

BIRTHDAY Gifts FOR 'POPULAR' READERS!

The POPULAR

Complete Story Weekly

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2^d EVERY TUESDAY.



*Rookwood's
Sensational
Raffle.*

THERE ARE 4 SCHOOL YARNS INSIDE BOYS!

RAISING THE WIND!

Tubby Muffin, the fat and fatuous Fourth-Former, is always on the look-out for an opportunity of raising the wind. He gets the chance this week, and proceeds to create quite a sensation among his Form-fellows!

TRICKING the FOURTH!

OWEN CONQUEST



A ROLLICKING LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE MERRY CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Going Cheap!

"CRICKET!"

"Eh?"

"Cricket will be coming along soon," said Tubby

Muffin.

Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, had rolled into the end study, interrupting prep there, apparently to give Jimmy Silver & Co. that piece of gratuitous information.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked up from Virgil, and Arthur Edward Lovell detached his attention for a moment from crossword puzzles. They stared at Reginald Muffin.

"Did you come here to tell us that?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes. You see—"

"Of all the silly owls!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "Do you think we don't know cricket's coming along, Muffin? Are you wandering in your mind? Go and wander in the passage instead."

"Give a fellow a chance to speak," urged Reginald Muffin. "Cricket will be coming along soon. I was thinking—"

"Draw it mild!"

"I was thinking—"

"What with?"

"I was thinking!" roared Tubby Muffin, "that you fellows would like a handsome new cricket bat, as cricket will be coming along soon."

"Well, my hat! Have you come here to offer us a new bat?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, quite astonished.

"Yes!"

"Trot it out," said Raby. "I'll take it off your hands."

"I haven't got it at the moment."

"I thought not!" grinned Raby. "What on earth are you trying to pull our legs for in this fatheaded way, Muffin?"

"But I'm getting it. My pater is sending me a handsome new cricket bat—a first-class two-guinea bat," said Muffin impressively. "It's the best bat you've ever seen—a real corker. Now, you fellows are keen on games—I'm a bit more intellectual myself—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And the fact is, I'm not specially keen on that bat," said Muffin. "So I thought of passing it on to you fellows, if you'd like it."

"Well, that beats it!" exclaimed Lovell in great surprise.

The Fistical Four stared at Muffin. That generous offer took them quite by surprise. Reginald Muffin was not celebrated in the Rookwood Fourth for generosity—quite the reverse, in fact.

If Muffin ever offered any fellow anything, that fellow's natural query was, "What's the matter with it?" So the offer of a handsome new two-guinea cricket bat was simply astounding to the end study.

"I mean it," said Muffin. "I don't care about the thing, and I'm offering it to you. Honest Injun!"

"For nothing?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Well, practically nothing."

"Oh! Only practically? I thought there was a catch somewhere," said Lovell. "What is practically nothing?"

"A shilling!"

"A shilling for a two-guinea cricket bat?" said Jimmy Silver, eyeing Muffin.

"A shilling each, you know."

"That's four bob," said Lovell.

"Four bob for a two-guinea bat?"

"Honest Injun!" asserted Muffin.

"Look here, if you don't like the bat when you see it you can have your bobs back, see? Can't say any fairer than that. A splendid bat. The very best bat stocked by Potters, at Latcham. Cost twenty-five shillings hard cash."

"They let you have a two-guinea bat for twenty-five shillings?"

"I mean it cost two guineas hard cash!"

"Does your pater do his shopping at Latcham?" asked Raby. "He doesn't live within sixty miles of Latcham."

"I—I mean—"

"Do you mean anything, or are you just talking out of the back of your neck?" inquired Lovell.

"I mean, my pater sent the order to Potters, at Latcham, to deliver the bat here," explained Muffin. "He told them to send their very best, see? My pater's rolling in money, as you know."

"Then he ought to send you some to settle up the half-crown you owe me from last term."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it a go?" asked Muffin. "Just a bob each, that's little enough for a chance of bagging that ripping cricket bat. I've got tickets here."

"Tickets!" repeated Jimmy Silver & Co., with one voice.

"Yes. Here they are."

Reginald Muffin drew from his pocket a wad of tickets, evidently cut from impot paper. He detached four of them and threw them on the study table.

"What on earth are you driving at?" asked Raby. "If you're selling that bat for four shillings, what are the tickets for?"

"Oh, draw it mild, you know!" said Muffin warmly. "I hope you don't expect to get a three-guinea bat for four measly bobs? It's a raffle!"

