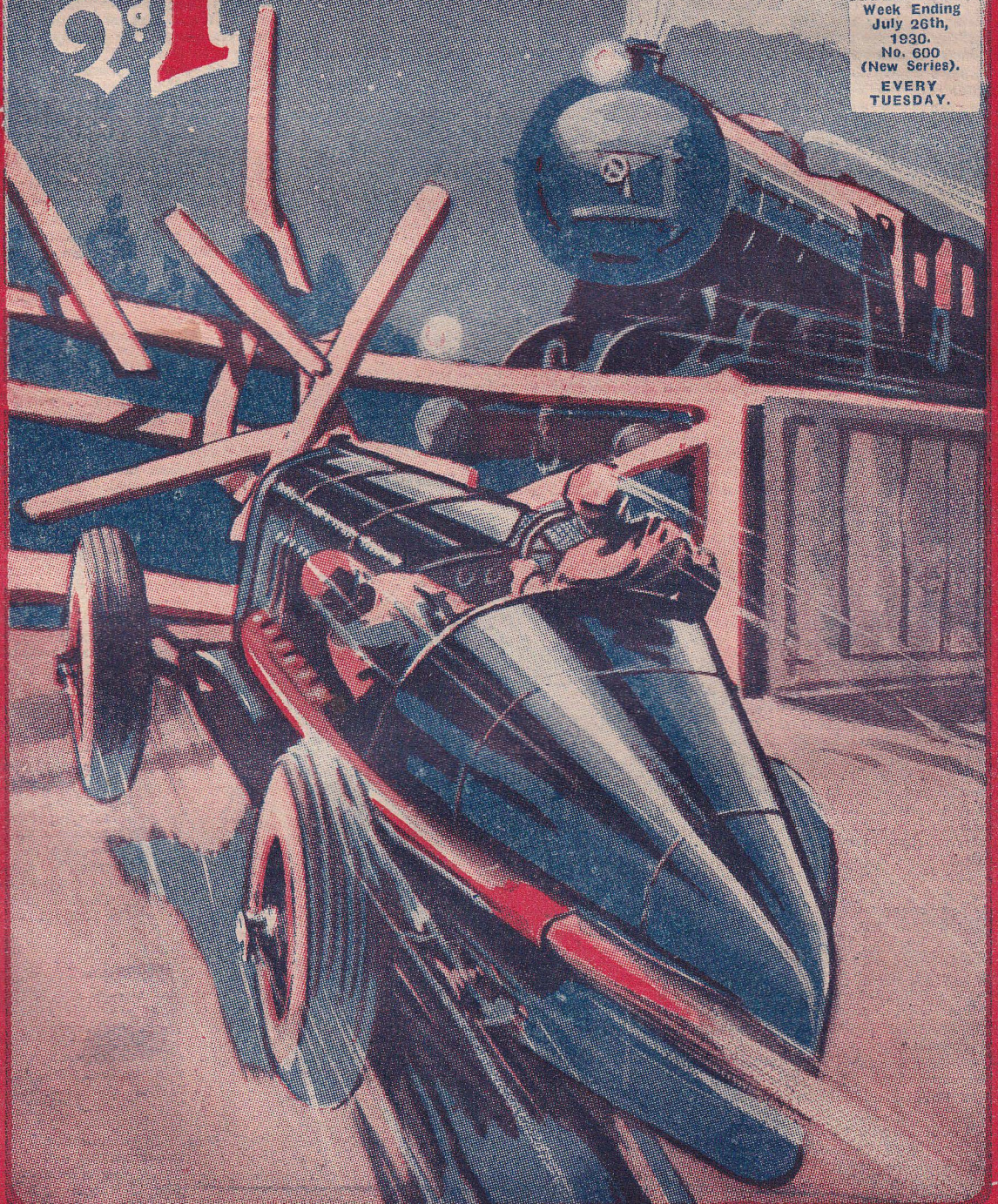


CEE! HERE'S VALUE! FIVE COMPLETE STORIES!

The POPULAR

2¢

Week Ending
July 26th,
1930.
No. 600
(New Series).
EVERY
TUESDAY.



"FIGHTING SPEED!" First of a Roaring New Motor-Racing Series!

THE RETURN of the RIO KID, Outlaw, IN—

A Rough-House in Plug Hat!

BY RALPH REDWAY.

The Horse Thief!

LIGHT down!"

The Rio Kid was surprised. The Kid had ridden a long trail that day, and the alkali dust was thick on his goatskin chaps, and on his grey mustang. He had ridden by lonely ways, for Sassafras County was cow country, and more thinly settled than any other part of Texas that the Kid knew. He had seen no man that day, until he came in sight of the town of Plug Hat. The Kid was glad to see the cow-town, for outlaw as he was, and used to solitary trails, he liked the company of his fellow-men.

There were many cow-towns into which the Kid could not have ventured to ride; but he figured that in Plug Hat he was not likely to find trouble. For Plug Hat had a rich and juicy reputation, as the most lawless cow-town in all Texas; a town that law-officers disliked and avoided, and that was a law unto itself. And a town that sheriffs and marshals disliked was a spot where the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande was likely to find repose. Nobody there, he reckoned, was likely to know him; but even if he was known, he would be only one of the many breakers of the law who found a refuge from trouble in Plug Hat.

In that wild and lawless country, the Kid would not have been surprised at a hold-up on the trail, till he came in sight of the camp. But he was surprised now; for the town was scarce a hundred yards ahead of him, when a man stepped out of the mesquite, with a gun in his hand, and ordered him to light down.

The Kid grinned.

He knew that Plug Hat was a wild place. But if a hold-up could take place in full view of the town, without interference, it was surely a wilder place than he had reckoned.

The Kid pulled in Side-Kicker; but he did not light down. He sat in the saddle and looked at the man with the gun.

"Say, bo!" he drawled. "Is this a joke?"

The man who had stepped out of the mesquite was a powerful fellow, with a red beard, dressed in a cowman's flannel-shirt and chaps, with a stetson on the back of his tangled head. He looked as tough a galoot as the Kid had ever seen; but the Kid did not seem alarmed. More than one tough galoot had woke up the Kid for a gopher, and found him a cougar, all teeth and claws.

"Nary a joke!" answered the red-bearded man. The gun in his hand was half-raised. "I guess I want that boss."

"He's sure a good hoss," agreed the Kid. "He's carried me a long way, and I guess he's carrying me farther, feller. Say, isn't that burg jest ahead of me Plug Hat?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

"You've said it! I guess you're a stranger here?"

"Sure!" assented the Kid.

"I reckoned so, or you wouldn't be riding a cayuse of that heft into the town." The red-bearded man eyed the Kid's mount, appreciatively. "Why, dog-gone my socks, I'll say that that mustang is the best piece of hoss-flesh I've seen for a dog's age."

"He's sure the best piece of hoss-

The red-bearded man grinned. "You're sure some tenderfoot," he said. "How long you reckon you'd keep that cayuse, if you took him into the town?"

"Jest as long as I wanted, I reckon." "Sho! Waal, I'm telling you that the minute Cactus Carter set eyes on that hoss, he would want him."

"I ain't the pleasure of knowing Cactus Carter," said the Kid. "But I sure opine that if he took a fancy to my cayuse, he would have a lot of trouble with the rider."

"Aw, forget it!" said the red-bearded man. "Light down, I'm telling you. It's jest my luck that I spotted you riding into town, and got hold of the hoss afore the other guys. Jest pure

luck, I reckon. You don't want to worry any, stranger; you wouldn't keer that hoss till sundown, if I let you pass with him. You're only losing him ten minutes ahead of time. Now light down, afore I get tired of holdin' this gun."

The Kid laughed.

He had picked out Plug Hat as a place that sheriffs disliked, and therefore suitable for an outlaw who was tired of the llano and the chaparral. But it struck him that that advantage could be over-done. Seemingly it was a town into which no stranger could ride without being deprived of his horse on the spot. The Kid had struck some lawless places in his time; but he figured that Plug Hat was the limit.

"Feller," he said, "you sure do tickle me a whole lot. Mean to say you can corral my cayuse this-away, and the guys in that burg yonder won't string you up for hoss-stealing?"

"I guess if all the hoss-thieves in Plug Hat was strung up, there wouldn't be rope enough in Sassafras County," answered the red-bearded man. "But I didn't stop you to chew the rag—I stopped you for that cayuse. I guess I'd be sorry to spill your juice all over the trail; but I ain't waiting any longer. You lighting down?"

He raised the six-gun.

"I never was a guy to say no to a six-gun," answered the Kid, amiably. "If you say light down, feller, light down it is."

"That's sense," agreed the big cowman. "Seeing you're a stranger here, boy, I'll tell you it ain't healthy to sit arguin' with

**BOYS! HERE'S YOUR OLD PAL
BACK AGAIN!**

**And He's Still The Slickest Man on the
Draw!**

flesh in all Texas," answered the Kid. "I allow there ain't another critter between the Rio Grande and the Big Colorado, that could keep sight of his heels in a race."

"Waal, light down."

"Hold on your hosses a piece," suggested the Kid. "I've sure heard that Plug Hat is a rip-snorter of a burg; but are they all hoss-thieves in this country?"



(Copyright in the United States of America.)



Red Harris, when he's got a gat in his grip. You get me?"

"Sure!" assented the Kid.

And he alighted from the grey mustang.

There was a smile on the Kid's handsome, sunburnt face; there was no hint of resistance in his manner. So long as a six-gun was looking at him, the Kid was prepared to be amiable.

Red Harris thrust the revolver back into his holster, and stepped towards the horse. The Kid's smiling and submissive manner quite deceived him; moreover, the Kid did not look dangerous, to the eyes of the burly cowman. He looked a "kid" cowpuncher—almost too good-looking and neat and natty in his get-up for a cowpuncher. In the eyes of Red Harris he was the tenderest of tenderfeet. Red Harris gave all his attention to his prize.

"Say, this is some cayuse," he said, enthusiastically. "I guess you're a dog-goned bonehead to ride him into this country, stranger; but you sure do know hoss-flesh; you surely have picked out a prize cayuse. This hyer is jest luck, for I've sure lost my own cayuse at poker to Colorado Bill, and I was wanting a mount. Cactus Carter will sure cuss a whole lot when he sees this here critter; but first come, first served, I reckon."

"Go slow!" murmured the Kid, as the red-bearded man was about to mount the grey mustang.

"What—great gophers!" gasped Red Harris.

The muzzle of a gun, in the Kid's hand, touched Red Harris lightly in his belt.

"Don't!" smiled the Kid.

The levelled gun, with the Kid's eyes

smiling over it, warned the cowman not to draw. It dawned on him that this handsome boyish cowpuncher was not the tenderfoot he had supposed.

"Search me!" gasped Red Harris.

"That's my hoss!" said the Kid cheerily. "I ain't giving him away—not now I'm the man that's handlin' the gun. Leave that gat where it is, Mr. Harris, or there'll be a dead hoss—thief lying around on this trail before you can say 'no sugar in mine.'"

Red Harris breathed hard.

"Put 'em up!" said the Kid.

The ruffian eyed him savagely, sullenly, and his hands went up slowly above his head. The Kid had him covered; and though his eyes were smiling, the cowman could read death in them.

"That's better!" said the Kid. "I see you've been carefully brought up, feller, and you know when to do what you're told!"

"You dog-goned durned skunk!" said Red Harris between his teeth.

"Can it!" said the Kid. "I ain't going to plug you, feller; not if you behave. I'm sure obliged to you for puttin' me wise to what I've got to look for in Plug Hat. I reckon I'll borrow your hardware!"

With his left hand the Kid drew the revolver from the red-bearded man's belt. He dropped it in the trail and stamped a heavy heel on it.

Red Harris watched him savagely. "You're safer without that," explained the Kid. "You sure might figure on spillin' lead, and then I should have to plug you for keeps, and I ain't come to Plug Hat a-shootin'. You get me?"

"Dog-gone you—"

"In the Frio country, where I was raised," said the Kid, "they hang hoss-thieves! I guess I feel powerful inclined to waste my trail-ropes on you, Mr. Harris. I surely do!"

"You dog-goned—"

"I've told you to can it," said the Kid mildly. "You've said your piece, feller, and it's my turn to chew the rag. Put your paws together!"

"I guess—"

"I ain't waiting," said the Kid, making a motion with his six-gun, and the ruffian put his hands together, over his head; and the Kid, with his left hand, threw a loop of cord over them and drew them tight.

"Now step under this cottonwood," said the Kid.

"I guess—"

"Pronto!" rapped out the Kid. Red Harris stepped under the tree. The Kid reached up and tied the end of the cord to a bough.

"I guess that fixes you!" he

remarked. "I sure opize that a hoss-thief ought to be strung up, but I'm letting you off light. You can stand there and cuss, Mister Harris, till somebody comes along and lets you loose. If nobody comes along the trail, I guess you'll worry loose by midnight!"

"You gol-darned lobo wolf!" hissed Red Harris. He stood helpless under the tree, his bound hands fastened to the branch above his head. His eyes fairly burned at the Kid's cool, handsome face.

The Kid smiled.

"So-long!" he drawled. "I guess you've got time to do a lot of thinking, feller, and you better think that the next time you hold up a tenderfoot for his hoss, he may turn out a wildcat. So-long, feller!"

The Kid remounted Side-Kicker and rode off towards Plug Hat. Red Harris, left standing under the tree, yelled curses and threats after him, while he dragged and wrenched in vain at the cord that held him secure. His furious voice followed the Kid into the main—and only—street of Plug Hat.

Sharp Shooting!

THE sound of a voice, swearing steadily, greeted the ears of the Rio Kid as he walked into the Plug Hat hotel, leaving Side-Kicker hitched to the hitching-rail in front of the timber building. The Kid had heard plenty of "cuss-words" in his time, and was no stranger to the picturesque language of the cow country; but he had never heard a guy swear so fluently before, and he was interested. He glanced round him and sighted a fat man in shirt-sleeves, who stood by the bar, and who, he guessed, was the landlord of the shebang.

If the fat man was the landlord, he did not seem interested in the arrival of a new guest. His face was red and excited; he was evidently deeply perturbed about something. Taking no heed of the Kid, he continued to swear with undiminished fluency. Three or four other men were in the room, and they listened to him with respectful admiration for his flow of language, grinning to one another the while.

"Pop Short," said one of them. "you sure can cuss a whole lot! You sure can cuss off a bull buffalo's hind leg!"

The fat man still swore, unheeding. Evidently there was something serious the matter. The Rio Kid waited, and watched him for some minutes. He was not the guy to horn into any man's game, and if Mr. Short wanted to swear, it was not the Kid's funeral. But after waiting politely for a few minutes, the Kid grew restive. He wanted refreshment for himself and his steed, and his flow of language, picturesque as it was, was a poor substitute.

"Say, fellers," said the Kid, looking round, "where's the boss of this hyer shebang. I want to know?"

One of the loungers hooked his thumb towards the fat man.

"Stranger," he answered, "that's the guy you want. That's Pop Short!"

"Mr. Short," said the Kid politely. "I dislike interrupting a guy that can cuss like you do, and if there was another hotel in this burg, I'd sure let you run on till the cows come home. But—"

"The dog-goned scallywags!" said Pop Short. "The pesky skunks! The

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

all-fired polecats! I guess it was some of Cactus Carter's gang that lifted my pinto! Yep! And if I was as young as I used to be, I'd go hunting them up and down Plug Hat with a gat in my grip. And if there was a man in this hyer burg that was worth calling a man, he sure would put paid to that horse-stealin', rustlin', cow-liftin' thief, Carter."

"Can it, Pop Short!" said one of the loungers. "It sure wouldn't be healthy for you to let Carter hear you calling him fancy names."

"What's the trouble, feller?" asked the Rio Kid curiously. "What's this guy Carter been doing?"

Mr. Short gave him attention at last.

"He's lifted my pinto, or some of his friends have," he answered. "A guy can't call his hoss his own in this town."

"You won't get your cayuse back by cussin'," suggested the Kid. "Why not go to the town marshal?"

"Because there ain't one, you bonehead."

"Then you want to go to the sheriff?"

"Guess again!" snarled Mr. Short.

"Well, what's the matter with going to the sheriff?" asked the Kid. He was really curious. The Kid disliked sheriffs himself, but he saw no reason why the landlord of the Plug Hat should share his dislike.

"Because there ain't no sheriff, you jay!" answered Mr. Short. "There ain't been never more than two sheriffs in Sassafras county, and both of them died with their boots on; and I ain't heard of any galoot that is anxious for the job since. If you was to offer it with a bag of dollars sticking on to it, I guess you wouldn't find nobody to take it!"

"Search me!" said the Kid, in surprise.

Mr. Short resumed swearing. He seemed to find some relief in this for the loss of his pinto.

"Feller," said the Kid, "you'll be losin' your voice if you keep on cussin' that way. Ain't there a man in this town who's white enough to stand for sheriff, and ain't there white men enough to elect him if he stood?"

"I guess there's plenty of guys in this burg would be glad to elect a sheriff," answered Mr. Short. "But I guess if they elected one, they'd have to bury him the next day, and nobody's homin' for a front place in the town cemetery!"

"Oh, sho!" said the Kid. "Well, I've heard that this town of Plug Hat was a warm corner, but it sure does look to be like the hot place with the lid off. But if there ain't any marshal and there ain't any sheriff, you surely want to go and look for that hoss-thief with a gun, feller!"

"Say, you got a lot to say for a kid cowpuncher," remarked one of the men in the room, coming towards the Kid. "I reckon you're the guy that Red Harris went to meet on the trail when he saw you coming down the hill."

"I'm that guy!" assented the Kid.

"Then I guess you've hoofed it into town."

"I guess not," said the Kid, smiling. "I've sure ridden into this burg on the back of my cayuse, feller!"

"Then what was Harris doing to let you get away with it?"

"The last I saw of Mr. Harris, feller, he was standin' under a cottonwood with his hands tied to a branch, cussing like our friend here," said the Kid. "That's how I left him."

The Plug Hat man stared at the Kid. "And who tied him up?" he demanded.

"This very identical guy," answered the Kid.

"I guess that's a darned lie," said the Plug Hat man. "Harris wouldn't make more'n a small mouthful of a kid cowpuncher like you. I guess—"

"Let the puncher alone, Colorado Bill!" said Mr. Short. "What do you want to be kicking up a rookus for, the minute the feller puts his nose into town?"

"Aw, don't you worry about this infant, Mr. Short," said the Kid. "This guy don't mean any harm, and he's going to ask pardon for saying that what I said was a darned lie!"

"You reckon?" grinned Colorado Bill.

"I reckon!" assented the Kid. "Because if you don't, I've got a gun here that will make you wish you hadn't forgotten your nice manners to a stranger!"

"You dog-goned young bonehead!" roared Pop Short, forgetting even the loss of his pinto in his anxiety for his new guest. "Don't you draw on him, Bill—I tell you I won't have my floor all mussed up!"

Colorado Bill's hand was already on his gun.

"Take Mr. Short's advice, feller," said the Kid. "Don't pull that gun—it won't be healthy."

"Ey thunder!" said Colorado Bill, and he dragged his gun from the holster.

Crack! There were plenty of men in Plug Hat who were swift on the draw. But the swiftness of the Rio Kid seemed like magic.

Colorado's gun was only half out of it's holster when the Kid fired.

There was a roar from the cowman as the gun was smashed out of his hand by the bullet.

It flew across the room and dropped on the sanded floor, and Colorado stood clutching his right hand with his left, uttering howl on howl of agony. The shock had jarred his arm from wrist to shoulder, and for the moment he figured that his hand was shot off.

The Kid smiled at him over his smoking gun, with a wary eye at the same time on the other men in the room. He was watchful for anyone to draw a gun. But no other guns were drawn. The Plug Hat men were staring blankly at the kid cowpuncher who was so wonderfully quick "on the shoot."

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Mr. Short. "Say, bo, where did you learn to pull a gun like that? Why, that beats Cactus Carter."

"Feller," answered the Kid, "I was pullin' a gun before I stood as high as a cowman's cinch."

"Ooooooh!" roared Colorado Bill. "Oooooooh!"

He rubbed his numbed right hand, astonished to find that it was still there.

"Say, you don't want to make a fuss," drawled the Kid. "You ain't hurt, feller, though I guess that gun of yours will never be any use again. You want to nurse your arm a piece, that's all. You want to be pleased that I didn't shoot your fingers off. But I'm a peaceable galoot, and I didn't come to Plug Hat a-shooting."

Colorado Bill glared at him and nursed his numbed arm. The Kid smiled and holstered his gun and turned to the landlord.

"Mr. Short," he said, "now our friend here is through, I guess I want to see about fodder for me and my cayuse."

"Your cayuse?" said Pop Short.

"Where'd you leave your cayuse?"

"Hitched on the rail outside."

The hotel-keeper grinned sourly. "You sure are a tenderfoot, and you don't know Plug Hat," he said. "You won't need any fodder for your cayuse."

"And why not?" asked the Kid.

"Because I reckon he's not there now," answered the landlord. "No cayuse that was ever hitched in Plug Hat ever stayed hitched more'n a minute."

"Oh, great gophers!" ejaculated the Kid.

He rushed to the door, while the men in the Plug Hat hotel chuckled—even Colorado joined in the chuckle as he nursed his arm.

The Kid stared out at the hitching-rail. Pop Short's statement was well-founded. The rail was untenanted, and Side-Kicker had disappeared.

The Kid Horns In!

THE Rio Kid's brow set grimly. Many and strange had been his experiences in the wild cow-country, but Plug Hat Camp was a new thing even in the Kid's experience.

Certainly, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande was not likely to be troubled by the law in such a warm corner. Evidently there was no law in Plug Hat but the law of the Colt, and the man who was the quickest to draw it. But lawlessness carried to the extent of cinching a galoot's cayuse got the Kid's goat. The Kid had not come to Plug Hat to hunt for trouble; indeed, the Kid, wild as his reputation was, never did hunt for trouble. But trouble had a way of dogging his trail and coming to him unsought. And now it had come again. For the Kid, peaceable as his intentions were, was the last man in Texas to have his horseflesh lifted without raising Cain.

