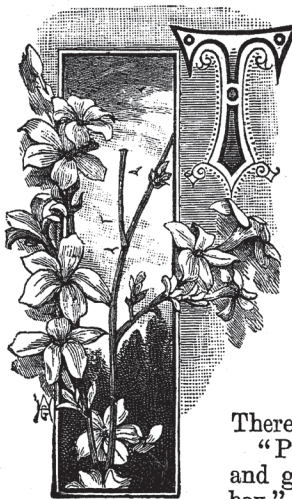




“Expelled!”

By FRED. WHISHAW, *Author of “The New Master,” etc.*



HE trouble began one day when one of young “Alice” Attley’s friends desired to borrow two-and-sixpence from Alice, and the latter—having consented—went to his box for the money, but found his purse as empty as the interior of a starved mouse.

“Hullo!” said Alice, “how rum! I’m sure I had seven-and-six left, and the thing’s empty.

There were three half-crowns.”

“Perhaps they’ve slipped out, and got among the things in the box,” said the would-be borrower faintly; for he felt that his lot were hard indeed should this half-crown, so nearly won, escape him thus at the last moment.

But, though everything the box contained was turned out and shaken, and carefully examined, the three half-crowns were distinctly and decidedly not at home.

“Are you sure you had ’em?” asked the borrower; and it was noticeable that the tone of his voice was wanting in the affability and almost deference which had distinguished it while the half-crown was still presumably a negotiable quantity.

“Certain,” said Alice.

At this Smith disappeared, whistling a sad tune in a minor key, and with both hands dejectedly crammed into his pockets; for Smith felt that fate had played him a shabby trick, and that he had a grievance against things in general.

Alice did not tell Mr. Rhodes, the housemaster, of his loss, but he did tell the prefects—Harrington, Billy Jones, and Henderson. Harrington and Henderson were inclined to look incredulously upon Alice’s tale of loss. He had probably spent or lent the money, they said, for he was “an improvident little ass, and always had far more cash than was good for him.” This was true, though Alice insisted upon it that he had neither spent nor lent the money on this occasion.

Billy Jones, however, the most popular prefect in

the house; a member of the school eleven and football fifteen; winner of the steeple-chase, and several other races at last year’s sports, and a favourite with both boys and masters—Billy Jones took a more serious view of the matter. He drew Alice into his study, and questioned him carefully; had he closed his box and locked it? Alice was sure he had done so. Did Alice suspect anybody? Oh, no; Alice had not the slightest idea what had become of his money. Did Alice expect further remittances? Yes, Alice hoped to receive a sovereign or two on his twelfth birthday—the thirteenth of this very month—to-day being the eighth.

“Well, keep your box carefully locked this time,” said Billy Jones, “and we’ll see whether we can find you this money of yours meanwhile, though—as a matter of fact—I don’t much think you’ll ever see it again. Are you unhappy about it?”

“Oh, no,” said Alice, “not a bit; I can get on well enough without tin till the thirteenth; there’s a good lot of grub left in my last hamper, besides; so I’d rather there wasn’t a row made about this.”

“Well,” said Jones kindly, “here’s a shilling for you to go on with; you can pay me back when you are well-to-do again. Now be off, and keep your box safely locked; we won’t make a row about this for the present.”

But a couple of days later the house was thrown into a disagreeable state of uncomfortable suspense and anxiety by the discovery of a second theft. Cadley, commonly called “the miser,” an exceedingly unpopular boy, and one who undoubtedly deserved his nickname, by reason of his hoarding and stingy nature—for he had never been known to spend a farthing on anyone else, and as little as possible on himself; this Cadley came howling and blubbing into breakfast one morning, holding in his hand an empty tin box.

“What’s up with you, miser?” said some one.

“I’ve been robbed; I’ve been robbed!” shrieked Cadley, half mad with despair and rage. “My money!—every farthing of it gone—four pound, thirteen, and eight!”

