St. Jim's?"

"It's possible that the watch wasn't originally his."

"Do you mean he boned it, Kerr?"

"Crumbs, no! But that Parker-Roberts chap may have been his pater, you know."

"Name ain't the same."

"He might have dropped the hyphen and the Roberts. What's the giddy good of hyphens?"

"It would have been the Parker he'd have dropped, not the Roberts."

"So it would," admitted Kerr.

"Besides, I've got evidence that Parker is really the 'Messenger' man!"

"Great Scott! You might have said so before, old scout, instead of arguing nineteen to the dozen!"

With an air of triumph, Figgins produced a number of copies of the "Daily Messenger."

"I got these straight from the publishing office," he said. "They go back six weeks or more—to before the time when Parker blew in. There are several articles by P. I. Parker-Roberts in the earlier ones. Pretty good articles, too. I couldn't have done 'em much better myself!"

"Do you think our man Parker's got all that in him, Figgy? The chap ain't such as ass as he looks, I know; but—well, it seems a wildish notion! Why, Ralton as near as could be caned him a little while ago!"

"I wish he had quite! It would have been something for the bouncer to remember when he gets back to Fleet Street! But let me go on, Kerr. There ain't a single article during the time Parker was here. See any clue in that? But he goes off all in a hurry, and then the screeds begin again. And the first two are about a murder case—jolly clever articles, too! Don't tell me that it was anything but that case that made him sent for in a hurry! They hadn't

got another man fit to handle it, that's my notion."

"But is it likely that such a nonsuch would be kind of wasting his sweetness on the desert air down here, Figgy?"

"No, it ain't a bit likely; but it happens to be so, that's all!"

Fatty had finished his tea, and had fallen asleep. The other two were too absorbed to notice Fatty. For once Figgins, not Kerr, had assumed the detective role. But Kerr had never doubted his chief's brains. They were as good as any among the St. Jim's juniors, he knew.

"You've made out a good case, old chap," he said, "but I can't see the object of his being here."

"I can't, either. But it's fishy, Kerr. Look here, if the articles dry up now, will you believe?"

"Yes, I rather think I shall. It would be hard not to."

"Hallo, you fellows!"

It was Tom Merry who spoke, and Manners was with him.

"Welcome in peace!" said Tom. "Fatty may slumber on. His consent is not in doubt. I haven't any doubts about you chaps, either. You don't usually say 'No' when invited to a feed."

That word aroused Fatty from his slumbers.

"Who said 'feed'?" he asked. "Was it you, Tom Merry?—I thought at first it was all part of my dream. You chaps had the most scrumptious spread in your study; and Parker was inviting us to come along."

"'Twas the vision of prophecy, Fatty," answered Tom, grinning. "It is really Parker's do, only he's too shy to go round asking the fellows."

"Old Pignacious has returned laden with wealth, and in a much better temper," said Manners.

"I'm coming, for one!" said Fatty, very decidedly. "To-morrow, I suppose? It's too late for it to-day."

"Besides which—"

Tom glanced at the table, with its array of empty dishes.

"Oh, that wouldn't really have mattered!" said Fatty. "I've pretty nearly forgotten that. But I dare say I shall be in better form by to-morrow."

"We can count on you all, I suppose?" Tom asked.

"Oh, rather!" replied Kerr.

"Yes, we'll come," said Figgins.

"Why, I thought you said you wouldn't go, Figgy?"

"That must have been in your dream, Fatty," answered George Figgins gravely.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Taking Mellish for a Walk!

"COMING along to footer, Parker?" asked Lowther, meeting the new boy after classes next morning.

"Thank you, but I think not. I do not feel quite up to the mark," replied Parker.

It was of no use to argue with Parker. When he made up his mind, he made it up good and hard. So Lowther hurried off to join Tom and Manners, who had gone ahead.

"Hallo, Parkah! All alone—eh? Aren't you comin' to footah, deah boy?"

This time it was Arthur Augustus. Parker liked Gussy very much, but just now he could not help regarding him as rather a nuisance.

"Not to-day, I think, D'Arcy," he answered.

"Oh! Not slackin' off, are you, Parkah, deah boy? That would be a pity, because Tom Merry says you have the makin's of a weally good half."

That rather pleased Parker. He had never played footer at all in the days when he had really been a boy. Now he had taken to it with keenness. He was old enough to be above the vanity of being pleased by a mere boy's favourable opinion—or he ought to have been. But it is a fair question whether anyone is too old for vanity in one form or another.

"No, I'm not slacking off," he said. "It's very good of Merry, I'm sure."

"I considah that he is quite cowweet, Parkah. You weally play a wippin' game for a fellow who has had so little expewience. With a little coachin'—"

Arthur Augustus meant his own coaching. Parker quite understood that.

But at the moment it did not suit him at all. He wanted to go to Rylcombe, and in sheer desperation he said so, though he

knew that he risked having the company of the swell of the Fourth—which he did not want on this expedition.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I have an appointment in the village, and if I'm not to be late I must go at once."

He pulled out his watch to add colour to the fiction; for he had no appointment, in reality, though he had reasons for going.

"That's a wippin' watch, deah boy!" said Gussy. "Is it the same one that Fatty Wyn saved for you that night?"

The watch was replaced in haste. Parker had remembered now the inscription on it, of which Gussy knew nothing. The New House chums had not taken D'Arcy into their confidence about that.

Arthur Augustus noted the quick return of the watch to its pocket, and there was something in it which rather nettled him. But he was still more nettled by what Parker said next.

"By the way, D'Arcy, I trust that you have not mentioned that little affair to anyone?"

"I was undah the impresson, Parkah, that I gave my word that I would not. Aftah that—"

"Oh, of course! I beg your pardon, D'Arcy, really!"

"Don't mench! I am not easily offended by the nuthinkin' indiscretion of a friend, Parkah, an' I think you are awaah that I regard you as a friend."

But the manner in which Gussy stalked off, with his noble nose high in air, showed that he was a bit offended.

Parker was sorry for that. But, anyhow, Gussy had been effectually choked off offering to come to Rylcombe.

Mellish was mooning at the gates as Parker passed out.

Now, it was curious that Parker, who did not want the company of D'Arcy, whom he liked, should go out of his way to secure that of Mellish, whom he despised and disliked. But he did so, and for doing so he had his reasons.

"I am going to the village, Mellish," he said. "You might come with me, I think."

"Oh, might I?" snarled Mellish, who was in a very bad temper.

He was stony-broke, and it seemed to him the height of injustice that Racke, who was rolling in money, and Crooke, who had quite as much as was good for him, should have won his sorely needed funds in that last little game of banker.

"Yes, I think it would be as well," said Parker.

"Well, I don't, and I'm not coming!"

"I think you are mistaken, Mellish."

"Go and eat coke! I'm not coming!"

"I am sure you are mistaken, Mellish, so let us have no more argument. Not that, in any case, an order to go and eat coke can be considered as an argument!"

Mellish lifted his sulky eyes. They met Parker's, and they dropped before Parker's cool, imperious gaze.

"I suppose you think you can make me?" he said weakly.

"Be more gracious, Mellish, if you know how! Accept my invitation to take a walk with me."

"Oh, I reckon I may as well come!" said Mellish.

They walked away together. Ernest Levison saw them go, and wondered. But Mellish was no concern of Levison's; Levison had washed his hands of the sneak. And though Levison had come to the conclusion that there was something out of the ordinary in Parker, he had not yet got as far as entertaining any definite suspicions.

Sidney Clive, the South African junior, ran up and joined Levison. Both were on their way to footer, and a trifle late.

The two new chums went on their way. Parker and Mellish went on theirs, in silence for a time.

Mellish broke the silence.

"I suppose it's because of that silly bit of paper that you think you can order me about as you like!" he said sulkily.

"Your confession of blackmail, you mean?" returned Parker. "My views of a scrap of paper are not Hunnish, and I certainly do think that that particular scrap puts you in my power. But I have no wish to make myself unpleasant, I assure you."

"You might as well hand it over, then," said Mellish, trying hard to speak off-handedly.

"I think not. I don't want to be personal, Mellish, but I discern signs of the Hun in you!"

Conversation languished again for some little time after that.

Parker was watching Mellish narrowly.

It was queer that those two ruffians should have found out about his journey to town and the time of his return. And they must surely have found out, or they could not have been at Wayland on the *qui vive* for him.

Someone might have put them up to it. Parker's suspicions quite naturally flew to Mellish, the only fellow at St. Jim's, as far as he was aware, who knew his real identity.

And not a fellow to be trusted, either. Of that Parker was sure; but he doubted whether Mellish was scoundrel enough to help the two with knowledge of their object. It was hardly likely that they would have confided it to him.

Parker was visiting Rylcombe that day on the off-chance of sighting his assassins.

He did not expect to recognise them, in any case, for he had not seen their faces on either occasion of their attempts upon him. But he had an idea that if he saw them he would know them for something other than rural denizens, and a question or two in the village might enable him to guess more.

He had been away for over a fortnight. He did not imagine that they had been hanging about Rylcombe all that time, awaiting his return. But he thought it more than likely that they would have followed him down again, for he had no doubt as to who was the man who had set these beasts of prey upon him. And he knew him for a man not easily hauled.

Mellish grew conscious of the fact that his companion was watching him, and did not like it a bit. So he began to make talk.

"Don't you find those chaps rather slow?" asked Mellish.

"I cannot say that I do," answered Parker. "You mean Merry and the rest, I apprehend?"

"Yes; swanking Merry and Lowther, who thinks himself so blessed funny, and gives you pains in your inside with his puffing jokes."

"I admit that I do not consider Lowther's jocular attempts invariably successful," said Parker dryly.

Mellish was encouraged.

"And that ass, Manners!" he went on. "Potty about photography! As for D'Arcy, he's nothing but a silly tailor's dummy!"

"D'Arcy is a friend of mine!" broke in Parker.

"Oh, I forgot! Worth while to chum up to a lord's son, ain't it?"

Parker let that sneer pass.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In the Village!

"BUT you must get a bit fed-up with that saintly crew," went on Mellish. "Tisn't as if you were a kid still. I dare say you were a good little Georgie at their age, but—"

"You had better moderate your tone, Mellish!" snapped Parker.

"Oh, well, I don't mean any harm!" replied Mellish, who was merely being as offensive as he dared. "But you're a man, and I should think you'd have a man's tastes, or some of em."

"Such as?"

"Well, don't you smoke?"

"I have smoked, Mellish."

As a matter of fact, Parker, in ordinary life, was a fairly heavy smoker. He missed his pipe at St. Jim's a good deal. But he had a strong will, and could go without tobacco when he made up his mind to do so.

"And drink?"

"I am not a teetotaler."

"And play cards?"

"At times, though I am not a confirmed devotee of any card game."

"And have a bit on a gee-gee now and then?"

"That is quite out of my line."

"Well, the Turf's a bit off just now for me. But I can't see why you should cut yourself out of any sort of amusement all the time you're here."

"And how do you propose that I should obtain such amusement, all of it being, I assume, against the rules of the school?"

"Oh crumbs, yes! But that's no odds, you know. It don't matter a giddy scrap as long as you are fly enough not to be caught out."

"So that is all that matters, Mellish?"

"Of course it is. What else should?"

Parker looked at Mellish in a queer way, so Mellish thought it.

But Parker was thinking hard. He remembered that, in coming to St. Jim's, his main idea had been to study the worse side of public-school life—not to study that side exclusively, of course. He had meant all along to be fair.

But he had certainly believed that that worse side was far more in evidence than he had actually found it.

There was not a lot of bullying at St. Jim's. There were a few bullies. But the general feeling of the school was all against bullying.

And there was not a lot of dissipation, as far as he had yet gathered. That there were a few gay dogs he knew; but, quite unmistakably, they were held in anything but high esteem by the rest.

But Parker had promised the great chief of the "Daily Messenger" that he should be heard from in the role of "Parker, the Prodigal." And he saw in the turn of the conversation between him and Mellish that taken a chance of starting in on that role.

He would not like it a bit, he knew. He would far rather have gone on studying the Terrible Three, the chums of No. 6, Figgins & Co., Talbot, and the other fellows who had already given him new notions as to public-school life.

They would look upon him as a renegade if he took up with the doggy gang. But it could not be helped. The thing had to be done.

"That is one point of view, certainly," said Parker.

"Seems to me that it's the only point of view, for anyone but a blushing little Eric," replied Mellish, growing bolder as he thought he saw signs of Parker's coming round.

"Then I may take it that you are decidedly not a blushing little Eric?"

"Not me! Nor Racke, nor Crooke. There's Clampe, too, and Scrope and Piggott. But he's only a kid, though, my hat, he's pretty fly for his age! And, of course, there are Cutts and St. Leger and Gilmore in the Fifth. And a Sixth Form chap or two. But I don't know much about them. They have to be careful. A prefect gets it in the neck jolly hard if he's caught out."

Mellish was growing quite confidential.

"Racke is the war-profits person, isn't he? And Crooke is the hefty lout who scowls persistently at Talbot? I do not think, Mellish, that I should care about going out with Racke or Crooke; while I have not the—er—pleasure of Clampe's acquaintance."

"Levison would have suited you better. But that's dead off now," said Mellish, with regret.

"Levison does not—er—blag any more? Blag is, I believe, the accepted term?"

"Yes; that's what the silly asses call it. No, Levison's gone right off it. That's a pity, too, for he had ever so much more in him than Racke and Crooke."

Ernest Levison had often been rough on Mellish. There was no one at St. Jim's who knew better than Levison the true value of Mellish, which Levison was far from rating high.

But, at his worst, Levison had been a better comrade than Racke or Crooke. They had scarcely even "thieves' honour." He had been ready "to stand by a pal."

"What of Cutts and his friends?"

"Well, of course, they're in the Fifth. That makes a heap of difference. They'll take up a flag sooner than they will a chap in the Shell or Fourth. There's young Piggott. They took him up, and Manners minor. But that didn't come to much."

"Have you any influence with Cutts and his worshipful company, Mellish?"

"I dare say I could work the oracle for you if you make it worth my while. After all, they are ready enough to be civil to a junior if he has plenty of tin."

"Ah, we will talk further of this, Mellish! Here we are at the village."

Parker was keeping his eyes open now for any sign of the two roughs.

Mellish was not thinking much about them. If he did think of them, it was only to assure himself that they had cleared out now, since he had not seen them for fully a fortnight. His gaze wandered round.

It stopped at last upon a confectioner's window.

"I'd ask you in here, Parker," he said, in very friendly tones, "only, as it happens, I haven't a blessed sou to my name."

"Which means, I apprehend, that you wish me to ask you in?"

"I shouldn't say 'No.' And as you've dragged me down here, I think it's up to you."

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"It will spoil your dinner."

"Rats! I don't mind that, anyway."

"Come in, then."

They went in.

"Have what you like," said Parker.

He himself ordered a dry ginger-ale, and took a seat whence he could watch passers-by.

Mellish was in clover. His powers of consumption were not equal to Fatty Wynn's, but he was naturally greedy.

He ate fast, and he ate for quite a long time. Parker began to think he would never stop.

Confectionery of all sorts disappeared rapidly, and in what seemed to Parker a disgustingly mixed manner. Sausage-rolls, after cream-tarts, seemed something like the limit to Parker.

Mellish reached at last the stage at which he could get down no more solids. He had already drunk more than one bottle of ginger-beer. Now he topped up with two more, and announced that he had finished.

Parker thought it was more than time, but did not say so. He settled the bill, and they passed out together.

"Do you feel—er—quite comfortable, Mellish?"

Mellish did not. Mellish was feeling that those last two bottles of ginger-beer had been a mistake. But he was not going to own it.

"Oh, yes, thanks, Parker," he answered, not very cheerily.

Just then the ill-assorted pair caught sight of another badly-matched couple.

Parker saw Messrs. Smiler and Rusty before Mellish did, but only a second before. Mellish changed colour as his eyes fell upon them. That might have been due only to nausea, but Parker fancied otherwise.

Messrs. Smiler and Rusty were coming from the station. Parker guessed that they had been sent down from town for his benefit.

"I am going into the post-office, Mellish," he said.

"I guess I'll come with you," said Mellish.

"Better not, Mellish! There might be objections to your being—er—ill in there. And I really fear that you are going to be ill!"

Mellish groaned as Parker left him. Mellish hardly felt in form for keeping up his end with those two.

"Hallo, Mister Percymellish!" said Smiler affably. "An' 'ow's Mister Percymellish this fine day?"

"Oh, pretty well, thanks!" replied Mellish, feeling anything but well. "I say, you know, you'd better not stop and talk to me just now. He's in there."

He nodded in the direction of the post-office.

"Wot, our dear young friend Parker?" returned Smiler, with an oily grin. "Ow we should rejoice to see our dear young friend again—eh, Rusty, old image?"

Rusty only grunted.

"You'd better toddle along this way about five o'clock this afternoon, Mister Percymellish," said Smiler, in a commanding tone that made Mellish feel still less comfortable.

How he wished he had never seen these two! Trouble would come of it, he knew, and Parker might be watching.

"I don't know that I can," he said weakly.

Smiler fixed him with a gleaming pair of eyes.

"You'd better!" he said briefly.

Mellish succumbed, like the coward he was.

"I'll come," he said. "Only do clear off! I don't want him to see us together."

But Parker had seen them. It was for no other purpose he had left Mellish outside.

Messrs. Smiler and Rusty moved on towards the Green Man.

Parker came out.

"Friends of yours, Mellish?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" replied Mellish hastily. "They were asking the way, that was all. Nasty rough-looking chaps."

But though he still felt internal uneasiness, Mellish was in better spirits when he reached the school. He had managed to tap Parker for a loan, and had told him quite a lot more about Cutts, Racke, Crooke, and the rest of the bold, bad blades.

Parker the Prodigal would not be long in starting his career now.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Parker's Patrons!

IT could not be said that Mellish and Cutts of the Fifth were on intimate terms.

As a rule, Cutts steered clear of Fourth and Shell fellows in his amusements, even as Mellish had said. He might have lowered himself to be chummy with Racke, who fairly rolled in ill-gotten wealth; but so far Racke had shown no desire to be chummy with him. Racke liked to lead, and Cutts was too masterful.