He looked along the rugged street, dusty and hot in the glowing red sunset of Texas. At a distance was the plaza, an open space in the centre of the town, with the signs of several saloons in full view.

There was a crowd in the plaza, gathered chiefly outside the Red Flare Saloon. Thirty or forty men were standing crowded round a man who was mounted on a cask, and round the outskirts of the crowd were a dozen or more on horseback. Something was going on in the plaza. Even at that distance the buzz of voices and the sound of laughter reached the ears of the Rio Kid.

He turned back into the lumber hotel. "Say, Mr. Short," said the Kid. "I sure don't see my cayuse, and I guess some guy has rustled him. Mebbe you could tell me where to look for him?"

"Mebbe," answered the landlord. "But I guess you don't want to look for the cayuse, Mister—Mister—"

"Brown!" said the Kid amiably. Even in a hot place like Plug Hat, the Kid did not care to announce his real name. "Texas Brown, sir."

"Waal, Mr. Brown, your best guess is to buy another hoss and ride out of town," said Mr. Short. "There's a plenty hosses for sale in Plug Hat—any day in the week, Mr. Brown."

"I ain't doubting that," said the Kid. "I guess from what I've seen of this hyer burg, there'll always be hosses for sale here."

"You've said it," grinned Colorado

Bill, "and if you've got a fancy for your own cayuse, you can sure buy him at the auction."

"The auction?" repeated the Kid. "I guess he's being sold already," grinned the cowman. "I can hear the boys in the plaza, and I guess that means an auction. Cactus Carter always auctions a hoss when he lifts it off a stranger, and I reckon it was Cactus lifted your cayuse."

"I guess I saw a whole caboodle of guys in the plaza," said the Kid, his frown deepening. "If they're selling my hoss, it won't be healthy for the guy that sells him, or for the guy that buys him, either."

"I reckon you'll be in time for the sale if you hump along," answered Colorado.

"Can it, Colorado," interrupted Pop Short. "If the puncher aims to horn in and make trouble, Cactus will fix him for the cemetery, and you're wise to it, dog-gone you. Mister Brown, you take my advice and get out of town without meeting up with Cactus."

The Kid smiled; a grim smile. "I ain't getting out of this town yet," he said, "and if I was, I guess I wouldn't be hitting the trail without my cayuse."

"Aw, don't act foolish," said Pop Short. "I tell you Cactus is a gunman, and if you worry him any, you're a dead puncher. Look here, if you're set on getting that cayuse, you can buy him — if you're heeled. But buy him peaceable."

The Kid laughed. "This sure is some town, where a guy is wanted to buy his own hoss," he said. "If I buy that hoss, feller, all I shall give for him will be a chunk of lead."

The Rio Kid swung out of the hotel and walked up the rugged, dusty street towards the plaza.

"Say, I'm going to see Cactus shoot him up!" remarked Colorado Bill, and he followed the Kid, and the rest of

the loungers in the lumber hotel went the same way. Pop Short shook his head sadly. Mr. Short, like other peaceable residents in Plug Hat, would have been glad enough if a stranger had come to town, who was able to play Cactus Carter at his own game—which was gun-play. But he did not figure that this boyish-looking puncher could do it. Cactus was a "killer," with a reputation as wide as Sassafras county, and he was acknowledged leader of the whole lawless element in Plug Hat. Mr. Short's opinion was that "Texas Brown" was going straight to be accommodated with a place in the camp cemetery.

The Kid walked coolly up the dusty street and reached the plaza. He stopped on the edge of the crowd to take his bearings before he horned in. The Kid meant business, but he was wary, and not in a hurry.

He looked keenly and curiously at the man mounted on the cask. The man was rather a slim fellow, dressed with rather more elegance than most of the men of Plug Hat; and he packed two guns. His face was hard, clean-shaven but for a little black moustache, and the eyes were keen, sharp, searching, and cold as ice; the eyes of a professional gunman. The Kid nudged a burly cowman near him, and asked:

"Say, who's that galoot, feller?"

The cowman stared.

The Rio Kid shoved forward.

Two or three rough fellows stared round at him, and advised him not to shove, with threats attached. But the Kid smiled amiably.

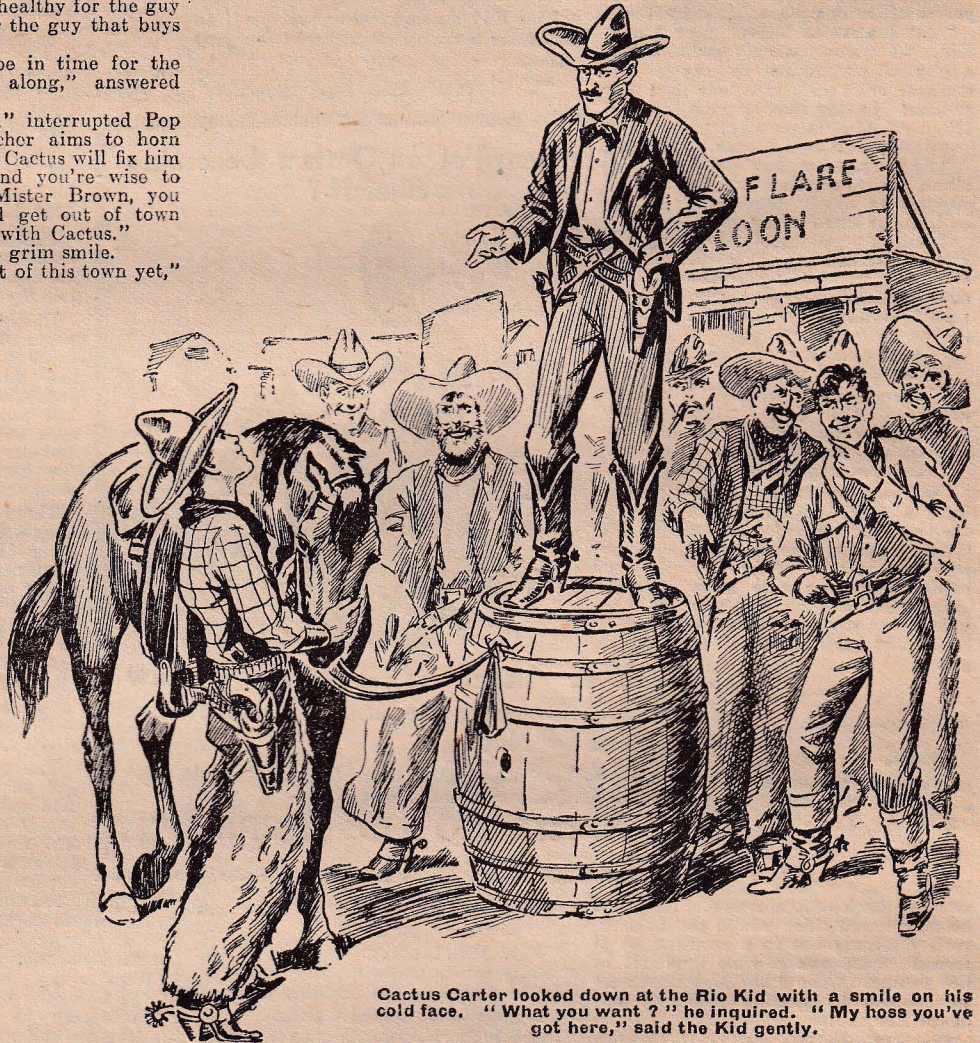
"I sure want to see the hoss," he said. "You see, fellers, that's my hoss, and I've called for him."

"Great gophers! You the tenderfoot that rode that cayuse-into town?"

"Yep!"

There was a roar of laughter.

"Here, Cactus!" yelled Mesquite;



Cactus Carter looked down at the Rio Kid with a smile on his cold face. "What you want?" he inquired. "My hoss you've got here," said the Kid gently.

"You're a stranger hyer, if you don't know Cactus Carter," he answered.

"I sure guessed he was Carter, but I wanted to know," said the Kid. "Say, he's selling a cayuse?"

"Yep! There it is, tied to the cask."

The Kid pushed a little forward, and through the crowd he sighted Side-Kicker, tethered to the cask on which the gunman stood.

"Say, gents!" Cactus Carter was speaking. "I sure want you to walk up with your bids. Don't keep me here all night. Mesquite yonder said two hundred dollars for this mustang. Who's the next?"

"Two-twenty!" called out a voice.

"Two-twenty I'm bid for this cayuse!" said Cactus Carter, who was evidently used to conducting auctions.

"Who's making it two-fifty?"

"Here's the tenderfoot, and he's called for the hoss."

Way was made for the Kid at once. He was allowed a free passage through the crowd to reach the auctioneer.

He arrived in the open space round the cask. And Side-Kicker turned his head, and whinnied to his master. The Kid stroked the mustang's glossy neck.

Cactus Carter, from the top of the cask, looked down at him, with a faint smile on his cold face.

"What you want?" he inquired.

"This hyer cayuse," answered the Kid gently.

"Bidding for him?"

"I sure never struck a town in Texas afore, sir, where a guy's hoss was stole under his nose, and offered for sale ten minutes after!" said the Kid.

"Mebbe," answered the man on the

ask—"mebbe. You're learning, boy. If you ain't bidding for the hoss, stand back!"

"I ain't bidding for the hoss," said the Kid mildly, "and I ain't standing back a whole lot, neither. Gents, I'm a stranger in this hyer town, and I only want to know. If this hyer is a joke that you guys play on strangers, why, I'm ready to laugh as loud as any galoot hyer. But if it's business, I jest want to say that I don't stand for it."

There was another roar of laughter. "Say, boy, you hit the horizon while you're all in one piece," said Cactus.

"But I want to know," persisted the Kid. "I guess it's only polite to put a guy wise. Mean to say that a stranger can't ride into this hyer burg without having his cayuse lifted off him this-a-way?"

"Jest that," said Cactus. "And s'pose a guy don't stand for it, what's likely to happen to him?" asked the Kid, in the same mild tone.

"Suthin' sudden," answered the man on the cask, with a grin. "There was a stranger hyer yesterday who raised objections. He's in the camp cemetery now."

"Sho!" ejaculated the Kid. "Now stand back!"

"Not in your lifetime!" answered the Kid. "I'm done asking questions. Now I want my hoss."

"How much you bid?" "Nothing, unless it's a pill from a Colt," said the Kid. He glanced round at the staring crowd. "Gentlemen, this sale is off. This hyer critter ain't for sale now. This critter is mine, and any galoot that says he ain't mine has got to back it up with a gun!"

Beaten to the Draw!

THE Rio Kid spoke quietly, but clearly, and every man in the Plug Hat crowd

heard him. There was a swaying back of the crowd. They had been gathered thick round the auctioneer's rostrum; but in a moment, as it seemed, there was a wide lane left in the throng. The Plug Hat men were accustomed to getting promptly out of the line of fire.

The Kid was left well alone, facing the cold-eyed man on the cask. The latter was eyeing him searchingly.

The Kid stood in an easy, almost careless attitude, but his hands were very close to the walnut butts of his guns, low-slung in the holsters. His eyes were on Cactus Carter's warily.

A glint was in the icy eyes of the man on the cask.

"Say, puncher," he said quietly, "you're shooting off your mouth a whole lot for a kid. I guess you want to get back to your ranch in a hurry."

"That's where you miss your guess, Mr. Carter," answered the Kid cheerfully. "I've come to Plug Hat to stay a while; and I ain't hitting the trail nohow. Jest now I want this hoss."

There was a breathless hush in the plaza of Plug Hat. All the crowd knew now that it would be gun-play.

Cactus Carter made no motion to touch a gun. There was a faint smile on his face, and his hands hung carelessly at his sides. But all knew his swiftness on the draw. And every moment they expected to see a gun leap from his holster, and ring out the death-knell of the boy puncher who defied him so recklessly. Well they knew that Cactus Carter's apparent carelessness was only due to the fact that he was assured that the life of the puncher was in his hands, to take when he pleased.

The Kid made a movement as if to unhitch the rope that tethered the grey mustang to the heavy cask.

"Don't touch that rope, puncher,"

Ever heard of an Outlaw becoming a Sheriff? Gee, No!



Ever heard of a BOY Outlaw wearing the Sheriff's star! Surely Not!

Well, next week you'll hear all about it in the most thrilling tale of Texas ever written—

"THE RIO KID SHERIFF!"

said Cactus Carter; and his voice was soft and almost pleasant.

"Why not?" asked the Kid. "The critter's mine, and I'm sure going to take him back to the shebang yonder."

"I guess not," smiled Carter.

"But afore I go," continued the Kid, "I'd be powerful glad if some guy would tell me who cinched my hoss? I sure want to kick that hoss thief across the plaza."

"I guess you don't want to hoof it a long way to find that galoot," said Cactus Carter.

"Mebbe it was!"

"Mebbe it was."

"You look the sort of dog-goned, pizen skunk that would steal a hoss," remarked the Kid, in a casual tone. "I guess in any other burg you'd have been strung up, Mr. Carter, jest on your looks."

There was a buzz in the crowd, and the gunman caught his breath. It was the first time, since Cactus Carter had been king-pin in Plug Hat, that he had been talked to like this.

The hardening of his face, the glint-

ing of his eyes, warned the Kid, used to such signs, that he was about to draw. But the Kid drawled cheerily:

"Yep! I'll say you look a born lobo-wolf, Mr. Carter, and I guess I needn't look any farther for a hoss thief. I don't stand for hoss stealin', Mr. Carter. You get down off'n that cask and I'll boot you across the plaza, jest like I said! You sure ain't worth dirtyin' a cowman's boots on! But you got to learn to keep your thievin' hands off my hoss!"

Like lightning the gunman's hand moved.

But swift as he was the Kid was swifter. Cactus Carter's gun was out of the holster; but the Kid's Colt was looking him in the face before his hand could rise.

The Kid did not speak; but his eyes gleamed over his gun, and Cactus Carter kept his hand down.

Had he lifted it, he knew that a bullet would have crashed through his brain before he could fire.

Cactus Carter, who had never been beaten to the draw before, knew when he had met his master. His face whitened, not with fear, but with deadly rage; his eyes scintillated at the Kid. But he kept his hand, with the gun in it, down at his side.

There was a gasping of deep-drawn breath in the Plug Hat crowd. Cactus Carter was standing helpless under a gun—the first time any eye in Plug Hat had seen such a sight. For a second or two there was no sound but that startled gasp from the watching crowd.

"Drop that gun!" The Kid spoke suddenly, sharply.

The gun crashed to the ground beside the cask. The Kid uttered no threat; the threat was in his eyes, and his levelled Colt. Cactus Carter's life hung on a thread; and life was dear.

He still remained calm; only the pallor of his face, the burning of his eyes betraying his deadly rage. Why the Kid did not shoot was a mystery to the staring onlookers, for by the law of the Colt—the only law in that lawless cow-town—he was entitled to shoot his enemy dead as soon as he made a motion towards a gun. But the Rio Kid had his own ways, and they were not the ways of Plug Hat.

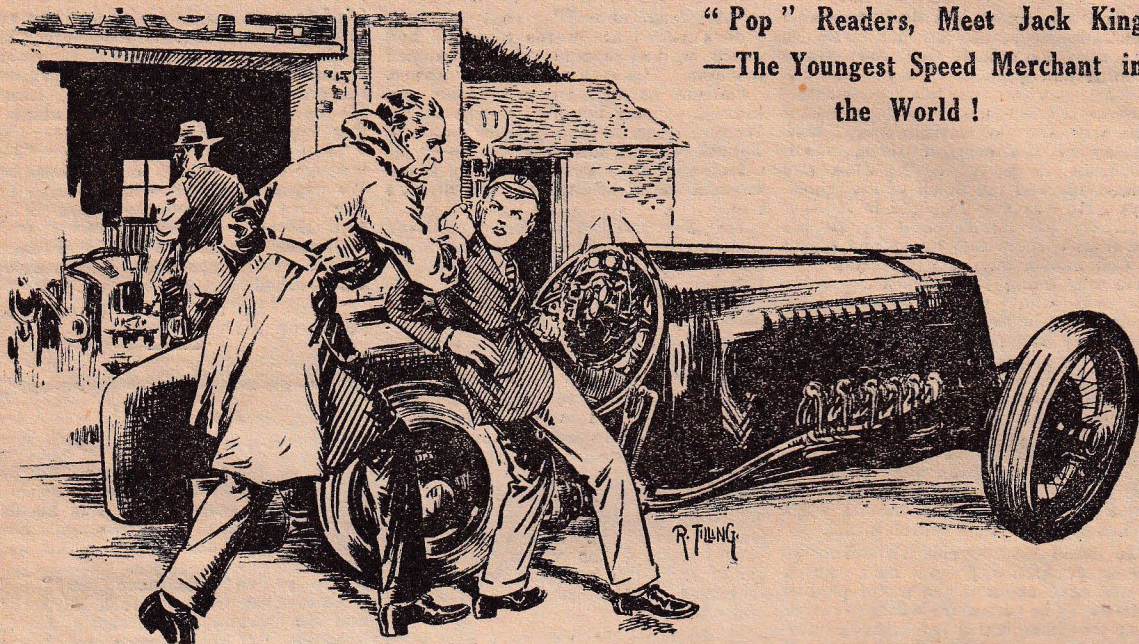
"Now the other," said the Kid.

Cactus Carter, in silence, lifted his other gun from the holster, and dropped it to the ground. The action was watched in awed silence by a hundred pairs of eyes.

"That sure is sense," remarked the Kid pleasantly. "You're a good little man, Mister Carter, and you know how to do as you're told. I ain't got no hunch to spill your juice, so long as you behave."

Cactus Carter drew a hissing breath. "Now hump down off'n that cask," said the Kid. "I ain't going to spill your juice, feller, if you don't make

(Continued on page 11.)



"Pop" Readers, Meet Jack King
—The Youngest Speed Merchant in
the World!

FIGHTING SPEED!

By ALFRED EDGAR.

A "Crack" in the Making!

JACK KING leaned over the side of the car and stared at the instrument-board. Every available inch of it was occupied by a dial or a gauge or an indicator of some sort, while four more dials held a kind of overflow meeting on an extra bit of board which stuck out underneath.

Jack had never seen a car like it. The steering-wheel fairly sprouted knobs and buttons, and had a very special gauge clamped all by itself to the steering column.

The front of the machine was covered all over with headlamps. It had bicycle type mudguards, which nestled above the wire wheels. These wheels were chromium plated; the rest of the machine was painted a glorious, eye-dazzling crimson. From beneath the engine-cover jutted an exhaust-pipe that looked like a copper drain, and which was bound in places with white asbestos tape. It ended in a fish-tail silencer as big as any shovel.

Jack pushed his St. Manuel's school-cap to the back of his head, so that he could the more conveniently scratch one ear. He was broad-shouldered and sinewy; his one interest in life was motors, and the faster they could go the better he liked them.

This red machine was standing outside Packer's Garage at the end of the village street. Jack had, so to speak, scented it from afar, and had hurried up to get there before the thing was moved off.

The driver was in the garage, and

Jack was taking the opportunity of looking the car over. It was a Hartz hyper-sports; it looked flashy, it could make an awful lot of noise; but any fast motor-cyclist could wave his rear wheel at it and leave it standing!

Jack saw at a glance that half the instrument dials did not function, and were only there for show. He reached out to see if the row of tiny lights above the gauges worked, when a hand clamped on his shoulder and jerked him back.

"What th' heck d'you think you're playing at?" a voice rasped in his ear.

Jack saw that he had been grabbed by someone who could be only the owner of the car. He was tall, with a

dozen times, filling the street with its machine-gun-like blare.

The uproar brought people to their doors and windows, and when he had a thoroughly satisfactory audience he slipped into gear and sent the machine off with a jump.

Engine roaring, exhaust bellowing, rear wheels spinning and sliding as they tore dust from the ground, the hyper-sports Hartz vanished from the quiet little village, leaving Jack's face stinging from the grit slung over him by the machine's thrashing wheels.

"That chap was Phil Hartz." The voice came from Jack's side as he stared after the machine, and he saw that old Joe Packer had come up

beside him. "He's driving a Hartz machine in the Ulster Grand Prix Race, on Saturday. He's going there now, so he said. He wanted a pair of black driving gauntlets, but I hadn't got such a thing."

"That's Phil Hartz, is it?" Jack repeated. "Well, I wish I was going to drive in that motor-race! I bet I'd give the rotter a run for his money!"

"He thinks a good bit of himself," the garage man said. "He's like that red car—mostly swank." He went on: "And if they were to give you a racing-car to drive, I bet you'd make a show of it! You'll be finding something to do with motors after you leave St. Manuel's, won't you. This is your last term, isn't it?"

"Yes," Jack nodded, and smiled ruefully. "We break up to-morrow, and then I'll be finished with school."

"Just having a last look round the village, like?" Packer asked.

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

100 m.p.h. After a Crash!

"Some" Speed—but it's nothing to the school-boy speed merchant!

face shaped like a wedge, and a "shy" chin—it seemed to want to hide itself in his neck.

"Trying to do some damage?" the man roared. "Let me see you lay hands on that car again, and I'll call a policeman—if you've got one in this one-eyed hole!"

He glared as he climbed over the side of the machine; it had no doors. He slid down behind the raked steering-wheel, then pressed the starter-button.

The engine fired with a shattering roar. He opened the throttle half a

"Just having a last look around," Jack admitted, then strolled away in the direction that the red Hartz machine had gone.

It was the last Wednesday half-holiday of the summer term, which ended on the morrow. As Jack had said, it marked the finish of his school-days. He was now engaged in bidding a strictly private farewell to all the odd little corners and nooks and places he had known during past terms.

He was doing it in much the same way as a fellow will go around every room in the house his family is leaving when they are moving to some other place. He steps into each empty room he has known so well, and silently says good-bye, and would just hate anyone to imagine that he was so sentimental.

Jack was only doing what many another St. Manuel's boy had done before him; and from the village he turned into a narrow, shady lane, in which he had gone bird's-nesting when he had been a Third Form infant.

