

"BOB CHERRY'S LUCK!" A Long Complete School Story Inside.

**The Magnet Library**

With which is incorporated  
The Greyfriars Herald.

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No. 854. Vol. XXVII. April 26th, 1931.



**BOB CHERRY WATCHES OVER HIS LITTLE CHUM!**  
(A Dramatic Moment in *The Long Complete School Story Inside.*)

**JOHN NIX  
PENTELOW  
1872-1931**



JOHN NIX PENTELOW

Published in 1972 by  
Cambridge Old Boys Book Club  
to mark the centenary of the birth in  
Somersham, Hunts on March 26th 1872  
of John Nix Pentelow.

Contributors

Jack Overhill  
Bill Lofts  
Deryck Harvey  
Danny Posner  
W. J. A. Hubbard  
W. H. Broster

Editor: Danny Posner

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# REALM STARS

Cheery Chats about our Famous Authors & Artists by Watch-dog

**R**ICHARD RANDOLPH is our oldest writer. Oldest in years, that is, and certainly oldest in experience. He has written sport, school, and adventure yarns over longer than your old favourite, A. E. Hardy. But you won't run away with the idea that he is an old, old man. Not a bit of it! He is young still, our oldest author only because he is the oldest of a group of charming young ones!

Now, most people of such experience are apt to be severely critical of their younger and more innocent brethren—such as you and well-worn Mr. Randolph is no exception to the rule. He can be very critical when he likes and we often feel quite afraid of him. In fact, we have already made up our minds to be unusually careful when we say in this delightful article!

Not that he looks very fierce when he comes into this office. Oh, does he! On the contrary, he has even a soft head and an engaging smile to greet us. We might even suspect him of being a weak and mild sort of chap but for that unmistakable light of battle in his grey-blue eyes. He is fully prepared—and don't we hope all-to engage in a noisy argument, should we so desire.

Mention in all, loudly-soft, and with eyes, shortly giving back, the popular HEAD "Star" sports pretty nearly everything there is to know about the old profession of authorship. Under whose name he has written hundreds of stories in tens of years; and as Jack North he is better known, perhaps, than as Richard Randolph. His first story, he tells us, was published nearly thirty years ago, but he has actually been writing since he was eight

No. 52.  
RICHARD RANDOLPH.



years old! Certainly, if you had a penny for every word he has written you could well afford to be a gentleman of leisure for the rest of your next young life.

Richard Randolph was born in a Shropshire village quite a long time ago. At school in the county town he was mainly a student and sports enthusiast, excelling at the latter game, though he loved none for a good deal of running and boxing in those days, too. Some time after he had left his old school, he went back to it again—as a teacher. His experience in that world, unadorned, we imagine, helped him considerably later on with the two school yarns which first brought him into the limelight.

But Mr. Randolph did not remain long in a schoolmaster. At about twenty-five he entered the Civil Service. Already cricket was playing the big part in his life that it still does. Today, we may mention, he probably knows more about the history of big cricket, English and Overseas, than any other man in the world. He is recognized everywhere as a leading expert on the grounds of amateur games. Which, incidentally, explains the wonderful accuracy of detail displayed in the cricket serials of his which have appeared in our columns over the last three seasons.

For fifteen years Mr. Randolph saw a great deal of our English countryside in the course of his Government work, and then, settling down in Sussex, he adopted writing as his main profession; for hitherto he had only written stories in his spare time. His reputation, of course, was already made, and stories flowing from his gifted pen were speedily published. He soon took a big place among leading writers of boys' fiction.

To-day he has few rivals for popularity; he certainly has no rivals at all for real-life county cricket yarns. Littlest year later the office as constant reminder of his wonderful success. And he has made a crowd of friends among fellows who make no secret of their opinion that his REAL cricket yarns are the best of the year.

Which reminds us, in conclusion, that Richard Randolph is already working not another one for next summer—one which we know will be a worthy successor to "Carriage of Carabians!"

(Next week: E. E. BRISCOE.)

Richard Randolph was one of Pentelow's pseudonyms. He was almost 52 when this photograph and pen portrait appeared in the Boys Realm 8th March 1924. The biography isn't truly accurate when it says 'his first story was published nearly thirty years ago'. In fact Pentelow's first published story had appeared 37 years before in Boys Jubilee Journal.

## A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN

by Danny Posner

A group of men and women met in Cambridge on March 26th to commemorate the centenary of the birth of a man they hold in high esteem. Nothing very unusual in that, perhaps, except that his one claim to fame is that he was a writer and editor of juvenile papers from Amalgamated Press in the first three decades of this century.

The man in question was John Nix Pentelov and his other, rather more dubious, claim to fame is that mention of his name today forty-one years after his death can still produce strong emotion and even anger in the hearts of some mature and intelligent men. For back in 1918 when Pentelov was Editor of *The Magnet*, he committed a cardinal sin as far as *Magnet* enthusiasts are concerned. He bumped off one of the leading characters and the felony was compounded by that fact that it wasn't one of his own characters but instead a Frank Richards creation, Courtney, a sixth-former at Greyfriars School.

Frank Richards of course was a pen name for Charles Hamilton who created Greyfriars of Billy Bunter fame for *Magnet*, Tom Merry & Co. of *St. Jim's* for *The Gem* and a host of other schools and characters for other A.P. papers.

His name is now a legend among collectors of these papers. Collectively they are known as Hamiltonians and you'll find them in high places and low all over the world. It's from among a hard core of their members that mention of Pentelov as the slayer of Courtney produces harsher epithets than ever the boys of Greyfriars with their mild 'go and eat coke' or 'Beast' could bring themselves to say.

'The biggest bore in years', 'clever dick repartee', 'deadly dull dialogue', has been said of his writing; some have gone even further, attacking the character of the man by suggesting that when editor he feathered his own nest by deliberately excluding Hamilton stories in favour of his own.

This last accusation hardly stands up to the facts available. Pentelov was a kindly man, according to former A.P. editors H. W. Twyman and C. R. Samways. Born in Somersham, a quiet Huntingdonshire village, in 1872 he was quickly off the mark into being published with stories appearing in *Boys Jubilee Journal* when he was only fifteen. By the turn of the century he was a regular contributor to A.P. boys papers under the pen name Jack North and his stories of Wycliffe and Haygarth schools are still popular with many collectors today. Outside his work for A.P. he contributed to *The Captain and Chums*, both highly popular magazines, and he made his mark also as a leading commentator on cricket. By the time he took over the editorial chairs of *The Magnet* and *The Gem* in 1916 he was relatively successful, well known in his own right, and a mature rather old looking 44.

He must also have been a worried man. The problem which faced him was that he had to produce each week two papers containing 15,000 word stories – AND BOTH STORIES WERE SUPPOSED TO COME FROM THE SAME MAN, NAMELY CHARLES HAMILTON. Hamilton was undoubtedly a writing machine. Words poured out from his typewriter of such consistently high standard that even today they can be read with pleasure where those of his contemporaries seem dated and relatively dull. Such was his output that he kept *Magnet* and *Gem* going for 32 years and managed to contribute to other A.P. papers as well. Orwell in his *Essay on Boys Papers* for *Horizon* concluded that the stories must have been written by a team of authors and was amazed when Hamilton turned up to confound him.

But even Hamilton couldn't keep it going non-stop for ever and sometimes the flow turned into a trickle. To guard against the ultimate disaster of having nothing to print, A.P. decided to use substitute writers when necessary, all writing under the Hamilton byline appropriate to the particular magazine.

By the early 1900's he was a frequent contributor to Harnsworth papers under several names most notably that of Jack North. He is best remembered during this period for his stories of Wycliffe and Haygarth schools which were subsequently reprinted in Boys Friend Library.

In 1916 however, there was a war on and most of the substitutes were doing their bit in France. At this time and for the next couple of years Hamilton was particularly unproductive so poor old Pentelow was left with a pretty ghastly situation to tackle. He resolved it in the only way open to him. He wrote the stories himself. But whereas other substitute writers had usually tried to write like Hamilton, Pentelow disdained such an approach and taking the Greyfriars and St. Jim's characters he wrote them up a la Pentelow. Years after his death this 'presumptuous' and 'arrogant' act was to bring contumely on his bones.

The killing of Courtney was a bit unfortunate. Pentelow, it has to be admitted, was a fine writer of the Victorian school where a bit of tear jerking and redemption through death went down rather well. So every now and again when he got the urge, one of his characters died a noble death and with a bit of imagination you could visualise the Angels, little Nell and Tiny Tim singing overhead. Hamilton was of different stuff and usually the only bloodletting was via the nose when, for instance Wharton and Vernon Smith, the bouncer of Greyfriars, had a ding dong.

According to Bill Loftis, gumshoe par excellence in the search for facts of interest to collectors, Pentelow may have received orders from above in 1918 to kill off Courtney. Apparently the name was too much like that of another character in a companion paper and readers were getting confused.

Orders to kill, of course, mean all things to all people. For SMERSH its a device which explodes as you raise the lavatory seat; Hamilton would do it painlessly by despatching his character to join a rich uncle in South America. Pentelow took the higher ups literally and Courtney went to his end saving the life of a fellow pupil. The story was called 'A Very Gallant Gentleman'. He was probably wrong to do it. Jack Overhill of Cambridge recalls that by 1918 the battlefield was the prospect of youth, with death at short odds. By contrast The Magnet was a thing of life and laughter until Pentelow's story made it for him as a fourteen year old youth 'a grim place where boys went in healthy and happy and came out in coffins'.

Other boys however had different reactions and there is no doubt that long afterwards readers were writing in to say how much they had enjoyed the story.

When war was over Pentelow was made editor of The Boys Realm and he did a good job, contributing many fine stories himself under the pen name Richard Randolph. He was editor of other A.P. papers too and with his cricket writing and a young wife, life in Carshalton where he lived must have been good.

Two distinctions were to come his way. The first was in 1927 when Sir John Squire, who was doing book crits. for The Observer, picked up a copy of The Boys Friend Library at a bookstall on Godalming Station and spent his train journey into London reading 'Good Enough For England', a Pentelow story. Squire wrote a 1500 word review and even though he treated it tongue in cheek it was still the first time that a serious reviewer had looked at a boys periodical. Pentelow made the national press again in 1931 when he died, for The Times did a brief obit.

His wife, who was 28 years his junior, still lives but, as Deryck Harvey feature writer for the Cambridge Evening News has noted, all his friends and family are dead or scattered and nobody in the village where he was born remembers him. He lives on only through his work, remembered by those enthusiasts who find the old papers fascinating as nostalgia, or social commentary, or as some do, fine pieces of writing.

Pentelow would have enjoyed the centenary celebration. He was a sentimental man who was reputed to pay for stories even when they lacked merit simply because the author needed the money. His contemporaries have described him as courteous and there are many today who owe their start to him. He wrote thousands of stories, was a good editor, and a popular man. It's ironic that one story called 'A Very Gallant Gentleman' should have marked him out for posterity.

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I should imagine that there have been few authors of boys' stories who have provoked more criticism than Mr. John Nix Pentelow and quite a number of copies of both the "Collectors' Digest" and the "Story Paper Collector" over the past twenty years have contained articles of this nature. Admittedly these articles have been mainly aimed at Pentelow in his capacity as a "Substitute" writer to Mr. Charles Hamilton in the "Magnet" and "Gem" mainly during Pentelow's occupation of the editorial chair of both papers during the period 1916/19. They have however, rather tended to obscure the fact that Pentelow was a fine writer in his own sphere and quite capable of producing a school story of a very high standard to satisfy all but the most exacting critic.

I do not, however, in this article, intend to pass any further remarks on Pentelow's "substitute" work in the "Magnet" and "Gem" but to confine myself to a description of some rather remarkable stories written by him under one of his numerous pen-names — Jack North. These stories were of Wycliffe School and had Pentelow written nothing else during his long career as a boys' editor and author, I think they would have been sufficient to establish him as a writer of more than ordinary interest and power.

The Wycliffe stories originally appeared in "Pluck" some time towards the end of 1907 and according to my information were numbered as follows:-

No.117, Title not known; No.122, Jack's Enemy; No.126, Title not known; No.128, Facing the Music; No.131, Prefects of Bowker's House; No.134, At Half-Past the Eleventh Hour; No.136 Big Billy's Transformation; No.140, The Shooting Box in Borden Wood; No.142, Brothers of Borden; No.144, The Mystery of Sports Day; No.146, Cock House at Wycliffe; No.148, Sixteen of Them; No.151, The Hitcises; No.153, The Captain of Wycliffe; No.157, Rival Captains; No.161, The Scamp of Wycliffe; No.166, The Commander's Birthday; No.169, The Secret Seven; No.172, In Open Rebellion; No.178, The Schemer; No.181, Wycliffe's Ghosts; No.186, Merry Minor's Chum.

There were also a number of Boys' Friend Libraries (3d.) that were original stories that fitted into the main pattern of the yarns. These were:-

No.53, Chums of Wycliffe (Published in August, 1908); No.73, Larry and Co; No.82, The Runaway.

Then, in 1921, the "Pluck" stories were reprinted in the S.F.L. (4d.) 1st Series and for the benefit of the Collector who is interested in such details I give below the order in which I consider the yarns should be read, although I would stress there is some dispute among followers of Pentelow's stories about this.

No.532, Jack Jackson's Enemy; No.535, The Rise of Bowker's House; No.539, The Prefects of Bowker's House; No.542, The Staunchest of Chums; No.547, The Wycliffe Scholarship Boy; No.550, The Brothers of Borden; No.555, Birds of a Feather; No.568, The Rival Captains; No.588, Prefect and Fag; No.593, In Open Rebellion; No.596, A Troubled Term; No.53, Chums of Wycliffe; No.73, Larry and Co; No.82, The Runaway; No.604, Alexander the Great.

As portrayed by Jack North, Wycliffe School was apparently situated somewhere in the South of England like the vast majority of fictitious schools. It had seven houses, all, with the exception of the School House, named after masters, and had something like 500 pupils. The usual neighbouring town was Wickham, the county town of Wickshire on the river Wyvern and some five miles from the school and spoken of by Jack as "a big place, with considerable manufactures, though by no means to be classed as a manufacturing town purely and simple." The School colours were Green and Silver and there were also house colours.

An interesting and to my mind pleasing feature of the stories was the fact that the boys grew up and there

was undoubtedly something rather fascinating in following their careers through the school to the dignity of the Sixth Form. It was this feature that made the character work so important in the yarns and enabled the author to present such a realistic picture of school life. Let us then deal with all the leading actors of the Wycliffe stage.

First of all we have Jack Jackson and his chums, Donald MacDonald, David Davies and Patrick O'Hara who in the first story arrived as new boys and were placed in the Upper Fourth Form. They were portrayed as being about 15 years of age. Jackson, a fine example of a typical English boy and the son of a famous explorer, was one of the four leading characters in the stories. A frank, healthy though trifle irresponsible boy with brilliant all-round sporting ability he was a most interesting study, Donald MacDonald was as





typical Scots as Jackson was English; dour, canny, with excellent mental powers he was also possessed of considerable sporting ability being a good cricketer and a first class footballer, chiefly at right back and a fine long distance runner. David (Taffy) Davies was the youngest and smallest of the four. Extremely clever, with ability as a female impersonator he was not shown as a particularly outstanding sportsman in the early yarns but later improved greatly especially at Cricket where he became the 1st XI wicket-keeper. Davies was probably the most lovable character in the whole of the Wycliffe Saga. Patrick O'Hara was a fine specimen of the Irish race, full of fun and fight too when it was needed, and a good sportsman.

To these four boys there were allied two others. Harry Merry was already at the school when Jack Jackson and his chums arrived. An Australian, with considerable powers of leadership, a great schoolboy all-round cricketer and a brilliant rider, he was also a member of the Upper Fourth. Later he was Chairman of the "Brothers of Borden", a schoolboy Club or Association formed by the leading characters in the stories and the school Cricket Captain. Beiram Singhji, who also arrived as a new boy in the opening yarn was a real attempt to portray an Indian boy at an English Public School. A Rajput Prince and a nephew of the great cricketer, Ranjitsinghi, he was presented as a quiet, intelligent boy to whom his friends were devoted. It is hardly necessary to say that he was shown in the yarns as a brilliant batsman and wonderful slip field. He also possessed considerable hypnotic powers.



thoroughly reliable chum and Arthur Saunders, a small clever boy, were the other two.

As the yarns proceeded four boys from the School House appeared on the scene, Bob Merritt, a scholarship boy round whom the "Wycliffe Scholarship Boy" was mainly written and his three chums, Tom Blencowe, rather a bully of the Harris type at first, but later Bob's close friend, and Conway and Charles Cartwright. Reginald Hardy, of Morants House, the Cock House at Wycliffe at the beginning of the series, was another close friend of Jack Jackson and Co., also Harry Crosswell.

It was these sixteen boys who formed, at the suggestion of Bob Merritt, a Club within the School called the "Brothers of Borden" whose meetings were held at a shooting box in Borden Wood, near the School, the property of Squire Fetham, a local landowner who adopted Bob as his son. Later on membership of the "Brothers" was extended to most of the Prefects and other leading characters and to be a "Brother" became a distinction that was prized among all Wycliffe boys.

Jack North used a very large number of characters in the Wycliffe yarns. There were, perhaps, too many of them, and the stage became a trifle crowded despite the fact that the boys grew up and left enabling the author to gradually dispose of certain of them in a plausible manner. In compiling this article, I have so far come across, including those just merely mentioned, over one hundred characters. He was, however, extremely natural in dealing with the relations between the Senior and Junior boys of the School and the character of Walter Raleigh, Captain of Wycliffe in the early yarns stands out most prominently for this reason. A wonderful all-round sportsman and a boy loved and respected by both masters and pupils Raleigh was, despite his perfections, one of the finest characters at Wycliffe and in some ways it was a great pity that Jack North had to have him leave the School at the conclusion of "Birds of a Feather". William Rawson, who eventually succeeded him as Captain was another interesting study, never loved as Raleigh was perhaps, because his character was too cold, but respected for his attention to duty. A first class sportsman, Rawson figured very prominently in the stories which Jack North wrote in the middle of the Wycliffe series featuring the dispute in the School over the Captaincy after Raleigh's departure.

In opposition to Jackson and his friends in the opening yarns were four other boys, Harris, Wicks, Porson and Saunders. Charles Horace Harris was a fine character indeed. Rather overbearing and a bit of a bully in the early stories he later reformed and became one of the outstanding boys in the school. A first class all-round sportsman, Harris was shown as older than the rest and in the Fifth Form.

Harris's friendship with his three Upper Fourth chums was presented in a most convincing manner. His chief friend, Reginald Robert Riddiesden Wicks was shown as a long-legged, English boy, with typical curly hair and considerable sporting ability. Percival Porson, a rather stout amiable boy and a steady and

Pentelow was only 15 when he began writing for D'acre Clarke's Boys Jubilee Journal in 1887.

D'acre Clarke was a singularly unsuccessful publisher and his papers were all short-lived. Evidently he didn't check his contributors carefully enough because in the year when J.N.P. was first published, Boys Jubilee Journal twice had to apologise for publishing plagiarised stories.

Pentelow's contributions were not particularly good but they at least had the merit of being his own work.

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COMRADES  
 THE  
**BOYS' JUBILEE**  
 JOURNAL

AMUSEMENT, FUN, AND INSTRUCTION.



CRABBY RACED IN THE  
**Vanoc;**  
 OR,  
 THE GLADIATORS OF OLD ROME.

By J. N. FARRER.

CHAPTER III.—continued.  
 THE CRABBY RACED IN THE  
 Vanoc; OR, THE GLADIATORS OF OLD ROME.  
 THROUGH THE GATES, WHICH THE  
 MARCH OF THE BRITISH HAD NOT

YET OPENED.  
 WITH A GREAT SWEEPING CHARGE THE  
 BRITISH HAD TAKEN THE GATES WHICH HAD  
 BEEN LONG SINCE SHUT, AND HAD  
 TAKEN THEM BY FORCE.  
 THE CRABBY RACED IN THE  
 Vanoc; OR, THE GLADIATORS OF OLD ROME.  
 THROUGH THE GATES, WHICH THE  
 MARCH OF THE BRITISH HAD NOT  
 YET OPENED.

No. 12. ... the week  
 ending July 5, 1887.

I have already spoken of Bowker', afterwards Williams' as the house at which the leading characters resided, although later Harris and his chums transferred to Whiteman's House about half way through the series. The Captain of Bowkers' at the beginning of the stories was George Barham. Transferred to Bowkers' from another house in an effort by the Headmaster, Dr. Anderson, to rescue the House from the state of decline in which it had fallen, Barham succeeded in a not inconsiderable task in which he found opposition, not only from the "bad hats" of the house but from the Housemaster as well. A quiet, modest and clever Senior, but a boy of considerable determination and a good sportsman, Barham was helped in every way by Jack Jackson and his chums and had the satisfaction, before he left, of seeing his house "cock" of the School. Other prominent Seniors were Algernon Carver, one of the "bad hats" who, like Harris, was in the Fifth Form in the early years, Snow, an opponent of Harris at the beginning but later a good all-round sportsman who succeeded Barham as House Captain and Victor Larings, a boy of mixed blood who was a character of the worst type.

Wilfred Duncan, another fine type of Senior was the original Captain of Gazman's House while Paddison, an excellent all-round sportsman who eventually captained both the School Cricket and Soccer teams succeeded Raleigh as Captain of Morants.

Rawson was the original Captain of the School House while Arthur Warden was Head Prefect of Leighs'. Warden, not a bad chap at heart, but rather inclined to be influenced by others was a prominent character in the stories written round the fight for the captaincy of the School. Dairymply, another Prefect and a close friend of Warden and Raphael, a Jew, but a fine chap and eventually a Prefect and a "Brother of Borden" were other Senior boys who played parts in the stories.