The miser looked so ridiculously and delightfully frantic with rage, that his behaviour would have been amusing, if the communication he had made had not been so important and appalling. No one was sorry

for the miser, of course; he was far too unpopular a character to waste sympathy upon; and, besides, his fury and bad language were such as to put aside any feelings but those of ridicule.

"Come, stop that drivelling and screaming," said Henderson severely, "and let's hear quietly what you have to say."

Billy Jones was pale, and evidently concerned to find that another theft had been perpetrated. "What is it, Cadley?" he said. "Have you lost money, or what's the matter? Compose yourself and tell us."

The miser threw down his empty box upon the prefect's table, where it fell with a clatter, lid down; Cadley picked it up again, and it was observed that no coin fell out. "There!" he cried, "look at it—empty, and there was nearly five pounds in it last night; I had collected it to—to buy a present for my mother" (a shout of derision here suddenly arose from the small boys at the end of the table, but was quickly suppressed), "and—and oh! I wish I had hold of the fellow who's got my money, I don't care who he is!" The poor miser ended his statement by bursting into a flood of passionate tears, and hugging the money-box to his heart in a manner which would have been supremely ridiculous if it had not been also very tragic.

"Come, now, no foolery, please," said Harrington; "where was this money?"

"In my locker in the passage!" blubbered Cadley.

"Was it locked?"

"Yes, I should just think it was," said the miser; "you don't suppose I'd leave it unlocked, with a beastly thief in the house?"

"Come, Cadley," said Billy Jones, "be a man, and help us to find the thief. Are you perfectly certain the locker and the box were both locked? Where are the keys?" Cadley looked confused.

"That's the rum part of it," he said; "here's the key of the tin box, but the locker was open, and I can't find the key of it."

"Oh, well," said Henderson, "if you leave your locker open, my good chap, you may expect to be robbed!"

"But I didn't!" cried Cadley, almost shrieking, "the thing was locked; I'm positive of that."

"Then where's the key?" asked Billy.

"Stolen by the beast who took the money," said Cadley, growing frantic again; "and if you prefects want to hush it up, as you did Attley's loss, all I can say is, you're not going to be allowed to league with my robber as you did with his; so you'll just make a row about it and tell Rhodes, or I shall!"

Of course, there was nothing to be done but to kick Cadley for his impertinence (a duty which was freely performed by Henderson and Harrington, though Billy Jones was more mercifully inclined), and to go straight to Mr. Rhodes, and tell him all about both thefts.

Never had any of us beheld the countenance of dear old Rhodes so black and careworn as it appeared that day at dinner, after the communication had been made to him. He ate nothing, and, to all that was said to him, he answered in monosyllables, or not at all. Truly and indeed he was the picture of a despondent housemaster; and no wonder! for we did pride ourselves at Rhodes' upon being, at least, an honest community; and I know Rhodes himself thought more about straightforwardness, and matters of that kind,

than of pre-eminence in school-work, or even proficiency in games and athletics.

After dinner Mr. Rhodes made us a little speech, and contrived in a few words to make us realise to the full how horrible and shameful a thing had befallen us, in that one of our number had proved himself a thief. The blow was terrible to him, he said (he need not have told us this, for the poor old fellow's voice was shaky with grief as he spoke, and there were tears rolling slowly down his cheeks), and he hoped we all felt the horror and degradation of it. It must be our duty, he said, to discover the mean and unworthy and wicked person who was guilty of this thing.

We did keep our eyes open: we even went so far as to form a sort of vigilance committee, each member of which hung about the hall and passages for a certain period of time every day, in order to keep a watch upon the lockers and play-boxes.

But in spite of our care, and to our utter dismay and disappointment, a third robbery was successfully perpetrated within a very few days, that is, within a week, of the first. Young Attley had received the birthday tip he expected—two pounds ten. He had cashed the postal orders, and put away the money in the usual receptacle for his wealth; yet, when he went to his box, on the following day, the purse was empty, just as on the former occasion, though the box itself was locked exactly as he had left it.