He found his thoughts wandering to the great Ulster Grand Prix, which he had read about in the motor papers. Once again he pictured his future career as he had imagined it would work out—a job in some big motor firm; getting a chance to be a mechanic on one of their racing cars; then handling a speed-iron in a race and winning it; and, finally, becoming so famous as a speedman that even the kids at St. Manuel's would be awed at the mention of his name. Eventually he would return to the school on some Speech Day, covered with glory and driving the fastest and fiercest racing machine that he could get.

He could drive already. His father's chauffeur had taught him, and old Joe Packer had let him handle one of his garage cars now and again. As a matter of fact, Jack could drive rather well, because he had a natural instinct for the work.

Still deep in thought he wandered down the narrow lane, to turn an abrupt bend and stop dead as he saw what was drawn up at the side of the narrow way.

It was just such a racing-car as he had at that moment been driving in imagination! What was more, there was no one near it, and nobody in sight up and down the lane. It was almost as though his wish for a speed-iron had been miraculously fulfilled.

He gasped as he stared at it, then stepped closer. The machine was painted blue. It had neither mud-guards nor headlamps, and there were two massive straps over the engine-cover; the machine was, in fact, stripped to racing trim.

It was long and very low. Vicious-looking, almost! It had a grim and purposeful air about it, and when Jack gazed down into the cockpit—all smudged with oil and grime from hard-driven miles—he saw that the instrument-board carried only four dials, as compared with the forty or so he had seen in the flash Hartz!

This car was a Connaught—a real, thoroughbred racer—a machine that could amble along the road at anything up to 120 m.p.h. without beginning to rattle. Jack saw that the tiny nuts which secured the body-work were all wired down. He saw handholds for the mechanic, and noted the big, spring-soaked steering-wheel was bound about its thin rim with whipcord, dark from much handling.

The POPULAR.—No 600.

"Anybody about?"

Jack yelled the words when he had twice walked around the abandoned machine. His call received no answer.

"Might as well sit in it," he told himself. "This is a real racer, this is. Wonder what it feels like to sit down behind that wheel and—"

He slipped a leg over the side, and a moment later he was in the driver's seat.

He discovered that he was lying almost flat, with the steering-wheel down in his lap and his feet just comfortably reaching the pedals. He peered past the tiny windshield of wire mesh, and saw the long, rivet-lined bonnet tapering away to the radiator stoneguard.

The wheels, with their taut, dusty black tyres, seemed to come almost level with his head, so low was the car to the ground. He fitted down into it, shrugging himself into the padded driving-seat until the side of the cockpit was level with his shoulder.

"Now, I'm driving it in the Ulster Grand Prix," he told himself, and tensed behind the wheel. "There's the starter's flag going to drop. Down it comes, and we're off! Whoom! Rah-h-h-h!"

He imitated the noise of a wide-open exhaust as he pretended to send the machine away. Inside half a minute he was in the thick of the race, going like mad, rocking and swaying in the cockpit, taking corners in furious skids, passing other cars, flirting with death on the turns—forgetting that he was only in a narrow lane by St. Manuel's.

In his imagination he was on the great Irish circuit, with thousands cheering him on. He was having a neck-and-neck race with Phil Hartz—and Jack's Connaught was licking him! They took hairpin bends with their wheel-hubs almost touching, cheating disaster. They went down the straight-aways at about 150 m.p.h.—no Hartz ever built could come within twenty m.p.h. of that speed—but what did that matter?—with frantic spectators holding their breath at the mad, desperate way young Jack King, the schoolboy speedman, was flogging his blue car on.

Ahead were the grandstands and the finishing-line. Jack bumped his chin on the wheel in his excitement as he

tried to urge another mile an hour out of his perfectly stationary machine. He made strange noises in his throat as he left Phil Hartz behind. He imagined the crowds rising to him in the stand. He saw the black-and-white winner's flag flying for him.

"I'm winning!" he gulped. "I'm beating him! Come on, Connaught! We win, old girl—we win! There's the flag dropping for us! We've licked Phil Hartz! We've—won!"

Gasping, he sank back in his seat, then almost jumped out of it as a cool voice asked:

"What in the world d'you think you're up to?"

The Smash!

JACK discovered a lean, bronzed fellow standing beside the machine with a bunch of tools in his fist. He was half-frowning, half-smiling in a puzzled way as he went on:

"So you've won, have you?"
"Yes—that is, no," Jack answered; and he scrambled hurriedly to the ground. "If this is your car, I hope you don't mind. Only there was nobody about, and I shouted out first. I couldn't resist just—just sitting in it."

"Well, as you're a St. Manuel's boy, we'll say no more about it," the stranger said. "But I'm not going to let you off altogether. You're going to stand here while I crawl underneath, and hand me these tools as I want them."

"I'd like to do it," Jack said eagerly. "I'll be glad if you'll let me help, if there's anything wrong," he added. "Is this car going into a race?"

"It is—into the Ulster Grand Prix," came the answer. "Grab these!"

And the driver passed the heavy tools across, then ducked beneath the machine and began to struggle with the under-shielding.

For twenty minutes Jack crouched beside the Connaught racer and passed tools to the stranger. In that time Jack discovered quite a number of things. The racing man's name was Bernard Franklin; he had bought the machine from the Connaught works, and there were only three others in the world like it! Those other three had been entered by the firm in the big race; this one Franklin had entered himself, and he was to drive it.

"I ought to be over in Ulster now," he told Jack. "I ought to be practising, but I only got the car yesterday, and I'm travelling across there first thing Friday morning."

"That means you won't get any practice at all," Jack said.

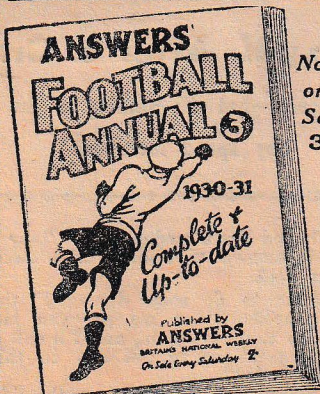
"It does, but I know the course. I rode there last year, and the year before. I've got the car out now for brake tests. To-morrow I'm giving it a sort of general speed trial, and on Saturday I'm going to try hard to put up a good show."

He had come from under the car, and was collecting the tools, tucking them away beneath the mechanic's seat as he went on.

"As a matter of fact, all I'm really out to do is to put it across that horrible boulder. Phil Hartz—don't suppose you know him, though."

Jack explained that he had seen him only a little while before. He added that their ideas about Hartz were in accord with one another.

Get YOUR Copy AT ONCE



Be ready for the Football Season. Be up-to-date and buy ANSWERS FOOTBALL ANNUAL. It will tell you everything you want to know about the coming season's games. If you are a football enthusiast you must have this book. On Sale Everywhere.

"He thinks he's king of the road, or something," Franklin went on. "I met the funny-faced blighter down at Brooklands, and he rather rubbed me up the wrong way, so I thought I'd show him." He added: "In a hurry to get back to school?"

"No, I've missed tea, anyhow," Jack said.

"And you can't buy any tea out because it's the end of the term, and you're broke," Franklin smiled. "Well, I'll give you some at my place. But we'll tootle the old tub around a bit first. Hop in!"

"In—into the car?" asked Jack.

"No, into the valve hole of one of the tyres you young ass!" Franklin grinned. "Come on!"

Jack slid into the mechanic's narrow seat, and Franklin wedged down beside him.

hand had grabbed the machine and was dragging it to a stop.

They checked, tyres smoking, faint rubber marks on the surface of the road behind them.

"Pretty good, that," Franklin commented. "Well, what d'you think of her?"

"Fine!" Jack gasped. "I'd—I'd give anything for the chance to drive her."

"I bet you would, but there's nothing doing," his companion smiled. "Now we'll go back, and I'm going to step on it properly this time. We ought to touch a hundred and twenty if nothing shows up on the road."

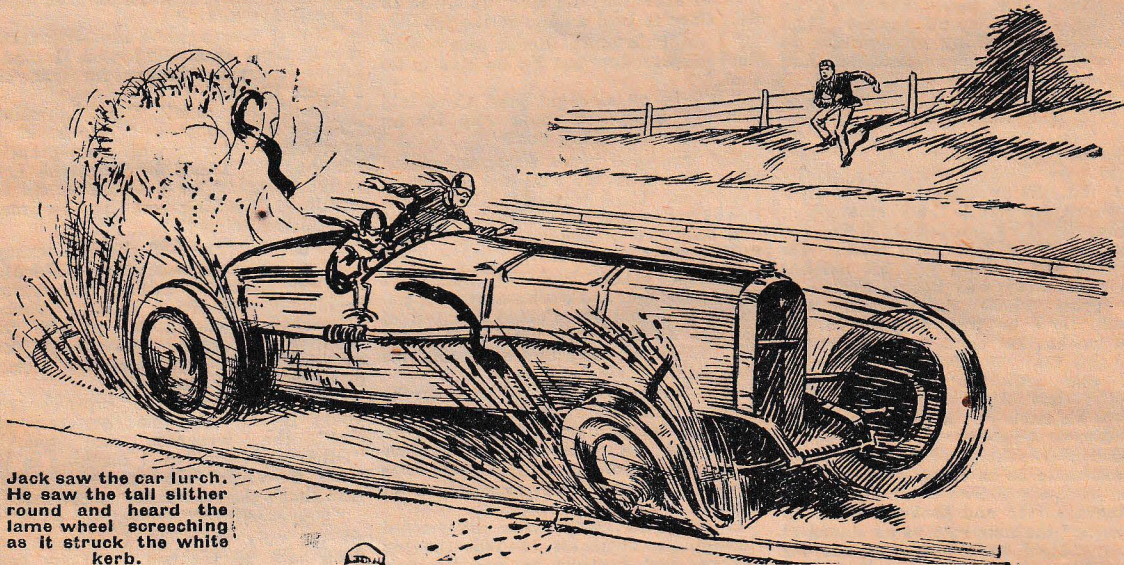
Jack knew that they touched two miles a minute. The car travelled as it had not moved before. The road became blurred before him. Things swept up and past at an incredible

out then, and I'll be moving fast just to get the feel of her."

"I'll be there!" Jack assured him. "I'm supposed to be going home tomorrow for the holidays, but I can stop Thursday night at the school. Lots of chaps do if their trains don't fit in very well. I'd like to watch this car go fast, so's I'll know what it looked like when I was in it just now."

He returned to St. Manuel's soon after that. He did not tell anyone about his afternoon's adventure, and in the morning he found it easy enough to wangle matters so that he stopped for the Thursday night at the school instead of going straight home.

In the ordinary way, it would have been a sad sort of day for him, saying good-bye to friends and masters. But this was tempered by the thrill he was



Jack saw the car lurch. He saw the tall slither round and heard the lame wheel screeching as it struck the white kerb.

"I've got a starter-motor rigged," he said. "The battery's under my seat, but all that'll come off for the race."

He punched the fat starter switch, and the engine roared vigorously in answer. He let it run, throttled down for a minute or so, watching the oil gauge and the revolution counter, then he sent the car forward.

There was no skidding here, no bellowing exhaust, no wild acceleration. Smoothly and gently they slid away, but all the time Jack felt the rear of his seat pressing into his back as they gathered speed, to swing out on to the main road and do sixty miles an hour along it before they hit a strip of the new motor highway that skirted the village against which the school stood.

Here Franklin let the car go. Jack had no means of telling how fast they travelled. He only knew that the wind shrieked in his ears and made water come to his eyes as he huddled up in his seat, hanging on.

The broad, grey road swept towards him at a pace which made his blood leap in his veins. Now and again Franklin shouted something to him above the furious beat of the engine and the screeching whine of its supercharger, but Jack never answered.

Presently Jack heard the driver yell something about trying the brakes, and they went on a moment later. The rear of the machine wagged a little, and Jack was slithered forward in his seat. It felt just as though a mighty

pace. He felt as though they were not on the ground at all, but skimming the surface, save when they came to a rough patch of road, and then he was jolted solidly in a way that bruised him.

They slowed where the broad road ended, and a little later the blue machine pulled up outside a big garage attached to a house less than half a mile from the school. Here Jack met the driver's mechanic, a quiet fellow named Cope, who seemed to have been somewhere for spare parts.

Tea was brought to them from the house. They took it there in the garage, with Jack sitting on an oily bench, staring around and listening to what the pair were talking about.

He saw two other racing cars in the place, and he inspected them after tea.

"They're not a patch on my Connaught," Franklin told him. "She's got something very special in the way of superchargers, and that's what makes her so fast. The other three Connaughts in the race have got exactly the same type of blower, and there are only the four of them made so far."

He showed him the supercharger—a fat, compact mass of fluted metal at the front of the gleaming, beautifully-kept engine.

"It's a pity you can't see the race," Franklin commented. "I can tell that you're keen on this game; but if you want to watch a bit of fast work be on the new road about six to-morrow evening. Cope and I will have the machine

to get in the evening, and his final good-bye to the old school would not actually come before the Friday, when he really would go home.

He potted about all the afternoon, packed his things after tea, and walked across to the new motorway. It was nearly two miles distant, and he cut across fields which would bring him to the centre of its straightest stretch where, he judged, the car would be travelling at its fastest.

As he neared the highway he heard the approaching roar of a machine, and recognised it for the Connaught's war-song. He ran, jumping a wire fence which cut off the field from the side of the road and looked down the slope.

The highway stretched before him, quite empty, and down the centre of this the blue Connaught was scuttling. It squatted on the road, coming at stupendous speed. Jack could see Franklin's head and the mechanic huddled beside him. From a blue speck the car changed to a hurtling thing with stamping, spraddling wheels, leaving behind the faintest trail of thin smoke.

On it came, howling in an ecstasy of frenzied speed. Awed, he watched it, still clinging to the fence; then his heart seemed to turn over as something kicked out from one front wheel.

It pitched forward and upwards in a black streak—torn rubber! A burst tyre!

Jack saw the car lurch. He saw the

tail slither round and heard the lamed wheel screeching—smashing as it struck the white kerb on the opposite side of the highway.

The wheel collapsed. The car tilted as it jumped the kerb, and then went on, spinning round and round, half hidden in upturn earth and dust. It stopped, finally, with a crash as it struck head on into the shape of a hawthorn tree which grew from the foot of the bank at that side of the road.

The Chance of a Lifetime!

FOR long seconds Jack remained where he stood by the fence. It was absolutely the first time he had ever seen a motoring crash, and never had he witnessed anything so demoniac as the way the racing machine had plunged to destruction.

It was just as though the bursting of the tyre had unleashed some tremendous, terrifying power, bent only on shattering the beautiful wheeled meteor. As though something vitally cruel had been waiting for just this opportunity to wreck the Connaught.

Abruptly Jack slithered down the bank and raced across the road. He saw that the ground was all marked with great weals and huge stretches of torn grass where the machine had skated, then he was gasping in the acrid smoke that came from the car.

He saw that the mechanic was on his feet, one arm limp as he moved dazedly, then Jack sighted Franklin flat on his back just at the side of the machine.

"Hurt!" Jack gasped the word to the mechanic as he came level with the man.

"Burst a tyre and broke a wheel on the kerb," the man said as he stared at him. "He'd have held her but for that. Where is he?"

For answer Jack dropped on his knees beside the driver, to find that his eyes were open. He tried to sit up when he saw Jack, and smiled wanly.

"Hallo! Hit something, didn't I? How's the car?" He tried to come to his feet, only to grunt in pain and drop back. He looked at the machine then.

The radiator was battered, steaming water flooding out. The wrecked wheel made the damage appear worse than it was; the machine had slowed a lot before it hit the tree.

The mechanic came up. Then a car stopped on the highway and some men ran to the scene. In a minute or two quite a crowd had collected where before there had seemed to be no one at all.

One of the newcomers knew something about first aid. He told the mechanic that his left wrist was damaged—possibly broken—and that there seemed to be something wrong with Franklin's ribs.

"Better get home as quickly as possible and have a doctor," the stranger said. "I'll run you there in my car!"

"Will you stop by the wreck?" Cope, the mechanic, asked Jack. "I'm not hurt a lot, except for my wrist. I'll send Packer's breakdown van out to fetch the Connaught in. You come back with her, see?"

The injured pair were taken away, and the crowd filtered off until Jack found himself alone again. Passing cars slowed up while the occupants gazed at the wreckage of the machine.

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

A few stopped and asked what had happened. He got tired of telling people, so he occupied himself in picking torn spokes and bits of the tyre from the road.

It was almost an hour later when he sighted Packer's Garage breakdown van rolling towards him, with old Joe himself on it and Cope at his side.

"I've got a busted wrist, all right," he told Jack when he arrived. "That means I don't ride in the Ulster Grand Prix! And my gov'nor isn't so good, either. They've put him to bed, and they don't seem to want to say what's wrong with him."

"Is it serious?" Jack asked. "Shouldn't think so," Cope answered. "His last words to me were that I was to have this machine repaired by the morning, and to have Packer's mechanics working on it while I stood over 'em and told 'em what to do. Care to lend a hand at the job?"

"I can't do much except pass tools," Jack answered; "but I'd be glad to do that."

"It'll be an all-night job," Cope told him. "Still, you could stop for an hour or two, couldn't you?"

The damaged racer was manhandled from where it lay and the wreckage examined. Cope seemed to think that it was not so bad as it might have been, and soon the breakdown crane hitched up the front of the car.

It was taken back to Franklin's private garage, and work was started immediately. Old Joe Packer and two of his men worked on it, with Cope standing by, doing what he could with his free hand.

Jack stood near, passing tools to the men as they called for them, until he had to return to the school. He promised that he would be back before breakfast in the morning, and he was awake with the very first streak of dawn.

It was still early when he trotted through the clear air towards the big garage, just in time to see Packer's breakdown van rolling away around the other side of the drive. The doors of the building were still standing open.

In the centre of the floor was the Connaught, now looking as though there had never been any accident. Sitting on a bench, his face white and his eyes tired, Cope was perched, smoking a cigarette.

"Hallo, kid!" he nodded, as Jack came up. "In at the death, eh? We finished her half an hour ago. But there won't be any Grand Prix for this car!"

"Why not? What's wrong?" Jack asked.

"Mr. Franklin," came the answer. "I never knew it, but they've been up with him all night—a doctor and two nurses. All the while we've been working to get the car ready, they've been busy on him. He's got three broken ribs. One of the doctors has only just told me. He's going to be all right now, but it'll be three months or more before he sits behind this wheel again!"

"Then he—he can't drive?" Jack gasped.

"He can't," Cope agreed. "Therefore, we've had all our work for nothing! I've got the machine tuned up as good as ever it was; but it won't run in the big race because he can't drive it. As a matter of fact they've just sent off a wire cancelling his entry. They'll get it in Ulster just about the time the cars there are taking the course for final practice."

"What rotten luck!" Jack exclaimed. "I say, you've had a time of it, with

your broken wrist, and working all night. You look all done up. Can't I get you some grub, or something?"

"That wouldn't be a bad idea," Cope agreed. And they made for the kitchen.

One of Mr. Franklin's nurses was there, and she allowed Jack to scratch up a meal for the mechanic. He hung about the garage after that, because they promised that he might have a word with the unlucky driver later on.

It was almost mid-morning when Cope appeared and told him that they could both go up to the bedroom. They found the race driver in bed, a little pale, but smiling.

"Hallo, young 'un! They told me you were here," he said. "This is just a sample of the luck you get in this game. I shan't have my chance to show Phil Hartz that he isn't so clever as he thinks he is!"

"You'll ride against him in another race!" Jack said. "I wish I was a driver—I'd take the car for you, and I'd lick Hartz!"

"That's the talk!" Franklin smiled. "That's the way to—!" He broke off as a nurse came in with a telegram in her hand. "This'll be from the Connaught people," he said, as he slit the envelope, "telling me to be more careful next time!"

He unfolded the buff slip and scanned the long message, then called suddenly: "Cope, listen to this! 'Regret your accident. Our No. 1 suffered cracked supercharger casing in practice this morning. Please send blower off your machine as replacement. Utmost urgency. Reply paid.'"

"If they've busted a super-charger, yours is the only one they can get, sir!" the mechanic said quickly. "Otherwise their No. 1 machine in the team is out of the race—can't run! And that's the fastest car of the three!"

"You're right!" Franklin tried to sit up, only to grunt from pain and drop back to his bed. "Look here, Cope, we've got to get them out. Get the supercharger off and send it to Ulster as quickly as you can. The boy will help you."

"Better to run the car itself to the port, sir," Cope said, "and take the blower off the engine there. It can go right across on the next boat—and we can catch the midday boat if we went now. If we hurried!"

Jack stared from the mechanic to the driver. He understood that something had gone wrong with one of the Connaught racers. They wanted a part off Mr. Franklin's car so that their disabled machine could still run in the race.

"That would be the quickest, Cope," Franklin agreed. "Drive the car up to Holyhead, and— But you can't, of course. You've got a broken wrist!"

"I'll drive it!" Jack cut in quickly. The pair looked at him, and he went on: "I can drive, Mr. Franklin! You ask Joe Packer, or anybody about here. I could get to Holyhead pretty quickly with the machine!"

"He is hot," Cope said quietly. "Packer was telling me about him. Got the makings of a real fast driver in him, so he says. Let him have a go, sir, and I'll ride with him. It'd take twenty minutes to get anybody up from Packer's garage, and then they wouldn't be as good as this youngster."

"All right," Franklin nodded slowly, looking into Jack's eager features. "All right! I believe you could do it, young 'un. Have a shot at it, any way!"

That Mad Drive!

THE blue shape of the hurtling Connaught split the greyness of the road like an azure streak. Behind the wheel Jack sat, with his foot hard down on the throttle pedal, Cope at his side with his injured arm wrapped about in cloths to protect it. Fifty miles lay behind them, and Jack had driven faultlessly, never losing a second. Cope had worked out how much time they had for the journey, and Jack now knew that half a minute's delay would make them miss the boat they were trying to catch, and on which they now intended to ship the entire car.

They had one hundred miles still to travel, and a shade over two hours in which to do the distance. Already Jack was handling the machine as though he had been born driving it. He had forgotten the faint nervousness with which he had started.

The fierce crackle of the exhaust, the booming of the engine, and the shrill whine of the supercharger were music which spurred him on. They had no hooter, but the noise that the racing machine made was more than sufficient warning at cross-roads.