But Mellish was a useful sort of jackal, and in that capacity Cutts could put up with him on occasion.

Mellish didn't expect any great measure of civility. He could eat dirt if he saw his profit in it.

So he went along to tell Cutts that Parker showed a disposition towards playing the gay dog, and might be persuaded to place himself under the wing of the great Cutts in pursuit of that end.

"I don't know that I want to have anything to do with the cheeky rotter!" growled Cutts, who had not forgotten or forgiven the fact that Parker had put him on his back before a crowd.

"He's got lots of tin, Cutts," said Mellish.

"Seen any of it?"

"Rather! He stood treat to me in Rylcombe to-day. No blessed limit. I had all I could eat or drink."

"Ah! I thought you were looking a bit off colour," said Cutts, with a grin.

"You shouldn't be a pig, young Mellish!"

"It's all right now. I didn't want any dinner after it, that was all. Shall you look Parker up, Cutts?"

"May as well. He's an amusing little animal, anyway," yawned the great Gerald Cutts. "Cut along an' see if he's on his lonesome now."

Mellish obeyed the command, and less than five minutes later the dandy of the Fifth strolled into Study No. 10 on the Shell passage, where Parker sat alone, writing letters.

"Hallo, Parker!" said Cutts affably.

"Heard you'd turned up again, an' thought I'd give you a look in."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure!" replied Parker dryly. "Cutts of the Fifth, I think?"

"By Jove, we ought to know each other!" said Cutts. He did not bear malice to any very great extent, and Parker's attitude rather tickled him.

"Well, yes; so we ought," Parker replied.

"Will you take a seat, Cutts?"

Cutts took one on the table. That was not what Parker had meant, but he let it pass.

Parker guessed why Cutts had come, and because he guessed he made up his mind to bear the Fifth-Former's insolence as meekly as possible.

At least, Cutts was an improvement upon Mellish. Parker had a very low opinion indeed of Mellish.

"Find it slow here?" yawned Cutts.

Parker said that, on the whole, he found it a trifle slow. It was not precisely the truth, for he had never yet had a slow day at St. Jim's. But it seemed to Parker legitimate to deceive Cutts.

"Rather a collection of wash-outs, the Shell, on the whole—what?"

Parker intimated that, compared with the august Cutts, the Shell might be regarded in that light.

"Gettin' a bit fed up with them?" suggested Cutts.

Parker admitted, untruthfully, being rather fed up.

"Care about a fling—somethin' to relieve the giddy monotony—what?" asked Cutts, imagining himself to be getting along famously. He did not begin to realise that he was playing right into the hands of this chubby-looking junior—this junior who had to arise early in order to shave a startling crop of bristles, and who was really at least ten years his senior.

Parker signified that a fling might meet his views, but naturally desired to know what sort of a fling Cutts proposed.

Cutts expounded his notion of a fling. It sounded to Parker very sordid and silly, and not in the least worth doing.

But Parker did not tell Cutts so. He only said:

"Is it not a bit risky?"

"Oh, that's half the fun of it," said Cutts.

This was a new light on the subject to Parker. Not quite, though. When he came to think of it, Mellish had made it clear that that queer fellow Levison had gone in for this kind of thing in much the same

spirit. Mellish and Racke and Crooke had none of it, Parker fancied. Cutts had, it seemed. And so Parker preferred Cutts as a companion on such an expedition to any of them, though he himself saw no fun in such proceedings.

"When do you propose initiating me?" inquired Parker.

"By Jove, you're a rum 'un, Chubby! I doubt whether the Shell has ever had such a queer, dry old stick as you in it before."

"Initiate" is good—quite good!"

"My name is Parker, Cutts."

"That's all right. Among pals, you know, Chubby."

Parker did not protest further, for at that moment Monty Lowther came in, laden with supplies.

"Hallo, Pignacious! Have you asked Cutts to the spread?" said Lowther.

"None of your cheek, you impudent fag!" growled Cutts. "I don't come to kids' gorges!"

"Pleased to hear it," Lowther replied cheerily. "On the whole, Cutts, I think we shall be happier without you. Ta-ta, if you must go!"

Cutts departed.

"I shouldn't get friendly with that chap if I were you, Parker," Lowther said quite seriously.

Parker did not answer.

Now came along Tom Merry and Manners, also laden. They did not grumble that Parker took no share in fetching up the provender or even in setting the table. That was scarcely to be expected from Parker, who had a positively unnatural way—from their point of view—of considering a spread as a thing of very little importance.

But this particular spread was of some account in Parker's eyes. The pleasure of the Terrible Three in it pleased him, and he was also pleased to find that everyone asked was coming.

The table was set, and a fine sight it made. Tea was made, extra teapots and kettles having been borrowed for the occasion.

The guests began to arrive, among the first being the four chums of Study No. 6. Then came Clive and Levison, followed by Noble and Dane and Glyn. Lastly, arrived the New House trio and Talbot.

How everyone was crowded in was a mystery, although the Terrible Three's study was bigger than most of the other studies. But crowded in they were. And all—with the possible exception of the founder of the feast, and even he seemed to have a better appetite than usual—did full justice to the bountiful spread provided.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Plot against Parker!

IT seemed as though the day of the spread had marked the zenith of Parker's popularity at St. Jim's.

His absence for a time had wiped out any feeling against him for having the cheek to imagine that he, a new boy, could improve the tone of the school. The spread had been a lavish one, and though those invited to it were not the sort of fellows to be bribed, that fact had counted.

Lowther had confided to Tom Merry the same evening that he really thought Pignacious was going to settle down and be one of them—quite a good, reasonable little Parker, in short.

But Pignacious had not done anything of the sort.

He had begun to go badly astray within twenty-four hours, and that in a completely unexpected way.

For who that knew him could have dreamed of Parker's taking up with the bold, bad blades of the Fifth?

Racke and Crooke grinned and chortled. Ernest Levison looked with his old, sarcastic smile; Mellish, much worried, had not the spirit even to grin. The toils were around Mellish now, and he was horribly afraid.

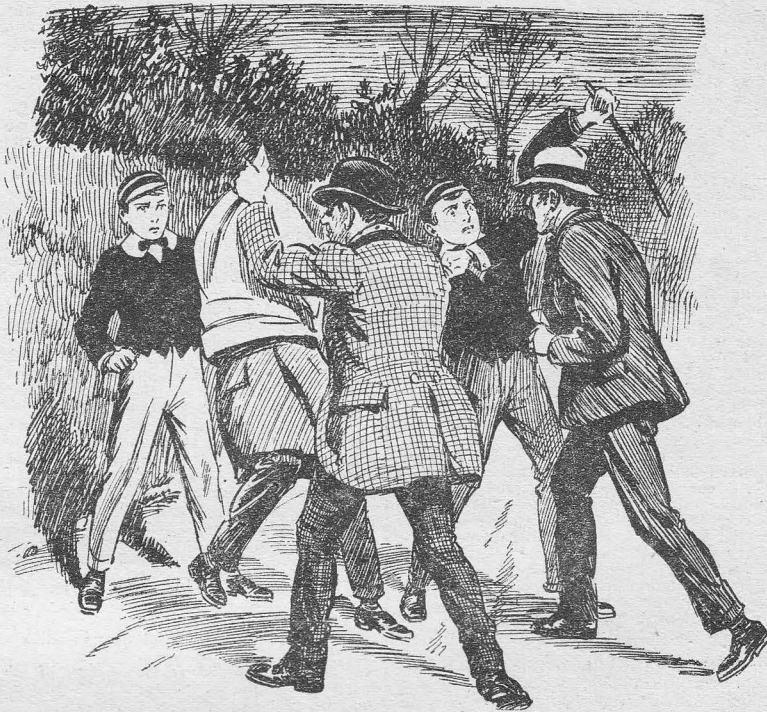
Talbot held aloof. He had suddenly become far less inclined to make a friend of Parker. Arthur Augustus shook his noble head sadly. The Terrible Three were genuinely troubled. They had grown to like "the intruder."

"You're seeing too much of Cutts and that gang, Parker," said Tom two or three days later.

"So D'Arcy has told me in very plain terms," answered Parker.

"Gussy's right for once in his fatheaded life!" growled Manners.

"There's one consolation. It isn't us who



THE PERIL OF THE BLADES! Out of the gloom sprang two men and they cut at the three blades with whips. Cutts dodged and bolted, but Mellish was seized and a sack was thrown over his head. (See Chapter 8.)

will suffer by this idiot's fooling round with rank outsiders," said Lowther, for once too serious to jape.

"Then I really cannot see that it is any affair of yours!" said Parker, with a snap in his voice.

An angry silence fell after that. It marked a new period in the relations of the four in Study No. 10.

Parker was going from bad to worse! So the Terrible Three agreed a day or two later. They were seeing little of him now. He would not even come to footer.

For that there was a reason. Parker was not fit for footer, as he had found after one attempt to play following an evening with Cutts.

He was frequently seen with Cutts, Gilmore, and St. Leger—and the Terrible Three particularly barred that trio. He had even spent an evening in the study shared by Racke and Crooke, and if the Terrible Three barred anybody more than those Fifth-Formers it was Racke & Co.

Parker was alone in Study No. 10 that evening after prep when Cutts looked in.

"Hallo, Chubby!" said Cutts. "Are you game for to-night?"

"Yes," replied Parker.

He was not by any means keen. But, on the whole, he thought it would be just as well to go through with this, get it over, and leave St. Jim's for good. Parker liked popularity, and the present attitude of the fellows whose friendship he really valued hurt him, though he knew it was what he might have expected. Indeed, he would have been disappointed had it been different, and yet he did not like it!

"Meet me on the upper corridor about half-past nine, then," said Cutts.

"I will do so," said Parker. To himself he added:

"This once, but never again!"

After a little thought, somehow or other Cutts did not fancy an expedition alone with Parker. Gilmore and St. Leger would not come. Whom should he ask?

He thought of Racke and Crooke, but dismissed the idea. Then he thought of Mellish, and smiled sardonically.

"It ought to be rather good fun," he thought. "Mellish will be in no end of a funk all the time, and it will be better than running Chubby alone."

So he sent for Mellish.

Percy Mellish was having a pretty miserable time of it in these days.

He was deep in the toils—deeper than he had ever meant to get. He had had occasion to write to Smiler, and that worthy held his letter over his head—a veritable sword of Damocles! For if anyone in authority at St. Jim's saw it, Mellish's career at the school would come to a sudden end.

There was even worse than that. Mellish knew something now of the two attacks upon Parker. When once Smiler felt sure that the wretched junior was fairly in his power, he had taken little trouble to deceive him any longer.

Mellish knew now that between the man who had sent these two rascals to Rylcombe and Parker-Roberts there was something more than a mere unfriendly wager.

Deadly harm was intended to Parker-Roberts—harm that might stop short of murder, it is true, but even of that the miserable junior felt none too certain.

The knowledge had come upon him by degrees. If it had come in one lightning flash of illumination, it would have gone near to sending him mad.

He had lost all his spite against Parker now. Even the slipping had not really re-awakened it. With all his faults, Mellish lacked the deep-seated rancour of Racke and Crooke. He had never hated Parker as Racke hated Levison, or as Crooke hated Talbot. It simply wasn't in him.

So it may be guessed how little he relished Cutts' plan.

Smiler and Rusty knew—through him—that some night before long Parker might be expected to break bounds after lights out and visit the Green Man. They expected to hear from him in advance which night it would be. But they were on the watch every night—that much was certain.

Their plans were laid. Mellish had to think out something to thwart them.

It was hard enough in any case. The wretched junior had racked his brains in vain.

But Cutts' command made it even harder. Never, in his worst forebodings, had Mellish contemplated being taken right into the midst of the affair like this!

At worst, he had pictured himself as lying

sleepless at St. Jim's knowing that something was happening, but out of it all personally. "I'm going to take the great Chubby out to-night, Mellish," said Cutts, in his lordly way. "You can come with us if you like."

"Oh, thanks, Cutts, no end! But I don't think I will," replied Mellish, trying hard not to show how much the prospect dismayed him. "I've got rather a nasty cold."

"Rats!" said Cutts. "You're snuffling. I can see; but then you're always doin' that. You are a snuffling sort!"

"I don't care about coming," said Mellish sulkily.

The junior's obstinacy only awoke all the bullying instinct in Cutts. It was not his ruling instinct. Cutts could be pleasant enough when he got his own way; but he was quite capable of being a good deal of a brute when crossed.

"I don't see how you can make me," whined Mellish.

Cutts took him by the ear. "There's one little thing I can do," he said savagely, "and that is to give you away to Parker!"

The effect was electrical. Cutts had not dreamed that it would be so instantaneous.

But the very last thing the wretched Mellish wanted was to have Parker suspecting that he had been plotted against. He did not know that Parker already felt pretty sure that Mellish was in some sort leagued with his enemies, and he feared that what Cutts might tell the Shell fellow would put him on the scent of other things.

"I—oh, look here, Cutts, I'll come if you want me particularly, though I'm not a bit keen!"

"That's more like it, Mellish! We'll have some fun with Chubby to-night!"

Mellish did not expect any fun. He crawled away from Cutts' study in an agony of fear.

What was to be done? On one side were Smiler and Rusty, waiting for their prey. On the other were Parker, who had him in a cleft-stick, and Cutts, who also had a strangle-hold upon him, through his fear of Parker.

Verily, the way of the transgressor was hard! Mellish resolved to order his life on a different model if he could once get clear of this scrape.

To whom could he go for help?

Crooke was out of the question. He knew something about the affair; but though he might have helped in a scheme for pinning Parker, there was not the faintest chance of his aiding Mellish to get out of the pit he had dugged for himself.

Tom Merry & Co.? Here there seemed a little more hope.

But not by open confession. They would insist on warning Parker, and that meant ruin for Mellish. For well he knew that if Parker spared him, Smiler would not.

Mellish was a coward, but he had brains; and if ever in his life he had needed to make the fullest use of those brains, he needed to do so now!

He buried his aching head in his hands, and laboured to think out a plan.

And at last he hit upon one. It entailed running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, but that he did not mind.

He would let the two scoundrels in the village know that they might expect to get a chance of seizing Parker that night.

And he would let Tom Merry know that danger hung over Parker, and trust to Tom and his chums to avert that danger. They would not dismiss the warning as an idle yarn, for already—as Mellish knew now—they had seen for themselves that Parker had enemies.

Mellish was quite pleased with his scheme. It had one great drawback—the fact that he himself, because he could not get out of accompanying Cutts and Parker, would be in the thick of danger, if danger came. But he hoped not to be recognised.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Warning and two Secrets!

TOM MERRY opened his Latin-English lexicon, and saw inside it a sealed envelope, addressed to himself in printed characters.

The study had settled down to prep. Parker's head was bent over the works of Cicero. Manners and Lowther were also engaged upon those works, which they appreciated less than Parker did. The queer new fellow was well ahead of the Form in classics. For him Cicero meant no new difficulty, only an effort of memory.

THE POPULAR.—No. 315.

Tom read the note without saying anything. It was the best that Mellish could manage after at least a dozen attempts. Thus it ran:

"TO TOM MERRY.

"IF PARKER GOES OUT TO-NIGHT, SOME OF YOU HAD BETTER FOLLOW HIM, AND THE MORE THE SAFER. HE WILL BE IN GREAT DANGER!"

"A FRIEND."

Tom stared. But for what had happened before, he would have dismissed this as a bad joke; but he could not do that now. He had not the least idea who had written the warning, but he felt it must be taken seriously.

He touched Lowther, put a finger on his lips, nodded towards the studious Parker, and passed him the note.

Monty read it, lifted his eyebrows in surprise, and, with the same precautions, passed it on to Manners.

Parker went on studying Cicero.

"I've finished," said Tom, half an hour or so later. During that time he may have read twenty lines of Latin, but he had not understood a word of it. "I think I'll run across and see Figgins & Co."

Over in the New House Tom found Fatty Wynn still stoging away at his prep, Figgins reading an old copy of the "Messenger," and Kerr working out some abstruse mathematical problem.

Tom's coming—or, rather, his disclosure of what he had come for—was like the dropping of a bombshell into it.

"See here, Figgy! What do you think of this?"

Tom had expected exclamations of disbelief—"Bunkum!" "Sheer rot!" But not one such exclamation was uttered.

No one even looked greatly surprised.

The eyes of Kerr and Figgins met, and somehow Tom felt sure that these fellows already knew a good deal.

"It's a rum thing, in a way," said Fatty slowly. "But we know Parker's been in dan—"

"Shurrup!" snapped Figgins.

"I say, though, how do you fellows know that?" asked Tom.

"My aunt, who should know it if we didn't?" demanded Figgins.

"Now you're letting it out, Figgy!" said Wynn.

"Well, I think we might know it, considering that—"

Tom pulled himself up short. He and his chums had promised Parker not to tell.

It was a difficult situation. What did these chaps know? If it was what the Terrible Three knew, how had Figgins & Co. found it out? And if it wasn't, what could it be?

"Considering what?" asked Figgins pointedly.

"I haven't a right to tell you," replied Tom. "What did Fatty mean?"



MELLISH IS BROUGHT BACK!
Just at that moment Blake and Lowther came in, and between them walked the miserable Mellish. He was coated from head to feet with mud. (See Chapter 8.)

"We're not a liberty to say," answered Figgins.

It looked like a deadlock. These fellows knew one another well. Each knew that the other's word of honour was a sacred thing.

As it was so important, they decided to be perfectly frank with one another. As they discussed the problem a scheme came to light, and they were able to make arrangement for the biggest difficulty. They must watch Parker, and they must do it that night.

The plan was made, and Tom Merry & Co. waited anxiously for the night. Many things were to happen that night, but they were prepared to stand by Parker to the last.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER I

Eleven on the Trail!

PARKER got out of bed. He had never been keen on this expedition. But he had the part to play, according to promise, and he must play it.

After to-night no more of it. A few days more at St. Jim's, and then back to town and to work.