"A—a—a raffle?"

"Of course! And I'm offering you fellows first chance. Tickets a bob each, and the draw to take place in my study next Saturday, see? A bob isn't much to pay for a chance at a three-guinea cricket bat."

"Price gone up since your pater ordered it?" asked Lovell. "It was a two-guinea bat to start with, then a twenty-five shilling bat, and now it's three guineas."

"I—I mean—"

"I know what you mean," assented Lovell, rising to his feet. "You mean to spoof this study out of four bob. There isn't any bat, and there isn't going to be any bat, and you think you can diddle this study with a yarn that wouldn't take in Cuffy of Manders' House. But I've got a bat here—a five bob, and—"

Lovell did not say any more; he let his actions speak for him.

With one hand he picked up the five bob, with the other he grasped Reginald Muffin by the collar.

Whack!

"Oh!" roared Muffin.

Whack!

"Leggo!" yelled Muffin. "I tell you it's honest Injun; The bat will be here to-morrow—"

Whack!

"Yaroooh! It's really a raffle, and—"

Whack!

"Whooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin tore himself away and flew out of the end study. Lovell chuckled and returned to crossword puzzles; his comrades chuckled and returned to prep. On the study table lay the four numbered tickets, representing Tubby Muffin's latest remarkable stunt for raising the wind. Muffin did not come back for them. Whether they were worth anything or not, whether there really was a handsome new cricket bat or not, might be doubtful; but there was no doubt about the five bob, and Tubby Muffin remained at a safe distance from the end study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Takers!

"IT'S come!"

Reginald Muffin made that announcement to a group of Classical Fourth fellows in "Quarter" the following morning.

"It's come!" repeated Muffin, as no one seemed to heed his remark. "Do you hear, Jimmy? It's come!"

"Has it?" said Jimmy.

"Yes; it's in my study now."

"Go and look after it, then, whatever

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it is," said the captain of the Fourth. "Stay with it."
 "It's the bat!" hooted Tubby.
 "What bat?"
 "My splendid new cricket bat—the one I'm going to raffle."
 "Trot it out here, then," said Mornington.
 "Oh, all right."

Apparently the Classical juniors did not want the trouble of mounting the stairs to Tubby's study to see the wonderful new bat. Indeed, they were not likely to believe in the existence of the bat at all until they saw it.

So they were rather surprised when Tubby Muffin came back with a cricket bat under his arm.

It was quite a handsome bat.

Jimmy Silver knew all about cricket bats, and he saw at a glance that the bat had not cost three guineas, or even two; but it was exactly the twenty-five shilling bat sold at Potters in Latham, and it was a possession of which any junior cricketer might have been proud.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy. "It's really a bat! Whose is it, Tubby?"

"Mine!" yelled Tubby.

"You don't mean to say you were telling the truth in the study last night, Tubby?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yes you ass!"

"How did it happen, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you chaps—look at this bat!" said Tubby Muffin. "Have you ever seen a splendid bat like this?"

"Lots of times," said Lovell; "and better, too. But it's a good bat. Too heavy for you, though. You should have told your pater—"

"Oh, that's all right. I'm not keeping this bat," said Tubby. "It would suit any of you fellows. I want you to have it. I'm selling tickets for the raffle at a shilling each. That's cheap."

"Rats!"

"You see, if I sell twenty-five tickets I don't lose anything," said Muffin. "But I'm risking it. How many tickets will you take, Jimmy?"

"Nix."

"How many will you take, Lovell?"

"Same as Jimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin sniffed and rolled away with his bat. He tried Cyril Peele of the Fourth, but in vain.

After class, Tubby Muffin hawked his tickets up and down the Classical Fourth, but found no takers.

Some of the cricketing fellows liked the idea of possessing that bat; but they were not taken with the idea of a raffle.

Some had objections to it from its resemblance to a gamble; others were not at all sure that a raffle conducted by Reginald Muffin would be conducted on lines quite above suspicion; others were influenced by the great probability that Mr. Dalton would frown upon the scheme if he heard of it. And fellows with a turn for calculation pointed out that if Tubby sold twenty-five tickets for the raffle, a fellow had one chance in twenty-five of bagging the prize—which was not good enough for any fellow with his wits about him. Twenty-four fellows would pay a shilling each for nothing, which they had no desire to do.

It transpired, also, that Tubby's sheaf of tickets had numbers up to fifty, and the fat junior had not apparently set himself any limit. With unlimited tickets, a fellow's chance was next door to nil.

