

SCHOOL & WILD-WEST TALES & *Free Gifts* EVERY WEEK!

The POPULAR ²

Complete Story Weekly

Week Ending
April 20th,
1929.
New Series.
No. 534.

EVERY
TUESDAY.



"The
RIVER of FIRE!"
Amazing Story of African Adventure!

HANDSOME FREE GIFTS for members of the Birthday Club! Are you a member?

The "Popular" BIRTHDAY GIFT CLUB!



RULES AND REGULATIONS.

In order to become a member of our FREE BIRTHDAY GIFT CLUB you must, first of all, fill in ALL the particulars required on the special REGISTRATION COUPON printed below. When you have done this, post the coupon to:

The Editor,
The "Popular" Birthday Gift Club,
5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.)

Providing your registration coupon is filled up correctly, you will then be enrolled as a member of our Birthday Club, and may consider yourself as such, unless you are notified by us to the contrary.

Then watch carefully the list of birthday dates, which are published in this paper week by week. Should the date of YOUR BIRTH be the same as one of the published dates, you will be able to claim one of the splendid gifts in the list printed above. You can choose your own present!

Once readers are enrolled as members of our Birthday Gift Club they have no need to re-register, as their original registration holds good, providing they continue to purchase regularly the POPULAR, and also one other of the following papers—the

You can choose any of these GIFTS:

Fountain Pen.
Penknife.
Pocket Watch.
Combined Compass and Magnifying Glass.
Table Tennis Set.
Conjuring Outfit.
Torch and Battery.
Hobby Annual.
Holiday Annual.

"Magnet," "Gem," "Nelson Lee," or "Modern Boy"—as stated on their registration coupon.

Take every care that the DATE OF BIRTH which you give on your registration coupon is absolutely correct in every particular, for this date, once it is accepted for registration, can in no circumstances be altered afterwards.

Please remember that the only method of joining our Birthday Club is by filling up one of the printed registration coupons published in this paper. No other form of registration can be recognised.

The Editor's decision upon all points arising out of this scheme must be accepted as final and legally binding. This is an express condition of registration.

Only ONE registration coupon need be filled in, and sent to the given address. This should be received on or before the date stated on the registration coupon.

READERS OVERSEAS.

All Overseas readers are eligible to participate in our Free Birthday Gift Club, as special time extensions are allowed in the case of readers living elsewhere than in the British Isles.

This week's list of birthday dates, and special claims coupon, appear on page 17.

REGISTRATION COUPON.

BIRTHDAY GIFTS.

(Please write very plainly.)

Name Date of Birth: Day Month Year

Full Address

I declare that I am a reader of "THE POPULAR" and and purchase BOTH THESE PAPERS regularly from my newsagent. I have carefully read the rules of your Birthday Club Scheme, and I agree to abide by them in every particular. Will you please enrol me as a member of your FREE BIRTHDAY GIFT CLUB.

Newsagent's Name

Address

THIS COUPON IS ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL APRIL 27th, 1929.

POPULAR.

APRIL 20th, 1929.

THE ST. FRANK'S ADVENTURERS IN AFRICA!

In the hands of cannibals—no chance of rescue! That situation might turn even the biggest optimist into a pessimist—But not so with Nelson Lee. With characteristic British grit and pluck, Lee devises a method of escape—a hazardous, desperate venture!



The RIVER of FIRE!

A GRIPPING LONG COMPLETE TALE OF THE EARLY ADVENTURES OF THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S, NARRATED BY NIPPER OF THE REMOVE!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Magicians!

"SOMETHING," I said distinctly, "has got to be done!" The situation in which we found ourselves was decidedly unpleasant.

By "we," I mean Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Nicodemus Trotwood of the Remove at St. Frank's, and myself. It is true that, flying over the African desert in our aeroplane, we had been successful in lifting the buried treasure of the oasis of El Safra, which we had come so far to seek. But it was equally true that the said treasure—some three hundred thousand pounds' worth of precious stones—was likely to be of little use to us! For, blown out of our course by a terrific storm, we had been compelled to come down in the country of the Beejees, a particularly hostile tribe of African savages. We were now together in a hut which was built in the topmost branches of a tall tree in the Beejee village.

"By gad," remarked Dorrie, "I think somethin' is goin' to be done, by the look of those blacks! An' it'll be somethin' connected with sharp knives, or burnin' faggots—an' we shall be the unhappy victims!"

"I don't mean that," I said. "Some-thing's got to be done—by us! We shall have to make a bold bid for liberty!"

"Good!" said Dorrie. "How shall we do it?"

"That's just what we've got to think

of!" I declared. "It's no good standing here, twiddling our thumbs—"

"My dear Nipper, I admire your courage," put in Nelson Lee. "But you must not raise false hopes. Our chances of escape are remote, and when I speak in that way you may realise that the position is fairly desperate."

"Yes, gov'nor, I know it," I said quietly.

Night had fallen, and the scene which we beheld immediately below us was weird and extraordinary. And it had a kind of sinister interest for us, because we knew very well that the preparations had been made mainly because of ourselves.

The Beejees were intent upon a night orgy.

After a tremendous feast, the idea was to offer up sacrifices—or, to be exact, Dorrie, the gov'nor, Nicodemus, and myself. We were prisoners in the hands of these savages, and our position was indeed precarious.

The feast had already commenced.

Up in our tree-dwelling, built in the topmost branches, we could see right down into the enormous enclosure near the chief's hut. Many bonfires were burning, and the whole scene was illuminated by the glaring, flickering light. It was a wild enough spectacle, in all truth.

Some of the blacks were attired in awful-looking paint and feathers, and these were dancing and yelling as though they had gone completely mad. In all probability they had.

Up in the tree we were helpless; indeed, I don't think I have ever felt quite so helpless before. There was absolutely nothing to be done. We were a great distance from the ground, and even though we had our revolvers, they were of no use to us.

"Couldn't we manage to shin down the bally trunk of this tree?" suggested Dorrimore brilliantly.

"Easily," replied the gov'nor.

"Well, what's wrong with the idea?" "Simply that we should be captured, one by one, as we reached the ground," replied Nelson Lee calmly. "You have apparently overlooked the fact, Dorrie, that a large number of our yelling hosts are almost beneath this tree, and in the glare of the light cast by the fires we have no chance of reaching the ground undetected. I'm afraid your idea is no good, old man."

Dorrie sighed.

"My ideas are always like that," he growled.

We were squatting on the platform which surrounded the hut. The wind had completely died down, and the tree was motionless, except when we moved; then, of course, it would sway slightly.

"I don't think we shall have to wait long now, sir," I said, after a while. "The beggars have been going ahead for hours, and dawn will be here before so very long. Oh, I'd give thousands if I could only get into that old bus!"

I gazed longingly across the river—just visible—at the black patch of

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

ground which, in daytime, could be recognised as grassland. On that gentle slope rested the great aeroplane which had brought us into the land of the Beejees. The machine was intact.

No harm had befallen it. The natives had feared to tamper with the huge specimen of modern progress.

"Isn't it awful to know that that machine is standing there, loaded up with oil and petrol, ready to fly off!" I said bitterly. "There's enough juice on board to carry us four or five hundred miles, sir."

"Quite," agreed Lee. "But it will do no good to talk like that, Nipper. We can't get to the machine, although we can see it. A fight for freedom would certainly end in a swift death. And my plan is to stave off the final scene as long as possible. I never give up hope until the situation is really hopeless."

"Well, it's rotter to know that the machine is there, and that we can't use it," I said. "It would be better, perhaps, if the old bus had got smashed up, then we shouldn't have felt so wild about it."

"It is wrong of you to say that, my good Nipper," put in Trotwood. "While there is life there is hope—and I have great faith in Mr. Lee. If there is even a slight chance, we shall make a bid for freedom. And the aeroplane will be ready for our use, if such an opportunity crops up."

Nelson Lee nodded. "What we must do is to make an attempt to scare these savage blacks," he said. "Once we can get them in a state of fright, our chances might come. Mind you, our position is as desperate as it could be, and there is only a very remote possibility of anything being accomplished. However, we can do nothing but try—"

"Why, have you got an idea, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"Of course he has!" put in Dorrie. "Before now you, gov'nor has got us out of the most frightful scrapes—an' I shan't give up the ghost until I see the professor polished off. Once he's gone, we might as well give in."

Nelson Lee smiled. "You must not place too much faith in me this time, Dorrie," he said. "I do not believe for a moment that my scheme will work. But I happen to have a small bottle of petrol in my pocket, also some cotton wool, to say nothing of a small silver cigarette-holder—"

"What the dickens do you mean, sir?" I broke in, staring.

"If you will let me finish, Nipper—" "I will, sir; but how can cotton wool help us—or petrol? And where does the cigarette-holder come in?" I asked.

"He's got an idea," said Dorrie. "Be quiet, you little ass, or you'll spoil everything". You can bet the idea is a good one—"

"I really think somebody is mounting the tree," put in Nicodemus at this point. "Look, sir!"

And then we noticed that quite a number of blacks were swarming up the tree—up the rough ladder, which had been placed into position unbeknown to us. We all stood up, and I clenched my fists.

"Shall we fight for it, sir?" I asked tensely. "We can knock the brutes down one by one, as they attempt to climb on to the platform. We could hold out for days—we could defy the rotters—"

"Until we starved!" put in Lee grimly. "Quite so, Nipper. And you

need not think that the blacks would be defeated by that expedient. They would not give us time to starve. Finding us obstinate, it would only take them a few minutes to hack through the tree at the bottom—until we crashed down!"

"But we can't submit without a scrap!" I protested.

"I have no intention of doing so," said the gov'nor quietly. "But the time has not yet come for us to engage in the scrap, Nipper. We must be meek and submissive—we must make these blacks think that we are scared out of our wits. Then there will be a greater chance of success later on."

"I suppose you're right, sir," I agreed. "We don't want to mess everything up by being too impulsive."

There was not much time for further conversation, for the Beejees were now arriving on the platform in twos and threes. We had been unable to hear Nelson Lee's plan, and so had to go unsatisfied.

I noticed that a sudden light had come into Trotwood's eyes. He almost looked excited, and this was most unusual, for Nicodemus was generally a calm fellow, and it needs a lot to disturb him.

"Thought of something, Nicky?" I whispered.

"Really, Nipper, I do not know," replied Trotwood. "But there is just a slim possibility that we might try a little experiment. It all depends upon circumstances."

"But what's the wheeze?"

"I would rather not say," replied Nicodemus. "I do not want to make you feel that there might be a hope—because, frankly, I have little faith in the project which is in my mind."

"You're a queer merchant," I remarked.

"Quite so, my dear Nipper—I am well aware of that," replied Nicodemus calmly. "And I hope—"

I merely knew what he hoped, for just then he was grabbed by two blacks and forced along the platform. I was treated in the same way. Ropes made of stout fibre were passed round us.

And then we were lowered like sacks to the ground.

It was a horrible experience. The rope was not secured very tightly, and if it slipped I should have plunged to certain death. And there was no guarantee that the rope would stand the strain of my weight.

However, it was good stuff, and did stand the strain.

Upon arriving on the ground, I found Nelson Lee and Dorrie already there. Somewhat to my surprise, I saw that they were not bound, but stood quite free in the centre of a crowd of jabbering Beejees.

There was no hope of escape, of course, and Nicodemus and I were soon with the others. It was something, at all events, to be together. And it was also excellent to be free.

When the worst came to the worse we should be able to fight like Britishers—and it would be better to die fighting than to submit to murder. However, the time had not yet come.

We should only show fight when death actually stared us in the face.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Touch and Go!

WE were marched from the foot of the tree to the compound, where all the festivities were taking place. As we went along a tremendous shout commenced, and it grew louder and louder as we progressed.

It was a wild, howling yell, and it

rose from hundreds of throats. The sound was terrifying, and it made us realise more than ever how completely we were in the hands of these savages.

To escape by sheer force was an utter impossibility. If any escape was to be made, it would be by a ruse—by a stratagem. And I did not see how it was possible to adopt any trickery.

Once within the compound the shouts died down. We were taken straight across to the chief's dwelling. The fat old beggar squatted there, surrounded by his headmen. All were painted up.

The other blacks formed themselves into a great circle, leaving us standing alone. And beyond the enclosure were thousands of other blacks, all greatly interested in the proceedings.

The king commenced jabbering at express speed, and shortly afterwards Nelson Lee told us that the gist of the old rascal's talk was that we were to be put to death as soon as the first light of dawn appeared.

The gov'nor had something to say about it; and as I can't set down the words in the Beejee language, I'll do so in English. I'm afraid Beejee would look rather queer in print, and nobody would understand it.

"Thou art a bold man, O chief of the Beejees!" exclaimed Nelson Lee sternly. "Is it for us to fear thee? We are men of magic, my companions and I. Thinkst thou that we care for thy threats?"

"Thy speech is coarse," said the chief. "It is with difficulty that I grasp thy meaning, for thy knowledge of my tongue is limited. I am Mwangaal, the king of all the Beejees, and yet thou address me. Thou shalt suffer!"

Of course, he didn't speak like that—he used his own filthy lingo, and I've put down the gov'nor's translation as near as possible.

"It is thou who wilt suffer, O Mwangaal," said Nelson Lee. "Thou art ignorant of the fact that I am a great witch-doctor. Were it my will, I could strike thee down even now. See thou this steel object?" And here the gov'nor exposed his revolver. "It is capable of sending death!"

"Thou art a man of little sense—" began Mwangaal.

"Wait!" snapped Lee. "Listen to me, thou reptile! Is it proof thou wantest? I will send thee into a state of fear by wonder-workings. See! I will set fire to my own breath, until the flames roar forth!"

"Bah! Thou art mad, white man!" said the chief. "Perform thou this feat, and thy life shalt be spared. But thou art boasting. No man can set fire to his own breath—nay, not even the magic witch-doctors of my own people!"

"They are as babies compared to me," said Lee contemptuously. "Wait, O boastful king! Thou wilt see! Harm us, and curses will fall upon thy tribe even as rain falls during the storm!"

Nelson Lee turned to speak to us—we hadn't understood a word of what he had said to the chief, of course—he let us know that afterwards. There was a keen light in his eyes.

"I'm trying to bluff the old ruffian," he whispered. "Collect round me—I don't want the brutes to see what I'm doing!"

The gov'nor pulled the small bottle of petrol from his pocket. Within a few seconds he had soaked a big wad of cotton wool—and this he stuffed into his mouth! Then he took a fancy to his cigarette-holder, for he placed this in his mouth, too. When he turned back to the chief he looked normal. The cigarette-holder was between his lips, hidden—nearly all of it—within.

"Oh, my hat!" I gasped. "I know what he's going to do!"

"Please tell me, old son!" pleaded Dorrie. "I'm frightfully puzzled. Why has he eaten that cotton-wool an' the cigarette-holder? I didn't know he was particularly hungry—"

"It's a trick!" I broke in. "Don't you see what it is? The gov'nor's going to set light to the petrol fumes as he blows them out! The cig-holder is to protect his lips—it forms a kind of burner for the gas!"

"By gad!" said Dorrie blankly.

"He'll burn his lips, too!" muttered Trotwood.

"Supposing he does?" I asked. "That's better than being burnt altogether, isn't it? Watch! This is going to be interesting! There's no telling how the blacks wil. take it! They're terribly superstitious, and i they think we're 'tagati,' they'll treat us like gods!"

We waited breathlessly.

Nelson Lee said nothing further; he couldn't very well. The blacks were watching us suspiciously, and with hostile looks. I half expected them to attack; I believe they would have done, but for the chief.

The gov'nor struck a match, and at the same time: he blew gently and steadily through the metal tube. Naturally, a mixture of air and petrol spray emerged—a kind of gas.

And the instant he applied the match to his mouth the gas ignited with a soft roar; for, with the force of the gov'nor's breath behind it the whole thing acted as a blow-lamp.

The flame roared out of Nelson Lee's mouth, and it was almost impossible to see the end of the silver tube. I have seen a similar trick performed on the music-hall stage—it is quite easy, once you know how.

The effect was immediate.

The blacks shouted with fear and amazement. Those who were near stared at Lee with frightened faces. Even the chief started back, and his eyes grew large. A man who could set fire to his own breath was certainly a mighty wizard!

"Thou art indeed a great witch-doctor!" muttered Mwangaal.

Nelson Lee went mad for a second. He jumped about, rolled over, jumped up again and then let out a terrific roar. I knew the reason. He wanted to get rid of his cotton-wool and cigarette-holder unobserved.



THE FLAMING RIVER! The instant Trotwood threw his match to the ground, a blinding sheet of flame rushed towards the river. The next moment the water was aflame from bank to bank, roaring and hissing like a huge furnace. (See Chapter 3.)

"See!" he shouted. "What of thy witch-doctors now, O Mwangaal? Canst thou produce one who can make fire of his own breath?"

The chief and his headmen jabbered together excitedly. The trick had had a good effect. And while Lee was waiting for the chief to speak again Trotwood tugged at his arm.

"Can I make a suggestion, sir?" asked Nicodemus.

"Certainly, Trotwood," said Lee; "but you must be quick."

"Do you see those skulls, sir?"

Nicodemus pointed to a horrible collection of human skulls which hung from a string at the top of a high pole, quite near by.

"Yes, my boy, I see them," said the gov'nor.

"And do you see that cow standing there, sir?" asked Nick.

"Yes. But what on earth—"

"Half a minute, sir," said Trotwood eagerly. "Tell the chief that our marvellous powers are such that we can make the skulls talk, and we can cause the very trees to chatter!"

Nelson Lee stared. "You are overwrought, my boy—" he began.

"I'm not, sir," protested Nicodemus. "I can easily—"

"Great Scott!" I breathed. "I can see the game! Don't you know, gov'nor? Trotwood's a ventriloquist! He's got a marvellous knack of throwing his voice! If you'll tell the chief—"

"Splendid!" interrupted Lee. "Excellent! It may be the means of turning the tide in our favour. Be ready when I give the word, Trotwood."

"Yes, sir."

Nelson Lee turned to Mwangaa again.

"Well, O chief, hast thou decided?" he asked. "Is it still thy intention to make thy slaves lay fingers upon our sacred persons? Thou wilt be a bold man indeed if thou—"

"Hold!" interrupted the chief. "Thou hast impressed me—thou art a great worker of magic. But I and my advisers would see further examples of thy wondrous power. Kill thou that cow which stands yonder."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"Why should the innocent beast die?" he asked. "It shall be killed if thou watest; but I will do better. The cow shall laugh, even as the human being!"

"Thou art talking madly, O white wizard!" said the chief.

Nelson Lee nudged Nicodemus.

"Make the cow laugh!" he breathed.

We all waited, rather breathless.

"It is my command that the cow shall laugh long and loudly," shouted Nelson Lee. "Listen, O thou unbelievers! Listen, and thou wilt surely understand that thou art not dealing with fools, but with men of magic!"

The gov'nor pointed dramatically towards the cow, and Nicodemus took his cue.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" roared the cow. "Ho, ho, ho! Haw!"

It was certainly rather uncanny, for it seemed as though the very cow itself gave vent to a wild laugh. The Beejees stared at it in a state of real terror, and some of them were shivering visibly.

"Mayhap thou wilt say that there is some trickery?" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "But I will show thee a further example of our power. Even the skulls of dead men shall laugh with scorn at thy ignorance. Listen, O Mwangaa!"

Lee turned his head slightly.

"The skulls!" he murmured, in English.

The next moment the skulls set up a most infernal din—or so it appeared. Not one of them, but the whole bunch seemed to be cackling in the most unearthly and diabolical manner.

It was quite uncanny—even though we knew that Nicodemus was responsible. And if it seemed weird to us, who were in the know—how must that cackle have sounded in the ears of these superstitious savages?

The result, in any case, was remarkable.

Scores of the blacks grovelled on the ground—whether in fright or whether in reverence to us, I don't know. In any case, they grovelled. It was not even necessary for Nicodemus to go any further with his ventriloquial entertainment.

The king rose to his feet.

"Thou hast impressed me greatly, O white magician," he exclaimed. "Until dawn thou art safe—and thy companions with thee. I will speak with my advisers, and it shall be decided what will be done."

He said a lot more than that, and once more we were surrounded and led away. But this time the blacks were quite deferential in their manner. They were afraid of us now.

For a moment I feared that we were to be taken back to the tree-top. But this, happily, was not the case. Having emerged from the compounds we were marched away through the village until we came to a large mud hut set with its back to a belt of trees.

In this we were thrust, and left to ourselves.