There was risk to-night, he knew. It was characteristic of him that the risk of being caught out by someone in authority and having to leave St. Jim's in disgrace loomed larger in his mind than any peril which the wiles of the Big Boss' emissaries might occasion.

Everybody seemed to be asleep. But everybody was not.

Manners had dozed off. But Tom and Talbot and Monty Lowther were all awake.

Parker made very little noise, but they heard him.

They waited till he was out of the room. Then Tom slipped out of bed, and shook Manners gently. He could see, dim as was the light, that Talbot and Lowther were also out.

"Grooo-ooo-oh! Lemme alone! 'Tain't rising-bell yet!"

Tom whispered in his drowsy ear. In a moment he was awake.

They did not argue that question. Talbot slipped off to fetch the Fourth Form fellows. Talbot came back.

"They'll be with us in a brace of shakes," he said. "I say, here's a rum go, Tom! Blake says Mellish got up and went out some minutes ago!"

"Whew! Mellish! Well, I'm blessed!" But now came Jack Blake & Co., who had been let into the secret, from the other dormitory, and a start was made.

They made their way to the box-room, joining forces with the New House juniors, who had been awaiting their arrival in the passage, and clambered on to the roof of the outbuilding below it. Thence, one after another, they dropped to ground.

It was not very dark in the quadrangle, and as yet it was far too early for everyone at St. Jim's to be in bed. But as it chanced, no one saw the little band go. Windows were shut in by thick blinds, and only the merest glimmer of light came from any of them.

Over the outer wall they went. Tom Merry came last, and he alone had to do without help from below. But there was help from the top, and he scrambled up without much difficulty.

Once outside, they felt safer.

But they were a bit puzzled.

Cutts would make for the Green Man, of course. Closing hours would not matter in the case of a valued patron like Cutts. Jolliffe took many risks of that sort.

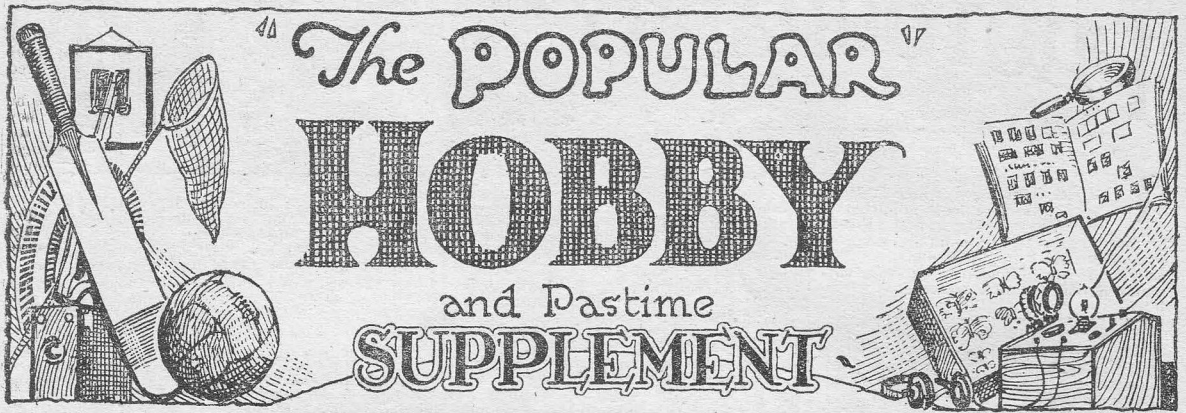
But they could not wait outside the Green Man. Besides, an attack upon Parker there was most unlikely.

There was no certainty that the attack would be made on the return journey at all; but that seemed more likely, as it would be later.

Parker would hardly agree to go through the wood, even if Cutts wanted to. He had been attacked there once, and he was no fool.

It would be somewhere along the road that the attempt would be made. That much seemed certain. And except for the chance of its being made before the three had reached the Green Man there seemed no occasion for hurry, as Cutts and his companions might stay some time in the high-class resort to which they had gone.

(Continued on page 17.)



With few exceptions, every radio set must have an earth connection, and in every case where such a connection is necessary, it should be of the best.

There are many ways of connecting a receiving set to earth, some good, others bad. But whatever system is used, it is essential that (1) the earth connection should be comparatively near the receiving set itself; (2) it should be made of stout wire, with consequent low resistance; and (3) the earth itself in the neighbourhood of the connection should be damp.

Probably the most common method of making an earth connection is to twist some bare wire round a handy water-pipe. This is quite all right providing that the connection is strongly made, and that the pipe contains main water. If the pipe is a waste pipe, or goes to a tank in the roof of the house, it is not efficient. The method of connecting the wire to the pipe itself is important. It should either be soldered, or fixed to the pipe by means of an "earth clip." The latter consists of a circular piece of copper which can be bent round the pipe and tightened up by means of a nut and bolt. The connecting wire is then fixed to the tightening nut, and a good earth connection results. Before fixing the clip, the section of piping where it is to make contact should be scraped clean.

There are many ways of making a "buried" earth connection. A biscuit tin, with wires soldered to it at different points, can be buried in damp earth, and will make a good connection. An old zinc bath, or anything similar, will also do excellently. In these kind of earth connections, stranded copper wire should be used, and the several strands may be untwisted and soldered to various parts of the buried object. A strip of wire netting stretched out under the earth is another favourite and its efficiency cannot be denied.

Where space is limited, or there is no damp soil near the surface, an "earth rod" can be used. This is merely a metal rod, fairly stout and long, hammered into the earth at a convenient spot. The connecting wire should be soldered either at the top or half-way down.

All these methods sound comparatively easy, but there are some radio enthusiasts who are unable to use any of them owing to existing circumstances. Matters for them become rather difficult for they have to find an earth connection somewhere inside the house. Of course, the main water pipe can be used, but I would always advise an outside earth connection when this is at all possible.

Some enthusiasts make an earth connection to the gas pipe, but this is inefficient and dangerous. It is inefficient because where sections of gas piping are joined together they are smeared with a paste which effectually insulates one section of piping from the other. It is dangerous because, should a lightning storm come up, and the aerial become charged with electricity, that charge will have to go to earth. The possible result can be easily imagined.

There are several methods of making an earth connection still unmentioned, and if you have an idea for one of them, you should first consider the following:

Is there a good "surface" to the connection? Does it cover a fair amount of ground? Surface is an essential thing.

Is it of low resistance? Resistance in an earth connection is an undesirable thing and should be avoided at all costs. The connecting wire should be thick.

Is the earth connection fairly local? A long earth connection is a thing to be avoided if possible.

Lastly, is the connection a safe one in the event of a lightning discharge? The possibility of the



MAKING A GOOD EARTH CONNECTION!

aerial itself. The latter point is important.

The "capacity" earth connection is only used under special circumstances and in the case of an ordinary receiving set it is not reckoned to be so efficient as a direct connection. Most transmitting stations use a "capacity" and in certain cases a receiving set works better on an earth connection of this sort than one of the ordinary kind.

Perhaps the most common use for a capacity earth is when a receiver is working in the region of electric light mains which insist on making an unpleasant "hum" in the telephones sometimes too loud to be tolerated. I once succeeded in getting rid of this most annoying interference by substituting a capacity earth for the ordinary water-pipe one. It seems probable that many amateurs hear noises in their receiving sets which they are unable to track and which are very probably brought there by the earth connection. If you have any trouble of this sort, the best way to find out whether the earth connection is the cause of the trouble is to temporarily disconnect the earth wire from the set. If the noises cease, then you don't need to be much of a Sherlock Holmes to realise that you have found the seat of the trouble.

The capacity earth is not half so liable to bring in this form of interference, but unfortunately you have to make up your mind on another point before deciding either way regarding the earth. The point is—the amount of interference really so bad that it prevents enjoyment of the broadcast programmes and would a slight decrease in signal strength be worth while in order to get rid of the interference?

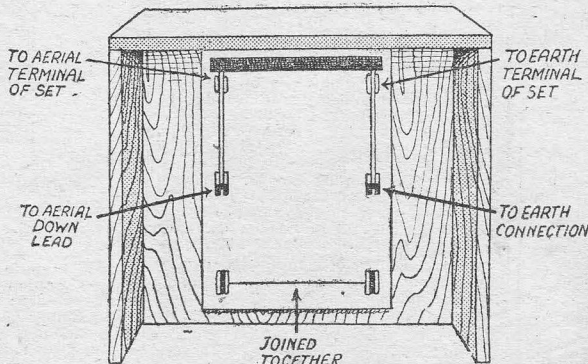
Perhaps you are troubled only with "occasional" interference. In such circumstances you might resort to a little scheme which I adopted while on holiday with a radio set in the Channel Islands last year. The farm where I was staying had its own electric light plant which operated in the evenings between the hours of 6 and 8 p.m. With an ordinary earth this "plant" made a noise that reminded one of some of the B.B.C.'s American relays—it was just like listening-in during a particularly strong medley of atmospherics. When the generator was not running, an ordinary earth could be used, so I arranged a little double throw switch by the side of the set by means of which either earth could be brought into use.

Now a word about the earthing switch.

This is, without a doubt, a very necessary part of a radio receiving outfit. It is fitted outside the window of the room where the set is situated. It is a two-position switch. In one position the aerial down lead is switched through to the receiving set. In the other it is "earthed." The latter position renders the set free from harm by way of atmospheric discharges and also converts your aerial into a very efficient lightning conductor.

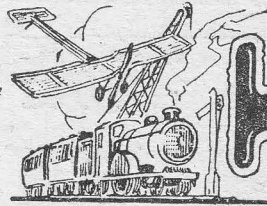
The simplest switch is known as a "double pole double throw" switch and can be bought for about a shilling.

The diagram on this page shows how the switch is connected up, and also suggests a means whereby the switch can be kept perfect & dry. The cover illustrated can be very easily made,



The diagram shows the switch and cover. Switch is shown in "on" position.

PHOTOGRAPHY



HOW TO

STEAM TURBINE ENGINE

THE USE OF STOPS!

THE "stop" or diaphragm of a camera is the mechanism which controls the amount of light admitted to the camera. The stop is adjusted by means of a scale and pointer, usually to be found on the tube which holds the lens. Details of the mechanism of stops vary with different makes of camera.

From this you will see that U.S. 4 is equal to F8 and so on.

The term F8 simply means that the diameter of the stop opening is one-eighth of the focal length of the camera, which is the length from front to back. When a single lens is used the focal length is measured from the back of the lens to the ground glass screen or plate; in the case of a double lens from the diaphragm between the two glasses. Thus if the focal length of your camera is 8 inches, and the diameter of the top stop opening is 1 inch you will know that that particular diameter of stop opening is F8 for your camera. If you haven't a scale of stops on your camera you can make your own in this way.

An important fact to remember in connection with either system of stops is that each stop needs twice or half the amount of exposure required by the stop next to it under identical conditions. For example, F8 will require half and F16 twice the amount required for F11.

To decide the size of stop that you will use you must consider the degree of sharpness desired in the negative, the state of the light, and the nature of the subject.

What is meant by degrees of sharpness is best explained by a diagram. In the scene depicted there are four planes or distances marked by a motor, a cyclist, a horse, and a hill. Without the use of stops it would be difficult to get all the planes of this picture sufficiently clear in the one negative.

If the camera is focused upon point A with the stop at F8 then planes B, C, and D would not be clear, but by using stop F11 plane B might also be made sharp, whilst with F16 or F22 planes C and D might also be sharpened.

The rule of focusing is to focus on the principal object with a large stop and then to change down to smaller stops until the remaining planes are of the degree of sharpness required. Sometimes, of course, you may wish to subdue the background in order to make the central figure more important.



A pleasing subject through an old-world archway.

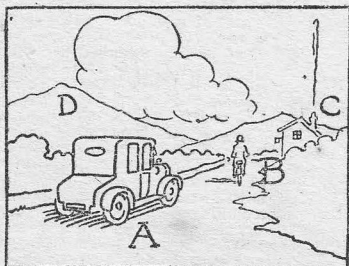
In conjunction with what is known as a "single" lens the diaphragm passes in front of the glass lens, whilst with the type known as the "double" lens (including Rectilinear and Anastigmat lenses) it is placed between the two glasses which form the lens.

Although the stop is but a small part of the camera it is nevertheless an extremely important one, and unless the principles of its use are thoroughly grasped at the outset the beginner will be unable to make much headway with his photography.

Three points to bear in mind about the use of stops are, that they lessen or increase the amount of light which passes through the lens in a given time; that the length of exposure required increases as the size of the stop aperture or opening decreases; that by decreasing the aperture a sharper and clearer image is often obtained.

There are two systems of numbering stops; the F system and the U.S. or Uniform system. Below is a comparative table.

U.S. numbers:	1	2	4	8	16	32	64	128
F.	11	8	5.6	4	2.8	2	1.4	1



A plan which simplifies the meaning and use of "stops."
THE POPULAR.—No. 315.

(Continued in next column.)

AN effective turbine engine can be made from two boot polish or similar tins with the help of a soldering bit and some scraps of metal and wood. One tin should fit inside the other and leave a space of half an inch or so all round it. The action of the motor is shown in the end view Fig. 1, the sections, Figs 2 and 4, and the plan Fig. 3.

A represents the larger tin, B the smaller and inner tin, C the blades attached to the inner tin, S the spindle to which the inner tin is attached, I is the steam inlet, O the outlet and U the metal supports for the large tin.

First of all the tins should be cleaned with emery cloth on the edges at least, and then the inside diameter of each carefully measured; these sizes are marked on a piece of paper so that circles can be drawn with a pair of compasses.

The circles are cut to the exact shape with scissors and placed inside the tins so that the centre of each portion can be accurately marked; the method being to make an indentation with a centre punch, or a carefully pointed large wire nail, so that it leaves a definite dent on the metal.

The next thing is to obtain a length of round steel wire or rod for the spindle, a four-inch wire nail will do, and then to find a drill of the same diameter. Holes are now drilled in each portion and if the marking and drilling has been done properly, both tins when closed will revolve freely on the spindles.

At least twelve blades must now be attached to the outside of the inner tin as at Fig. 5; these are first cut out of scrap tin from an empty tin as at Fig. 6, or made from sheet zinc as being less liable to rust. The best plan to adopt in soldering the blades to the rim is to first mark the position and cover the space as well as the flange with solder. The blades are fitted in position in turn and the soldering iron rested sufficiently on the top of the flange to allow the heat to melt

the solder underneath. pressure will be needed, but taken in removing the solder prevent movement.

When all the blades have the inner tin should be fitted the file being used to take sections which prevent the rotor as it is called, should be fitted each side to prevent sideways movement must be of either brass or thick enough, and besides and probably prevent free rotation.

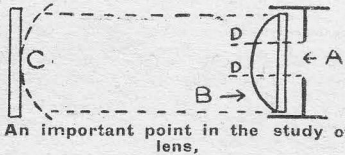
The inlet is about one-eighth inside diameter and can be short length of scrap tin wire nail and soldered up, the of the required size can be cheaply.

The outlet hole should be opposite to the inlet and the fill the inside of the larger tin of wood and drill suitable diameter being about a quarter diameter. Holes can be finished true with a small router is difficulty in drilling.

When the inside is complete portions of the outer tin soldered together with the position, and then the two shown separately at Fig. 7 either brass or stout tin.

The dimensions of the spindle matter very much, but the spindle should be accurately drilled. The supports should to a wooden base planed to size, but the base can be either boiler.

Two flywheels are fitted be a grooved pulley wheel so can be attached by an endless small working model such as A fairly heavy grooved pulley from two pennies, the in filed and the two coins soldered A similar method of joining



An important point in the study of lens.

If you use a fixed-focus camera you will find that the distances in your pictures are usually sharp enough, and that the stops are required to sharpen up the nearer planes.

With regard to the state of light it is obvious that on a very bright day more light will pass through the lens in a given time than on a dull day. Therefore, in a good light it is possible to stop down a little in order to give a longer exposure and so get better sharpness or definition. A point to note is that on a very bright day at the seaside the tendency is to over-expose. Supposing the shutter of your camera will not allow you to take pictures quicker than at one fiftieth part of a second then you may find that in the bright light of the seaside this is not quick enough. To avoid over-exposing your negatives you must therefore use a smaller stop and so cut off some of the light. You thus use your stops to increase the speed of the shutter.

On a dull day, of course, you want as much light as possible to enter the camera and so you use a large stop.

The nature of the subject affects the choice of stop because in photographing a moving object you will want as large an amount of light as possible to enter the camera in as short a time as possible so that you will need to use a larger stop than

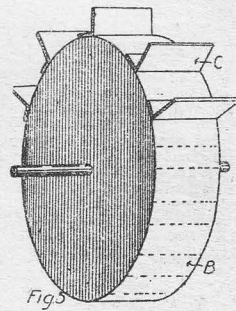


Fig. 5

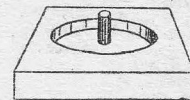


Fig. 6

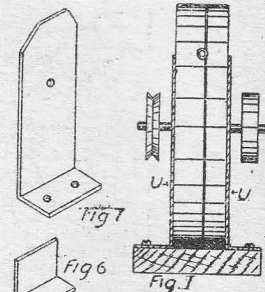


Fig. 7

Fig. 6

Fig. 1



Fig. 4

An effective turbine engine can be made from two boot p...

(Continued from previous column.)

if you were taking a motionless object under the same conditions.

An excellent method of studying the effect of stops is to make several exposures in a well-lighted room. Use a different stop for each exposure. From the negatives which result you will see the effect which the stops have on the sharpness of the various objects in the room, and also on the amount of light which enters the camera.

A further use of stops is to cheaper types of lenses. This you must know that most lenses, excepting corrected anastigmats is that the lens does not project accurately as the centre, curvature of the surface.

As you will see from the curved surface of the lens image in a curved formation focus is right for the centre

The Conjuror's Corner

By "The Wizard"

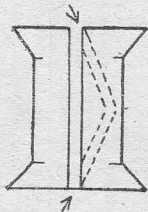
THE OBEDIENT REEL.

Obtain an empty cotton-reel and carefully remove the label from each end. Then place a piece of wire in the fire or the gas-ring until it is red-hot.