So Reginald Muffin, to his great chagrin, did not sell a single ticket;

and his face was frowning—most other faces wearing smiles.

The Classical fellows, in fact, were interested in Tubby's latest wheeze, rather as a joke than anything else—a joke on Tubby.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Leggett to the Rescue!

"W HAT luck?"
 Albert Leggett, of the Modern Fourth asked Muffin that question the next day.

Muffin's wheeze was well known by this time all through the Lower School. Moderns and Classicals, Fourth Form and Shell, had heard about it, and chuckled over it.

Not a single ticket had been sold, though Muffin had gone to the length of offering quite a large number of fellows to "wangle" the raffle in their favour if they would only take a few tickets off his fat hands.

Muffin considered this rather astute. The effect produced, however, was quite the reverse of the effect intended.

Fellows who did not want to be bothered with a raffle at all were not likely to bother about it when they learned that it was to be "wangled."

To Muffin's surprise and chagrin, this masterly move on his part put the lid on, so to speak, and on all sides he was assured that no Rookwood fellow would touch his raffle with a barge-pole.

Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, did not need to ask Muffin what luck he had had. Muffin's lugubrious face showed plainly enough that he had had no luck at all.

"Rotten!" said the fat Classical lugubriously. "I say, Leggett, old man, you take a ticket, and set an example."

"How many have you sold?"

"Oh, a few dozen."

Habit was too strong for Reginald Muffin. It really seemed that he could not tell the truth if he tried. Not that it was on record that he ever had tried!

"Oh, if you've sold a few dozen, not much chance of a fellow bagging the bat," said Leggett, shrugging his shoulders.

"I—I mean, I haven't sold any."

Leggett laughed.

"I know you haven't, you fat ass! You've practically told all the fellows it's a swindle. Serve you jolly well right. But, look here, I think I might take a ticket."

Tubby's fat hand went into his pocket.

"When's the raffle coming off?" asked Leggett, eyeing the fat junior curiously.

"This evening, in my study," said Tubby. "It's simply got to be settled before to-morrow—"

"Why to-morrow, specially?"

"To-morrow's Saturday," explained Muffin.

"Well, what difference does that make?" asked Leggett, staring at the fat Classical.

"I—I mean," Muffin stammered, "I—I happen to want the money to-morrow. I say, Leggett, how many tickets will you take?"

"Let's have it clear first," said Leggett. Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, was a businesslike youth, quite as unscrupulous as Tubby Muffin, and a good deal brighter. "First of all, you can't sell a swamp of tickets—a fellow wants a run for his money. If you arrange to put only sold numbers in the draw, it will be fair play."

Tubby considered this.

"You see, a fellow's not going to take

the chance of drawing a number out of hundreds of blanks," explained Leggett. "All very well for you, but you would need awful mugs to buy tickets on those lines. Put it in writing that only sold tickets will count in the raffle, and you may get a look-in."

"I—I suppose there's something in that," said Tubby reluctantly.

"Well, if that's a go, I'll take a ticket."

"It's a go!" said Tubby promptly. "Tubby would have agreed to anything to handle a shilling for one of his squares of imput paper. It was morning break or "quarter," and Tubby was keen to drop in at the tuckshop before third lesson. And Tubby was in his usual stony state; none of the vast wealth of the Muffin family had found its way to Rookwood yet.

"Here you are, Leggett! Sure you won't take two?"

"Enough's as good as a feast," said Leggett, "and before you touch my shilling you've got to put it in black-and-white. You're rather a downy bird, old Muffin, but you will have to get up very early in the morning to annex my bobs for nothing."

"Look here, Leggett—"

"Oh, come to business!" said Leggett impatiently. "Put up a notice, as I've told you, in the Fourth Form passage, so that you can't back out of it afterwards, and then you can talk to me."

Leggett strolled away.

"I say, Leggett, old chap—"

The Modern junior walked off without turning his head.

Muffin grunted.

Even Leggett's shilling was not to be forthcoming in time for light refreshments before third lesson.

However, his advice was good, and Muffin proceeded to act upon it. It dawned upon even his fat and fatuous brain that a raffle in which all the chances were carefully weighted against the participators was not likely to catch on.

Jimmy Silver & Co., chatting by the window in the Classical Fourth passage a little later, were interested to see Reginald Muffin sticking up a paper on the passage wall. A remnant of common sense deterred Reginald from putting it on the notice-board, where it might have been observed by masters and prefects.

"Hallo! What's this game?" asked Lovell.