As the stories developed, Whiteman's House played a more distinguished part mainly because of the transfer of Harris and his friends. It was made clear by the author that Harris's transfer was at the request of Mr. Whiteman, who had a strong liking and respect for him.

Another leading Whiteman's House Senior and one of the most splendid character in the Wycliffe Saga was Arthur Dangerfield. Proud, headstrong and with great powers of leadership Dangerfield later became the mainstay of the opposition to the "Brothers of Borden" in the school, and his death, an action typical of Jack North, was in some ways a considerable loss to the stories as he left a gap that was never really filled. Dangerfield's best friend was Bulstrode, another Senior, who later became one of the "Brothers" after his chum's death.

One of the most determined opponents of the "Brothers" in the School was Witley a School House Senior whose enmity was a prominent feature in quite a number of the Wycliffe yarns. An associate, but never a friend of Dangerfield, Witley was a very interesting character study. Butcher, known to his friends as "Slaughterhouse" and White, known as "Doggy" were two other Seniors who were Witley supporters.

A boy who played a leading role in the final story of the series was Alexander. A senior from Eton and a fine cricketer who had already featured at Lords he returned to his old school at the end of the yarn which was, in my opinion, rather a pity as the author might have made more of him.

Like all fictitious schools, Wycliffe had more than its share of "bad hats". I have dealt with most of the seniors and we must now consider those who were mainly in the Middle School when Jack Jackson and his chums arrived. Prominent among them was Augustus Thwaites, an errant "funk" who was known as "Spider" to his schoolmates. Associated with Carver in an attempt to bring Harris and Wicks into disgrace by making it appear that they had cheated in an examination, Thwaites was eventually expelled from the School. Two other "bad hats" were the Solomon twins, Aaron and Moses, Jewish boys with all the worst attributes of their race. Then there were a number of Witley's supporters, Bass, Spring, Good, Cornelius Dando and Mimmsack. Neither Spring or Bates, who were close chums, were bad chaps at heart. Good was a thoroughly vicious character and one of the worst boys in the School which he was eventually asked to leave. Dando and Mimmsack were merely hangers-on.

A boy of Harris's type, who has reformed and who dominates by sheer force of physical strength, character and will power always succeeds in making enemies among other boys who in the ordinary run of events would not take exception to him, and Baird, Webber and Wilderspin figured among the opponents of the "Brothers" mainly for this reason. Baird, indeed, kept up his dislike to the very end of the series as in the final story, along with Bond, Carson, Powell and Rogers of Ray's House, he helped in the formation of the "Macedonians" the Association started by Alexander in rivalry to the "Brothers of Borden".



A Splendid Story, Complete School Tale  
of the Joinsers of Kingsley College.  
By JACK NORTH.

One of the leading characters in "Chums of Wycliffe" was Ram Ghosh, an Indian boy. Actually he was really Bhedwar Singh, Beiram Singh's cousin and mainly for that reason a deadly enemy of the "Brothers" who played a prominent part in foiling his evil plans.

In the early Wycliffe stories, the Junior boys were only mentioned occasionally and played rather ornamental parts. Durward, who was originally Rawson's fag, Snider and Simpson were the most prominent of these characters but with the appearance of Larry Merry, Harry Merry's brother on the scene in B.F.L. No.588 "Prefect and Fag", the limelight was switched to some extent on the boys in the lower forms. Larry Merry was one of the best of Jack North's creations, an irresponsible boy with great charm and powers of leadership. Larry's chief chums were Durward and Ewald from the School House; Simpson, who owed allegiance like Larry to Williams; Frank Fisher and Tommy Tidd, from Whitesmans' and Wood Minor from Morants. The exploits of these juniors, who were known to themselves as the "Secret Seven" were featured in quite a number of the yarns.

Tommy Tidd, the son of a local greengrocer who was killed in Jack Jackson's father's employment, was the most interesting of Larry's friends. He was, however, not a Cockney character, but a perfectly normal boy in habits, manner and speech, a most refreshing change to the usual procedure. Ewald, a boy with no less than six Christian names and so for obvious reasons known to his friends as "Bill" was another good character. He was a cousin of Arthur Dangerfield. The author's presentation of these seven junior boys was of a high standard for all the lads seemed to enjoy a most distinct separate personality.

In the later yarns other Junior boys came on the scene and of these the most prominent was Claude Arthur Coningsby Wilder. A boy who had been brought up in India, Wilder found himself at loggerheads with the other juniors right from the start.

Another leading Junior who came on the scene later was William Ambrose Hamilton (Bull) Barrance. Burly and aggressive, and in many ways rather like Harris, Barrance figured not only as an enemy of Wilder but as a rival of Larry and his chums.

Larry's popularity at Wycliffe earned him quite a few enemies as well as friendly rivals and among these we must include Dark and Henry Mighell Golding. Dark's nature was like his name and his dislike of Larry and his chums was presented in a very realistic manner in the stories. He quickly realised that Larry and Barrance were marked out as natural rivals and did all he could to make trouble between them and succeeded for a time. Golding was an overgrown lout of a boy whose lack of brain power kept him in the Junior School. He was considerably under Dark's influence and an associate of older boys whose company he should have avoided.

The Headmaster of Wycliffe at the beginning was Dr. Anderson. A stern but firm and just man in the tradition of Messrs. Locke and Holmes of "Magnet" and "Gem" fame, and liked and respected by the whole School, Dr. Anderson retired from the stories to become the Bishop of Culverbourne.

There were no less than eight Housemasters — Messrs. Bowker, Dunford, Gazman, Leigh, Morant, Ray, Whitman and Williams. Mr. Bowker, an M.A. and also Master of the Sixth Form was a scoundrel with a weak nature and vicious temper who was killed in the early stories. Mr. Dunford was also Master of the Upper Third. Mr. Richard Timothy Gazman, M.A., was one of the most important adult characters. Known to the whole School as "The Gasman" and a fussy interfering man with a considerable sense of his own importance he was a very fine character study. Master also of the Upper Fourth he succeeded Dr. Anderson as Headmaster. Mr. Leigh, a rather absent-minded individual, succeeded Mr. Gazman as Master of the Upper Fourth.

Mr. Morant was probably the best liked Master at Wycliffe and a most brilliant sportsman while Mr. Ray succeeded Mr. Gazman as Housemaster. Mr. Whitman eventually took Mr. Gazman's place as Headmaster of Wycliffe in the final yarns. A good sportsman who took a personal interest in many of his boys, his popularity was almost as great as that of Mr. Morant.

Mr. Benjamin Inchtald Williams was another interesting character study. Known to his boys as "Big Billy" he succeeded Mr. Bowker as Housemaster and played a prominent part in quite a number of the yarns. Another Master who played a leading part was Mr. Malcolm Kaghams Waters, the Junior Science Master. A rather despicable type who did not hesitate to actually spy on the boys, Mr. Waters was disliked both by them and his colleagues.

Two other Masters mentioned were Mr. Lymbery, the Senior Science Master and the Revd. Theodore Williams, known to the boys for obvious reasons as "Little Billy".

Other adult characters I must reluctantly leave out owing to considerations of space.

By W. H. BROSTER

Two Long Complete Stories for All.



"FOOT STRUCK" - A New Story, by J. H. BULL.  
 "THE THREE BOYS" - A School Tale, by JACK HARRIS.

With all the prodigious amount of material that Charles Hamilton himself turned out week by week, added to by the very considerably proportion published by his imitators, we find ourselves today with a fairly large market of these sort of school stories. Though the themes varied, they had to, on the whole the pattern followed each other. The age of the schoolboy characters never varied from the set standard of fourteen to sixteen years, never was it anything but Middle School. This never varied week by week, year after year. Also for some unknown reason it had to be a public school. One author did write one or two really refreshing series of school stories about the boys and girls of an ordinary county council school. We had schools on ships, a school in the Rocky Mountains of Canada, one in the Wild West; interesting variations no doubt but these had to have the inevitable fat boy, the scapegoat who reformed and the other too familiar types. Quite a change, but these schools did not last long. One famous author merged his very popular detective tales with school yarns and this idea became very popular and proved itself by lasting for many years. But even this was the usual pattern of Fourth formers, Removites, fat boys, reformed bad lads, dandified freaks and all the too familiar appliances.

How nice it was, with all this surfeit of similarity to suddenly happen on to a school story which was different, where the boys grew up in a natural way, where the masters were human beings and not just types; schools set in beautiful surroundings. Fags, middle school and seniors all doing the things you would expect them to do plus, of course, that little bit extra needed by the author to make up his story. You associate a yarn of that sort, one which is jolly interesting, full of adventure but not far-fetched, with such writers as Talbot Baines Reed, Desmond Coke, Fletcher and Rhodes and you are sure to think first of all of the forerunner of them all, "Tom Brown's School-days". Stories rich with humour, schoolboy pranks, the sins and scrowns of the average boy, in some cases paths but mostly all full of sport and adventure. Nothing too far-fetched in these yarns,

just enough of that little bit of extra to make a good plot. Such stories were those written by that very versatile author John Nix Pentelow. Versatility was John Nix Pentelow's main asset. He could write a good adventure story, pirates, scouting, detective yarns, tales of Robin Hood and the Wild West, footer and cricket tales; well anything you liked. But I think he excelled with his school stories. One can fault him that he introduced too much sadness, he was wont to "kill" off a central character. Perhaps for this reason it has been argued that his tales were for the more adult youngster, that idea may be helped in that he introduced a love interest most times. Nothing overdone but a trifle more than the average boy and girl friendship. I feel myself that he too could be criticised for bringing in too much fighting. Unsurpassed, however, were his descriptions of the cricket matches, the football games, the boat races and the athletic events which took place at these schools of his. All true to life and nothing left to the imagination. He made much of team spirit did Pentelow as he did the love of "Alma Mater". School against school, school against neighbouring villages, houses against house, dormitory against dormitory; these last for a cup or shield put up for competition. The "House Cup" or "Dormitory Cup" was a favourite theme of his and he was practically alone amongst authors for this. This brought in boys of different ages, from fags to perfects all taking part in the same team. Often and this is unusual too, we had the boys playing against the masters. Yes, Pentelow used his knowledge of sport to good purpose in his various school yarns. And, let it be said, he knew his subject be it cricket, footer, boxing or athletics. Who better than he for instance was qualified to talk of cricket or rather write of cricket.

But on to his schools and schoolboys. I have written elsewhere of his two most famous schools - Haygarth and Wycliffe. So now lets have a look at some of his other schools.

#### WELSTEAD

This was a school which through the slackness of its headmaster had gone down. A school with ancient traditions and which had produced great men but unlike Haygarth was unlucky in having a weak type of man as Head. The story tells us of the arrival at Welstead of Paul Delaware. Now Pentelow went one better than any of his rival authors in this yarn. These other writers bring into their stories boys from overseas, of different colours, different races. Pentelow himself as a substitute for one of them introduced quite a few Colonials and such. But this time - I do not recollect a similar happening, he brought in a Red Indian boy. Well anyway he was half Indian - if his father was an English emigrant his mother was an Iroquois princess. Paul Delaware was a Delaware though we are subsequently told that his father was rightly named Ware and for obvious reasons adopted the name of Delaware. We read of this boy of fifteen who looked much older being pitchforked - strange thing this for a school story - into the Sixth Form.

His first friend was an old puglist turned cab-driver "Honest Charley" Arbor who taught him how to use his fists in the approved English manner and how well it helped him in his struggle against the worst set at Welstead. His pluck and steadfastness won for him the friendship of that strange but sterling character George Erasmus Baythorne, he of the terrible fists and the sarcastic tongue. A friend hard to win but he won, who never failed him. Nina James, daughter of the Headmaster soon became his friend (perhaps more later) and so did that misunderstood man Mr. Moss the second master. In time others rallied to Delaware's side, he became Captain of Welstead and helped to revive the footer team, made Welstead a great tricketing school once again.

The plot of the story is how his main enemy James Chivers is secretly his cousin and a contender for the favour and fortune of their grandfather, old General Ware. The plottings of Chivers and his henchman Leah – what an utter rotter this last one was – and the friendship of Baythorne and Nina are interposed with the winning of some who sided with Chivers at the start – principally Lowdell and Stanhope, who died in the end. This yarn of Welstead, a great public school near Ancester in the South of England and one of the more serious writings of Penelowe, it is not conspicuous for its light moments, goes on to tell us how old General Ware found his long-lost grandson; how the Headmaster was saved from financial ruin by Paul and his friends: how in the end Chivers repented and found his true level. Yes, a more serious tale than usual but realistic in everyday. Perhaps the best part of the entire Welstead saga is the celebration (at Wycliffe) after the historic match with that famous school. The scene in the great Hall of Wycliffe. Well perhaps we could not do better than give it in Penelowe's own words –

"Meanwhile in the dining-hall at the School House, hot tea ran down thirsty throats, and the Wycliffe fellows vied with one another in keeping the plates of their visitors replenished.

There was not much time to spare, but it was impossible to leave without some acknowledgment of the hospitality they had received. Morton said that speechifying wasn't in his line: Lowdell granted when asked to get up and speak: Paul suggested that Baythorne could do it better than he and so, as everyone had expected from the first, it was Baythorne who rose. A moment before talk had been going on all around. Now silence fell.

Baythorne's clear well modulated voice broke it. He made no attempt at eloquence; but his words were hearty and to the point.

"Gentlemen of Wycliffe" he said "my comrades and I feel that we can't leave without some expression of the pleasure that this visit has given us all. We were royally welcomed, we have been royally entertained and – we haven't been beaten. I ought not perhaps to set the last fact alongside the other two because I am quite sure that a part of the hospitality intended for us was a good thrashing. This is not a time for toasts but if it were I should drink to Wycliffe, coupling with

thoasts the names of Wycliffe's honoured Head, of Mr. Harris, captain of the school and of Mr. Merry, captain of the footer eleven."

He sat down amid the applause of his comrades. Then Mr. Whiteman the Head of Wycliffe spoke a few genial words saying he was glad to have witnessed the inauguration of matches between the two schools and that they would long continue. After Merry major had said a few words everybody looked at Harris.

He rose, squared his great shoulders and spoke. "Merry major says he's no orator. I don't know. Put him alongside me an' I guess he's a regular Semosthenes. But it's up to me to say a few words and I suppose I've got to. So here goes. Jolly good fellows, jolly good game, jolly good result – though there's another I'd have liked better. Here's the best of good fortune to Welstead and to Delaware, her captain".

That let Paul in.

"There isn't much for me to say – after Baythorne. But I heartily endorse all he has said and I should like to add, on my own behalf, that I shall never forget my first visit to Wycliffe. A year ago I had never set foot on English soil and I suppose so one would have called me anything but an American. But my father was English and I have liked to think myself so, and Welstead has made me an Englishman as Wycliffe would have done if it had been my good fortune to have come here. For that's the great thing about our public schools – so my father told me – they make Englishmen. Eton or Harrow, Marlborough or Malvern, Wycliffe or Welstead – they all have that at least in common they make Englishmen".

They cheered him to the echo, Wycliffe and Welstead alike joining in the din. Harris came round to pat him on the back, Lowdell growled with pleasure. Baythorne said "Well done, Paul". But perhaps it was to Morton that the words went home most for when Welstead was at its worst Morton had always kept alive a spark of the public spirit.

These were Penelowe's words and give some illustration of his idea of a public school. That ends for now the story of Paul Delaware and Welstead School. A pity for we should have like to have heard more of Welstead and how it maintained its place alongside the other great public schools which Delaware quoted in his speech, after the historic match at Wycliffe.

## FRANKLINGHAM

John Nix Penelowe as Jack North wrote in some length of Wycliffe, Haygarth and Welstead, but it was under the pen name of Richard Randolph that he wrote more well known yarns of two other schools, Franklingham and Thistlestane. The tale of Johnny Goggs at Franklingham School is a direct contrast to the more serious epic of Welstead. Here you have an abundance of lighthearted schoolboy fun and as they say, never a dull moment. The school of Franklingham is one and a half miles from the village of that name. On the map you will find it very near the towns of Earlisham and Howlisham. There are five houses at Franklingham. Grayston's, Hayters, Waymarks, Bultristrides and the Head's House. To Grayston's went Johnny Goggs on his

arrival at Frankingham. John Goggs was a boy of fifteen with unusual gifts and certainly far from the usual in looks. To say he was freakish looking would not be at all exaggerating, but behind those big spectacles of his were in the words of his creator "the bluest eyes any boy ever had". And certainly an intellect far in advance of his years. Yes, Johnny was an inveterate "spoofer". "Spoo" was a favourite diversion of schoolboys of his day and age. They nicknamed him "Goggles". Let it stand that his comical name suggested that those big glasses of his were no small part of his "spoo". Eyes as keen and observant as his did not need any aid. Lanky and thin in appearance, his frame too belied the wily strength and agility he displayed on the sports field and running track. "Spoo", yes he spoofed them all along the line. He talked like a college professor; people wondered when meeting him first if he was quite normal. His conduct seemed to be on a pattern set by his "dear grandmother. That "dear old lady" popped up all the while. Just more of his "spoo". "She" was in reality a very prominent private detective and certainly not old or ladylike come to that. On the day Goggs arrived at Frankingham many strange events occurred. Animals appeared to talk, people said things (or appeared to say) which caused much diversion and all the time it was Goggs who was a very clever ventriloquist.

Frankingham was reached by the Southern railway and it was at the railway station and on the journey from there to the school that the first funny episodes occurred. Amongst others it was here that Goggs first met his chums to be, those widely different characters, the three from Grayson's House, Bloant, Tricketts and Waters. Nicknames are characteristic of schoolboys and this school of Frankingham was a bit more than fond of using nicknames. These three had theirs, "Bagshaw", "Tricks" and "Wagtail". Through the first story of Johnny Goggs runs the theme of the enmity of Cardenden for his cousin the school Captain, Harry Granville. How Goggs got mixed up in all this, how his "grandmother" was able to prove that this Cardenden was a "bad egg", this was the serious part of the yarn. But amongst all this, the drama and the amusing antics of Goggs we are treated to realistic football matches, not where one form plays another only but where one house against another, when the teams contain seniors and juniors. Goggs turns out to be a first rate centreforward, not what you would expect from his looks but anyway good enough for Graysons House.

The sports day at Frankingham was a great occasion apart from the athletic events and the author of these series of stories of Johnny Goggs gave us many different kinds of events, more than you get by and large from the usual school story, most of the dramatic incidents happened. On this special day Johnny's "dear grandmother" came along with all the other guardians, parents, mothers and fathers with the usual complement, of pretty sisters to bring in a little of feminine interest. You have everything in this yarn of Johnny Goggs and Frankingham School. Sport, schoolboy fun, intrigue and plotting and quite a different sort of detective work from the usual. Yes, quite a bit different from the usual school story. Again as in

"Jack North's" yarn you have masters who are more than just masters, men of wide understanding and who are not adverse to turning out in a match against their pupils. You have a school captain who is not automatically captain of football. You have form prefects to each house and in some cases not even Sixth Formers. You read of a "Games Secretary". Quite a change that. Prefects meetings when the only punishment to call corporal punishment, is meted out. In fact the "game" is hardly mentioned in this unique yarn. Everything else is there, everything needed to make a school tale which sounds normal and life like. Johnny Goggs is a fine type of English schoolboy apart from his apparent eccentric ways and unusual looks. Anyway who wants the heroes always one of the curly haired "handsome" type, shining examples of virtue but apt to go off the other way in their bad moments. "The Fourth Form at Frankingham" with Johnny Goggs in the leading role was one of Richard Randolph's finest school yarns and it had a sequel "Goggs Grammarian". In this Johnny Goggs transferred himself to Rykcombe Grammar School. Old favourites in Gordon Gay, the two Wootton brothers, Frank Monk and Carboy, not to mention the French boy Mont Blanc, all came into this fine yarn. All the characteristics of Goggs were given full vent in this worthy sequel to the Frankingham yarn and more was revealed of the fine grammar school and its inmates, once the feature of a very old boys magazine now almost forgotten. The same author was not responsible for these early Rykcombe stories but the creator of Goggs knew all about it as the story "Goggs Grammarian" proves.

Johnny Goggs of Frankingham school - if his creator had lived long enough we might have read more about him. As an afterthought, one remarkable thing about this main Frankingham yarn and I fancy I am right in saying the others I have mentioned also is that there is not a funny fat boy in the story at all.