You have now to bore an extra hole through the reel as shown in the diagram. This will necessitate the re-heating of the wire several times, of course, but should not take many minutes.

Before facing the audience, paste on the labels again and thread a length of string through the extra tunnel in the reel. You can then display your wonderful power over it.

When you say "Fall, Jimmy!" the cotton-reel immediately begins to slide down the string. But the instant you say "Stop, Jimmy!" it does so.



The dotted line shows the angle the new hole is bored.

This you can repeat until the reel is at the bottom of the string, after which you have merely to hold it up the other way to let it slide in the opposite direction.

Finish up by saying: "There you are, ladies and gentlemen. No deception whatever!" Drawing out the string, you show that there is nothing faked about it. "Now, would any member of the audience like to have a try?"—as you thread the string through the original hole.

Of course, no one could do the trick now; so after one or two pals have had a try, you put the reel away and get on with the next item.

The secret is that when the string is pulled taut, the reel cannot slide. But as soon as you bring your hands closer together, it commences to fall.

"SOMETHING UP MY SLEEVE."

Of course there is never anything up a conjurer's sleeve—at least, so he says. But this is the exception that proves the rule.

Invite a wealthy member of your audience to drop a halfpenny up your sleeve. If no one will trust you with so large an amount, you must supply your own coin. Show that your hands are undoubtedly empty after you have dropped it, then shake your sleeve until the halfpenny reaches your elbow.

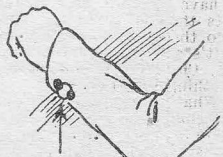
"I will now rub this coin completely through the cloth," you say.

Working your fingers over the cloth for about half a minute, you at last produce the coin and display it to the audience.

This trick solves another mystery. Do you know why tailors always sew a couple of buttons on your sleeve-cuffs? Undoubtedly, it is so that you can perform this stunt.

For just before the show you must press an extra halfpenny between those buttons, as shown in the sketch. Then, when the other coin is dropped, and you are shaking your sleeve to make it reach your elbow, you must surreptitiously remove the extra halfpenny and conceal it in your hand whilst rubbing the cloth.

That extra coin is the one you finally produce. The other you obtain later on when no one is looking.



COIN BETWEEN BUTTONS.

Note the coin placed between the buttons on the coat sleeve for the vanishing coin trick.

EXIT THE GLOVES!

Walk up to your table and calmly commence taking off your gloves. Make quite a show of it, so that everyone watches just what you are doing.

Having removed one glove, roll it between your hands, draw them apart—and then look thoroughly startled. For the glove has 'disappeared!' Being unable to find it, shrug your shoulders, remove the other glove, roll that between your hands—and then show that that also has gone!

Scratch your head in bewilderment, search the floor in vain, and then get on with the next trick, having said nothing about the vanished gloves!

The explanation is, that before the show two lengths of elastic must be fixed to the back of the waistcoat and one length carried down each sleeve of the coat and fixed to the glove.

Take care that the elastic is the right length in each case. It should just reach the glove when the arm is bent. When removing the gloves in front of the audience, therefore, keep the elbows bent until you wish a glove to vanish, then straighten your arm. Immediately the glove will shoot up your sleeve.

BAMKA—A native Indian state which had very crude type-set stamps from 1888 to 1894. They bear the words "Bamra Postage" in English, but the native printers frequently made mistakes in the spelling. There is a tiny scroll design, and the native inscriptions are in Orya characters.

BANGKOK—Before Siam had stamps of its own a British post-office at the capital, Bangkok, used Straits Settlements stamps overprinted with a large capital "B."

BARBADOS—The most windward of the West Indies—a British Colony. Finely engraved figures of Britannia appear on the early issues. In 1906 a set of stamps was issued to commemorate the centenary of Lord Nelson; it shows the local monument to Nelson. On the current stamps you see King George in a chariot drawn by seahorses.

BARBUDA—A minor dependency of Antigua in the Leeward Islands which had Leeward Island stamps overprinted "Barbuda" for a short period 1922-23.

BARWANI—Another native state of India which has only recently (1921) taken to issuing its own stamps. They have a "portrait" of the Rajah.

BATOU—A town and district on the Caspian Sea which was occupied by the British troops in 1919 and which about that time had locally produced stamps bearing a design of an aloe tree. Some of these were overprinted "British Occupation."

BAVARIA—One of the largest of the German states, and the first of them to issue postage stamps (Nov. 1st, 1849). The earliest bear large numerals, then came the familiar "arms" design which with modifications continued from 1867-1910. The post-war stamps of Bavaria include some freaks of modern art.

BAHAMAS—A British group of islands south-east of Florida. It is probable that it was on Watlings Island of this group that Columbus first landed in the New World. The first stamp design is a beautiful diademed profile of Queen Victoria, with small side panels showing a pineapple and a conch shell. A handsome stamp of later times shows a view of the "Queens Staircase," a remarkable flight of steps cut in the solid rock near Nassau, the capital.

BERMUDA had some quaint stamps of local manufacture for a few years from 1848, but little is known of them, and only a few specimens exist, which have sold for £280 to £580 each. They were made at Hamilton, the capital, by the postmaster, using his postmarking shop to strike the impressions. The Queen's head stamps came into use in September, 1865. In 1901 a "farthing" stamp, for local letters, was introduced, the farthing being surcharged on 1s., which

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The Stamp Collector

INTERESTING STAMP COUNTRIES!

was printed in slate-grey for this purpose. On later stamps you will see the Admiralty's wonderful floating dock, and a seveneenth-century ship with the cross of St. George at each masthead.

BEYROUT—Several foreign powers with postal agencies in Turkey issued stamps in this town. French Levant stamps and Russian Levants also exist with the name over-printed as "Beirut."

BHOPAL is an important state of India, ruled over by a woman, styled the Begum. The first stamps were issued in the reign of the Begum Shah Jahan in 1876, and her name is spelt out in English characters round the octagonal frame. Her successor Sultan Jahan's name appears on the stamps since 1901, and the letters in the four corners B. L. C. I. are supposed to mean Bhopal, Central India.

BHOR—Another Indian state which had two quaint stamps about 1879, one oval, the other square, with inscriptions in native characters. Then we heard nothing more of Bhore stamps until 1901, when a 4-anna red stamp was issued bearing a portrait of the native ruler.

BOGOTA is the federal capital of Colombia. In 1889 a 4-centavo black stamp with the city's arms on it was issued for postal use on newspapers, and in 1903 a similar stamp, but black on rose-coloured paper, value 10 centavos was issued. The inscription "Corres Urbano de Bogota" means "town post of Bogota."

BOLIVAR is a department of Colombia, at one time a sovereign state. It must not be confused with the republic of Bolivia, though each derives its name from the famous "liberator" of South America, Simon Bolivar. Most of the Bolivar stamps show the portrait of "El Libertador."

BOLIVIA—This independent republic of South America issued stamps first in 1867, and these, with the fine engraving of a Condor, are still fairly accessible in the 5c. denomination. A more elaborate design in 1868 shows the Arms with 9 stars below. Note the stars carefully, for there were only 9 states in Bolivia then, but shortly afterwards we find the stamps similar in design, but with 11 stars, denoting the addition of two states. Chili and Peru, however, squabbled with Bolivia over these additions, and took them from her, so history repeats itself on the 1887 (11 stars) and 1890 (9 stars) issues. There are some fine portraits on the later issues of this country.



'THE RETURN OF PARKER!'

(Continued from page 12.)

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. Somebody Nabbed!

CUTTS, Parker, and Mellish were a very ill-assorted trio. Mellish was in a blue funk, Parker in a state of depression, and even Cutts none too cheery. It was hardly worth while, after all, to take so much trouble just to have the pleasure of rooking Parker, Cutts thought. But, like Parker, he meant to go through with it.

"It's a silly trick to wear that light overcoat, Chubby," growled Cutts, who wanted something to grumble about.

"What does it matter? In this gloom a light coat does not show up any more than a dark one.

Messrs. Smiler and Rusty, warned by Mellish's traitorous message, watched the three steal into the yard of the Green Man. The light of a passing motor-car chanced to show up Parker's light coat rather conspicuously.

"We'll know our bloomin' bird by 'is fancy overcoat," whispered Smiler to Rusty.

Parker did not find the Green Man at all to his liking. Host Joliffe was bad enough; but Banks, the bookie, over on one of his frequent visits, and Crooke's friend, Lodgey, struck Parker as the absolute limit. He could not understand Cutts suffering their familiarity, though, as a matter of fact, they were far more deferential to Cutts than they were accustomed to be to their junior patrons.

They played billiards on a very lumpy table, and Cutts was surprised to find that the fellow who had been brought out to be rooked was more than a match for him.

They smoked, of course. Parker refused the Green Man cigars, but smoked more than one cigarette. He did not appear to be upset. On the other hand, Mellish not only appeared to be, but most distinctly was.

And at last Parker expressed an emphatic opinion to the effect that it was time they were getting back. Cutts agreed sulkily. It had been wasted time for Cutts. Mellish said nothing. He was trembling like an aspen leaf, and sick with smoke and fear.

Their coats hung in a dark, smelly little passage. Mellish, first, seized a coat and dragged it on without looking at it. When they got outside, Parker noticed that it was his coat Mellish had donned, while he was wearing Mellish's old raincoat. But he said nothing, as it chanced. They could not stop there to exchange.

They were a hundred yards or so from the village when they saw a market-cart standing in the road, seemingly unattended.

"Somebody's lost it," said Cutts. "It—Look out—"

Out of the gloom sprang two men. One of them struck savagely at Cutts with the butt of a cart-whip.

Cutts dodged the blow, and bolted. He did not want to be recognised, and, of course, he knew nothing at all about the danger to Parker.

Rusty seized Mellish, taking him for Parker, and clapped a sack over his head before he could cry out. He stuffed the corner of the sack into Mellish's mouth without compunction. There was nothing half-hearted about the methods of Rusty.

Parker went for Smiler like a lion. But Smiler tripped him up, and hurled him into the hedge.

Mellish was now enveloped in a pig-net, and bundled unceremoniously into the cart.

Before Parker had time to scramble out of the hedge, the two rascals were in the cart, and Rusty was plying the whip fiercely. Parker yelled for help. But he only shouted once; and when Tom Merry, Figgins, and Talbot came rushing up from their post a short distance away, he seemed quite cool and composed.

Kerr and his squad came up at a run. But when they reached the rest, it looked as though nothing had happened, for at first they failed to notice that there were but eight where nine should have been.

Parker was in the midst of the group. They could hear his voice.

Kerr was the first to note the absence of Mellish.

"I say, though, where's that rotter, Mellish?" he asked.

"In the cart," replied Parker coolly. "I am not sure that he was really wanted. But he had put on my overcoat by mistake,

so it is possible they have mistaken him for me. On the other hand, there does not seem any particular reason why they should want me, does there? They are certainly not friends of mine.

"We know that," said Talbot quietly. "They are enemies. That's why we came along."

"It strikes me," returned Parker, "that you fellows know a great deal more than I can tell you."

"No," said Lowther; "but we know a great deal more than you have told us!"

"That is evident. But before we discuss the matter further—"

"It's no use thinking of discussing anything till we have got that outsider, Mellish, back," said Tom.

"Be quite easy in mind about Mellish. I am sure that nothing will be done to him beyond the infliction of some bodily pain; and that he well deserves. Unless I am very far astray in my suspicions, the kidnapping gentlemen are by way of being friends of Mellish, though they are scarcely likely to treat him in very friendly fashion after their mistake."

"Do you mean that Mellish has been helping them? I say, Parker, that's pretty hot, you know!" cried Tom. "If he did a thing like that—"

"Even that isn't the question," put in Blake. "The question is, what are we going to do about it?"

"I should suggest that Mellish should be left to find his way back, like the character in the nursery rhyme—or was it the sheep?"

Parker's coolness annoyed them all. All except Talbot, that is.

"It's quite hopeless," said Talbot. "That cart will be a mile or two away by this time. I am inclined to think, as Parker does, that nothing very dreadful will happen to him. It was Parker they wanted; they have no use for Mellish. They may give him a good hiding before he's let go, but that will be the worst of it."

"But what did they want Parker for?" asked Herries.

"That Parker can explain a good deal better than I can," said Talbot.

"Expound, Pignacious!" said Lowther. But Parker turned to Tom Merry, and asked sharply:

"Why are you all out here at this time of night?"

"I had an anonymous letter, saying that you were in grave danger, and these fellows agreed to come along with me to give a hand," said Tom.

"I am very much obliged to you all. I hope that if I have given any of you reason to dislike me, you will accept my sincere apology for such offence given. Some time later I may explain all this; but at present I—"

"Between me and you, Parker, it won't take so much explaining as you may fancy," said Tom Merry bluntly. "After I got that warning some of us did a thing that isn't much in our line—we broke promises!"

Then they told him how much they knew of his secret, and that they knew he was Parker-Roberts, of the "Messenger."

"I am not going to deny it," Parker said coolly. "You fellows shall hear the whole story, but not here. Mellish will find his way back to the school, no doubt. Do you not think we had better return now?"

"What beats me is—who sent that warning?" said Figgins, as they made their way back.

"I do not know. But I strongly suspect Mellish," replied Parker.

"But how could he know anything about it?" objected Herries.

"There, again, I do not know, but I suspect him of having entangled himself with those scoundrels, who carried him off. Then, no doubt, he got frightened, and paid you fellows the compliment of leaving you to put right what he had put wrong."

"Mellish is a rotter," said Digby. "But—well, that's pretty steep, you know, Parker."

"I admit that it is—er—pretty steep, Digby. But you will find that I am justified, I believe."

"If it's true, it means the sack for him," Tom said.

"Why should it?"

"Do you mean that you'll keep it dark?" asked Jack Blake.

"I should certainly prefer to keep it dark, for many reasons. And I should also prefer Mellish to have another chance. I do not think he will ever be a credit to St. Jim's

but I should be sorry if I had anything to do with his being cast out."

There was silence for a minute or two after that little speech. Not a fellow there but felt more kindly disposed to Parker because of it, and more ready to believe that he was right about Mellish because his suspicions were so evidently not prompted by any ill-feeling.

Then Manners broke the silence with these words:

"You're a brick, Pignacious!" "I may or may not be—er—a brick, but my name is certainly not Pignacious," replied Parker dryly.

They got back to the school without difficulty and without detection. They saw nothing of Cutts. That worthy had betaken himself to bed, doubtless.

But they did not go to bed. It was no use thinking of it till Mellish came back. Rotter as he was, they were anxious about him.

"We can't wait in this hole," said Tom Merry, as they paused in the box-room. "Better take it in turns here; two will be enough. The rest of us can go to our study. I dare say the fire isn't quite out yet, and if it is we can relight it."

Manners and Gussy volunteered for the first half-hour, and the rest sat in the gloom of No. 10, with no light save that of a sulky fire, talking in whispers. They learned something then of why Parker had really come to St. Jim's; and of his feud with the Big Boss, the unscrupulous scoundrel who had sent down Smiler and Rusty to dog him; and of his early days, so different from theirs, which had shaped him into something very unlike them, and yet, as they saw, into a man, too, and a plucky, cool-headed man.

After a bit Digby and Kerr, very loath to go and leave Parker still discoursing of things they would hear only at second-hand, relieved the first two watchers.

And still Mellish did not come.

One or two fellows dozed off from time to time in sheer weariness. But no one would go to bed. They were all getting very worried; even Parker admitted that he did not like it.

But just at this moment Blake and Lowther came in, and between them walked the miserable Mellish.

He was coated with mud, and had evidently been rolled in it. His eyes were wild with pain and fear. His face looked like an old man's in its haggard woe.

That he had been through it there could be no manner of doubt.

He was even too utterly dispirited to lie. He blurted out the whole wretched story, admitted everything, and appeared to have resigned himself to the notion that he had done for himself at St. Jim's once for all.

When he learned that there was yet another chance for him he bucked up a little, and managed to tell what had happened to him—how he had been taken off, rolled up in the pig-net, and driven some distance along a road he did not know in the gloom to a small, lonely cottage; how his captors had found that they had not secured Parker-Roberts, after all, and had taken it out of him for their disappointment, thrashing him, rolling him in the mud, and finally leaving him to find his way home alone along the dark roads; and of his miserable, hopeless trudge, with nothing before him but the last disgrace of expulsion!

Parker came out in a new light then. Of them all, it was Parker who was least down upon the wretched young rascal. It was Parker who took him up to the bath-room, and helped him to get decent—outwardly, at least—and saw him into bed.

Parker went, of course. St. Jim's was no place for him now that more than a dozen fellows knew his true identity.

But he went with flying colours. He had it out with the Head and Mr. Railton like a man, accepted meekly their reproaches for the deceit he had practised, and gladly their forgiveness, and left them good friends.

"We shall be pleased to see you again as a visitor, Mr. Parker-Roberts!" said the Head.

"Say, rather, as an old boy, sir," said Victor Railton, smiling.

"I should be pleased and proud to come back in that capacity, gentlemen!" said Parker-Roberts.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's grand St. Jim's tale.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 315.

THE BOY FROM AMERICA!

A lively stranger strays from the land of the Skyscrapers into the Backwoods of Canada, and the stir he causes at Cedar Creek brings trouble for several of the chums!



A Rollicking, Long, Complete Story of FRANK RICHARDS & CO., the cheery chums of the Lumber School of the Canadian Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Pilgrim and a Stranger!

"S A-AY!" That ejaculation, with a strong nasal accent, caught the ears of Frank Richards & Co. as they trotted up the trail towards Cedar Creek School one fine morning.

The three chums pulled in their horses at once.

From the cedars and larches beside the trail a youth of about their own age had emerged, and he was holding up a bony hand as a signal for them to stop.

The chums of Cedar Creek regarded him rather curiously.

He was a stranger to them, and apparently a newcomer in the Thompson Valley, and they rather wondered how he came to be wandering alone in the almost trackless timber.

"Hold on, bub!" continued the youth, coming out into the trail.

"Well, we're holding on," said Bob Lawless good-naturedly. "What's the trouble? Buck up! We're late!"