They overhauled fast traffic as though it were standing still. Jack took curves wide, hugging the side of the road, and they were travelling at something very close to 100 m.p.h. when they plunged over the Welsh border.

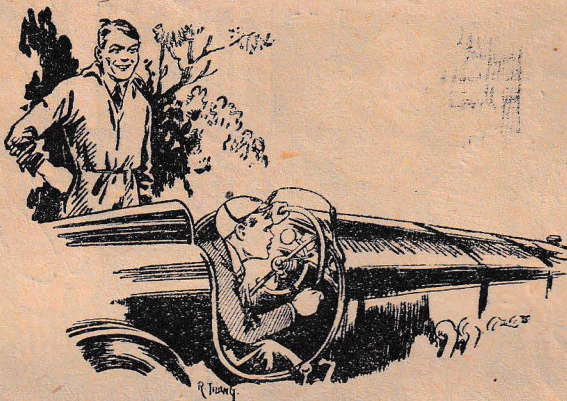
They cleared the wild hills of Bettysy-Coed, and Cope guided Jack over a short cut that missed Bangor and brought them to Menai Bridge—with twenty-five miles to go and twenty minutes in which to do the distance.

"Kick her wide open, or we miss the boat!" Cope yelled.

"All right!" was Jack's answer, and his goggled gaze bored past the windshield as he watched the straight road.

They were doing a hundred again before he reached the end of the straight,

IT'S JACK KING'S AMBITION TO GET INTO A MOTOR WORKS AND BECOME A PUKKAH RACING "CRACK." YOU'VE READ HOW HE CAN HANDLE A CAR—THE POINT IS, WILL HE GET A CHANCE OF DRIVING A RACER ON THE SPEEDWAY?



SEE

"JACK KING—SKID KID!"

By ALFRED EDGAR,

next week's tale of smashing motor-racing adventure, featuring our schoolboy speed merchant!

white screen. He tightened his grip on the wheel, and set his teeth as he saw the train almost entering the crossing.

There was the fraction of a second of suspense, then the blue Connaught hit the barrier in the very centre. Woodwork splintered and flew out. The car leaped high—and hurtled on!

Jack saw the buffers of the locomotive level with his head. He saw the smoke-box, its pounding drivers, the clattering bogey-wheels—and the other gates opposite.

The engine was on them. It seemed as though it must strike the car and grind it to debris under its steel-flanged wheels—then they were past it, the second gate was shattering as though it was made of cardboard.

The car ripped through, skidded, straightened under Jack's quick hands, and plunged on with the throttle kicked wide open.

Behind them, broken woodwork was still flying about the crossing.

"After that, we ought to catch the boat!" Cope panted.

And they did!

The following day Jack learned that No. 1 car in the Connaught team had won the Ulster Grand Prix—and that Phil Hartz had finished nowhere.

He sat with the paper before him, picturing the scene as the winning machine raced home—and he reminded himself that he had helped the car to victory with the spare supercharger from the machine he had driven.

"Cope told me that even Mr. Franklin himself couldn't have handled the car better than I did," he murmured. "And he said I must have plenty of nerve, the way I split those gates. Well, that settles it! I'm going to make dad get me a job in a motor works, and I'm going to be a racing driver. I don't know how I'll wangle it—but I'm going to do it!"

THE END.

A ROUGH HOUSE IN PLUG HAT!

(Continued from page 6.)

me; but if you don't jump to do as you're told, you're a dead horse thief. You get me?"

Cactus Carter, still in dead silence, stepped down from his rostrum.

"Now let that hoss loose."

For a second the gunman hesitated.

The eyes of all Plug Hat were on him, breathlessly. On more than one face there was a mocking look. Men who had trembled at a glance from the ice-cold eyes, were grinning now.

The bitter humiliation of his defeat, of obeying the orders of the boy puncher, was almost too much for the desperado. But he read death in the clear, steady eyes of the Rio Kid, and his hesitation was brief.

He cast loose the mustang.

"Gents," said the Kid amiably, with

a glance at the staring faces round him, "I'm powerful sorry to spoil your fun, but this sale's off, like I told you. I ain't come to Plug Hat huntin' for trouble, but I don't stand for horse-stealin', and I'm sure going to boot Mr. Carter across the plaza, like I said, jest to warn him to keep his thiev'in' hands off a guy's cayuse."

He made a stride at the gunman.

With his left hand, the revolver in his right, the Kid grasped Cactus Carter and spun him round.

Crash!

There was a yell from the gunman, and a roar of laughter from the crowd as the cowpuncher's heavy boot landed on Cactus Carter.

The gunman staggered away.

The Kid followed him, and his boot crashed again, and yet again, till the gunman, panting, desperate, fairly took to his heels, and fled across the plaza.

The Kid, with a smile holstered his gun, and leaped on the back of Side-Kicker. No man in Plug Hat was disposed to contest with him the owner-

ship of the grey mustang, since the defeat of Cactus Carter.

"Say, Kid!" called out Colorado Bill. The burly cowman seemed to have forgotten his own defeat, in his admiration for the puncher who had beaten Cactus Carter to the draw. "Say, you want to hit the trail afore Cactus gets hold of a gun agin! Say, you want to ride, puncher!"

The Kid laughed.

"I guess I ain't hitting the trail a whole lot," he said. "I'm sure stopping a piece in this hyer burg. If Cactus wants me agin, he will sure find me to home."

With a clatter of hoofs and a jingle of spurs the Rio Kid dashed away down the street towards the lumber hotel. He left the crowd in a buzz behind him. It was the biggest excitement that had ever struck the cowtown. And before the sun had set, on every lip was the name of "Texas Brown," the stranger in Plug Hat.

THE END.

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

BUNTER *the* MAGNIFICENT!

By
FRANK
RICHARDS



An Alarm in the Night!

HARRY WHARTON sat up in bed and listened:

It was a hot July night. Wharton was generally a good sleeper; but the heat perhaps had made him restless. At all events, he had been awake for some little time, and had heard one chime from the marble clock on the mantelpiece in his bed-room.

The great house was very still. Moonbeams fell in at the tall windows of the room, glimmering over the polished floor and the rugs. Hardly a breath of air was stirring. In the deep stillness of the summer night every faint sound was heard strangely and clearly,

And a sound had come to Wharton's ears from the corridor outside his bed-room door.

It was not the creak of a window, or the scuttle of a rat behind the ancient oaken wainscot of Combermere Lodge. It was a footfall—a soft and stealthy footfall in the silence of the night.

Wharton stared towards his door. Someone was passing that door outside; passing it with stealthy footsteps at one in the morning.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove felt his heart beat a little faster.

The thought of burglars flashed into his mind at once.

All the occupants of the house had long been in bed; it was two hours since Walsingham, the butler, had made his last round, and seen the house fastened up for the night.

Wharton stepped quietly out of bed.

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

His room was the last but one in the corridor; and the last room was tenanted by Billy Bunter. If any of the Greyfriars party had turned out for any reason in the middle of the night, no one but Bunter was likely to pass Wharton's door.

And Billy Bunter was the last person in the world to turn out of bed at night. He found it trouble enough to turn out in the morning.

Besides, if any of Bunter's house-party had turned out, surely he would have put on the electric light in the corridor to see his way. But there was no glimmer of light under Wharton's door. Whoever was creeping stealthily along the broad corridor, was creeping in deep gloom.

There were many valuables in Com-

stepped softly towards his bed-room door and opened it without a sound

At the end of the great corridor was a tall window of stained glass, through which the moonlight glimmered dimly. It was not light enough for Wharton to make out anything with certainty; but in the distance in the gloom, he thought he saw a moving shadow. Faintly there came back to his ears the stealthy footfalls of the unknown who was creeping farther and farther away from him.

Wharton did not hesitate.

He hurried quickly but silently along to the next room, which was occupied by Bob Cherry.

Bob was sleeping the sleep of the just when he was awakened by a light shake.

"Shush!" breathed Wharton "Not a word!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Shush!"

Bob sat up and blinked at him.

"Is that you, Harry?"

"Yes. There's somebody sneaking along the passage, and I fancy it's a burglar. Will you come along?"

"Oh, my hat! Yes, rather!"

Bob was out of bed with a jump.

"Shall we call the other chaps?" he asked.

"No time; they'll wake fast enough if we collar the chap and there's a row. Come on!"

"Right-ho!"

Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh were fast asleep in their rooms; no sound came from them. Bob Cherry stopped only to annex a heavy brass poker from the fender, and then he followed Harry Wharton into the corridor.

"Listen!" breathed the captain of the Remove.

Bunter's more Fool than Rogue—

But He's a Cunning Fool!

bermere Lodge that might have tempted a burglar. Indeed, the house and its appointments were so magnificent that it was a standing puzzle to Harry Wharton & Co how Bunter could possibly have obtained possession of it for the summer vacation. That he had possession of it was indubitable, for there he was, and there were his guests. But how he had done it was a mystery.

If an enterprising burglar had penetrated into the great house to lift some of the valuables, Wharton was prepared to take a hand in the proceedings. He

"I can hear him!" whispered Bob. They hurried in the direction of the sound.

Dimly, in the deep gloom, they made out a shadowy figure ahead.

The chums of the Remove trod silently, with bare feet, and drew quickly nearer to the strange shadowy form.

It had stopped now.

"He's going into Sammy Bunter's room," whispered Bob. "Better collar him before he goes in; that fat young ass would be scared out of his wits by a giddy burglar."

"Right! I'll turn on the light. There's a switch about here," breathed the captain of the Remove.

Wharton felt along the wall for the electric light switch.

The shadowy figure had stopped at the door of the room occupied by Sammy Bunter, the minor of the great William George.

He had groped for the door-knob and found it, when all of a sudden Wharton pressed the switch and the corridor was flooded with light.

"Collar him!" panted Bob.

The figure swung round with a startled gasp. The next second he was on the floor in the grasp of the two Removites of Greyfriars.

"Got him!" panted Wharton, as he sprawled over the gasping, struggling intruder.

"Give in, you villain!" shouted Bob. "I'll brain you! Let me get at him with this poker, Harry—"

"Yaroooh!"

It was a wild yell from the sprawling prisoner.

"Why—what— My hat!"

"Bunter!"

"Ow! Help! Fire! Burglars! Thieves! Murder! Help!" shrieked Billy Bunter. "Keep off! Help! Yoooop!"

"Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Billy Bunter!" gasped Wharton.

And the two Removites released their prisoner as suddenly as if he had become red-hot to the touch, and jumped up.

Very Mysterious!

BILLY BUNTER sat up.

He gasped and spluttered and splattered. In the glare of the electric light he recognised Wharton and Bob Cherry, and realised that they were not burglars, as he had supposed at first. It had been a mutual mistake.

"Ow! Wow! Groogh! Ooooooh!" spluttered Bunter. "You silly asses! Ow! You footling chumps! Grooogh! What do you mean by playing your silly practical jokes on a fellow—ow, ow!—in the middle of the night! Oooch!"

"Bunter!" stuttered Bob.

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

"You fat duffer!" exclaimed Wharton. "Ow! Beast! Ow! What do you mean by jumping on a chap?" howled Bunter.

"What do you mean by wandering about in the middle of the night, in the dark, and making a fellow think that burglars were in the house?" demanded Harry Wharton indignantly.

"Ow! You silly chump!" gasped Bunter. "I suppose I can walk about my own house if I like, any time I choose? Ow!"

"Yes; but—"

"Mind your own business, blow you!

Ow! I thought it was burglars when you collared me! Oh dear!"

"Well, we thought you were a burglar, creeping about like that in the dark—"

"You silly chump!"

"Well, why didn't you turn on the light?" demanded Bob. "Do you see better in the dark, like a silly owl?"

"Yes—I mean, no—I mean, it's no bizney of yours!" growled Bunter. "I suppose I can do as I like in my own house. Who's master of Bunter Court, I'd like to know!"

The Greyfriars juniors grinned.

Bunter still referred to Combermere Lodge as "Bunter Court," though his guests were aware by this time that the house was only "let furnished," and that its change of name was only pure, unadulterated "cheek" on the part of Billy Bunter.

Bunter picked himself up, evidently very much annoyed. He jammed his spectacles on his fat little nose, and blinked angrily at the two Removites.

Three doors had opened along the corridor. Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh looked out in surprised inquiry. The bump of Bunter on the floor had awakened them.

"What's the row, you fellows?" asked Nugent.

"Only Bunter," said Bob. "He was wandering around in the dark, and we took him for a giddy burglar."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Spying on a chap!" hooted Bunter.

"What?" roared Bob.

"Can't you mind your own business?" exclaimed Bunter.

"You silly, cheeky owl!" exclaimed Bob indignantly. "I've a jolly good mind to bang your cheeky head on the wall."

Bunter jumped back.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What is there to spy on, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton quietly, and regarding the Owl of the Remove with a very curious look.

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all! I—I couldn't sleep, you know, and I—I was just taking a stroll down the corridor!" stammered Bunter. "If you think I was going to speak to Sammy, you're mistaken!"

"What?"

"As for being nervous about going downstairs alone, that's all rot! You know I'm as brave as a lion!" said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Besides, why should I want to go down to the cellars?" argued Bunter.

"Nothing of the kind, of course!"

The chums of the Remove stared blankly at William George Bunter. It was Bunter's way to exculpate himself by piling one "whopper" on another, and to give himself away thoroughly in the process.

"You were going down to the cellars!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Of course not! I've just said I wasn't!"

"What on earth were you going down to the cellars for?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"I—I wasn't! I wouldn't you know. Besides, the key of the wine-cellar is lost, and I couldn't, could I? You fellows heard Walsingham tell me to-day that the key had been taken from his room, and couldn't be found. Nobody can get down to the wine-cellar now."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Johnny Bull.

"It beats me," said Harry Wharton blankly. "But I suppose it's no business of ours. If you've got anything to

go downstairs for, Bunter, and you're funky, we'll come with you, if you like."

"I haven't!" snapped Bunter.

"But you said—"

"Look here, you fellows, get back to bed!" interrupted Bunter. "You're losing your sleep, and that's bad for you. Go back to bed at once!"

The Famous Five of Greyfriars exchanged wondering glances.

From Bunter's remarks they gathered that the Owl of the Remove was the unknown person who had abstracted the key to the wine-cellar from the butler's room, and that it had been his intention to visit that remote quarter in the middle of the night.

Being "funky" of going down through the great house alone, he had intended to call his minor, Sammy, to go with him. That much seemed to be clear, in spite of Bunter's denials, or rather, because of his denials.

But what it could possibly mean was a deep mystery.

"Let's get back to bed," said Bob Cherry. "I shall kick Bunter if he says any more, and a fellow mustn't really, kick his host when he's on a visit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to their rooms.

Bunter blinked after them frowningly, and he seemed greatly relieved when five bed-room doors had closed, and he was left alone in the great corridor.

"Silly owls!" murmured Bunter.

"Spying on a chap! Lucky I pulled the wool over their eyes all right! He, he, he!"

Bunter turned off the electric light in the corridor and opened the door of Sammy Bunter's room.

A deep and unmusical snore greeted him. The noise in the corridor had not awakened Sammy Bunter.

William George grinned, and stepped into the room, closing the door softly after him. Then he turned on Sammy's electric light.

"Sammy!"

Billy Bunter bent over his minor and shook him forcibly.

"Sammy—ow!"

"Oh!"

Sammy awakened suddenly and started up. There was a loud crack as his head came in contact with the fat chin that was bending over him.

Sammy Is Not Taking Any!

OW!

"Wow!"

"Sammy, you ass—"

"Billy, you idiot—"

With that exchange of compliments the two Bunter's glared at one another. Billy Bunter rubbing his fat chin, and Sammy rubbing his bullet head. The collision had been a sudden and rather violent one.

"What the thump are you waking me up for in the middle of the night?" demanded Sammy Bunter indignantly. "I was just dreaming such a lovely dream, all about a game-pie—"

"You fat duffer!" growled Bunter. "Don't shut your eyes, Sammy, you're not going to sleep again yet."

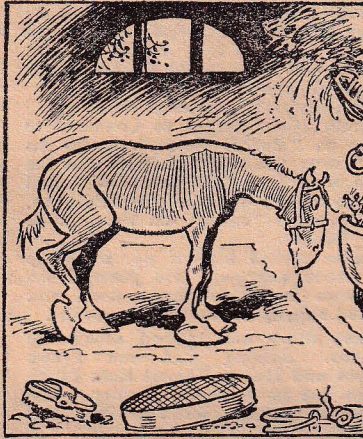
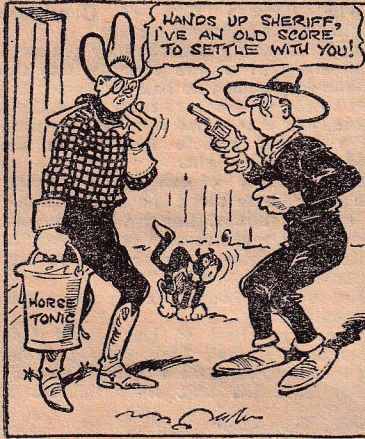
Sammy's eyes had closed, perhaps because he was sleepy, perhaps in an

(Continued on page 16.)

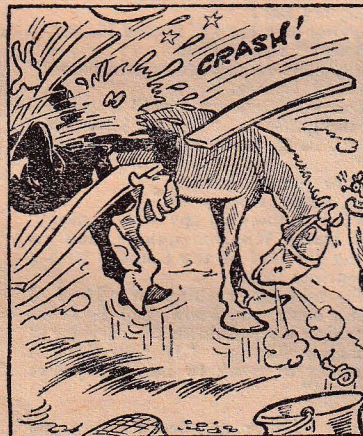
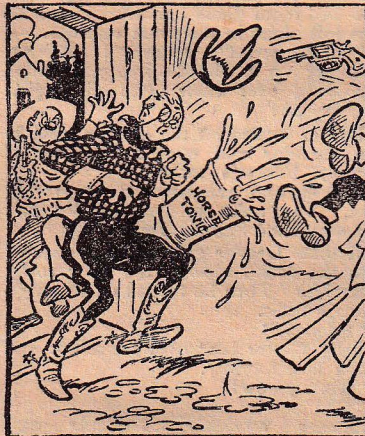
MONTAGUE BAGGS

The SWELL SHERIFF

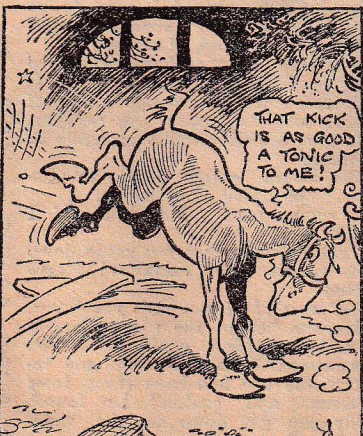
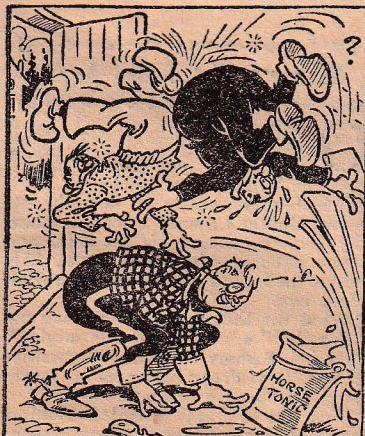
"HOSS" SENSE!



Monty's poor old gee-gee's been overdoing it. Too many late nights, an' all that, had put him down and out and no error. That was why Monty came along with some special hoss tonic. But when Monty happened alone, he found a bad lad was awaiting for him with a shooting-iron.



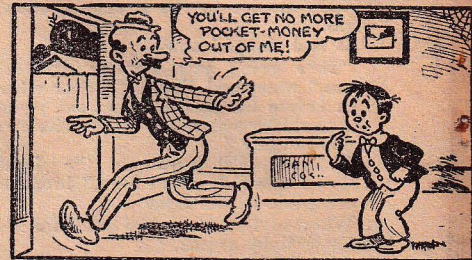
The laddie wanted to pay off old scores, and got nasty with a shooting-iron in his fist. Then, what d'yer think happened? N'other nasty-faced customer entered, and sent the first guy clean into the stable.



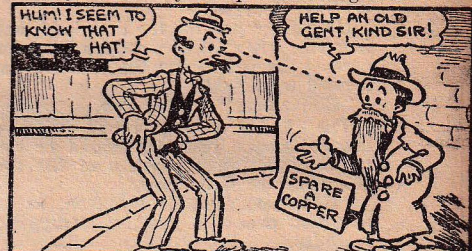
Course, that did it, sort of. Monty's gee was a bit particular about his stable, so he ups with his hoofs, and out flies that bad lad. Carrying on his non-stop flight, he takes his pal with him—out into the jolly old street again. After that the hoss-tonic wasn't wanted.

SUNNY BO

THE MONEY-MAK



1. Tain't a nice thing to be stopped your pocket money, but that was what happened to Sunny t'other day. Pop was feeling mean.

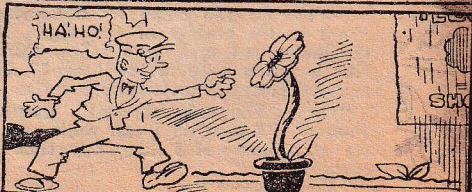
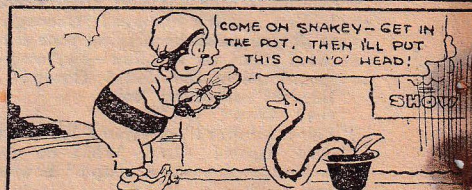
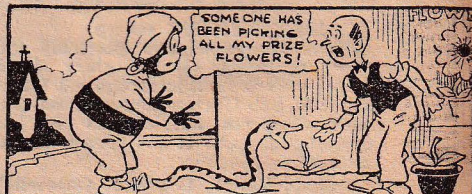


3. Getting up a good spot of face fungus and what-nots, he set out to break the heart of Pop, and get a spot of cash.



5. But that snuff Pop had given Sunny in the hopes that he would sneeze his beard off didn't act the right way.

ALI HOOPLA AND SNA



BOY AND HIS POP

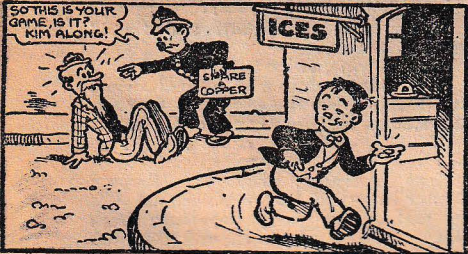
POPKER IN ACTION!