I was a member of the vigilance committee, and was present at the meeting when notes were compared and the matter thoroughly discussed and investigated. I could swear that no thief had been near the play-boxes or lockers during my term of sentry-go, for I had kept them in view all the time; and, since it was football afternoon, not a soul had come about the place. The rest were just as positive, and I remember Billy Jones raised a laugh by declaring that it so happened he had sat on Alice's box all the while he had been on duty, so that the thief must have been clever to remove first him and then the cash without revealing the circumstance. The thing was a mystery.

Then we agreed that the proper course to pursue would be to put marked coins in the boxes, and watch again, and at the same time to spread a rumour that such and such persons had received sums of money, and were anxious as to the safety of the same.

This was done; but, though we waited and watched very carefully, we surprised no thief, and, indeed, the marked coins remained unappropriated, though a sum of two pounds, belonging to one of the bigger boys, and unmarked, was removed as mysteriously as the sums already appropriated.

After this last disaster, Mr. Rhodes engaged a detective; but, though this gentleman watched and dogged pretty nearly every boy in the house, unbeknown to the fellows, he obtained no clue of any kind, and was obliged, after a week or so of futile labour, to give up the task as useless.

"They're all up to it now," he said, "it ain't likely that the thief would try any of his games on with me about; you make the boys their own detectives, sir, and you'll get him in time."

Then the vigilance committee was disbanded, and every member of it instructed to keep a watch on his own account and according to his discretion.

A few days after this I received a very great surprise. I was playing in a pick-up football match, and

had the misfortune to hurt my ankle. I waited awhile in hopes of being able to join in the game presently, but the ankle continued to swell, and I was obliged regretfully to hobble away home as best I could. I had some Elliman's embrocation in my play-box, and went to fetch the bottle on my way to the dormitory, in which I proposed to change out of my flannels. As I slowly and laboriously climbed the stairs and entered the long passage, I perceived someone standing at the lockers at the far end; he had his back turned, and appeared to be busily looking for something within one of the lockers, which was open.

"My hat!" thought I, "have I come upon the thief? What a blessing in disguise was my sprained ankle, if I have!" But at that moment the individual started and turned his head, and I saw what a mistake I had made for once in my life; for it was Billy Jones, the prefect and chairman of the vigilance committee!

I laughed when I saw who it was, and Billy laughed too, quite boisterously, when I told him how he had disappointed me.

"By Jove, old chap," he said, "what a pity; sorry I can't oblige you, I'm sure; but don't you wonder what I was doing at that locker?"

"Why," I said, "isn't it yours?"

"No, certainly not," said Billy, colouring a little, "mine's over there, at the top left-hand corner. But look here, Charlie; don't tell anyone; I'll tell *you*, because you sort of caught me at it. I'm on the scent. Look at this key. Now watch." To my utter surprise, Billy went from one locker to another, unlocking and re-fastening each in turn with the key he had shown me. I was amazed.

"Good gracious!" I said, "Jones, what key is that, and where did it come from?"

"That's just the point," said Billy, "I wish you could tell me; I found it down there, hidden in the corner, and was trying it when you came in. What had we better do about it, think you?"

We agreed that the best thing to be done was to say nothing about the "find" to anybody, but to put it back where Billy had found it, and keep our eyes open for future developments.

But next morning at breakfast Mr. Rhodes came in with a grave face, even graver than it had been for the last month, and that was saying much. He surprised us greatly by having the house-list read out, which was unusual at this time of day. The entire house was present excepting young Archie Whitworth, a junior of about thirteen years of age, a nice little chap whom everybody liked.

"Anyone absent besides Whitworth?" asked Mr. Rhodes, when the list was finished.