Muffin blinked round at the Fiscalal Four.

"Read for yourselves!" he said, with dignity. "You fellows have been saying that my raffle is a catch and a swindle."

"Not much doubt about that, after what you've said yourself, you fat duffer!" said Raby.

"Well, look at that!" said Tubby Muffin loftily.

Jimmy Silver & Co. read the notice, written in Tubby's sprawling hand, and grinned. It ran:

"NOTIS! MUFFIN'S GRATE RAFFLE!

The prize to be won is a first-class splendid cricket bat, wich may be sene any time in No. 2 Study.

The winning number will be pooled out of a Hat in No. 2 Study on Friday evening at ate o'clock. Onley the numbers on tickets soaled and pade for will be included in the draw.

NO BLANK! SPESHUL NOTIS! NO BLANK!

Sined,
 REGINALD ADOLPHUS MUFFIN."



SETTLEMENT WANTED: "Am I to collect the money or take back the bat?" demanded the gentleman from Potters. Lovell's grasp closed on his new bat. The expression on Tubby Muffin's face grew positively anguished. Only too well he knew that if the gentleman from Potters did not receive either the bat or the money he would proceed directly to the Head. (See Chapter 5.)

"I think you fellows will admit that that's fair and above-board!" said Reginald Muffin, in a very dignified way, "and any chap you like can make the draw, if you don't trust me."

"Fair enough on those lines," said Jimmy Silver, with a nod.

"I've asked Gunner to draw the number," said Muffin. "I suppose you can trust Gunner?"

"Certainly! He's a born idiot, but as straight as a die," said Jimmy. "But you may as well chuck it, Muffin. Can't you see that your giddy raffle is a chicken that won't fight? Forget it!"

"I've sold a ticket already."

"So there's one silly ass at Rookwood, anyhow," remarked Lovell. "Who's the victim?"

"Leggett, of Manders' House."

Jimmy Silver looked surprised.

"Well, Leggett's about the last chap I should have expected to be taken in by rot of this kind," he said. "Leggett's jolly deep, and jolly wide. Mean to say he's paid up?"

"He's going to, as soon as he's seen this notice up," said Tubby. "Here he comes."

Albert Leggett came along the passage. The Fistical Four eyed him curiously as he read the notice, and then handed over a shilling to Reginald Muffin, and received a numbered ticket in exchange.

"So you're going in, Leggett?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Why not?" said Leggett.

"Mug's game," said Lovell; "and I always thought you were more rogue than mug, old bean!"

"Thanks!" sneered Leggett.

Tubby Muffin, with a beaming face, was scudding down the passage to the stairs, with Leggett's shilling in his hand. There was just time to scud

across to the school shop before third lesson, and expend that shilling in refreshments liquid and solid.

Leggett, with a look of dislike at the Fistical Four, walked away, his raffle ticket in his pocket.

There was a grin on his face as he walked back to Manders' House.

Most of the Rookwood juniors agreed with Lovell that the raffle was a "mug's" game; yet Leggett, reputed the sharpest fellow in the Lower School, had taken a ticket when all the other fellows held off. But Albert Leggett knew what he was about—as he usually did.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Lovell Butts In!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL was in the end study when the Co. came in to tea, wearing a thoughtful expression.

"I've been thinking about that fat idiot's silly raffle," he remarked, as the Co. sat down to tea.

"Eh?"

"Look at it!" said Lovell. "We know Muffin can't sell his raffle tickets—nobody will touch them."

"I know that!"

"He's sold one—to Leggett. Well, then, at that rate there will be only one number in the draw, and Leggett will hold it. It's an absolutely safe thing for Leggett; and he bags the cricket bat for a shilling."

Jimmy Silver stared.

"Well, my hat!" he exclaimed. "That's jolly deep of Leggett! Of course, he waited to see that the thing was a frost. Tubby's methods would have made it a frost, even if the fellows had been keen on silly raffles."

Raby chuckled.

"Muffin doesn't seem to see it," he remarked. "He was quite bucked by Leggett taking a ticket."

"It's rather thick," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "But Muffin oughtn't to be holding raffles at all; and he's got to take his chance. If he sells only one ticket, the bat goes to the holder of that ticket. He hasn't made it a condition that a number of them have to be sold."

"Well, I admit Muffin's a tick; but he's not such a tick as Leggett," argued Lovell. "And Leggett's a Manders' man, and I don't see letting a Manders' man diddle a School House man."