They were cutting the alfalfa on the Lawless Ranch, and Frank Richards & Co. had been helping.

Miss Meadows had allowed them an hour's leave; but the hour was up, and they were anxious to get to school.

"I reckon I'm looking for a trail," said the youthful stranger.

"Well, you've found one," said Vere Beauclerc. "Is this the one you want? Where are you going?"

"Cedar Creek."

"The school?" asked Frank Richards, with interest.

"Yep."

That reply increased the interest of the Co. in the young stranger. Apparently it was a new schoolfellow whom they had found wandering in the timber.

"Some sort of a one-horse backwoods school, I guess, strewed about hyer somewhere," continued the youth. "There don't seem to be a guide-post in all this benighted country! I'm from Chicawgo!"

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"Walked from there this morning?" asked Frank innocently.

The youth stared at him.

He was a very sharp-looking youth, with keen eyes and pointed features, but it did not seem to dawn upon him that the Cedar Creek schoolboy was pulling his leg.

"I guess not!" he answered. "Don't you know Chicawgo is over a thousand miles from here?"

"Then you must have ridden?"

"Oh, come off! You can't take a rise out of B. H. Honk!" said the youth derisively. "That's me, you know!"

"Honk!" repeated Frank. "Is that your name?"

"I guess so. Bunker Hill Honk," explained the youth. "Named after Bunker Hill, where we whipped you Britishers!"

This polite speech earned him a rather grim stare from the Cedar Creek fellows.

"Where you whatted?" ejaculated Frank. "In our history-books the whipping was the other way round."

Master Honk nodded.

"Very likely," he assented. "But we get the facts, you know. But what I want to know is, where is that pesky, goldarned, one-hoss backwoods school? I left Thompson Town nearly two hours ago, and I haven't lit on it yet!"

"You missed the trail, then, and it runs straight enough from Thompson to Cedar Creek," said Bob.

"I guess I was taking a short cut!"

"And lost yourself!" said Frank, with a smile.

"I guess I may have gone round a bit," said Master Honk cautiously, evidently unwilling to admit that he had lost himself. "Of all the benighted, one-horse countries, give me Canada! I guess this country was the leavings after the States was made! Here am I—"

Bob Lawless set his horse in motion again.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said. "I'm not enjoying this polished conversation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank and Beauclerc followed Bob, leaving B. H. Honk standing in the trail staring after them.

The American youth broke into a run in pursuit.

"Hyer, sa-ay!" he shouted. "You haven't told me the way to Cedar Creek!"

"Better tell him, Bob," murmured Frank.

Bob Lawless gave a grunt. Bunker Honk's remarks on Canada had not pleased him.

"Oh, I'll tell him!" he answered.

He checked his horse and glanced round at the panting Honk.

"You want the trail to Cedar Creek?"

"Yep!" gasped Honk.

"Turn round and keep straight on!"

"Waal—"

"Keep right on, and you'll reach the school in time," said Bob. "It's rather a long way."

And Bob Lawless rode on with his chums.

Master Honk, without troubling to thank him for his information, turned in the trail and tramped away.

"Bob!" exclaimed Frank.

Bob Lawless shrugged his shoulders.

"I've given him the straight tip," he answered. "That's the way to Cedar Creek, if he keeps on far enough. I've told him it's a long way, and so it is—about twenty-five thousand miles that way. He will have to walk through the States and Mexico and South America, and swim the Pacific, and walk over the South Pole—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And by the time he's done that he may have learned that it's a good stunt to be civil when asking favours of strangers," said Bob. "He's lucky to get off without a licking for his cheek. Come on!"

Frank Richards glanced back rather remorsefully, to see Bunker Honk disappearing in the distance, en route for the South Pole, apparently. But Bob was determined that the youth from Chicawgo should have his lesson, and it was not for Frank to interfere.

Ten minutes later the chums arrived at Cedar Creek School, and joined Miss Meadows' class at lessons.

Lessons that morning were not interrupted by the arrival of Bunker Honk.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The New Boy.

THERE'S a new chum coming to Cedar Creek."

Chunky Todgers afforded that information to Frank Richards & Co. as they came out of the lumber school after dinner.

The chums smiled. Chunky prided himself on being first in the field with any news that was going, but on this occasion, at least, his news was known beforehand, owing to the meeting on the trail.

"Name of Honk," continued Todgers. "Galoot with a knife-blade nose, and an accent you could chop with a lumberman's axe. I saw him yesterday in Gunten's store. He's the son of old Honk."

"Who's old Honk?" inquired Frank Richards

The Co. were rather curious to know how the Honk family came to be located in the Thompson Valley.

"You know, they've found gold on the Hopkins' clearing," said Chunky. "Old Isaacs is taking it up, you know, and he's sent for an engineer from the States. That's the man Honk. He's brought this specimen with him, and he's sending him to school at Cedar Creek. I didn't think much of the galoot myself—too nosy, and too all there. He says that Thompson is way behind the littlest township in the back blocks of Arkansas."

"Does he?" growled Bob.

"He ought to have been here this morning, according to what he told me," said Todgers. "I shouldn't wonder if he missed the trail."

"I shouldn't wonder!" agreed Bob, with a grin.

"Hallo! There's the galoot!" exclaimed Chunky, with a jerk of his fat thumb towards the gates.

B. H. Honk was coming in.

He looked dusty and tired, which was not surprising, as he had been on the tramp all the morning.

His thin face was very red with exertion and warmth, and his hat and clothes were plentifully besprinkled with dust and cottonwood flowers.

A good many glances were turned upon him as he came into the playground from the trail. He called out to Harold Hopkins, who happened to be standing near the gates.

"This hyer Cedar Creek School?"

"That's it!" answered Hopkins.

"Oh gum! What a show!"

With that disparaging remark, Bunker Honk tramped on across the playground towards the lumber schoolhouse, leaving Hopkins staring.

He started a little as he came up with Frank Richards & Co., evidently recognising them at once.

"You galoots hyer?" he ejaculated. "Yes. We belong to Cedar Creek," said Frank, with a smile.

Bunker H. Honk pointed a bony forefinger at Bob Lawless.

"Why didn't you put me wise on the trail?" he demanded.

"But I did," said Bob. "You only had to keep straight on."

"I met a cattleman, and he told me I was going in the opposite direction from this hyer shebang," hooted Honk.

"You only had to keep on. I told you it was a long way. You just had to walk round the earth—"

"Hay?"

"Nothing much for a bright galoot like you," said Bob. "I should have expected you to do it in about three hours, and come up smiling."

"Say, I call that playing it low down!" said Honk. "I guess I've a mind to whip you!"

"Go ahead!" said Bob cheerfully. "If you can whip one side of me it will be a surprise. You're welcome to try."

"I guess I could make shavings of you if I got my mad up!" said Honk impressively.

"You'd better keep your mad down, in that case," said Frank Richards, laughing. "Get in before the dinner's all cleared off, and you may bag something to eat. You must be hungry."

"I guess I could polish off a seventy-five cent do in a chop-suey joint," said Honk.

"Translate, Bob," said Frank Richards.

But Bob Lawless shook his head. This was a variety of the American language that was beyond even his powers.

"You don't know what a chop-suey joint is?" asked Honk derisively.

"Where was you brought up? Where was you raised? But where's that grub? I'm hungry!"

"In the school-house."

Honk looked round. "Waal, p'int out the school-house," he said. "If there's a school-house, p'int it out."

"There it is!"

"That shed?" asked Honk, staring at the lumber-built house in surprise and disdain.

"Yes, that shed, as you call it," said Frank. "And the grub will be gone if you don't buck up!"

"That lets me out!" said Honk.

And he scuttled into the porch. And a minute later his shrill, acid voice was heard in argument with Black Sally.

"The dear boy!" murmured Beauclere. "I think I can foresee some trouble for that merchant at Cedar Creek if his manners don't improve."

"If they don't improve, he'll get them improved for him!" growled Bob Lawless. "Why the thump couldn't he stay on his own side of the line?"

Honk's argument with Black Sally, apparently, turned out in his favour, for he stayed in the dining-room to a late dinner.

He came out presently, picking his teeth with a pine-chip, and came towards Frank Richards & Co.; but the Co. strolled away before he could join them. They were "fed" with the society of Bunker H. Honk.

Miss Meadows called him into her sitting-room, no doubt to inquire why he had not arrived earlier; and a few minutes later Bob Lawless was called in by the Canadian schoolmistress.

Frank and Beauclere waited rather anxiously for Bob to emerge. They were not at all sure what view Miss Meadows might take of the little trick he had played on the stranger from afar.

Bob's face was flushed as he came out. "The pesky scallywag!" was his first remark.

"Trouble?" asked Frank.

"I've had five minutes' steady chin-wag," said Bob. "That pesky jay spun Miss Meadows the whole yarn. She thinks I oughtn't to have sent the scallywag astray."

"Well, you know—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob crossly. "I've a jolly good mind to collar him now, and put his head under the pump."

"I guess you couldn't do it!"

It was Honk's voice, at his elbow, and the rancher's son spun round, with a very grim look on his face.

"I guess we'll see about that!" he said.

Honk backed away a pace or two.

"Keep your wool on," he said soothingly. "I don't want to hurt you, but don't you try to take a rise out of me again, or there will be thunder, I can tell you."

"You pesky mugwump!" growled Bob. "I believe you'd crack in two if I hit you!"

"I guess—"

"There's the bell!" said Frank hastily.

The school bell put an end to the altercation, and Frank dragged his Canadian cousin into the school-house.

"Just in time to save your bacon, I guess!" said Honk.

Bob stopped.

"Let me go, Frank—"

"Rats! Come on!" answered Frank. "He isn't worth punching! Get a move on, and don't be an ass, old chap!"

And he piloted Bob into the school-room, where the rest of Cedar Creek followed; and the new chum from Chicago took his place in Miss Meadows' class.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Heathen's Way.

BUNKER HILL HONK attracted a good deal of attention on his first day at Cedar Creek.

It was clear at a glance that Master Honk prided himself upon being a very spry fellow, "all there," and up to every move in the game. He was willing to confide to everybody that he guessed he had cut his eye-teeth in Chicago, and that there was very little any galoot could teach him in a way-back, mislaid, back-number country like Canada. He had a delightful candour in expressing his opinion upon his surroundings. His firm conviction was that in his native city he had learned pretty nearly all that was to be learned; but polite manners, evidently, had not been in the curriculum.

But Master Honk had no use for polite manners. He could not figure out their value in dollars and cents, and, therefore, they had no value in his sharp eyes.

Such a youth was not likely to be popular among the cheery young Canadians, but Honk did not seem to mind that. Perhaps he had no use for popularity.

He affected an amused disdain for the class work in Miss Meadows' class, and informed Frank Richards that he could do it on his head, with his eyes shut.

It was noticeable, however, that he did not distinguish himself in class, and he was unfortunate enough to give Miss Meadows the impression that he was a backward pupil.

Frank Richards rushed his Canadian cousin away after lessons, to avoid a collision with Master Honk. He had no fears for Bob in the event of an encounter, but he did not want to see the rancher's son punching the newcomer on the first day at school. Bob demurred, but gave in; he had taken a considerable dislike to Master Honk, but he was a peaceable fellow, and willing to avoid trouble.

The three chums rode away from Cedar Creek immediately lessons were over, therefore; and Master Honk, who spotted them ride away, grinned—the grin of complete misunderstanding.

"I guess that galoot knows what's good for his health," he remarked to Chunky Todgers, jerking a bony thumb after Bob as the chums disappeared on the trail.

Chunky gave him a glance of great disdain.

"Do you think Bob Lawless is clearing off to keep away from you, you jay?" was his answer.

Honk nodded.

"Correct!" he replied.

"I'll tell him to-morrow!" growled Chunky.

"Do! And if you get his dander up, you'll see me make shavings of him," said Honk cheerily.

Whereat Chunky Todgers sniffed scornfully, and walked away to his fat pony.

Bunker Honk had to walk home to Thompson, not being the possessor of a horse. Several other fellows were walking, and Honk bestowed the pleasure of his company upon them; but that pleasure seemed to pull, for they increased their speed, and soon-left him behind. Little Yen Chin, the Chinese, was the last left, and he was the recipient of an incessant stream of talk from Master Honk, whose chin, apparently, had been developed by much activity, and never seemed to tire. When the little Celestial would have followed the example of the other fellows who had gone on, Honk took him by the pigtail.

"Not so fast, heathen," he said.

"You're leaving me behind."

"You walky faster," suggested Yen Chin.

"Nope!"

"No can?" remarked Yen Chin.

"I guess I could walk any galoot in Canada off his legs," said Honk disdainfully. "But I ain't going to. You keep pace, young 'un. I'll pull your pig tail if you go ahead—like that! You see, I want you to show me the trail."

"Chinese no wantee."

"I guess that cuts no ice with me," answered Honk coolly. "I guess it's what I want that goes some!"

Yen Chin blinked at him with his almond eyes.

"You no letty go lil' Chinese?" he asked.

"Nope!"

"You makee me walky?"

"Yep!"

"Allee light. Me walky."

And Yen Chin trotted on serenely, and Bunker Honk grinned and accompanied him. At the Hillcrest fork on the trail, Yen Chin turned the corner, and Honk turned in with him, quite unconscious of the fact that he was now tramping away from his destination. They passed Hillcrest, and turned along by the creek, leaving Thompson two or three miles behind.

"I guess it's a pesky long way to the town," said Honk, at last, irritably. "I s'pose you know the way?"

"Me knowey."

"Isn't it about time we sighted Thompson, then?"

"Walky on. Soon see."

"What a one-horse country!" growled Honk. "I guess I ain't going to leg it like this every day, and I'll tell popper so, just a few! Hallo! Where are you off to, you yellow image?"

Yen Chin did not reply.

Having led Honk three miles out of his way, the little Celestial made a sudden dart into the trees and vanished. Honk rushed after him.

But it was quite easy for the little Chinese to elude him in the timber. His voice came back from the distance:

"Melican boy gleet fool! You lost! Gleet fool!"

That was Yen Chin's farewell.

"Oh Jerusalem!" gasped Honk.

No further sound was heard from Yen Chin, who was evidently scudding away

home by paths through the timber known to him, but utterly unknown to the youth from Chicago.

It was up to Honk to find a way, but for such a bright youth he was not very successful.

He found "blazed" trees in the wood, evidently a guide to somewhere, but they were no guide to him. He almost succeeded in losing himself in the timber, but fortunately got back to the bank of the creek as the twilight was falling.

He could do nothing but follow the creek to its junction with the Thompson River, which landed him among the diggings.

By that time it was full night, and Honk was tired out; but he had still some distance to go to reach the town.

He arrived home at last, footsore and weary, and vowing deadly vengeance upon Yen Chin. It was his second long tramp that day, and the second time his leg had been pulled, which ought to have raised doubts in his mind as to whether he really was quite so bright as he supposed, but didn't.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bound Over to Keep the Peace!

CHUNKY TODGERS made it a point to pounce upon Bob Lawless when Frank Richards & Co. arrived at school the next morning. It would have been more judicious on Chunky's part to leave unreported Master Honk's boastful remarks; but Chunky was not judicious. Moreover, he was quite anxious to see Bunker Hill Honk taken down a peg or two. So he reported Master Honk's remarks in full, and even with some little trimmings of his own, and had the satisfaction of seeing Bob's brow grow dark and grim.

"I guess that galoot won't be happy till he gets it," said Bob. "A jolly good hiding will do him good!"

"Bosh!" said Frank Richards. "You don't want to wallop a new kid, Bob. Give him time to shake down and learn a little sense."

"You heard what Chunky says, and if—"

"Chunky's a silly ass!" said Frank.

"Look here—" began Chunky.

"Fathead!" interrupted Frank Richards. "What do you want to repeat all that duffer's gas for?"

"I guess I want to see him licked," said Chunky Todgers warmly. "Isn't he asking for it—turning up his nose at our school, and talking out of the back of his neck all the time?"

"Let him!"

"I don't see letting him!" growled Bob Lawless. "The galoot puts my back up!"

"Well, you pulled his leg yesterday," said Frank. "It was really rather a rough joke on a stranger."

"Rot!"

"Thanks!" said Frank Richards, laughing. "But it was, you know—sending him tramping off with his back to Cedar Creek."

"Didn't he ask for it?" grunted Bob.

"Well, yes; but kids mustn't be given everything they ask for, you know. Let him alone, anyhow."

"Am I going to let him grow over me, and say that I'm keeping clear of him?" exclaimed Bob wrathfully.

"Why not? He doesn't matter."

"Not a little bit," concurred Beaulere. "Don't play the goat, Bob. The silly fellow is only making himself ridiculous. Everybody knows you could knock him out with one thump."

"That's all very well."

"I don't see—" began Chunky Todgers.

"You ring off!" said Frank. "Now,

look here, Bob, young Honk is a new kid here, and there's such a thing as Canadian hospitality. You're not going to rag with him to-day. Promise!"

"Rats!"

"Then we'll hold your head under the pump till you do," said Frank Richards.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Bob Lawless. "If you like, I'll agree not to touch the pesky jay to-day; but if he doesn't keep clear of me I'll give him the licking of his life to-morrow!"

"Done!" said Frank.

And that agreement having been arrived at, the chums of Cedar Creek went into the school-room, where Bunker Honk arrived very late. He was gently reprimanded by Miss Meadows, who was lenient with him as a new boy. Master Honk was still feeling the effects of the unusual amount of walking he had put in the previous day. He gave Yen Chin several menacing looks in class, and the little Chinese eyed him very warily when the school was dismissed, and attached himself to Frank Richards.

Honk bore down upon them in the playground, and Yen Chin promptly placed Frank between himself and the youth from Illinois.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Frank Richards, pushing Honk back as he made a clutch at the heathen.

"That pigtailed jay led me astray in the timber yesterday," breathed Honk. "I'm going to strew him around in little pieces! You hear me wop!"

"Yen Chin, you young rascal—"

"Pool lill' Chinese no wantee walky with Melican boy!" explained the Celestial. "Honk takee pigtail, makee me walky—no wantee!"