"A nasty, smelly hole—that's what this is," complained Dorrie. "What's the idea, Lee, old man?"

THE POPULAR—No. 534.

In chet is conferring with its headmen," said Nelson Lee. "We have gained a respite, at all events, and this prison does not seem to be such a proposition as the house in the trees. There may be a chance yet."

"Nickv was marvellous!" I declared.

"It was certainly a remarkable performance," said Nelson Lee approvingly.

"Well done, Trotwood! Without your aid, I verily believe we should have been dead by this time. We have made the blacks afraid of us—and that is a very good thing."

"And what's to be done now, sir?" I asked.

Nelson Lee clenched his fists.

"We are going to—escape!" he replied grimly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The River of Fire!

LEORD DORRIMORE chuckled.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "I knew it was comin'—"

"—I was expectin' it, by gad! Escape! That's the best word I've ever heard spoken!"

"But how can we escape, sir?" I asked excitedly.

"It is now or never," replied the gov'nor. "The chief and his elders are pow-wowing. It is quite probable that they will decide to put us to death, for they fear us. We have a chance to get across the river. Our guards will not cause much trouble, since they understand our power, and are afraid of it."

"But how can we find the river, old man?" asked Dorrie.

"If you did not use your eyes while you were in the tree dwelling, I did," said Lee grimly. "This hut is built against a narrow belt of trees. On the other side of these trees the river flows. So our task ought not to be hard."

"By jing!" I breathed. "Is it possible, sir? The bridge isn't far off, and—and the aeroplane—"

"You must not raise your hopes too high, Nipper," warned Nelson Lee. "Our lives are in danger, and this is no time to attempt any wild 'stunts,' as you would call them. The aeroplane will probably remain where it is—our chief object is to escape from the clutches of these savages."

"But we can fly away in the machine can't—"

"Possibly; but the chance is remote," said Lee soberly. "The aeroplane must be started up, and it cannot be accomplished in a second. While we delayed with the machine we should be captured—unless, of course we adopted some ruse to keep the blacks on the other side of the river."

"Couldn't we chop the bally bridge down?" suggested Dorrie.

"With our hands?" asked Lee.

"Well, hardly—"

"Great Scott!" I gasped. "I've got an idea, sir!"

"Well?"

"How much petrol have we got on board?" I asked huskily.

"Several hundred gallons."

"Could we sacrifice fifty gallons?" I went on. "Could we get it out of the tank, and—"

"I dare say we could, but what on earth are you talking about?" demanded Nelson Lee. "How will petrol help us?"

I took a deep breath.

"Let's escape from this hut, sir—and then I'll tell you," I said. "While we're jawing here we might leave it until too late. The main thing is to get to the aeroplane."

"Yes, Nipper, you are right," said

Now, Dorrie, follow me; and you boys come behind Dorrie. If we have to fight, we'll fight gamely and go down like true Britons."

We did not find it necessary to use the front exit, after all. For the wall of the hut was cracked in the rear, and one or two knocks resulted in a portion of the wall collapsing.

We all slipped out easily, and made our way into the dark trees. Our escape was apparently unnoticed, for no hue-and-cry was raised. The trees afforded us excellent shelter.

It was quite on the cards that some of the blacks were posted at different points, but we had to chance this.

The whole crowd of warriors and on-lookers still gathered round the brightly illuminated compound, waiting for the chief's decision. And while the fat old scoundrel was making up his mind we were making our escape.

Not that we had many hopes of success.

We were in the heart of the Beejeo stronghold. Even if we succeeded in getting clear of the village, there was no guarantee that we should escape from the territory. Our absence would soon be noted and then the chase would commence.

At the same time action was a joy to us. We were doing something—we were making a desperate bid for freedom. And I had an idea in my head which filled me with wild hopes.

The main thing was to get across the river.

We passed through the trees cautiously. Dorrie was for plunging ahead at full speed, but Nelson Lee's wiser counsel prevailed. It was better to go cautiously and to waste a few minutes, than to arouse the whole village by our movements.

"The river!" I breathed at last.

We had emerged into the open again. The village was partly hidden from us; but we could see the glare of the bonfires reflected overhead. There were no native dwellings just here; and farther along we could dimly see the frail-looking structure of the wooden bridge.

"Can we do it, sir?" I asked in a whisper.

"We can try, at all events," replied Lee. "Be quiet, young 'un."

We moved onwards like shadows. In single file and walking on the extreme bank of the river, we progressed. We crouched as we walked, hoping that our movements would be unseen.

It was a trying journey, although so short.

Detection at this moment would have meant failure—ghastly failure. All our hopes rested upon crossing that bridge. We were fairly shivering with excitement as we approached the bridge—at least, I was.

Nelson Lee was the first to set foot upon the rough woodwork. He turned for a moment, and saw the shapes of many huts, with dark figures moving between them. And the gov'nor crouched down low.

"Get down all of you!" he hissed.

"We shall be seen if we are not careful! If the blacks make a rush towards the bridge—run! We will get to the other side, and use our revolvers. It ought not to be difficult to hold the bridge for a few minutes."

As it happened, no alarm was raised.

We crept across the bridge like mere shadows—slowly and noiselessly. And at length we reached the other side. We were all astonished to find that our escape was still undetected.

Right in front of us stretched a large expanse of smooth grassland. And the

faithful old aeroplane was standing there, ready for instant use. But should we be able to start up the engines and get off before the hordes surrounded us?

It was a problem. "Now, what's the programme?" asked Dorrie. "Shall we make off into the bush, or shall we get into the old bus?" "The former plan is, perhaps, the safer one," said Nelson Lee. "We should at least stand a chance of getting far away before the blacks overtook us; it is even possible that they would abandon pursuit at dawn. By remaining here, and attracting attention by starting up the aeroplane, we might sign our death-warrants. But I am in favour of attempting the flight."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "Let's get to the aeroplane, sir!" Both Dorrie and Trotwood were also pleased by the gov'nor's decision. It was far better to take a sporting chance, even in face of death, than to sneak off on the quiet, sacrificing the machine.

Within a few minutes we were alongside, and in comparative safety. For the great biplane afforded us shelter. There was not a soul near it excepting ourselves. The machine was quite intact.

It stood on the grass exactly as we had left it upon landing.

There was a clear run before it, and Nelson Lee was confident that with the engines running at full power he would be able to take the air successfully. The main difficulty would be in starting up the engines.

It was more than likely that they would splutter to begin with; and the noise would give the alarm. It would be hopeless to attempt the flight before the engines were running at full power—we should only dash ourselves to pieces against the high trees.

And that is where my idea came in. "If we can only spare a good lot of petrol, sir, we can pour it into the river," I exclaimed eagerly. "Do you see, sir—about fifty gallons into the river!"

"By gad!" said Dorrie. "He's lost his wits!"

"My dear Nipper," said Trotwood, "you must not get excited—"

"Wait!" interrupted Lee. "I think I have grasped Nipper's idea, and it is a splendid one. Upon my soul, Nipper, that scheme may be the salvation of us all! We shall do no harm in trying it, at all events."

"But my dear Lee—" began Dorrie.

"Don't you understand, man—"

"No, I'm hanged if I do!"

"Then let me explain," went on Lee. "Petrol, as you probably know, is lighter than water, and when poured into a lake or river it floats upon the surface in a thin ever-spreading sheet."

"Yes, I know that," said Dorrie. "And if you apply a match to that film of spirit, there is an instant flare of light—all the petrol catches fire at once on the surface of the water. The effect, as you will agree, is decidedly startling."

"By gad!" said Dorrie breathlessly. "What a rippin' stunt!"

"The blacks will think us capable of any magic," continued Lee. "It will be the last straw, and they will not even attempt to harm us further. But everything depends upon speed now."

"We've got to get that petrol into the river, sir," I said.

"Exactly," agreed Lee.

We lost no further time in conversation. It was a case of all hands to the pump, and the petrol was allowed to

flow from one of the tanks into a short length of pipe which communicated with the ground.

There was no grass just where the machine was standing, and the ground sloped rather steeply for a short distance towards the river bank. Thus the petrol flowed straight down and into the water.

And then, in the midst of our preparations we heard a great shout. It rose on the night air, and increased in volume until it was a demoniacal roar. The sound was wild and awful to listen to.

"That's done it!" said Dorrie. "We've been spotted!"

"Oh, my hat!"

We all stared towards the village on the other side of the river. Figures were running about in all directions, and it was only too clear that our escape had been discovered.

Before three minutes had elapsed we saw a number of the savages hastening towards the river—in the direction of the bridge. It was quite certain that our movements had been seen, and that our capture would only be a matter of moments—unless we acted.

"Give the brutes a few shots, Dorrie,—you, too Nipper!" snapped Lee. "Trotwood, stand by with the matches, and drop a light upon the soaked ground when I give you the word. The flames will run down to the river in one sheet. Be careful to stand clear—all of you!"

Lee swung himself into the pilot's seat, and touched the self-starter. While he was doing so Dorrie and I stationed ourselves near the bridge. Our revolvers were out, and we used them.

Several shots rang out, and we both aimed low—to begin with. Two or three of the blacks collapsed as they ran, screaming with agony. Others tumbled over their prostrate figures, and there was much confusion.

The centre of the bridge was jammed for a short while, and Dorrie and I paused. And at that second the two powerful aeroplane engines roared into song. They spluttered for a few seconds, and then settled into a steady, even beat.

The machine moved forward across the grass, swung round, and taxied along for thirty or forty yards. Then Nelson Lee throttled down the engines, and turned to give Trotwood his instructions.

But Nicodemus was already acting. For the blacks had recovered from their momentary fright. They were surging across the bridge in dozens, and the whole structure threatened to collapse under their weight.

Crack, crack, crack!

Once again we fired our revolvers; but this time we were not able to withhold the rush. The Beejees came on relentlessly, yelling and screaming at the top of their voices.

It seemed hours before Trotwood struck his match. As a matter of fact, Nicodemus did not waste a second. As soon as he saw that the aeroplane was safely out of the way he stood back and threw a match to the ground.

It nearly went out, flared up, and then a blinding sheet of flame rushed down like lightning towards the river. What happened next was extraordinary.

There was a tremendous roar, and a sheet of flame rose twenty feet into the air. The whole river, from bank to bank, simply flared up in one great livid sheet. It was one of the most terrifying scenes I have ever witnessed.

The Beejees screamed and shrieked

with utter terror. They fled from the bridge as though demons were on their heels. The bridge was just at the limit of the petrol expanse; but the flames licked the woodwork.

In addition, the flaming petrol was spreading, and within two minutes the bridge itself was a roaring mass of flames. To cross it was impossible.

The river was blazing along the whole expanse opposite the village. The flames were being blown towards the village itself, and already the banks and bushes were blazing.

The Beejees had no time to bother about us.

Their sole activity now was centred upon putting out the flames. And this was no easy task, for they were under the impression that their water supply was burning! The blacks certainly thought that the water itself was on fire.

"Splendid, Nipper—wonderful!" shouted Nelson Lee, as we ran up. "Your scheme has worked with amazing success. I never dreamed that we should have things so easy. Any injuries?"

"Not a scratch, by gad!" gasped Dorrie.

"All aboard, then!" sang out Lee. "Hurry up!"

We climbed up into the fuselage, and in a few seconds we were in our places. I noticed that the first light of dawn was showing in the sky—and nothing could have been better.

We should have daylight with us almost as soon as we were in the air. There was no wind, and the weather was splendid for flying. The only troubling point was—could we get the machine off the ground successfully?

Nelson Lee opened up the engines to their widest extent. They roared with all their power, and the great biplane fairly shot over the dark ground.

We left the ground with a clear jump, and soared steeply up into the air. Nelson Lee lifted her far more steeply than usual—in fact, it was quite a dangerous experiment. But it was either that or crashing into the trees.

Up we soared, and I half expected any second that we should "stall," owing to our stiff climbing angle. And a nose dive would not be at all pleasant. But the biplane acted magnificently.

She just scraped over the tops of the trees; I honestly believe there was not a foot to spare. But, once over, Lee reduced the climbing angle, and we rushed away into the night.

Then we swung round, climbing all the time.

"Hurrah!" I roared. "Oh, hurrah!"

Dorrie and Trotwood—and even the gov'nor himself—took up that cheer. We nearly drowned the noise of the engines with our joyous shouts. We had escaped from death itself—by a bare inch, so it seemed.

Round we went, all glowing with happiness. And we raced right across the Beejee village. We could see the figures running about helter-skelter. The glare from the river had died down a great deal for the petrol was practically burnt out. But the grass and bushes were still blazing.

That glare had helped the gov'nor considerably, for the whole ground and the trees had been clearly illuminated.

And then, after having climbed to a good height, we set off across the forest—soaring away into the unknown as the dawn was breaking.

THE END.

(The adventure is nearing an end—but the St. Frank's boys are not yet out of the wood. Don't miss: "THE WANDERERS' RETURN!" next week's gripping long story.)



The RIO KID

To the Rio Kid, adventure is the spice of life. But one can have too much of a good thing as the Kid discovers when he rides into Mexico.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Into the Trap!

SO far as the Rio Kid was aware, nobody at Fanchita knew him from Adam. He had crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico before, more than once, and ridden many mountain trails in Chihuahua, but he had never been anywhere near this little pueblo nesting under a spur of the Sierra Madre. The Kid, in his Stetson hat, and chaps, and silk neck-scarf, looked just a cow-puncher, and a Texas cow-puncher wasn't an uncommon sight on the Mexican side—not uncommon enough to attract a whole heap of attention. Yet, as he rode down the dusty unpaved street of Fanchita, Mexicans stared at him on all sides, and nudged one another, and whispered in the soft liquid Spanish, and a little crowd gathered, and followed him along towards the plaza. The Kid caught the word 'Gringo' uttered many times. Any man from the north side of the border was a 'Gringo,' just as any galoot from the south side was a 'Greaser.' But surely, the puzzled Kid thought, plenty of Gringos must have been in Fanchita before, and there was nothing in the sight of a Gringo to make the whole population of the pueblo 'rubber' at a hombre in this way.

The Kid rode on at a walking pace. It would have been difficult to ride

faster with Mexicans, draped in their cloaks, crowding in the narrow irregular street. The Kid was dusty from a long trail, and he was aiming to find a posada on the plaza to put up for the night. The sun was sinking behind the soaring peaks of the Sierra Madre, and the Kid had figured on passing that night under the shelter of a roof in Fanchita. As he found that his arrival had caused so much sensation, he rather regretted that he had not camped out on the mountain. It looked as if there was going to be trouble, and he was badly placed for trouble, in the middle of a crowd of more than a hundred Mexicans.

Yet why trouble should come, he was puzzled to guess—in the belief that he was unknown to any man at Fanchita. And even if he was known, it was no business of these Greasers that he was wanted by sheriffs on the Texas side of the river. The Kid decided to walk his horse on as far as the plaza, and there, in the wider space, to put the big grey mustang to a gallop, and ride out of the pueblo.

But it was not so easy to carry out that plan. The crowd thickened round him, and several horsemen—evidently vaqueros from the ranchos—had joined it, and some of them were armed. Here and there in the crowd was a gleam of steel, as a cuchillo was half-drawn. So far from getting his mustang to a gallop in the plaza, the Kid found the mob so thick round him there, that he had to draw rein, and fairly halt. Five or six horsemen barred his way, with a crowd of Mexicans on foot, and on either side of him, the throng thickened. Behind him it was thicker still. The Kid was the centre of a sea of dark

faces, glittering black eyes, and big sombreros. But though many weapons were shown, there was no sign of an attack—indeed, many of the swarthy crowd were grinning. But the Kid saw clearly enough that the attack would come, if he tried to drive his way through by force. He was not honing for a fight with a mob of a couple of hundred Greasers, if he could help it. He sat his mustang, the butts of his guns very near his hands, looked over the swarthy faces nearest to him, and spoke with a cool drawl.

"Say, you geeks, what's this pesky circus, anyhow? Ain't you never seen a white man before?"

There was a buzz of voices, and the word 'Gringo' was repeated many times, and then he heard the words "El Nino del Rio."

The Kid swore softly.

El Nino del Rio was Spanish for the Rio Kid.

So he was known—the name and fame that he had hoped to leave behind him in Texas, had followed him into Mexico. And he wondered whether these Greasers knew that a reward of a thousand dollars was placed on his head in the Lone Star State. Likely they did!

"El Nino del Rio!"

The name was taken up, and buzzed through the crowd.

"El bandolero!"

The Kid flushed.

"Aw, forget it, you'uns," he snapped indignantly. "What you mean calling a galoot a bandolero—which I reckon in your dog-goned lingo means a pesky rustler. Cut it out!"

The dark-skinned crowd grinned at him mockingly. They had him where they wanted him; the Kid was trapped



in MEXICO

RALPH REDWAY

in the midst of the surging mob. He had ridden right into a trap, when he entered Fanchita for a night's lodging at a posada.

There was a shout across the plaza.

"El alcalde!"

The Kid looked round.

"I'll sure be glad to see the town marshal of this hyer burg," he said.

A tall man with a black beard came majestically across the plaza, from a mansion on one side of the square. The mansion was a one-story rambling stone house, no great shakes of a shebang, in the Texas cowboy's opinion, but a mansion in comparison with the shacks and hovels by which it was surrounded. There was only one other building of any pretensions on the plaza, and that was a square-built adobe house, with barred windows, which the Kid guessed to be the calaboose—a building in which, from the way things looked, he was likely to get his lodging that night.

But he lifted his Stetson politely to the tall, black-bearded Mexican, who was evidently the alcalde. With Spanish courtesy, the alcalde lifted his big sombrero in return to the salute.

"Say, bo," said the Kid cheerily. "you speak English? If you can sling my lingo, hombre, put me wise to what this hyer circus means? I guess I seem to have stirred' up this burg like a nest of tarantulas."

Don Salvador Iguerez, alcalde of Fanchita, bowed gravely.

"Senor, you are known here," he said.

"Search me," said the Kid.

"You are El Nino del Rio—the Rio Kid?"

"I guess they called me that, back in Frio," assented the Kid. "Is this

hyer a public welcome to a celebrated character, senor?"

Don Salvador smiled.

"Senor, I regret it a thousand times," he said. "But the orders are to place you in the calabozo."

"Senor, you sure don't regret it half so much as I do," answered the Kid. "So I guess I can put it at two thousand times."

Senor Iguerez looked a little puzzled. "Don't you reckon you better guess again?" asked the Kid. "I ain't trod on any galoot's toes since I crossed the border. I ain't come into Mexico a-shooting. I'm sure the most peaceable guy in Texas when I'm let alone. If you don't want me in this hyer burg, senor, I allow I'll ride on and look for a camp on the sierra. Say?"

The alcalde shook his head.

"Senor, you were seen on the trail, and the word was passed," he said. "You are well known—an outlaw of Texas—and I have orders to arrest you and keep you in safety till you may be handed over to the Military Commandant at Las Aguas."

"I guess I ain't honing to meet that galoot," said the Kid shaking his head.

"Such are the orders, senor," said the alcalde. "I regret it a thousand times—ten thousand times! You will not be so foolish as to resist. I should be desolated, senor, to give orders to kill you, moreover, the commandant at Las Aguas desires you as a prisoner. Tomorrow, senor, the soldiers will be here to take you. For to-night, I beg you to honour Fanchita with your presence."

"Waal, carry me home to die!" ejaculated the Kid, in disgust.

"You will graciously surrender your

weapons," continued the alcalde. "You will have the overpowering kindness to dismount from your horse, senor."

"Feller," said the Kid, "you sure are the politest lobo-wolf that ever got in a bite on me. There ain't a sheriff in Texas that has a thing on you. Seeing that you're so dog-goned polite, I reckon it would be bad manners for me to say no, senor."

The alcalde of Fanchita smiled gently. "Muy bien, senor," he said. "Give up your arms."

The Kid took one glance round.

Quietly and coolly he calculated the chances of pulling his guns, spurring his mustang, and fighting his way out of the pueblo. He saw that there was nothing in it. Knives and pistols surrounded him, the throng of Mexicana blocked his way, a score of horsemen were at hand. He was fairly trapped—and the Kid was not the man to butt his head against a stone wall.

He slipped from the saddle, took his guns by the barrels, and presented them to the alcalde of Fanchita.

"You win, feller," he said amiably. Senor Iguerez accepted the walnut-butted guns gravely.

"I am desolated, senor," he said. "But you savvy—orders are orders! Now I will conduct you to the calabozo. You will find another Gringo there to keep you company—another bandolero, senor, of your own sort, who also is going to Las Aguas to-morrow morning to be shot. Senor, do me the honour to walk with me."

