

HAVE YOU WON ANY MONEY PRIZES AT POPLETS YET?

Every

Wednesday.



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THE SCHEMER!

A splendid, new, long, complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I. A Lesson for Levison.

"H, Gussy!"



"Gussy, I'm shocked!"

"Gussy, how could you?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, adjusted his eyeglass very carefully, and stared at the juniors. D'Arcy was standing in the Fourth-Form passage, and he held in his hand a little gold-and-green packet, which he was examining very attentively as the juniors came along. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were hurrying down the passage with their bats, to go out to cricket practice, but they stopped at the sight of Arthur Augustus with that suspicious-looking packet in his hand. Three exclamations of shocked surprise were uttered at the same moment.

"Cigarettes!" said Monty Lowther, eyeing the little packet. "Oh, Gussy! Gussy has taken to smoking! Gussy, who has always been our model! Gussy, the glass of fashion and the mirror of form! Oh, Gussy!"

"Shocking!" said Manners. "I'm surprised at Gussy! He knows how we all take example by him! This awful thing is enough to corrupt the whole school!"

And the Terrible Three chimed in together:

"Oh, Gussy!"

"You uttah asses——" began Arthur Augustus.

"Cigarettes!" said Lowther. "Golden

Hyacinth—ten a penny. Warranted made from carefully selected sawdust and coffee-grounds. Gussy——"

"You frightful ass, Lowthah! If you mean to imply——"

"I'm disgusted with you, Gussy," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Gentlemen and chaps, we're in a hurry to get down to the cricket, but we can spare a few minutes to bump Gussy back into the path of virtue."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners and Lowther heartily.

The swell of St. Jim's backed away in alarm.

"I wefuse to be bumped, you asses!" he said. "You do not seem to compwhend the circs.——"

"We comprehend the cigarettes," said Lowther sternly.

"Suppose a prefect caught you with them! What would Blake and Herries and Dig. say? What an awful disgrace for Study No. 6! Gussy, I'm astonished that you should pick up vices like this in your old age!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

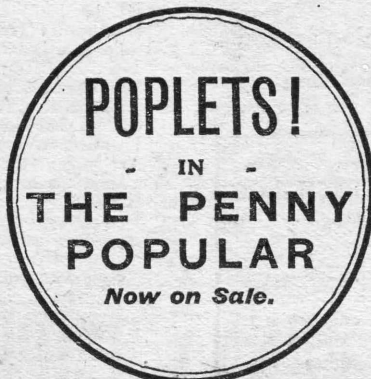
"Collar him!" said Tom Merry. "This is a serious matter, and must be dealt with at once. We can't see our one and only Gussy reeling on the road to ruin without putting out a hand to save him. Never shall it be said that we refused to scrag a pal in the hour of need."

"You feahful ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am not weelin' wecklessly on the woad to wuin! I picked this up——"

"And now you've got to drop it again," said Tom Merry severely. "You can pick up anything you like, excepting the habit of smoking. That's barred."

"I picked it up——"

"Fancy Gussy picking up smoking!"



Next Wednesday:

"TOM MERRY'S SPECIAL NUMBER!" AND "SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!"

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said Lowther. "I can scarcely believe my eyes! Oh, Gussy, are you going to bring down your pals' pink whiskers with sorrow to the grave? Gussy—"

"I know you are wottin', you wottahs. You know vevy well that I picked—"

"We know vevy well that you've got to be stoppéd before it's too late," said Monty Lowther. "You've read in the story-book of the young man who was seen going into a cinematograph show, and eating chocolate cream in public? After that there was no hope for him, and he went from bad to worse, till he became a Cabinet Minister. Gussy—"

"I picked this up in the passage—"

"Worse and worse!" said Lowther, shaking his head. "He does not even keep his vices screened from the public eye! Why, even Levison of the Fourth, Gussy, the outsiders outsider in the school, looks himself in the box-room when he's going to smoke. He wouldn't think of doing it in the passage."

"Blacker than I thought," said Manners, with owl-like gravity.