2. But Sunny wasn't upset long. Oh dear no! When he saw Pop chucking coppers away on a poor blind man he got a sudden brain-storm.

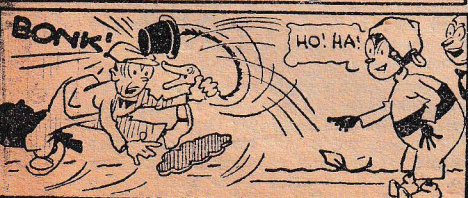
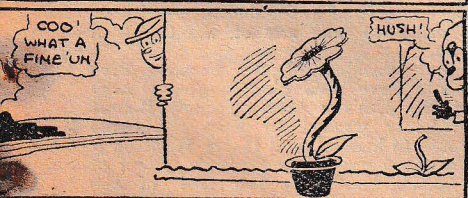
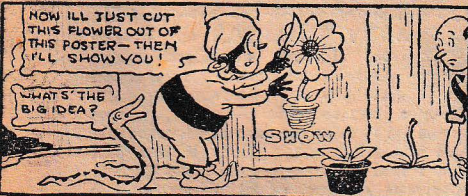


4. But oh, for his hopes! Pop wasn't born yesternoon. He'd recognised the artful little 'un through the hair, so offered him some snuff.



6. In fact, when Sunny sneezed he sneezed the board right on to Pop's face and the cop that came along copped Pop for swindling the public.

POPKER IN MORE FUN!



JERRY JINKS AND THE FLAPPER TWINS AT FUNNYCUTTS SCHOOL

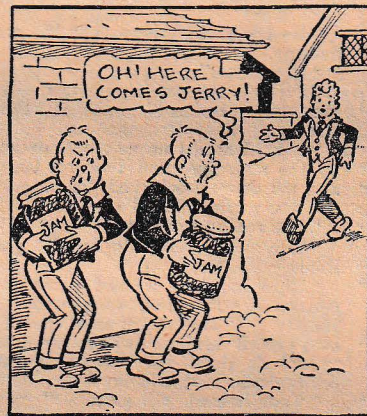
"JAMMED" IN THE HEADS!



1. The Flappers, being fond of jam, thought they'd get in a supply for tea. But Porker and Fatty were also fond of the pickled fruits, and so they lay in waiting.



2. All unsuspecting, the Twins came along, and then those two bad lads did the highwayman stuff. What could two damns do against two nasty-faced ruffians.



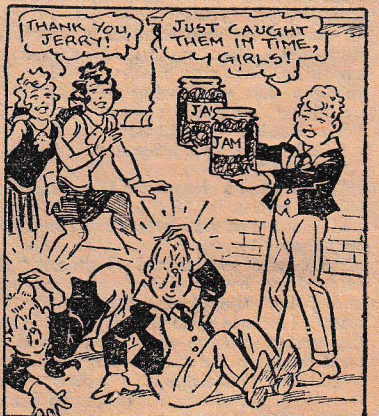
3. But those two jam-pinchers were not to be left long with their ill-gotten loot. Oh, dear me no! Up came Jerry, and he saw what had happened in a twinkling of an eyelash.



4. The sight of Jerry coming along gave those two inward tremors. So they decided to get rid of their loot for the time being, in case their sworn enemy got rid of them.



5. But Porker and Fatty hadn't noticed that they had been standing beneath the roof of the outhouse, when they tossed their jars into the air. With the following result.



6. 'Taint a pleasant thing to get a couple of ten-pound jam-jars plonk on the napper, and that's why Porker and Fatty gave two loud yells, when the jars descended from above.

Bunter the Magnificent!

(Continued from page 13.)

effort to recapture the vanished beatific vision of the game-pie of his dreams.

Bunter shook him.

"Look here, you young ass!" he said. "It's jolly important. I suppose you don't want to have to clear out of this show, do you, and go home for the rest of the vacation?"

Sammy sniffed.

"You can't keep it up for ever!" he grunted. "You've got hold of the house somehow by diddling the agent—goodness knows how! You're running the whole show on tick, and fooling Walsingham. He's running up bills with the tradesmen, and you'll never pay them. You're stuffin' him that you're rich by giving him tips, and you've done it with money you've borrowed from your visitors. That game can't go on all through the vac. It's bound to come to a crash, and, as your brother, I hope you won't end up in chokey. I can tell you that I shall clear at once if I see a policeman coming."

"You—you—you—" gasped Bunter. "Now let a chap go to sleep."

"Listen to me, Sammy! I've got to tell you—"

"Tell me to-morrow, then," snorted Sammy. "Can't you let a chap sleep at midnight?"

"How am I to tell you to-morrow, fathead, when the man's got to be fed to-night?"

"Eh—what?"

Sammy Bunter sat bolt upright. His major had succeeded in effectually awakening him now.

"Are you potty?" he ejaculated. "What man? Who? Which?"

"Pilkins, the agent. I can't let him starve. He's a meddling fool, but he can't starve."

"Eh? Where is he?"

"In the wine cellars," breathed Bunter.

"Wha-a-at?"

"That's why I cleared all the fellows and the servants out of the house the other day. Pilkins was coming here to see me. You see, he was in the nursing home, and I thought he was laid up for the whole vac. I hoped he was, at any rate. But he got well and went back to his office, and found that Combermere Lodge was let—to me. Of course, he was frightfully upset, as there had been no papers signed or anything, or any money paid. He thought he was being bilked by a swindling tenant, you know," said Billy Bunter indignantly.

"So he was," said Sammy.

"What!"

"But what's happened?" demanded Bunter minor. "If the agent got well and found you out, why hasn't he come on to you?"

"He has," whispered Bunter. "He came here by appointment to see me, and I had the place empty, ready for him. I made him think that Walsingham was in the wine cellars, and he went down to see the butler there, and I put on Walsingham's voice. You know what a clever ventriloquist I am, Sammy?"

"I know what a silly ass you are!"

"Well, I got him into the wine cellars and talked to him, but he wouldn't see reason. He actually refused to agree

to my keeping in the house unless I paid the rent—"

"Not really?" said Sammy sarcastically.

"Yes, really. A distrustful black-guard, you know. I told him that I should pay everything—ultimately. He didn't seem to trust me."

"Go hon!"

"He didn't, Sammy. Of course, these house agents are a downy lot. They're always diddling somebody, so naturally they're distrustful. He actually refused to take my word for it that the money was all right."

Sammy blinked at his major.

"So there it was," said Bunter. "I couldn't give up the house. Why, I've asked D'Arcy of St. Jim's to come here for part of the vac. I've named it Bunter Court, to keep up appearances to Greyfriars chaps. I've made all my arrangements to stay on here till we get back to school. And that fooling ass thought I was going to give it all up, simply because I'd got hold of the house while he was ill, without any papers being signed, and he was alarmed about his money. I can tell you I wasn't taking any of his cheeky nonsense!"

"What did you do?"

"Locked him in the wine cellars."

"What!" howled Sammy.

"I locked him in, and locked the upper door, too, and I'm keeping the key. See?"

"Is—is—is he there now?" gasped Sammy.

"Of course."

"Pilkins, the estate agent, in—in—in the wine cellars!" babbled Sammy Bunter.

"Yes. There's no way out, excepting up the staircase, and I've got the key, and the doors are locked."

"You awful idiot!"

"Oh, really, Sammy—"

"Why, it's his kidnapping!" gasped Sammy Bunter.

"Rubbish! He walked down to the cellars of his own free will," said Bunter. "He's staying there of his own accord really. It's not my business to unlock doors for cheeky, meddling fellows who butt into my house."

"Your house! Oh crumbs!"

"As tenant of the house, I'm entitled to charge him for board and lodging really, so long as he stays there," said Bunter. "I won't. I'm an easy-going chap. But I'm entitled to. But you see how it is, Sammy. I put those things in the wine-cellars for him—some rugs and blankets, and some grub and a jug of water. There's a tap down there, so he will have plenty to drink. And cold water is very healthy. Much better for a man really than tea or coffee, and, of course, ever so much better than spirits. Most likely it will do him good, so far as that goes. But he must have some grub."

"Oh crumbs!" said Sammy faintly.

"That's why I've woke you up," said Bunter. "You see, I can't go down to the wine-cellars in the day-time. I can't let Walsingham know that it was I who bagged the key from his room. Besides, the servants would wonder what I went down for. There's no wine kept there now; and, besides, we don't drink wine, even if there was any. And if I went down, Walsingham would be sure to butt in, too. You know how fussy he is. So I can only go down after they're all in bed."

"Oh dear!"

"I'm not funky at going down alone, of course," said Bunter. "But—but I want a chap with me. That fellow

Pilkins might spring at me as soon as I opened the door. He's brute enough for anything—a regular ruffian! It's really not safe for me to deal with him alone. I want you to come."

"You want me—"

"That's it! I can't ask Wharton, or any of those chaps. They don't know anything about Pilkins being shut up there. Of course, it would be all up if they knew. They'd get him out at once. You're the only fellow here that I can trust, Sammy," said Bunter flatteringly.

Sammy Bunter gasped.

"You can trust me—yes, rather! You can trust me not to get mixed up in this! I'm jolly well not taking a hand in it!"

"Now, look here, Sammy—"

"You silly ass!" gasped Sammy. "Why, you may be sent to chokey for this! I'm jolly well not going on the treadmill along with you—I know that! I'm jolly well getting out of the house before the crash comes. I'm clearing off first thing in the morning—well, after breakfast, anyhow."

Bunter glared at him.

"Won't you back me up, Sammy?"

"No jolly fear!" said Sammy promptly.

"You mean that, Sammy?" hissed Bunter.

"Yes, you ass!"

"Then take that!"

Bunter clutched up the pillow from Sammy's bed. He swept it into the air in both hands and brought it down with a terrific swipe.

"Yooop!" roared Sammy.

"Take that, and that, and that!" gasped Bunter.

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

Billy Bunter delivered a final swipe, and then hurled the pillow at Sammy, and stalked indignantly out of the room.

Next morning, however, Sammy Bunter surprised Harry Wharton & Co. by making an early departure from Bunter Court, which showed that the youthful Samuel was wise in his generation.

Parker Wants to Know.

HARRY WHARTON sat in the old library at Combermere Lodge next morning in a mood of lazy and pleasant comfort. After a long swim in the river, he was prepared to take his ease in an armchair and laze till lunch. Billy Bunter had just rolled off in a car to meet Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, at the railway station in Combermere—without offering to take any of the Co. with him.

Any member of the Famous Five would have been glad to give D'Arcy of St. Jim's a greeting; but Bunter evidently wanted to keep the noble youth to himself, and Harry Wharton & Co. could not follow Bunter's system of "butting in." So the Owl of the Remove went off alone to the station. And Harry Wharton strolled into the library to rest and look at a book till lunch.

It had been simply as a jest that the Famous Five had accepted Bunter's invitation for the holidays; they had been astounded when it turned out that Bunter really had a place to ask them to. For days after their arrival the chums of the Remove had had to be-

lieve that Bunter Court really did exist—for there it was.

Then they had learned that Bunter had had the place furnished from the owner, and had coolly and cheekily renamed it Bunter Court.

Wharton was thinking; but really, he did not quite know what to think. There was something odd, something hidden, something he could not understand, about this extraordinary vacation with Bunter.

"Excuse me, sir!"

It was Walsingham's deferential voice.

Wharton glanced round. The Combermere butler had appeared with his silent tread.

"Yes, what is it, Walsingham?" asked Harry.

"Parker has just called, sir."

"Parker?" repeated Harry.

"Mr. Pilkins' clerk, sir."

"Oh!" said Harry. "I remember—I saw him at Mr. Pilkins' office when I called there with Lord Mauleverer the other day. He has called to see Bunter, I suppose."

"Yes, sir; but as Master Bunter has gone out—"

Walsingham hesitated and coughed.

"Well?" said Harry.

"It's very odd, sir," said Walsingham. "Parker tells me that Mr. Pilkins called to see Master Bunter here on Tuesday, and did not return to his office. Master Bunter informed me that Mr. Pilkins had gone up to London to see his father, Mr. Bunter, to settle the business details of the tenancy."

"No doubt," assented Harry.

"But Parker says that Mr. Pilkins has not been at his office since, and has not been at his home," said Walsingham. "Neither had he mentioned to Parker his intention of going to London. Parker thinks that something must have happened to him."

Wharton started.

"What could have happened to him?" he asked.

"I cannot say, sir; but Parker seems alarmed about him. As Master Bunter is not here, perhaps you would see him? He wishes to see you."

"Certainly," said Harry. "I'll see him if he wishes. Show him in, by all means."

"Very good, sir."

Walsingham retired, and Parker was shown into the library. Harry Wharton greeted him politely.

"You wanted to speak to me, Parker?" asked Harry. "Sit down."

Parker sat down on the edge of a chair.

"I want to speak to Master Bunter, sir," he said. "But as he is absent, I think I had better speak to one of his

friends. I am very uneasy about Mr. Pilkins."

"But why?" asked Harry.

"I have not seen him for three days, sir."

"It seems that he went to London to see Bunter's father," said Harry.

"If you are sure of that, sir—"

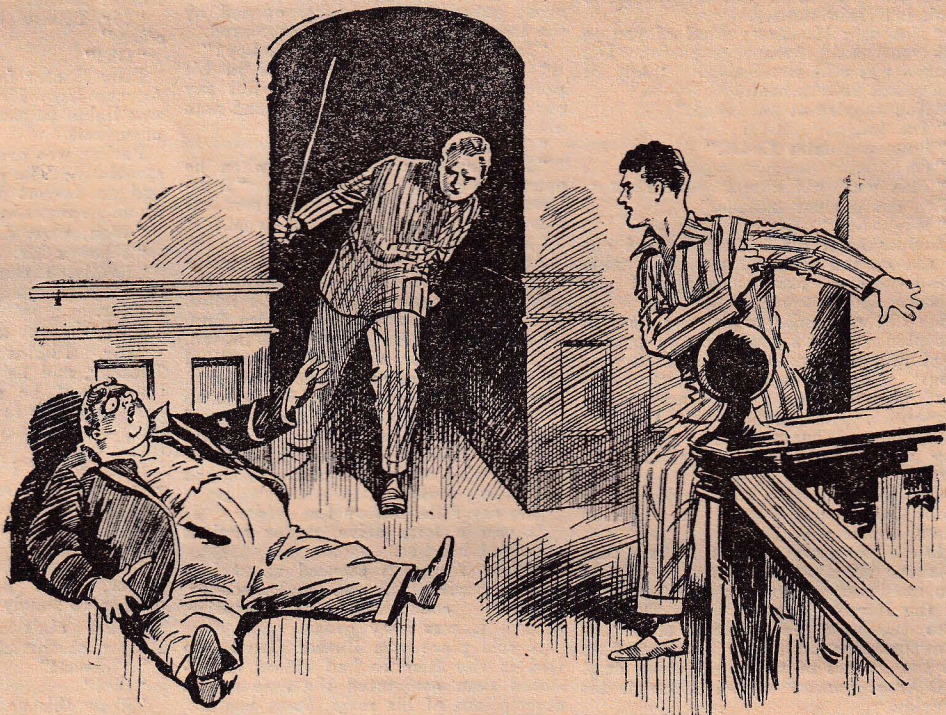
"As it happens, I was away that day," said Harry. "I went on a motor trip with my friends, and did not see Mr. Pilkins. But Bunter mentioned it to the butler."

"It's very odd, sir," said Parker, shaking his head. "Why has Mr. Pilkins not written a line if he is staying on in London? I am awaiting his instructions with regard to a good many business matters."

Wharton smiled.

"I really don't know," he answered. "I can't account for what Mr. Pilkins has or has not done, Parker."

"Very well, sir, I must communicate with him," said Parker. "You can give me Mr. Bunter's address?"



Billy Bunter sat up and glared at Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry. "You silly chump!" he howled. "We took you for a burglar!" said Harry Wharton, with a grin.

"Mr. Bunter's address?" repeated Harry.

"Yes; as he went up to London, it seems, to see Mr. Bunter, that is where an inquiry must be made."

Wharton paused.

"As a matter of fact, I don't know Mr. Bunter's exact address," he answered. "Bunter's never happened to mention it."

It was useless to give Bunter Court as Mr. William Samuel Bunter's address. Excepting as a new name for Combermere Lodge, it was certain that Bunter Court was only a figment of Billy Bunter's fertile fancy.

Parker raised his eyebrow.

"The young gentleman is a friend of yours, and you are staying with him, and you do not know his home address?" he said, in a very marked tone.

Wharton coloured a little.

"No, I don't," he said sharply. "I've

never been home with Bunter—till now, I mean. I've never asked him. I suppose you can ask him, if you want to know about it."

Parker pursed his lips.

"I had better wait and see Master Bunter, then," he said.

"You had better do as you think best," said Harry curtly. The captain of the Remove did not like the young man's manner at all.

"The fact is, I am alarmed about Mr. Pilkins," said Parker. "I learn that on the day Mr. Pilkins called here all the servants were sent away for one reason or another. Master Bunter's guests were also absent."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"You know nothing of the matter, sir?"

"I? Of course not! What the thump do you mean?"

"Well, I know that schoolboys are generally rather larkish," said Parker, eyeing the captain of the Remove. "I've

wondered whether some trick was played on Mr. Pilkins."

"What rot!"

"Well, you see, it's very queer his not coming back to Combermere—"

"You'd better see Bunter," said Harry abruptly. "It's no affair of mine, and I think you're talking rot."

Parker shrugged his shoulders and rose.

"Very well, I'll wait and see Bunter," he said; and there was an impudent expression on his shiny face as he withdrew.

Wharton knitted his brows.

The "queerness" of that holiday at Bunter Court seemed to be on the increase. To the other innumerable peculiar circumstances now seemed to be added the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Pilkins, the estate agent, who had—apparently—let the house to Bunter. At this rate, the mysteries of Combermere Lodge seemed likely soon to equal

the Mysteries of Udolpho, or the Castle of Otranto.

Arthur Augustus Arrives!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stepped from the train at Combermere Station, adjusted an eyeglass in his noble eye, and glanced about him. A fat figure rolled across the platform to greet the swell of St. Jim's. Billy Bunter's fat face beamed with genial welcome; his very spectacles gleamed with it.

"Gussy, old chap!"

"Bai Jove! Buntah!"

The Owl of the Remove extended a fat hand, full of friendship, but a little grubby.

Arthur Augustus shook hands with him.

"Jolly glad to see you, old fellow!" said Bunter effusively.

"You are vewy kind, deah boy!"

"Awfully good of you to give me a look in!" said Bunter.

"Not at all! Vewy kind of you to ask me!" said Arthur Augustus. His glance was still wandering. "Any of the othah fellows heah?"

"No; they're at the lodge."

"The lodge?"

"I mean Bunter Court."

"Oh!"

"This way, old chap!" said Bunter. "I've got my car outside."

"Wight-ho!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked out of the station with Bunter. His noble face wore a rather thoughtful expression.

He did not quite know why he had accepted Bunter's invitation to pass a week of the summer holidays at Bunter Court. Bunter had persistently bothered him to come, till at last he had consented. And undoubtedly the fact that Harry Wharton & Co. were staying with Bunter had helped him to make up his mind.

Outside the station stood a handsome Rolls-Royce car, with a liveried chauffeur in attendance.

It did not even occur to D'Arcy that this car belonged to Bunter. It was too much out of keeping with the Owl of the Remove that he knew. Fellows who borrowed half-crowns of casual acquaintances could not be guessed to be the owners of thousand-guinea cars.

D'Arcy glanced round through his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove! Did you say your cah was heah, Buntah?"

"Yes, old chap!"

Bunter grinned. The chauffeur touched his cap to them.

"Here it is, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! Is this your cah?"

"That's it."

"Oh!"

"My father's car, of course," explained Bunter.

"Oh, yaas, wathah!"

"Hop in, old bean!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy "hopped." It required all his good manners to conceal his surprise.

The car rolled away.

"It's no end of a pleasure to see you here, old fellow," said Billy Bunter, as he sat beside Arthur Augustus in the car, and leaned back luxuriously on the softly-cushioned seat. "By the way, you won't see any of my people, as it happens."

"Not, weally?" asked D'Arcy.

"No. My pater's abroad with the

mater, you know. He generally has a rather expensive trip in the summer."

"Bai Jove!"

"Why not, when a man's rolling in money?" said Bunter.

"Oh!"

"So I'm the only one of the family at the lodge."

"The lodge?"

"At home, I mean. But I've got some friends staying with me, as I told you—not wealthy people like myself, but fairly decent in their way. You know Wharton, the captain of our Form at Greyfriars?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then there's Nugent—rather soppy, but a nice chap in his way. And Bull, Johnny Bull's a bit of a hooligan, but I had to ask him with the others. And Bob Cherry; his people are rather poor, but quite respectable—oh, quite!"

Arthur Augustus did not reply. He had had ten minutes of Bunter, and he was wondering dismally how he was going to stand seven days of him.

"Here we are!" said Bunter, as the great gates came in sight, opened by the lodgekeeper as the car appeared.

"Is this Buntah Court, deah boy?"

"Oh, yes!" Bunter groined in his pocket.

"Dash it all, I've left my purse indoors! Have you a pound note about you, Gussy?"

"Certainly, deah boy!"

"I generally tip the man when he opens the gates," said Bunter. "I believe in encouraging good servants when they know their place—what?"

"Bai Jove!"

At Eastwood House Arthur Augustus had never heard of encouraging the servants by tossing them pound notes. But he was not there to criticise Bunter's methods. He was there, indeed, to supply Bunter with the wherewithal to carry on his magnificent methods. The lodgekeeper touched his hat with great respect as one of D'Arcy's pound notes was tossed to him by Billy Bunter, and Bunter, fortunately, did not see the wink which the man exchanged with the chauffeur.