## THRILESTANE

Versatility was John Nix Pentelow's strong point and the stories he wrote under the pen name of "Richard Randolph" were examples of that versatility. Stories of film stars are not very often dove-tailed in with those of schoolboys but in his famous "Ferrars of the Sixth" Richard Randolph wove a very intricate pattern of a Sixth Form boy who became a film star while still at school. The school was Thirlestane. Like Welstead and Haygarth, Thirlestane was very near Wycliffe and almost as well known as a nursery of famous politicians, great soldiers and even greater athletes. John Abton Ferrars was a name which will be ever on the "Roll of Honour" at Thirlestane School. Great film star and even greater cricketer - Ferrars of Worcestershire and England - great batsman and even greater fast bowler - the records will show how many times he turned out for England. Not so well known as a footballer though he was the Corinthian centreforward after his school days were over. The story of Jack Ferrars and his struggle against Weldon Barcherd and his set at Thirlestane brings in the usual intrigue we expect from Pentelow. How Ferrars' father was ruined by Barcherd's rascally half brother Jasper



Walkreth and committed suicide. How Ferrars to help support himself at Thirststone came on film work. Great characters like Charles Crocker Houlston; "Colorado Charley" the Cowboy; John Gordon; William Warke were only a few we meet in the members of this film company Ferrars worked with. The usual "black sheep" we can expect to find in any great organization like this film company worked against our hero, worked in harness with his enemies at the school. The story tells of how Ferrars came out on top in the end though many were the near escapes he had to death and mutilation. We have our fill of cricket, football, boxing, athletics, plenty of schoolboy fun and frolics. Plenty of thrills and adventures. As in his other yarns, Penelose introduces some fine examples of schoolmasters; his schoolboys are the usual lifelike sort we expect from him. Seniors and juniors all mixing together, come sport come war. The feminine interest is a trifle more than the "boy and girl friendships" of the "Jack North" yarns. That is why I say this saga of Jack Ferrars was more for the adult reader than the very young. We find interest in the love affair of Jack Ferrars and Young Vera Gordon and are saddened somewhat by the unreturned love of "Colorado Charley" for Nina, Jack Ferrars' sister. Sentiment is more developed in this yarn than others and a certain pathos is brought in the death of Gawaine Grant-Smith. A fine character Grant-Smith. Against Ferrars primarily but in the end he did Ferrars a good turn. In fact Jack had to thank him for a considerable rise in wealth in the later stages. The deaths of Leeman and Lewin were an inevitable part of the story so was the demise of Jasper Walkreth but Walden Barchard escapes and the story ends leaving us wondering if he will ever cross the path of Ferrars again. Well, he did as we read in another story of Richard Randolph's. To wit, the story of the 1921 Australia test visit to England - the adventures of "Young Yardley". Yardley was a Thirststone boy but it is to be said that he was never mentioned in "Ferrars of the Sixth". Perhaps we shall tell of the remarkable experiences of Gilbert Yardley another time.

There is the story of Jack Ferrars of Thirststone school, we cannot find space for much to say about those other fine fellows - Broke the school Captain (Ferrars was only sports Captain); Patrick Flannigan, that sterling Irishman; the three inseparable chums of the Fourth - Jimmy Wynward, "Jerrery Chivers" and Musgrave; Conrad Wales, true to his chum Grant-Smith to the very end. Just another school of Penelose's and what a story. A story of life at school, a good glimpse into the ever interesting film, a story bringing in many outside characters apart from those at the school. The school held an enormous galaxy of human characters. The Head, the Reverend Philip Warrander - The three Housemasters, Pace, Weston and Kernarth; great men in most ways than one. The story of John Alston Ferrars had everything a great author could give it. Its only fault, like the others, it finished too soon.

### WINDLESTHORPE

In search of lost treasure. How often has that been the theme of an adventure yarn. But mix it with school life, cricket and you have a decided

change from the usual run of school stories. Secret underground passages which open by way of hidden panels in a Lower Fifth Form study. Two schoolboys on the quest of the monk's treasure. No wonder Gawlor, the bully of the Upper Fifth wanted this particular study in the Lower Fifth passage. It was quite a coincidence that Quentin Quinthred the other seeker after hidden wealth was allotted or rather claimed this room. Quinthred had been sent to Windlesthorne School by the man who he thought was his father to track down this treasure trove. So had Gawlor been sent by his cousin on the same errand, but the difference lay in the fact that Quinthred hated the job while anything underhand was just in Gawlor's line. The startling adventures and hairbreadth escapes which befell the hero of this tale of Windlesthorne School is the mysterious underground passage which had its other exit on the moor near the school, an only a part of the story. How he fought against the prejudices of his school mates who suspected him of foul play against the popular captain of Windlesthorne. The loyalty of his particular chum "Hurricane" Gale never falters whenever the evidence against Quinthred. Firm friends of the two are the other two inmates of their dormitory Bill Brown and Hollis-Brown. Quinthred has friends outside the school and useful friends they prove too. Caesar Jenkins the county cricketer; his servant John Williams; that queer Irishman Denis O'Hagan who knew where the treasure chamber was. Well, no one gets the treasure because it has been recovered years before by no less than the lord of the manor. In other words, Highbrow the captain of Windlesthorne. That was the surprise for us in the last chapter of this unusual school yarn. "Quinthred's Quest" by Harry Harrington? Just another pen-name for John Nix Penelose. You can guess from that we have our fill of cricket, plenty of "scrapping", some good pen portraits of masters and scholars. Mr. Flunk the house master was a different type from what we expect of a master but one with a heart of gold. Some of the boys too are interesting studies and intriguing too are the nicknames they have. Schoolboys have a liking for nicknames and Penelose makes good use of that liking. Windlesthorne was a great public school; its colours of green, gold and silver had been worn by many well-known personalities; it had produced many great athletes and in Highbrow, Quinthred, Gale, Hollis-Brown and Brown Secundus to mention only a few had good material in her two Houses, Old and New as they were called, to keep up that tradition. Another great school and one more great yarn by Penelose.

### HARDEN

"The Troublesome Twins" by Jack North is described as a "very laughable school tale". It has its dramatic moments but generally this is one of the lightest of Penelose's school yarns. The title gives some indication of the theme of the story. Twins, that is identical twins, and doubles have been a popular standby for authors. The periodicals we are most familiar with have featured many instances of twins and doubles, their subsequent complications have made many intriguing stories. Maybe we could say the idea has worn a trifle threadbare

and excise could be found for Pentelow to try to do full justice to the theme now and again. Perhaps he is best known for his effort in this direction which we know as the "Twins from Tasmania" by "Richard Randolph". A story of Highcliffe and Cliff House with a good slice of Greyfriars to give good measure. Not dealing with that story as they were not Pentelow Schools, we pass on to Haygarth. Here many spicy plots were woven round the likeness of Jimmy Markworth and Claude Ferrings. You have to read the saga of Haygarth to appreciate all the implications of that likeness. They were not related which made the similarity in features so remarkable. Haygarth School has been dealt with so on to another great public school of Pentelow's - Harden. Maybe not so well-known as some of the others but still a top ranker as public schools go. Indeed, its Headmaster, Dr. Maeston was without a peer. Maybe only Dr. Anderson of Wycliffe and the Rev. Arthur Dalton of Haygarth were his equals.

The school was situated in the village of Harden and very near to the towns of Deveney, Ampleton and Wavenhoe. There were three Houses at Harden. Wrightsons, Lakes and Olivers, from which we get the names of "Wrong 'uns" - "Fish" and "Iron-sides" by which epithets the various inmates of these houses styled themselves. Two prefects to each House was the rule at Harden and the competition was very keen for the honour. Coverdale was the school Captain and his fellow prefect in Wrightsons was Francis Mandrell. The enmity of Mandrell and Clowten, the rotter of the Harden Sixth is a feature of this yarn. Indeed this hatred was hereditary for their fathers once very firm friends were at loggerheads and the story has its sad note at the finish when these two men died under dramatic circumstances. Bill Barcoe was not a prefect but still a very good friend of Mandrell's and Coverdale's. Apart from these few seniors, the upper school of Harden takes second place in the tale of the "Troublesome Twins". Jim and Joe Telford are Lower Fourth boys and to say they were mischievous is an understatement.



Both great sportsmen, they soon made themselves felt and found kindred spirits in Featherstone, Fowle, Waller, Thompson, Kenny and Harrison minor. Much fun is caused by the number of times the twins are mistaken for one another. This also causes consternation of another kind. Anyway, you have to read the story to find out all that happens. But the "Troublesome Twins" by Jack North is a little bit different from most school yarns and I think that it is unique in the fact that the school has a secret society and as the qualification for membership is that you must be a son or grandson of a former Harden boy, it is conclusive that it has its members in Lower, Middle and Senior School. The "Hereditaries" it was called and held its meetings in true ceremonial costume and rites in the big gym. The captain of the school was of course, High Hereditary. Quite a novel turn this and though it had its serious note, much fun also. Truly, a "very laughable school yarn" this story of the twins who came to Harden from Davenby Grammar School.

Pentelov was a frequent contributor to *The Captain and Chums* around 1910.

## A SECOND BALACLAVA

See Captain Shaw's Splendid Serial Story on page 300.



# CHUMS

**DOOMED BY DYNAMITE.**  
A Story by a Reader of "Chums."  
See page 360.

No. 858.—Vol. XVII.]

JANUARY 13, 1900.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



FOR THE SAKE OF A CHUM.

As he fell David had a brief vision of Walter's terrified face, of the Squire flinging up his arms in wild alarm, of Rowley crouching. Then came an awful smash. (See the Splendid Complete Story on page 245.)

Picture illustrates a scene from 'A Rank Outsider' by Harry Huntington (Pentelov).

Jack Overhill, a prolific writer and occasional broadcaster, was 14 when 'A Very Gallant Gentleman' appeared. It made such a deep impression on him that in 1972 he could still vividly recall it.

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## A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN

by Jack Overhill

I bought my first GEM - Tom Merry's War Fund - at Wade's, a little shop in Union Road, Cambridge, on a wet afternoon in November, 1914. It thrilled me. I then took it every week and before long the MAGNET.

I soon knew all the boys at Greyfriars and St. Jim's. They came alive to me. Eleven years old, I was always with them - and never happy when I wasn't.

The time came when I lost interest in school stories. I found more excitement in tales of adventure, highwaymen, outlaws and pirates. But I continued taking the MAGNET and GEM, putting them unread on two separate piles on the low cupboards beside the fireplace in my shoemaker-father's workshop.

In January, 1918, just before my fifteenth birthday, the illustrations in a Magnet called A Very Gallant Gentleman, impelled me to read it. Courtney, a sixth-former at Greyfriars, had died saving the life of Valence, also a sixth-former, whose sister Violet, had been his close friend. It was the last year of the 1914-18 war. Call-up at eighteen and eight months, the battlefield at nineteen, was the prospect of youth - dying in thousands. Mothers and wives running hysterically in the streets, fatal telegrams in their hands, was a searing sight. I had always admired Courtney; he inspired affection; and though the circumstances of war had hardened my nature, the story shocked me.

Death had no place in the MAGNET. The atmosphere of Greyfriars had been light and airy. It had been a place of sun and shade, of life and laughter; for though wrongs often had to be righted, things shaped themselves happily in the end. All that had changed. Greyfriars had become like the public

schools of Victorian fiction - grim places where boys went in healthy and happy and came out in coffins.

Tales of that sort had never appealed to me. I wanted fun in the form room, fights in the gym, football and cricket matches, jokes, study feeds, trips to the tuckshop, picnics in Friarstable Woods, boys breaking bounds after lights out, mysterious goings-on in the old priory and the tower, and occasional barring-out, and holiday adventures at home and abroad. In short, I wanted the fullness of life, not the inevitability of death. For me, Greyfriars could never be the same again. It had been transformed into the reality of the living world - how could it be the same again.

Critics of substitute stories of Greyfriars and St. Jim's have often said that some of them shouldn't have seen daylight. The worst of them had a better claim to publication than this one. It was folly on the part of the Amalgamated Press to print it. The story couldn't have increased sales, only decreased them.

I haven't seen a copy of A Very Gallant Gentleman for fifty years, but two items in it have personal significance.

I can still see Courtney and Vi Valence draw apart when I hear the ring of a bicycle bell - an incident in the story.

Springtime of Youth is a title of one of the chapters.

So it is in my first novel, ROMANTIC YOUTH, a story of Cambridge University life, published in 1933. Young love is the theme of both.

Seemingly, A Very Gallant Gentleman had a lasting effect on me.

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Came the war. In 1916 Pentelow was appointed to the editorial chair of *The Magnet* and *The Gem*. He also contributed many stories to these papers, the best known and most controversial being 'A Very Gallant Gentleman'.

A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN!



**SAVING VALENCE!**

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88-1-18

A Magnificent New  
Long Complete  
Tale of  
Harry Wharton & Co.  
at  
Georgetown School.

# A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN!

By  
Frank  
Richards.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER The Voice of Honour!

"YEAH, you're a rotten lot!"  
It was Bob Cherry of the Ram-  
mers who spoke, and he spoke  
angry.

Harold Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"It may be," he said coolly. "But if it is, it's not my lot. Ask your pal Cherry whether it's true or not?"

"Bob's love changed."  
"If Cherry says it—," he began  
slowly.

"It's true, of course!" snapped Skinner.  
"I follow you, but guess the approval of the *Princeton Five* isn't his even if he loses."

"If Cherry says so," went on Bob, "he's made a mistake. They say he wouldn't tell a lie about it. He's not your sort, Skinner. But he may have been mistaken. He doesn't know the scores very well yet. It might have been Loder, or Carr, or Madock, or Valence, but it couldn't have been Courtney."

"You're right, Cherry," said Vernon Smith. "Courtney's the very last chap in the South for little games of that sort, even excluding old Wiggle or Guyton. I've never known a straighter fellow than Courtney, any way you like to take him. He's down wide all through."

"You think a heap more of him than he does of you, buddy!" sneered Skinner.

"That's likely enough. He hasn't any particular reason to think well of myself, the Rammer confound. 'Very few people here, for that matter.'"

It might be true, but Skinner was one of the few, and he knew it, and everybody else there knew it. But gratitude seldom lasted long in Harold Skinner, Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Harrie James Ross Nash, Nick of Broome, whose his three called Jack, came into the Game room just then, with the new fellow, Leonard Oswald Channing.

There was a lot of a mystery about Channing. His statistics, Bob and Snoop, did not like him at all, but that was not an account of the mystery. It was because he was not their sort, which, seeing what sort Snoop and Matt were, was nothing against Channing—quite the contrary, indeed.

Now, did the fact that Pansy of Highfield was his enemy tend to show that there was anything against him? Pansy was up to be the enemy of any decent fellow.

Anyway, the Famous Five had taken to Channing, in spite of a reserve on the part of the new boy that they did not always feel it wise to understand. And Vernon Smith, who alone at Georgetown knew that Leonard Channing was really Tom Redding of Blackhall, the son of a noble, was his firm friend. For Tom had known Bob, since the time of his and Vernon Smith's, with all his faults, but a lively sense of gratitude thus showed.

"What's the row!" growled Johnny Bull, who saw at a glance that there was something wrong between Bob Cherry and the end of the Rammers.

"Nothing's the row," replied Skinner. "Now Channing's here, it can be settled in a minute."

Channing looked uncomfortable. He was sitting under false colours at Georgetown, and though the circumstances were such that no great blame could be attached to him even by the most severe if the whole story were known, he was naturally sensitive about it.

"What's Channing got to do with it?" Wharton said. "If you're trying to make up that silly yarn of Poo's, Skinner, you're dead off it. So don't you try it!"

"I'm not," said Skinner. "Sandy noticed that, didn't you, Sandy? A chap like Poo, 'liver' in glass house and all that, can always be got at, can't he, Sandy? And when it comes to mischief-makers, Sandy's the man for the job, isn't it, Sandy? I'm durned to speak out, because Sandy's got him in a duff stick. And as there's no more to be said about Channing, is there? Of course, a chap may think what he likes, but he can't say it!"

"Hold your poisonous tongue!" rapped out the Rammer.

Channing had first reddened, then paled, and the Rammer, determined to stand by him in spite of his refusal to speak anything, left angry on his account.

"I'll hold it, certainly. I've nothing more to say—at present," replied Skinner, somewhat.

"Skinner says that you saw Courtney of the Sixth coming out of the Green Keep, Channing," said Bob Cherry, in the straightforward way. "Is that correct?"

Channing nodded.

"You're quite sure?"

"Yes, I couldn't be mistaken. But I didn't tell Skinner. I only mentioned it to you, and I am sure that there was anyone else saw."

"That's right," said Donald Ogilvy. "And I don't think Channing would have mentioned it at all but for something I happened to say. He'd got across with that crowd Loder, and I told him a thing or two about the beauty."

"Snoop told me," said Skinner, with an evil grin. "Snoop was by way of being a pal of Skinner's, but friendship did not count for much with Skinner when he saw a chance of making mischief." "So said Channing told him."

"Snoop and I are not on speaking terms," Channing said coldly.

"Where is Snoop?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, what does Snoop matter?" said the Rammer. "It's no great to suppose here that Snoop isn't particular when he knows he. Channing's admitted that he said it. But I think he must be mistaken."

Channing shook his head. He seemed to be quite sure that there was no possibility of a mistake.

"When was it?" asked Eggle, other-

wise Stomper Quincy Elley Field—hot life is too short for rance like that."

"Last night, between ten and prep," answered the new boy. "I got here to go down to Princeton, and I used a flight-table follow there—Dorsett, you know. He seems a very decent sort. He's kind to the post-office for something, as I said, and we studied along together for a bit. We were passing the pals when Courtney came out alone."

"You're sure it was Courtney?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Oh, quite. He isn't like any other fellow here, and the light from some room inside fell full on him as he came out of the door. Besides, Dorsett knows him. He gave a few whistles, in a kind of surprised way, and said, 'Now, I shouldn't have expected that!'"

Skinner laughed mockingly.

"Only George Washington rising from the dead could improve on that evidence!" he said. "Hilary's Channing. You claim you shook full of faith in him; I don't know why. And he can call in Dorsett to support him, and you all think Dorsett's no end straight. Courtney hasn't got a leg left to stand on. He's convicted of post-humour, and I only remain for sentence to be passed upon him. I'm not sure that we can do that, and I don't want it, for me, but I don't say Wharton lies. It's an awful shock to Wharton. Look at his face!"

Harry Wharton did look worried.

There were fellows in the Sixth whom every decent jamer liked and respected. Howell, rapped Wiggle, with the bark of post; Brown, good Guyton; North, and Parkins—they had all earned the right to be held above such low games as Loder and Carr practiced regularly, and Walker and Valence as truce.

And no one of these all had a clearer record than Arthur, Etona Courtney. Every fellow who had been at Georgetown more than a term or two could recall a dozen instances of sportsmanship and fine-gentleman behaviour in his part, not never an instance of stepping aside from the straight path.

It was Courtney who had refused even to be punished for the cheating when his cheap Wiggle had been deposed. He had stood by Wiggle through thick and thin, legal always. It was Courtney who had saved Valence from punishment and disgrace at heavy cost to himself. And he could nothing to Valence. They had never been class-classes, as he and Wiggle had been and were.

It is true that Courtney and Valence's sister Violet were good friends. Perhaps the feeling between them was something more than mere friendship. More than one of the Removers thought of that now, but none mentioned Violet Valence's name.

"I haven't any doubt that Channing was Courtney, as he is so sure of it," he said. "But I'm pretty certain that Courtney was not Courtney, as he's on my such word as Skinner says to be before."

"Excuse me, Sandy!" struck in

lover, with elaborate politeness. "I haven't asked anyone to believe anything. I have my own opinion, but I haven't even suggested that you believe it."

"But we know it's true, as it's your father!" snapped Johnny Bull.

"And we know that your opinion is otherwise, as Courtney happens to be one of the little bit of the Farnsworth [?]—"

"Do you want your nose pulled, then?" roared Bob Cherry.

"No, you idiot! What do you want to pull?" Farnsworth! Keep him off, somebody!"

But nobody troubled to keep Bob off. Johnny Bull started towards the door.

"Whether in the headlamps of your headlights, my respected and ludicrous shadow-puncher Edward James O'Hara Singh, in his witted and wonderful English."

"I'm going to pull Broogy's nose!" roared Johnny Bull, who wouldn't have been any of this if Broogy hadn't first teased and then talked. "I don't mind not having his nose pulled; Bob can pull it off, for all I care—it's no ornament, anyway. But I think Broogy's wants pulling hard!"

And, as Johnny Bull generally meant what he said, there seemed little doubt that, unless he failed to find Broogy's nose, would be pulled harder than Broogy had been pulled. Broogy's was red and swollen, when the vigorous Bob had finished with it, and started to grab Skinner's.

But Skinner had gradually minked!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Springtime of their Youth!

REUMOR was fabled by the ancients to have a hundred tongues, and the fable is one of evidence to anyone who has ever noticed how quickly a story spreads in a school.

Within twenty-four hours there were seven a fellow at Gryffindor—from George Wingate, the stammer, to the seventh and youngest boy in the Second-year who had heard that Arthur Courtney had been seen coming out of the Green Keys.

Yes, there was one—Courtney himself.

It is when the person most concerned who is the last to hear that gossip is busy with his ears.

While Wingate was knitting his brows over the story Hammersley had just told her—while Loder and Cerus chattered together over the same story—while Loder of the Fifth was talking Potter and Thorne that he didn't believe a word of it—while Thorne & Co. discussed it, with expressions of regret that Courtney should have gone wrong, if he had gone wrong, when, as Fry said, wasn't an absolute rest yet—while the Farnsworths and Fyfe and Van Brown and the Farnsworths and Peter Todd and the Hammersleys sat around together as to whether something might not be done to make the matter who was speaking of it—while Todd of the Third-year seemed to light up when he was told the story, while the Second, led by Dicky Norton and Gatty, jumped Bannan Bannan for saying he knew it was Arthur Courtney, his ears not burning

at all, wheeled his bike to the gates, mounted, and rode off to keep an appointment.

It was a wonderful day for so early a period of the year. The sun shone almost warmly; the sky was cloudless, and here and there a delicate bird sang as if it felt sure the winter was over. The night almost was passed that the hedges, a week before snow-laden, were spreading now.

And Courtney walked, though there was worry at his heart.

His appointment was not at the Green Keys. It had for object the giving someone an account of the result of his errand there.

The result had not been by any means what he would have wished. He was still greatly concerned at the peril of his chest—still in doubt what his next move should be.

Yet for all that his heart sang within him. For he was going to meet Violet Valence!

Courtney's parents were long since dead. His nearest relative was a wealthy old uncle. They had never got on well together; and in the family Gryffindor were the two people who mattered most in the world were George Wingate and Vi Valence.

A year ago Wingate might have stood still. But he was no longer so. Arthur Courtney had reached an age when it is quite possible for a fellow of strong feelings to be very sincerely and wholly in love. And he loved the gentle, bewitching, fair of goodness Violet Valence with all his heart and soul.

He had never told her so. No words of more than friendship had passed between them. But he believed she understood.