"You uttah wottahs! I picked this wotten packet of wubbish up in the passage!" shrieked Arthur Augustus wildly. "It does not belong to me. Levison droppéd it as he went by, and I picked it up to give it to him, when I wemarked that it was a packet of cigavettes. Then I weflected—"

"Oh, then you haven't taken to smoking in your old age!" Monty Lowther exclaimed, looking astonished.

"You know vevy well that I have not, you wottah!"

"And you weren't going to light up?"

"Certainly not!"

"Oh, in that case we accept your apology," said Lowther blandly.

"I have not apologised, you uttah ass! I have explained that this wotten wubbish isn't mine. It belongs to Levison, and I was weflectin' whethah I should weturn it to him or chuck it into the fish."

"Where is Levison?" asked Tom Merry.

"I think he has gone up to the box-woom. He went in that diwection. I should weward it as my duty to thwow this wubbish into the fish, but I have a great wespsect for the wights of pwopahity. It belongs to Levison, you know."

"Are you fellows ever coming?" bawled Jack Blake of the Fourth from the staircase.

"Blake, old man, you're wanted. Awfully serious."

Blake came along the passage from the stairs. He, too, cast a look of great surprise at the packet in D'Arcy's hand.

"We've found Gussy in possession of cigarettes," explained Tom Merry.

"Why, the silly ass—" began Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Let me catch you smoking!" said Blake, in a tone that implied that D'Arcy had really better not let him catch him smoking.

"Weally, deah boy, I should judge the mattah for myself," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "I do not smoke, because it is bad form for boys to smoke, and it is vevy bad for the wind. I was debatin' in my mind whethah I should thwow this packet into the fish, or weturn it to Levison, and give him a feahful thwashin' for disgwacin' the Fourth?"

"Oh, it belongs to Levison, does it?" said Blake. "Let's talk to Levison. I'm fed up with his doggish ways."

"Yaas, wathah! I considah—"

"Hallo, here he is!" said Manners.

Levison of the Fourth came along the passage, looking about him as if for something he had lost. He cast a suspicious glance at the chums of the School House. Then he caught sight of the green-and-gold packet in D'Arcy's hand, and uttered an exclamation.

"That belongs to me."

"You admit it?" demanded Tom Merry.

Levison shrugged his thin shoulders.

"Of course I do; it's mine. What is it to do with you, Tom Merry? You've not been made a prefect, that I know of."

"I'm not a prefect," said Tom Merry, "but I'm a decent chap, and I'm up against this kind of rot. If you were in the

Shell I should serag you for it. As you're in the Fourth, I'm willing to lend Blake a hand."

"Yes, rather!" said Lowther. "What shall we do with him? Bumping, or frog's-march, or something lingering, with boiling oil in it?"

"Look here—" began Levison.

"It would serve him right to make him smoke the rubbish," said Tom Merry. "But we won't be too severe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mind your own business," said Levison. "Give me my packet. I suppose D'Arcy isn't going to steal it?"

D'Arcy reddened.

"You fwightful wottah! There is your wotten packet!" And he tossed it to Levison, who caught it—with the end of his nose.

"Ow! You silly idiot!"

"I wufuse to be called a sillay idiot!"

"You should break these truths gently to Gussy," murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," said Tom Merry. "It is up to us to take Levison in hand, and teach him the error of his ways. Stop him!"

Lowther and Blake caught Levison as he was retreating, and pinioned his arms. The cad of the Fourth struggled angrily.

"Let me go, you beasts!"

"Not just yet," said Lowther agreeably. "If you wriggle like that I shall twist your arm. There, I told you so."

"Yow!"

"We're fed up with Levison," said Tom Merry. "He's caused too much trouble lately. He has recently distinguished himself by tormenting Herrie's bulldog, and causing a fearful lot of trouble about it. Now he's up to a different kind of rottenness. It would be a good thing for St. Jim's if he were sacked. As we can't sack him, we must do the best we can to cure him—our humble best."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bring him into his study."

Levison struggled again, but he was marched into his study. Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth, who had the doubtful honour of being Levison's study-mate, was there, and he jumped up in surprise.