A thronging, grinning crowd marched with the Rio Kid to the calaboose, and an iron-studded door clanged behind him and shut him off from the sight of the pueblo.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Gunman!

SHUCKS!" growled the Rio Kid. It got the Kid's goat; though he was more angry with himself than with the alcalde and population of Fanchita.

Like a gink, he had ridden into the first Mexican town he came to, figuring that he had left all his foes behind him on the Texas side of the Rio Grande.

Some geck had seen him on the trail and recognised him, and the report had gone ahead of him that a Texas outlaw was riding into Fanchita. That was the cause of the remarkable welcome the Kid had received.

The Kid could have kicked himself, if that had been any use. He had ridden fairly into a trap, and now he was cinched.

No doubt the military commandant at Las Aguas wanted him. That official might have him shot out of hand as a known bandolero, or might hand him over to a sheriff on the Texas side. Neither prospect attracted the Kid.

But it was useless to grouse, or to spill cuss-words. The Kid had been in tight corners before, and he knew how to take trouble philosophically when it came.

He looked round his quarters.

It was a large room with a tiny, barred window high up that let in a glimmer of the setting sun—only a glimmer.

The door was of upright iron bars, rusty with neglect, fastened by an enormous lock.

Outside that door was a little courtyard open to the sky. On the other side of the court was the gaoler's room. And that was all the building. The calaboose of Fanchita was not extensive.

Furniture was sparse. There were a couple of rickety benches and a bundle of dirty straw. They did not give their prisoners luxurious quarters in a Mexican calabozo.

"Shucks!" repeated the Kid.

He was not alone in the dirty, evil-smelling room. A man was seated on one of the benches, leaning back against the wall, smoking a cigarette. He was eyeing the Kid with a cool, searching glance. This was the "other Gringo" that the alcalde had mentioned.

The Kid, looking at him, did not like his looks. The man was a slim, wiry fellow, with a hard, cold face and small, keen eyes that had an ice-cold look in their depths. The Kid knew a gunman when he saw one, and he figured that he had never seen a harder, colder, more ruthless-looking gunman than the companion of his cell.

The Kid was handy with a gun himself; but he was no gunman, and he did not like gunmen. But in his present circumstances the boy puncher of Frio was not disposed to be particular. He had no intention whatever of remaining that night in the calaboose if he could help it; and if the other hombre was game, two heads were better than one in planning escape. So the Kid gave the gunman a nod and a cheery greeting.

"Say, feller, they got us where they want us," he remarked. "You from Texas?"

"Sure!" said the other, watching him keenly, coldly, sharply. "I guess I heard them Greasers yapping suthin about El Nino del Rio when you was toted in. You the Rio Kid?"

"That's me."

"I guess you're the hombre I want to see, then," said the gunman.

THE POPULAR—No. 534.

"Mebbe you've heard of me—Slick Thayer."

The Kid made a grimace. He had heard of Slick Thayer, though he had never met the man. Thayer was a "killer"; and it was said in Texas that he had killed more men than he had fingers and toes. It was the killer's icy look that the Kid could see in his eyes.

"I guess I've heard of you," said the Kid shortly.

He moved a little back. He hated the sight of a killer like Thayer. But he realised that he was in a tight corner; and Thayer, desperate rascal as he was, was the man for a desperate attempt—more useful in such an emergency than a better man would have been.

Thayer did not fail to note the involuntary repugnance in the Kid's handsome face; and his hard face hardened more, and the icy look in his eyes became intensified. But he, like the Kid, wanted help, and he did not allow a word of anger to escape him.

"I guess we're both cinched," he said. "We want to help one another out of this."

"Sure!" assented the Kid. "What they got you for, Thayer?"

"Holding up the alcalde," said the gunman coolly. "That old hombre, Salvador Iguerez, is what these Greasers call a rico hombre; I guess he's plastered with money. I got word from a galoot I can trust that the old Greaser has got the stuff in his adobe shebang—across the plaza here. I had to get out of Texas for a spell—same as you, I reckon. I figured I'd make a raise here."

The Kid set his lips.

The man knew that he was an outlaw, and was speaking as to one of his kidney. It got the Kid's goat.

"I slipped up on it," drawled Thayer. "I got the old galoot under my gun, and I guessed it was jest pie; he lives alone in that shebang 'cept for two peon servants—and I'd watched them clear. But a bunch of vaqueros came in from his ranch and horned in jest as I got him fixed—and roped me in like I was a steer." The gunman's cold eyes gleamed. "It was a cinch on me! They put me in here. I guess I'm going to Las Aguas in the morning. These god-darned Greasers leave everything till to-morrow—that's their pesky way! Hasta manana!" He grinned. "I guess it lets me out, fur I ain't staying the night in this shebang, Kid!"

The Kid nodded.

"Now there's two of us, I reckon we can work the rifle," went on Thayer, lowering his voice. "There's a gaoler—the carcelero they call him—lives in the calaboose; nobody else. That gink will come if you call him; he hands you anything you want if you're heeled. He won't open them bars for love or money; he puts the grub through, and cigarettes—or anything else you can pay for. Have they taken your roll?"

The Kid shook his head.

"Only my guns," he answered. "I'd rather they'd taken the roll. But that old hombre, the alcalde, is sure a polite old cuss."

"They'll get your roll at Las Aguas," drawled Thayer. "Old Iguerez calls himself a caballero; but most of these Greasers would rob their grandmothers of their hair-combs. But we ain't seeing Las Aguas to-morrow. I reckon, if you stand by me."

"Shoot!" said the Kid tersely.

"I'm letting you in on an even break," said Slick Thayer. "I was sure beat to handle this alone, but two's a team."

"You've said it," agreed the Kid. "I reckon we'll be outside this adobe at midnight," said Thayer. "Then we hit old Iguerez's shebang. I guess none of his ranch hands won't be hornin' in at that time o' night. If the peons wake up, I reckon you know how to put them to sleep again—same as I do." He smiled a slow, cold, merciless smile. "We get the old Greaser's roll—and I'll say it ain't less than ten thousand dollars in good United States. You get me? We divvy even and quit."

The Kid's eyes flashed. "You durned dog-goned rustler!" he exclaimed.

Thayer stared at him, unmoved. "What's bitin' you, feller?" he asked evenly.

"Don't you know a white man when you see one?" growled the Kid. "You figure that you've got hold of a thief of your heft, Slick Thayer? Forget it!"

The gunman's eyes glittered.

"You won't stand for it?" he asked.

"Sure not. I guess I'll stand for getting outside this shebang; but I ain't touching a man's roll, you pesky rustler; and you ain't, neither," said the Kid.

"You're sure mighty particular for an outlaw with a price on his head," drawled the gunman.

"Aw, can it!" said the Kid. "I guess I'd rather take my chance with the Greasers at Las Aguas, Slick Thayer, than work in cahoots with a rustler like you! Quit chewin' the rag!"

The Kid retreated to the further end of the cell, sat down on a bench, and relapsed into silence. Thayer watched him, without speaking again, and lighted another cigarette from the expiring one. There was silence in the dirty, stuffy adobe cell, as the shadows deepened, and the last red ray of the setting sun died, and the soft Mexican night brooded over Fanchita and its adobe calaboose.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Escape!

THE gaoler came out of his room on the opposite side of the little, unpaired courtyard. He stood, a black silhouette, against the glimmer of the smelly oil-lamp behind him. He was an untidy, bearded Mexican, greasy of skin, smelling of pulque. Slick Thayer, standing at the iron bars that formed the gate of the cell, was calling.

"El agua! El agua, senior el carcelero!"

The gaoler brought a tin pitcher of water from the fountain in the court, and passed it through the tall iron bars.

"Gracias!" said Thayer civilly.

He drank the water to the last drop. It was hot and stuffy in the adobe cell. The Kid would have been glad of a drink, and he came forward from his seat in the dim shadow. Save for the glimmer of the carcelero's lamp, fifteen feet away, there was no light.

Thayer slipped a silver dollar into the gaoler's greasy hand and returned the tin pitcher to him.

"Say, I guess you can hand me a drink, feller," drawled the Kid.

"Que es esto?"

"Agua," said the Kid. "El agua."

"Si, senior."

The carcelero refilled the pitcher, and handed it to the Kid through the bars. And the Kid, like Thayer, passed him a silver dollar. Services were not performed for nothing in the calaboose of Fanchita.

Thayer remained at the bars, speaking to the gaoler in Spanish. The Kid



SURRENDER! The Kid slipped from his saddle, took his guns by the barrels, and presented them to the Mexican. "You win, feller!" he said amiably. (See Chapter I.)

went back to his bench at the extremity of the cell. He saw Thayer pass money to the gaceter, and receive a packet of Mexican cigarettes. Then the Mexican went back across the courtyard to his room, closed the door, and all was dark, save for a faint glimmer of starlight over the yard.

The Kid was thinking. A galoot like Thayer got his goat, and he hated to be shut up with him, or to have any dealings with him. But freedom was freedom, and, alone, the Kid saw no way of getting out of this. Thayer had said that he had a plan which the two of them could work together. Apart from the doubtful prospects of the morrow, the Kid hated to spend a night in the filthy Mexican prison. It was dirty and stuffy and in the dirty straw there crawled innumerable insects that were a horror to the cleanly Kid. His objection to acting in concert with the gunman faded a little. He would not speak first; but he resolved that if Thayer opened the subject again, he would give him a patient hearing. And he was assured that Thayer would.

He was right. At a late hour, the gunman came towards the Kid's bench, unseen but audible in the darkness of

the cell. The Kid could see only a black shadow and a glitter of eyes.

"Say, bo," said Thayer, in the same calm, even tones as before, "you don't want to go off on your ear, and land both of us before a firing-party at Las Aguas. Are you going in with me?"

"Spill it," said the Kid briefly.

"That carecelero has the key of the iron gate hung on his belt—"

"I guess I saw it there," said the Kid. "But I reckon he won't unlock them bars for a bribe."

"He sure won't. But he will come across the yard if you call him," answered Thayer. "You ask him for something, and clink one dollar agin another. That'll bring him jumping."

The Kid grinned.

"You get him handing something through the bars," said the gunman softly. "He'll be watching you. He won't be watching me. He'll see the light of my cigarette here, right at the end of the cell. I guess I shall get hold of him through the bars and cinch him. Once he's in my grip I'll see that he doesn't let out a yaup. We get the key off him, and let ourselves out and skip."

"How in thunder is he going to see you smoking a cigarette here, if you're a dog-goned ten feet from here?"

"They forgot you when brains was served out, I reckon," remarked Thayer. "Like this."

He stuck his cigarette in a crack of the adobe wall above the bench, at the height of a man's head.

It glowed there; and, seen from across the cell, it looked as if a man sat there smoking. All was blackness about the bench, save for that glowing spot of fire.

"You got that?" drawled Thayer.

"I sure got it," assented the Kid.

"You're a slick hombre, Thayer, same as they call you. I guess it will work. But look here, you fire-bug, if we get out of this, there ain't any hold-up in the programme. I'll say I don't stand for it."

"If you make a point of it, I've got to agree," answered Thayer. "I guess it will be healthier to beat it right out of town, anyhow. I wouldn't care to try it on without a man to help, after slipping up on it last time. You stand by me, and we'll have the old Greaser's roll—"

"Forget it!"

"You're losing a good thing," said Thayer, unmoved. "But if you ain't standing for it, let it drop."

"That goes, then," said the Kid.

And, after the discussion of a few more details, to make all clear, the plan was put into execution. Thayer sat on the bench at the back of the cell, smoking. The Kid went forward to the bars. He shook the bars and called.

"Say, feller! El carcelero—senor! Say!"

It was some time before the gaoler responded. But he came out of his room at last.

"Senor!"
"El agua," said the Kid.

"Si, senior."
The Mexican filled the tin pitcher, and came back to the bars with it. He was quite wiry, his eyes watchful. But the Kid was full in his view; and across the cell, ten feet away in darkness, glowed a cigarette, showing that the other prisoner sat there, smoking. So the Mexican passed the tin pitcher through the bars, unsuspecting.

A shadow flickered, and a grasp of iron closed on the gaoler's wrist.

"Carambo!"

The tin pitcher clattered to the floor. The gaoler gasped out that one startled word—he had no time for another. He was dragged against the bars, and Thayer's other hand came through and gripped his throat. The Kid horned in instantly, both hands gripping the carcelero. The Mexican made a desperate effort to reach the knife in his belt, but he was held—Thayer had one wrist, the Kid had the other, and all the time the gunman's right hand was gripping his throat and choking his voice.

"Get the sticker and carve him!" breathed Thayer.

With his free hand, the Kid reached through and got the knife from the belt of the carcelero.

He put the point of the knife to the half-choked man's throat, his eyes gleaming over it.

"Kill him!" breathed the gunman.

"Aw, forget it! We've got him fixed," said the Kid. "There ain't going to be any killing here, Slick Thayer."

"You fool!" hissed Thayer.

"That's enough from you!" said the Kid coolly. "The galoot knows he's fixed—get the key off him. Silencio!" he added in Spanish to the gaoler, and the knife pricked the greasy skin.

Thayer freed his hand from the Mexican's throat. The man was close up to the bars, pinned there by the hold on his wrists, and the knife that touched his throat was warning enough for him. He gasped for breath, but uttered no cry.

Thayer reached through the bars with his free hand, and unhooked the long iron key from the Mexican's girdle. A few moments more, and it was in the lock of the iron gate, and turned back. Thayer pushed open one side of the gate and slipped through into the yard, leaving the Kid holding the carcelero to the bars.

"Say, lend me a hand with this hombre," said the Kid. "We got to get him tied safe afore we quit."

Slick Thayer made no answer. He opened the outer gate, slipped through into the plaza, and closed the gate behind him.

The gunman was gone!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Kid Chips In!

THE Rio Kid swore softly. He might have expected that, or any other treachery from the gunman. He was left holding the carcelero, while Slick Thayer made his escape.

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

The carcelero's eyes gleamed at him. The Kid gave him a look.

"You just give one yaup, feller, and you'll never give another," he said, pressing the point of the knife a fraction into the greasy skin.

The Mexican did not understand the words, but he understood the look and the action. He shuddered, and was silent.

With Thayer's help, all would have been easy for the Kid. Alone, it was not easy. To get outside the cell, he had to release the man he was holding through the bars. A thrust of the knife would have made all safe, but the Kid was not the man for that. He put the knife between his teeth, and drew both the Mexican's hands through the bars. Holding them in his left, he tore off the Mexican's neck-scarf with his right, and bound the wrists together. As one arm was passed in on either side of a bar, the carcelero was tied to the grate. Then the Kid whipped out and stood beside the man. With the knife, he cut strips from the carcelero's dirty shirt and gagged him.

"I guess that fixes you, hombre," said the Kid.

The Kid crossed to the outer gate, opened it, and stepped out.

It was close on midnight, and the pueblo of Fanchita slept. The last cantina was closed. There were no street lamps in Fanchita. The only light that burned, gleamed from the adobe building where lived the alcalde. Don Salvador Iguerez, apparently, was not yet gone to bed. The Kid scowled at the light.

He was free, but the Kid had no idea of quitting Fanchita without his horse. A man on foot was not likely to keep his freedom long, even had the Kid been willing to part with his faithful mustang. The powerful mustang had been taken to the alcalde's house—he had seen it led there, as he was taken to the calaboose. The Kid had hoped to see the alcalde's house in darkness. But whether the Mexican official slept or waked, the Kid intended to get his horse.

He stepped quietly across the plaza.

The house of Iguerez was shut for the night. The Kid circled round it. Behind the building were stables; the Kid figured that the mustang would be there. From a porch at the back of the adobe, came a glimmer of light, and the Kid realised angrily that a door was open.

He listened intently.

But all was silent and still. Then he started, and listened more keenly. From the silence came a faint sound—a low, faint, gurgling sound, like that of a man throttling. The sound came from the house—faint, low only audible because all was deathly still. It sent a shiver creeping through the Kid.

Then in a flash he knew.

"That coyote Thayer!"

The Kid gave no further thought to his horse, or to his escape. With a blaze in his eyes, he ran in at the open door. A dim long passage was before him, faintly lighted by lamplight that streamed from the open doorway of a room. From that room came the faint, horrible, gurgling sound.

The Kid reached the doorway.

On the floor of that room, on his back, lay Don Salvador Iguerez, his face black, his eyes starting. Kneeling on him was Slick Thayer, his hands gripping the Mexican's throat, slowly, steadily, ruthlessly choking out life.

Thayer had lied to the Kid. He had not intended to go without the alcalde's roll. The Kid knew that now. And he knew that he was barely in time, and he

did not waste a second. One swift spring carried him to the scene, and his clenched fist, hard as iron, struck the killer behind the ear with the force of a mule's kick.

There was a faint grunt from the gunman, as he rolled off his victim.

The Kid hardly glanced at him. He knew that Thayer was stunned. He dropped on his knees beside the choked alcalde.

"All O.K., I guess, hombre," said the Kid pleasantly. "But it sure was a close call, I'm telling you."

The alcalde gasped and choked and spluttered.

"El agua!" he moaned.
"You bet!" said the Kid.

He rushed from the room, and found water. He placed the jar to the lips of the fainting man.

The alcalde drank. He sat up, the Kid supporting him. But in a few minutes he staggered to his feet, with the Kid's aid, and sank into a chair.

"You don't want to call your peons, senior," said the Kid. "I'd sure be sorry to handle you, seeing as you've been so durned polite to me. But I ain't letting you raise a rookus. You get me, senior? I'n plumb tired of that calaboose. You say you'll keep quiet while I beat it, and I'll trust you. Say!"

The alcalde rubbed his podgy neck, and gasped.

"Senior Nino del Rio, you have saved me the life!" he said. "That dog of a Gringo"—he paused to spit at the unconscious Thayer—"a bandolero—un hombre del cuchillo—carambo! Senior, gracias! Gracias! Muchisimas gracias! You save me the life!"

"I guess that's the size of it," assented the Kid.

"That hombre—he come to kill—to rob! Carambo! But you—"

"I guess I can for my hoss, when I heard you doing your song and dance," grinned the Kid.

"Senior, I am a thousand times grateful. I am your servant, senior!" The alcalde rose painfully from the chair, gasping for breath and crossed the room to a cabinet. The Kid watched him curiously. Don Salvador opened the cabinet, and took out a pair of leathern holsters with the Kid's walnut-butted guns and a cartridge-belt.

With a low, grave Spanish bow, the alcalde of Fanchita presented the belt and the guns to the boy puncher.

"Senior, follow me. Your cavallo—your horse!"

"I should smile!" said the Kid.

He followed the alcalde from the house. A few minutes and the Kid's mustang was nuzzling his muzzle under his master's arm.

"Senior, I am loth to bid you depart," said Don Salvador, with grave courtesy. "But to linger is not safe. Otherwise, my humble house is yours, and all it contains. But if the morning finds you here—"

"I guess the morning will find me hitting the horizon, senior," grinned the Kid. "Adios, senior."

"Adios, amigo!"

The alcalde bowed. The Kid raised his hat and rode into the darkness. Don Salvador Iguerez listened anxiously to the beat of the horse's hoofs as they died away in the night, and when all was silent he breathed a deep breath of relief, and went back into his house, and called his sleeping peons to deal with the gunman.

THE END.

(Now, boys! Don't miss next week's gripping story of the Rio Kid, entitled: "CORNERED BY BRIGANDS!" It's full of thrills!)

With the black shadow of disgrace hanging over his head, Frank Digby is forced to flee from his school. He turns his steps to St. Jim's, to seek shelter with his cousin, and unwittingly brings trouble in his train!

The Schoolboy Refugee!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



A SPARKLING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., OF ST. JIM'S.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bad News for Digby.

"HUWAH! Heah comes the chawabanc, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth was standing on the School House steps when he made that exclamation. His chums, Blake and Herries, were in the hall, chatting to Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell. All were dressed in their football clothes. It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at St. Jim's. The weather was crisp and snappy, and just right for footer. The St. Jim's junior eleven were playing an away match with Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood that afternoon.

Gussy's exclamation brought the other juniors rushing eagerly out of the hall door.

"My word!" exclaimed Blake enthusiastically. "The giddy charabanc's arrived! Isn't she a stunner?"

A large, handsome, red charabanc had driven in through the gates of St. Jim's. It had been Gussy's idea for them to travel to Rookwood and back by charabanc, and this idea had been greeted with hearty acclamation by the other juniors, especially as Gussy, who had just received a fiver from his pater, was nobly standing the "exes."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry, as the charabanc drew up to the School House steps. "Now we shan't be long! Here come the others!"