Harrington, who had read it, as senior prefect, replied that all were present; should he send out for Whitworth?—he was probably in his study.

"No," said Rhodes, "Whitworth is in my own study; I am sorry to say, boys, that I have sad news to tell you—sad, and yet, in a way, satisfactory. I believe I may safely tell you that the thief, who has of late so disgraced the house and the school, is at length detected."

There was a death-like silence as Rhodes uttered these words; one or two boys grew very pale, and sat down; their excitement and agitation rendering them suddenly faint. Teddie Bates was one of these—my chief chum—and Billy Jones was another.

Then Rhodes proceeded with his tale, and told us how Baines, the boot-man, had entered the corridor by the studies this morning early, and had found young Whitworth opening a locker with a key which was not his own, but a pass-key. Asked to account for the possession of this key, he had blushed and then cried, and was understood to explain that he had lost his own key, and had found this one on the ground in the corner, and was then in the act of endeavouring to discover whose key it was by trying the lockers in turn with it. The key opened all the lockers. Whitworth was actually handling one of the marked coins when surprised by Baines, and had declared that he was "only looking at it." The inference, Mr. Rhodes said, was obvious; Whitworth was the thief. An inquiry should be held in hopes of finding all or part of the stolen money; but there was little doubt that in Whitworth the dastardly plunderer of his companions had been found; and, whether the money were discovered or not, Whitworth would be sent home, disgracefully expelled, that very morning.

At the close of Mr. Rhodes' remarks I was about to step forward and mention what I knew of the pass-key, when a very extraordinary thing happened. Billy Jones gave a sort of horrible groan, that made one's blood run cold, and fell forward across the breakfast-table in a fit.

* * * * *

At dinner, Mr. Rhodes had a still greater surprise in store for us. He entered Hall leading Archie Whitworth by the hand. Rhodes had been crying like anything, and his face looked like a caricature of his own dear old good-natured countenance of former times.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have brought back Archie Whitworth; he returns among you without a stain upon his character, and with my fullest apology to him for the unjust suspicion attached, this morning, to an honourable boy. The real thief——" Here the poor old man quite broke down, and we did not hear the rest of the story until the evening, when Harrington was deputed to tell us that Billy Jones—the favourite and darling of the house—had confessed, rather than see Whitworth unjustly punished, to being the perpetrator of one and all of the robberies.

The facts were sad indeed, and this is where the moral comes in. Some disreputable firm of speculating brokers from outside the Stock Exchange had been sending circulars to a number of the senior boys in the school, inviting them to take part in a speculation which was certain, according to their showing, to repay the fortunate plungers ten times the value of their venture: £10 would land the speculator £100, £50 would bring in £500, and so on; the "pool" would be over and the profits realised in a month.

Most of those who had received these circulars had laughed over them; wondered how the man got hold of the names; concluded that he made a note of the Eleven from the columns of some newspaper, and threw the paper into the fire without further thought. But Billy, poor Billy, whose mother was a widow and could ill afford his approaching expensive coaching for the army, had seen in this trap an opportunity for obtaining a hundred pounds in a manner providentially simple. That hundred pounds, he thought, would make all the difference to his mother, and it might be had by the outlay, for one single month, of ten pounds.

The rest was easy. He was going to repay the amounts "borrowed," he said, twice over, if only Whitworth had not had the misfortune to be suspected and convicted. Poor Billy was not base enough to allow Archie to suffer, the innocent for the guilty. Poor Billy, indeed! I honestly believe that the simple-minded fellow never once realised that he was a common thief; so sure was he of returning the borrowed money with interest, that the fuss about the thefts amused more than it disquieted him. If the fellows knew, he thought, how the thing really was, they would laugh too!

We never saw Billy Jones again. He went straight from Tuppenham to the crammer, and obtained his commission a couple of years later.