"Hallo, what's the trouble?" he exclaimed.

"These silly fools are playing the giddy ox, as usual," growled Levison.

"Levison is playing the rotten cad, as usual," said Tom Merry. "He's got a packet of cigarettes here, and he is going to burn them, and we're going to watch him."

"I'm not!" roared Levison.

"Your mistake; you are!" said Tom Merry calmly. "There isn't a fire here, so you will have to light one. Buck up!"

"I won't!"

"I give you one minute to start," said Tom Merry ominously.

The juniors had released the cad of the Fourth, but they stood between him and the door, and he had no chance to escape. Lumley-Lumley grinned, and sat down again. He was not disposed to help his study-mate. Levison glanced at the grim faces round him, and sullenly gathered materials for lighting a fire. Paper and wood were soon blazing in the grate.

"Now shove that packet of cigarettes on the fire," said Tom Merry.

"I—I won't!"

"Up-end him, Blake, old man, and I'll give him a taste of my bat," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to cure him, at the risk of denting a good bat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hands off!" snarled Levison. "I—I—I'll burn them, if you like, you beasts. You're five to one."

"Bai Jove! If you mean to imply that we could not tackle you one to one, Levison, I am willin' to pwove the contwawy. If you care to put your wotten hands up—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Levison.

"I wufuse to do anythin' of the sort. I considah—"

"Are you going to burn those cigarettes, Levison?" asked Tom Merry, taking a business-like grip upon the cane handle of his bat.

"Yes, hang you!"

Levison thrust the packet into the flames, and it flared up. Then he turned upon the juniors with a savage scowl.

"Now get out of my study, confound you!" he exclaimed.

"No hurry," said Tom Merry. "I fancy that isn't the only packet you've got. Turn out your pockets."

"I won't!" yelled Levison.

"Turn them out for him, you fellows."

Levison made a wild spring for the door. He was grasped and dragged back, and his pockets were turned out on the floor. Quite an interesting collection came into view—two

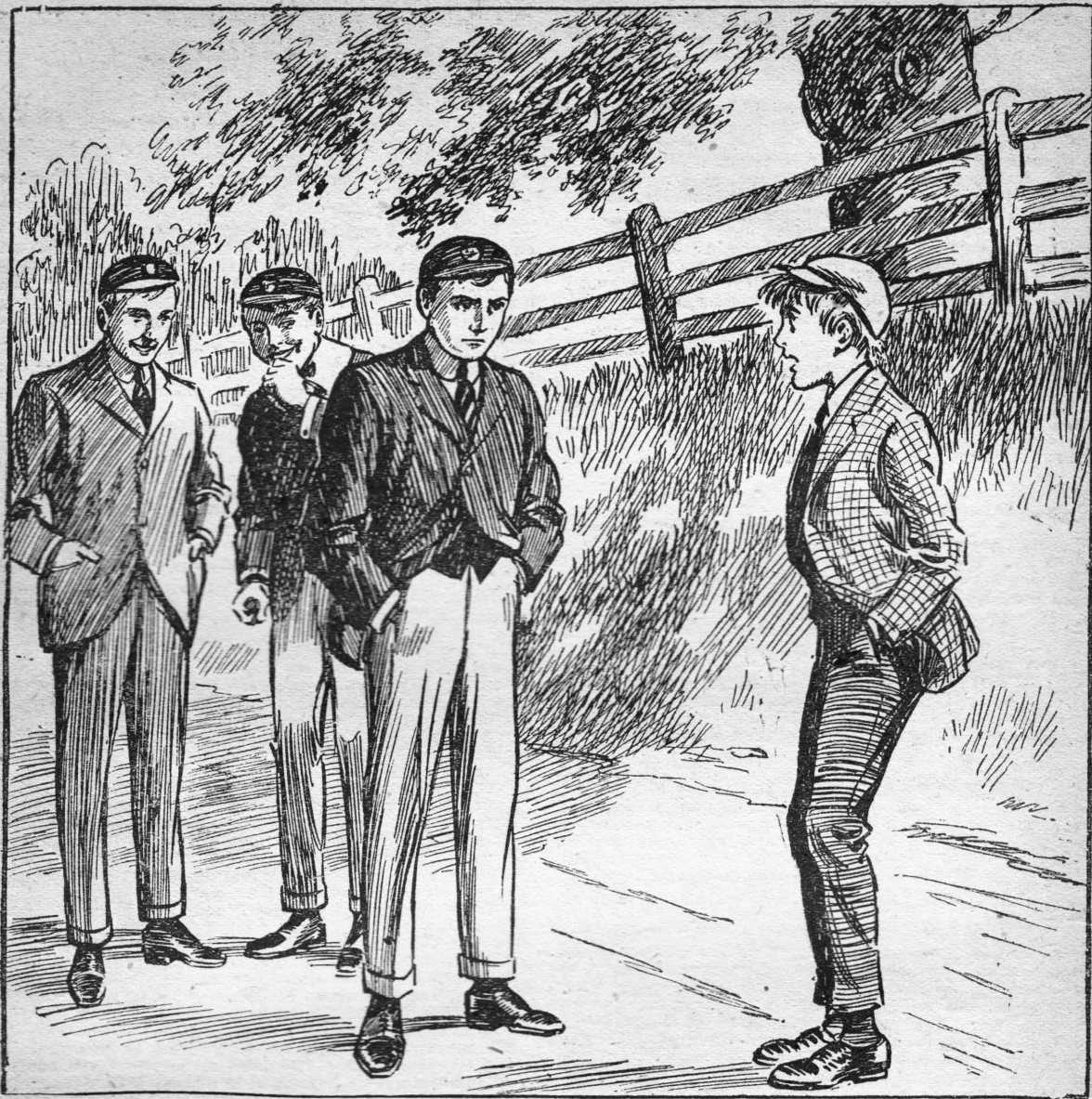
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(See column 2, page 26 of this issue.)