Talbot, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble came hurrying up, to be followed by Figgins & Co., who had run over from the New House.

The charabanc was soon surrounded by admiring juniors.

"Tumble in, kids!" said Tom Merry. "We haven't got much time to waste. Rookwood is rather a long way away, you know. The ride will tone us up for the licking we're going to give Jimmy Silver & Co.—what?"

"Rather!"

The members of the team "tumbled" into the charabanc. The front seats had been reserved for the players, and the rear ones were quickly filled by other juniors, eager to visit Rookwood as spectators.

"Now, are we all here?" said Tom Merry, looking round. "My hat! Digby's missing!"

Robert Arthur Digby of the Fourth was conspicuous by his absence.

"Bai Jove! Dig must be up in the studay, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "I wemember now, he had a lettah, and he took it upstairs. The feahful ass! He has forgotten the time!"

Tom Merry jumped down from the charabanc, and Blake followed him.

"We'll go in and rout out the chump!" said the St. Jim's junior skipper. "Dig deserves to be bumped for keeping us waiting!"

Tom Merry and Blake hurried upstairs to the Fourth Form passage and entered Study No. 6.

Digby was standing by the window. He had a letter crushed in his right hand. He turned as Merry and Blake entered, and the haggard expression on his face told them instantly that something had happened to upset Digby.

Instead of "blowing him up," as they had fully intended to do, Tom Merry and Blake looked anxiously at their chum.

"What's the matter, Dig?" asked Blake. "Bad news?"

Digby nodded.

"Ye-es," he replied, in a quiet voice. "Bad news of a sort. It's about my Cousin Frank. You've heard me speak about him."

"Your Cousin Frank of St. Ormond's?" asked Blake.

"Yes. This letter is from him. He's in terrible trouble at the school; in fact, he's under sentence of a public flogging and expulsion!"

Tom Merry and Blake both gave low whistles.

"My hat! What ever has he been up to?" asked the Shell captain.

"Frank's been up to nothing!" exclaimed Digby, his eyes flashing. "Frank is one of the best! He's as straight as a die, I can swear to that! Yet—yet they've accused him of assaulting one of the fellows of his school—a chap with plenty of money—and robbing him!"

Tom Merry and Blake looked grave. "That's jolly rotten!" exclaimed Blake. "What proof have they against your cousin? The Head at St. Ormond's couldn't expel a chap without proof of his guilt."

"That's just it," said Digby miserably. "They've got proof—at least, they think that have. Some of the stolen property was found in my cousin's study. He and the fellow who was robbed were not on the best of terms. The other fellow, so Frank says, is an awful rotter, and he has pressed the matter to the full. My cousin is innocent; he tells me so in his letter, and I believe him. But the Head of his school won't. Frank is to be publicly birched—and disgraced—for a thing he didn't do."

"Hard lines!" exclaimed Blake. "But buck up, Dig! Don't let it worry you. Come along to Rookwood, and forget it for the time being. The charabanc is outside, and we're all waiting for you."

Digby gave a start.

"Oh, I had forgotten footer! Look here, Tom Merry, don't you think I'd better go over to St. Ormond's, and see the Head there, and tell him that my cousin—"

"I don't think you'd better do anything of the sort, Dig!" replied Tom Merry vehemently. "Don't be an ass, old chap! What could you do, anyway? You can't prove your cousin's innocence, just by going over to St. Ormond's. Better keep off the grass, old chap, and come along to Rookwood."

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

"Yes—this way, Dig!" said Blake, taking his chum's arm and leading him out of the study. "Things will turn out all right, so don't worry. You can't do any good by barging in over at St. Ormond's. Kim on!"

Digby suffered himself to be led away. The juniors in the charabanc were waiting impatiently, and several lurid remarks were hurled at Digby.

The Fourth-Former did not take any notice of them, however.

He climbed up into his seat in the charabanc, and sat there moodily, his face looking hard and troubled.

"Honk, honk!"
"We're off!" chirruped Figgins gleefully.

The charabanc started, turned slowly, and then made its way through the gates of St. Jim's and along the Rylcombe Lane, en route for Rookwood.

And Digby, much to Tom Merry's relief, roused himself from his morbid thoughts to such an extent that he was quite in his usual form when the match started against Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

St. Jim's was at full strength when

they took the field against their old rivals, and so were the home team; so the match proved ding-dong from the first whistle. But luck was with the visitors, and at last St. Jim's drove ahead of their opponents, the final whistle going with the result of two goals to one.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Runaway from School!

"NOW for St. Jim's!" said Blake cheerfully.

Tea was over at Rookwood, and it was time for Tom Merry & Co. to leave. The charabanc was standing outside the school gates, its engine humming musically.

Jimmy Silver & Co., and Tommy Dodd & Co. saw their visitors down to the gates. They parted on their usual friendly terms, and with the usual amount of good-natured chaffing.

"Cheerio, you chaps!" called Jimmy Silver, when Tom Merry & Co. were all aboard the charabanc. "See you again one of these days!"

"Rather!"

The charabanc moved away, and, with Tom Merry & Co. standing up and waving farewell to the Rookwooders, it bowled along at a good speed, en route for St. Jim's.

Digby was infinitely more cheerful than he had been on the first journey. The part he had played in that great football match had brought numerous congratulatory remarks showering on him from his schoolfellows.

His face became overcast at times; but Tom Merry & Co. kept up a cheery round of conversation, and they made Dig join in, and thus kept his mind from worrying about his cousin.

They had passed through several villages, and were humming along at a fine speed along a narrow country lane that led to Rylcombe, when all of a sudden Cardew, who was sitting at the back of the charabanc, gave a shout.

"Look behind, boys! There's a chase on!"

The other occupants of the charabanc jumped up and looked back.

Startled exclamations arose.

A boy of about their own age, wearing a red-and-black school cap, was pedalling along madly behind them, his body bent over the handlebars of his bicycle, and a tense expression on his face.

Giving chase to the youthful cyclist was a grey touring motor-car, in which, in addition to the chauffeur, were a man and a schoolboy wearing similar caps to the other boy in front.

The man was standing up in the car, gesticulating and shouting angrily to the boy on the bicycle. That worthy paid no heed, but dug at the pedals for all he was worth.

As the cyclist approached the charabanc he rang his bell furiously.

Digby, who was leaning over the charabanc side, suddenly jumped up with a loud shout:

"Frank! Good heavens, it's my cousin Frank!"

The car was very near to the school-boy on the cycle now.

He looked up with a strained, haggard face at the St. Jim's juniors in the charabanc, as if mutely appealing to them for help. Then, hearing Digby's cry, his expression changed.

A glad light leap into his eyes when he saw Digby beckoning to him.

"Bob," he cried, "they're after me—the warden and—Barker! Can't you block their way and—"

"Honk, honk, honk!"

The chauffeur of the car behind was blowing the horn furiously.

The man at his side was standing up, a look of rage on his thin, spiteful face. He waved wildly to Tom Merry & Co.

"Stop him! That boy is a runaway from school, and—"

"Look out!" shouted the chauffeur suddenly.

Jack Blake, sitting next to the driver of the charabanc, had grasped the wheel and turned the big vehicle so that it occupied the centre of the narrow lane.

Frank Digby was able to get by easily on his bicycle, but there was no room for the car to pass.

The chauffeur had to slow down.

"Go on—go on! Pass the charabanc! The young rascal is escaping!" almost shrieked the angry man at his side.

"I dare not, sir!" replied the chauffeur. "We'd go into the hedge if I did!"

The man fairly danced with impotent rage.

Tom Merry looked grave.
"I—I say, I wonder if we are doing right by blocking the road like this?"

WONDERFUL COLOURED PICTURE CARDS FREE!

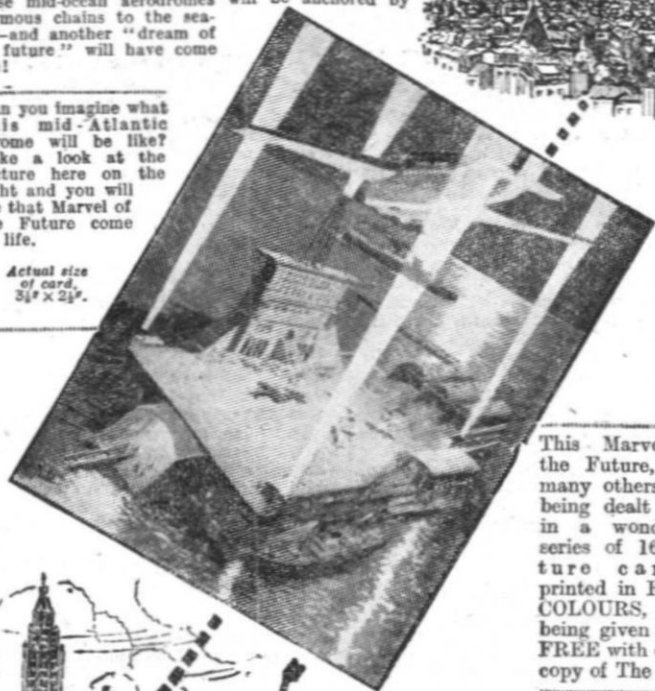
LONDON to NEW YORK-By AIR

When people travel to the ends of the earth in great air-liners and passenger planes with as little fuss as we now go for an express train ride, the oceans will have been dotted by engineers with enormous artificial islands—floating landing-ground, replenishment depot, hotel, and halts combined. These mid-ocean aerodromes will be anchored by enormous chains to the seabed—and another "dream of the future" will have come true!



Can you imagine what this mid-Atlantic 'drome will be like? Take a look at the picture here on the right and you will see that Marvel of the Future come to life.

Actual size of card 3 1/2" x 2 1/2"



This Marvel of the Future, and many others, are being dealt with in a wonderful series of 16 picture cards, printed in FULL COLOURS, now being given away FREE with every copy of The GEM



THE GEM LIBRARY

YOU'LL FIND THE FIRST OF THESE UNIQUE FREE GIFTS IN THIS WEEK'S ISSUE.—On Sale Wednesday, Price Twopence.

he said. "The man in the car is evidently a master of St. Ormond's, and—"

"No, he isn't!" exclaimed Digby, his face tense and flushed. "He's a warden—didn't you hear my cousin say so? A warden is a sort of glorified prefect—a chap whose business is to keep order among the boys, and do odd jobs in the school. Not many schools have wardens now, but St. Ormond's is one of those that do. Keep that car behind, driver, as long as you dare. Frank must escape—he must!"

The chauffeur and the school warden in the car behind were raving. Frank Digby was now almost out of sight, pedalling furiously.

"Draw in to the left, will you?" shouted the enraged chauffeur. "I'll report you to the police for obstruction if you don't, and—"

"I'd better let him pass, young gents," said the driver of the charabanc. "It's a rule of the road that large vehicles like this must give way to others."

"I'll give you ten shillings to keep him back a little longer!" panted Digby desperately. "If the car gets past, it will overtake Frank in no time."

The driver, however, turned the steering-wheel, and the charabanc drew in to the left.

The chauffeur of the car behind dug his foot down hard on the accelerator. But what with the warden's urgent harassing, and the excitement of the chase, the chauffeur misjudged his distance.

The car shot forward, and a cry of alarm arose from Tom Merry & Co. It seemed that next minute the vehicle would crash into the back of the charabanc.

The chauffeur saw his danger in the nick of time. He turned the steering-wheel sharply, and instead of colliding with the charabanc, the car lurched perilously to the right, and went headlong up the bank at the side of the road.

"Gweat Scott!" cried D'Arcy. "The car's done for now, deah boys!"

Gussy spoke the truth!

The bonnet of the car had shot through the hedge and cannoned with terrific force into a stone wall at the other side.

There was an ominous rending noise, and a tumbling of bricks, and a concerted shout of dismay arose from the three occupants of the car.

Digby drew a deep, deep breath of relief.

"Get along with it, driver!" chuckled Blake. "We shan't be bothered again with that little lot behind!"

The charabanc driver nodded and increased the speed of his vehicle.

"Stop!" shrieked the warden, standing in the up-ended car and waving to the departing charabanc. "I command you to stop and take me aboard! I will pay you well, and—"

But his voice was lost in the roar of the charabanc's powerful engine.

"Thank goodness they're stranded!" exclaimed Digby fervently, as the warden's car disappeared from view. "I wonder where Frank is now? We ought to catch up with him soon."

Rounding a bend in the road, they saw the schoolboy cyclist about a mile ahead. It did not take the charabanc long to reach him.

Frank Digby turned, and he slackened his pace when he saw the charabanc.

"Where's the car?" he shouted.

"Up the bank—crashed into a brick wall!" cried Digby. "They can't follow you now, Frank—not unless they pick up another car, and that isn't likely to



THE AVALANCHE! As soon as Mr. Rathbone wrenched open the door of the woodshed, there was a terrific crash, and an avalanche of wood logs and sacks of cement came down on his head. "Yoogh! Wow!" Mr. Rathbone disappeared in a white cloud. (See Chapter 3.)

happen, because this is a lonely road. Come up here with us."

"Oh, thanks!" gasped the runaway St. Ormond's junior. "I'm just about beaten after that ride!"

The charabanc was stopped, and Frank Digby dismounted from his bicycle and flung it over the hedge.

"I shan't need that any more now," he muttered, as he climbed up into the charabanc.

He squeezed into the seat between Digby and Tom Merry.

"Right away, driver!" cried Blake.

The charabanc moved on, and was soon speeding along at a fine rate.

"What happened, Frank?" asked Digby eagerly. "Tell us all about it. I've been worrying about you ever since I received your letter."

And then in a calm, convincing way Frank Digby told his story.

"Ericson, one of the fellows of the Upper Fifth at our school, was attacked in the wood near St. Ormond's the other night, and robbed of a lot of money and all the valuables he had on him. Ericson is awfully rich, and was always flashing his money about. He and I have not been on good terms for a long time—I licked him once for bullying a

kid in the Second, and he never forgot it. He was always sneering at me because I was hard up.

"My people aren't well off, and the pater's business has suffered in the recent trade slump, and I haven't been receiving so much pocket-money as the other fellows. I happened to be out on the night that Ericson was robbed. And I was accused of attacking and robbing him."

Digby of St. Jim's clenched his hands tightly.

"As if you'd stoop to do such a thing, Frank!" he exclaimed.

"They found Ericson's gold-and-diamond tiepin hidden in my study," continued Frank Digby. "Ericson accused me, and he was backed up by his cronies, a worse rotter than himself, who has always been down on me. Barker is the chap you saw in the car just now, with Rathbone, the warden."

"Rathbone looked a bit of a tartar," remarked Tom Merry.

"He is a tartar!" came the quick response. "Well, I got it in the neck properly! Most of the chaps believe me innocent, but Rathbone, Ericson, and Barker have made things look black

against me, and the Head decided to give me a public flogging, and then expel me.

"To cut a long story short, I broke out from the punishment-room at St. Ormond's this afternoon, and got away on my bike. I was on my way to St. Jim's to see you, Bob. I knew there would be a chase directly my escape was discovered, but hoped to get to St. Jim's in time, knowing that you would help me. Evidently the warden got wind of what had happened pretty quickly, and he and Barker came out in the Head's car to find me. They caught up with me on this road, and I was just giving up hope of getting away when you came along."

"Thank goodness we did!" said Digby of the Fourth. "But it was the chauffeur's own fault that he ran the car up the bank. They won't catch you now, Frank."

"Not if I can help it, anyway," replied his cousin, setting his teeth grimly.

The St. Jim's juniors looked curiously at Frank Digby.

He was a handsome, well-knit lad, with honest blue eyes, and a manner that inspired complete confidence. His story rang true to the last letter. Tom Merry & Co. could not help liking and believing him, and their hearts went out in sympathy to the unfortunate lad.

"Jolly hard lines!" said Jack Blake, in his gruff, good-natured way. "We'll do all we can to help you, of course."

"Thanks!" replied the runaway school-boy gratefully. "I'm afraid to ask you to help me, though, in case you get into trouble. It's rather a serious matter, you know, assisting a fellow in running away from school—although, of course, I was to have been chucked out to-day. Rathbone evidently guesses where I am going. He'll turn up at St. Jim's, and will start inquiries there."

Digby of the Fourth gripped his cousin's arm.

"Hang Rathbone! Let him come to St. Jim's!" he said between his teeth. "They shan't take you back, Frank—not until your name is cleared! I'll see to that! Come on to St. Jim's with me now, and we'll discuss ways and means when we get there. Rathbone won't reach there till long after us, anyway. You chaps will keep mum about this, of course?"

"Rely on us, Dig!" chorused the others.

St. Jim's was reached at length, and Frank Digby went upstairs to Study No. 6 with Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rathbone on the Track!

NOW for a rumpus!" Monty Lowther made that remark.

The Terrible Three, Kangaroo, and Talbot were standing in the Hall in the School House at St. Jim's an-hour later. Dusk had fallen over the countryside. The Shell fellows had just finished their prep, and had come down to wait for the postman, in the fond hope that some stray remittance might turn up.

A car had drawn up outside, and a thin-faced gentleman had come in, followed by a big, surly-looking fellow in Etons, and with the St. Ormond's school cap in his hand.

It was Mr. Rathbone, the tyrannical warden of St. Ormond's, and Barker of the Upper Fifth of that school.

"I wish to speak to Dr. Holmes—at

once!" snapped Mr. Rathbone to Toby, the page, when that worthy came up. "Tell him I represent Dr. Protheroe of St. Ormond's, and that my call is on a most important matter."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Toby; and he hurried away.

Five minutes later Toby returned with the message that Dr. Holmes would see Mr. Rathbone in his study at once.

Tom Merry & Co., and Jack Blake & Co., together with a number of excited juniors, watched the warden from the top of the stairs as he passed along the corridor on his way to Dr. Holmes' study.

Digby was there, his face grim and sternly set.

"There's bound to be a row now, Dig," said Tom Merry. "What are you going to say?"

"I shall tell the truth, that's all!" replied the Fourth-Former, in a quiet, incisive voice. "My cousin left St. Jim's half an hour ago, and I do not know where he is now."

Aubrey Racke of the Shell sneered.

"I'll wager you know where he is going, Digby!" he said in his most unpleasant tones. "You can't pull the wool over my eyes. You are hiding your rotten cousin somewhere, and—Yah! What the—Yarough! Wow! Hands off, you rotter! Ooooooop!"

"Take that, and that, and that!" cried Digby furiously, hitting out straight from the shoulder at the cad of the Shell. "You dare speak of my cousin like that, you worm! He's worth fifty of you!"

"Wow-wow! Yah! Grooogh! Keep-imoff!" howled Racke.

He dived through the laughing juniors and rushed headlong down the stairs, to escape the sledge-hammer blows of Robert Arthur Digby.

Baggy Trimble, and Mellish, and Scroop, and a few others who had laughed at Racke's remark, suddenly became serious when Digby's wrathful glance came to bear on them.

A few minutes later Toby came up.

"Which Master Digby is wanted in the 'Ead's study at once!" he announced.

Digby gave a shrug and went downstairs.

Passing the Hall door he saw Racke talking to Barker of St. Ormond's, and a frown crossed his face. He paused, as if to speak to them, but walked on and tapped at the Head's study door.

"Come in!" said Dr. Holmes' deep, grave voice.

Digby entered.

Mr. Rathbone was there. The warden darted him a sharp, malevolent glance. His narrow face had the cunning of a fox's, and the venom of a tiger's.

"Digby, you are aware, of course, of your cousin's amazing escapade at St. Ormond's School?" said Dr. Holmes, looking hard at the Fourth Form junior. "Mr. Rathbone, a responsible person of that school, who had been sent by the headmaster to take back your cousin to receive his just deserts, informs me that you are harbouring the boy at this school. Is that so? I require the truth, Digby, and nothing but the truth."

"I will tell you the truth, sir," replied Digby, facing the Head fearlessly. "I admit I brought my cousin here, after meeting him on the road. We had a chat in my study, and he left St. Jim's half an hour ago."

"Where is the young rascal now?" demanded Mr. Rathbone harshly.

"I do not know where my cousin is," replied Digby, striving hard to suppress his feelings. "He is not at St. Jim's. I can tell you no more."

The Head rose from his table.

"I am afraid I can do nothing more for you, sir," he said to his visitor. "I wish you good-evening!"