"Something in that," agreed Newcome. "Still, I don't see how we can butt in."

"You wouldn't," said Lovell politely. "I can, though. I'm not gone on raffles, but I'll go into this raffle to keep that tick Leggett from bagging a twenty-five bob bat for a shilling."

"But we're down on it," said Raby. "Oh, rot!"

"Why, you yourself said that this study ought to be down on it, and set an example."

"Well, perhaps I did; but that was before I knew Leggett was laying dodges to bag Muffin's bat for nothing. I'm not seeing a School House man diddled by an unwashed tick from Manders'. I'm going to buy a ticket myself, and I think my friends ought to back me up," said Arthur Edward Lovell warmly.

"Oh, anything for a quiet life," said Jimmy Silver. "Pass the cake, anyhow. Let's finish tea before we rescue Muffin from the Manders' man."

Arthur Edward Lovell had his way. After tea, the Fistical Four walked down the Fourth Form passage to

Study No. 2 and looked in. They found Tubby Muffin there, sad and lugubrious. "Sold a lot of tickets yet?" grinned Raby.

"Only one," said Muffin mournfully. "I say, you chaps might take a few off a fellow's hands. I say, I haven't had my tea; and Putty and Higgs and Jones minor are teing out, and there's nothing in the study cupboard, and—"

"And so the poor dog had none!" said Jimmy Silver sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We want a ticket each," said Lovell. Tubby Muffin brightened up wonderfully. Four shillings meant quite a decent tea in the study; and the absence of his study-mates was all to the good.

"Here you are!" he said eagerly. "Mind, we're down on the silly rot," said Lovell magisterially. "I don't approve of raffles. We're doing this to save you from being diddled by a man from Manders'. Can't you see that, in the conditions, if you sell only that one ticket to Leggett, he will get the bat for a shilling?"

Tubby Muffin stared.

"Well, if a lot of the fellows take tickets, it will be all right," he said brightly. "You four, to begin with, and—"

"Here you are, image!"

Four numbered tickets were handed over in exchange for an equal number of shillings. Jimmy Silver & Co. were not quite satisfied with their participation in Muffin's raffle; but there was satisfaction in the thought of defeating Albert Leggett's little game. Leggett, having assured himself that the raffle was a hopeless frost, with no takers except his honourable self, counted upon the prize as a certainty, and certainly did not count upon a turn of the tide so late in the day.

It was quite pleasant to think of the expression that would adorn Leggett's sharp face when he found a number of fellows in Muffin's study that evening for the draw.

Arthur Edward Lovell was so keen on it that he turned himself into a sort of commercial traveller for Muffin's raffle, and fairly hawked Muffin's tickets up and down the passage.

"You see, it's to put a stopper on a Modern cad!" Lovell explained in all the studies. "I'm down on raffles; but this is special. Do you want a Modern tick to diddle a School House man?"

Nobody did.

The result was that Tubby Muffin received quite a number of calls as he sat in Study No. 2 consuming tuck to the exact value of four shillings.

Mornington dropped in—apparently not having asked his chum Erroll's opinion this time—and then Townsend and Topham, and Oswald and Conroy, and several more fellows.

No less a sum than twenty-nine shillings was taken by Reginald Muffin; and as the bat was certainly not worth more than twenty-five, this was good business.

It was no wonder that Tubby beamed. He was still beaming joyously when the fellows came into the study before eight, to be ready for the draw. Study No. 2 was crammed with grinning Classicals when Leggett arrived from Manders' House.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lovell's Reward!

ALBERT LEGGETT looked surprised as he came into Study No. 2—wedged in, rather.

There was not much room to move in the room now.

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He glanced round, evidently not suspecting, for the moment, the true state of affairs.

"Hallo, you've got an audience, Muffin!" he remarked.

Muffin chuckled.

"Ready for the draw?" asked Gunner of the Fourth, with a grin.

"Ready, ay, ready!" chuckled Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Leggett looked still more surprised. So far, he could not see where the joke came in.

"No need for a crowd like this that I can see," he remarked. "As you fellows are not in the draw—"

"But we are!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We is!" grinned Raby.

"The jolly whole family!" chuckled Mornington. "Altogether, there will be—how many numbers in the draw, Muffin?"

"Thirty-four," said Muffin.

"What!" ejaculated Leggett.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

Leggett's face was worth watching, as Lovell had said it would be.

"That's right," said Tubby cheerfully. "One I sold to Leggett, four to you fellows, and twenty-nine since. That's thirty-four."