"I guess I wanted the heathen to show me the way home," explained Honk. "Now, you slide, Richards, and leave me—"

"Not quite," said Frank coolly. "You had no right to interfere with Yen Chin; and if he fooled you, it serves you right."

"I'm going to wallop him!" roared Honk.

"Go ahead! But you'll have to wallop me first."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "Who's quarrelling with the new kid now, Franky?"

Frank Richards coloured.

After his homilies to his Canadian cousin, it was rather awkward to be placed in his present position. But he did not intend to see the smallest boy at Cedar Creek roughly handled by Bunker H. Honk.

"I guess I'm waiting for you to shift, Richards," said Honk menacingly.

"You can wait!" snapped Frank.

"Why don't you shift him, Honk?" inquired Chunky Todgers sarcastically.

Bunker Honk looked over Frank with a very keen eye, as if weighing up his chances. But he evidently decided it was wiser not to attempt the shifting operation.

"The heathen'll keep," he said.

And with that he walked away.

"If you bother Yen Chin, you'll have to deal with me—remember that!" said Frank.

Honk did not appear to hear that remark; but he did not appear to forget all about Yen Chin's offence, for he made it a point to ignore the little Celestial afterwards.

In fact, Master Honk was almost subdued for a short time, doubtless realising that he had had a narrow escape from an encounter that might have proved disastrous to him.

But after dinner he recovered all his inflation.

Bob Lawless was leaning on the school-house porch when Honk came by, and the rancher's son detached himself at once from the porch, and walked away.

Honk stared after him.

Bob was mindful of the promise he had made his chum to let that day pass without trouble with the new boy; but Honk was not aware of that little circumstance.

All he saw was that the sturdy Canadian schoolboy was deliberately avoiding him, and that he attributed to only one reason.

Bob sat down on the wood-pile at a distance, and Bunker H. Honk followed him there, with a grim countenance.

Bob Lawless walked away before he came up, however.

"Hyer, you hold on!" Honk shouted after him. "I guess I want to speak to you."

"Go and eat coke!" was Bob's reply, over his shoulder.

"Stop, I tell you!"

Bob Lawless walked on across the playground. Honk broke into a run after him, and caught him by the shoulder.

Bob stopped then.

He turned on his pursuer, with a gleam in his eyes that made Bunker Honk let go his shoulder as if it had become suddenly red-hot.

"Well?" snapped Bob. "Do you want me to wipe up the playground with you, you silly jay?"

"I guess it would take about six galoots of your heft to do that!" retorted Honk derisively.

"Then I'll—"

Bob stopped suddenly, remembering his undertaking.

Instead of advancing upon Bunker H. Honk, he turned quickly on his heel, and hurried away towards the schoolhouse.

Honk's first feeling, as he turned, was one of deep relief; his next, of triumph. He trotted after the Canadian schoolboy.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "I guess I'm after your scalp. I reckon I'm going to make shavings of you!"

Bob, with his cheeks crimson, quickened his pace.

Honk broke into a run. He overtook the Canadian schoolboy at the porch, just as Miss Meadows stepped out, with a severe frown upon her brow.

"Honk!" she rapped out.

"Yep, marm?"

"Are you quarrelling with Lawless?"

"I guess—"

"Let there be no more of this!" exclaimed Miss Meadows severely.

Honk bestowed a derisive grin upon Bob Lawless.

"Oh, all right, marm!" he said. "I guess what you says goes, marm. I'll let the poor cuss off!"

And he strolled away, with his thin, sharp nose high in the air, feeling extremely satisfied with himself.

Miss Meadows gave Bob a rather curious look as she went back into the house. Bob's cheeks were crimson as he joined his chums a little later.

"Do you want to have to get a new nose, Frank?" he asked.

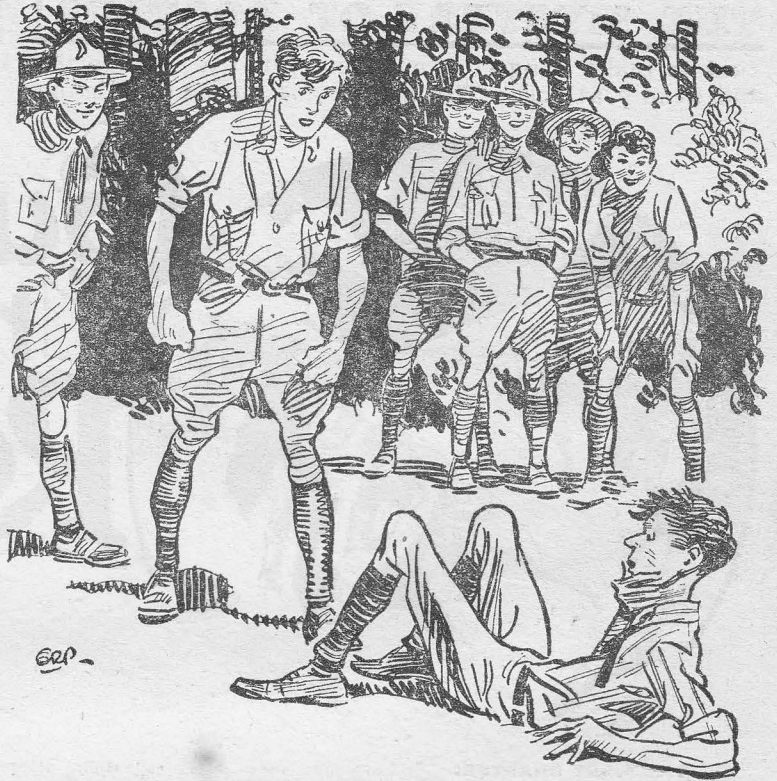
"Eh? No. Why?" ejaculated Frank, astonished by the question.

"You'll need one if you chip in again between me and that galoot!" said Bob in a deep growl. "I hope I shall be able to keep my hands off him till to-morrow. But then—"

"My dear chap—"

"E-r-r-r-r!"

Bob Lawless found comfort in thinking of the sorrow, when Master Honk was to be brought to book.



KNOCKING OUT THE SWANK! Honk sat down in the grass heavily. "Oh, Jerusalem!" he gasped. "I guess I'm done!" Bob Lawless stared down at him. "Done!" he exclaimed. "What the thump do you mean? You haven't started yet!" (See Chapter 5.)

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Something Like a Fight!

NOW, Bob!"
"Rats!"
"Peace is the word, old chap!" said Beauclere.

"Bosh!"

It was the following morning, and the chums were going into lessons.

Bunker H. Honk had arrived, and he gave Bob Lawless a lofty and derisive grin as he saw him in the crowd of schoolboys.

That grin would probably have cost Master Honk dear but for Frank and Beauclere, who hurried Bob on into the school-room.

Bob Lawless breathed hard as he dropped into his seat.

"After lessons—" he murmured.

"Well, if he chivvies you after lessons you can go for him," said Frank. "But let him begin."

"Oh, all right to that!" growled Bob.

Bunker H. Honk passed Bob on his way to his form. He carelessly flicked Bob's ear as he passed, and Bob was so astonished that he sat and blinked after him blankly. When it dawned upon him that the new fellow had flicked his ear intentionally Bob jumped up with fury in his face. But just then the voice of Miss Meadows was heard:

"Sit down!"

Even the schoolmistress' voice would hardly have restrained the enraged Bob at that moment; but Frank Richards grasped his arm and pulled him down on the form.

"Quiet, now, Bob!" he whispered.

"You—you—" stuttered Bob.

"I saw him. You can knock him into

small pieces presently. Quiet, now, kid!"

Bob Lawless nodded, controlling himself with a great effort.

Morning lessons seemed very long to him that day, and almost as long to his chums. All Frank Richards' peaceful desires were banished now. He no longer wanted to avoid the inevitable encounter. His consideration for the new boy was quite gone, owing to the peculiar manners and customs of the youth from Illinois. Frank was very keen to see Master Honk handled as he deserved.

School was dismissed at last, and as soon as the fellows were in the playground Bob Lawless made for Bunker H. Honk at once.

That youth met him with a disdainful grin.

"I guess you've come for another flea in your ear, hay?" he inquired. "I'm the galoot you're looking for."

"Put up your hands!" said Bob quietly.

"My dear jay, I guess I should make shavings of you," said Honk. "Don't ask to be slaughtered."

"Come out into the timber," said Frank Richards. "Miss Meadows will see you from her window here."

"Come on, Honk!"

"I guess I'm not doing a paseo with you jest now," drawled Honk. "You go and chop chips!"

"Funk!" snorted Chunky Todgers.

"I guess—"

"You're coming!" said Frank Richards. "You've been asking for two days now for what you're going to get. Get a move on!"

(Continued on page 25.)

THE MYSTERY OF BOOTLES! Mr. Bootles of Rookwood is a harmless gentleman, and not the kind to make dangerous enemies, yet it is strange that he should be subject to a violent and deadly attack. The mystery is deep and stirring!



Chums to the Rescue!

A Splendid, Long, Complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood School.
By Owen Conquest.
(Author of the famous stories of Rookwood now appearing in the "Boy's Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Sudden Attack!

"HOLD on!" rapped out Jimmy Silver.
"What the—"

"It's Bootles!"
"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Arthur Edward Lovell, in dismay.

The lane that ran from the village of Coombe, past the gates of Rookwood School, was powdered with snow, that glistened in the light of the rising moon. Four juniors of the Fourth Form were trudging home to Rookwood, when Jimmy Silver suddenly gave the alarm.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth were out of bounds—which made the sudden sight of their Form master extremely unwelcome.

Fortunately, it was only the back of Mr. Bootles that they saw.

Here and there the heavy shadows of the trees lay across the lane, and between the shadows were patches of clear moonlight. And in a clear patch of moonlight, not twenty yards distant, Jimmy Silver had suddenly spotted the well-known figure of Mr. Bootles, proceeding towards Rookwood School at a slow and stately pace.

"Phew!" murmured Raby. "Might have run into him!"

"What a surprise!" chuckled Newcome.

"Hush!"
The Fistical Four had stopped, and they watched the little plump figure of their Form master with anxiety. They wondered whether the shadow they stood in was deep enough to conceal them if Mr. Bootles looked round.

But he gave no sign of looking round. Probably he was in a hurry to get out of wind and snow, and into his warm study. He truded on at his best pace—which was about that of a fairly active tortoise.

"This is nice—I don't think!" grumbled Lovell. "We can't pass him without being spotted! And if we follow at the rate he's going, we sha'n't be home till morning!"

"We were rather asses to come out after lock-up!" remarked Newcome, in a reflective sort of way. "It's jolly cold, and the wind's icy, and the snow's beastly, and—and—"

"And anything else?" inquired Jimmy Silver, in a tone of sarcastic patience.

"Well, it was your idea, Jimmy, and your ideas are generally rotten!" said Newcome.

"Now we seem to be landed!"

"Oh, come on!" said Lovell. "He's nearly out of sight now. We shall have to crawl, that's all!"

"After all, he's nearly as blind as a bat," said Raby. "If he did look round and see us, he mightn't know us. Naturally, he

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thinks we're in the end study at prep. Come on; I'm shivering."

"Go slow, though," said Jimmy Silver, as the Fistical Four started again; "and don't jaw. He may hear."

"I know who does most of the jawing in this Co.," remarked Newcome.

"Dry up, old chap!"

The four juniors truded on, very cautiously now. It was really important not to be discovered outside the school walls after lock-up.

Dropping over the wall, and going for a ramble by moonlight, was quite a harmless escapade, from the point of view of the juniors themselves. But it was quite certain that their Form master would not look on it in the same light. School rules were made to be obeyed—at least, that was Mr. Bootles' view.

The juniors' footsteps were inaudible in the snow, and they took advantage of the shadows of the trees beside the lane, in case Mr. Bootles should glance round.

Every now and then the Form master disappeared from sight in a black bar of shadow, but he reappeared in the moonlight beyond in a few minutes.

The juniors chafed at the delay as they suited their pace to that of Mr. Bootles—which was not rapid.

Lovell began to hum the "Dead March" in "Saul" with sardonic humour. Jimmy gave him a forcible dig in the ribs.

"Shut up, you owl!"

"Ow!"

"Do you want to be spotted, you ass?" exclaimed Jimmy warmly. "This means two hundred lines each, if not a licking!"
Lovell grunted.

"Look here, can't we take to the fields, and dodge round him?" he demanded. "I shall get rooted here, at this pace!"

"Well, perhaps—" Jimmy Silver considered.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Raby suddenly. "What the merry thunder—"

There was a sudden sharp cry ahead.

To the blank amazement of the juniors, two dark figures suddenly rushed from the shadows of the lane, and hurled themselves upon Mr. Bootles.

The scene, not twenty yards away, was perfectly clear to the eyes of Jimmy Silver & Co., and for a moment they stared at it, transfixed, in utter astonishment.

Mr. Bootles, assailed on either side, gave a sharp cry as he was seized; a moment more, and he was down in the snow, with one of his assailants kneeling on him. The other bent over him, with something in his hand.

"Footpads!" gasped Lovell.

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

There was no thought of further concealment now. The sight of little Mr. Bootles in the grasp of a couple of ruffians was enough for the Fistical Four. They thought only of helping him.

They broke into a tearing run, and dashed towards the scene. Mr. Bootles was spluttering wildly. He was alarmed, and still more surprised than alarmed at this sudden attack.

"Release me!" he panted. "What, what! Bless my soul! Police! Help! Yow-ow-ow! Dear me! Help!"

Silence.

"Help! Police! Groooogh!"

Mr. Bootles, like the juniors, supposed his assailants to be footpads. To his amazement, a loop of cord was slipped over his plump wrists, and drawn tight. Then he was dragged to his feet.

"Quick with him, Gadger!"

Each grasping an arm of the astounded Form master, the two assailants hurried him to the side of the road.

Mr. Bootles wondered whether he was dreaming.

It was not robbery that was intended; it was kidnapping. That was clear enough, though the reason for it was a deep mystery.

Kidnapped Mr. Bootles undoubtedly would have been, whatever the reason, but for the presence of the Fistical Four. They were running up fast. Their feet made no sound on the snow, and their arrival was as great a surprise to the kidnappers as to Mr. Bootles.

They came on the scene with a sudden rush, and, without stopping, hurled themselves on the two ruffians.

It was a complete surprise.

Jimmy Silver drove his clenched fist under the ear of the man called Gadger, and that individual rolled in the snow with a gasp. The other fellow sprang clear of the rush, but in a second Lovell and Raby had hold of him, and he was dragged down. Mr. Bootles, reeled against a tree, his hands bound, and spluttered:

"Ow! Ah! Ow! Help! Police!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. At Close Quarters!

THERE was a desperate struggle proceeding in the road. The man Gadger had scrambled up, darted through the trees, and vanished from sight. But the man Lovell and Raby had dragged down was fighting like a wild-cat. Newcome ran to his chums' aid, and

collared him, and in a moment more Jimmy Silver had a grasp on the man's collar.

Four to one was too heavy odds for the rascal, though he seemed a powerful fellow. He was crushed down in the snow, panting, under the weight and grip of the Fistical Four.

"Oh, oh, oh!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"All right now, sir!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"Silver!" exclaimed the Form master.

"Yes, sir! We've got him!"

"Bless my soul! You—you juniors here at this hour! But hold him securely, my boys! Bless my soul, my hands are tied, and I cannot help you! Hold him securely!"

"We've got him, sir!" said Lovell.

"The—other atrocious rascal has—has escaped!" spluttered Mr. Bootles. "But this—this villain shall be handed over to the police! He shall receive hard labour for this! Bless my soul, what—what! Will one of you boys kindly unfasten my hands? Dear me!"

Raby let go the ruffian to perform that service for Mr. Bootles. He cut through the cord with his pocket-knife.

The man was still resisting feebly, but the three juniors had him fast. Jimmy Silver jerked him over so that his face came visible in the moonlight. It was not a pleasant face.

It was that of a man about forty, clean-shaven—a hard face, with lines in it which told of an evil life. A beard was hanging by a wire to one ear. The rascal had evidently been disguised in a false beard, which had been torn off in the struggle with the juniors.

His eyes, sunken and glittering, blazed at the Fourth-Formers like those of a captured wild animal. His chin, which was sharp and bony, was marked with a red scar, as if it had been long ago slashed with a knife.

"A pretty customer!" said Jimmy Silver. "The rotter doesn't look like a tramp, though. He's jolly well dressed for a tramp."

"Let me go!" panted the man breathlessly.

"That's likely, you rotter!"

"Hold him!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"Hold him!"

"Safe as houses, sir!"

"He shall be sent to prison for this!" said Mr. Bootles, blinking down upon the rascal, after setting his glasses straight upon his plump little nose. "Dear me! What a horrid-looking scoundrel!"

Crack!

The sudden report of a revolver made the juniors start. The man with the scarred chin had his hand under him, and he had evidently succeeded in getting it into his hip-pocket for a weapon.

He fired at random, and the bullet whizzed into the trees; but the sudden report startled the juniors, and their grasp relaxed.

In an instant the rascal tore himself free and bounded to his feet.

"At him!" roared Lovell.

The juniors were springing on again, when the levelled revolver looked them in the face.

"Stand back, or—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. paused. The man was evidently desperate and ready to fire.

"Stop!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Stand back! I forbid you to risk your lives! Stand back at once!"

Reluctantly the juniors held back. The scarred man, panting, savage, backed to the other side of the road. Arthur Edward Lovell made a movement, but Mr. Bootles grasped his shoulder.

"Stop, I tell you!"

Held off by the revolver, the Rookwood juniors watched the rascal back into the woods, and then, with a sudden turn, he disappeared. They heard his footsteps for a few moments crashing among the frozen underbrush.

He was gone.

The first man, whom they had heard addressed as "Gadger," had long vanished and there came to the ears of the Rookwooders across the intervening wood the whirr of an automobile.

Whether it belonged to the rascals or not they did not know, but they suspected that the intended kidnappers had had a car at hand.

Mr. Bootles, still breathless and deeply agitated, made a sign to the juniors to hurry on to Rookwood, and he set himself at a quick little trot, puffing and blowing.