"But, Dr. Holmes, I demand an inquiry!" stormed the warden. "Digby is concealing the truth. He—"

"I should consider it a favour, sir, if you would leave St. Jim's immediately!" rapped Dr. Holmes, his kind old face suffused with anger. "How dare you make demands of me! I regard your conduct as most insolent! Kindly go!"

Mr. Rathbone clenched his fists, gave a gulp, and then left the study.

Digby followed him.

The warden turned to him in the corridor outside, a baleful scowl on his face.

"I shall find your cousin!" he hissed malevolently. "Do not think that he will escape punishment. I will see to it that the longer you keep him from recapture the worse he shall suffer!"

"Oh, rot!" retorted Digby. "I don't care a rap for your threats, you rotter!"

He turned his back on the rascally warden and walked away.

Mr. Rathbone ground his teeth and made his way downstairs.

He was passing along the lower corridor that led to the Hall when a sound at one of the windows caused him to give a start.

He looked sharply in the direction of the window, and saw the figure of a schoolboy clambering out. He could not see the boy's face in the dusk, but the red and black cap he was wearing caught the warden's eye.

"Digby!" he shouted, making a dart forward towards the window. "You young rascal, then you have been hiding here all the time! Come back! Stop! Come back, I say!"

"Go and eat coke, Rathbone!" retorted the runaway from out of the window. "I'm not obeying your orders! Catch me if you can!"

Mr. Rathbone scrambled out of the window and crouched on the sill. He saw a schoolboy figure run away across the Close in the darkness.

Mr. Rathbone was not an athletic gentleman, but he was desperately anxious to catch Frank Digby, so he jumped.

Mr. Rathbone made a very ungraceful landing—on his hands and knees—on the hard asphalt below, and he gave a yell that carried far across the Close.

But he regained his breath, scrambled up, dashing across the quadrangle in the direction he had seen the runaway take.

He saw his quarry lurking in the shadows by the school wall, and his heart beat wildly.

"Digby, stop! Come here!" he shouted.

"Rats!"

The fugitive ran off, this time making for the wood-shed. Mr. Rathbone set out in full chase. His heart beat exultantly when he saw his quarry dash into the shed.

"Ah! I have him now!" he gasped exultantly. "He thinks I did not see him go in there!"

Mr. Rathbone reached the woodshed. He wrenched open the door and burst in.

Next minute he found himself crashing into a bewildering mass of ropes and woodwork in the dark. Before he had time to realise quite what it all meant there was a noise from above, and next minute it seemed to the startled Mr. Rathbone that the whole of the woodshed had collapsed on top of him.

Crash! Bang! Wallop! Thud!

"Yaroooogh!" howled Mr. Rathbone, losing his footing as a heavy beam of wood struck him amidships. "What the— Yah! Geroooogh! Wow-yow!"

Whizz!

A deluge of some powdery substance swamped down on him from above. It came from a sack, whatever it was, for a minute later the sack flopped on Mr. Rathbone's head as he lay there squirming on the ground.

"Yoogh! Wow! Yah! Help! Gerrooooch!" gurgled Mr. Rathbone.

There was a movement in the woodshed, and a boyish voice exclaimed, "Hallo! You've upset the whole caboodle now, and no mistake! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. and a crowd of juniors came dashing up. They seemed to have known to come to the woodshed. Jack Blake switched on his electric torch.

There was Mr. Rathbone lying on the woodshed floor, surrounded by tumbled planks of wood, ladders and ropes. A bump showed on his head, where one of those planks had struck him. He was smothered from head to foot in grey cement, which had fallen out of the sack that dangled ungracefully across his shoulders.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "What ever made you come in here, Mr. Rathbone? Taggles, our school porter, has been doing some work at the stables, and he stacked all his materials in here to-day. It appears that you came in and upset the lot. How silly of you! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerrooogh! Yah! Woooooh!" gurgled Mr. Rathbone, struggling to his feet. "I came here after Digby! Yow-ow! The young rascal is in here! Do

not let him escape. I— Oh! Guggood heavens!"

A schoolboy figure, wearing the St. Ormond's school cap, crept out from behind a pile of faggot in the woodshed.

It was not the runaway schoolboy at all, not the runaway schoolboy whom Mr. Rathbone was so anxious to capture, at any rate. It was Monty Lowther of the Shell.

"Dear me!" said Monty, with a stare of surprise. "You appear to have made rather a mess of things, Mr. Rathbone. I quite forgot to shout out to you, when I crept in here, that the shed was full of wood and cement and things, and that you would have to go carefully!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"You—you—you—" he stammered. Rathbone, gazing at Monty like a man in a dream. "Are you the boy who climbed out of the window?"

"I cannot tell a i. It was I!" replied Monty Lowther solemnly. "Here is Barker's cap, Mr. Rathbone. That's what you were chasing, me for, isn't it?"

"Barker's cap!" gurgled Mr. Rathbone faintly.

"Yes; I took it off the table in the Hall," said Monty. "Barker was busy talking to Racke—one of our chaps, you know—and he didn't see me sneak in and steal his cap. I'm sorry you've had so much trouble in recovering it, Mr. Rathbone."

Mr Rathbone's face where the cement did not cover it, went pink and white and red by turns. He seemed utterly at a loss for words. He realised how he had been hoodwinked into believing that he was chasing Frank Digby, and how he had been decoyed into the woodshed for the express pur-

pose of falling into the stacked-up articles in there in the dark.

"You—you—you—" he stammered. "I—I—I have been hoaxed. I—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors of St. Jim's.

Mr. Rathbone, with Barker's cap clutched in one hand, dived out of the woodshed, and ran across to the School House, leaving a long, long trail of cement in his wake.

Barker was on the steps.

Mr. Rathbone did not go into the School House to lodge a complaint, as most of the juniors expected him to do. Possibly he realised that he would meet with a cold reception from Dr. Holmes. He jumped into the car that was waiting at the bottom of the steps. It was a hired car, and the driver gave a glare when Mr. Rathbone entered and distributed the cement all over the cushions. Barker followed him in, and, at a curt order from the warden, the car-driver started the engine and let in the clutch.

Loud laughter followed the car as it rattled towards the gates, which Taggles opened. The car disappeared into the darkness of Rycombe Lane, and Tom Merry and Co. just caught a glimpse of Barker in the lamplight standing up beside the cement-smothered warden, and shaking his fist furiously at them.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Hiding the Refugee.

BOOM!
The last stroke of eleven died away on the night air at St. Jim's. In the Fourth Form dormitory all was dark and still.

Robert Arthur Digby sat up in bed. "Are you fellows awake?" he asked quietly.

(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 13th, 1929, may claim one of the following gifts:

- Fountain Pen.
- Penknife.
- Table Tennis Set.
- Combined Compass and Magnifying glass.
- Conjuring outfit.
- 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 13th, 1913.
- December 20th, 1912.
- September 3rd, 1913.
- July 11th, 1917.
- March 9th, 1918.
- August 17th, 1911.
- October 2nd, 1916.
- June 9th, 1914.
- February 19th, 1914.
- November 27th, 1908.
- April 5th, 1916.
- October 28th, 1911.
- May 2nd, 1915.

If you were BORN on any of these dates, fill in the CLAIMS COUPON provided on this page and send it to:

The Editor,
POPULAR Birthday Gift Club,
5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4.

so as to reach this address not later than April 25th, 1929. Please write the word "CLAIM" in the top left hand corner of your envelope.

No reader may claim a Gift unless he or she has already been registered as a member of our Birthday Gift Club.

A published date must be exactly the same in day, month, and year as that given on your registration coupon.

You CANNOT claim and register AT THE SAME TIME. Should your birth date happen to be published in this list, and you are not already registered, YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GIFT.

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

BIRTHDAY GIFT	CLAIM COUPON
(For the use of REGISTERED READERS ONLY.)	
Name.....	
Full Address (please write plainly)	
I declare myself to have registered in your Birthday Gift Club, before Saturday, April 13th 1929, and as the date given above (here state date)..... is the date of my birth, I wish to claim a (state name of the Gift you would like)..... in accordance with the rules of the club	
THIS COUPON IS ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL APRIL 25th, 1929.	
POPULAR.	APRIL 20th.

SENSATION AT ROOKWOOD!

Great sensation is caused at Rookwood when Mr. Greely, the majestic master of the Fifth, exhibits a damaged nose in public. Never before in the history of the school, has such a thing happened!

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.****Not a Laughing Matter!**

JIMMY SILVER & CO. smiled. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth Form, frowned.

The chums of the Fourth were adorning the steps of the School House, when Mr. Greely came out to take his accustomed stroll in the quad in morning "quarter."

Perhaps it was not quite respectful to smile. It was Mr. Greely's nose that did it.

Mr. Greely's nose, like Marian's in the ballad, was red and raw. It was also swollen beyond its usual size. It was always a prominent feature in Mr. Greely's face. Now it was more than prominent; it was striking—it caught the most casual glance. Mr. Greely looked as if he had had the worst of a fistical encounter, if so majestic and ponderous a gentleman as the Fifth Form master could have been supposed to have engaged in a fistical encounter with anyone.

General attention at Rookwood had been drawn to Mr. Greely's nose that morning. It was very unusual to see a Form master with a nose that looked as if it had been badly punched.

The explanation was quite simple.

Mr. Greely was accustomed to punching the ball for exercise before breakfast. On this particular morning he had punched not wisely but too well; and the rebounding ball had fairly crashed on his nose before the Fifth Form master could elude it.

Hence the highly-tinted and blossoming aspect of Mr. Greely's nose. It was perfectly simple; an accident that might have happened to anybody. But there was no doubt that it looked a little odd, and that it drew general attention.

All over Rookwood, fellows were making their little jests about Greely's beautiful boko and Greely's prize proboscis. Some of the fellows shook their heads and said that they had heard that punch-ball story before. Peele of

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

the Fourth, indeed, declared that he knew, as a positive fact, that Mr. Greely had captured that nose overnight, in a personal encounter with the chucker-out at the Bird-in-Hand.

There was no doubt that Mr. Greely was sensitive about the state of his nose. He comprehended the misconceptions to which it might give rise.

In the Fifth Form room that morning he had been very tart and irritable; he had suspected that the Fifth were thinking more of his prize nose than of their lessons—as probably they were. If two fellows exchanged a whisper, Mr. Greely felt certain that they were commenting on his nose.

Generally, Mr. Greely's plump and chubby face was quite good-tempered in expression; now it was quite cross. He wondered incessantly what Dr. Chisholm would think of his nose when he saw it. So far he had kept it out of the Head's view, but the Head was bound to see it sooner or later. And Mr. Greely felt deeply perturbed at the anticipation of the Head's glance of cold surprise.

So when he emerged from the House, and four Fourth-Formers on the steps smiled, it was really the last straw—it put the lid on it, as it were.

Jimmy Silver & Co. meant no offence. But the Fifth Form master was in a mood to take offence where none was intended.

Instead of passing the Fistical Four with his usual lofty and pompous stride, Mr. Greely turned on them, frowning darkly.

The chums of the Fourth became grave at once.

"Well?" said Mr. Greely in his deep and fruity voice.

"Hem! Good-morning, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Nice morning, sir!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

But the soft answer did not turn away wrath.

"You are disrespectful!" said Mr. Greely.

Mr. Greely Again!

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

By
Owen Conquest.

"Oh, sir!" murmured Raby.

"Not at all, sir!" said Newcome.

"The manners of some of the Lower boys in this school are simply shocking!" said Mr. Greely. "You, I think, are the very worst!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

Really this was a lot of fuss to make over an involuntary smile. If Mr. Greely did not want fellows to smile he should not have taken such a nose about in public. That was how the Fistical Four looked at it.

"If you were in my Form," continued Mr. Greely, "I should cane you severely for your bad manners!"

"Hem!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather glad that they had not the privilege of belonging to Mr. Greely's Form.

"As you are not in my Form," went on Mr. Greely in his ponderous way, "I shall report you to your own Form master."

"What have we done, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Greely did not answer that question.

He rolled ponderously down the steps and approached Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, who was taking the air in the quad.

The chums of the Fourth exchanged glances.

"Poor old Greely!" murmured Lovell. "It's his own fault; he shouldn't spring a nose like that on fellows suddenly."

"He shouldn't!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"I wonder how he got it?" remarked Raby. "Peele says he was scrapping at an inn last night. Of course, that's rot!"

"Muffin says there was a row in Masters' Common-room, and Greely and Mr. Bohm came to punching," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Bosh! It was a punch-ball accident, of course—"

"Well, that's a pretty old story, isn't it?" said Lovell. "I've heard that more than once."

"Hallo! There's Dicky wanting us!" groaned Raby.

Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was beckoning to the four cheery members of his Form. He had listened to Mr. Greely's complaint, and

was obviously going to take official notice of it.

Reluctantly, Jimmy Silver & Co. approached their Form master. Mr. Dalton looked very grave; and Mr. Greely stood frowning portentously, his damaged nose glowing in the sunshine.

"Mr. Greely complains that you four boys have treated him with disrespect," said Mr. Dalton severely.

"Not at all, sir," said Lovell. "We didn't mean to, anyway, sir."

"If laughing in a Form master's face is not disrespect, sir, I do not know the meaning of the word!" said Mr. Greely. "I repeat, sir, that I do not know the meaning of the word!"

Mr. Dalton's lips twitched a little.

His own opinion was that Mr. Greely was making an absurd fuss over a mere trifle, which it would have been more judicious to pass over unnoticed. In fact, he found it rather difficult not to smile himself when his eyes rested on Mr. Greely's blossoming nose—that damaged feature looking so extremely odd upon a ponderous gentleman like Mr. Greely.

But discipline was discipline; and it was clear that the thoughtless junior had smiled if they had not laughed. And Mr. Greely was too majestic a gentleman to be even smiled at with impunity.

"I regret that any of my boys should have given offence by thoughtless want of manners," said Mr. Dalton. "You will take fifty lines each, and you will hand them to Mr. Greely personally by three o'clock. You may go!"

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir!"

The Fistical Four went. Mr. Greely grunted; he considered this punishment absurdly lenient. It was not as if any other member of Dr. Chisholm's staff had been smiled at. It was Mr. Horace Greely who had been smiled at. That made the incident a serious one.

However, Mr. Dalton was turning away, evidently regarding the matter as closed.

Mr. Greely departed on his stately promenade under the beeches, feeling more cross than ever. And as he sighted Dr. Chisholm in the distance, coming away from the library, Mr. Greely hastily changed his course to avoid him—anxious to keep his nose out of the Head's sight as long as possible. And passing Snooks of the Second he saw, or fancied he saw, a disrespectful smirk on Snooks' face, and astonished the fag by boxing his ears as he passed.

Then he rolled on, leaving Snooks of the Second rubbing his ear and staring after him with an expression that was really almost homicidal.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Lovell's Wheeze:

"I've got it!"

Arthur Edward Lovell whispered the words to Jimmy Silver at the dinner-table.

Lovell had been thinking; and, to judge by the grin on his face, his thoughts were of a humorous nature.

Jimmy had asked him to pass the salt; but Lovell, deeply occupied by his own reflections, had not even heard him.

"I've got it!" he breathed, in Jimmy's ear.

"You've got it?" asked Jimmy, a little puzzled.

"Yes, rather!"

"Pass it along, then."

"Eh? Pass what along?"

"The salt."

"Salt!" repeated Lovell. "Salt! Who's talking at out salt?"

"I am. You said you'd got it."

"You silly ass! Blow the salt! Look here, I've got it—a wheeze—a tip-top wheeze to dish old Greely! I'll tell you—"

"Not quite so much talking at the table, please!" came in Mr. Dalton's quiet voice.

Lovell checked himself. It was no time or place to inform his chums of the great wheeze he had thought of. Certainly, it would not have done to allow Mr. Dalton to catch a whisper of it.

Lovell was eager for dinner to be over. As soon as the Rookwood fellows went out he caught Jimmy by the arm.

"Come up to the study."

"Well, we may as well get on with the lines now," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"That's it, the jolly old lines!" grinned Lovell.

Lovell dragged his comrades away to the end study in the Fourth. There he shut the door in quite a mysterious way, before he imparted his wonderful wheeze. He was grinning widely. His comrades, on the other hand, were quite serious. As a matter of fact, they had had some experience of Arthur Edward's wheezes and did not think much of them, as a rule.

"I've got it," said Lovell. "We're going to do those lines—fifty each. But it wasn't specified what lines we were to do."

"Eh? It's always Virgil, unless it's specified otherwise," said Jimmy Silver. "Fifty lines of Virgil, of course."

"I know that ass. Still, we can make it fifty lines of something else, if we like."

"I—I suppose we could," assented Jimmy dubiously. "Blessed if I see why we should, though."

"What about Shakespeare?"

"Shakespeare?"

"Yes, Shakespeare!"

"Shakespeare isn't Latin."

"Mr. Dalton didn't say Latin," rejoined Lovell.

"No; it's understood."

"We needn't understand it for once, if we choose."

"Blessed if I see what you're driving at, Lovell," said Raby, in wonder. "I'd rather write out Virgil than Shakespeare myself. We're more used to it."

"You don't seem to see the point yet."

"Oh, you're coming to a point?" asked Raby innocently.

"Yes!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, all right! Get on to it, then."

"We're going to write our lines from 'Love's Labour's Lost,'" said Lovell.

"You remember we had an act of it in class one day?"

"I remember. But why—"

"I've got it here," said Lovell, sorting over the bookshelf. "Here it is! Wait a minute. Listen!"

And Arthur Edward read out from the ballad at the end of that Shakespearean play:

"When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parsons' saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

Lovell closed the volume with a snap. "Got it?" he asked.

"Nunno! Not quite. What—"

"That's the line; 'And Marian's nose looks red and raw!'" Lovell chuckled.

"We've got fifty lines to do, and if we like to write the same line over and over again that's our business. We're going to write out that line fifty times."

"My hat!"

"Got it now?" grinned Lovell.

"Phew!"

Lovell's chums stared at him.

They had "got it" now, certainly. They had fifty lines each to write, and fifty lines from Shakespeare might, perhaps, pass muster instead of fifty Latin verses. It might possibly be conceded that the same line might be written over fifty times, instead of fifty distinct lines—possibly, though not probably.

But that particular line—

"We're not bound to guess that Dicky Dalton meant Latin lines, or that he meant fifty different lines," said Lovell argumentatively. "That line's good enough. Shakespeare is good enough for Greely, I suppose. That's the line I'm going to write; you fellows can please yourselves."

"But—" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"But—"

"Greely will know it's an allusion to his jolly old boko!" exclaimed Raby.

"Of course he will. If he didn't it wouldn't be a wheeze!"

"He will be frightfully wild," said Newcome.

"That's what I want."

"Hem! But—"

"What can he do?" demanded Lovell. "If he makes a fuss, it will be all over the school; he will be chortled to death. If he's got any sense, he'll just shove the impots in the fire and say nothing. We shall score over him, and—and there you are."

"But has he got any sense?" murmured Newcome.

"Anyhow, we score! Look here, it's no end of a wheeze. Fancy his face when he looks at the impots!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of merriment in the end study. The thought of Mr. Greely's face, when he looked at those unusual impots, made the chums of the Fourth roar.

But—there was a but!—it might be a feast of honour, but after the feast came the reckoning!

But, though his chums felt doubtful, Arthur Edward Lovell was not to be deterred. Indeed, dubiety on the part of his comrades had its usual effect of confirming him in his determination. Lovell sat down at the study table with a pen and a sheaf of impot paper, and began. His pen raced over the paper, and the Co. watched his impot grow.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw!"

That was how Lovell's impot started, and that was how it continued. Jimmy Silver looked at it and chuckled.

After all, it was worth a little risk. It was really a great jest, and was certain to be howled over by all Rookwood if Mr. Greely made a fuss about it. Even in Masters' Common-room there would be chuckles over that extraordinary impot. Besides, that line from Shakespeare referred, distinctly, to Marian's nose—not to Mr. Greely's nose. Mr. Greely would have no real right to suppose that there was any reference to his own nose. If he was touchy, at present, on the subject of noses, that was his own look-out.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome sat round the table and started writing. And all the lines they wrote referred to the redness and rawness of Marian's nose.

Putty of the Fourth looked into the study while the four were going strong. "You fellows busy?"

"Yes, rather! Lines for Greely," said Jimmy Silver, without looking up. "They've got to go in at three."

"Take a squint at 'em," said Lovell. Putty of the Fourth took a "squint" and uttered a yell.

"That's for Greely?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Putty.