So, for all his worry, he felt happy as he sped over the miles that separated Gryffindor from the trying-school.

He was before his time; but she was waiting for him, standing, far-out, by the side bar, beside the mother's business brooches of an old oak in a British-queened lane.

As it, saw him coming she rested her machine against the thick belly hedge, and moved forward to meet him.

Courtney stepping off his own bike, and if it fell to the ground. For both her hands were held out to him, and both his hands met them.

"Have I kept you waiting, Vi?" he asked.

"Oh, no, Arthur! I have only just got here, and you are really before your time. You must have ridden very hard."

"I think I did—yes, I know I did. I was in a hurry to see you again, Vi. But I haven't any good news to give you, I'm sorry to say."

The girl's face quivered, but she looked up bravely.

"You have done your best, I know, Arthur," she said. And her voice rang with utter faith in the lad who held her hand in his.

"Yes, I've done that. But Hesper's won't come to terms—no any terms I can make with him. If I had money enough—"

—but she soon that she could buy anything from a private doctor's very little money. And I can't get any more my uncle without explaining why I want it—"

—which is clear impossible in this case."

"It isn't right that you should think of using your own money, or your uncle's, to get straight Hesper's reckless folly."

The girl said, gently withdrawing one hand.

But he kept the other. She could not have withdrawn that without lying, and she was not sure that she wanted to withdraw it.

"There's nothing I'd grudge doing for him. But it's for your sake, Vi!"

He had never said so much as that before. But she had known it.

It was hardly possible that there should be any friendship between Courtney and Valence. They were two utterly unlike. Most fellows who had suffered for a clean what Courtney had suffered for Valence, and had been repaid by the loss of health, as he had been, would have washed their hands of that clean one and for all.

Arthur Courtney might not have done that that even had Hesper Valence had no more, granted, been a child, but he did not sit down to disagree from himself that what he did was for Vi's sake; and now the time had come when he could no longer disguise it from her.

"I know, it's a long talk of you, and yet I can't see it, Arthur! Not that you went through before—that was too much—though it made me feel ever so good of you—more good than I could begin to tell you!"

"Don't, Vi! Then nothing mattered. Sometimes I've felt as though the shame of it had burned into my very soul—to be thanked by a laughing trout like old Hesper! I've wished to think of it."

"But you know that there was no real shame—that to me—"

The girl's voice broke. She could not say what was in her heart. But she stood suddenly, and kissed his hand.

"Vi!"

Courtney spoke hoarsely, almost breathlessly. He looked down at the hand she had just let go. His own amazed, and he saw a tear on it.

For a moment they stood motionless. Then the girl pulled herself together, and said:

"You know all along, Arthur; you mean to have known! But never mind that; we both understood now. It is Hesper we must talk of. What makes this man Hesper so bitter against me?"

"I don't know; but it's wrong to guess. Hesper is involved by the high game; and Hesper is a selfish, resentful heart—"

—but the man to stand that sort of thing from anyone he thinks he has in his grip."

"And he has Hesper!"

"I'm afraid so, Vi."

"But I don't quite understand. Of course, I know it must have been through gambling; and very likely Hesper was cheated."

"Not a doubt of that, I should say!"

"Then how could this man dare to let Dr. Ludo know? He would be giving himself away, wouldn't he?"

"It would not be news to the Head if he were told that Hesper is a wrong 'un. He knows that very well. But he can't do much—he's not sure that he can do anything as far as Hesper is concerned. That wouldn't prevent his dropping heavily on to any fellow who was proved to have had dealings with the scoundrel."

"Won't he wait? I don't see how you have brought all that I can. It isn't nearly enough, I know; but it may help to persuade him to wait."

In the ordinary way I suppose he would make a bargain for his advantage if he saw any chance of ever getting paid at all. But Hesper has put his back up body. Tell him that the money was not used—that he could be contented, and wouldn't, say it—"

—but that if Hesper possessed his father he would both wait and wait. He is old enough, of course."

The girl's eyes flashed, and involuntarily she was frowning.

"It would be the best thing he could do!" she said. "Hesper means a lot to me—you know that, Arthur! But I've"

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not a coward. If I were he, I would go; and if he were I, I could bear it— and though he never came back! Better dead on the field of honor than disgracing our name—and he is disgracing it!"

"Vi, I've been thinking about that very thing. Why shouldn't we both go? he said it! The fact was that he half meant what he said to Hester; but I do feel sure that he would go with me. We've got the disease we need to be, but—"

"You are ready to sacrifice yourself for his sake, Arthur! But it isn't fair! It isn't fair!"

"It wouldn't be sacrificing myself, Vi. I want to go, dear—don't you see? And I'm not the only one. I know how two or three others feel about it. It's all very well to be a member of an Officers' Training Corps, and to know that if the war looks long enough we shall have commissions. But we'd rather look up at you. The lad from the Council School is old enough at eighteen. Why shouldn't we be?"

"That's because the people who know all about these things see that you would be more use to the country as officers, isn't it? That's what I've always understood. If your turn comes a little later, your risks are heavier when it does come."

"Hark now! I'm not sure. Some of us, maybe—follows like old Wiggins, for certain. He was born to lead men. I don't think I see; and I don't think Hester was. His shouldn't have commissions ought to go, but we're better off following than at getting a lead."

"You don't do yourself justice, Arthur!"

"I think I do, Vi. Don't you think it's a good plan?"

"I guess I ought to think it is!"  
"I haven't asked him. The fact of the matter is that—well, he won't listen to anything I say just now. He thinks I want to preach to him—Hester knows I don't! Why can't I that I should preach to myself?"

"And you've given up taking all this trouble for him while he is so heavy against?"

"It's only partly for him. It's mostly for you, Vi. You're a thousand times dearer to me than he is, and there's nothing I wouldn't do for your sake. But if I peered up it wouldn't be just for that. It really means to me the right thing to do."

"If the girl's lips quivered."

"The Robert says, it must not be under the shadow of daggers!" she said passionately.

"He must not go to avoid opinions. That is all he seems to be thinking of!"

Courtney could not deny it. There was none of the spirit of self-sacrifice that moved him in Rupert Valence. Like most that was before him, he thought of the Army as a convenient refuge from his creditors.

"I'll have a talk with him, and perhaps if we see Hester together something may be arranged," said the Sixth-Former.

"I don't know how to thank you enough, Arthur!"

"There's no reason for thanks from you to me!" replied Courtney, almost bitterly. "If it was my life, it wouldn't be too much to pay, dear!"

The light in her eyes as they met his was the light of affection, trust. But there was more in it than that—so plainly as if it had been laid in words Arthur Courtney said that she loved him as he loved her.

He stopped, and kissed her forehead. But her lips were fixed to his, with the memory of a kiss, but the love of a *Tom Moxter*—No. 108.

woman; and for the first time their lips met.

"Ting-a-ling!"

A little bell sounded. Vi started back, flushing. Courtney looked round, with anger in his face.

Hester ran forward and Bessie rode past the two, grinning broadly.

"The confounded young spies!" muttered Courtney bitterly.

"I don't think they would have been spying," replied the girl. "It must surely have been an accident."

"You don't know them! I do! I'm sorry, Vi."

"Don't trouble, Arthur. I don't mind—oh, not very much! I'm not ashamed—why should I be? I must go now! Here is the money I brought. You may want take it! I am Rupert's sister, remember. Are you to do all for him, I'm thinking? And now—Oh, I don't know how to say it, but I do seem, and I trust you with all my heart!"

In another moment she was speeding down the road. Courtney stood looking after her, with a feeling that all life had changed for him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Three Spies!

"H E, he, he, but I don't I tell you fellows that if we tracked him down we should see something worth seeing!" choried Harold Skinner.

"Well, we came far enough to see it, and we shall have our work cut out to get back to the school before the dinner-bell goes!" grumbled Stan.

"And we'd better be jolly careful that we don't slip into a trap on the way back," said Bessie earnestly.

"Rate to Courtney! He won't dare to do anything! He'll try to think that we didn't see the jammed part. Of course, he'd know that we're might have seen Valence's sister; but we won't be sure that we saw him kissing her."

"And her kissing him! I was six of one and half a dozen of the other! He, he, he!" chuckled Bob.

"Then we aren't going to say anything about it!" said Bessie, Missy James had taken alarm at the furious look on the prefect's face.

"Oh, aren't we?" sneered Skinner.

"What do you think, my child! I'm jolly well not going to keep anything like this to myself! Courtney's made me set up about you. Now it's my turn!"

"Now you, for the Common-sense!" chimed in Stan. "Let's see whether they'll pull out under this time!"

"They will," said Bessie gloomily, and with conviction. And, indeed, it seemed likely that Sidney James was right.

"We are all here," Skinner said. "We can get back another way, and Courtney will have walked down a bit by after dinner. Thank I don't say any more again when the tale gets about it."

"How to keep clear about it," muttered Bessie.

"Not! What a cheap snuff on a public road to run rarely talk about it!"

"That's all very well, Sidney, but we followed Courtney up—you know we did!"

"I know it all right. But how is anyone else to know it? Easy enough to creep up a path about it when we were out here."

They had no glimpse of Courtney on the way back until they were within sight of the gates of Greyfriars. Then they saw him standing like a statue.

"The didn't seem so much putting back as he did going!" remarked Bessie, with a grin. "But then, there's only dinner waiting for him this end—and not much of a dinner at that!"

"Much or little, I'm ready for mine!" said Stan. "And there goes the bell!"

At dinner Sidney James' Bessie looked distinctly gloomy. He was by long odds the biggest lark in the Room. Bunter and Fish were no less so, and there was plenty of things Skinner and Bob looked. But Bessie was worse than any of them, and in this matter he divided both Courtney and the Roomers.

But Skinner and Bessie were quite chippy. They were every bit as spoiled as Courtney, and somewhat less so, and they despised all the prefects who did their duty.

Below the cold roast beef had given place to pudding there was a considerable amount of tiring going on at the Roomy table, and many glasses were directed at Courtney, where he sat among the fifth.

He did not appear to see them. Perhaps he did not see them. But he was under no illusion as to what Skinner & Co. would do. Deceit was not to be expected from these young backsliders.

"What's the joke?" growled Johnny Bull.

"The story had not yet got to the ears of the Famous Five."

"But Spiff had heard."

"It isn't a joke at all," he said. "I make a joke of it as a snipe, but this is real news!"

"He, he, he! I think it's jolly funny news!" cried Billy Bunter. "What I'd been in Courtney's boots, that's all. I shouldn't have cared who saw me, not a scrap."

"Lucky for you weren't!" said Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy! What do you mean?"

"Because any self-respecting girl who had been kissed by you would naturally feel bound to do something with good by her to pay you back!"

"He, he, he! I don't consider that kissing is far from being a very nice thing," said the Owl, who seemed vastly amused.

"That say girl who had been kissed by you would," said Peter.

"Well, I haven't got a long nose to get in the way, at any rate. So put that in your pipe and smoke it, Toddy!"

"I have other nose for my nose, thank you, Bunter. And it is true—though you will be—that you haven't a long nose. Your nasal apology is merely a harmless and delicate touch!"

"What's that about kissing?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, it wasn't Marjorie, so it's no business of yours, Courtney!"

"I'd give you a kissing after dinner!" growled Bob angrily.

"He, he, he! I suppose it isn't my fault if Courtney—"

"If I hear any more of that about backsliders, Bunter, I shall send you out of the room!" snapped Mr. Quirk, from the head of the table.

Bunter subsided. To be sent out with the second course still in the kitchen was not very far from it.

But Fish took up the tale.

"I say, Wharton, that quiet Skinner says—"

"I don't want to hear what Skinner says!" broke in Harry.

"But he says— Oh, Jonathan exclaims! What are you looking a sheep's skin for, Courtney?"

"Herrrrrr! Quirk's eye's on you!" cried the South African junior.

Everyone was curious, though some had the decency to shut their mouths. A door opened a small crowd gathered around Skinner and Bob. Bessie she evenly remained.

"Come away, Bob!" said Harry Wharton, taking Bob Cherry by the arm.

eyes don't want to listen. Let the cat bark."

"That's just what I don't mean to let you do if I can help it," replied Bob. "Now, how?" said Johnny Bell. "In my opinion there's a lot too much to say about the rights of free speech, and I don't think it's worth starting up a gang and beating."

"The merchandise would be the good old penny paper," remarked Harry King. "But I am thoroughly of opinion that it would mean the ending of the state law after the publisher had gone too often to the wall, as your English proverb says."

"Why shouldn't the founders tell what for we are?" blurted Belmore senior. "You shaps haven't any right to put your nose in, I want to hear, and I want to see."

"You would want to?" said Boyd distinctly. "You're like any dashed old man for gossip, Belmore!"

"Who want? Why that again?" asked the lady of the Romans.

"I say that you're like any dashed old man for gossip," repeated the lady with coldness. "Do you want me to write a set? I'm willing."

"Ho, ho, ho! Boyd's only trying to keep a lid on leaving across the track!" sneered Billy Hunter.

Fate Todd took the Owl by the ear.

"Come away, lobby!" he said. "You haven't any morals, as they can't be corrupted. But you're too infamously, and I'm going to see—"

"Vooch! Loochee be, Teddy! I've got a right to hear about Courtney's living Valmore's sister as—"

"What's that?" asked Valmore's voice that broke in with a bellow like that of an angry bull.

The tall man stood in among them, looking forward open way and Kippo with, and pushed Hunter out of Teddy's grasp.

His face was like the face of a wrathful demon, but most of those who saw it did make eyes for him. It was not a pleasant thing for a fellow to hear at his, and hearing it from Hunter, who was full of it with glowing, did not make a man pleased.

Valmore shook Hunter severely. The latter replied like a jelly in his own shirt.

"For it again, if you dare! Say it again, and I'll thrash you!" bellowed the man's form.

"I should advise him not to say it again at this price!" remarked Delaney.

"Steady on, Valmore! Hunter was only repeating what he had heard from the mob," said Wharton.

"Oh! Who dares to say— Ah, it's you, Skinner!"

Skinner was struggling in the hold of the theory and Johnny Bell. He had decided that whoever of body was the best presence of mind at this juncture, but his and Johnny had no notion of trying his skin away.

Frank Nugent and Tom Brown had advised Scott, but Scott did not struggle. He thought it better not to draw attention upon himself.

"I—"

"Skinner doesn't seem quite so steady to tell his tale now as he was a little while ago!" sneered Valmore's mouth.

"Hand him over!" thundered Valmore.

"Low, here, Valmore, hadn't you better wait till you're a bit cooler?"

"One of your cheek, Wharton! I'll thank you to read your own business!"

"It's not my lack, Valmore," replied Belmore, in real earnest. "We—"

"—don't talk seeing it, you know. If you don't like it, you ought to get at Courtney about it, not at us."

"If I don't like it! Oh, you rotten



Not the fellow they expected! (See Chapter 6.)

young ruff! As if any fellow— But it's no good talking to you. Who was with you?"

"Scott and Scoop," replied Skinner, in trembling tones.

"So Scoop was there?" murmured Belmore. "Just as well to know that."

"Is this true, Scott?" roared Valmore.

"I don't want to say anything about it," answered Scott sulkily.

"Rather a pity that you didn't want to that frame of mind an hour earlier!" said Delaney.

"A pity because didn't get off the railway's little' longest cut, hey?" said Mademoiselle.

"Where's Scoop?" demanded Valmore, but as you know where Scoop was—"

sneered Sidney James Murrell. As a matter of fact, he had gone to earth in a by-gone room.

"Where was it?" was Valmore's next question.

He seemed determined to know all about it. Some who heard thought that, in his place, they would have considered the loss still the better.

But Valmore did not appear to be of that mind. He was too furious to be discreet.

"In Welch's Lane," replied Skinner, "and that's all I mean to say. You can't get it any—"

"And you needn't, Valmore," said Boyd. "You can leave him to us. The Romans doesn't exactly love to spy, you know."

"Who says we were spying?" booted Delaney.

"It's a lie, whoever says it!" mumbled Scott.

"Of course it is!" said the Bonche sarcastically. "Skinner, Scott, and Scoop, by god! Could anyone in this corner believe for a moment that these such high-minded youths could be spying?"

"A chap isn't to be confounded because other fellows no better than he is take it for granted he's a spy," said Skinner, with an ugly look at the Bonche.

"I defy anyone to prove that we followed Courtney."

Delaney stepped forward.

"I don't care about telling tales," he said, smiling, "but I know you did. I wouldn't say anything, only I think the three of you are about the dirtiest set of clerks I ever struck, and it's up to me to speak."

Valmore had released Skinner now. He looked round at the faces of the crowd.

Skinner & Co. seemed to have no friends there. Even Belmore never so against them. Belmore was not a specially high-minded youth, but he drew the line somewhere.

"I'll leave the young cads to you fellows," said Valmore, with a very unpleasant smile. "I've finished it for you. They'll let them off too easily, that's all!"

He stood away. Possibly he had exaggerated the sympathy felt for him by the Romans. That man's sympathy was almost entirely with Courtney, who was a general favourite, whereas few had Valmore. The Romans did not mind Courtney's kissing Valmore's sister, and saw no particular reason why Valmore's sister should mind, though they could quite understand that having it talked about was not nice for Valmore.

What the Romans objected to was spying and tattling. It was his the telling of the story by Skinner & Co. that the man in which it was told and the way in which it had been got hold of that annoyed every fellow there with a trace of decency.

"Well, Clavering!" said Wharton. "I was in my study last night chasing the morning, taking a look down the door behind the door, when I heard Scoop's footsteps in the passage, answered the new boy. "He had just got to the door when Scott hurried up and said: 'Come along, Scoop! Skinner says the Bonche has just started!'"

"I never said anything of the sort, you lying ruff!" howled Scott.

"You've forgotten, Scott," said Skinner. "Didn't I ask you to look up Scoop and tell him to come along to my study for a game because the Bonche had just gone out?"

He told his lie with perfect composure.

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And Matt, recovering himself, backed him up at once.

"So you did!" he said. "But what's that to do with Courtney?"

"Some of those who had were half persuaded, although they knew well how late Harold Blinzer cared for the truth at any time.

But Verone-Smith spoiled the effect produced.

"Where had I started for, Blinzer?" he asked.

"I don't know. How should I? I only know I saw you go," replied the end of the Remore, slugging his shoulder.

"Well, I'm not a George Washington!" said the Remore ardently. "I've told a good many lies, and I dare say I shall tell a good many more. But I come to a decision between me and Blinzer, both of us being quite capable at a push of saying that which is not. In the particular instance, though, I haven't anything to gain by lying, and Blinzer has."

"Then you weren't out, Blinzer? I know you wouldn't come with us to Foster Junction," said Harry Wharton.

"I went up to my study directly after thinking I came up the stairs but behind Chatterbox. And I didn't fly from the place till dinner," replied the Remore.

"If Blinzer & Co. had their little game they must have cleaned matters of verminosity. And it must have been a very short game to have done this in get to Welwick Lane and back again!"

"That's good enough!" growled Johnny Ball.

"No time to attend to the others before dinner," both Chatterbox said. "If we look out when it comes to the dinner no can either keep, then."

"I don't see what we've done that you chaps should make all this fuss about it!" retorted Brett.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Flew in the Skirt!

RUPERT VALENER did not see Courtney again till both entered the Little Farns room that afternoon.

Their seats were not together, and in the presence of the Head Valence had to choose to say anything until dinner was over.

As they came out, however, Courtney fell a strong and not too friendly grip upon his arm.

"I want a word with you," spoke Valence's eyes in his eye.

Two hours it took the young dispenser to be had done precisely little work had not cooled Rupert Valence down. In fact, he was more savage than ever.

There were many reasons why he should feel grateful to Courtney. But gratitude is not a plant which thrives in any soil. Valence had little of it. For months past—though very lately he had been going slow after his expulsion and subsequent reinstatement—he had kept aloof from the class of former days.

"All right!" replied Courtney, in rather a tremulous voice. "I'll come along to your study if you like."

They went. And all the way Valence kept his grip on the other man's arm. There was sympathy in that grip. Courtney knew what it meant. But he was not released of anything he had done, and he was not willing to be so treated. The situation had been made an awkward one by the three spies. But, in any case, Courtney had meant to have a talk with Valence, and he had not expected that talk to be actively pleasant.

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Valence closed the door and turned the key in the lock when were they were inside the study. He had to release Courtney's arm to do that; but as he closed his hand he went up as if he meant to take the other man by the throat.

"Keep your temper!" said Courtney sharply. "I don't wish to quarrel with you, Rupert, but there's a limit."

"There is, and you've gone past it, by god!"

"Will you let me explain?" asked Courtney quietly.

"I don't see what possible explanation you can give. Of course, it's all very well for you. No one thinks the score of a fellow for kissing a good-looking girl. But what about the girl? Nice for her to have her name lauded about by every fellow on Greyfriars, isn't it? Vi ought to be—"

"Not a word against Vi! I can stand anything from you but that, Rupert. Don't you understand? We're not children, Vi and I. Why're you just, I know; but she's the only girl in the world for me, and that won't change, however long—or short—my life may be. And now I know that she cares for me as much as I care for her, a friend—we've always been good friends, Vi and I!"

Something of the fury went out of Valence's face. He was no child, either; and he recognized the method that spoke in Courtney's voice.

"That's all very well," he said. "I don't know what my people will say to it. I don't know that I'm keen on it myself. But I shan't make such a difference. What I see is your keeping her on the sly, and being seen by those young niggers. We don't explain to the whole school that—oh, that it's the dead straight thing, and not more sporting?"

"I'm as angry about that as you can be. And if I had said that it was not by accident they came along—"

"It was!" struck in Valence grimly. "But those young snobs don't matter. Wharfen and the rest have undertaken to attend to them, and I fancy they'll be disposed upon. It's too late to catch the yoke; but Blinzer and the rest won't be in too big a hurry to dog you again, I should say."