"Leggett's got one chance in thirty-four," remarked Mornington. "Looks to me as if the bat will stay on the Classical side, whoever bags it."

"Just a few!" chuckled Lovell.

Leggett breathed hard.

"Well, let's get on to business!" grinned Gunner.

"Go it!"

The ceremony of the draw did not take long.

Thirty-four numbers were shaken up in the hat, and then Gunner groped in it and drew out one slip of paper.

He held it up for inspection.

"Number two! Who's got Number two?"

Leggett muttered something under his breath. His ticket was numbered one. There was a chuckle from Arthur Edward Lovell, and he held up his ticket.

"Adsum!" he said.

"You, old fellow!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Little me!" chortled Lovell.

"You bag the bat, then," said Gunner.

"And I think I deserve it," said Lovell complacently. "But for me, that Modern tick would have bagged it."

"Hear, hear!"

Leggett scowled and slipped out of the study. With a scowling face, he walked home to Manders' House.

The cricket bat was duly handed over to the winner of the raffle, and the crowd in Study No. 2 broke up.

In Study No. 2 Tubby Muffin's fat face was beaming with contentment. The unusual sum of twenty-nine shillings was in his possession. He could not move without a sound of rattling and clinking cash.

The raffle had been a distinct success—owing to Lovell! A good deal more than the value of the bat had been captured by the fat Classical, and his thoughts were running on more and more raffles. It was a happy and contented Muffin who rolled up to the dormitory that night with the Classical Fourth.

The following morning Tubby Muffin was still in a state that could only be described as happy and glorious.

He beamed at breakfast; and after breakfast he cut across to the school shop for a further snack, to fortify himself for lessons.

As a rule, when Tubby was in funds, his funds made a rapid transit across Sergeant Kettle's counter. On the present occasion Tubby exercised heroic self-denial, and expended only the moderate sum of four shillings. Perhaps the fact that he had only just breakfasted helped him to resist temptation. Twenty-five shillings still jingled in his pocket when he rolled into the Form-room.

First and second lesson passed, and the juniors turned out for "Quarter"—by which time Tubby Muffin was hungry again. He was always hungry in quarter—and out of it, for that matter. With twenty-five shillings in his pocket, it was rather surprising that Reginald Muffin did not make a "bee-line" for the sergeant's little shop behind the beeches. For some reason Reginald was exercising an unusual self-control. But, as if unconsciously, his footsteps drew him nearer and nearer to the school shop.

For five minutes Tubby Muffin hung about the door of Sergeant Kettle's little shop, like a fat Peri at the gates of Paradise.

Obviously he was torn by an intense inward struggle.

Fellows who noticed him there expected, now that he was in funds, that he would roll into the shop and feed himself fairly up to his fat chin. What they naturally expected, happened at last.

Tubby Muffin rolled in.

He started with a single jam-tart, with a determination to end with it also. But the jam-tart was gone in a second or so and it was followed almost unconsciously by another. Almost before he knew what he was doing, Tubby Muffin had bolted nine or ten tarts, and was washing them down with ginger-pop in a few minutes.

After that Tubby seemed to throw discretion to the winds; perhaps on the principle that it was as well to be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

He gave orders right and left, and only the bell for third lesson interrupted the spread.

He rolled back to the School House, shiny and sticky, and breathing hard—with nine of his precious shillings still jingling in his pocket. The rest of them had ceased to jingle, in Sergeant Kettle's till.

Tubby Muffin was very thoughtful during third lesson. Some worry seemed to be on his fat mind, and Mr. Dalton had to call him to order several times. But lines, and even a rap from a pointer, seemed to make no impression on Tubby—with that mysterious worry on his fat mind.

At dinner he was quite lugubrious, not looking at all like a fellow who had lately secured a handsome profit in a raffle.

After dinner, as Saturday was a half-holiday, the juniors were free; and Tubby Muffin's footsteps led him, as usual, to the shop behind the beeches. This time he hesitated, but his hesitation was brief. He rolled in, and when he emerged, not a single shilling remained in his pocket.

How the inner Muffin dealt with the supplies Tubby had crammed in was a mystery; but if he was good at nothing else, Tubby had always been at least a hefty trencherman.

About tea-time he drifted along the Fourth Form passage to the end study. Jimmy Silver & Co. had come in from games practice and were sitting down to tea when Reginald Muffin blinked in on them.

Lovell held up a hand.