And Putty of the Fourth rushed away to tell the news along the passage. Before those impots were finished Jimmy Silver & Co. had received at least a dozen visitors from the Classical Fourth who stared at the growing impots and chuckled explosively. It was agreed on all hands that it was a great jest, and this unanimity of opinion greatly bucked Arthur Edward Lovell. It was not always that his wheezes caught on like this. It was agreed, also, that the Fistical Four were asking for a licking if they handed in those impots to Horace Greely; but that could not be helped. Now that the thing was public, Jimmy Silver & Co. felt that it was up to them.

And when the lines were done the four juniors started for Mr. Greely's study, to deliver their impositions as commanded by their Form master.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

On the Carpet!

"COME in!" snapped Mr. Greely. It was close on three o'clock, and as a tap came at his study door, Mr. Greely supposed that it heralded the arrival of the four delinquents of the Fourth with the impositions.

As a matter of fact, it did not. Jimmy Silver & Co. had not arrived yet. Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, had arrived.

The Head opened Mr. Greely's door and entered. Mr. Greely had a lofty frown on his lofty face, all ready for the juniors, to impress upon them that it was their duty to enter his impressive presence in fear and trembling. The headmaster had the full benefit of the majestic frown as he entered.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Greely.

He jumped up in confusion.

"Dr. Chisholm!"

The visit was entirely unexpected. Like a flash it passed through Mr. Greely's mind that, when he had avoided the Head in the quad that morning he had not, as he had supposed, quite succeeded in keeping his flaming nose from observation. Dr. Chisholm's eyes were very keen; that nose had struck him, even in the distance, and Mr. Greely knew, he felt, that the Head had dropped into his study for a closer inspection.

Mr. Greely stood blinking at the Head, his cheeks almost as crimson as his nose.

"Pray excuse my interrupting you, Mr. Greely," said Dr. Chisholm, in his politest and coldest tone.

"Not at all, sir!" gasped Mr. Greely. He was conscious that the cold, icy gaze of the Head was fairly boring into his swollen and inflamed nose, almost like a gimlet. "Will you—hem—pray be seated, sir. This is—hem—an unexpected pleasure, sir. May I offer you—hem—a chair?"

The Head remained standing, grimly regardless of Mr. Greely's anxious and confused courtesy.

"I could not help observing you this

morning, Mr. Greely, when I passed you at a distance in the quadrangle."

"Oh! Yes! Quite so! An accident—"

"You cannot fail to be aware, Mr. Greely, that your present—hem—aspect is very—very unusual in a member of my staff. I have no desire, no right to interfere in the slightest degree with your private concerns. But certain things—a certain regard to appearances—are naturally expected of a gentleman holding such a position as that of master to a senior Form at Rookwood School."

Mr. Greely's face might have been a freshly-boiled beetroot, to judge by its complexion.

"Yes, sir. An accident—"

"Boxing," said the Head, ruthlessly interrupting Mr. Greely, "is a very healthy form of exercise, I believe. Among the boys, I think it should be encouraged to every reasonable extent. In a middle-aged gentleman, Mr. Greely, a certain restraint is advisable."

"I—I was not—it was not—that is—you will see—"

Mr. Greely was a little incoherent.

"A bruised and swollen nose on a Form master is likely—I may say certain—to cause something in the nature of risibility among the boys, Mr. Greely."

Mr. Greely was only too painfully aware that it had already caused a good deal in the nature of risibility among the Rookwood fellows.

"I should not like to use the word ludicrous," said the Head, and immediately proceeded to use it. "If you will take the trouble to glance into your mirror, Mr. Greely, you will see for yourself that such an aspect, in a gentleman of your years, can only be described as ludicrous."

"Sir! I—I—"

"It may give rise to an impression—doubtless unfounded, I trust quite unfounded—that you, a Rookwood master, have engaged in some kind of an encounter at fisticuffs," said the Head.

"An accident—"

"Quite so—quite so!" With a wave of his hand the Head waved aside all explanations. "I understand, quite so. But you do not need me to tell you, Mr. Greely, that such accidents should be carefully avoided by a gentleman of your years and in your position. Such accidents are liable to cause the most unfavourable and disrespectful comment."

Mr. Greely gasped.

He wondered whether the Head actually suspected that he had been fighting somebody, like a fag of the Lower School.

"That is all!" said the Head. "I felt compelled to mention the matter, Mr. Greely. I—"

Knock.

The door opened again, and four juniors of the Fourth Form—marched in with impots in their hands, little dreaming that they were marching into the presence of their headmaster.

At the sight of Dr. Chisholm the four stopped dead.

The Head glanced at them.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in a silent row, impots in hand. It was within a minute or two of three o'clock, but certainly they would have postponed their visit had they known that the Head was with Mr. Greely. But it was too late now.

Mr. Greely gave them an unhappy glare.

"Place your lines on the table!" he articulated.

"Yes, sir."

"One moment." The Head's voice interposed, cold as steel and as hard. "Have these Fourth Form boys brought impositions to you, Mr. Greely?"

"Yes—as you see, sir."

"I fail to understand. It is a rigid and unbroken rule at Rookwood that no Form master interferes with the duties of another. Am I to understand that you have imposed lines upon boys in Mr. Dalton's Form, Mr. Greely?"

The Fistical Four stood red and uncomfortable. Mr. Greely had annoyed them extremely, but they could feel for him now.

"You are to understand nothing of the kind, sir!" said Mr. Greely, goaded, as it were, into resistance.

"What?"

"These boys were guilty of disrespect to me, sir, and Mr. Dalton imposed the lines, and ordered them to bring the lines to me."

"A very unusual proceeding," said the Head coldly, "and a very unusual imposition. Give me the paper, Silver."

"I see nothing unusual in the imposition, sir," said Mr. Greely. "Fifty lines is not unusual."

Mr. Greely had not seen those lines yet; but the Head had had a glimpse of the papers.

"Do you hear me, Silver?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

Lovell's wonderful wheeze was not working out as per programme. Even Lovell would scarcely have dreamed of writing out that line from "Love's Labour's Lost" had he been able to guess that the impots would be handed over to the headmaster.

Dr. Chisholm took the paper from Jimmy, and fixed his eyes upon it. The juniors stood quite still.

"Upon my word!"

Dr. Chisholm looked at the juniors. At a sign from him, Lovell and Raby and Newcome handed over their impots. The Head scanned them in a terrible silence.

Still silent, but with thunder in his brow, he placed the sheets on the table before Mr. Greely.

The Fifth Form master looked at them. He looked, and stared, and blinked. He had expected to see Virgilian verses, probably beginning with "Arma virumque cano." Instead of which he saw:

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw.

"And Marian's nose looks red and raw."

And so on, and so on, covering the sheets in four varieties of handwriting.

Mr. Greely gazed and gazed, his plump face growing more and more crimson till it was purple as a ripe grape. The silence in the Fifth Form master's study could almost have been cut with a knife.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Greely at last, in a faint voice.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"Were these the lines set you by Mr. Dalton?"

"Mr. Dalton did not specify what lines we were to write, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "We—we decided on a—a—a line from—from Shakespeare, sir!"

Jimmy Silver made that explanation,

as the only possible one, painfully aware at the time that it was, so to speak, a chicken that would not fight.

"Is it customary, in writing impositions for your Form master to repeat the same line ad infinitum?"

"No-n-no, sir."

"I thought not! Have you selected this line from a play of Shakespeare's as an impertinent reference to—hem—Mr. Greely's present state, the result of an accident?"

The juniors did not answer. No answer, in fact, was needed. They waited for the thunderbolt.

"Very well," said the Head, very quietly. "I shall speak of this to your Form master. You may go."

The juniors were glad to escape from the study.

Mr. Greely wiped perspiration from his purple brow.

"This is—this is unheard-of insolence, sir!" he said gasping. "This is—is an occasion for severe punishment!"

"I do not agree with you, Mr. Greely," said the Head coldly. "The boys have been impertinent. By appearing in public, sir, with the aspect of a—I cannot say less—the aspect of a prize-fighter—"

"Sir!"

"The aspect of a prize-fighter, you have provoked this impertinence. You

standing before an incensed Form master—he, whose deep, fruity voice dominated Masters' Common-room; he, who in his heart of hearts felt entitled to the succession of the headmastership, when Dr. Chisholm should retire—a date which, in the best interests of Rookwood might well have been hastened, Mr. Greely considered. And he had stood all this because a punch-ball had rebounded on his nose.

The Head had not even allowed him

visit to Mr. Greely's study, and were surrounded by a dozen of the Classical Fourth.

They did not look as if they had, after all, scored a victory. They were looking rather worried.

The presence of the headmaster had spoiled everything. Mr. Greely had been on the carpet, they realised; and their little jape had made matters worse for him.

That was not what they had wanted



AVOIDING THE HEAD! Mr. Greely sighted Dr. Chisholm in the distance and hastily changed his course to avoid him— anxious to keep his damaged nose out of the Head's sight as long as possible. (See Chapter 1.)

have only yourself to thank, Mr. Greely!"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"I make no inquiry into the cause of the injury you have received, Mr. Greely. That does not concern me. But I beg of you, sir, to bear in mind that such accidents are to be avoided. The impertinence of these juniors should be warning to you on that point."

"Sir! I—"

"That is all, Mr. Greely."

Dr. Chisholm sailed out of the study. He swept past four rather troubled juniors in the corridor. Mr. Greely, perspiring, wiped his brow, and stared at the door that had closed after the Head! He respected the Head, but he had sometimes been intensely exasperated by him. Now he was exasperated to such an extent that he trembled with resentment.

He had been called over the coals—really rated, as if he had been a boy

to mention the punch-ball—the Head, doubtless, would have regarded punch-ball exercise as frivolous. Certainly it was difficult to imagine the Head himself punching the ball.

"I will not endure this!" gasped Mr. Greely.

With glowing cheeks, and a still more glowing nose, the perturbed master of the Fifth left his study at last, with the fixed determination to follow the Head to his room, and there, with lofty and dignified front, to hurl his resignation—metaphorically, of course—at the feet of the headmaster of Rookwood.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Just Like Lovell!

"**H**OW did it go?"
 "Licked?"
 "What did Greely say?"
 "What did Greely do?"

There was a rain of questions as Jimmy Silver & Co. returned from their

at all. They had wanted to pull Mr. Greely's leg in return for his pompous interference with their noble selves. But making the poor gentleman look a complete fool in the presence of his chief was quite another matter. They had not wanted that, and they were sorry for it.

"It was rather a fizzle," said Jimmy Silver. "The Beak was there—that spoiled it all."

"The Head!" exclaimed Putty of the Fourth.

"Yes. Of course, we never knew he was there when we butted in—"

"My hat! Greely must have felt an ass!"

"I know he looked one!"

"Was the Head ragging him about his boko?" chuckled Oswald.

"I fancy so! Poor old Don Pomposo!"

"Well, a Form master shouldn't

gather up a nose like that!" grinned Peck. "We should get lined if we took a boko like that into class! Form masters ought to know better."

"Ha ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four walked away not feeling at all easy or satisfied in their minds. Arthur Edward Lovell was almost shamefaced.

His great jest had fallen rather flat, he felt. They had scored over Mr. Greely—more than they had intended or desired. The Head had been "ragging" him, that was clear; and they felt sorry for any man who was up before those steady, icy eyes, and that cool, incisive voice.

Mr. Greely had annoyed them, but they had not wanted really to hurt or pain him and they knew that he had fairly writhed.

Arthur Edward Lovell waited for his comrades to speak. He was prepared to hear them say that it was a rotten wheeze, and that he ought to be kicked for having thought of it. Then Lovell was prepared to maintain that it was a first-class wheeze, and if it had happened to give a sharper edge to the Head's "ragging" of Mr. Greely—why, that couldn't be helped, and, anyhow, it served Don Pomposo right!

But as his comrades did not speak, Lovell, not being driven into obstinacy by criticism, realised that he was sorry himself that he had ever evolved that masterly stunt.

"It's rather rotten!" said Lovell. "Poor old Greely looked fairly on toast! Do you know, I rather believe that the Beak was glad we butted in with that rag; it gave him a chance to rub it in harder!"

"Shouldn't wonder," said Jimmy. "The—the fact is—" Lovell hesitated.

"Go it!"

"Well, the fact is, I wish it hadn't happened, and—and Greely is a pompous old ass; but—but I—I—I think we owe him an apology."

Jimmy Silver smiled. That was his own idea; and he had expected Lovell to arrive at that conclusion if undeterred by hostile criticism.

"Think so?" he asked.

"Well, yes! The old boy was fairly sweating," said Lovell. "You heard what the Head said, after we left the study; he didn't care if we heard! Bit thick, ragging a master with fellows hanging about to hear! The fact is, the Head's a bit of a Tartar at times, and he was grilling Greely. I—I've a jolly good mind to apologise to Don Pomposo."

"Good idea!" said Raby.

"After all, he's not a bad sort—only an old ass!" argued Lovell. "It's jolly bad form cheeking a master, too; though you fellows don't seem to realise it."

That was Arthur Edward Lovell all over, so to speak. His three comrades glared at him.

"Whose wheeze was it, you cheeky fathead?" hooted Raby.

"Didn't you drag us into it, ass?" demanded Newcome.

"Well, I can't do more than tell you that I think it's bad form to—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Newcome. "It's no good talking sense to Lovell—give him a bumping."

"I'd be glad to hear you talk sense, old chap; it would be a new experience, and a pleasant one," said Lovell calmly.

"But never mind that now; I'm going to see Greely, and make it all right

with him. When a chap's in the wrong, there's nothing undignified in offering an apology, so far as I can see. You fellows may not think so."

"Haven't we said we think so?" shrieked Raby.

"Don't shout!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Don't yell!"

"By Jove! I'll—"

"You fellows wait for me in the study," said Lovell. "I'll come there and tell you after I've spoken to Greely. Leave it to me to calm the old boy."

And Arthur Edward Lovell walked away—none too soon, for his chums were getting into an extremely exasperated frame of mind, and Arthur Edward had a narrow escape of being clutched hold of and bumped on the floor.

"The cheeky ass!" breathed Raby. "I shall punch Lovell's nose one of these days. He's always asking for it."

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy Silver cheerily; and the three repaired to the end study in the Fourth, to wait for Arthur Edward.

Lovell headed for Mr. Greely's study.

Arthur Edward Lovell was a good, hearted fellow, and he was really sorry for what he had done amiss. He felt that a handsome apology would meet the case, and he was prepared to offer it. But he was not in time to catch Mr. Greely in his study. He was in time to see the portly figure of the Fifth Form master turn the corner at the other end of the corridor.

That was the direction of the Head's study; and Lovell wondered whether Mr. Greely was going to speak to the Head. If so, the apology would have to be postponed for a little while.

He followed on Mr. Greely's track, to wait for him and speak to him when he came out of the Head's room.

Mr. Greely was striding on at a rapid rate, fuming almost at bursting point with resentment and outraged dignity.

He was going to let Dr. Chisholm see and clearly understand that he, Mr. Horace Greely, was not to be talked to in this manner. Headmaster as he was, Dr. Chisholm had to be made aware that there were other gentlemen at Rookwood with a sense of dignity—dignity that had to be respected, even if slightly marred by a blossoming nose that looked like the relic of a prize-fight.

And yet—

Somehow or other, Mr. Greely's determined stride dropped into a slower walk, and the walk became a very slow one. The nearer he drew to the headmaster's study, the less, somehow, he seemed to relish the interview; and the more clearly it was borne in upon his mind that he did not want to leave Rookwood. He wanted to hurl his resignation at the Head in crushing commanding tones; but he did not want to go—very, very much indeed he did not want to go! It became clear to Mr. Greely that he was torn between two incompatible desires, and—

The portly gentleman slowed down still more. A few yards from the door of the Head's study he stopped.

For a full minute he stood irresolute. Then he turned round.

Mr. Greely's resignation was not to be handed in that afternoon. That lofty, dignified speech was not to be delivered in the Head's study.

The time would come, perhaps. But it had not yet come. Obviously, from the direction Mr. Greely was now taking, it had not yet come. It would be wiser, perhaps, to take counsel with

his colleagues in Masters' Common-room.

He was still simmering with resentment, and as he came back along the corridor, portly and ponderous, he almost ran into Arthur Edward Lovell at the corner.

Mr. Greely breathed hard.

He had spared the Head. But he was seriously in want of a victim. The unhappy Lovell came along in the very nick of time.

This was one of the impertinent young rascals—one of the authors of that insolent, absurd reference to a nose that was red and raw—doubtless even at this moment thinking of some new impertinence.

"Mr. Greely—" began Lovell.

He got no further.

He was interrupted by a grip on his collar.

Shake, shake, shake!

Lovell spluttered.

"I—I say—yoooogh—groogh—leggo—I say—oh, my hat—leggo!"

"Impertinent young rascal!" boomed Mr. Greely.

"I—I say—grooogh—"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Leggo! I say—oh crumbs! Yoooop!"

Smack!

Mr. Greely, having shaken Lovell till his teeth were almost rattling in his head, released him and boxed his ear!

It was a hefty smack that rang like a pistol-shot.

Lovell staggered.

Smack!

A box on the other ear set him upright again.

"Yarooogh!" roared Lovell. "Look here—oh, my hat—" he spun away and fled.

Mr. Greely was not finished yet. His smacking hand—a heavy hand—just missed Lovell as the junior fled—the apology unuttered, not even mentioned. Mr. Greely never knew that Lovell had come there to apologise. Perhaps he would not have cared, anyhow. He strode after the fleeing junior, in Olympian wrath.

"Lovell! Stop! I order you to stop at—"

Arthur Edward Lovell did not stop.

He fairly flew up the staircase; Mr. Greely fortunately remained at the bottom. Lovell did not halt till he was in the end study—breathless, furious, with singing head.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him.

"Hallo! How did the apology go off?" asked Jimmy. "Greely all right?"

"Ow!"

Lovell rubbed his burning ears.

"Wow! The cheeky beast—the pompous old ass! The Head didn't give him half enough! You silly owls can apologise to the priceless old dummy if you like—I'm jolly well not going to! Ow! Wow—wow!" spluttered Lovell. "Pitching into a chap before he could get out a word! Yow—ow—ow!"

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

"You cackling asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, is there?" shrieked Lovell.

But his comrades evidently thought that there was, for they cackled almost hysterically, till Lovell grabbed up a cricket bat and drove them, still yelling, from the study.

THE END.

(Mr. Greely is having a full share of the limelight, and next week he has even more. Look out for: "GEEELY, THE GALLANT!" a rollicking long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

TEACHING BUNTER A LESSON!

Billy Bunter has asked for trouble—begged for it, for a long time. At last his schoolfellows decide that Bunter must be taught a severe lesson. So Bunter, the grub-raider, the story-teller, the sponger, speedily becomes Bunter, the friendless!



BARRÉD by the REMOVE!

BY
**FRANK
RICHARDS**

Author of the well-known tales
of HARRY WHARTON & CO.,
OF GREYFRIARS, appearing in
the "Magnet" Every Saturday.

THE FIRST CHAPTER In Coventry!

CLANG, clang, clang!
Billy Bunter yawned portentously as the rising-bell awakened him. The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove was in no hurry to turn out of bed; he never did turn out till the latest possible moment. But he kept one eye open for Bob Cherry, who was wont to assist the fat slacker out of bed with the help of a pillow or bolster if he stayed in too long. But on this particular morning there was nothing to fear from Bob, he did not even glance at Bunter's bed. Nobody called to Bunter to turn out—nobody even called him a slacker or a frowster.

It was rather a relief to Bunter, till the cause dawned upon his fat mind. He remembered suddenly that, owing to his habit of boning other people's tuck, the Remove, to a man, had sent him to Coventry.

Bunter sat up in bed. He groped for his big spectacles and jammed them on his fat little nose, and blinked round at the Removites.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.
Skinner grinned and Snoop laughed; but the rest of the Remove paid no heed to Bunter.

"Bob, old man, what's the time?"
No answer from Bob Cherry.
"I say, Wharton—"
Wharton did not heed.

"Getting deaf?" roared Bunter.
"Nugent! I say, Franky, you're not such a silly owl as those chaps!"
Nugent grinned, but did not speak.

Billy Bunter glared round and rolled out of bed.

"I know you silly asses are only pulling my leg!" he exclaimed. "I've done nothing to be barred for. I never touched Smithy's grub!" said Bunter indignantly. "I hope I'm not the fellow to raid a study cupboard. If Smithy's missed his grub, it was most likely Redwing bagged it."

Tom Redwing opened his lips, but closed them again.