"Yes, we can depend upon Wharfen," said Courtney. "There's one thing that must be put straight between you and me, though, Rupert. You talk of my meeting Vi on the sly. That's not fair, to her or to me—not that I realize now." "You can't get out of it. You don't mean to pretend that my people know of it, do you?"

"No, I don't. But do they know all that Vi knows—about you, I mean?"

"The question strikes Valence. His eyes glowered heavily, and a spot of red flamed in each of his cheeks as he answered:

"So you're mixing yourself up in my affairs again!"

"You may call it that if you like," answered Courtney quietly. "But what could I do? You appealed to Vi for help, without any thought of the good it would do me here to know that you were in such a hole."

"I shall be in a dashed right wicker hole if I don't get help!" snarled Valence. "As you know so much you must be aware of that. But I don't thank Vi for willing you!"

"When could she tell help to me? Where else could she look for help, as you refused to make a clean breast of it at home?"

"You know as well as I do that that would be no use, as don't let's have any dashed cut about making a clean breast of it! That's the worst of you piece traps. You can't look at things from a

man-of-the-world point of view. Your notion is that when a chap's kicked over the traces he wants to confess and repent. Well, that's where you're off! What he wants is to get out of the rotten hole he's got into without any confessing and repenting. They're the very things he has most need of—"

"I am, Rupert! I've no claim to be considered pious, and you know it, and I haven't any notion of penitencing to you. I don't ask you to do penance or to ask yourself a reasonable dinner; but I do think it's a manly and straighter course to face anger at home rather than dog your sister into it, and ask her to help you out."

"But I haven't dragged Vi into it! I only asked her to let me have all the study she could scrape together, and you mean to say that that trifles in going to get me out of the hole? But it would help to give the worst off for a bit. Then she's no blamed innocent—"

"Hush it all, Rupert, only a man might could put it that way!"

"Along with me, by convincing the justice of the ethics, perhaps."

"Well, just it how you will, I had to explain things to her a bit. I didn't mean her to pass on the whole story to you, though."

"Don't you think you should have come to me first?" asked Courtney.

"No. Why should I?"

"Rupert. It's not my fault that we are no longer so."

"Your fault! Oh, no! You're one of the laziest men, Courtney. No one ought ever to think of blaming you for anything. But, though you're so good, I've my pride. And, though you're so generous and forgiving, I know dashed well you must have had the right of me over since the Pupper affair. If I'd done it your piece first I'd have laid the old hands with a gun, and turned it afterwards on the old who let me in for embarrassing his brutality!"

There was a longer silence in Valence's voice, but there was no good thing he wanted, yet. His head passed to late himself for that episode of the past, but he had gone over to being Courtney's ally. His pride was of the kind that would not face to magnify the contrast between them.

"It isn't true, Harold! On my honor, it's not! I won't say I had no feeling against you, but that's soon passed. What has kept us apart since has been your feeling, not mine."

"Well, let it go as that," said Valence solemnly. "The fact remains that we aren't chums, and never shall be again. And you've no more right to butt into my troubles than Whigams or North or Himmensley."

"I think I have. Anyway, my right begins where you stop Vi into them."

"Oh, dash it all, you're not married to the girl—not!"

Courtney flushed at the coarse language of that speech. But he kept his temper, though not still.

"Look here, Rupert! You told Harlow that if he didn't act like a reasonable person you'd cut the whole thing and snarl! Did you mean that?"

"How in the world did you come to know what I said Harlow?"

"Never mind that, old man. No here, the thing can't be done the way you suggested. It wouldn't be decent, but if we can bring the matter to terms between us, why shouldn't we leave her and snarl together? We're big and old and strong enough to take our place in the world. And you might find out there that that old party for us to be chosen still, in spite of all that has passed!"

Arthur Courtney speaks with cool

reflections, and in a better mood Valence might have responded. But it was evident at once that he would not respond. His lip curled in a sneer as he said:

"You've got that nice little address up with Vi, of course? Just like the sensitive notions of a silly girl, and a fellow who's so conceited to think he's punished himself for life at nightfall! You'd never make a soldier, Courtney! There's only one job for you—a farm!"

"I can stand your insults, Valence; but I've fed up with your rotten sneers at your sister, who is worth ten thousand of you."

"I can see you, I don't say. But never mind Vi. She hasn't much to do with the affair, and she'll have common little to do with you in future, if I have my way! How did you know that I spoke my thanks at joining the Army?"

"The fellow told me so himself."

"What?"

"He told me so himself. I think I spoke plainly, Valence!"

"You mean you say that you've been to him?" asked Valence, almost choking with rage.

"It was my duty to go, I consider."

"Your duty to me! Pah! What is there between us that you should owe any duty to me?"

"Not to you. To Vi."

"Keep Vi out of this, or—"

"I wish I could! It's through you that the law has dragged into it—through your weak cowardice!"

Arthur Courtney had warmed up now. His patience was all at an end.

"It's right," he said, "wrong in reproaching Heaton, but he left that Valence had been far more utterly wrong in his selfish appeal to Vi."

"Oh! me a coward, do you? Take that!"

Expert Valence's fist shot out. In spite of the warning words, Courtney was not prepared for a blow. The blow was, in fact, delivered even as the words were spoken.

It took Courtney right under the chin, and he crumpled backwards, his head striking the fender.

For a moment he lay there, unable to rise, half insensible.

Valence did not offer him a hand. He stood glaring down at him.

Courtney staggered to his feet with difficulty.

"Put your hands up!" he said hoarsely. "That was a foul blow!"

"Stop! You're shouting, man!" cried Valence, taking a step back.

"The other side has put up his hand to his head. It came away with blood when it. It struck a vessel on the vein, and it is a half-dead man."

"It's sorry," said Valence awkwardly. "It's worse meant to do that! But you graded me to it!"

"Put your hands up again!" said Courtney hoarsely.

"I tell you you've not hit me!"

"That's my look-out. Put your hands up or take a thrashing!"

"If you will have it, then—" howled Valence, and he sprang at Courtney like a tiger.

He was surprised at the reception he met. Courtney was hurt and shaken, but he still carried two more guns for Valence. Only George Wigwag knew just how good Courtney was; he knew what that straight rickshaw punch of his meant. They often looked together, but Courtney seldom put on the gloves with anyone else.

Valence took that right-hand punch, and it sent him sprawling on the table, feeling sick and giddy. But he came on again, only to stagger back once more, spinning round till the wall hit him.

"I say, what's the row in here?" demanded Wigwag's voice from outside.

"The rowest of all rows!" panted Valence hoarsely.

"You're there, Courtney, I know. What's up? You can't fight in these like two legs, you know."

"It's all right, Valence. There's been enough of this," said Courtney.

He strode over to the door. Valence gave a half-indefatigable grovel of protest, but did not strive to stop him.

"Ay! ay! who, you bleeding, old chap!" said Wigwag, closing the door behind him as he entered.

"It's all an unnecessary Courtney answered. "My head struck something, that's all."

Wigwag looked gravely at Valence's bruised and averted face.

"I need hardly ask who started it," he said. "Courtney's no braver."

"Oh, Courtney's not guilty, of course!" sneered Valence. "At least, he's only guilty of getting my sister talked about all over Greenham! That's nothing; if I had had a sister on your side, Wigwag, she'd have been laid on the line. But I ought to think it a dashed honor, I suppose? Well, I don't, and I warn Courtney here and now that I'll make him sorry for himself if he interferes in my affairs again!"

As for my sister, he shall never set eyes on her in future if I can help it!"

Courtney staggered, and his face turned dusky pale. The set on his head was a mere service one than he had realized.

"Come along, old fellow!" said Wigwag very gently, and he took his share by the arm as he spoke. "I don't want to interfere into the right way wrong of things, but I'm certain that you're not the man to do anything shameful."

Courtney went, walking with difficulty, by his head was.

Valence dropped into a chair, his face in his hands. He was ashamed of himself; he was half crazy with fear; yet he was not repentant. He was one of those stubborn natures to which nothing short of tragedy brings real repentance.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Nothing?

#### WHEN'S THE SKINNER?

The stocky voice of Bob Cherry boomed along the passage.

But the question which Bob asked was not one that could be answered by any who was not.

Somehow or other Skinner and Skat and Skoop—when Bob Cherry inquired for Skinner he meant all three—had slipped out of the Romero farmhouse at the end of the road, and had vanished.

They could not have vanished into the open. As Delany remarked, that was too much to hope for, as it would mean that they were not expected to return. That they appeared to have gone out of gates, as Tom Brown, always generous, reported their horses absent from the shed.

These days in just before tea, took that meal in Skat, and vanished again. But they might have spared themselves the trouble on this occasion. For it had been resolved to give them a Farm trial in December.

If Courtney had been a less popular fellow nothing much would have been said. Certainly the Romero would not have troubled about a Farm trial if Skinner & Co. had reported seeing Ledo or Dams or Valence appearing. But it was another matter when Courtney was concerned, and the Romero Five and some of the other fellows who happened

to know Violet Valence was heartily indulgent.

Delany had time the story of the fight between Courtney and Valence was going the rounds.

Delany had started it, though it might have been difficult to bring home to him the thought of having done so. Wigwag had said no word to anyone, not even to Heaton, who was his chosen, and Courtney's too; and naturally Valence and Courtney had not talked. But Gerald Ledo, who had heard the sounds of the scuffle, and had peeped out of his door to see Courtney laid away, bleeding and half-dead, by Wigwag, was not the fellow to keep dark such a choice bit of scandal as a fight with bare fists between two fellows of his own Form.

Valence had had the best of it, so it was said. But the sympathies of the great majority were with Courtney, whether winner or victim.

"Courtney's was the opening shot," said Harry Wharton. "The puns those side told may be true. I dare say it is, in a way it's not news. We all know he is a good fellow, but he's not a kid. He isn't a kid. He means it. Valence is an ass to quarrel with him, and a bigger ass to go round raging about it."

"You speak like an ass, Wharton," said Squiff.

"Like a sensible chap!" growled Johnny Bull. "I've no use for spouting asses. But Courtney's all right. I know that."

"Whether a winner," said Frank Deegan, "whether Courtney's going to the Cross Keys had anything to do with Valence?"

"Might have had, too," said Bob Cherry, opening his eyes widely. "Did Courtney stand by that rather, please in a way that no other fellow ever born would have done, and he might be doing it again."

"Valence's particular vanity isn't particularly so much as posing," remarked Squiff thoughtfully. "But he's quite enough of an all-round center for that to be just. If I were Courtney, I'd be like sick or swim by myself this time, though."

"It's because of his sister, if he's doing it," said Wharton.

Nobody answered that. It appears there understood by Courtney till Harry Wharton's words he expected to.

He had done much and borne much for Polse Harvillans, and all that he had done and borne had been for the sake of Heaton's Farm.

Skinner & Co. did not enjoy the hour of prep. Clavering had not a word to say to Skat and Skoop; but the Bowdler looked to Skinner. It was not talk that Skinner stood by that rather, please in a way that no other fellow ever born would have done, and he might be doing it again."

They were in something like a state of panic by that time. During the interval between prep and bed-time Skat had ideas about in the bathroom. Billy Baxter, sitting round, had found them there, and had virtuously reported his find to the Romero Five. The reward of virtue in this particular instance was a harp. Baxter thought it most unfair.

Nobody spoke to the three when they struck into the dormitory. But Delany major avoided at them, and Valence Smith grinned awkwardly. Even below like Trevor and Trellis and Elton, generally to be found on the wrong side when they declared themselves at all, had not a word to say for the night.

Skinner was not a fellow who could not understand it. They had done far worse things—from their point of view—without incurring the general condemnation of the Form in anything like this extent.

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North came along to get out lights. After he had gone there was a loud infernal of brass in the dormitory. It was just just to be in time for a heavy all night rain. A perfect night blow in again.

But in about ten minutes the Bunsome slept sharply.

"Time you came up to the attic, Skinner! Skin out!"

"There was no reply. The Bunsome himself got out of bed. He fished an electric torch upon Skinner's bed.

Skinner's bed was empty!

"Skin's done a bunk!" said Ogilvy at the same moment.

"No hot Snop?" announced Spoff.

No one had heard the three go. They must have been very cautious and silent. And they had wanted no time.

"Looks almost as if they didn't want to be took," said Bunsome.

"It doesn't matter much what they want," said Johnny Bull. "They may get it off a little, but they've got to go though it."

"We shall have to find them first, though," Peter Todd said.

This could not be denied.

"Wonder whether they've done a bunk?" said Hallowell.

"Not likely! They haven't the ghost!" answered Dick Hallowell solemnly.

"I don't think running away is very smart," said Harry Wharton, as he thrust his legs through his trousers.

"Not to start?" said Hallowell.

Wharton was not the only one who was sleeping. At least a dozen were also dozing. The parents so lately called. If the trio who were wanted went to their search, they would have to find some one waking first, for the search was bound to be thorough.

The bedroom was tried first, and skunk blank. Vernon Smith, Spoff, and Delaney went down to the study floor, while the Fatman, Five Tom Brown, Peter Todd, and Mark Lingle made further investigations there. Belmore started, struck by a bright idea—an unusual occurrence with him—insisted on going down to the Fern-parlors, and Ogilvy and Hallowell went with him.

The three were not in the studies. They were not, as far as search could make certain, on the dormitory floor.

But Belmore's notion turned out to have something in it.

"Where's the other potter?" demanded Perry Hallowell roughly.

"He don't know anything about him," replied Spoff.

"Not a word!" said Hallowell. "Just you better show Belmore!" If he was not yet got to be the worst of the three.

"Oh, yes!" We don't!" avoided the body of the Bunsome.

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had some something for which he had come to feel grateful.

"I know. Oh, look here! I'll tell you if you let me off!" he looked Spoff.

"What up, you snook?" said Spoff severely.

"Punk! Oh, you funk, Snop!"

hunted Jolly Snop.

"I don't care what you call me. It won't really say fault that I was in this affair at all," said Snop impatiently.

"I didn't want to be, and I told Skinner that it would be best to keep it dark."

"You can say all that when it comes to the point," Bob Cherry said impatiently.

"The question you've got to answer now is, where's Skinner?"

"I believe he's run away!"

"Don't take any notice of him. I don't believe anything of the sort!" said Spoff.

"Well, that's what to tell me was going to do. You know he did, don't?"

"Yes. That's one reason why I don't believe it. Skinner isn't the best hand at telling the truth that I know."

"Well, he's gone out. I know that much," Spoff persisted.

"How did he get asked Johnny Bull?"

"By the back-room window, I suppose."

"He didn't, then! We were in there only a few minutes ago, and the window was fastened."

"Perhaps one of those two that it often has," suggested Kippo.

"We didn't. But he's gone. I expect he's slipped out since you were there," Snop said.

"I know he was going to his study first to get some of his things."

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Spoff.

"You know just what you don't believe a word of all that, if he did say so?"

"But did he say so?" asked Frank Spoff.

"I'm not going to tell you anything," answered Peter Todd.

"I'll tell about to the best man and see," volunteered Bob Cherry.

He came back in a minute or two.

"There as if there's something in it," he said.

"Skinner's dog is barking. Nothing better over happened for Greenham?"

"Oh, he'll come back!" greeted Johnny Bull.

"I suppose we can't say we'll go on with the trial of these two certain tonight!"

"I don't see how," replied Wharton.

"Skinner was leader, that's pretty certain, as Skiff and Snop were the others concerned. But my opinion is that he'll slip back as soon as he thinks we are asleep. He may be hiding in the wood shed now. I note that some of us go and wait for him in the back room!"

"Hood, hood!" said the Bunsome.

"Meanwhile, these two can sit on the floor and wait."

"Oh, let the average get back to help Wharton said. "No, don't you or I Skiff!"

"You aren't too fit yet, Bunsome!"

"We five will go," said Johnny Bull decisively.

And it was the Famous Five who set to watch for Skinner's return. They made up objection, in spite of the cold, some of the others thought of it, cold at all.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Not Skinner, After All!

ALTHOUGH COURTNEY had not expected that he would rather be alone, and the skipper had let him in his own study, after snoring and snoring the sound at the back of his head.

George Hallowell's hands did that were very good and very definite, and he did not make a single mistake. He was a real class, Courtney felt.

But Wiggins did not go without leaving more of the trouble.

"I suppose you've heard the rumour that's gone round?" Courtney asked.

"Yes. But didn't tell me anything unless you choose, did you?"

"I'd rather. You will understand, anyway. Skinner said Spoff and Snop came upon me with Courtney when they'd dugged me, I'm pretty certain, though I can't think why. You know how things are with me, Wiggins. But we didn't want because of that—I mean, I didn't want her to meet me on the spot. It was something else."

"Oh, I know! That idiot Valence has been getting into trouble again. What ever about it, he's coming to me. Let me show's exactly how Valence thought they are kinds of a feather, and Leder has a poisonous tongue."

"Don't think of Valence as Leder's set, George! He isn't that."

"He's not worth the trouble you take over him, Arthur! Let him avalanche out of the hole himself, if he can! If he can't, and comes a professor, I shan't pity him. He runs nothing about the good name of the school. Let him slip!"

"But there's W!"

"Yes, I know that. Pity such a toping girl ever had such a rotten of a brother, I say! But it does make a difference," W said.

"You really care for the girl, did you?"

"Can you doubt it? I care more for her than for all the rest of the world. W!"

"Then there's no more to be said, I know. You think it's up to you, and I'm not denying it. In those any way I can help! I wouldn't say a single word to Valence. Just let it go for his sake. And then, nothing I wouldn't do for you, Arthur!"

It was not George Wiggins's was to express his feelings so plainly as that. He really had no intention to be spoken. But later he was glad—very glad in the midst of a great sorrow—that he had spoken those words. Courtney might have understood without them, for so loyal and generous a friend as he always knew what friendship meant. For it was what they should have been said.

"I'll ask you if there's anything, old chap. But I don't see how you could help me," said Courtney.

"Valence wants my interference, and he would be capable that over if he thought I just talked him over with you."

"Right! Only come to me if there's anything, as soon as you can. And don't trouble about Valence's feelings, or expect any gratitude from him for anything you do. You won't get it!"

With that Wiggins went, and Courtney lay by the fire alone, thinking, thinking hard.



For all the trouble he had faced, and not yet paid, his thoughts were not steady yet.

How could that be while Val's Valence's life has flared before his startled vision? That day had marked an epoch in Arthur Courtney's life. He left as though Christmas and birthdays had passed in the past. And he longed yet to be able to carry out the plan he had laid over weeks. He longed that he and his brother might yet come to real, no-draw friendship, where friendship counts for so much. Over three, where passion is primary, respect Valence might yet wipe out the stains upon him, and prove himself a man.

Somebody tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said Courtney.

It was Nagert's maid who appeared, looking very cross. It was not the usual way of the valuable Dicky to look serious. But the Second greatly, though despising anything in the nature of espionage, were for Courtney. And he felt just then that a girl's mood had been out of place.

"Not for you, Courtney?" he said.

He threw a glance too close excepting into the perfectly hands.

"A letter brought it," said Dicky. "Gert and Myra and me—I, I remember at the girls. One of those things she long round the Cross Keys, he was. I told Gert and Myra not to say a word to a licensed soul. They won't split, Courtney."

"Thanks, kid! But don't you go finding that I want you—"

"Oh, I know, Courtney! You ain't that awfully kind here, you know, it's all my well—Valence's side is a jolly nice bit—"

"That's enough, young Nagert!" There was more than a suspicion of sag in Courtney's tone, but Dicky did not resent it.

"I suppose I oughtn't to have said anything about the girl," he told himself in his next thoughts. "She's not so much really when they're in love. Couldn't wonder if I might be useful, but she really is a mischief girl, though she has a real of a brother. Hope old Courtney won't get mixed up with that Cross Keys gang through him. He's jolly innocent for a chap of his age, and he'd do him down, for a cut. He'd think it cheek if I offered him a bit of advice. But I bet I know more about it than out of things than he does, though I ain't particularly proud of it."

Courtney opened the dirty note as soon as Nagert's maid had gone.

It was from Jerry Hays, as he predicted, and in spite of Dicky's protest about his innocence, Courtney was asked enough to guess that the blackguard had been making inquiries about him, and had come to the conclusion that it was worth while being civil.

He had not been at all civil at their other interview. But it was likely enough that he had learned since then that Courtney was a rich man, and that Courtney was his heir. Lots of people knew that, and fellows of Hays's type had their own ways of finding out such things.

Hays addressed him as "Dear Mr. Courtney," and asked for another interview. He suggested half-past ten as a suitable time, and the Cross Keys as a suitable place.

Courtney shut neither the note nor place. But he had no hesitation as to what he'd do.

He read on, of course. If anything could be done by August Valence, it could be done—by Val's Valence!

He was in one and spoke to no one during the rest of the evening. When he was starting out he found that he had a card on the table in the small side-



"Good-bye!" (See Chapter 10.)

gate. Each of the perfect had one of these keys, but it was very seldom Courtney used his.

It did not matter much, he thought. He could easily get out by the back-door window and the back-door way known to him of old, as a junior.

By that way he went, not quite liking it, but performing it to avoid the loss of a key from any of his colleagues.

From a door close to that of his study Harold Skinner watched him go. The fact that the perfect had on coat and cap deepened the crackly mystery that he was likely to be away some time. And that just suited Skinner.

The end of the Remore had never had the least intention of running away. He had told Fritz and Snoop that the one way to get the derelict trial postponed was for one or more of them to be searched for in vain. They could not all hide successfully, he said; but one of them could manage it all right, and that would serve the purpose of the others.

To Snoop he said something about running away, guessing that Snoop would let it out. Skinner's loyalty was not a very certain quantity; but there was nothing doubtful about the loyalty of Sidney James Snoop. He did not know the meaning of the word!