Evidently he was not wholly without uneasiness that the ruffians might return, though they had been thinking only of escape after the arrival of the rescuers.

"Hadn't we better cut down to the police-

station, sir, some of us?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he trotted by the Form master's side.

"No, no!"

"But the police, sir—"

"I will telephone from Rookwood," said Mr. Bootles. "Let us get to the school as quickly as possible. You are in danger, my boys!"

"Oh, they've cleared right off, sir!" said Lovell.

"Possibly. But hurry!"

Mr. Bootles was sadly winded, but he kept up gamely, trotting with a speed really creditable in a gentleman of his age and plumpness.

The gates of Rookwood loomed up before them at last.

There they halted, and Mr. Bootles groped for his key to the wicket-gate. He blinked nervously back along the road as he did so.

But it lay calm and clear in the moonlight. There was no trace of pursuit by the scarred man and his confederate.

Jimmy Silver, indeed, was pretty certain that the ruffians were miles away by that time. But poor Mr. Bootles had been thrown into a terrible flutter by the startling adventure.

He unlocked the side-gate, and the juniors passed in with him. With a sigh of relief, the little gentleman locked the gate again.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another in the dimness. Mr. Bootles had not asked them yet how they came to be out of gates at that hour. But now that the last shadow of danger was past, that thought occurred to the Fourth Form master's agitated mind. He turned his glittering spectacles upon the four juniors.

"I have not yet—ah!—thanked you for coming to my aid. Ah—hem!" he said. "It was very brave—ah—of you! Very timely—very timely indeed! For some reason those dreadful persons—ah—intended to make me a prisoner—why, I cannot fathom! You saved me! But what were you doing on the spot, Silver? It is—ah—past lock-up by an hour, at least!"

"We—we—"

"You were out of bounds!" said Mr. Bootles sternly.

"We—we went for a ramble in the moonlight, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles gave him a rather searching blink. But he was satisfied that the Fistical Four had had no ill object in slipping out of school bounds that evening.

And in the circumstances he could hardly condemn them very severely for having been on the spot to aid when in the hour of need.

"This must not occur again!" he said.

"I will—ah—excuse you on this occasion—hem—as your—your escapade has had—ah—such happy results—what, what—for me personally! Hem! But—ah—it must not occur again! You may—er—go!"

And the Fistical Four went.

Mr. Bootles, still in a flutter of agitation, trotted into the School House, where he sank down in his study armchair, and gasped for a good five minutes before he felt equal to getting on the telephone and calling up the police at Rookham to listen to a long, detailed, and rather confused account of his most extraordinary adventure.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Startling Story!

"NABBED?"

Valentine Mornington asked that question as the Fistical Four came up into the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood.

"Licked?" asked Putty Grace.

"Walloped?" chortled Tubby Muffin. "I saw Bootles come in, looking in no end of a bait. Bootles nabbed you? He, he, he!"

"Bottles nabbed us, right enough!" said Jimmy Silver. "But it's all serene. Somebody else nabbed Bootles—"

"What?"

"And we rushed to the rescue like giddy Paladins!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell. "In us you behold the heroes returned from the wars!"

"What on earth's happened, then?" asked Mornington, puzzled.

A dozen of the Fourth gathered round to hear the tale. There were exclamations of surprise on all sides.

"Kidnapping Bootles!" howled Townsend.

"What on earth would anybody want to kidnap Bootles for?"

"Couldn't be to hold him to ransom!" chortled Conroy. "A Form master's screw wouldn't be worth their while!"

"Give us an easier one, Jimmy!" suggested Tubby Muffin.

"I've told you what happened!" answered the captain of the Fourth curtly. "Make the best of it! I know it's jolly queer."

"They must have wanted to rob him!" said Erroll.

"Well, they didn't try to rob him," answered Jimmy. "They tied his hands together with a cord, and they were yanking him into the woods when we came up."

"Come and saw and conquered, you know," grinned Baby, "like giddy old Julius in Asia, or wherever it was!"

"I believe they had a motor-car in the lane t'other side of the woods," said Lovell. "We heard one soon after they'd bunked." Mornington whistled.

"But who on earth could want Bootles? And what the merry thump could they want him for?" he asked.

"I'll give that one up!" said Jimmy. "And the Fistical Four went on to the end study to begin their somewhat belated prep."

Prep in the end study was subject to a good many interruptions that evening.

The story of the strange attack on Mr. Bootles spread through in a very short time, and all the Classical Fourth, who had not yet heard the story, looked into the end study for details. When they were satisfied there were more to come. The Shell heard of it, and Smythe and Howard and Tracy came in for the story, and when they had heard it they smiled. Adolphus Smythe was pleased to believe that the Fistical Four were romancing.

"I'd write that down and put it in a magazine, dear boys!" said Smythe of the Shell. "Quite an excitin' story!"

"What about a copyright?" said Tracy. "They must have read it in a magazine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver jumped up, in great wrath.

"You silly asses, clear off, or—"

Smythe & Co. backed out of the study, still grinning.

"Keep your wool on, old bean!" said Adolphus. "You didn't expect us to swallow a yarn like that, did you? Kidnappin' Bootles! Oh dear, no!"

Adolphus withdrew his nose from the doorway just in time to escape a slamming door. Jimmy turned the key in the lock.

Then the Fistical Four settled down to prep again.

The door-handle was tried a dozen times. Wegg of the Third howled through the key-hole; Snook of the Second, athirst for information, kicked the door for a steady five minutes before he retired baffled. Hansom of the Fifth thumped the door a little later and demanded entrance, and retired with dire threats on receiving no reply.

Prep had to be done, and the chums of the Classical Fourth did it, heedless of the thirst for news on the part of their school-fellows.

But prep was over at last, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came down to the Common-room, where they were at once surrounded by an inquiring crowd. Tommy Dodd & Co. of Modern side had heard the news, and had come over for further details from the fountain-head. A number of the Fifth wanted to know, and even some of the Sixth Form prefects looked in to hear the story. Never had the Fistical Four been in such demand as they were that evening.

Carthew of the Sixth sneered at the story, and remarked "Gammon!" in his unpleasant way. But Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, listened with grave interest.

"You can ask Mr. Bootles, if you like, Bulkeley," added Jimmy Silver, when he had concluded the story for the twentieth time for Bulkeley's benefit. "I don't understand it any more than you do, but that's what happened."

"It's queer enough," said Bulkeley. "I suppose that's what Inspector Sharpe has come to see Mr. Bootles about."

"Has he come?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yes; he came on his motor-bike, and he's with Mr. Bootles now," said the captain of Rookwood. "I hope he'll get the rascals."

Lovell minor of the Third looked into the Common-room.

"You kids are wanted," he said to the Fistical Four.

"Kids!" exclaimed Lovell, with a wrathful glare at his hopeful young brother. "If you—"

"Don't jaw, old chap!" said Teddy Lovell. "Bootles wants you to speak to the giddy inspector. Get a move on, and give your chin a rest!"

And Teddy Lovell departed just in time to escape a brotherly boot.

"I suppose they want us to give a description of the rotters," said Jimmy Silver. "Come on, you fellows!"

There was no doubt now among the juniors as to the truth of the amazing story. The presence of the inspector from Rookham was evidence enough of that. Quite a little army followed the Fistical Four to the study of Mr. Bootles, but the door was closed on them when Jimmy Silver & Co. had entered.

The Co. found Inspector Sharpe with Mr. Bootles. The portly gentleman eyed them very keenly, and questioned them very closely, and took down their description of the scarred man in his pocket-book. Of the other man they could tell him little, excepting that he was of burly build, and had been addressed by his companion as "Gadger."

The inspector was evidently puzzled.

An attempt at robbery he could have understood easily enough, but it was clear that robbery had not been the object of the mysterious pair. They had bound Mr. Bootles' hands, and striven to force him away into the woods, and it appeared that there had been a motor-car in waiting near at hand. Why anyone should seek to kidnap the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood was a simply unfathomable mystery. Mr. Bootles could not let the slightest ray of light in upon the matter. He had, so far as he knew, no enemies, and, indeed, it was absurd to suppose that the plump, good-natured little gentleman, who for many years had spent his life secluded in the scholastic shades of Rookwood, could have possessed personal enemies of a bitter and lawless nature. But if the two ruffians were not his personal enemies, who and what were they, and what had been their object?

Inspector Sharpe, of Rookham, did not often have the good fortune to drop upon a deep mystery; the cases he handled were generally of the simplest nature. Here was a mystery that might have puzzled Scotland Yard, but the portly inspector was not very happy over it. Even the Fourth-Formers could see that he was perplexed and non-plussed.

True, cases of kidnapping for ransom were not unknown; but such an explanation in this case was ludicrous. Adequate as the salary of a Form master at Rookwood was, it certainly did not suffice to make him a worthy object of so desperate a scheme. Kidnappers with a view to ransom could easily have found much wealthier game within a few miles of Rookwood School, or at Rookwood School itself, for that matter.

But any other motive of the kidnapping was unfathomable, and the inspector questioned the juniors closely, with a lurking suspicion that the excited little gentleman had—unintentionally, of course—exaggerated the matter.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. corroborated Mr. Bootles' story in every particular. They had found him with his hands bound; they had seen the ruffians attempting to drag him into the wood. They bore witness to the chief rascal's false beard and revolver.

The juniors were dismissed after the inspector had made careful notes of their statements, and he turned to the agitated Form master again.

"A very curious affair, sir," he said. "It shall, of course, be most closely investigated. The descriptions of the ruffians shall be circulated. We shall do our best. But if you could give me the slightest hint as to why the attempt may have been made—"

Mr. Bootles shook his flustered head.

"Impossible, Mr. Sharpe. I cannot imagine the—"

"You may, of course, have been mistaken for some other person against whom these men have a grudge," the inspector said musingly.

"I—I trust that is the case," said Mr. Bootles, much relieved by the suggestion. "I sincerely hope so! But they saw me in the clearest moonlight, as plainly as I see you now!"

"You think they were lying in wait?"

"I am sure of it. They had been watching from the trees, and rushed out on me as I came by—"

"How could they have known that you were passing at that hour?"

Mr. Bootles started.

"Bless my soul! I never thought of that, sir! Undoubtedly they must have gained information as to my movements. Perhaps I was watched leaving Rookwood, and they laid this dreadful ambush on the way I had to return!" Mr. Bootles shuddered.

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"In—in that case the—the school must have been watched on my account! It is terrible!"

"If the school has been watched for you, sir, it may be watched for you again, and there will be other watchers on the scene," said the inspector comfortingly. "I strongly recommend you not to proceed beyond the school walls until we have some definite information, at least."

"Most certainly I shall not, sir. I—I am no coward, I trust," faltered Mr. Bootles. "But an affair of this dreadful and lawless kind to a man of my age, sir, is no light matter. I—I fear I shall not sleep soundly to-night. It is—is most unnerveing!"

"Rely upon us to deal with the matter, sir," said Inspector Sharpe.

And he rose and took his leave. He departed from Rookwood as puzzled and perplexed as Mr. Bootles, though certainly not so flustered or alarmed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Under Jimmy Silver's Protection!

"L'AFFAIRE Bootles," as Mornington entitled it, was almost the sole topic at Rookwood the next day.

It was so strange and mysterious an affair that it could not fail to become a nine days' wonder in the old school.

When Mr. Bootles appeared in the Fourth Form room in the morning to take his Form he showed signs of trouble and unrest.

All the Fourth sympathised with him sincerely enough.

This morning he was still aching from the rough encounter, and in a state of unusual absent-mindedness—of which his pupils mercifully forbore to take any advantage.

When Peele of the Fourth showed a disposition to pull the flustered little gentleman's leg in class, Jimmy Silver gave him a look which, as plainly as words could have spoken, warned Peele off the course, as it were. Jimmy's look meant a hammering after lessons if Peele persisted, and Cyril Peele decided wisely to be good.

Seeing Mr. Bootles in such a troubled and flustered state, the end study had determined that the Fourth should be on their best behaviour; and when that flat had gone forth from the end study it had to be obeyed. Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern division of the Fourth, generally opposed Jimmy Silver on principle; but in this instance they were quite at one with him. Tommy Dodd was as ready to hammer a Modern as Jimmy Silver was to hammer a Classical who bothered Mr. Bootles that day.

But lessons in the Fourth that morning were very desultory, in spite of the unusual good behaviour of the Form.

After morning lessons Mr. Bootles was observed to take his usual "trot" in the quadrangle, but he did not go near the gates. He glanced at the gates, and, seeing old Mack, the porter, there, beckoned to him. Old Mack came along slowly, probably

wondering why Mr. Bootles could not walk the intervening distance if he had anything to say.

"Have you seen—er—anyone—any person—any suspicious character—lurking about the school this morning, Mack?" asked Mr. Bootles.

Mack opened his ancient eyes very wide.

"Suspicious pusson?" he repeated.

"Yes; any ruffian—any desperado or—"

"My hey!" said Mack. "No, sir; I ain't seen any sich pusson!"

And old Mack returned to his lodge, wondering whether the master of the Fourth had been drinking.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Act!

"IT'S up to us!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that remark on Saturday afternoon, with an air of profound reflection, after being buried for some time in thought.

There was snow on the ground, and there was no football that afternoon. The Fistical Four were at rather a loose end for the half-holiday.

"What's up to us?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"About poor old Bootles."

"Those rotters tried to bag him once," said Lovell. "They had some reason, though we don't know what it was, and Bootles don't, and Mr. Sharpe hasn't found anything out. But they had a reason. Owing to us, they had to hike off without Bootles. But if they want him, won't they try again?"

"Yes, I suppose so," assented Jimmy.

"Yes, it's most likely."

"And suppose they're still watching for a chance at him?" continued Lovell.

"I—I suppose it's possible. But their faces would be known—at least, one of them."

"Not if they were disguised."

"Oh!"

"One of the rotters had a false beard the other night. Now, I've been keeping my eyes open," said Lovell, in rather a lofty way. "Yesterday, coming in, I noticed a fellow with his overcoat collar turned up, and a jolly thick beard, leaning against a tree not a hundred yards from the gates."

"I believe I've seen such things!" murmured Raby.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave his humorous chum a glance of rebuke. This was not a matter for jesting.

"This morning," he went on, "I loafed out of gates, and there was the same Johnny walking in the road. He pretended to be lighting a pipe as I came by."

"Perhaps he really was lighting it?" suggested Newcome.

"After dinner," continued Lovell, unheeding, "I took a squirt out of gates, and the same Johnny, in the same beard and overcoat, was sitting on a stile across the field."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure! Now, doesn't that look suspicious?"

"Well, it looks as if the fellow is hanging round the school," said Jimmy Silver. "It's a bit queer, now you speak of it. Let's take a walk round and see if he's on the scene now. If there's a rotten spy looking for chances at old Bootles, we'll jolly well come down on him heavy."

"Good!"

In quite a triumphant mood Arthur Edward Lovell led his chums towards the gates.

Lovell looked this way and that way, like Moses of old, and fairly gasped:

"There he is—right under our noses!"

Across the road was a park fence, and against that fence a rather burly man was leaning. He was muffled up to his ears in a big overcoat, and he wore a cap pulled low down over his face—most of which was hidden by a thick, brown beard, save a nose blue with cold.

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"Dash it all, he seems to be watching the place!" he said. "If you've really seen the same chap hanging about before, Lovell—"

"Three times!"

"Then we'll jolly well put it to the test!"

The juniors consulted in whispers for a few moments, and then strolled along the road. They turned at a little distance, and came racing back—on the farther side of the road now, so that they would pass close by the man leaning on the fence.

The bearded man drew back as close as he



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could to the fence as the four came racing by, but he was not to escape so easily. Quite artistically, Arthur Edward Lovell stumbled just in front of him, and reeled headlong against his chest.

Crash!
"Oh!" spluttered the bearded man breathlessly. "You young fool—"

Lovell clutched at the beard and dragged. To his own amazement—for he was hardly prepared for such a dramatic confirmation of his suspicions—the beard came off in his grasp.

A clean-shaven, though rather mottled, chin was revealed. There was a howl from the juniors, and with one accord they leaped upon the man like hounds upon a stag. He came down into the road with a crash in their clutches.

"Pin him!" roared Lovell. "Got the scoundrel! Mind he doesn't get at his revolver!"

"Down him!"
"Hold his hands—"

"Let me up!" roared the struggling man. "You young rascals, I'll complain to your headmaster about this! How dare you touch a policeman in the execution of his duty!"

"Wha-a-at?"
"Eh?"

The man's cap had fallen off, and his beardless face was quite revealed now. Jimmy Silver & Co. let him go as suddenly as if he had become red-hot to touch. They blinked, almost frozen with horror, at the rugged and well-known features of Inspector Sharpe, of Rookham!

"Old Sharpe!" stammered Lovell.
"Great Scott!"

The hapless inspector sat up breathlessly, and groped for his beard and cap.

"You young rascal—"
"Oh dear!"

"If—if you say a word about this I'll ask your headmaster to flog you!" gasped the inspector, and he struggled to his feet and fairly bolted, beard and cap still in hand.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at each other speechlessly. Evidently the inspector had been on the watch for the mysterious foes of Mr. Bootles, whom he—as well as the Fistical Four—suspected might be spying on the school.

"Mum-m-m-my hat!" stammered Jimmy Silver at last. "We—we—we seem to have—to have put our foot in it this time!"

"You ass, Lovell!"
"You chump, Lovell!"

"You fathead, Lovell!"

Arthur Edward Lovell received these three friendly tributes in abashed silence. He was



A STARTLING REVELATION! The beard came off in Lovell's grasp and a clean-shaven chin was revealed. There was a howl from the juniors, and with one accord they leaped like hounds upon the man. "Pin him!" roared Lovell. "Got the scoundrel! Mind he doesn't get at his revolver!" (See Chapter 5).

dumbfounded. And the Fistical Four trod in again at the school gates, sadder if not wiser Fourth-Formers. On this occasion, at least, they had not succeeded in solving the mystery of Mr. Bootles.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, dealing further with the mystery surrounding Mr. Bootles. The story is entitled: "The Form Master's Fortune!" and is full of thrills.)

A COOL CUSTOMER!