Very soon after this he gained the Victoria Cross for a most heroic piece of life-saving, under fire, during one of our frontier-wars, I forget which; and, a few years later, again, this fine fellow—for he *was* a fine

fellow, when all is said and done—was killed, while endeavouring to repeat the same species of feat which had gained him the Victoria Cross and his brevet captaincy, two or three years before.

The Sunday after Billy's expulsion, the Head had preached a most moving sermon in chapel on the text, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," with special allusion to the sad end (as he thought it) of poor Jones's career. I shall never forget that sermon, and the impression it made upon us all; but I wish I had heard a second, which I read in the pages of the *Tuppenhamian*, while at Oxford, and which the Head preached upon the text, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," and which bore especially upon dear old Billy's death, and the noble life he had led after leaving Tuppenham. The editor of the *Tuppenhamian* described it as "most affecting," and I fully believe that it was!

OUT WITH THE OLD VOYAGERS.

To the Land of the Eskimo.

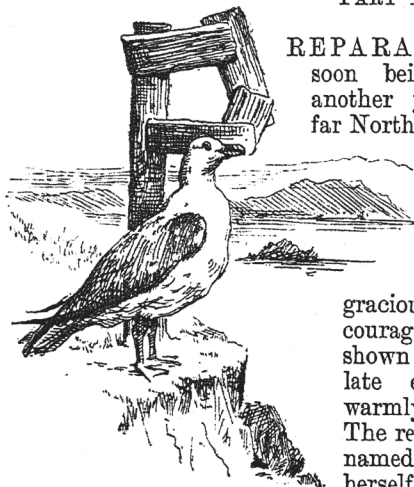
THE THREE VOYAGES OF MARTIN FROBISHER, 1576—1578.

By HORACE G. GROSER.

PART II.

REPARATIONS were soon being made for another journey to the far North-West.

Frobisher's reception by the great Queen had been most flattering and gracious, and the courage and hardihood shown by all in the late expedition was warmly commended. The region visited was named by Elizabeth herself, *Meta Incognita*



—the Boundary of the Unknown; and arrangements were forthwith put in hand for establishing a colony there, the better to develop its supposed mineral riches.

The ore brought home by the three ships had been lodged partly in Bristol Castle and partly at the Tower of London. A sample of it when submitted to an assay or testing raised such high expectations that no doubt was felt that huge profits would result from this third and greater expedition.

It was decided that a party, numbering a hundred men, should be quartered in the newly discovered land, of whom forty should be seamen for navigating the surrounding sounds and inlets, thirty should be miners, and thirty should be soldiers. The latter

were to give protection to the others in the exercise of their duties: and "a strong fort or house of timber, cunningly devised by a notable learned man here at home," was to be taken abroad in sections, and set up as a shelter and a citadel for those who were to winter in that ice-bound region.

The prospect offered to these hundred men was hardly a cheerful one; but there was a spice of romance about it, and plenty of volunteers came forward. Captains Fenton, Best, and Philpot were to have charge of this contingent, and three ships of the fleet were to be left at their disposal for exploring trips and as a means of escape if serious peril threatened the colony.

Compared with the two previous expeditions this was quite a big undertaking. No less than fifteen ships were to take part in it. Full power was in the hands of Frobisher, who was a pretty severe disciplinarian, and the rules drawn up for the conduct of the voyage were strict enough. The first article ran thus: I. Imprimis, to banish swearing, dice, and card-playing, and [foul talk], and to serve God twice a-day, with the ordinary service usual in churches in England." Two other regulations are interesting: "III. That no man shall by day or by night depart further from the admiral than the distance of one English mile," and "IX. That every ship in the fleet in the time of fogs, which continually happen with little winds, and most part calms, shall make a reasonable noise with trumpet, drum, or otherwise, to keep themselves clear one of another." It must have been comforting to the sailors, but not a little disconcerting to the coast tribes, to hear those strange noises coming muffled through the fog. Such unexplained sounds probably gave rise to many a weird story among the natives of sea-