Skinner had stolen down to the Sixth Floor passage, while his enemies had gone elsewhere. Carter's study was empty, its occupant being with Loder and Walker. These Skinner had hidden himself.

But it was no very secure refuge. Carter might return at any moment, so Skinner was glad to shift his quarters to Courtney's study.

He wrapped himself up in an old corner of the perfect's, and put himself to bed under the table. The fire was burning quite nicely, and the fact that the floor was harder than his bed in the Remore dormitory did not trouble him.

For if he were there he would not be in bed, and he did not mean to return there until there was a fair chance that someone should be asleep.

What—? anything—happened to Fritz and Snoop in the meantime was not his concern.

Skinner fell asleep in a very few minutes. The sleep of the just is soundly a pleasure; the subject often sleep quite as well.

Courtney had gone on his habitual mission. The Fatness Five waited in the box-room for the return of Skinner, who had not come out. And the three who were to be tried for spring all slept—Snoop and Fritz in their beds; Skinner, as usually as they, under the table in Arthur Courtney's study.

"We might just as well have waited in the dorm," said Frank Nagert, shivering.

"I am thickly of the opinion of my honorable claim," perred Harve Hagg, doing likewise.

"Well, we should have died off sleep," said Johnny Bell.

"There ain't any blessed chance of doing that here!" said Bob. "I say, jolly, you'd better get back to bed. And Fritz, too. We shall have you both laid up and a nice sort of thing that will be!"

"If you can stand it, I suppose I can, Bob!" answered Frank irritably.

"Not so sure, my naps! Hello, hello, hello! Someone's coming! Get your electric torch ready, Harry!"

Someone was coming. Against the darkness of the window something red looked showed, shining out the light steadily.

They had kept a bright vigil, but it was over at last. Not one of the five had any doubts that in another minute or so

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the electric Skinner would be in their grip.

So they stood silent in the darkness while the streamer was pushed up, and the fellow outside dropped in.

Then they made a rush for him. No grave, sharp sound of engine, except for faint humming, and

"The light of the electric torch flashed. "My boy! It's Courtney!" cried Wharton.

The rest fairly staggered in surprise. Wharton gave Courtney a hand to help him rise.

"What are you justice doing here?" asked the prefect.

Had it been Lander or Curtis, Walker or Valmore, these would have been a ready and quite easy report. A question of that sort hardly rattle well from a fellow who had just obviously been out on some secret errand.

But it was Courtney!

That made all the difference. They believed in Courtney. The story of his having been seen coming out of the Cloak Keyway had not been such a myth. And what had not shaken it. No higher testimony than that to the life Arthur Courtney had led at Grayfriars could have been asked for.

They had never known him anything but straight and generous, and there were not going to believe him anything else now.

As they stood before him almost breathless, he had still the perfect composure over them.

It was Wharton who spoke. "We were looking for a fellow in our form," he said. And on his eyes there was a smile as though he Courtney not to ask for the fellow's name.

Harry never knew what else Courtney understood it. All that was sure was that he did not ask.

"He did not ask to see?" he said sharply. "He did not explain by as much as a word his own position.

They went. Courtney accompanied them along the passage, but did not turn back when they stood in at the dormitory door.

"It's gone! He's like a fellow who's had such a shock that nothing coming after it matters," whispered Frank to Harry.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Skinner Heard!

**F**RANK MURPHY was right! Courtney had had a shock—an awful shock.

He had known that Hapery Valmore was not straight, but he had never suspected anything else as black as this.

The whole world had seemed to be reeling when he learned the truth from Harry Haxley.

Hapery Valmore a forger!

And Haxley his senior believed it anything but a forgery. Not for a moment had he been deceived.

There was evidence enough. He had seen the cheque. Nothing could be more certain than that it had never been drawn by Mr. Valmore. As Courtney was well aware, Valmore had been ready to do anything rather than have the people at home know of the hole into which he had fallen.

And Haxley his senior believed it anything but a forgery. Not for a moment had he been deceived.

Little wonder that Valmore had sneered Courtney's performance!

He would have known he knew as **THE MERRY LIBRARY**—No. 327.

Little about such things; he could play upon her affection. But he knew that Arthur Courtney's clear sight was not to be dimmed. If Courtney was so unkind to know anything, he would soon know everything, and because of that he must not be allowed to help.

What was to be done? Haxley's demands were such as could not be met. V's position, all that Courtney himself could raise by the aid of Wingate and other chums, would weigh but lightly in the balance.

Courtney never gave another thought to the Famous Five after they were gone out of his sight.

More than ever he felt now that the end of his long, good time at Grayfriars had come. It had been a good time, and so dearly as ever he loved the old school. He would rather reach rather than disgrace should fall upon it. But even for Grayfriars he did not care as he could for V.

"I must see him! I can't go to bed leaving it like this!" he muttered, peering up and down his study.

He looked at his mattress, for his footstep smokes nicotine. But because he was quite still under the table.

"Something jolly serious is up!" he told himself. "I don't know that I want to hear about it, but it looks as if I should have to. And after all, you never know what may be useful."

The door knob turned sharply, and peering from under the table, Haxley saw that Courtney had gone out of the room.

He hesitated whether to stay where he was or to attempt to escape.

It would be safer to stay lower; also he should be less likely to be seen if he should be seen. On the whole, it seemed to him best to stay.

Footstep sounded in the passage. Courtney and Valmore entered the room together.

Skinner curled himself well up, and opened his eyes widely.

"I don't care to discuss it with you at all," were the first words he heard.

"But you must know. For it's asking for your people—for your own!"

"Look here, what have you been fooling out? I should never have thought you'd play the spy, Courtney!"

"Oh! is what you like—though you know well enough it was not spying. I know all there is to know, I think. Anyway, it seems impossible that anything would remain behind!"

There was bitterness in that speech; but, all the same, there was the true spirit of unselfish friendship in it.

Skinner, hearing, quite understood that the speaker meant to stand by Valmore, but Valmore understood that it hardly seemed like it.

"And now, I suppose, you intend to give me away?" he said.

"I intend to get you out of this mess if it's any way to be done!"

"You don't seem it, Arthur! You can't—"

"I mean it! There's nothing I won't do—in honour! But I don't see a way to it."

"If I could get that thing from Haxley—"

"No good thinking of that! He will hang us to it for all his worth! And you're badly enough disposed already without trying anything will make desperate!"

"Not so sure of that! The boy's given to the boy, Arthur, do you think he knew you had—"

Valmore paused.

There was bitterness in Courtney's words again as he looked the sentence for him.

He was not really shocked, he had no one to blame but his own degree in the world outside. He thought for a moment to get the sack out of his school; but schoolmasters ask things that judges don't need before a prison bar!

Under the table Skinner drew a long deep breath, and trembled with excitement.

There was news indeed! Valmore was a forger!

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to wonder breathing that that he slept, but he had his way, in spite of the weight on his mind and his heart. He had washed the inside of his consciousness, and it came curiously.

It came curiously to Skinsay as well as to Courtney.

Not that Skinsay went to sleep when he was. But as soon as he was sure it was safe to stir out, and up through the dark passage to the Remover's chamber, where he found no one there.

What he had heard did not keep him from sleeping. Why should it, when it had no dangerous hint?

### THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

WHAT Skinsay Told!

"**H** ALLO, halo, halo!"  
The stair-bell had clanged out; but Harold Skinsay still slept.

He had no chance of sleeping much longer, though. For Bob Cherry stood over him, a sponge dipped in lavender water in his hand.

"Wakeup!"

Skinsay awoke with a startled cry. The sponge had descended a second time, and he came to consciousness from a dream in which he was an Arctic explorer, and had fallen into an ice-berg. It was not a pleasant dream; but Skinsay did not see like the usual march here.

"Where did you get to last night, Skinsay?" asked the Remover.

"That's my affair. You're not the only fellow who has private business and that, Skinsay! Keep that snug away from me, Cherry, you tell!"

"Here an account of yourself, or you'll not it again!" boomed Bob.

"Leave the end alone, Bob," said Wharton quietly. "We'll see to it that he doesn't give up the slip to-night!"

"Rightish! There's money still wanting. I'll drive him up with the gold news that he does get Skinsay hasn't really done a leak," Bob replied, grinning.

Skinsay did not appear delighted either with the whispering or the news which he heard.

"What do I care?" he remarked. "Sooner than Skinsay could do would be to beat out! I should never have been in all this trouble if it hadn't been for him—I know that! Though I can't for the life of me see why you fellows should make me a fly about it!"

"Then you need making out!" growled Bob.

"I wouldn't bother about a trial if that was the only reason for it," said Donald Ogby, looking up from his basin.

"You'll never make any of the others see that. It's not worth the trouble. But I'm all for the trial, all the same. I know they ought to be put through it to bring such case, whether they can help it or not!"

What they had not been legal, but which expressed the sentiments of most of the Removers with fair accuracy. There was really no hope of inducing Skinsay to do. It is the error of their ways; no hope of their amendment. But, all the same, they had to be punished!

Skinsay devoted a good deal of thought during the day to the problem at how to evade punishment.

"They're as fixed on it as any!" he muttered to himself over his empty tea. "Can't think why they should care. A fine would never have expected them to take it like this. What can I do?"

"All alone, Skinsay?" he said softly.

"I've been none too with you, if you like."

"But I do mind!" growled Skinsay.

"Get you for me!"

"Oh, really, Skinsay! You shouldn't talk like that to the only pal you've got in the Firm! I'll have some ribs, I don't suppose it's up to much. But they're sure to make these days! But I will be better than nothing. And I'm practically staying. I am Skinsay go to No. 1, so I know you'd be all alone."

Butter did not trouble to ret the ribs. There was only half a pound or so left, and he took the lump. Skinsay did not protest. He merely eyed his visitor with look half angry.

"I'm a pal of yours, Skinsay, you know," went on Butter, with his mouth full of ribs. "I don't see a bit what they want to try you for because you happened to see old Courtney kissing Valence's sister. Or, he, he! But they mean to do it. And Skinsay's parading with those sting retires about the terrace they're going to put you through. I heard them."

"I'll not a word from Skinsay."

"Courtney's a soft idiot," rumbled on Butter. "He's let Valence knock him about because he's a penny or two. Would I take me! But there won't be much more of that. Valence's number will be going up pretty soon, I'll bet! It's all over the school that he's in the merry jokers of a mess with some of the Great Key gang!"

"What's meant Skinsay."

"Mean to say you haven't heard? Why, everyone knows, I should think, even that silly son Chawring—he and Russell and Ogby were talking about it a few minutes ago."

"Oh, get out of this! I don't want any of your rotten tales! Out! Do you hear?"

Butter, having swallowed the last mouth of ribs, got all his feet and came for. He called out now, scrambling.

A sudden thought had flashed across Skinsay's brain.

"They don't know it all, that's a good one!" he said to himself. "And if they had heard anything they wouldn't believe me. But, as it is—Now, I wonder if there's any way of saving my own skin in this?"

He thought hard, and he came to the conclusion that there was.

To expose him it might have seemed that his plan would at best merely postpone his punishment. But even that was something, and Skinsay had hopes of more. If, in addition, he could get another dose not burn at white heat long among boys of fifteen or so. Let another twenty-four hours pass, and half the Removers would be willing to allow the matter to lapse. Time, Skinsay thought, was on his side.

So he went up to bed with his place carefully laid. He brushed on word to Scott or Snoppy, the Removers might try and condemn Skinsay and Snoppy for all Harold Skinsay cared.

Wingate saw light out. His "Good night!" lacked the accustomed cheerfulness. The skipper of Greyfriars was troubled.

"Open the door, someone!" said Skinsay, as soon as Wingate had made exit.

"I'm there!" scolded the voice of Scott.

"There's no need!" spoke up Skinsay. "I've not going to be in danger now to-night. You'll forget all about your petty trial when I've told you what I've got to do!"

He spoke boldly. His words rang with assurance.

"If we believe it?" snuffed the Remover.

"I don't think you'll doubt it," replied

Skinsay quietly. "I didn't mean to tell it, but by accident I heard. But I've thought it over, and it seems to me that if some of you fellows don't do something, the worst thing that ever happened to Greyfriars is going to happen tonight!"

"What! Worse than your coming here?" asked Vernon Smith earnestly. "Must be pretty bad, then?"

"Oh, you can dry up! I don't expect you to believe, Skinsay! But Wharton will!"

"Having a more cautious belief than I have—that!"

"If this is proof, Skinsay—"

"It isn't, speak, Wharton!" said Skinsay quietly.

And again he spoke as though he were alone. Perhaps, in a way, he was. Little did Harold Skinsay care for Greyfriars. But his own matter was real to him; and he did not believe that Valence would keep that promise if he were tempted to break it.

"Oh, on, on," said Wharton.

"I've not going to show a thing like this out; you'll understand that when you hear it," said Skinsay. "Anyone who needs to hear must come close."

Wharton was dressed hastily, and nearly all the Removers crowded round Skinsay's bed.

The story he told was a queer mixture of truth and falsehood. He told them of the fatigue—there were whistles of shock and surprise when they heard that, but for disbelievers—and of Valence's threat to attempt getting back the jumped subject by force or ruse—how, after a long time, he had decided to tell them of the promise given; and he represented Courtney as having said that he would his hands of the whole affair.

"A very legitimate plan, Skinsay!" said old Remover snuggly. "I should like to know how you came to get hold of it, though."

"I hid from your charge in Courtney's study," confessed Skinsay. "I was under the table, and couldn't help hearing."

"Well, I for one don't care to get on anything heard in that way," the Remover said. "I'm going back to bed. Take no notice of him, Wharton. It's a pack of lies!"

But Harry Wharton felt that the Remover's showed judgment was at fault here.

"Suppose it shouldn't be, Skinsay?"

"I'm not going to suppose anything of the sort. Skinsay can't tell the wool over my eyes! Are we going to try that three times?"

"I think—"

"Rightish! If you're going to start thinking, old Scott, I'm off back to bed. It's no good out here for that!"

"I suppose, what do you say?" asked Harry.

"Well, it's likely enough Skinsay's lying. He generally is," said the down-right Bob. "But he may not be. And I've got up to me to do what we'd do if we believe him. We can take it out of his hide afterwards if he has lied."

"You say Valence means to go to-night, Skinsay?" asked Harry.

"That's what he said."

"Well, he won't have gone yet. It's too early for burglary. And he'll go by the box-room, for certain. We can see a guard there. He must be stopped somehow."

"I'll go to the box-room now," volunteered Tom Brown.

"Right-ho, Brewery! Someone shall come and relieve you in half an hour or so."

The New Escalator junior departed, and a number of the rest took counsel. The Master Lament.—No. 100.



together. But the Bouncer stayed in his bed.

"I'm out of this!" he said. "Skinner can't lead me!"

#### THE NINTH CHAPTER.

##### The Night of the Raid!

### "COURTNEY!"

It was the Bouncer who spoke, shaking the prefect by the shoulder as he lay in his bed in the dormitory of his study.

"What is it? Is that Veron-Smith?"

"Yes. Get up at once! Valence has gone to the Cross Keys, and a lot of fellows from my Form are after him to stop him. Skinner said you'd washed your hands of the whole affair—and so we could let you get it back, but it seemed to me you ought to know."

Arthur Courtney was wide awake now. He leaped out of bed, and began at once to dress. The Bouncer had switched on the light.

"Skinner! What was Skinner know about it?" he asked wonderingly.

"He was under the table last night. It's a long yarn. No time to tell it all now. Wharton took the job of stopping Valence in hand. I stood out. With a bang, for they're making no mistake. They have kept a watch in the back-room. But now they had he's gone by some other way. He isn't in his bed, that's a cert, for I've looked myself. I say, I'll go with you."

"What are Wharton and the rest doing?" asked Courtney, hurrying on his clothes.

"They're after him—a crowd of them. Wharton, Cherry, Nagel, Jessy, Sligh, Bill, Fred, Tom, Ross, and D'Agon—may be one or two more, but I think that's all."

"But why?"

"They know. At least, they have heard Skinner's yarn about the forged cheque Hawke holds. My Jove, it's true! I see it in your face!"

"Yes, it's true—but we can't go into that just now. Come along! If only I can get at him before he utters this mad thing!"

The Bouncer's shrewdness had failed him in one particular—not in all. He had not believed Skinner's statement that Courtney had washed his hands of the whole affair; that would not have been like Courtney. And it was this doubt that led him to the prefect's bedroom.

Later, he regretted that he had gone armed for it with a grief he would have believed him capable of feeling. Yet he knew he had done right—alone at that moment, when he had had his aid. And in that, at least, there was comfort. In the passage someone spoke, rather nervously.

"It's me—Courtney! I don't want to see an interference; but they'll go with you fellows. There's a raid on! I believe I heard the great in the distance just now!"

"All the same, beware who you shouldn't come," said Courtney, standing at his door by the sound of the anti-aircraft gun.

He heard these two, and he was almost glad to hear them. Surely this would put back Valence from his old occupation!

But he saw the need of haste, and in his haste he thought little of either of the prefects. But when he was outside the school was, by bright moonlight, they were still with him.

They were still with him a moment later, for he was out to Friarville with the speed of a deer. Kiva Clowery said "V" was the sign with him and the Tax Myster Lancer.—No. 291.

Bouncer, not long out of amateurism, was left behind by Clowery.

The hours of the game came to all three. At first Courtney looked a little; his mind was in a turmoil. That Valence's secret should have become known—that he should have gone after his promise—that the Revenue should have followed to prevent him—it was all like some wild nightmare. The air raid seemed a trivial thing—a circumstance of no real importance at all.

Courtney ran on. The constant gun of all week firing now; the hostile aircraft must be close at hand.

Through his mind there flashed the thought of the loyal peasant who had gone out on an errand of mercy for the old soldier's wife. It was not for Valence's sake, he knew; they had no reason to care for Harry Valence.

He must lead them—get them under cover somewhere. Valence had enough on his head already. If anything happened to Wharton or any of the rest it would make matters a thousandfold worse!

Boom, boom, boom!

Through the dense air the sound of the gas came as it comes very near. And now Courtney was aware of another sound, a far more ominous one—the drone of powerful engines somewhere above.

He looked, and looked up.

There they were, very plainly visible in the moonlight, flying under way low. They had passed the coast some, and knew that there was comparatively little for further delay.

Three of them—three of the newest aeroplanes, not to speak a lone reconnoiter on a possible and alarming countryside! They seemed to hover over Friarville.

Clowery saw them, too, and Vernon-Smith in Clowery's room. But no more than Courtney did either think of turning back.

The Bouncer was regretting bitterly that he had not gone with Wharton and the rest. It would have been better to shanty danger they had to face.

There was no such thought in Clowery's mind. He had not been asked to join the expedition. Perhaps he could not have explained why he held on now, instead of returning to the school and to cover.

Crank!

That was a bomb, not a gun! Courtney stood on. He had reached the village now.

"Courtney!"

It was Harry Wharton's voice that hailed him. He called up at once.

The crowd of juniors nearest took from a shout; they had obeyed the natural instinct to take cover. The shot would not have served any sort of safeguard in the event of a direct hit; but it afforded a decent link in an off-shoot, and far more deaths and injuries result from the failure to take cover against the fragments of exploding shells.

"Get back!" said Courtney sharply.

"You're back in there—nothing in Friarville that would stand up against a bomb that dropped fairly on it! They're very close."

"Just up above us, and not far above, either," said Wharton softly.

His eye was upturned.

Most of the rest was looking up, too. There was no faint among them. This was not their first air-raid, and in any case they were not the lucky set.

"Here, Valence!" asked the prefect.

"No," replied Johnny Ball. "That's certain he's out somewhere. He wasn't in his study."

He looked up at the sky.

"Hello, hello, hello!" said Bob Cherry.

"Here's another of them! Not one left on back, are you, Courtney?"

"No. Come with Courtney, but get along! Vernon-Smith's back. Where's Courtney? Off to it!"

The senior had gone on. The G. Keys was lost a couple of hundred paces or so ahead. If Valence were there, that surely he could not be!

"No good standing here," said Bob Cherry.

Crash!

A bomb had fallen within a very distance of them. They heard the sound of falling masonry, and saw fragments thrown into the air. But there came a shriek of pain or fear. The house in which they were, empty.

"Hi! Where are you going, Courtney?"

The new fellow did not answer. He was following Courtney.

"Where's the Bouncer?" said Vernon-Smith.

Vernon-Smith was wondering far more than Clowery had been. But he was gone.

"Where's Courtney?" he jerked out.

"Gone, too," answered Frank Brown. The Bouncer did not seem half-breath. He ran on also. And all three followed. It was impossible to a where they were while affairs no through it was difficult to see what could be done by going on.

"Great Kite! It's the Cross Keys, it's on its side!" gasped Tom Brown.

Above, the driving noise was all audible; but it was leaving in value. The House were making their way further inland. They had begun to run on foot than little Friarville. But a very way over the village they had dropped their loads and one of them, an ordinary bomb—had struck it.

Cross Keys!

Outside the inn stood a crowd of frightened and gasping villagers. It was not necessary for their thinking, about some were at work fetching water.

As the juniors came up they at Courtney make a dash into the burning building.

"Come back!" shouted a hoarse voice.

"You'll go to your death! You can't get a chance!"

"Upstairs, if you will go—first run on the right!" howled another man, which the Bouncer recognized as that Jerry Hawk.

Courtney dashed on, and disappeared into the inferno of smoke and dust; then down.

"He's in there—Valence!" shouted Clowery. "There's been a row. I don't understand what happened; but they put him in the inn in a hot-room and forgot all about him when he left, the coward!"

"That's our fault!" piped Chalk, he leashed of the Cross Keys shrill.

"What right had he to break in?" he asked, coming for their thinking.

"I don't know what he's got!" cried Harry Wharton.