(Continued from page 21.)

"I reckon— Leggo!"
Frank Richards and Beauclere took Bunker H. Honk by his bony arms and walked him towards the gates.

Bob Lawless walked behind; and when Honk strove to hang back he touched him up—not gently—with a rather heavy boot.

A crowd of Cedar Creek fellows accompanied them, laughing and chuckling. Honk was walked through the gates, vainly dragging at his conductors. A great deal of his swank seemed to have deserted him now, and he was in a very uneasy mood.

Doubtless it had dawned upon him at last that Bob Lawless was not, as he had supposed, "dead skered," but had been letting him off for reasons unknown.

By the time the crowd of schoolboys were in a clear space behind the cedars Bunker H. Honk was feeling very troubled.

Frank and Beauclere released him there, and the Cedar Creek fellows made a thick ring round.

Honk looked about him uneasily, as if seeking a way of escape, but ways of escape there was none.

"Put 'em up, Honk!" growled Eben Hacke. "Can't you see Lawless is waiting for you?"

"I—I guess—"
"Ready?" asked Bob.

"I—I guess I'm ready to make shavings off you, or any other galoot this side of the Line!" exclaimed Honk.

"Go it, then!"

"But I calculate I don't mind letting you off—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tap! Bob Lawless' knuckles came in contact with Honk's sharp-pointed nose, eliciting a sudden howl from him. Then Honk came on at last, and the fight began, watched with eager interest by the Cedar Creek fellows.

Bunker Honk came on with a rush, waving his bony arms somewhat like the sails of a windmill; and he was suddenly stopped by a drive that landed on his sharp chin.

Bump!

Honk sat down in the grass heavily.

"Up with you, Honk!"

"Go it!"

"Oh Jerusalem!" gasped Honk. "I guess I'm done!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Lawless stared down at him.

"Done!" he exclaimed. "What the thump do you mean? You haven't started yet!"

"Ow—wow! I—I guess I've got a pain!" groaned Honk, rubbing his chin. "I—I reckon I'll let you off, young Lawless. I guess I should about slaughter you if I got my mad up, and I don't want to do that! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bob Lawless, all his wrath evaporated, burst into a laugh. After the swank of Bunker Hill Honk, this sudden and complete surrender struck him as comic.

"Sure you're finished?" he asked.

"Ow! Yep!"

"You wouldn't like a little more?"

chuckled Frank Richards.

"Ow! Nope!"

"Then the circus is over!" said Frank, laughing.

And, with loud chortles, the Cedar Creek fellows streamed away in a merry crowd, leaving Bunker H. Honk sitting in the grass, nursing his bony chin tenderly with two bony hands.

B. H. Honk was not seen again till dinner-time, when he came into the dining-room in the school-house very quietly, evidently not desirous of attracting attention. The glory had departed from Bunker H. Honk, and for several days, at least, there was no more "swank" from the chum from Chicago.

THE END.

(Meet B. H. Honk, the Boy from America, in next week's rollicking backwoods story, entitled "The Business Man of Cedar Creek!")

ADVENTURES BEHIND THE BLACK MASK! A dramatic

climax is reached in the amazing feud between Dick Neville, the young highwayman, and his rascally uncle!

DICK O' THE HIGHWAY!

By DAVID
GOODWIN.



A THRILLING ROMANCE OF DICK TURPIN, THE FAMOUS KNIGHT OF THE BROAD HIGHWAY.

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 Faulkourn, 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 Dirkeley, has tried to denounce Vesey 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 discovered his whereabouts, so decides to keep a strict eye on him.

But Vesey cleverly lays his plans, and

succeeds in kidnapping Ralph right under the doctor's nose, and takes him away, a prisoner, in a fast-travelling coach.

Dick Neville and Turpin are riding along the road when the coach, bearing Ralph and Vesey, dashes past. Dick sees his young brother inside, and at once gives chase. But the coach meets with a terrible accident. In swerving round a corner, it rolls over the side of a deep chalk-pit, and crashes to the bottom. Dick, with many misgivings, climbs down the cliffs, and sees his young brother lying motionless amongst the wreckage.

(Now read on.)

Where There's Life There's Hope.

"RALPH!" cried the young highwayman, in a choking voice, clambering in and bending over him.

The boy lay white and still; no answer came from his lips.

"He's dead!" said Dick, with a sob. "The fall has killed him. Bear a hand, Turpin, and lift him out. Oh, Heaven, that I should see this day!"

They bore the boy out tenderly and laid him on the turf. His quiet face was white and peaceful. He looked as though asleep.

"It's the end!" muttered Dick, rising, with wild eyes. "Where is the hound that brought him to his doom? If I find one breath left in his body I will rob him of it with these hands!"

"Poor lad!" said Turpin, with a sigh. "He was an upright and brave youngster, and his blood is on the head of that traitor Vesey! But I doubt vengeance is taken from our hands. He must be beneath the chaise, crushed. Prise it up and see."

They could not move the crushed vehicle with their hands, but soon they found an old strut-pole, and levered it up. To their amazement there was nothing beneath save the crushed bush and the bruised gravel.

"Where can the villain be?" exclaimed Turpin. "He is not under the chaise nor the horses. His body must have rolled among the bushes."

They searched the tangled undergrowth without avail their surprise growing.

"I will find the scoundrel if he is above ground!" said Dick between his teeth, the white face of his young brother still haunting him. "He must have found strength to crawl away into some bush."

"That we'll soon prove," replied Turpin; and the two comrades, drawing their rapiers, made a thorough search of the pit, thrusting their blades into every bush and every nook and cranny. But they met again by the chaise, having found nothing, but more amazed than ever.

Dick turned to the still figure on the turf again, when a cry escaped him.

"Here, Turpin, quick! Have you any brandy? There's life in him yet!"

"Here, take it!" exclaimed Turpin, thrusting a silver flask into Dick's hands. "By the rood, you're right! Not too much at first, man!"

Dick's heart leapt within him as he felt the faint beat in his young brother's breast and called to Turpin for the life-giving spirit. A little of it poured between the boy's teeth brought a faint tinge of colour to his white cheeks.

It was some time before Ralph's eyelids rose. He looked into Dick's face and recognised him, but he could not move.

"Are you much hurt, old boy?" said Dick anxiously.

"Don't know," muttered Ralph. "My head sings like a kettle."

"Where is Vesey? How did this all happen, Ralph?"

"Isn't he killed?" said Ralph weakly.

"I do not know. He and one of his men sprang out on me quite near the school, and Vesey dragged me into the chaise and drove off. I saw you and Turpin follow us soon after, and Vesey was in the chaise when it fell. I—I—"

He broke off, and his voice ceased.

"Do not trouble him with questions now," said Turpin, "it may be dangerous. Let us get him to a doctor, and if Vesey still lives we will soon call him to book. He has forfeited his life by this. Come!"

They wrenched the door from the chaise, and, making Ralph as comfortable as they could, they bore him to the outskirts of the school, whence Dick carried him in alone. Turpin hastened back for the horses and awaited his companion in the plantation. After some time Dick came out once more.

"The leech says there is no harm beyond a shaking, and that Ralph has had a marvellous escape," said Dick. "He little knows how true his words are. Now let us ride back and scour the neighbourhood for the villain that brought him to it."

They galloped back to the gravel-pit and ransacked the place thoroughly, but with no more result than the first time. Then they scoured the entire neighbourhood industriously, but never a trace of Vesey did they find.

"It is a miracle!" said Turpin, when they were forced by nightfall to give up the search.

"I must ride to Basing House and see Sir Henry," said Dick. "There are matters here that he can help me in. Then, when I have news of Ralph

again, I shall lie the night at the shepherd's cottage by Longford."

"There is but room for one guest there," said Turpin, "so I will quarter myself again with the charcoal-burner in Quern Woods, where I am well enough housed, though I am not very sure of my host. To-morrow we will find news of Vesey and ride him down."

The two parted with a warm "Good-night!" and while Dick went off on his errand, Turpin betook himself to the charcoal-burner's cottage.

The Trapping of Turpin.

NEXT day, for the first time since they rode together, Dick Neville failed Turpin at the trying-place; nor was the highwayman able to discover what had become of his young friend. Turpin rode the bridle-paths round Longford all the forenoon, and at last returned to his quarters in Quern Woods.

"'Tis strange he failed me," muttered Turpin, stabling Black Bess in the charcoal-burner's shed and entering the cottage. "I trust no ill news has reached him!"

The small parlour was cosy and the fire bright, and Turpin sat half dozing by the hearth, nodding from time to time, for he was weary. Presently he rose, and the charcoal-burner, Sam Legatt, entered the room.

"Good-morning, Sam!" said Turpin, yawning. "Was it you flitting about the room half an hour since, or did I dream it?"

"Nay, your honour," said Sam cringing. "I have but now returned from work."

"Well, get me the best meal you can," said Turpin. "Have I paid you any score of late?"

A most welcome guest to a poor man was the highwayman, who lavished his money freely for such fare as an honest cottager could give him. Turpin put his hand to his pocket for a couple of guineas, when suddenly his face changed and his eyes flashed sternly.

His pistols were gone! He had taken them from the holster and placed them in his pockets—a thing he never failed to do—when he stabled Black Bess. He knew they were in their places in his wide side-pockets when he first seated himself by the fire.

In an instant he had Sam Legatt by the throat.

"You treacherous dog!" he cried. "Where are my pistols?"

Even as he said it he heard a step outside the house.

"I have not touched them, sir!" cried the frightened charcoal-burner, who was very white about the gills.

"That we shall see!" said Turpin between his teeth. "There's treachery afoot, and Heaven help you if you're the cause of it! So for the present stay you there."

He flung open the door of a cupboard in the wall, swung Sam Legatt bodily into it, locked him in, and looked round for a weapon, in case there were enemies afoot.

There was nothing that would serve. He was about to make a dash for the door and the stable when a tall figure suddenly stepped into the room from without.

"Od's death! You!" exclaimed Turpin. "What is this?"

And, in spite of himself, he stepped back a pace in dismay.

It was Vesey Neville.

Turpin subsided into the chair, his eyes still fixed on Vesey's face.

"You seem surprised to see me," continued Vesey. "'Tis little wonder. I doubt you and that nephew of mine have been cudgelling your brains to know what became of me when the chaise fell into the pit. 'Twas a rude ending, eh, Master Turpin?"

The highwayman continued to stare at him blankly.

"'Twas simple enough, in truth. When I saw the chaise was bound to go over the edge I flung open the door to throw myself out. I was a moment too late, and when I leaped out the carriage was already plunging downwards.

'Twas lucky for me, nevertheless, for I was better out of the chaise than in it, and I fell into a juniper-bush, escaping with no more than some bruises and scratches and a shaking.

"Then, knowing you and that whelp would instantly be down to look for me, I crawled into a bush, beneath which I found a deep cranny in the ground. Into that I wedged myself and lay while you and the cub Neville were searching the pit. His infernal sword thrust over the bush and spiked the ground within six inches of my body, but he never found me. I consider, sir, I tricked the pair of you very prettily."

Turpin sprang up from his chair, his expression changing to a grim frown.

"One moment!" said the squire of Faulkbourn. "Attempt no violence, sir, till you have heard what I have to say. I come not as an enemy, but in peace. I have a brave offer to make you."

Turpin paused a moment. He saw there was something in the wind, and he knew well that Vesey would never dare show that confident air before him unless he were sure of his ground. So, too shrewd to run blindfold into a pit, Turpin determined to find out how the land lay before he laid hands on Vesey.

"Come to the point, and shortly," he said, "for I am choice as to my companions, and like not your company!"

Vesey flushed darkly.

"You are passing nice for a road-robber!" he said, with a stifled oath. "However, let that pass. My offer is this. You know this cub of a nephew of mine—Dick Neville?"

"I have some knowledge of him," said Turpin grimly.

"You know where he is?"

"I might indeed find him, if I chose," returned the highwayman.

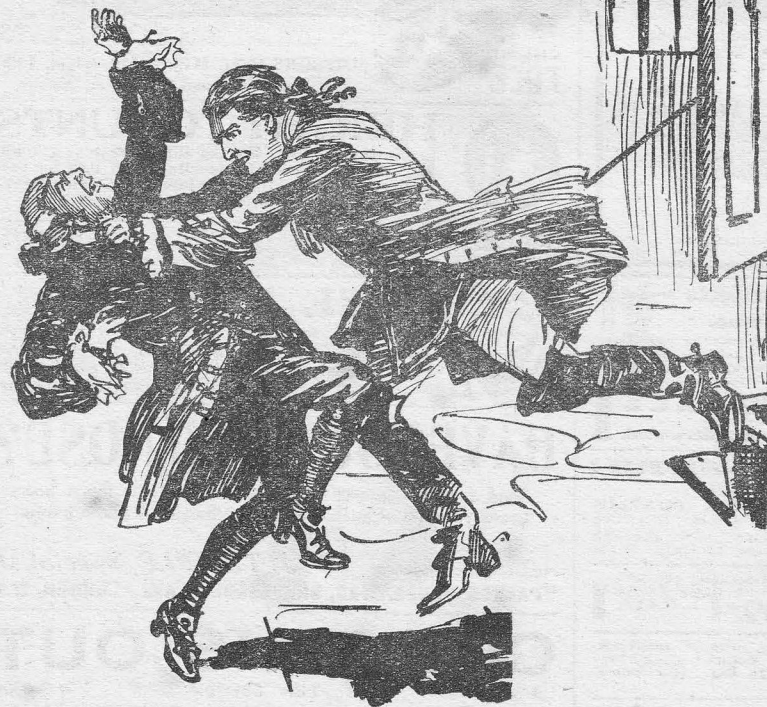
"Do you take me?" said Vesey. "I greatly desire to see my nephew, and this is the place of all others where I would have him come. I do not, however, wish him to know the pleasure that is in store for him. So, if you will bring him hither, under any plea you may choose, I will give you a thousand guineas."

"Merely for the pleasure of seeing him?" said Turpin.

"I wish him to be my guest," said Vesey cunningly. "When I am quite certain he will not refuse my hospitality the thousand guineas will be paid to you."

"In other words," said Turpin, "I am to decoy him here without arousing his suspicions, when you will arrange to have him captured unawares; and when he is bound I am to receive my thousand guineas. That I take to be your meaning."

"You have a coarse way of putting things," said Vesey, "but you are fairly near the truth."



A DESPERATE MOMENT FOR DICK TURPIN! "Keep your distance," said Vesey Neville with an oath. "You are coming over-close—ah!" The last word was a shriek, for Turpin, having edged by degrees within easy distance as the bargain was struck, made a quick bound and gripped Vesey by the throat with fingers of iron. (See page 28.)

He rubbed his hands together—his fat, soft, white hands—as he spoke. He did not note the dangerous gleam that was glowing in Turpin's eyes as the outlaw looked at him from under half-closed lids.

"It is necessary, of course," said Vesey, "that he should have no inkling of what is in the wind, for he is a dangerous rogue. Indeed, if you can contrive to coax his weapons away from him on the way, it would be a great service, and I will give you another hundred guineas."

"I quite understand you," said Turpin, with a peculiar tone in his voice. "We are on very agreeable terms, it seems."

"'Tis better than flying at one another's throats—eh?" said Vesey, still rubbing his hands. "A little mutual profit settles the matter. The young villain crosses me at every step; he thwarts me in all I do. It is necessary for me to get rid of him, and you will pocket a thousand guineas on the exchange. Is it agreed?"

"You seem very certain of my accepting," said Turpin. "What if I refuse?"

Vesey spread his fat, white hands out and shrugged his shoulders.

"That would be very regrettable," he said. "The house is surrounded by armed men, I may inform you. Every exit is guarded. Escape is impossible!"

"Do you mean to threaten me?" said Turpin fiercely, starting up from his chair. "Have a care, you misfavoured dog! I am not to be forced by man or devil!"

"Tut-tut!" said Vesey, raising his hand. "I did not mean to offend you, sir. Pray, sit down again! I only wish to point out to you that you are unarmed, and that before you could do me any injury your brains would be blown out!"

Turpin saw that Vesey was right. He had no pistol, and his life was in the visitor's hands. Vesey was not attempting deception. He would never show the coolness he did unless his life were perfectly safe.

"Let us consider the matter quietly," said the highwayman, seating himself again. "How am I to get the money if I fulfil the conditions?"

"That is better!" said Vesey, slapping his knees. "Now we are on a business footing again. I reply, sir, that I have the money about me, and to show you my good faith I will give you a hundred guineas of it when you start forth, and the rest when the cub Neville is bound captive."

"That is fair and above board!" said Turpin, his eyes seeming to flash greedily; and he hitched his chair a little closer to Vesey's. "It will, as I know, be worth many thousands to you to get the cub out of the way. I must have fifteen hundred for the work."

"Oh, come, sir!" cried Vesey. "I made you a liberal offer, and I cannot go beyond it. One thousand, and another hundred if the cub is disarmed. My men will capture him, and it may save some of their lives. I may tell you I have a dozen outside, ready to enter at the slightest call from me; but

I know the young knave fights like a tiger, and might account for four of them with those accursed double pistols of his!"

"All the more reason why I should be well paid," said the highwayman. "Hang it, sir, if he were to get the least inkling of the matter he would shoot me like a dog!"

"Poo!" said Vesey. "An old stager like you? Come, man, I will give you twelve hundred, and not a penny more. Egad! 'Twill be the best afternoon's work ever you did in your life!"

"And, by the rood, I'll make the most of it, now I've got the chance!" cried Turpin, hitching his chair forward excitedly again. "I'll have fifteen hundred or you may go hang, sir!"

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Vesey. "See, there, fourteen hundred, and that's my last word."

"Mr. Vesey Neville," said Turpin, edging a little closer, so that he could tap Vesey on the knee as he said the words. "I don't want to press you too hard. One thousand four hundred and fifty guineas and I'm your man!"

"Very good," said Vesey, with an oath. "But keep your distance; you are coming over-close—ah!"

The last word was a shriek, for Turpin, having edged by degrees within easy distance as the bargain was struck, made a quick bound and gripped Vesey by the throat with iron fingers.

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