The car rolled on up the drive.

It was a long drive, under ancient oaks and beeches.

Arthur Augustus glanced about him with growing interest and wonder, carefully concealing his surprise, though it was very great.

If this place was Bunter Court, the Owl of the Remove had rather understated than overstated the case in his descriptions of his magnificent home.

The long, many-windowed front of the great house came in sight at last, and the Rolls-Royce stopped before the great portico.

"Here we are!" smiled Bunter.

"Bai Jove! This is Buntah Court?"

"Just that."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy alighted from the car. The great door had been already opened by Walsingham; he was there, portly, deferential, impressive. Bunter ushered his honoured guest in. A footman took D'Arcy's hat, another his gloves, another his cane.

A young man with a shiny, pimply face looked out of a morning-room that opened on the great hall of Combermere. It was Parker, Mr. Pilkins' clerk and factotum. His expression was sneering and suspicious as he looked at Billy Bunter; he was fairly well assured that that fat youth was little better than a "bilk"—if any better. But his expression changed as his glance rested on the calm, aristocratic face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. There was some-

thing reassuring in the looks of the elegant St. Jim's fellow.

Parker had been about to step out and address Bunter; but D'Arcy awed him, and he waited till Walsingham was showing the noble youth up the great staircase to his room before he intervened. Then, as Bunter stood in the hall blinking up the staircase after his guest, he felt a touch on the arm, and turned in surprise, to see Parker's shiny face at his elbow, with impudent suspicion in it.

"I want a word with you!" said Parker.

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

He did not know Parker, and was not at all pleased by the impudent familiarity of his address.

"Who the deuce are you?" he demanded. Walsingham had gone up with the newly-arrived guest. Thomas, the first footman, came respectfully forward.

"It's Parker, sir—"

"Who the thump is Parker?" asked Bunter testily.

"Mr. Pilkins' clerk, sir, in the estate office."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter felt a slight trepidation. Anyone from Mr. Pilkins' estate office was liable to cause him a little inward uneasiness.

Parker was eyeing him not at all respectfully. The estate office young man had no respect to waste on a fellow whom he regarded as a "bilk."

"Well, what do you want, Parker?"

"Where's Mr. Pilkins?"

"Really, I can scarcely be expected to know where your master is," said Bunter.

Parker's eyes gleamed.

"Mr. Pilkins came up 'ere on Toosday, and he did not come back to the office," he said. "I ain't heard from him. So far as I know, no papers have been signed about the letting of this house. Everything is very irregular, and I know that Mr. Pilkins was fair scared and knocked over when he 'eard that you had the house, Mr. Bunter. I want to know what it means?"

"You had better ask your employer," said Bunter haughtily. "I decline to bandy words with you."

"That ain't good enough?" said Parker obstinately.

"Thomas!"

"Sir!"

"Show this young man out."

"Very good, sir!"

"Kindly do not admit him again," said Bunter.

"Certainly not, sir."

Parker glared at Bunter and seemed disinclined to go. But Thomas took a grasp on his arm, and Albert took a grasp on his other arm, and between the two footmen he was propelled to the door and shown out.

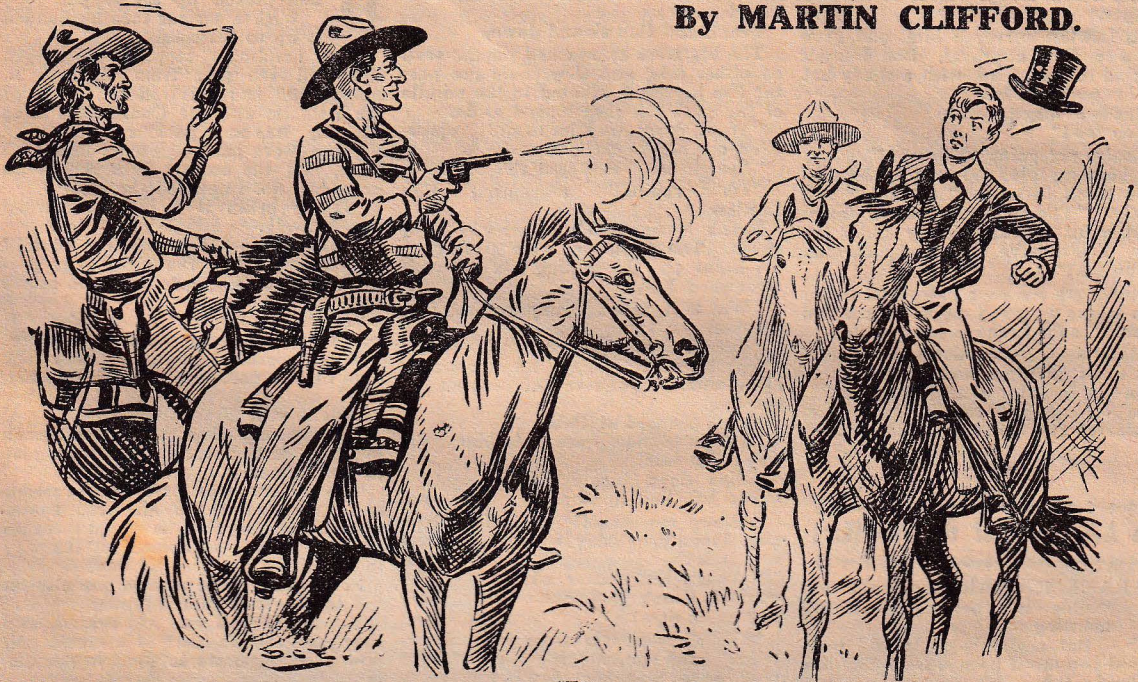
And Bunter rolled away, feeling that he had got out of his last difficulty with flying colours. Bunter had never been particular in his methods, and in his present peculiar position he was likely to be less particular than ever. He was, in fact, skating on such exceedingly thin ice that he really could not afford to think of anybody but himself. But how thin was that ice was to be made known to the fatuous William George in alarming fashion before many more hours had passed.

THE END.

(There's more fun and adventure at "Bunter Court" next week!)

THE GREENHORN OF CEDAR CREEK !

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Taking the Stranger In.

"SCHOOL to-day!" said Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards looked up.

Frank was doing full justice to a substantial breakfast of fresh salmon, corncakes, and honey. He had been several days at the Lawless Ranch now, and he was getting used to his surroundings.

He had confided several times to his Cousin Bob that he liked Canada. It was a huge change after life at St. Kit's in far-off England, but he was of an age when change itself is a pleasure.

And the fresh, breezy, open life of the British Columbian ranch was pure enjoyment to him.

He was not specially pleased to hear Bob's announcement.

Riding out with Bob in the mornings, visiting the fruit farm with Mr. Lawless, chatting with the Kootenay herdsmen, canoeing on the river, or roaming in the scented woods, had filled in every hour very pleasantly, and he was not anxious for school.

"School!" he repeated. "This is ripping salmon, Bob."

"Everything in Canada," said Bob solemnly, "is ripping. The national motto is 'Let her rip!'"

Frank laughed.

"Pass the honey, old chap. What topping honey!"

"As good as you get at home?" grinned Bob.

"Quite. Has your pater settled for us to go to school to-day?"

"My what?"

Frank coloured slightly at Bob's quizzical look. Unconsciously he used the expressions he had been accustomed to.

"Your father, Bob. You know what I mean!"

"Do they talk Latin in the Old Country?" asked Bob.

"Of course, they don't, duffer. But we generally say pater and mater."

"And we sometimes say popper and mopper," grinned Bob. "That isn't Latin; that's American. I hope you're well up in Latin, Frank, or you'll cause disappointment at our school."

"I don't know about being well up," said Frank. "I wasn't an ornament to the Fourth at St. Kit's. And I believe I've forgotten no end during the past few weeks. I wasn't thinking much about Latin on the Atlantic or the St. Lawrence. I suppose the Head won't be hard on a new chap."

"Oh!" Frank paused. "Are we coming back here?"

"Do you want to camp out on the floor of the school-room?" asked Bob.

"Nunno. I mean—"

"Oh, it's not a boarding school," said Bob, with a smile. "We go in the morning, and we come home at night, and we get dinner there."

"I see."

"Now, what about duds?" asked Bob. "Did you bring your school rags?"

"Yes, I thought I'd better, as the pater said I should be sent to school here by Uncle Lawless," said Frank. "I've got two suits of Etons. I—I only brought one topper."

"One which?"

"Topper."

Bob Lawless seemed to be suffering for a moment from internal convulsions. Frank Richards looked at him rather suspiciously.

"Look here, Bob—"

"Famous!" said Bob.

"You see, I thought you might have forgotten that, and it's rather important. The Head likes a fellow to be decently dressed."

"I'd rather go in a cowboy hat, of course!" said Frank. "But if the Head's particular—"

"Awfully!"

"Then it will have to be the topper." Bob Lawless rose from the breakfast-table.

"Better run up to your room and change," he said. "It's time we were off. Mustn't be late, or the Head will jaw us."

"Right you are!"

Frank Richards hurried upstairs to his room. It did not take him long to change into his English Public-school clothes.

He found Bob waiting for him outside

The Schooldays of Frank Richards

In the Backwoods of Canada !

"The what?"

"The Head—the headmaster, you know," said Frank rather warmly. "Don't you call your blessed headmaster the Head?"

Bob Lawless chuckled explosively, but he did not reply to the question.

"Is the school far away?" asked Frank. He glanced regretfully out of the big window across the green fields and greener woods. He would have been quite willing to put off school for a few weeks.

"Only a step or two!" said Bob. "We shall ride there."

"Eh? How long is the step?" asked Frank. He was beginning to have some knowledge of Canadian distances.

"About twelve miles."

the porch, where a Kootenay stableman held two ponies.

The Indian stared at Frank Richards. It was certainly the first time the ranchman's eyes had fallen upon an English Public-school boy in Etons and a topper.

Bob Lawless surveyed him, and gave him a nod of approval. Bob himself was clad in homespun, with a shady hat over his sunburnt face.

"Ready?" asked Frank.

"You bet!"

"You're not going to change?"

"I keep my glad raiment in the gilt-edged trunk at school," explained Bob gravely. "The topper especially is apt to get a bit knocked riding under the trees. You'll have to be very careful. Up you get!"

"Shan't we see your pater and mater again before we go—I mean, popper and mopper?" said Frank, with a smile.

"Mater's at the dairy-farm, and pater's in the orchard," said Bob. "Won't be back for hours! Come on!"

The cousins jumped on the ponies, and started at a canter down the trail.

The Adventures of the Plug-Hat!

FRANK RICHARDS enjoyed that canter in the sunny, breezy morning.

But certainly he would have enjoyed it more if he had been clad like his Cousin Bob.

Frank was a good-looking lad, and, with the flush of health in his cheeks, he looked very nice in his neat, dark Etons and shining silk hat.

But he realised as he rode on that Etons and a topper must be a very uncommon sight on the Canadian ranch lands.

Every hand they passed, whether Canadian, or Kootenay, or negro, ceased whatever work he was engaged upon to stare at the English boy with a broad grin. Even the Chinese cook came out of the cookhouse to stare.

Frank's cheeks began to burn as he felt himself the cynosure of all eyes. He glanced at Bob several times, but Bob Lawless seemed unconscious of the stares and the broad grins.

Frank was glad when the ranch was left behind, and they cantered down the trail under the big trees through the forest.

But there the topper had bad luck.

A low branch caught it, and swung it off the junior's head, and it pitched in the grass behind the pony's heels.

Frank reined in his steed.

"Hold on a minute, Bob!"

"You bet!" said Bob cheerily.

Frank jumped down and retrieved his topper, and jammed it on his head again. Bob regarded him gravely the while.

The junior remounted, and they rode on, Frank ducking his head carefully when he passed under a hanging branch.

For several miles they rode on the forest trail without passing anyone or anything alive save a stray gopher.

But suddenly from another trail two horsemen rode into the path, and came trotting towards the two boys.

They were big, loose-limbed fellows, with slouch hats and tanned faces, and Frank, who was already learning to dis-

tinguish, decided that they were cattlemen.

As their eyes fell upon Frank Richards they fairly jumped in their saddles. Both of them reined in their horses in the middle of the trail, as if thunderstruck.

Frank and Bob slowed down.

The big trees encroached on the trail on either side, and they could not pass the two horsemen planted in the middle of the path till they moved aside.

"Waal, carry me hum to die!" ejaculated one of the cattlemen.

"Search me!" stammered the other.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards felt his cheeks burn again. The cattlemen were staring at his Etons and the shining silk hat with astonished looks.

"Wot is it, Hank?" inquired the first speaker.

"Search me!" repeated Hank. "Search me!" being an American ejaculation expressive of unbounded surprise.

Frank glanced at Bob.

"Those duffers are blocking the way!" he said.

"Slow down!" said Bob.

The two had to stop.

"Skuse me, gents!" said the cattleman blandly. "May a galoot inquire wot it is?"

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Frank Richards. "Why don't you let us pass?"

"It's a rip-snorter from Ripsnortersville!" said Hank. "It's a galoot in a plug-hat! Stranger, don't you know that plug-hats are condemned to sudden death on this side of the Rockies?"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the other.

"This ain't a larfing matter, Bill Bloggs!" said Hank. "This hyer is serious. Hyer's a galoot in a plug-hat. There's a duty to be done. Stranger, aire you ready to pass in your checks?"

Frank Richards started, as each of the cattlemen drew a revolver from his belt.

Before the English boy could make a movement the revolvers came to a level, and two loud reports sounded as one.

Crack-ack!

Frank Richards had already heard from his Canadian cousin stories of the "bad men" and "border ruffians," but this was a surprise. His first impression was that the two men were firing at him.

He realised his mistake as the topper, struck by two bullets at the same moment, soared off his head and sailed away.

There was a roar of laughter from the two cattlemen, and they pushed on their horses.

Frank Richards, dazed by the sudden occurrence, sat motionless and bare-headed on his pony; but Bob drew his steed back behind Frank's to allow the cattlemen to pass.

They rode on still roaring with laughter, and fired several more shots at the hapless topper as it reposed in the grass.

Then they disappeared down the trail, still roaring with glee.

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

It was only a rough joke of the cattlemen, and he realised that they were good shots, and that he had been in no danger. But the bullets had passed so close that one had clipped a lock of hair from his head. It was some minutes before he recovered from the shock.

Bob is Too Humorous!

BOB LAWLESS slid to the ground and picked up the topper.

With a serious face he handed it up to his cousin.

That handsome topper, which had come all the way from England in safety, and had survived the perils of the Atlantic and the Canadian Pacific Railway, was in a parlous state.

There were half a dozen bullet-holes in it, and the contact with the rough grass had not improved the nap.

"Better brush it a bit!" remarked Bob gravely.

"I can't brush the holes out of it!" said Frank. "If the Head's as particular as you say, he's bound to notice that."

"Can't be helped," said Bob. "It was unlucky meeting those two chaps. I hadn't reckoned on that. Lucky they didn't try to perforate your Eton jacket, too."

"Oh!" said Frank.

He was very glad the two cattlemen had not carried their boisterous joke to that extent.

The topper was carefully brushed, and Frank set it on his head again, fervently hoping that he would meet no more humorous cattlemen on the way to school.

Fortunately there was no one else on the lonely trail that morning.

The forest trail was left behind, and they rode up the bank of a creek, and now buildings were in sight in the distance.

"Is that the school, Bob?" asked Frank.

"That's it!"

Frank Richards scanned the school curiously as they drew nearer.

He saw a large, log-built structure, surrounded by a fence that enclosed a good space of ground.

He had not expected to see a reproduction of the grey old walls and ivied buttresses of St. Kit's, but the "lumber school" was a surprise to him.

Bob looked at him rather oddly, but Frank did not allow his thoughts to appear in his face.

"Like what you expected?" asked Bob.

"I didn't know what to expect, Bob."

"Here are some of the pupils," said Bob, with a wave of his riding-whip. Frank looked at them.

There were fellows of all ages from nine to sixteen. Some of them were riding up from different directions, but the majority were on foot. Two or three came in canoes on the creek.

To Frank's surprise, there was a good sprinkling of girls among them.

"Girls and boys both here, Bob?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! You see, this is the only school for fifty or sixty miles round," explained Bob. "This isn't Toronto or Montreal, you know. This is the Wild and Woolly West. East you'd find schools more like the one you're used to."

"What is it called?"

"It's the National School."

"Oh, I see!"

"Everybody comes," said Bob. "Look at that long-legged fellow in the canoe. He's the son of a rich rancher who could buy up my dad and never miss the money. That stumpy kid in the canoe with him is the son of his stableman. That fellow with the nose is the son of a machine-man who's settled in the district. He puts on no end of side-

His name's Eben Hacke. Hallo! They seem to be interested in us!"

There was no doubt at all about that. As the two riders came up to the open gateway in the fence every pupil of the lumber school seemed to become rooted to the ground, and his or her eyes fastened on Frank Richards as if fascinated.

Some of the girls smiled or giggled, some of the boys chortled, and some seemed stricken dumb with surprise.

Frank noticed that nobody was in Etons, and that nobody wore a silk hat.

All were clad in the plain and serviceable garb of the frontier, and did not look much like schoolboys to Frank's English eyes.

"Leave your pony here," said Bob Lawless, jumping down.

"Tethered?" asked Frank.

"No need, they won't wander away."

Frank unhitched his bag of school books, and the cousins entered the enclosure, Frank's cheeks burning as he met stares and grins on all sides.

He remembered his cousin's propensity for practical jokes, and he began to suspect that Etons and a topper were not "the thing" at a British Columbian national school.

He gave Bob a sharp look, but Bob's face was quite unconvulsed.

"I—I say, Bob—" Frank began.

"This way!" said Bob.

"Hallo, Chunky! This is Chunky Todgers, Franky! My cousin Frank, Chunky!"

Chunky Todgers, a plump youth who reminded Frank of Fatty Babbage at St. Kit's, grinned widely, showing a splendid set of teeth.

"Where does he come from, Bobby?" he gasped.

"England!"

"I guessed so! But what—"

"Is that Canadian good manners, Chunky?" demanded Bob severely.

Todgers held out a fat hand to Frank, still grinning, and the English schoolboy shook hands with him.

"Glad to meet you, you know," said Chunky. "But what the thunder—"

"Come on!" said Bob, dragging at his cousin's arm. "You've got to see the Head!"

"The what?" yelled Chunky Todgers.

"Dry up, Chunky! You talk too much!"

Bob Lawless marched his cousin into the log schoolhouse. Behind them they left the playground in a chorus of laughter and giggles.

Frank Richards was feeling very restive by this time. There was something wrong somewhere; he knew that. This could not be the normal way of

greeting a new pupil at the lumber school.

"Look here, Bob—" he began again.

"Ah! Here's the Head!" Frank Richards jumped.

As they entered the wooden porch a trim young lady, with bright eyes and a very pleasant face, appeared in the big doorway.

Frank took off his hat at once.

"Good-morning Miss Meadows!" said Bob cheerfully. "This is my Cousin Frank, from England. I've brought him along to school."

than the schoolboys and schoolgirls outside, and she did not allow her astonishment to appear in her looks.

"I am glad to see you," she said pleasantly. "Mr. Lawless mentioned that his nephew, Frank Richards, was coming."

"I—I—" stammered Frank. He floundered helplessly, as he realised



Eben Hacke went staggering back from a terrific right blow from the "green-horn." There was a roar from the Cedar Creek fellows. "Go it, Franky!" yelled Bob Lawless.

Frank stammered helplessly, "Bob! You—you said—" Bob grinned. "Miss Meadows is the Head!" And Frank Richards ejaculated: "Oh, my hat!"

The First Day at School!

MISS MEADOWS gave the new boy a kind smile and nod. She was undoubtedly astonished by his get-up, but, naturally, had a little more restraint

that he was the victim of another of Bob's practical jokes. "I—I— Ma'am, is it the rule here for new boys to wear Etons and toppers?"

"Good gracious, no!"

"Bob, you rotter—"

"I didn't say it was, did I?" said Bob, in an injured tone.

"I—I thought from what you said that—"

Miss Meadows smiled.

"You should not play jokes on a new-comer, Lawless. It would be advisable to change your clothes to-morrow, Richards; but for to-day it does not matter. Something a little stronger and more serviceable is required in this district."

"Yes, ma'am."

Miss Meadows disappeared into the schoolhouse. The silk topper and the Etons in a backwoods school at the foot of the Rocky Mountains were almost too much for the gravity even of the "school-marm."

Frank Richards gave his humorous cousin a ferocious look.

"Bob, you beast, I'll jolly well punch your nose for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"You—you said the Head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Bob. "We don't call Miss Meadows the Head; we generally call her the school-marm."

"And—and this clobber—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unrepentant Bob seemed on the verge of hysterics. Frank glowered at him, quite unable to appreciate the joke at present.

The thought that he had to go through the whole day conspicuous in Etons, with the grinning glances of the whole school upon him, and to ride home after school in a "plug-hat," almost made him wish that the earth would open and swallow him up.

He shook his fist under Bob's nose, at which the merry Canadian only roared the more.

"You silly ass!" shouted Frank.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind to lick you!"

"Oh, my ribs!" groaned Bob.

"You're giving me a pain in the side, Franky! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see any joke, you fathead!"

"Everybody else does! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from outside.

"Pipe his duds!" came in a nasal twang from Eben Hacke.

"And a plug-hat!" chortled Chunky Todgers. "A plug-hat! He's come to school in a plug-hat! What a tender-foot! Ha, ha, ha!"

A bell clanged out from somewhere above, and the boys and girls began to troop into the schoolhouse.

They hung caps and hats and cloaks on pegs in the hall, and there was another gust of laughter at the sight of the silk topper prominent among them.

Frank's face was crimson as he went into the big school-room with Bob Lawless. He had never been troubled with self-consciousness, but he was troubled with it now.

Bob pressed his arm.

"Sorry, old chap!" he murmured.

"It was rather steep, I know; but I couldn't resist it. You were so jolly green, you know!"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank.

"Don't be mad, old fellow!"

Frank grinned in his turn. "Mad" meant angry, or, as Frank would have said, "waxy."