"Oh, great beyond! Courtney! We must help him!"

"Come on!" cried the Bouncer.

No one was ever known whether he at Wharton or Courtney was first, both the burning building. No one had the right to think about it, for they talked to one man, Bob Cherry and David, Tom Brown, and Peter Todd, Frank Nagel, and Mark Lister—not one long back!

They might not be able to help. They were not men that they could help. But they were game to share Courtney's risk, even if they were not.

"Stop!" pointed Wharton. "We can't do anything till they get down, and we'll wait on the stairs now!"

He looked up at the sky. As if he had heard. They all stood and waited.



Amongst Collectors, the story has given rise to much controversy which goes beyond the particular issue and into the whole field of Pentelov's writings.

#### EXTRACTS .....

#### *J. W. WHEWAY – An Appreciation by Frank Vernon Lay*

*John Nix Pentelov, Wheway's boss for a number of years, he speaks of him in terms of great affection, one might almost say love. We, in the C.D. have always regarded Pentelov with, shall we say, mixed feelings. As perhaps a man who pushed himself forward at the expense of others, a sentimentalist and a bit of an "old woman". But Wheway gives us a different picture – sentimental, yes, but in the real old-fashioned way. A man who would help anybody – he played the Good Samaritan to many and could seldom refuse a call for assistance. Although he and Hamilton can scarcely be said to have been friendly they both endeavoured to impart in their writings those ideals of conduct which can be best summed up in that now out-dated phrase "he's a white man even if his name is ink!" And this brings us to rather a peculiar paradox. Hamilton, the doyen of the writers, the man who taught them all the tricks, was a born gambler, and a snob to boot. He appears to have made very few, if any, firm friends and to have fallen out with several of his colleagues. Yet Pentelov's memory is revered by those who knew him well. As the man wrote, so he was – a "Very Gallant Gentleman"?*

\*\*\*\*\*

*About this time Wheway wrote two of the famous Mapleton Rover stories that were published under the Richard Randolph pseudonym of Pentelov, and it is a tribute to Pentelov that Wheway to this day regards it as a very great honour to have been allowed to write them and have them published as having been written by Pentelov himself.*

Extracts taken from the Collectors Digest Annual (1966).

#### *CONTROVERSIAL ECHOES by Laurie Sutton*

*I am fascinated by those editorials in which ill-spelt and abusive letters from readers (and others!) were published. However, I don't think it would be quite fair to lay all the blame on H. A. Hinton, even though this policy commenced under his rule. J. N. Pentelov wrote editorials both before and after he took over Hinton's chair, and abusive letters were featured frequently in JNP's chats.*

*You will agree that it does not follow that a controlling editor, although responsible for editorials and the views expressed therein, actually writes them himself. I have noticed that "the firm confident signature, YOUR EDITOR" was certainly used under JNP editorials (for classic examples see Gem 494-6), and Pentelov also wrote under that picture of the editor in his den (see Gem 612, 616, 638-9).*

*The blunt (and often cruel) replies to readers; the conceited self-importance; the moralizing; the ponderously serious outlook, all fit in with the image of JNP as given by his stories.*

*Apart from his unique style, Pentelov has his special vocabulary by which he can be recognized immediately. Chief among the latter is his obsession with the word "notion". Nobody ever had an idea in a Pentelov story – it is always a notion, and a word that the average author may not have cause to use in months is strewn consistently like a trademark through everything that JNP writes. In studying scores of Pentelov stories I have yet to find one in which the word "notion" fails to appear; it is used not only in full-length stories, but in every short instalment of weekly serials such as "Gogger", "Franklinham", "Luck of the Game", "Twins from Tasmania", and in short stories in the "Popular". It even appears frequently in short editorials, features, and in the "Greyfriars Gallery". Examples from JNP editorials are: "A very jolly stole notion ....", "..... give you some sort of notion ...."; "..... this notion"; etc., etc.*

Extract taken from the Collectors Digest, No.219 March 1965.

#### *A STUDY OF SUBSTITUTION by Laurie Sutton*

*It requires a painful effort to read through many of Pentelov's substitute stories – just words, words, words, with plots either non-existent or so tangled up that I, at least, give up trying to work out what it's all about. Actually, JNP was quite out of his depth in writing for a weekly paper; he should have concentrated on a few long, long hard-backs. Even so his style was about fifty years out of date even at the time when he was writing. I have remarked before on his obsession with the word "notion", and how every one of his stories contains its quota of from half-a-dozen to a score. These things are spotlighted by studying the stories and taking out thousands of phrases as I have done in recent years. But it is laborious work – particularly in Pentelov's case when it is literally an effort to get through some of the stories.*

Extract taken from the Collectors Digest, No.231 March 1966.

*Not everyone will agree with Laurie Sutton's opinion of Pentelow as a writer, or with his statement in the March "Collectors' Digest", that "actually, JNP was quite out of his depth in writing for a weekly paper".*

*I wonder if Laurie has ever heard of the weekly paper 'PLUCK', or read the superb stories about Wycliffe and Haygarth schools, which, commencing in January 1907, ran for many years therein.*

*They were later reprinted practically completely in some thirty odd copies of the BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY which is where I first read them. These copies of the B.F.L. are now among the most treasured items in my collection of old boys' books. That I am not alone in my estimate of Pentelow, the two following extracts will show.*

**HERBERT LECKENBY – COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, 1952:** "I shall always contend that in them (the Wycliffe stories), John Nix Pentelow, writing as Jack North, gave some of the greatest character studies, made life in a fictitious boys' school more realistic, and expressed some of the finest sentiment ever to appear in stories of their kind."

**HARRY BRODSTER – COLLECTORS' DIGEST ANNUAL, 1958:** "Stories rich with humour, schoolboy pranks, the sins and sorrows of the average boy, in some cases pathos, but mostly all full of sport and adventure. Nothing too far-fetched in these yarns, just enough of that little bit of extra to make a good plot. Such stories were those written by that very versatile author John Nix Pentelow ..... I think he excelled with his school stories."

*Charles Lamb once suggested that we should sing grace before reading Shakespeare. Well, I certainly feel like singing the student's song GAUDEAMUS IGI TUR (let us therefore rejoice) whenever I begin – once again – the marvellous sagas of Wycliffe and Haygarth! "Vivat Academia! Vivant Professores! Vivat membrum quodlibet! Vivant membra quodlibet, semper sint in flore!"*

*Extract taken from the Collectors' Digest, No.232 April 1966.*

### THE PENTELOW CONTROVERSY by Laurie Sutton

*In his defence of J. N. Pentelow Gerry Allison quotes a couple of others who share his admiration for that author, but he must be well aware that he could have found plenty of evidence of collectors holding contrary views.*

*Gerry is as entitled to his opinion as I am to mine – which happens to be that Pentelow was the biggest bore who ever put pen to paper. Yes, I have read – or, rather, attempted to read – Pentelow's Wycliffe and Haygarth stories; but I found them as great an effort as his Greyfriars and St. Jim's tales, and as laboured as "The Fourth Form at Frankingham", "Twins From Tasmania", "Goggs – Grammarian" (the wonder-boy who could do anything you cared to name to an absolute peak of perfection!)*

*I often wonder if some of the older collectors who profess admiration for Pentelow's writing have not allowed youthful nostalgia to cloud their adult judgement. I also have treasured books that I read as a youngster, but I don't actually read them now, and I certainly couldn't read them daily as I do Greyfriars or St. Jim's. Even with Charles Hamilton's work, I realise that my boyhood heroes, Lumley-Lumley and Talbot, are greatly inferior to dozens of other characters.*

*The fact, as I see it, was that Pentelow lacked the facile ability to turn out short weekly stories. His plots are invariably bogged down in a colossal amount of padding, which usually takes the form of deadly-dull dialogue, often used as a means of showing off Pentelow's clever-dick repartee, which, placed in the mouths of boys between twelve and fifteen years of age is just too ridiculous.*

*In one of the articles from which Gerry quotes, mention is made of Pentelow's sporting knowledge – "He knew his subject, be it cricket, football, boxing, or athletics". Since people are fond of criticising Charles Hamilton for his sporting descriptions (the latest on the cover of "Floreat Greyfriars") it is interesting to note that Pentelow was also, in fact, very hazy about soccer, as the following extracts from his "Victims and Victors", Magnet 464, conclusively prove:*

*"... as Delaney jumped to flat it out, the big man charged him, ball and all, into the net." This would have been a foul on the goalkeeper, who cannot be charged while his feet are off the ground, and apart from that it shows ignorance of the game. If the keeper was attempting to flat the ball it would never be in his possession; he would either miss it, when it would go straight into the net, or he would make contact, when it would go back upfield.*

*"The goalkeeper got his fingers to it; but Wharton got his shoulder against the goalkeeper's chest in the same second, and the ball dropped into the net." Another foul, and revealing ignorance of the game. If the keeper only got his fingers to the ball he would not be in possession and therefore could not legally be charged; and in any case it is not permitted to charge a goalie (or anyone else) in the chest.*

*"Courtesy put in a regular pile-driver, and the goalkeeper got a number eleven boot to it". Here we have the same error that C.H. is often faulted for! No goalkeeper ever puts his boot to a shot – much less a pile-driver! If he tried it the ball would almost certainly spin off into the net.*

*It would seem that if one can accept Pentelow's other stories one can stomach his Greyfriars and St. Jim's tales. I cannot pretend to do either. My discussions and correspondence suggest that most collectors agree with me.*

*Extract taken from the Collectors' Digest, No.233 May 1966.*

**ROGER JENKINS:**

*There can be no doubt that Hamilton was bitterly incensed about Pentelow all his life, despite the fact that other editors published substitute stories, apart from Pentelow. There undoubtedly must have been something additional about Pentelow to cause such bitterness.*

*When Charles Hamilton was writing his autobiography, he intended to follow the advice of Hotspur in "Henry IV" and tell the truth to shame the devil. There was a chapter on JHP written, which was giving offence to any relatives Pentelow might have left, and partly to keep the tone of the autobiography mellow and serene, the offending chapters on Pentelow were transferred to the famous "locked drawer" and Charles Hamilton declared that some people seemed more interested in the chapters left out than those left in! What happened to the chapter in the locked drawer is a mystery, but presumably it was destroyed.*

*When I wrote an article on the Greyfriars Story Competition (which appeared in the Magnet during Hinton's regime) Charles Hamilton wrote to me to declare that he was certain that Hinton was not responsible, but that he was the victim of more astute rogues (viz. Pentelow). Every additional piece of information about the Hamilton-Pentelow quarrel makes it seem more and more interesting, but I feel we shall now have to rest content with tantalising glimpses.*

**PETER HANGER:**

*The evidence that Pentelow held back genuine stories in favour of his own creations is quite indisputable. For witness how "A Very Gallant Gentleman" intrudes into the first Redwing series. While Hamilton was creating worthwhile characters, Pentelow was destroying them. Have you noticed that "A Very Gallant Gentleman" was No. 520? Surely the man was not concealed enough to regard this as a special story to celebrate ten years of the Magnet.*

**BILL GANDER:**

*It is surprising how opinions vary regarding J.N. Pentelow's ability as a story writer – apart from his venture into Hamilton sub writing. It seems that one either likes him a great deal, or else dislikes him a great deal. Here is something I do not remember ever having seen reference made to – the case of Gem 457 "All The Winners", and Gem 458 "In The Seats of the Mighty". The first written by Charles Hamilton, the second by J. N. Pentelow. Does this indicate co-operation, or could J.N.P. have discarded C.H.'s story and written one himself for the 1916 Christmas Number?*

Extracts taken from the Collectors Digest No.235 July 1966.

**THAT MAN PENTELow by Eric Payne**

*Next to Hamilton and Brooks, probably no man has featured more in Collectors' Digest columns down the years than John Nix Pentelow. Though, unlike them, he has usually collected more kicks than he gives. I think it likely that Hamiltonians have done him less than justice and I myself am no less guilty in that direction than anyone else. Prejudices – especially those from youth – die hard!*

*Another point is that he loved the Hamilton schools and characters. He must have done, otherwise he could not have written the Greyfriars and St. Jim's Galleries which gave proof of constant and affectionate reading of Hamiltonia. It has been suggested that he even tried to "take over" the writing of the Hamilton papers. I can see no proof of this after a hard study of the Pentelow period. Legend has it that Hamilton and Pentelow had a blazing row over something or other. I can find nothing to indicate that either. All the evidence, from Pentelow's period of editorship, is that he and Hamilton were working together in harmony. Pentelow's editorship ended, so far as Hamiltonia was concerned, in early 1919. Any disagreement that Hamilton had with Pentelow after that date can hardly have affected the supply of Hamilton stories to the Companion Papers. It was long after Pentelow's editorship ended that the real glut of substitute stories hit the Gem and the Magnet.*

*Recently, Pentelow has been mildly criticised as rude to mythical readers, in his editorials. In fact, that trait was far more evident with Hinton than it was with Pentelow, who had less space to spread himself during the years of the war. Indeed it was Pentelow who, over many weeks, devoted most of his editorial space to brief histories of both the Gem and the Magnet, and published a complete list of story titles to date, in both papers. This gesture must have been keenly appreciated by readers, and was proof of a pleasant and aboriginal sentimentality on the part of the editor.*

Extract taken from the Collectors Digest, No.266 April 1969.

and simple, but as I don't want to over-embellish an already dramatic debate we can concentrate with Penzlow as Postelov.

Like us many of the Americanized Press authors, he began as something of a lay wanderer, and he was only fifteen when he started contributing serials and longrunners of highly variable quality to the Open Range weeklies under such titles as Captain Nemo and Vasco; or, The Gladiators of Old Rome. He drifted casually into the occasional school story and does not appear to have made any sustained effort with them until he became a regular in Jack, his first story, in 1909.

It was not until 1912, however, during his Margaret days, and across that comparison was removed, that Penzlow was recognized as something of a jack-of-all-trades, writing anything on demand and indifferent to whether his action was staged in Texas, Siberia, or the Orient, or even in the Orient of London Cricket Ground.

There is no doubt about his popularity. The A. P. reprinted no less than 56 of his serials in the *Le Series of The Boy's Friend Library*, and he was only out-weighed by Clark's flock with 66 and David Crockett with 60. Penzlow's popularity was not limited to his own country, as is attested by the fact that he had been reprinted in England and he had no translators in an editor. Confident of improve-

ment for readers who had been disappointed by the confusion caused by Cozzens and Cozzens. This is one of the most surprising things I have heard of in connection with boys' weeklies. One would have thought that boys who hadn't the wits to distinguish between a German writer and a High School senior would not have been able to read a story so badly as the initiative is probable to the editor about it.

When, in the fall of 1915, these resuscitated Magazines came to read that remarkable Canadian classic, *The Auld Scholastic* of James Macal and found that the much-maligned Maria was in fact a girl, they were appalled that the "F." was an abbreviation of "father" and not of "Frank." Unfortunately, they already had it on the authority of *The Boy's Friend* that Frank had been edited in Canada and that the "F." was sent through his respecting the want.

It is now perhaps inevitable that the original writer will be substituted to the step-gap substituted, but even to improve the quality of the material, it is necessary to consider Penzlow's

suggested by H. A. Hinton of C. M. Doro because 1923 was not till 1928.

He seems therefore to have had to dispute with the receding editors, and his troubles with Frank Richards did not affect the peace with the American editors. When he was returned from the Army in 1919 to resume control of the Cozzens Fingers, Penzlow was switched to reviving the suspended Boys' Reads, and he followed this by launching *The Fingers Library*, *The Fingers Flood Library*, and *Open Range*, all of which were successful.

As far as his actual writing is concerned, the thing for which he was most hotly criticized was his killing-off of Rudyard's leading South-seaer, Cozzens, Mr. G. K. Stronach, who is one of the few people in a S.P.C. who Penzlow was not an independent agent in that he acted under higher directive to simplify

W<sup>h</sup>o says of late has been our attention on John Six Penzlow in the *Wicked* the Wood that we have rather lost sight of his considerable achievements in other fields. I want to mention a great deal about the *Wicked* but has not yet reached print, but this present series is not the place for it. Penzlow himself would be surprised to find so much attention being paid to what he must have regarded as a fleeting and unimportant part of his career.

He wrote all about 132 Cozzens and Masons, and his work here has received plenty of commendation, but very little commensal attention. It should not be overlooked that it was not just absorbed in whom Penzlow was active and able to do as he pleased, but that the material was not only interesting but also profitable. He was not to be exact—were certainly produced after he quitted the chair and went either commissioned or

ment, he would most likely have had to do with the B&O. The Communist Party of the U.S. has been on hand when the M&E, too, has had to concede himself with re-writing bits of his contributing' efforts and interpolating pieces of his own to add more of Richard's virtues to the same end. It is perhaps regrettable that there is no instance on record of Frank, exposing his gratitude for the unsolicited embellishments.

This comes out in his own writing, though he conceals it by making it look as if he were the one being advertised, while Frank Richards, he says, has been with a difference. Stanley Austin and Francis Wrenick, for example, made careful attempts to produce testimonials for Frank's virtues. The latter's favorite quotations and allusions to his technical skills, Penrose's self-interest, I take it, prevented him from following this arduous path. He did not want, mainly, to make Richards as wise about the more characters

series which ran for years and years in the U.S. and Canada. It is not impossible for an adult to read them without mixed feelings.

The thing that has me almost at once is that there is a remarkably honest air about his work. Conscience's marked dew is not there. The more the authors were hauled through, the more they glow it over. Penrose did not bother much with such aids to patriotism as softening the impact with pro-corporation; if he had a conscience to afflict he just jangled the matter before he started with it and plunged on with the more.

The entire effrontery of the long run of Jack Jackson at Weyliffe, takes firings upon the opening incident that on the first day of temp four new boys—one specimen from each of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, were immediately connected in lifelong friendship. The machinery cracks most harshly, and one does not require a crystal ball to foretell the developments.

The speech follows next. If a stretch of Richard's dialogue of the type and date within the conventional norms, Penrose strove after a likelier consistency and achieved disoriented membership which trip the sargat. It

pages meaner when read silently than when spoken aloud.

My idea was to read the first session. One of David Goodwin's elegiac representations on other for dropping his final 'g's with, "We used to do it, but every reader might say, so we don't do it now." Richard's reply referred to another session in which the same kind of thing had occurred, while Penrose took the process a stage further. He has, in dropped both 'g's and 's, as in his paper one littered with sentences like, "Air I was kicking it." He presumably thought this was a matter of the most important of public school speech, ignoring the defects that the pages are packed with the marks of elision and that the dialogue looks as though it must have been recorded. Nor did he ever explain why it was chosen to read and considered to be of such a high and respectable social circle.

This air of contrivance extends to his jokes. He laughs could names so that he can make puns on them, as with his Housemaster, Mr. Gammam alias the Quasar. It is easy to see why Mr. Penrose, who is called out at Blackwood, are called the Gladys Coates. Penrose continued that the members of Mr. Williams' House at Weyliffe were known as the Coates. They

were for four plids—in fact, were for the first time, in this talk—used it seems needless to say, until the speaker's discomfiture until the reader eventually reaches across the far-fetched reason. Mr. Williams is nicknamed Big Billy.

There was a series of offhanded remarks in the Penrose which was easily traced. One can imagine Richards dropping even lower than the *Kiddies of the Great Heart, For the Old School's Sake, and The Heart of a Hero*. When he had to traverse similar ground he said, "My name is Penrose, and I am here for the School's Sake and The Heart of a Hero." Richards followed the promise of his titles; Richards' necessary of feeling in non-matrimonial passages was beyond him. He gadded. Even his lips were green to address the audience in sentences of archness and in some of his more heart-felt substitute stories it is surprising how thin one factor suffices the crisp outline of Richard's dialogue.

One terrible expression of this kind is Penrose's "Crying streak" which is called out at Blackwood. Penrose's story for being in general when he said that he objected to all improving stations on principle, but Penrose never hesitated to halt the proceedings while he delivered

wise saws, modern instances, and short lectures on ethics. He could not feel certain of the effectiveness of indirect conditioning, or the aptitude of his students for the discipline of analysis and actions of the "goodies." To reinforce the lesson, he mounted his portable pulpit and administered his moral treatise as Mr. Wycliffe Spicers did his benediction-and-track. The victim was seized by the scruff of the neck, held down by his assistants' dense

thumbs, he would meddle with his character program, grabbing them by the seat of the benches and giving them the burn's rath along their destined path. Consider this typical question:

Darwinfield had chosen his job. He knew it was the wrong one, and he was married enough to admit it. But he would hold to it, when his proud wife, the former Miss Jean of the famous perfume and hat store, would not let him be unduly influenced by the man who chose her company. He was an one; "Having light, loving darkness suffer." And so—did he love it? Did he see hate it, even while choosing it.

This may have been the writing to Penelope; it may even be free writing to a fourteen-year-old. It is so long since I was

that age that I just don't know. At this moment, it looks to me like an unnecessary piece of rhetoric. Alice was right when she asked what was the use of a story which demonstrated that the writer could not think and so explain himself through his own words and actions, with further lights shed by the remarks and reactions of the rest of the cast, who stay would have gone on with greater artistic effect and satisfaction.

There is a formidable list of complaints, and it is only fair to say that they are adult judgments. When I was a boy I lapped up Jack North with avidity and I swallowed indiscriminately everything in both *Guns and Magoo* during the entire term of Penelope's schooling. When re-reading the stories, I realize that the best pieces of Penelope have stuck in my memory when genuine stories have faded completely.