"No more raffles!" he said.
 "I—I'm not raffing anything, you know," said Tubby. "The—the fact is, I—I—I agree with what you fellows said the other day—I—I don't approve of raffles."

"Eh? How's that?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"If—if you like, Lovell, we'll—we'll call it off."

"Call it off?" repeated Lovell.

"Yes. I'd—I'd really like to have that bat—"

Arthur Edward Lovell's face was a picture. He rose without a word and picked up the famous bat from a corner of the study. Tubby's face grew hopeful as Lovell came towards him with the bat in his hands.

"Thanks, old man! I— Yaroooh!"

Lovell did not hand over the bat—he lunged with it. The lunge caught Reginald Muffin on his well-filled waistcoat—too well-filled. There was a roar of anguish, and Reginald Muffin faded away down the Fourth Form passage. Lovell returned to the tea-table with a very grim face; perhaps repenting him that he had butted in to rescue Muffin from the wiles even of an "unwashed tick" from Manders' House.

A little later there was a tap at the door.

It opened to reveal the fat, scared face of Reginald Muffin.

"You fat villain, get out!" roared Lovell.

"Shush!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"There's somebody—"

"Oh!"

Lovell coloured as he caught sight of a gentleman, with a silk hat in his hand, behind Muffin.

The man was a stranger to the end study, and they wondered what he could possibly want. However, they rose politely to their feet.

"It—it's here, sir!" gasped Muffin, in an expiring voice.

"Very good. You are sure you have decided not to keep the bat?"

"Oh, quite!" gasped Muffin, "I—I meant to, but—but— I—I say, Lovell, he—he—he's come for the—the—the—the bat!"

"What?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"The—the—the cricket bat, you know!" gasped Muffin.

"The cricket bat?" repeated Lovell dazedly. "Who's this chap, anyhow?"

"I represent Potters," explained the gentleman with the silk hat. "Master Muffin ordered a cricket bat from us on Wednesday afternoon."

"Not—not this bat?" gasped Lovell.

"Yes; that appears to be the bat," assented the gentleman from Potters, glancing at Lovell's new possession.

"But—but this bat was sent to Muffin by his father!"

"It could scarcely have been," said the gentleman from Potters. "Master Muffin ordered it himself on Wednesday, and it

was duly delivered here, payment to be made this week. As we have not heard from Master Muffin, I have called to collect this small account."

"Oh!" gasped the Fistical Four.

"Of course, Master Muffin is entitled to return the bat if it proves unsuitable, and no doubt he will call at our extensive show-rooms and select another," said the gentleman from Potters; "but I regret that I am unable to leave the bat here unless payment is made, as we never run accounts—neither would Dr. Chisholm allow it. If you have decided, Master Muffin, that you do not wish to keep this bat, I will take it away with me."

Lovell gasped.

"You jolly well won't! Muffin raffed this bat!"

"Eh?"

"And I won it—"

"Well, upon my word! Of course, I have nothing to do with this," said the gentleman from Potters. "If payment is made for the bat, Master Muffin may raffle it, or do anything else he pleases with it. If the bat remains here, I must collect the amount of twenty-five shillings."

"Pay up, you fat villain!" hooted Lovell. "You can pay up easily enough."

"I—I was going to!" groaned Tubby Muffin.

"Well, go ahead and do it!"

(Continued on page 28.)

This Week's List of Birthday Dates!

Claim one of our topping gifts if you were born on any of the dates published below!

Readers who were registered in the POPULAR Birthday Gift Club before April 6th, 1929, may claim one of the following gifts:

- Fountain Pen.
- Penknife.
- Table Tennis Set.
- Combined Compass and Magnifying glass.
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- Drawing Set.
- Electric Torch and Battery.
- Leather Pocket Wallet.
- Hobby Annual.
- Holiday Annual.

—if the date of their birth is the same as a date in the following list—

- January 30th, 1914.
- December 4th, 1909.
- September 15th, 1918.
- April 10th, 1916.
- July 7th, 1914.
- November 5th, 1911.
- May 7th, 1915.
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- February 13th, 1913.
- October 9th, 1913.
- March 23rd, 1917.
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 5, Carmelite Street,
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so as to reach this address not later than April 20th, 1929. Please write the word "CLAIM" in the top left hand corner of your envelope.

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ANOTHER LIST OF BIRTH DATES WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

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POPULAR.

APRIL 13th.

And, amid a great rush, the doctor related what had occurred—or, rather, what he thought had occurred. He described Trotwood's fate; he told of the aeroplane's flight into the desert, and its non-return.