"All serene, fathead!" he said. "But what a thumping guy I shall look all day!"

"Never mind! You look very nice, you know! You're a credit to the school!" chuckled Bob. "All the girls are admiring your clothes, anyway!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Here's your desk—next to mine."

After the rough outward aspect of the lumber school, Frank was a little surprised to see the well-made rows of desks, with their ink-wells and flaps.

Everything was devoted to use, and little to ornament; but everything that was needed was there. It was evident, even to a stranger's eye, that the Canadian Government had a very keen eye on the education of the Canadian youth.

The schoolmistress had not yet come in, but a tall, slim young man, with somewhat watery eyes and gold-rimmed glasses perched upon the bridge of a long, thin nose, entered, and Frank's glance fell upon him.

"Is that a Form master?" he whispered to Bob.

"We don't call him that," grinned Bob. "That's Slimmey, the assistant master. Miss Meadows is head cook and bottlewasher."

"And the other masters?"

"I guess you've seen the lot now."

"What Form are we in?" asked Frank.

"You're not in a Form at all, my innocent, uninstructed youth!" said Bob. "Of course, you can call it a Form if you like. There's us and the kids, that's all. We're us, and the kids are the kids! Is that clear?"

"Quite," said Frank, laughing.

Mr. Slimmey was evidently in charge of the younger class. He seemed a tired, patient, somewhat overworked young man.

"Fellow-countryman of yours, Franky," said Bob. "He was as green as you are when he turned up here a year ago. He's a good sort, and forgives the chaps who play tricks on him. Lots of them do. Eben Hacke lassoed him one day."

"My word!" murmured Frank. "I'd like to see a chap lasso my Form master at St. Kit's. There would be an earthquake."

"He's spoons on Miss Meadows," Bob further confided to his cousin. "She stands him quite good-temperedly. She's a ripping good sort. Hallo! Here she comes. This is when we dry up chin-wag."

There was evidently great respect in the lumber-school for Miss Meadows.

Lessons were rather trying to Frank at first, as he did not know what to expect, and whether the knowledge gained at St. Kit's would be of any use to him in his new surroundings.

But he soon found that he could deal quite easily with the school work. Though of a more serviceable nature than school work at St. Kit's, it was decidedly easier.

Morning lessons passed off very well. When school was dismissed, Frank Richards marched out with the rest. Those of the pupils whose homes were near the lumber-school went home to their dinner. The rest dined with Miss Meadows and Mr. Slimmey in a large room with windows looking out on the shining creek.

As he sat at the long table, with Bob on one side of him and a smiling girl on the other, Frank Richards found himself feeling quite at home, only still a little discomposed by the grins that went round the table, and whispered remarks concerning his "duds" and the "plug-hat" that was still hanging in the hall.

It looked as if it would be a long time before the school recovered from the effect of that plug-hat.

He also made the acquaintance of a good many of his future schoolfellows, and he found most of them good-natured fellows enough, though still tickled by his Etons and the celebrated plug-hat.

There was only one fellow who gave Frank unpleasant looks, and that was Eben Hacke, who seemed to have taken a dislike to him, for some reason best known to himself; perhaps because he suspected the English lad of putting on "side." It was a very unjust suspicion; but to that motive Master Hacke chose to attribute the Etons and the white collar and the topper.

Several times the sharp-nosed Eben bore down towards Frank, but each time Bob Lawless succeeded in steering his chum clear, and Frank noticed it after a time.

"What are we keeping out of that fellow's way for, Bob?" he asked.

"He's looking for trouble, I guess!" said Bob.

"With me?"

"You bet!"

"Why should he?" asked Frank.

"He's rather a quarrelsome beast," explained Bob. "A good bit of a bully. He gets into a dust-up once a week, as a rule."

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"And you're keeping me out of harm's way?" he exclaimed.

"That's it."

"Thanks! But there's no need to bother. If Hacke is looking for trouble, there's no reason why he shouldn't find it."

"All serene!" said Bob. "I'll talk to him. I've licked the beast already, and I can do it!"

"And I think I can!" said Frank. "At all events, I'm going to try if he bothers me. And if you chip in I'll punch your nose!"

Bob looked uneasy.

"Look here, Frank!" he said. "He's nearly a head taller than you are, and he's as hard as nails. And he's plucky, in his way, though he's rather a beast. I'd rather you let him alone!"

"Rats!"

Eben Hacke hove in sight just then, and Bob Lawless linked his arm in Frank's to lead him along the creek. Frank Richards jerked his arm away, and walked directly towards Eben Hacke.

Hacke grinned, and stood awaiting him. Just then the bell clanged out, and footsteps on all sides were turned towards the schoolhouse.

Bob looked relieved. The "trouble" was inevitably postponed for the time.

"I calculate I'll see you again after school!" he remarked.

"I'll wait for you," said Frank coolly. And he went to his desk.

During afternoon lessons Hacke contrived to spill ink on Frank's trousers, and squeezed a chunk of maple-sugar down the back of his Eton jacket.

These kind attentions made Frank all the more determined to "wait" for the obstreperous Eben after school, in spite of Bob's evident misgivings.

He was glad when Miss Meadows dismissed school for the day.

The red sun was in the west, and the cool evening breeze waved the long grass, when Frank and Bob came out of the lumber-school. Bob hurried his chum out of the gate, but he had to leave him standing there while he caught the ponies with the long trail-ropes.

By the time Bob came back with the ponies Eben Hacke had joined Frank

A Fight to a Finish!

AFTER dinner, Bob led his English cousin out to see the "sights." The sights were of a familiar kind to Frank now—the clearings, the big trees, the creek, the canoes, one or two solid-looking homesteads in the distance, the great mountain tops far away on the horizon.

Richards, with a very disagreeable look upon his sharp face.

"Waiting for me—hey?" he inquired. "Quite ready for you, if you like," said Frank.

"Put them up!" said Eben laconically. Frank stepped back.

"Not in sight of the girls," he said. "Come along the trail a bit."

"Look here, Hacke, you clear off!" growled Bob Lawless, coming up with the ponies. "What are you shindying now for, you lanky hobo?"

"I guess this fellah ain't going to hide behind you, you galoot!" said Hacke. "I always climb over chaps of this sort—that's my rule. Where will you have it, you mugwump?"

"Come along the trail, and don't gas," remarked Frank.

Bob Lawless led the ponies, and Frank walked by his side, and the lanky, muscular Hacke slouched along with them. Chunky Todgers at once joined the party, scenting what was on, and half a dozen other fellows speedily joined up.

The party walked down the trail as far as the trees, which hid them from the sight of the schoolhouse and the scholars going homeward.

There Bob hitched the ponies, and the schoolboys stepped aside from the trail to a level spot under the big trees. Eben Hacke threw off his jacket with a swaggering grin.

It was evident that the lanky youth intended to "air" himself, as it were, by displaying his fistical prowess before the eyes of his schoolfellows, and it was equally evident that he regarded the English lad as "soft," and an easy victim.

But Frank was not quite so soft as Eben judged him. He had fought many a terrific "scrap" in the Fourth Form at St. Kit's, and his hands had not lost their cunning.

He peeled off his Eton jacket quietly, and removed his collar.

He did not inquire whether there were to be rounds and rests. He realised that it was to be a rough-and-tumble encounter. He "toed the line" with perfect coolness, somewhat to Hacke's surprise.

"Go it!" growled Bob.

Hacke gave a vaunting look round, and rushed in, to finish the combat at one fell swoop.

But it did not happen like that.

Instead of the slim English lad being swept off his feet by the bigger fellow's rush, he stood his ground like a rock. His right and left came out in swift succession, and then his right again. And Eben Hacke had the impression that he had suddenly run up against a stone wall.

He staggered backwards, and fairly rolled in the grass.

"Jerusalem crickets!" he ejaculated breathlessly as he rolled.

"Bravo!" roared Bob in great delight. There was a fat churrup from Chunky Todgers, and he removed a chunk of maple sugar from his capacious mouth to cheer.

"Bravo! Bray-vo! Well hit!"

Eben Hacke sat up dizzily.

"By gum!" he said.

Then he scrambled to his feet and came on.

There were no more blind rushes after that, and Hacke was much more cautious.

Frank's turn came to go down into the grass, and he went down heavily.

Hacke grinned over him, and stood ready to knock him down as soon as he rose. But Frank gained his feet with

great agility, fending off his bulky antagonist, and the fight was resumed.

Hammer-and-tongs they went at it now.

Eben Hacke was the bigger and the stronger of the two, but he had little knowledge of the scientific part of the game. To his great surprise, Frank Richards held his ground well.

Most of Hacke's thrashing blows sawed the air, and Frank's fists came home again and again upon his rugged face and his sharp nose.

Hacke's nose was not looking so sharp now; it was growing bulbous. One of his eyes was closed, and he blinked with the other.

Frank found difficulty in seeing out of his left eye, which was darkening to an art-shade in purple. But he kept on coolly.

Chunky Todgers stood, with his chunk of maple sugar in his hand and his mouth open, too keenly interested even to proceed with the mastication of his favourite comestible.

"Hurrah!" jerked out Chunky every few minutes. "Hurrah! Go it, my tulip! One for his nob! Hurrah!"

"Good old Franky!" chuckled Bob. "Who'd have thought it?"

Crash!

Eben Hacke went down more heavily than before, and lay on his back in the grass, blinking up at Frank Richards.

"Holy smoke! What a sock-dologer!" ejaculated Chunky Todgers in great admiration.

Eben Hacke made one effort to rise, and sank back in the grass, with a groan.

"Whipped!" muttered the school bully. "Whipped by a pesky dude! Whipped by a dude in store-clothes. Oh, thunder!"

Frank smiled faintly.

"Satisfied?" he asked.

"Yow - ow! I guess so! Yow-ow! Quite!" Hacke gasped for breath. "I reckon I woke up the wrong passenger this journey—I do, reel!"

Chunky Todgers gave him a grip and helped him to his feet. Hacke stood unsteadily, leaning on the fat youth.

"Stranger," he gasped, "you're a more hefty galoot than I thought. You've whipped me fair and squar'. Shake!"

He held out his hand, and Frank Richards took it cheerfully enough. Then Bob helped him on with his jacket, at the same time thumping him on the back in delight.

"Good old Franky!" he chuckled. "Who'd have thought it? Can you ride home now?"

"Well, I couldn't walk!" gasped Frank.

"Here's your plug-hat!" roared Chunky Todgers.

"And—and I ain't smashed it!" gasped Eben Hacke. "And I guess I won't now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can to-morrow," said Frank, laughing. "You won't see me in a plug-hat again while I am this side of the Rockies. It's a bit too exciting."

Bob had to help his cousin upon his pony. But, once in the saddle, Frank rode away on his homeward trail sitting firmly enough. The perforated topper adorned his head for the last time while he was in British Columbia.

"How do you feel, Franky?" grinned Bob, as they trotted along the forest trail in the red sunset.

Frank made a grimace.

"Rotten!" he said. "How do I look?"

"Rotten!" chuckled Bob. "You've got a black eye, and the other a beautiful pink, and a swollen nose—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Altogether, you wouldn't take a prize in a beauty show. But you've made a friend of Eben Hacke, if that's any consolation."

"I—I say," gasped Frank, "what will your father think, Bob?"

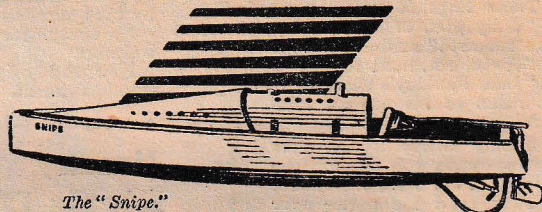
"He'll think you've enjoyed your first day at the school in the backwoods!" roared Bob. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And Frank Richards laughed, too, as he rode on to the ranch.

THE END.

"GRIZZLY! GRIZZLY!" is the title of next week's smashing tale of Frank Richards' schooldays at Cedar Creek.)

HOBBIES - BOWMAN STEAM SPEEDBOAT.



The "Snipe."

A SUPER-RACING CRAFT!

There's beauty in every line of the super-racing "Snipe." It's built for speed and long runs—see the superbly finished stream-lined hull, the low wind-cutting spray-hood and the burnished aluminium wind-shield.

STEAMS FOR A MILE

See, too, the Bowman-built, double-power steam engine which drives the "Snipe" swiftly through the water for one mile. You'll realise at a glance that the "Snipe" is a thoroughbred—and when you've raced it against bigger and more expensive rivals you'll like it even more!

BRITISH AND GUARANTEED

A beautifully finished wooden hull of extra light design. Length 23". Beam 4 1/2". Bowman single cylinder engine, 3/4" stroke x 3/8" bore. Brass boiler, 4 1/2" x 1 3/4", with safety valve. Automatic lubrication. Safety spirit lamp.

Other Models :—
 "Seahawk" — Steams 2 miles .. 42/-
 "Eagle" — " 1 1/2 " .. 32/-
 "Swallow" — " 1 " .. 17/6

22'6"

Postage 1/-.

Of Halford's branches and all good shops—ask your dealer or send n.c. for free illustrated leaflet

BOWMAN MODELS
 DEPT. 519 DEREHAM NORFOLK



The Darkey Quartette!
BY OWEN CONQUEST.

Noblesse Oblige!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. had just come in from cricket practice when they spotted a crowd of juniors round the notice-board in the Hall. Judging by the remarks of the Rookwood juniors, there was a notice on the board of unusual interest.

"A giddy farewell concert, by gad!" Smythe of the Shell was remarking. "Those Bagshot bounders again!"

"Jolly glad of the farewell, if not of the concert!" said Jones minor.

"Awful rot, most likely!" said Flynn. "Like Pankley's cheek! Who's going to listen to his ancient minstrel chestnuts?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. bore down upon the scene. The Fistical Four were interested.

They read the notice over the shoulders of the fellows collected in front of the board. It was quite a large and prominent notice, and it was in the large and somewhat sprawling hand of Cecil Pankley, the more important lines being set out in big and impressive capitals.

Thus it ran:

"GRAND FAREWELL CONCERT!
Notice!

Bagshot School being reopened next week, the Bagshot fellows who have been staying at Rookwood desire to express their Harty Thanks for the generous Hospitality they have received from the Rookwood fellows before taking their Departure.

They have quite enjoyed their stay at Rookwood, and congratulate themselves upon the outbreak of Infloenza at Bagshot, which provided them with this Grate Opportunity of enjoying Rookwood Hospitality.

They are very glad to think that they have livened up things a little during their brief sojorne in the classic shades of Rookwood, and that they have

THE POPULAR.—No. 600.

been able to give the Rookwood fellows some much-needed tips on cricket.

To testify their Gratitude for the Boundless Hospitality they have received, the Bagshot fellows are giving a Grand Farewell Concert, to which all Rookwood fellows are cordially invited.

THE BAGSHOT DARKEY MINSTREL QUARTETTE

will give a first-class performance on Saturday at six. The performance will be given in the Fourth Form class-room, by kind permission of Mr. Bootles.

No charge for admission. Everybody welcome.

New and original songs with banjo accompaniment. Wheezes guaranteed

Raby. "Why, we've played their heads off!"

"It's blessed sarc!" said Newcome. "Let's yank the notice down, and go and stuff it down Pankley's back!"

Jimmy Silver looked very thoughtful. In spite of the unending rows that had followed the Bagshot invasion, Jimmy admitted that the Bagshot bounders weren't really bad chaps in the main. They were cheeky, and they refused to be kept in their place, and they lacked proper respect for the Fistical Four; but upon the whole, now their stay at Rookwood was coming to an end, Jimmy Silver felt that it would be only the decent thing to give them a peaceful send-off. They ought to be allowed to "testify" their "harty thanks" in peace!

"Kids," said Jimmy Silver, "there's a lot of sarc in that notice—a lot of cheek—but, under the circs, it's up to us to keep the peace. We'll go to the concert and cheer 'em. After all, they're going. Panky is only being funny about Rookwood hospitality, I know; but we'll show him

that we can be hospitable. We'll back up that concert."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell. "I was thinking we might go, and take our peashooters!"

"And an egg or two!" said Raby.

"No!" said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"What about noblesse oblige?"

"Noblesse o' which?" said Lovell.

"Noblesse oblige," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's French."

"You don't say so!" remarked Newcome, with heavy sarcasm. "Sure it isn't German or Dutch or Chinese?"

"It's French," said Jimmy Silver, "and it means that it's up to a chap to play the game. They've been planted on us here, but now they're going we're going to treat 'em well. We're going to show 'em that Rookwood can do the right thing. Noblesse oblige is going to be our motto. We'll go to the concert, but we won't take any peashooters or eggs. Even if Pankley sings we'll stand it."

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver's Old Rivals Done Brown— And "Black"!

quite fresh. Rookwooders are requested to roll up in their thousands.

DON'T MISS THE GRAND FAREWELL CONCERT!"

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth wrinkled his brows a little over that notice. It seemed to him that he detected sarcasm in it. As the Bagshot juniors, while they had been quartered on the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, had been generally on fighting terms with the Rookwooders, the references to generous hospitality were at least slightly suspicious. Pankley and Poole of Bagshot shared the end study with the Fistical Four, and scarcely a day passed without "liveliness" of some sort.

"Seems to me that bounder is pulling our leg," said Jimmy Silver, with a shake of the head.

"Looks like it," said Lovell. "Look at that bit about tips on cricket! Lots of tips they could give us, the cheeky bounders!"

"Much-needed tips, by Jove!" said

"Even if Poole plays his banjo we'll take it like lambs."

"My aunt!"

"We'll bear it smiling from start to finish, and give 'em a rousing reception," said Jimmy Silver firmly. "It's up to us! Noblesse oblige, you know."

"Oh, blow noblesse oblige!" said Lovell peevishly. "Look how they're getting at us in that notice!"

"If we take it politely that will be heaping coals of fire on Panky's head."

"I'd rather punch his nose."

"Oh, don't be a Hun!" said Jimmy Silver. "I tell you it's up to us. Let's go and see Panky, and tell him we're backing him up."

The Co. looked expressively at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy was the acknowledged leader of the Fistical Four, though he was comparatively a new fellow at Rookwood. Since Jimmy Silver had dawned on Rookwood the Classics had more than kept their end up with the Moderns, their old rivals and foes. But never had the loyalty of Jimmy Silver's faithful followers been nearer to breaking-point than at that moment. The Bagshot concert was really such an excellent opportunity for ragging the Bagshot bouncers, and it seemed a sheer waste to let it go.

"I think you're an ass!" said Lovell at last.

"And a fathead!" said Raby.

"And a burbling duffer!" remarked Newcome.

"We could pack the Form-room and rag 'em bald-headed!" said Lovell temptingly.

"Not if they get some of the Sixth there," said Jimmy Silver. "Bet you Pankley will get a prefect or two, in case of trouble. Bulkeley's sure to come if he's asked; he'd do anything for anybody."

"Oh!"

"Besides, it's up to us. We'll pack the Form-room all right. We'll get a ripping audience—and cheer!"

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell, with a groan. "I suppose you mean to have your way. But I think you're a silly ass."

Raby and Newcome corroborated. But Jimmy Silver did not mind. Having gained his point, he proceeded in search of Pankley and Poole, to assure those cheerful youths of the hearty support of the Classical Fourth.



A Startling Discovery!



THE Grand Farewell Concert of the Bagshot juniors caused a considerable amount of excitement in the Lower School. In spite of noblesse oblige, there were more fellows to share Lovell's opinion of the matter than to share Jimmy Silver's.

The general idea in the Classical Fourth was that it was too good an opportunity to be wasted, and that the concert ought to be ragged. True, Pankley had foreseen that possibility, and had arranged for the captain of the school to be present. The hardest ragers in the Fourth would scarcely have ventured upon a rag in the presence of Bulkeley of the Sixth.

But there were ways and means, as Jones minor declared discontentedly. Jimmy Silver's idea of backing up the concert and giving the Bagshot bouncers hearty support was voted rotten.

But Jimmy Silver had his way. His chums backed him up, though

dubiously; and the Fistical Four were monarchs of all they surveyed in the Classical Fourth. So it was agreed that there should be no rags.

Tommy Dodd and his friends, on the Modern side, gave Jimmy Silver their support. They agreed with Jimmy Silver that the Bagshot fellows should be given a good send-off, and Tommy Dodd undertook to see that there were no rags by the Moderns.

So Pankley and Poole and the rest went ahead in peace. There was not a whisper of what the programme was to contain. That was being kept a dead secret by the Bagshot fellows. But the new and original songs and jokes must have been very funny, to judge by the way the Bagshot juniors chuckled over them among themselves.

Peace being firmly established by the great efforts of Jimmy Silver, unusual concord reigned in the end study. It was a case of the lion and the lamb lying down in peace.

The truce was kept the next morning.

After morning lessons were over Pankley was very busy making his preparations for the concert.

The Form-room was to be used as a concert-hall, and the Bagshot juniors were early at work getting it ready, and Jimmy Silver & Co. kindly helped them.

There was, indeed, no end to the politeness displayed by Jimmy Silver & Co. It was arranged that they were to act as dressers for the Darkey Quartette in the end study.

The quartette were Pankley, Poole, Putter, and Greene. The rest of the Bagshot juniors were to be in the audience with the Rookwood fellows. Other Bagshot fellows were coming, too, some from a distance. Two or three dozen at least would be in the audience when the farewell concert came off.

After lending their aid to their old rivals, the Fistical Four went down to the nets for a little cricket practice.

They were feeling very well satisfied with themselves and their unusually good behaviour. When the Bagshot bouncers departed, they could not help taking away with them a good impression of Rookwood hospitality. That was worth more than a rag as Jimmy Silver loftily explained to his somewhat doubtful chums.

"What about tea?" grumbled Lovell, when they came away from the cricket. "Those bouncers are in the end study making up their fatheaded songs and jokes and things. Awful rot, I expect."

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Newcome, as they sauntered across the quad towards Sergeant Kettle's tuck-shop.

It was a sheet of impot paper blowing away in the wind. Newcome picked it up, and glanced at it. Jimmy Silver burst into a chuckle.

"Some of Pankley's effusions, most likely," he said. "He's got the window of the end study open."