Penelope's defects, in which there is as almost feminine quality, do not loom so large when considered only as part of his original work. They are obscured by the strength of his imagination and the vigor of his tales. He used much larger and more varied means than the average writer, and he manipulated them

adroitly in complexly-woven plots. The main reason for steering them so much is that they take on greater importance when the writer's own substance is so thin. He carried all his old trains into the new field, where they sometimes are oddity on the shoulders of the original case. This certainly led to a deterioration in the stories. Even when an effort is made it is impossible for one man to comprehend the complex thought and technical skills of another, and Penelope did not exactly strain himself

to achieve the transformation. We are emphatic enough about the widening row, and it must have had some effect on the quality of the work or did not know it. The exact or even the approximate degree, if anyone has a few runs through year-olds on hand it would be an interesting experiment to feed them for a few weeks on a mixed diet of Penelope and Richards and then have them appear on the manuscript. There is no doubt that we editors might be surprised.



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Author of "The Football Game" "Football in the Classroom" etc.

*[Small text columns containing the beginning of the story 'The Footer School' by Richard Randolph.]*

After 1920 Pentelov continued as Editor of  
 The Boys Realm.

Pentelov's story 'Good Enough For England'  
 was published in the Boys Friend Library.  
 Sir John Squire reviewed it in the Observer on  
 Sunday June 19 1927.



## "BRIGHTER CRICKET"

"Good Enough for England." By Richard Randolph. "Boys' Friend" Library. (Amalgamated Press. 4d.)

(BY J. C. SQUIRE)

Forgive the headline, I am not going to suggest solid stamps, a narrow bat, a two-ball over, no boundaries, or no pad-play; the small ball has already been tried and found wanting. But after reading this work I could think of no other that would fit.

I thought the look of the railway book-stall on Godalming Station. Up with the lark that morning, I had already exhausted the newspapers, and I wanted something to read in the train. My eye was suddenly caught by a hard cover, amid rows of laid covers, more seasoned than the rest. The ground-work was red. The scene was just inside the window of a cricket pavilion, with a match "progressing" in the background. Is the foreground a young cricketer, just in from the wicket, was reeling, his eyes closed, his cap falling from his head, his belt dropping from his gloved hand;—and over the window—all there loomed a somberhood and red-headed man blazing a scowler (held in the left hand) at him. Casuality was violently aroused. Was this, I speculated, a left-handed bowler whom the bats had done out of his place in the team? Or was he (for he certainly looked it) a batsman who had realised that sport was the great stabilising influence in Britain, or was revenging upon a typical English boaster the master of Votkoff, well-known to have been investigated by the odious Chamberlain and the blood-thirsty Baldwin? He tugged out to be neither, but he was almost as good.

"That must be Arthur Richardson, the tall fellow with the glasses, next to Berridge. And that broad-shouldered chap would be Ellis, I'm pretty sure. But who's Capper-sub?" Thus the first paragraph. Capper-sub in point of fact, is a young, red-haired giant, who has recently discovered that he was born in England and hopes to discover his real name and claim the estate which is his due. He has proved himself a first-rate cricketer, and Collins is in hopes of bringing him in as a supernumerary member of the Australian team, which is too weak in bowling. This is not to be. No sooner has he landed than Tom meets Ken Carden, captain of Cardenshire, and his command—

"The Earl of Berridge, who had once—when he had been called Billy Chiswell—been a pro. in the county team."

They naturally carry him out to Cardenshire; discover him (chiefly through his red hair) to be T. H. Fielding, heir to the Fielding property, rapidly seized the M.C.C.'s as to his birth qualification, and play him in a trial match.

There was another bannet man in England than Kenneth Carden. Married to the woman he loved, with no need to trouble about money, the leader of a county team which befitted him, he found life very good.

That was something to start on; he found life better still when, in the trial match, his new overcast made 76 and took all ten wickets. All looked well for the county; the only question was whether Tom would also be able to play for Australia or for England; the Australian spirit fell when he turned Australia down; but here his career began to be chequered.

Not his cricket career. He had his off-days when he only made twenty or thirty and took but few wickets. But he did as well as a man could with—

"Cardenshire trying a new man, it seems," said more than one close follower of the game, scanning the lists in the dailies that morning—if not in that precise form of words, in words to that effect.

That first match was against Glamorgan—

Kyan sent down a very slow one, well pitched up. Tom missed it over the ropes, and the spectators roared.

Tom's first ball in county cricket: Bryan sent down a faster one, a trifle short. Tom got in hand to the on boundary.

So he went on—

Many a time before has a man playing in his first big match run two three Squares. But it may well be doubted whether any man going in sixth wicket down has ever achieved the feat under such conditions.

Before he went on to bowl, the resolve incident occurred, and his head was grazed, but he defied the doctor and won the match. Kent came next—

Hastings and Colles were first in Colles took strike.

Tom and his middle stump flying Seymour came next.

He heavily meant to touch that ball. It would have been better left alone—perhaps—

Thus far in first-class cricket Tom Fielding had taken four wickets without a run scored off him.

"You've found again our best, Carden," said L. H. W. Thoughtless, who used to captain Kent. Against Derbyshire Tom took eleven for 75, and on the last afternoon he received this telegram—

"You are chosen for The Rest at Lords. Can you play. —Warner."

In the Rest v. England match he had little chance. He threw Hobbs out, and made a sensational catch, but he bowled very little—

He got one far six; but as it was Stradwick, he could not feel elated about it.

Hobbs, rearing, fell down in the middle of the pitch.

Mascroft turned, ball in hand. Tom swung round as if to go back. Mascroft threw at the wicket Hobbs had left.

Then, swinging round again, Tom rushed past Hobbs, and raced the ball for the imperilled wicket, leaving the Surrey man amazed for the moment by his tactics.

Of course he'd cunningly run himself out instead of the invaluable Hobbs. This match was washed out by rain. In the end all being open the first Test at the Oval, Australia made 563, England 98. England, not unaccountably, followed on. When seven wickets were down for 563—

Tom Fielding and Maurice Tate came out of the pavilion together— They got to work at once—Australia needed 211 for victory—But they did not get them. Tom was unusable. What Jack Gregory had done for Australia he did for England. Tate and Mascroft were able helpes, and England was by 62 runs.

Cardenshire won the championship, also presumably owing to this versatile hero; and Tom won the estates. But what of the resolver?

Well, it was a nervous time for Carden and the Earl, and a worrying time for the Australians, whose company Tom much frequented. For his villainous cousin, who would succeed if he did, had a gang, and the gang attempted

Tom's life about twice a week, or once per match. There was the resolver that in Cardenshire. There was the kidnapping in London, which kept Tom (and the villainous Australians who raised him) up all night in the middle of a Test match. There was the Milk boats dropped over the bridge at the punt in Middlesex, there was the attempt in the railway-carriage by the sea with a fish head, there was the dastardly affair of the poisoned needle, and there was the nearly-unsuccessful throw of the dagger, a deadly weapon, sped with "a cautious flick," straight at Tom's heart, by his cousin, now disguised as a dogerman. This was outside Old Trafford. Happily the best slip-field in the world was on the spot—

Gregory did not see the action.

but he saw the glint of sunlight as the shining blade and his hand shot out. Within three inches of Tom's chest he gripped the shaft.

"Murder," he cried. "Find the man who threw this!"

They didn't find him. Really and truly, cricketers of both countries are not here represented as a very enterprising lot. "When will the police round up those scoundrels?" asked Collins, and "I wonder what those brighties will try next?" is about as far as any of them get, from the earliest savings when Tom is tipped into Bowling Locks until the climax, when the villains, having failed to kill such other. "Not enough evidence yet," is their usual comment. One is glad to see so strong a sense of law prevailing in any section of the community.

Remorse may have had the intellectual level, but, evidently, she still has her pastures. For the rest this composition is remarkable on two counts. It has no heroism (for the ex-pro Earl does not turn out to have a sister who lives red hair), and it makes the front end of a real situation. We often find real people in novels under thin disguises; here they are introduced in person. Mr. Gregory, perhaps, has no reason to complain; nor perhaps has Mr. Japp, who seems to be the author's favourite amongst English cricketers. But all those batmen who are bowled for supposition-ducks, all those fieldsmen who are described as missing articles which never were offered them outside the pages of this book, may well feel aggrieved. How would members of another profession feel about it were a novel's heroine to get into the divorce court and the author to write: "I never saw other than Sir John Simon fails, but he made a thorough mess of it on this occasion, and Eryostate lost her one," or "Sir Patrick Hastings put up a most worse show than was expected." How should I myself feel were I to open a story about a hero who started a paper and find myself confronted with: "Much to his disappointment he obtained from Mr. J. C. Square an utterly rotten article which nobody but a madman would have printed?" However, it is to be hoped innovation is restricted to the world of cricketers I don't much mind.

I forget to add that one of the villains, before the last desperate coup, is a truly superior war opens a speech thus—

"My information is that during the next two or three weeks—that is, before the final Test match, as I believe, it is called, between England and Australia, which it is to be played somewhere in the Kensington district—

This is almost good enough for the High Court of Justice.

John Nix Pentelow was born at Somersham, Saint Ives, Huntingdon, on the 26th March 1872. He was one of a family of eight children (five boys and three girls) his father being Ebenezer Pentelow who kept a local grocer and drapers shop. His unusual second christian name of Nix coming from his mother's maiden name Matilda Rachel Augusta Nix, daughter of a local landowner of Somersham Fen. The Pentelows all originated from the Parish of Pentelow, near Clare in Essex.

J.N.P. as a boy took a deep interest in writing, and cricket, though his game never rose above club level. At the early age of 14 he was writing stories, and having them accepted by Guy Rayner the publishers. Most of his early work was anonymous, but an early effort can be seen in Guy Rayner's Pocket Novels 'The Track of the Clown Hoof' (1888) published under his name.

Apart from writing, he also became a schoolmaster at a grammar school in Huntingdonshire for a short time, followed as an officer in the Customs and excise, but he also gave this up to become a full time writer and editor.

Cricket was without question his favourite sport, and he had an almost mania for the game, and all its history. A prolific contributor to the paper 'Cricket' he became its editor and proprietor in January 1912. Unfortunately this paper was not a successful venture to the world of finance – and became even worse when the great A.C. MacLaren joined him as partner. MacLaren of England and Lancashire was unreliable, in the business sense and although they changed the title to The World of Cricket, this within a year finally closed. Pentelow seemed fated in life to always be dogged with ill-fortune, and encounter difficulties. The coming of the Great War brought a halt to first class cricket, and so he devoted his full time to writing boys fiction. He had written for nearly all the Harmsworth boys papers with great distinction. 'Jack North', the first two initials of his name being one pen-name, whilst another was Harry Huntingdon. The former usually connected with His Wycliffe cricket yarns which appeared in Pluck. He also had contributed to the Scout. A personal friend of R.S. Warren Bell, who was editor of THE CAPTAIN, a sort of very high school Boys Own Paper, he had also contributed many stories and articles under his own name to his paper.

In 1916 he joined the Amalgamated Press, when with his knowledge of writing school stories, plus his editorial experience, he was invited to assume control over The Magnet & Gem, school story papers. Both C.M. Dowen and H.A. Hinton had been called to the colours – and with the third in command G.R. Samways likely to go anytime on war service there was nobody left to run the papers. It should be explained that both the Magnet & Gem had full length school stories each week. The former tales of Greyfriars by 'Frank Richards', and the latter, stories of St. Jim's by 'Martin Clifford'. Both these authors being the same person – Charles Hamilton, and it could be said that the continued run of the paper depended solely on this author. J.N.P. immediately took over his predecessors worries, in the lack of copy arriving from Charles Hamilton on time – and more often or not, none coming at all. The previous editors had overcome this difficulty to some extent by using substitute writers, but for J.N.P. this was not always possible –

for most of them were away serving in the armed forces. His own solution to this, was simply to write most of the stories himself, and which he did, his first being in 1916 and his last actually long after he ceased to be editor in 1924. There does not seem any foundation to an allegation once made that J.N.P. inserted his own stories in preference to those of Charles Hamilton – as the stock book records for that period are completely bare, nor any truth that the sales of the Magnet and Gem dropped because of his tales. In fact the circulations actually rose during his period of office and the boys of the period were seemingly quite content with the yarns, for whom the market was after all intended. Undoubtedly his best contribution was a sort of Greyfriars and St. Jim's 'Who's Who', in which he detailed accurately all the characters of the schools, and which has been praised by his most outspoken critics. He also created his own character of PIET DELAREY – a South African boy in the remove. Probably the greatest controversy of his editorship could be his 'killing off' of Courtney a boy in the Greyfriars Sixth, in a story entitled 'A Very Gallant Gentleman' which seems at first sight an act of crass stupidity. But it has been revealed in recent years that far from being a thoughtless act, J.N.P. was instructed to do so by a higher authority. Readers were writing to the Magnet office complaining that they were getting confused between Courtney of the Sixth and Frank Courtenay Captain of the Fourth Form at Highlife. The J.N.P. editorship of the Magnet & Gem, could be summed up perfectly by a former Director of the Firm who wrote as follows . . . . "I am astonished that there should be any criticism of Pentelow during his period of office on The Magnet and Gem. In my opinion, and as head of the department, I think he did a marvellous job, with all sorts of war-time difficulties. He kept the papers going, when we might well have felt justified in suspending them, and who knows they may not have been revived. I wonder if all those present day enthusiasts, and especially those who bought the papers in the 20s and 30s realise what debt they owe to him. Pentelow was a first class editor, and a man highly regarded by all at Fleetway House'.

With the return of H.A. Hinton after the war, J.N.P. assumed the editorship of The Marvel/Boys Realm and several small libraries, and wrote serials and articles under the names of John West, Richard Randolph and Randolph Ryke. He also contributed cricket articles for all the other A.P. papers including All Sports edited by Arthur S. Hardy. Many of his personal friends were England and County Cricketers and quite often Jack Hobbs and Herbert Strudwick could be seen making their way to his room at Fleetway House.

It was in the Marvel that he produced several supplements on cricket including an 88 page supplement 'Who's Who in the Cricket World'. In 1922 the Marvel was replaced by a much poorer publication entitled Sport and Adventure – which after only half a year changed into Pluck. Tired of editorial work, J.N.P. in 1924 decided to go free-lancing and so he retired from the Amalgamated Press. He had always been deeply respected at Fleetway House, where he was regarded something akin to Dr. Locke the Headmaster of Greyfriars, firm, a fatherly figure, kindly, and a perfect gentleman. He was presented with a handsome silver cigarette box by nearly all of his colleagues.

Being a heavy smoker, it was a most suitable gift, and it took pride of place beside his typewriter on his writing desk at home.

As a free-lance, J.N.P. poured out stories for all sorts of publications including those for girls under the name of 'Wedge North' (Wedge being the name of his second wife whom he married in 1922 - his first having died at Hastings in 1921 aged only 48) whilst he contributed to sporting and evening newspapers, as well as to *Lillywhite's Annual/Wisden/The Cricketer* and *Aynes Cricket Companion*. (Which he edited for a few years till his death). One honour that came his way, and which probably is unique in boys fiction history, was that one of his stories was actually reviewed in the *Observer* - by J.C. Squire (later Sir) the famous book critic. And the incident was related to me by H.W. Twyman former editor of the *Union Jack* who was at Godalming Station with Squire at the time, and awaiting the train to London. With nothing to read, his eye had been caught by the cricket scene on the cover of a *Boys Friend Library*. He read it, and wrote over 1500 words on the book, in his review.

J.N.P. himself was a tall, well built, good-looking man, who always looked older than his years. Distinguished in appearance and approach, he talked in a very quiet voice, and was unfortunately afflicted with deafness, which made a long conversation at times an ordeal. He was an avid book collector, and his home at 'Kintambo' Woodmansterne Road, Carshalton, where he had moved for his health in 1929 was stacked out with books of all descriptions. An avid reader, he was rarely seen without several books under his arm. Jack London was one of his favourites, followed by Zane Grey and Clarence Mulford creator of Hopalong Cassidy. He also had at one time almost a complete file of *Magnets and Gems* - (till just before his death) and was a great admirer of Charles Hamilton's schools - Gordon Gay of Rycombe Grammar School being a special favourite of his.

J.N.P. could also be said to be an Old Boys Book Collector, as in 1931, he also wrote an article about the Old Woods. His health declined sharply in the early part of 1931, and he died in the early morning of Sunday July 5th at the age of 59. Ironically enough it was also his wife's birthday - she incidentally being related to Syd Pride the *Union Jack* artist. An obituary notice appeared in *The Times* - and tributes poured in from all quarters, and his death to the world of cricket writing was sadly to be missed.

J.N.P. could be said to have become famous in two vastly different fields of literature - only probably equaled by Edgar Wallace. The first in cricket statistics he had no equal, and was regarded as one of the greatest authorities of all time, and his books/articles on the subject may one day be made into a bibliography. The second in juvenile literature, his stories featuring Wycliffe and Haygarth schools are regarded as classics of their kind, authentic without being dull and so true to life. He also had the distinction of adding two of the most loved and widely collected boys papers of all time *The Magnet & Gem*.

H.W. Twyman said of J.N.P. "He was one of that rare breed of men, that one usually only reads about, and one whom one wished he could be. Often or not, he accepted stories from contributors that were well below standard, simply because the writer probably needed the money. He had a heart of gold" John W. Wheway whom I met at Fleetway House, expressed the view that 'perhaps the worse thing that ever could be said about J.N.P. was that he was overloaded with good nature'. J.R. Samways, who worked with him on the *Magnet and Gem* as sub editor said 'of his inherent goodness there can be no doubt.

Although J.N.P. was born a hundred years ago his memory lingers on, and he has made a niche for himself for all time in the realms of boys fiction.

## POSTSCRIPT BY DEREK HARVEY



It is a surprise that today virtually no memories remain of John Nix Pentelov in Somersham, the Huntingdonshire village where he was born 100 years ago, on March 22 1872.

Out of this quiet Fen village Pentelov, the son of a tradesman, Ebenezer Pentelov, wormed into the London publishing world, subsequently to become editor of "The Magnet", a story-paper that was to become legendary.

Of several people questioned, only a Mrs. Taylor aged 85, who lived alone, recalled Pentelov. After his father's death, she said, he used to visit the village and lodge with Mrs Benton, at Norfolk House.

According to Mrs. Taylor, Pentelov wrote a piece on the Somersham Pageant of 1908, and in this he was in good company, for Dorothy L. Sayers, the author, had also attended the event and written about it.

A Miss Nix lived in Mrs. Taylor's present house - and died there - and a Mrs. E. Pentelov lived in St. John's Cottage, Church Street, which is still standing, and the children might have been born above the shop.

Today, Somersham's oldest accident, Mr. Peter Barlow, aged 98, who must have been Pentelov's contemporary, cannot recall him, even as a boy two years his younger at the village school, which still stands.

But records show some details of both the Nix and Pentelov families in the village.

Kelly's Directories (1885 and 1890) records two Pentelovs in Somersham, Ebenezer (the father) and Joseph, as well as William Nix, described as a principal landowner, and Mrs. John Nix and Mrs. William Nix, of Sydney House.

These records are confirmed by a Post Office Directory of 1877.

An advertisement appears in the "Hunts County Guardian" of 1887 as follows:

Ebenezer Pentelov Grocer, Draper, Stationer and News Agent  
Post Office, Somersham County Fire Office, Midland Counties Hall Storm Insurance Office Printing of Every Description.

Weekly paragraphs state:

"For printing of all descriptions go to Mr. E. Pentelov at the Post Office. Devises executed with care and promptness" and "Our Agent for the sale of the Guardian in Somersham and neighbourhood is Mr. E. Pentelov, bookseller & Co."

In 1885, news of village activities from Somersham improves in both quantity and quality of writing in the "Guardian", and it is obviously possible that Pentelov, then at an impressionable age, had become a "stranger" for his local paper.

Pentelov's father, Ebenezer, was an agent for W.A. Gibby, an agent for County Fire and Provident Life Joseph, the other resident Pentelov, subsequently became chairman of the Parish Council, and a magistrate.

Both men, it seems, were married to Nixes, and they may have been cousins.

E. Pentelov was one of two men who in 1885 kept the keys to the fire engine. William Nix was a principal landowner, and a memorial in St. John's Church records the death in action of a Fleet Surgeon Nix on H.M.S. Bulwark in 1915.

Nixes were well-known local lawyers, but no Pentelovs or Nixes are incident in Somersham today (although a Mrs. Dora Leigh, nee Pentelov, once resident, now lives at The Commodore, Lechlade, Gloucestershire).

A Mrs. Smith (nee Parsons), aged 81, knew Mrs. Ebenezer Pentelov and her children, Reginald, Frank, Edgar, Marion, Jesse and Isabelle - all except John, whom she could not recall.

She produced a photograph (circa 1900) showing a girl's cricket team, with Marion holding a cricket bat.

Mrs. Smith said that the Nix family originally came from Australia, which is why they called their home Sydney House. She herself had owned the house for a while when her husband was alive. Other owners had renamed it Ladyrose.

She remembered Mrs. Ebenezer as a tall, slim woman, very busy in church and village affairs. Ebenezer died when the children were young (although John was 18).

A history of Somersham by C.E. Doves, published in 1885, recorded that the village lay five miles North East by North from St. Ives on the road to March and Wisbech, and 78 from London. It consisted principally of one street (it still does) about a mile in length, running from East to West and crossed by a shorter street near the centre.

Nearly 400 years ago a Mr. William Harvey left an estate, the Puffin Estate, providing for the repairs of the churchway and other public and charitable uses.

The history records that a company was formed to supply the residents with gas in 1869, and that the Great Eastern Railway from Cambridge to St. Ives had a station there.

The church of St. John the Baptist, an ancient structure in early English and later styles, consisted of chancel, nave with cloisters, aisles, north and south porches, and an embattled western tower containing six bells and a very good set of chimes.

The school was a nationally endowed school built in 1343, since enlarged to meet the requirements of the Education Act, 1870, so as to hold 250 children. The average attendance was 153 in 1885, and Charles Nettleship Whison was the schoolmaster.