When he had finished everybody was convinced.

Four valuable lives had been lost, and the treasure was still in the heart of the desert! The scorching sands had triumphed!

There was no quiet on board the Wanderer that afternoon or evening. Sir Crawford remained in his cabin. He was bowed down with the awful news. And the ship was quiet and still at a much earlier hour than usual. By eleven o'clock everything was silent. And then something curious happened.

A dark form appeared in the water near the stern of the yacht. It moved to and fro once or twice, and then remained still right beneath a rope that dangled down from the deck.

Two arms grasped the rope, and a moment later a man was hauling himself up, hand-over-hand, to the deck. The swimmer had just come from the shore, braving the perils of the tropic sea.

And the intruder on board the Wanderer was none other than Captain John Nixon.

He had arrived at Agabat secretly, and nobody knew of his presence there. Awaiting his time, he had come out to the yacht.

Just for a moment or two he stood on the dark deck in his dripping clothes. Then he moved forward like a shadow, and disappeared below. Captain Nixon had failed all along the line—so far.

But he did not mean to fail now. He was not beaten yet. The treasure was lost, he believed, but it was still possible for him to have his revenge upon those who had foiled him so many times. The rascally skipper had become somewhat unlimbered in mind, owing to his long succession of failures.

He was not after the treasure now. Captain Nixon meant mischief—dire mischief!

THE END.

("THE RIVER OF FIRE" is the title of next week's thrilling story of the Boys of St. Frank's.)

BUNTER THE RAIDER!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Bunter's played a dirty trick, and bagged my tick," said the Bounder. "I think something ought to be done for Bunter. I really think he's gone over the limit this time—especially by dragging the captain of the Form into his rotten games."

"I agree!" said Wharton. "Hear, hear!" said Squiff. "I leave the matter in Wharton's hands, as Form captain" said Vernon Smith, and he laid his head on the pillow.

"I—I say, Harry, old man—" mumbled Bunter.

"Smithy, old man, you've played up jolly decently," said Harry Wharton. "I think every fellow here will agree that Bunter has gone over the limit this time. My opinion is that Bunter ought to be barred by the Form for the rest of the term."

"Hear, hear!" said Peter Todd. "As Bunter's study-mate, and the fellow who has to stand him at close quarters, I

fully endorse the sentence of our worthy Form captain. Bunter's sent to Coventry!"

"I say, Peter, old chap—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I wasn't—"

"Bunter's barred!" said Harry Wharton. "It's no good licking him; he's been licked lots of times. It's no good kicking him; he's worn out more boot-leather than any fellow at Greyfriars. He's barred by the Form for the rest of the term."

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!" said Polsover major.

"I say, you fellows—"

Nobody answered Bunter. The sentence of "Coventry" was already in force.

"Peter, old man—"

Silence.

"Harry, old chap—"

No reply.

"Beast!"

And Billy Bunter laid his head on his pillow, and his deep snore soon resounded through the Remove dormitory.

THE END.

(Another fine story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "BARRED BY THE REMOVE!")

TRICKING THE FOURTH!

(Continued from page 7.)

"I—I can't!"

"Why not?" hooted Lovell.

"I—I had to have a snack in quarter, and—"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

There was a silence in the end study. The gentleman from Potters began to look restive.

"Well, this does not concern me," he said at last. "Am I to collect the money, or take the bat back?"

Lovell's grasp closed on his new bat. The expression on Tubby Muffin's face grew positively anguished. Only too well he knew that if the gentleman from Potters did not receive either the bat or the money, he would proceed directly to the Head. Lovell knew it, too! and his grasp on the bat slowly unclosed, and in silence—a silence that could be felt—he handed it over to the gentleman from Potters.

With a far from satisfied expression on his face, the gentleman from Potters retired with the bat in his possession.

What followed was like a dream of anguish to Reginald Muffin, when he thought about it afterwards.

The fat Classical could not see that he had been to blame in any way—though Jimmy Silver & Co. did their very best to make it clear to him.

Tubby Muffin's manners and customs had often led to a ragging before; but this ragging was a real record.

When the fat Classical crawled out of the end study at last, he was wishing from the very depths of his podgy heart that he had never hit on that brilliant scheme for raising the wind.

And though Muffin seemed still unable to understand what the fellows were making such a fuss about—he gave up the idea of further raffles.

THE END.

(Don't miss: "MR. GREELY, AGAIN!" next Tuesday's rousing tale of Jimmy Silver & Co.)

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