"My hat!" said Newcome, staring at the paper.

"Oh, don't read it!" said Jimmy. "The silly asses want to keep their rotten wheezes dark till the show comes off. I expect we shall know every one of them by heart when we hear them."

"When is a door not a door?—and that kind of thing, I expect," snorted Lovell.

"Oh crumbs!" said Newcome, still staring at the paper. "Oh, you silly idiot, Jimmy Silver!"

"Eh?"

"You crass ass!"

"What's biting you now, you duffer?"

"You howling jabberwock!" roared Newcome wrathfully. "Nice jape you've let us in for, with your fat-headed noblesse oblige, and the rest of it. Look at this paper, you burbler!"

"But—but what—?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Look at it, you shrieking fathead!" howled Newcome.

The startled leader of the Fistical Four took the paper, and looked at it. Lovell and Raby looked at it, too. Then there was a howl.

"Oh, the rotters!"

"The spoofing cads!"

"Up against us all the time."

The Fistical Four stared at the paper, which was in Pankley's sprawling hand. They glared at it. For as they read those sprawling lines, they understood why Pankley was keeping strictly dark the programme for the farewell concert. They understood why Pankley was giving the concert at all, in fact. The deep duplicity of the Machiavelian Pankley dawned upon them at last.

For this is what was on the paper—evidently a leading item of the farewell concert, to be sung by the Bagshot Darkey Quartette:

"SONG—'THE FAT-HEADED FOUR!'"

"Have you heard of the fat-headed Four?"

Oh lor'!

Have you heard of that wonderful Co?"

Oh!

There's Jimmy, the chief, with a face like a kite, And Lovell, whose nose is a wonderful sight!

And Raby, whose features would frighten a cat,

And Newcome, who always talks out of his hat!

Oh! Oh!

It is the Co.

They're at Rookwood just now, but to Bedlam they'll go!"



Jimmy Silver has a Brain-wave!



JIMMY SILVER wanted to kick himself hard.

This was the kind of "farewell concert" the Bagshot fellows were giving.

"The song, 'The Fat-headed Four,'" was only one item in an extensive programme. There was no doubt that all the rest was on the same lines. The last scene at Rookwood was to be a general guying of the Classical Fourth under the form of a farewell concert.

"The awful rotters!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "So that's the little game."

Lovell caressed his nose. "So my nose is a wonderful sight, is it?" he growled. "I'll make Pankley's nose a wonderful sight shortly."

"And my features would frighten a cat, would they," said Raby wrathfully. "We'll put the blitherer's features into a state to frighten a wild Indian!"

"So we've jolly well found 'em out," said Newcome. "Pulling our leg all the time. Getting up a concert to guy us at the finish. And that howling ass, Silver, is helping 'em to get an audience

--to hear us 'guyed.' All Rookwood coming, by Jove, to hear 'em sing songs 'bout the 'Fat-headed Four,' and crack their stale wheezes about us! Us, by Jove!"

"And we're their dressers this evening," said Lovell, with bitter sarcasm. "We're going to help 'em get ready to go on and guy us."

"Oh, you fathead, Silver!"

"You champion ass!"

"This is what comes of your noblesse oblige," howled Lovell. "This! We help 'em with their rot, and get 'em an audience, so that they can poke fun at us. Oh, won't the fellows howl!"

"Look here," shouted Jimmy Silver, "have some sense! 'Twasn't my fault they've been planning this blessed jape! I can't help it if Pankley is as deep as a beastly Prussian, can I? Anyway, I've got an idea of turning the tables on them."

"Well, we'll hear it," said Lovell, with the air of a fellow making a great concession. "We're fed-up with your noblesse oblige! But we'll hear your wheeze; there may be something in it!"

"Jolly good mind to leave you out, and ask the Modern cads to help me!" said Jimmy Silver severely.

"Oh, rats! What's the game?"

"There's something about Doddy on this," said Jimmy Silver, turning over the written sheet. "Look here! They've been using this paper to make rough drafts. I don't suppose they'll miss this. They must have written out fresh copies; this is nearly all scratches and corrections. Look at this!"

On the back of the sheet was another "Song." Jimmy Silver had spotted it in turning the sheet in his hands. They had not noticed it at first. There were so many scratches and corrections on both sides that it was evident that this was merely the rough draft, in which Pankley had jotted down his inspirations, as it were, without giving them time to cool.

"I say, that's rather funny!" chuckled Lovell, as the Fistical Four read the second effusion from Pankley's fertile brain.

It ran, evidently to the tune of the old, popular song, "Tommy Atkins," but referring to quite another Tommy:

"Oh, oh, Tommy, Tommy Dodd! Your face is very odd!

Your nose is like a wrinkle, and your

mouth is like a cod!

Your tootsies are the biggest ones

that ever, ever trod!

When you take them out together they

almost fill the quad!"

"Well, that does hit off that Modern worm!" said Raby. "Blessed if I ever saw such feet as Tommy Dodd's!"

"I call it jolly personal!" said Jimmy Silver. "Not that it would matter if they stuck to the the Moderns; but they're going to chip us, too. I expect they've got whole yards of stuff like this about both Classicals and Moderns—yards and yards of it. Come on! We'll let Tommy Dodd see this, and those bounders can help us turn the tables on the Bagshot bounders!"

"Look here, let's go and rag 'em!"

"Rats! Something a bit more brainy than that," said Jimmy Silver, with a sniff. "You never think of anything brainier than bashing a fellow on the nose, Lovell!"

Lovell grunted, but he followed Jimmy Silver to the Modern side. The Fistical Four found the three Tommies

at tea in their study. Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were apparently in funds, for the table was plentifully spread.

Tommy Dodd waved a hospitable hand at the sight of the Classical Four.

"Trot in!" he said. "Sit down and feed. We're flowing with milk and honey to-day. It's pax till after the concert!"

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've found out something about that concert. It's a jape to guy us!"

"My hat! What awful cheek, when we're backing them up!" said Tommy Dodd indignantly.

"That's the cream of the joke," said Lovell sarcastically. "Silver was born to have his leg pulled, you know, and he'll always lend a chap a hand in pulling it. He calls it noblesse oblige!"

"Oh, do cheese it!" said Silver, pulling a chair to the table. "Fill your mouth, my son, and then shut it. Look at that, Tommy Dodd. That's an item for the concert. We bagged it, and Pankley doesn't know."

The Modern chums read the song "The Fat-headed Four," and burst into a chuckle.

"Well, that's funny," said Tommy Dodd. "Ha, ha, ha! They seem to know you chaps jolly well, don't they?"

"Yes, I know it's excruciatingly funny!" said Jimmy Silver, with heavy sarcasm. "Now look at the other side—that's funnier still!"

Tommy Dodd turned the paper over. "What's this? 'Tommy Dodd—face very odd! Why, the cheeky sweep! 'Fill the quad! The silly ass! Why, I'll—I'll—'"

Words failed the indignant Tommy. "You see, it's up against all of us, Moderns and Classicals," said Jimmy Silver. "A rotten jape on all of us, to guy us before they go. But I've got an idea—"

"I don't think much of your Classical ideas," said Tommy Dodd, shaking his head.

"It's a ripping wheeze—the catch of the season!" said Jimmy Silver. "Look here, if they can make up personal poems, so can we. If they can black their faces and play the giddy ox, so can we. And they're making up in the end study, and we're helping them—see?"

For a moment there was silence in the study, while the juniors thought it out.

Then Jimmy Silver's idea burst upon them altogether, and there was a roar. From that moment there was wonderful harmony in the study, Moderns and Classicals pulling together with almost brotherly affection in the great task of dishing the enemy.

A Little Surprise!

PANKLEY grinned and nodded as the Fistical Four came into the end study shortly before six.

The Bagshot Quartette were very busy. They were also very amused. The sweet and friendly smiles of the Classical Four showed that they hadn't any suspicion of the real nature of that farewell concert—at least, so Pankley thought.

Surely, if they had had any suspicion, they would not have come along in that friendly way to act as dressers for the quartette.

"Here we are!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Hope we're not late. We've been having tea with the Moderns, and we stopped to do some scribbling. We're ready to help!"

"Right-ho!"

The Fistical Four, with great cordiality, began to make-up the Darkey Quartette.

The quartette could not help grinning all the time. It seemed so unusually rich to them that the Fistical Four should help them in this polite way in a jape on themselves. They pictured the faces of the Rookwood chums when they learned the real nature of those songs and those jokes that were being kept so dead a secret.

Pankley was so satisfied with his tremendous cunning in taking Jimmy Silver in that it did not occur to him for a single moment that Jimmy Silver might be taking him in in his turn.

But he was destined to make that discovery. A quarter to six had struck when there were footsteps in the passage. Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle came into the study smiling.

"Hallo!" said Pankley. "You ought to be in the concert-room. You won't get good seats if you're late."

"We've come to help," said Tommy Dodd blandly.

"Thanks! We've got enough help. There isn't room in the study for a crowd," said Pankley. "You run off to the concert-room, there's a good chap."

Tommy Dodd grinned and locked the door.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Poole. "What are you up to?"

"Locking the door."

"What for?"

"In case any Bagshot bounders might come along."

"I—I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Panky, old man, this is where you get it in the neck. Collar 'em!"

"Hold on!" yelled Pankley, in alarm, dodging round the table. "Here, play the game, you rotters! You promised to help us dress."

"Well, haven't we helped you?"

"Look here, rags are barred—"

"Are they?" grinned Jimmy Silver. "What about the song of 'The Fat-headed Four'?"

"What about the song of Tommy Dodd, whose face is very odd?" hooted the Modern leader.

Pankley's jaw dropped.

"You—you—you know!" he stammered. "Some silly ass has been blabbing! How did you find out, you beasts?"

"Oh, we dropped on to it!" said Jimmy Silver carelessly. "You can't keep your end up with Rookwood, you know. Not much good trying to jape us. We were jolly well going to help you with your rotten concert."

"Noblesse oblige!" grinned Lovell.

"But now we've found out it's a jape, we're going to turn the giddy tables—see?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Pankley, in dismay. "It will be a frost, after all, Poole."

"No, it won't," said Jimmy Silver. "The Darkey Quartette are going on just the same, and they're going to sing some funny songs, but it will be a different quartette and different songs. Collar those sweeps!"

"Look here—I say—ah—oh— Back up, Bagshot!" yelled Pankley desperately.

For a few minutes there was a wild and whirling struggle in the study.

But the odds were too heavy for Pankley & Co., and they soon lay helpless on

the floor, unable to move, unable to speak, only able to glare. They glared like basilisks, but their glares had no effect upon the seven Rookwooders. Those cheery young gentlemen only howled with laughter.

"Time we made up," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Thanks awfully for the loan of this clobber, Panky."

"Grooooh!" came faintly from the unfortunate Pankley.

"We shall make a ripping Darkey Quartette—what do you think?" chuckled Lovell.

"Gurrrrg!"

"We've got new songs—quite a good selection," said Raby. "May I borrow your banjo, Poole?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co. could only glare in helpless rage and dismay. The Fistical Four stripped off their Etons, and proceeded to don the striking clobber prepared for the Nigger Quartette.



Dished, Diddled, and Done!

THE Form-room was crowded.

All the audience was there, and there were at least twenty Bagshot fellows, besides those who were staying at Rookwood. They had come along joyfully to watch the great Pankley "guying" the Rookwooders. All eyes were turned on the Darkey Quartette as they came in, and there was a murmur of applause from the Bagshot section.

"Bravo, Panky!"

"Ripping, old man!"

The quartette made their way to the dais at the upper end of the room, where four chairs had been arranged in a semi-circle. They saluted the audience and sat down. In the front row of seats, Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth, were sitting in state; the august presence of the two prefects was understood to imply that there was to be law and order, and that rags were strictly barred.

But nobody wanted to rag. The Bagshot crowd were prepared to enjoy the joke against Rookwood. And by this time a large number of Rookwood juniors, having been apprised in whispers of how the matter stood, were prepared to enjoy the joke against Bagshot. So both sides were satisfied.

Jimmy Silver began twanging his banjo—or rather Poole's banjo, and there was a preliminary cheer from the Bagshot section.

"Go it, Pankley!"

In the make-up it was not easy to tell which was Pankley and which wasn't. That not one of the four was Pankley did not occur to the Bagshot fellows.

The first item was a song, sung in a sing-song voice by the darkey with the banjo, who twanged his own accompaniment. The Bagshot fellows prepared to enjoy that song, but as it proceeded, their faces grew simply extraordinary in expression. For this is how the song ran:

"Have you heard of Pankley & Co?

Oh!

Have you heard of the wonderful three?

He, he!

There's Panky, the chief, with a face like a rake,

Who for first-class fat-headedness collars the cake,

And Poole, whose queer features would frighten a Hun,

"Look at it, you fathead!" howled Newcome. The startled leader of the Fourth took the paper they had just picked up and stared at it in blank amazement.

And Putter, whose nose is the shape of a bun,

He, he!

That is the three!

The thumpiest duffers you ever did see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That new version of Pankley's own composition made the Rookwood fellows howl. The Bagshot juniors looked utterly blank.

"Bravo!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Go it!"

"Second lap!" shouted Cook. "Pile in!"

"I—I say, they—they're mad!" gasped Purkiss. "They—they were going to sing a song about the Classical chaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Twang, twang! Pong, pong! went the banjo.

"They belong to a school that you know,

Oh!

Called Bagshot, a place rather low,

Oh!

It's a home for incurable duffers and flats.

And fellows who always talk out of their hats.

They can't keep their end up with Rookwood—they've tried—

And at cricket and footer they're licked to the wide!

No, ho!

That is the show.

The Bagshot asylum where lunatics go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood audience were almost in convulsions. The faces of the Bag-

shot fellows were pictures by this time.

What could possess Pankley to make him sing that absurd song about himself and his school simply beat them. Where was the rag the Bagshot Co. had planned—the jape that was to wind up their stay at Rookwood so triumphantly? Pankley & Co. seemed to have gone out of their senses at the last moment, and turned the joke against themselves!

"Next man in!" shouted Flynn.

"Go it, darkeys."

"On the bawl!"

Twang, twang! Ping, pong pong! went the the banjo once more. Then came the song to the tune of "Tommy Atkins"—but it was a new version; poetic genius was evidently as highly developed among the Rookwood juniors as amongst their rivals. Purkiss, boiling with rage, had slipped quietly out of the concert-room, and was dashing away in search of the missing minstrels, whose places now had clearly been borrowed by the fellows they had intended to jape. Meanwhile, Lovell was chanting the following:

"In the Bagshot Home for Duffers

there's an ass,

The greenest chap where all the chaps

are green,

His brains are very little, but his feet

Are quite the biggest tootsies ever seen!

Whene'er he plans a clever little jape,

He's somehow sure to meet a little

check;

He's tried it on, in fact, but we caught

him in the act,

And Panky's got it fairly in the neck!

Oh, Panky, Panky, Pank! You've got

yourself to thank!

You shouldn't come to Rookwood, dear, to play your little prank, You can't expect to score when you're up against us four, So we'll give your concert for you, while you're tied up on the floor!"

The Rookwooders shrieked with glee. They understood now what had become of Pankley & Co. while the Classical minstrels were giving the concert.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, in spite of his great dignity as a prefect and captain of the school, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

The juniors were almost in hysterics. Nearly the best part of the show was the expression on the Bagshot faces. Their looks were, as Tommy Dodd remarked, worth a guinea a box.

Pong, pong, pong, went the banjo. But the next item on the programme was destined never to be delivered. "Massa Johnson" was about to begin when the Form-room door was flung suddenly open. Purkiss of Bagshot had found the unhappy minstrels in the end study.

Four juniors with black faces and furious looks rushed in.

They were hardly recognisable, but the audience guessed that they were Pankley and Poole and Putter and Greene, the quartette who should have given that performance.

"Here they are!" yelled Bagshot. "Here's Panky!"

"Order there!"

"Kick those hooligans out!"

Not a word did Pankley & Co. utter. They made a rush for the platform. They wanted vengeance, and they wanted it at once.

Like a hurricane they swooped down on Massa Johnson & Co.

"Order!" yelled Jimmy Silver indignantly. "What do you mean by interrupting a concert—before you own visitors, too, and the prefect you've in-

vited! Keep off, I tell you! Oh, my hat!"

Pankley fairly jumped at him. The banjo went to the floor with a crash, and Pankley and Jimmy Silver closed, and crashed down on top of it.

Crash! Bump! "Back up!"

"Yah! Go for the cads!" "Give 'em socks!"

Eight black-faced and excited juniors were engaged in deadly strife. It was Pankley & Co. who had brought a prefect there to keep order. Now, under the very nose of that prefect, they were committing assault and battery upon the Fistical Four.

The chairs went reeling, and the combatants went reeling among them. Jimmy Silver & Co. had not quite expected that finale to the concert, but they did not mind—they were not called the Fistical Four for nothing!

Crash! Bump! Tramp, tramp, tramp! Bump! Crash! Yell!

The audience were all on their feet, most of them nearly in convulsions. They yelled encouragement to the combatants according to their sympathies.

Bulkeley stood gasping for some moments, utterly taken aback. Then he strode on the platform. Fortunately, he had brought in a cane, in case it should be necessary to keep order. He did not trouble to speak to the infuriated nigger-minstrels. He laid about him on all sides with great impartiality.

Whack, whack, whack! "Yaroo! Oh! Oh!" Whack, whack! "Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley was "going it" hot and strong. It was more than the nigger-minstrels could stand. Even the infuriated Pankley cooled off as the cane came thwacking across his back.

The eight darkeys scrambled wildly off the platform and fled. Bulkeley,

gasping for breath, shook his cane after them as they bolted.

The Fistical Four did not stop running till they were safe in the end study. Their "clobber" was almost in tatters after that wild "scrap," but they did not mind; it belonged to Pankley, and if he chose to rag his own property that was his look-out.

Jimmy Silver sank in the armchair, gasping.

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!" "Yow! I'm hurt!" growled Lovell.

"What did Bulkeley want to chip in for? We could have kicked those cads out and finished the concert!"

"Never mind! I think we did enough!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Ha, ha, ha! We did them brown! It's the last jape, and we've got the best of it! Panky & Co. have been fairly done in the eye this time! Hurray!"

There was no doubt about it, the Fistical Four had scored! Pankley's farewell concert had been a howling success—for the chums of Rookwood! And Jimmy Silver & Co. had cause to be satisfied.

On Monday the Bagshot crowd departed from Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. saw them off with genial smiles.

As the Bagshot brake rolled away Jimmy Silver called out to Pankley to be sure to let him know when he was giving another concert. But Pankley made no reply, he only blushed. It was likely to be a long time before Pankley's chums allowed him to forget that concert; and for days after the Bagshot fellows were gone Jimmy Silver & Co. chortled over the way they had succeeded in turning the tables.

THE END.

(Another rousing long complete tale of Rookwood next week, chums, entitled: "THE HEAD'S NEPHEW!")

XMAS CLUBS

Chocolates, Toys, Fancy Goods

SPARE TIME AGENTS WANTED.

Excellent Commission, Art Catalogue and Particulars FREE. SAMUEL DRIVER, LTD., Burton Road, LEEDS

SPURPROOF TENTS

Lightweight proofed material. Complete with three-piece jointed poles, pegs, guy lines, and valise. Weight 4½ lbs. Size 6 ft. 6 ins. x 4 ft. 6 ins. x 3 ft. 6 ins. With 6 in. wall Accommodates three boys. Special extra lightweight. Egyptian Cotton Weight 3½ lbs. 19/6

Send for beautiful illustrated Camping List, post free. GEO. GROSE & CO., 8, NEW BRIDGE STREET, E.C.4

HAVE YOU A RED NOSE ?

Send a stamp to pay postage, and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge. Enclose stamp. Address in confidence: T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist, "Palace House", 128, Shaftesbury Avenue, LONDON, W.1. (Est. over 20 years.)

£2,000 WORTH OF GOOD, CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL AND FILMS. 12 x 10 Enlargements, any photo or film. 8d. Samples Catalogue Free—HACKETT'S July Road, LIVERPOOL.

COLLECTION AND ACCESSORIES FREE!! Mounts, Tweezers, 76 different Stamps, 10 Canada, 8 Africans, Transparent Envelopes. Send 2d. post for Approvals LISBURN & TOWNSEND (UJS), LIVERPOOL.

FREE PASSAGES TO OTTAWA, CANADA, for approved boy farm learners, age 15 to 19. Apply—ONTARIO GOVERNMENT, 346, STRAND, LONDON

HANDSOME MEN ARE SLIGHTLY SUNBUENT "SUNBRONZE" remarkably improves appearance 1/6, 2/9. 6,000 Testimonials (Booklet, stamp.)—Sunbronze Laboratories (Dept. A 7), Colwyn Bay, Wales. (Est. 1902)

PARCEL OF 200 Interesting Stamps, such as Persia, Siam, Roumania (Boy King), Triangular, etc., price 3d with Approvals only—W A WHITE, Engine Lane, LYT. Stronbridge

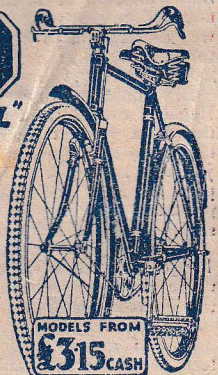
THE WORLD'S BEST CYCLE

26 DOWN The JUNO "ROYAL"

BROOKS SADDLE, DUNLOP CORD TYRES, RENOLD CHAIN, 14 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

& 15 MONTHLY PAYMENTS OF 5/10 All British. Superb Quality Guaranteed for ever. Direct from Factory to you. Packed and Carriage Paid. Wonderful easy terms to suit you. Chromium Plated Models if desired. Write for Free Art List.

JUNO CYCLE CO. (Dept. U.2), 248, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.



WANTED IMMEDIATELY

Thirty boys for farm work in Canada. Ages 14 to 19 or Australia ages 15 to 18. Apply at once Overseas Dept., CHURCH ARMY, 55 Bryansdon Street, London, W.1.

BLUSHING, Nervousness, Shyness. Free Book describes simple home cure. Write L. A. STEBBING, 25, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, UNION JACK SERIES,

The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.