"I say, you fellows, how long are you going to keep this up?" demanded Bunter. "Not that I want you to talk

to me. I've got plenty of friends in other Forms, if you come to that. I'm welcome in the Fifth and Sixth Form studies, if I care to go. Toddy, you beast, what are you sniggering at?"

Peter Todd did not explain what he was sniggering at.

"I say, Fishy!" Bunter turned to Fisher T. Fish, as a last resource. "I say, Fishy, old man!"

Fisher T. Fish grinned, but did not speak.

"I owe you a bob, Fishy," said Bunter. "Would you like me to settle up this morning?"

"Yep!" answered Fisher T. Fish at once. Bunter might be in Coventry; but a shilling was a shilling, and a serious matter to Fisher Tarleton Fish. And Bunter had owed him that shilling for a very long time.

"Now then, Fishy!" called out Bolsover major. "You know you're not to speak to Bunter!"

"I guess I want my dust!" said Fisher T. Fish. "Hand it over, Bunter, if you've got it!"

"I haven't exactly got it," said Bunter cautiously. "I only asked you if you'd like me to settle up. You see, I'm expecting a postal-order to-day."

"You fat clam!" roared Fisher T. Fish.

"Oh, really, Fishy—"
"I guess I'll—"
"Shut up, Fishy!" shouted five or six Removites. And Fisher T. Fish turned an angry back on William George Bunter.

Billy Bunter tried again and again, until the Remove went downstairs; but he did not succeed in eliciting any replies from the juniors.

Even Peter Todd, Bunter's study-mate, raised the heel against him. Peter heard Bunter's remarks with a face like a stone image, and answered not.

The Owl of the Remove frowned wrathfully as he rolled down after his Form-fellows.

It dawned upon his fat mind that he was in a scrape, and Bunter felt that it was hard. Often and often he had raided a fellow's study before; often and often he had been kicked for doing so.

Now the chopper had come down in earnest, and the Owl of the Remove felt that he was hardly treated.

He rolled rather dismally out into the quadrangle after breakfast. Being barred by the Form was not a pleasant situation, and it was especially unpleasant to Bunter. He could not possibly hope to raise his usual little loans from fellows who would not speak to him, and he could not ask himself to tea in a study where he was to be treated as a stranger. It looked as if there was a thin time ahead for the Owl of the Remove.

THE SECOND CHAPTER, Barred!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came on Bunter when they arrived at the door of the Remove Form room that morning. They did not seem to see his beseeching blink. They walked into the Remove room regardless of Bunter, as if he were not there.

"Beasts!" howled Bunter.
The chums of the Remove seemed deaf, as well as blind. Billy Bunter rolled after them into the Form-room.

"You silly asses!" he howled. "Can't you speak?"

Apparently the Famous Five couldn't. At all events, they didn't! Billy Bunter stood before them, as they sat at their desks with expressionless faces, and glared at them with a glare that bade fair to crack his big spectacles.

"After I stood you that splendid feed yesterday!" he hooted. "Do you call this grateful?"

Bunter's voice echoed through the Form-room; but it seemed to make no impression on the ears of the Famous Five. They gazed straight before them, as if looking right through Bunter.

"Wharton, you silly chump! I've a jolly good mind to yank you off that form and dust up the room with you!" howled Bunter.

The captain of the Remove remained unconscious.

"Inky, you black nigger!"
THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh remained impervious.

"Nugent, you milksoop! You ought to be sent to a girls' school, not to Greyfriars!" pursued Bunter.

Frank Nugent grinned, but did not speak.

"You silly asses, sitting there like a family of moulting owls!" shouted the exasperated Bunter. "What sort of blessed idiots do you call yourselves? I'd jolly well mop up the lot of you, if old Quelch wasn't just due—"

"Bunter!"
It was the deep voice of the Remove master. Mr. Quelch was not only due, but he had arrived.

Billy Bunter spun round.
"Oh, I—I didn't hear you, sir—I mean I didn't see you—I—I mean I—I never called you old Quelch, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Bunter's prevarications are no subject for laughter Bunter, how dare you allude to your Form master in such a disrespectful manner!"

"I—I didn't, sir! I—I mean I—I'm always respectful, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I respect you no end, sir. I—I don't think you a beast like most of the fellows, sir—I don't really."

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.
"Bunter!" he stuttered.
"I don't really, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I've often said to the fellows, sir, that looks ain't everything."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. He grabbed a cane from his desk. "Bunter, you impertinent young rascal, hold out your hand!"

Swish!
"Whooooooohooooop!"
"Now go to your place, Bunter, and if you repeat that ridiculous noise I shall cane you again."

Billy Bunter was careful not to repeat the "ridiculous noise." He squeezed a fat hand under a podgy arm as he rolled to his place. He sat down by Lord Mauleverer and blinked pathetically at his lordship.

"Hard cheese, old man!" murmured Mauly, forgetting for the moment that the Owl of the Remove was in Coventry. "Shut up, Mauly, you ass!" whispered Squiff.

"You let Mauly alone—blow you!" said Bunter. "Mauly can speak to me if he likes. He knows I'm innocent. Don't you, Mauly?"

"Bunter!" It was Mr. Quelch's deep voice again. "You are chattering, Bunter!"

"Oh, no, sir! I never opened my lips! I only said to Mauleverer—"
"You will take fifty lines, Bunter."
"Oh dear!"

It was not Billy Bunter's lucky morning. The Owl of the Remove sat with a dismal face during lessons.

After classes he rolled out of the Form-room with the juniors, and hooked his arm into Peter Todd's. Peter cheerfully shook him off and walked out into the quadrangle.

"I say, Peter—"
Peter Todd walked on without turning his head.

"Beast!"
Skinner and Snoop came by and grinned at the unfortunate Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter addressed them, and Skinner and Snoop walked by regardless. Skinner and Snoop, certainly, were not shocked at Bunter's conduct, which had brought on him his punishment; but they had entered heartily into carrying out his sentence, probably on the principle of "going for" any fellow when he was down.

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

Bunter's fat face did not brighten again till dinner-time; dinner always made him look cheerful.

During the afternoon Billy Bunter was very thoughtful.

Possibly he was meditating upon his sins. If that was the case, he had ample subject for meditation.

More probably he was meditating upon his punishment, and wondering how he was to escape it.

At tea-time that day he looked in at Study No. 1. The Famous Five had gathered there. A remittance had arrived for Bob Cherry, and when a remittance arrived for one member of the famous Co. all the members were in funds while it lasted. So there was tea in Study No. 1—quite a nice tea, Bunter stood in the doorway and blinked in on the festive five, like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise.

"I say, you fellows—"
"Pass the jam, Nugent," said Bob Cherry.

"I say, Harry, old man—"
Bob Cherry looked round. He did not speak to Bunter. He picked up a loaf and took aim.

The Owl of the Remove jumped back into the passage hurriedly.

"Beast!" he roared.
And he rolled on up the Remove passage in search of other victims.

In study No. 12 Lord Mauleverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian were at tea. The kind-hearted Mauly looked quite uncomfortable as he spotted Bunter's fat face at the door.

Sir Jimmy Vivian did not look uncomfortable. He frowned at Bunter, and jerked a commanding thumb towards the passage.

"Mauly, old chap—" pleaded Bunter.

"Oh, gad!" said his lordship. "You see, Bunter, you know you're in Coventry, you know, and so I can't speak to you, don't you know, what?"
"You ass, you're speakin' to him!" exclaimed Vivian.

"Yaas, begad, so I am," said Mauleverer. "Buzz off, Bunter; I'm not goin' to say a word to you, you know! Not a syllable, begad!"

Bunter did not buzz off; he rolled in, with a hopeful eye on Mauly and a wary one on Vivian.

Sir Jimmy jumped up and seized a toasting-fork from the fender.

He lunged at Bunter, and the fat junior dodged round the table.

"Yow! Keep off!" he roared.

Another lunge and Bunter dodged again. Sir Jimmy Vivian followed him up, grinning and lunging, and the hapless Owl dodged out into the passage once more.

Vivian slammed the door after him. Bunter only paused to howl "Beast!" through the keyhole, and then rolled dismally away. He looked in at Study No. 7, and found Peter Todd and Dutton there. As it was his own study he could not be excluded from it, and he rolled in and sat at the tea-table. But as his fat hand reached out Peter bestowed a heavy rap on it, and Bunter jerked it back with a yell.

"Toddy, you beast—"
Peter smiled, but did not speak. Bunter glowered at him across the table with deep wrath and indignation.

"Do you want me to miss my tea, Peter?"

"No answer."

"I'd stand my whack, I really would, Peter, only I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you know."

Frozen silence.

Billy Bunter reached out again for the cake.

Rap!

"Whooop!"

Bunter rolled out of Study No. 7. The Remove had been drawn blank, and the fat Owl went down to tea in Hall. There he munched the meal which he had described as wishy-washy and door-steps, in the lowest of spirits.

Possibly by that time Bunter was repentant of his exploits as a grub-raider. But repentance, as it so often does, came too late.

The Owl of the Remove was "for it"—he had sinned, and he had received his punishment; and the punishment of Coventry, to the most loquacious fellow in the Remove was a heavy one. Indeed, Bunter felt, like Cain of old, that his punishment was greater than he could bear.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Rough on Bunter!

"SAMMY, old man!"
"He, he, he!"
"What are you cackling at, you little beast?"

"He, he, he!" reiterated Bunter minor.

Two days had passed—two really awful days to William George Bunter of the Remove.

The sentence of Coventry was in full force; Bunter was barred by all the Remove.

Even Bunter grew tired of talking when no one answered; and the most incessant talker at Greyfriars had had to fall into dismal silence.

But Bunter had to talk or bust; and so he remembered that he had a minor at Greyfriars, and sought the society of Sammy of the Second Form.

Sammy of the Second did not receive that great honour and distinction so gratefully as might have been expected.

He giggled when Billy rolled up to him in the quadrangle after lessons and addressed him in tones of unusual affection. Sammy seemed amused.

"He, he, he!" giggled Sammy. "Are they still keeping you in Coventry, Billy?"

"What do you know about it?" snapped Bunter.

"He, he, he! All the chaps are talking about it," grinned Bunter minor. "I've seen you going around trying to jaw to Third Form chaps, and they ain't taking any. He, he, he!"

Bunter glared at his minor.

"Gatty says you'll burst if you don't talk," went on the cheerful Sammy.

"What a lark! He, he, he!"

"Look here, Sammy—"

"You can talk to me if you like," said Sammy generously. "I don't mind. I say, come into the tuckshop. Mrs. Mible's got in some new tarts."

"Right-ho, kid, if you're standing treat!" said Bunter.

Sammy of the Second winked.

"No fear!" he answered. "You're standing treat, Billy, if you want to jaw. He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter breathed deep and hard.

"You're a mercenary little beast, Sammy!" he said.

"He, he, he! Are you coming into the tuckshop?" inquired Sammy of the Second.

"No!" hooted Bunter.

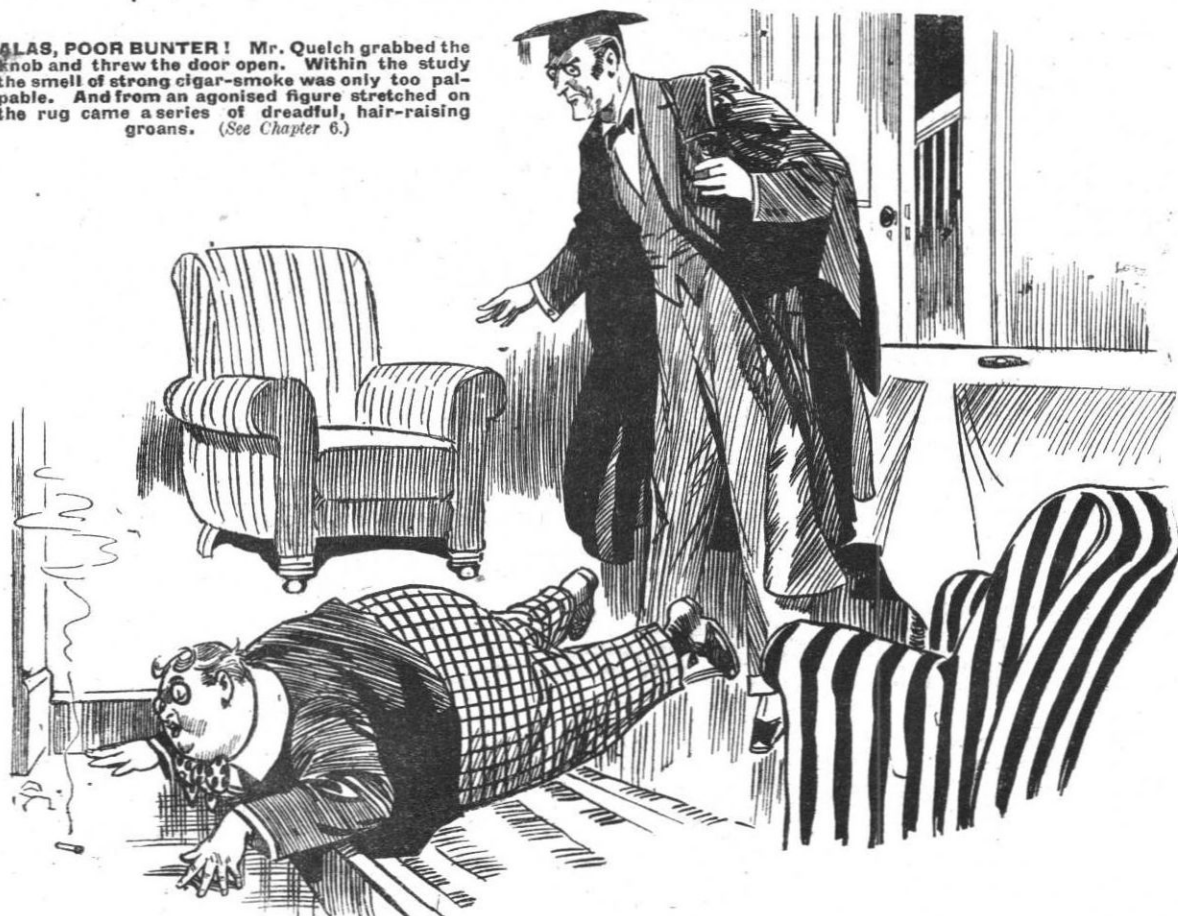
"Then you can jolly well buzz off!" retorted Sammy.

And the fat fag, evidently having had enough of his major's conversation, turned to walk away. Billy Bunter glared after him, and then stepped after him, and let out his right foot.

There was a roar from Sammy of the Second as he pitched forward on his hands and knees.

"Yaroooh!"

ALAS, POOR BUNTER! Mr. Quelch grabbed the knob and threw the door open. Within the study the smell of strong cigar-smoke was only too palpable. And from an agonised figure stretched on the rug came a series of dreadful, hair-raising groans. (See Chapter 6.)



"He, he, he!" chortled George. It was his turn to chortle.

He rolled away from the spot, leaving Sammy of the Second roaring, and feeling rather better himself for the encounter. He would have preferred to kick the Bounder, or the Famous Five, or Peter Todd, but that was impracticable. It was some satisfaction, at least, to kick Sammy.

But it was only a small solace. Billy Bunter was feeling that he couldn't stand it much longer.

Bunter was a gregarious fellow. He regarded his own society as fascinating; but he did not derive much comfort from it when left to it entirely. The sentence of Coventry weighed heavily upon him.

It was not only that there was no more loans to be raised in the Remove—that the horn of plenty had run dry. It was not only that he couldn't any longer "butt" into a fellow's study at tea-time. It was not only that the long-suffering Peter Todd had ceased to stand him tea in Study No. 7. All these things were serious enough—but worst of all was enforced silence.

The most active and well-exercised part of Bunter was his tongue—and that organ was now getting little exercise. And Bunter was feeling a deep wound in his dignity and self-importance. Nobody else in the Remove had ever regarded Bunter as being of the least importance; but in his own eyes he had been very important indeed. But he could not feel important when fellows would not speak to him, or answer him if he spoke, or take any heed whatever of his existence.

He had even fallen into the way of inflicting himself upon Third Form fags

—which was a come-down for a Remove fellow. But the Third Form did not want him, and told him so with the frankness that was characteristic of the Third.

Once he had even tried to attach himself to Coker of the Fifth; he was willing to listen to Coker talking about games, for the sake of getting in a word or two himself. But Coker of the Fifth had cuffed him, in his high-handed way, which was not at all what Bunter wanted.

The fat junior realised that if life was to be tolerable at Greyfriars at all he had to get back to speaking terms with his own Form. And that seemed impossible. He was barred for the rest of the term, and the Removites showed no sign whatever of relaxing the sentence. Even the kind-hearted Maul-ever was as firm as a rock.

Bunter, the grub-raider, had asked for it, and he was getting it severely. He deserved more than he had received, as a matter of fact, but that was no consolation to him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Plotting Vengeance!

"I'VE got it!"

Billy Bunter made that observation in the junior Common-room. Prep was over, and there were a good many juniors in the room. One or two glanced at Bunter and grinned, but there was no rejoinder to his remark. Nobody wanted to know what it was that he had "got."

Bunter scowled at the Removites over his spectacles. He had been brooding deeply—over his wrongs and grievances. His fat mind had long been made up—he was going to make the Remove fel-

lows sit up and take notice, as it were. His fat brain had pondered deeply on schemes of vengeance. Harry Wharton & Co., and the Remove generally, were to learn what a terrible fellow William George Bunter could be when his ire was really roused.

"I've got it!" repeated Bunter, with a defiant blink at the Removites. "You wait a bit!"

There was a chuckle from Bob Cherry, but no other acknowledgment of the fact that William George had spoken.

"You specially, Wharton!" continued Bunter. "I've got it in for you most of all! You're a rotter, you know!"

Wharton, who was playing chess with Frank Nugent, smiled slightly, but that was all.

"Wait till Quelch catches you!" said Bunter mysteriously. "It will be a Head's licking for you, Wharton! You'll get it jolly hot—hot and strong! You know what Skinner got when Quelch caught him smoking in his study!"

Wharton looked round from the chess at that. Bunter's remarks were quite surprising, and for a moment, the captain of the Remove opened his lips to speak. But he closed them again.

"You, being head of the Form, you'll get it hotter!" went on Bunter. "Just wait till Quelch finds you out! You, too, Nugent! You'll be in it!"

"You fat duffer!" said Nugent. "Now then, Franky—" grinned Johnny Bull.

"I forgot!" said Nugent, and he turned a deaf ear to Billy Bunter after that.

"Perhaps you fellows would like to know what I've got in for you!" jeered Bunter.

But it did not seem that the fellows wanted to know. And Billy Bunter ceased his remarks at last and relapsed into deep cogitation once more. More than once as he cogitated he chuckled.

But for the stern sentence of Coventry, several fellows certainly would have asked Bunter what he was burling about. He had succeeded in making the juniors curious.

It was clear that the Owl of the Remove had some scheme of vengeance working in his podgy brain. But his references to Mr. Quelch, and to smoking in the study, were deeply mysterious. Skinner and his set were accustomed to indulging in cigarettes behind locked doors, cautiously. Possibly Bunter might have found an opportunity of giving them away to the Remove master. But no such possibility existed in the case of Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, who did not share the shady proclivities of Skinner & Co. in the very least. So Billy Bunter's remarks were shrouded in mystery; and the only explanation seemed to be that he was talking out of his hat, for the purpose of breaking through the icy silence of the Removites.

But in point of fact, Bunter meant business.

The following day was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, and the afternoon was fine and sunny. Harry Wharton & Co. wheeled out their bicycles to ride over to Highcliffe, for tea with Courtenay and the Caterpillar there.

Billy Bunter hovered round the bike-shed, while the Famous Five were getting their machines out. He grinned a fat grin as they rode away on the Courtfield road.

"You wait!" he murmured mysteriously.

Then he rolled away in search of his minor, Sammy. Inquiry of Gatty of the Second elicited the fact that Bunter minor was detained in the Form-room that afternoon, Mr. Twigg having set him a detention task. Bunter rolled along to the Second Form-room, and blinked in at Sammy.

The hapless fag was alone in the room, seated at his desk, working dimly at a parsing exercise. He blinked up at Billy; and for once, Samuel Bunter was glad to see his major.

"Hallo, Billy! Come in, old chap!"

Bunter grinned and rolled in.

"Detained—what?" he asked.

"Yes!" groaned Sammy. "Old Twigg's given me this much to parse—some rot written by a rotter named Something-or-other. Look at it!"

It was the first stanza of the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" that Bunter minor had to parse. It was really not a difficult task, but to Sammy it seemed a herculean one. That was why he was glad to see his brother William George. To a Remove fellow—even a dunce like Bunter—the task should have presented little difficulty. The only question was, would William George take it on, and thus enable Sammy to escape from detention?

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day," grunted Sammy. "The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea. Rot, isn't it?"

"Bosh!" agreed Bunter.

"Curfew's a beastly common noun, singular number, and I suppose it's in the rotten nominative case," said Sammy.

"That's right," said Bunter.

He was not giving the matter much thought, but he was willing to agree with Sammy.

THE POPULAR.—No. 534.

"This would be easy enough for you, Billy—a clever chap like you," hinted Sammy.

It was the first time Sammy had acknowledged that his major was clever. And even now he was not speaking with strict veracity.

"Easy as falling off a form," said Bunter.

"Well, old Twigg isn't likely to come in," said the fat fag. "I've got to take it to him when I've finished it. Mug it up for me, old chap, and I can get out."

"It wouldn't take me ten minutes," said Bunter disdainfully. "You are a dunce, Sammy!"

"I—I know I am, Billy," said the fag with unusual meekness. "You do it for me, old man."

"That depends," said Bunter. "I want you to help me, Sammy! One good turn deserves another!"

"All right!"

"You know those cads in the Remove have turned me down, and sent me to Coventry?"

Sammy Bunter grinned.

"Yes. Is it still going on, Billy?"

Bunter nodded.

"Hard cheese, old chap—such a nice fellow as you!" murmured Sammy, with transparent hypocrisy.

"I'm going to make 'em sit up for it!" said Bunter.

"I would, old chap!"

"I'm beginning with Wharton and Nugent. I'm going to get them a Head's licking."

"Good!"

"Quelchy is sure to take them to the Head for a licking—or at least, give it them hot and strong himself, when he finds out that they've been smoking in their study," said Bunter.

"Do they?" said Sammy, raising his eyebrows. "I thought they weren't that sort."

"They ain't! But suppose Quelchy got a tip to go to their study, and found it reeking with baccy-smoke!" said Bunter, lowering his voice mysteriously.

"It wouldn't be, unless they'd been smoking there, I suppose," said Sammy, blinking at his major in amazement.

"It might be—if somebody else had been smoking there!" said Bunter, with a fat wink.

"Oh!" ejaculated Sammy.

"You know those jolly strong cigars that old Prout smokes," went on Bunter.

"A couple of those smoked in Wharton's study would make it reek for hours. Well, I can easily bag a couple of them from Mr. Prout's study—and we're going to smoke one each in Wharton's room—see?"

"Phew!"

"I want two smoked—one each for Wharton and Nugent. We'll leave the ends on the table—see? I'd rather not smoke two myself, one after the other—they're fairly hefty, you know. You'll smoke one, and I'll smoke the other."

"But—but they might catch us at it."

"They've gone over to Highcliffe; they won't be back till six. I heard them saying so."

"But—but—"

"I know exactly where Prout keeps his cigars. I'll show you just how to nip into his study and bag them, Sammy."

"Oh! Will you?" ejaculated the fag.

"Yes; and I'll do this exercise for you afterwards. Is it a go?"

Sammy Bunter shook his head.

"Cigarettes if you like; but I'm not taking on cigars," he said. "I don't want a blessed volcanic eruption under my waistcoat."

"Oh, that's all right! One cigar doesn't hurt a chap. I could smoke half a dozen."

"Then you can smoke two!" said Sammy promptly.

"Well, I'd rather not. You play up, old man, and I'll fix this exercise for you, and stand you threepence. There!"

"I'm jolly well not going rooting into the Fifth Form master's study," said Sammy, shaking his head. "And I ain't going to trust my insides with Prout's cigars. But—"

"Look here, Sammy—"

"You do this parsing for me, Billy, and then we'll talk it over," suggested Sammy Bunter.

Billy Bunter snorted. Trustfulness was not highly developed in the Bunter clan.

"Nothing of the sort," said the Owl of the Remove warmly. "I'll come here afterwards and parse that rubbish."

"Not good enough," said Sammy decidedly. "Look here! You bag old Prout's cigars and smoke 'em, and I'll smoke a cigarette, if you like. But you'll have to do this exercise first!"

"You fat little rotter—"

"I like that!" said Sammy derisively.

"Fat isn't the word for you, Billy! As for being a rotter, I haven't been barred by my Form, anyhow!"

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Look here! Are you parsing this rot for me?"

"No!" roared Bunter.

"Then get out, and let me do it! You're wasting my time!"

"Look here, Sammy—"

"Look here, Billy—"

"Bunter!" Mr. Twigg, the master of the Second Form, looked into the Form-room. "What are you doing here, Bunter? You know very well that you must not speak to a boy under detention! I shall mention this to Mr. Quelch."

"I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"Leave this room at once!"

And Billy Bunter, with a final glare at his minor, rolled out of the Second Form room. His great scheme, if it was to be carried out, had to be carried out without the assistance of Sammy of the Second.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Vengeance!

MR. PROUT the master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, left his study and walked down to the big doorway of the School House, where Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, awaited him. The two masters were taking advantage of the sunny spring weather to take a little walk together on the half-holiday—which was quite as welcome to them as to their pupils.

From the hall window William George Bunter watched them walk across the quad and disappear.

"Good!" murmured Bunter.

The two Form masters having vanished from the scene, Bunter was at liberty to carry out his remarkable scheme of vengeance upon the captain of the Remove. He rolled away to Mr. Quelch's study, and entered it, closing the door after him. He was aware that the two gentlemen were walking down to Courtfield, so that it would be an hour at least before they returned. That gave the scheming Owl plenty of time to carry out his scheme.

Mr. Quelch's typewriter stood on the study table, with its cover on. Bunter jerked off the cover, slipped a sheet of paper into the machine and typed:

"Sir,—I feel it my duty to inform you that smokin' gows on in the Remove! Look in Study No. 1 if you don't beleive me."

The Owl of the Remove drew the sheet from the machine, and placed it in a prominent position on Mr. Quelch's table. There it could not fail to catch the Remove master's eye when he returned. There was nothing—so far as Bunter could see—to give away the identity of the fellow who had "sneaked." The typing gave no clue to the writer, and it did not occur to Billy Bunter that the spelling gave any clue. Bunter was quite unaware that his orthography was of such an originality as to be easily recognisable.

"That's all right!" murmured Bunter. And he rolled out of the room and made his way to Mr. Prout's study. He knew just where the Fifth Form master kept his cigar-box—the number of things Bunter knew, which did not concern him, was amazing. Mr. Prout was accustomed to smoking very "hefty" Havana cigars—generally his study retained the aroma of them. There was no doubt whatever that if a couple of those thin, dark Larranagas were smoked in Study No. 1 in the Remove, the scent would cling to the study for a very long time afterwards.

Bunter slipped two of the cigars into his pocket, and left Mr. Prout's room.

He was feeling elated as he wended his way to the Remove passage. That quarter of the House was quite deserted on the fine half-holiday. Even Lord Mauleverer had found energy enough to ramble out. There was no danger of the Owl of the Remove being observed.

He closed the door of Study No. 1, and sat down in Harry Wharton's armchair, with a grin on his fat face. Then he took one of the cigars, cut off the end, and struck a match.

He lighted the cigar, and coughed as he captured a mouthful of smoke from the first pull. Undoubtedly it was a strong cigar—quite a hefty smoke. But Bunter was nothing doubting—he was equal to the occasion. He sat back in the armchair and smoked and smoked, and thick vapour gradually floated over the study.

Not only did Study No. 1 reek with the powerful aroma of Mr. Prout's potent Larranaga, but anyone passing the door could not have failed to become aware that smoking was going on in the study.

The cigar burned away, and the study reeked with it. Bunter was glad to drop the end into the fender.

Then he sat quite still.

He was becoming conscious of a dizzy feeling in his head and a strange stirring in the centre of his circumference. He sagely decided to rest a little before he tackled the second cigar.

He rested!

But the first cigar had done its fell work. Its effect was growing, cumulatively.

Bunter felt dizzier and dizzier. Strange and weird emotions shook him from head to foot.

Back in his mind came the memory of a time when he had crossed the Channel for a vacation in France.

He resolved not to touch the second cigar. He decided to get out of Study No. 1 and get to his own room as fast as he could. It seemed to him that the floor of the study was heaving like the waves in the Channel.

He made a movement to rise—for a second. Then he sat very, very still!

Vengeance on the fellows who barred him, the success of his plot—everything

vanished from his fat mind now—everything but the awful horror he was undergoing! He gave a sudden lurch in the chair and a faint, groaning howl.

And then there were sounds in Study No. 1 such as are heard on a ship in a gale; and Bunter, extended on the hearthrug, with his face in the fender, groaned and gurgled, gurgled and groaned, and wished for sudden death.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Horrid for Bunter!

"A BSURD!" snapped Mr. Quelch. The Remove master had returned from his walk. He came back to his study, and almost the first thing that caught his eye as he entered was the typed note Billy Bunter had left for him.

Mr. Quelch picked it up, read it, and frowned. The typing, as Bunter had so sagely calculated, gave no clue to the identity of the writer. But Mr. Quelch had no doubt whatever of that individual's identity. Only one fellow in the Remove spelled in that wonderful way. Bunter's spelling was Bunter's own—it was a gift, and never could have been acquired.

"Bunter! That utterly absurd boy!" murmured Mr. Quelch. "Of course, this was written by Bunter! What does he mean?"

Mr. Quelch made a motion to throw the note into the fire. But he paused. After some moments of reflection, he left the study, and ascended the staircase to the Remove passage. He did not for one moment believe the accusation contained in the typed note. But he felt that he had better look into Study No. 1.

He gave a violent start as he approached the door of that celebrated apartment. For even with the door closed there was a lingering smell of cigar-smoke to be detected.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured.

Mr. Quelch grabbed the knob and threw the door open. Within the study the smell of strong cigar-smoke was only too palpable. And from an agonised figure stretched on the rug came a series of dreadful, hair-raising groans!

"Bunter!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Groan!

"Get up at once, Bunter!"

Bunter could not have got up at once if the house had been on fire. He lay and groaned in the deepest depths of misery.

"Bunter, do you hear me?"

Groan!

Mr. Quelch's glance roved round the study. He saw the cigar-end in the fender—the unsmoked cigar on the table. He understood what had happened, but he was utterly perplexed.

He bent over Billy Bunter and shook him by the shoulder.

"Bunter! Speak, Bunter!"

Groan!

There was a sound of footsteps and cheery voices the stairs. Harry Wharton & Co. had returned from Highcliffe. They came trooping cheerily up to the Remove passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in astonishment.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Wharton.

The chums of the Remove clustered round the doorway of Study No. 1, staring in, utterly amazed. Mr. Quelch turned a frowning brow towards them.

"Wharton—"

"Oh, my hat! Yes, sir?" gasped the captain of the Remove.

"Do you know anything of this?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"I found this note in my study—typed, apparently, by Bunter. I came here and found the wretched boy ill, as you see him. He has smoked a cigar—apparently one of Mr. Prout's cigars. I cannot imagine why, if Bunter desired to smoke, he should leave information in my study regarding his surreptitious and foolish proceeding. You know nothing of it?"

"Nothing, sir," said Harry, greatly astonished.

Groan, groan, groan!

"It is utterly perplexing," said Mr. Quelch. "But the foolish boy has made himself very ill. He must be taken to the dormitory and put to bed. Will you boys take him, while I telephone for the doctor?"

"Certainly, sir."

Five astonished juniors carried Billy Bunter up to the Remove dormitory, Bunter groaning all the way. Kindly, quite forgetting that he was "barred," Harry Wharton & Co. put him to bed.

Bunter spoke not a word. He lay and blinked at them with glassy eyes, groaning deeply every few minutes.

Billy Bunter was ill.

For a whole day he did not appear in class, and when he did reappear he looked sickly and sorrowful.

By common consent the sentence of Coventry was rescinded—Bunter was no longer barred. He looked so seedy and sick that even Skinner & Co. compassionated him; the Bunder spoke to him quite kindly; Peter Todd was almost chummy; and Harry Wharton & Co. did all they could to comfort him.

It was not till some days later that the true history of that amazing episode in Study No. 1 was learned. Fortunately for Bunter, the Removes took it as a screaming joke. Bunter the avenger seemed to them funnier than Bunter in any other rôle, and the whole Remove roared and chuckled over the story, which did not please the Owl of the Remove in the very least; but he was glad, at all events, that there was no more mention of the Barring of Bunter.

THE END.

("THE MAN FROM THE PAST!" is the title of next week's topping long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.)



Delivered to your door for 3d. A DAY.

14 DAYS' FREE TRIAL without obligation to buy. **Juno Cycles** are British throughout and sent straight to you direct from our factory.

£3/15/0 cash or 7/6 monthly

Superb quality and easy running. Guaranteed for ever. Don't delay. Write for Free Art Catalogue.

JUNO CYCLE CO. (Dept. U.2.),
248 and 250, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.
Established 51 years.

Packing and Carriage FREE

JUNO

The Schoolboy Refugee!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Yaw-aw-aw!" came a sleepy grunt from Jack Blake's bed. "Who's that?"

"Only me," replied Digby. "Don't make a noise, Blake. I'm going out."

"My hat! What for?" gasped the leader of the Fourth, sitting up.

"To see my cousin," replied Digby, in a low voice. "He is coming back to St. Jim's at eleven. I told him how to get over the school wall. I'm going out to meet him—to hide him!"

"Whew!" whistled Blake, under his breath. "Where on earth can you hide him here? I'm afraid it can't be done, Dig, old chap."

"Yes, it can," muttered Digby. "I'll tell you when we get out. I want you to come with me."

"All serene!"

Jack Blake jumped out of bed readily. The two juniors hastily dressed and crept from the dormitory in their socks.

Outside, in the dark corridor, Blake turned to his study-mate.

"Now, Dig, what are you going to do?" he asked. "Where do you propose hiding your cousin?"

"In the secret chamber in the vaults!" answered Digby. "Nobody ever goes there, and it will be quite safe!"

"Jolly good place!" said Blake.

They crept down to Study No. 6. Jack Blake slipped his torchlight into his pocket. Digby filled his pockets with provisions from the cupboard, and he and Blake between them also took a travelling rug of Gussy's and two cushions.

Thus equipped, they stole softly downstairs, and let themselves out of the lower box-room window.

Keeping well within the shadows, they crossed the quadrangle to the school wall, where stood the old oak used by the juniors for breaking bounds.

As they approached a dark figure crept out of the darkness.

"Frank!" exclaimed Digby. "Then you got in?"

"Trust me!" chuckled the runaway from St. Ormond's. "Now, what are we going to do?"

"You come with us," said Digby quietly.

The three juniors moved away in the darkness, and disappeared into the cloisters. They walked under grim old arches, and entered the ruined tower at the end.

Blake lifted the stone slab in the ruined tower floor, and they descended into the vaults.

All was pitch black and silent as the grave, and there was an eerie stillness in the dank air that caused the three juniors to shiver, in spite of themselves.

Blake showed the way with his torchlight. After some time spent in wandering among the tortuous passages of the vaults, they came at last to a point where a blank stone wall confronted them.

"This is the place!" muttered Blake. "Hold the torchlight, Dig, while I find the secret opening."

Blake went down on hands and knees, pressing each of the stone slabs in turn. At last he gave a grunt of satisfaction.

Click!

A large block of stone in the wall swung inwards, revealing a yawning black space beyond.

Clambering through, the three boys found themselves in a small chamber, its walls, floor, and ceiling composed of grey, crumbling stone.

"Here we are!" said Blake cheerfully. "You'll be as safe as houses here, old scout!"

He and Digby set down the things they had fetched from Study No. 6.

"You'll need all these—and several things more, Frank," said Digby. "We'll make you as comfortable as possible. If you'll stay here in the dark, we'll cut off and fetch you a few more necessities."

"I'm awfully grateful to you chaps, but, really, I don't think you ought to run risks for me," said Frank Digby, in a low voice.

"Rats!" said Blake heartily. "Come on, Dig! Shan't be long!"

"Right-ho!" said the refugee gratefully.

He stood there in the darkness of his secret hiding-place, listening to the hollow echo of the other's footsteps receding into the black, lonely confines of the vaults.

Blake and Digby returned, after what

seemed an eternity to the waiting junior. Herries and D'Arcy were with them. The chums of Study No. 6 were well laden.

Herries carried a chair and two blankets; Gussy brought in a lighted lamp and a box filled with provisions; Blake had a small stove, some crockery and books; whilst Digby brought in a camp bed belonging to the Boy Scouts' stores.

"Here we are again!" said Blake cheerfully, as they set down their burdens. "Everything is O.K. We managed to get this little lot out of the School House without waking anyone. This is where you take furnished apartments, old chap. Do you think you'll be all right here?"

"Rather!"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "Now we'll be shifting back to bed. Good-night, old chap!"

"Good-night, and thanks awfully!"

Digby gripped his cousin's arm before he followed his chums from the secret chamber.

"Keep your pecker up, Frank," he said. "Rathbone will never find you here. You can stay until things blow over, and in that time I hope the real culprit will be found. In any case, I'll see your pater, and try to make things easy for you."

"You're a brick, Bob!" replied his cousin huskily. "Good-night!"

"Cheerio!"

The chums of Study No. 6 left the vaults and crossed the quadrangle back to the Fourth Form dormitory.

Nobody stirred in there as they hastily undressed and got into bed.

But, unknown to them, there was one junior awake.

Percy Mellish lay in bed, his eyes glinting and his heart beating wildly.

"So they've been out!" muttered the sneak of the Fourth to himself. "I wonder what their game is? I'll bet it had something to do with Digby's cousin. They're hiding him here somewhere! My word! The artful rotters!"

And Mellish lay awake for quite a long time, thinking of Jack Blake & Co.'s mysterious midnight errand.

THE END.

(You'll all enjoy reading: "STANDING BY DIGBY!"—next Tuesday's splendid long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.)

BE TALL!

STEBBING SYSTEM, 28,

Your Height increased in 14 days or money back. 3-5 inches rapidly gained! Amazing Complete Course sent for 5/- P.O. Or STAMP brings Free Book with further details. Write NOW to:

Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

25 BOHEMIA 50 HUNGARY 12 AUSTRALIAN
Every stamp different. Send 3d. postage for approvals.—LISBURN & TOWNSEND
(UJS), London Road, Liverpool.

FREE!

BLUSHING.—FREE to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment, and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to—
Mr. A. TEMPLE (Specialist), Palace House, 128, Shaftesbury Avenue (2nd Floor), London, W.1. (Established over 20 years.)

FREE PASSAGES TO ONTARIO, CANADA, for approved boy farm learners; aged 15 to 19. Apply:—ONTARIO GOVERNMENT, 163, STRAND, LONDON.

FREE to applicants for our Approvals: 75 different STAMPS, Duplicate Book, 100 Stamp Mounts, Perforation Gauge. Send 2d. stamp for packing. (Abroad 3d.)
R. WILKINSON, Provincial Buildings, COLWYN BAY.



For 26 Down

the Mead "MARVEL," the most popular cycle bargain of the year, is yours. Nothing more to pay for a month. Carriage paid. Other models from £3 19s. 6d. cash. 15 Days' Free Trial. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Write to-day for Free Illustrated Catalogue.

Mead

Limited (Dept. B847),
BIRMINGHAM.



MY GREAT OFFER

I supply the finest Coventry built cycles on 14 DAYS' APPROVAL, PACKED FREE AND CARRIAGE PAID, on receipt of a small deposit. Lowest cash prices, or easy payment terms. Write for Free Bargain Lists NOW.

Edw. O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 102 & 104, COVENTRY.

2

WEEKLY

300 STAMPS FOR 6d. (Abroad 1/-), including Airpost, Barbados, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc.—W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYE, Stourbridge.

HEIGHT COUNTS

in winning success. Height increased—health and physique improved. Wonderful results. Send for particulars and our £100 guarantee. To—GIRVAN SYSTEM (M.A.), 17, Stour Green Rd., London, N.4.



HANDSOME MEN ARE SLIGHTLY SUNBRONZED. "SUNBRONZE," 1/9, 3/-, remarkably improves appearance. 6,000 Testimonials. (Booklet, stamp.) Sunbronze Laboratories, Colwyn Bay, Wales. (Est. 1902.)

All applications for Advertisement Space in this Publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, UNION JACK SERIES, Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.