The boy with the red hair slackened his pace as he came up with the Grammar School juniors, and stared at them with a peculiar glint in his eyes. "Well, you'll know us again!" said Gordon Gay, good-humouredly. "Not if you wash your face," said the red-haired youth. Wootton major and Monk chuckled, and Gordon Gay turned pink. (See Chapter 5.)

more packets of cigarettes, and a cigar, and a pink sporting paper, and a list of racing fixtures.

"My only hat!" said Blake. "This is getting thicker and thicker! I wonder what the Head would say if he saw this little lot."

"Yaas, watah!"

"You're going the right way to get sacked, Levison," said Tom Merry. "You can't keep this sort of thing up long without getting bowled out. Shove all that rubbish into the fire, and then we'll bump you. We can't waste all the afternoon over you."

Levison, his face white with fury, piled his precious possessions upon the fire, and sullenly watched them burn away. When they were quite consumed, the chums of the School House collared Levison, and he descended upon the floor with a bump and a yell. He kicked out furiously, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy yelped as his shin was caught by Levison's heel.

"Ow! Ow! Bai Jove! The beast has kicked me! Ow!"

"Never mind; you're suffering in a good cause!" said Tom Merry.

"That does not diminish the pain—ow!"

"Give him another bump to teach him not to kick," said Lowther.

Bump!

"And another for his uncle, and one for his aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Bump!

Then the juniors streamed out of the study, leaving Levison sitting on the floor, gasping with rage. He staggered up, and scowled at Lumley-Lumley, who was chuckling.

"The rotten beasts! I'll make them sorry for that!" said Levison, between his teeth.

Lumley-Lumley only chuckled.

CHAPTER 2.

The Unexpected Happens!

QUITE a little crowd were gathered on the steps of the School House, an hour or two later, at the time when Blagg, the postman from Rylcombe, usually arrived. There was a dearth of funds in some of the studies—as will happen sometimes in the best-regulated studies. The Terrible Three were ready for tea; but tea was not ready for them. They had kept up the cricket till long after tea in Hall was over; so even that resource was not open to them. Tom Merry was expecting a remittance from his old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, and Monty Lowther had some vague

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hopes that his uncle might have remembered his existence. If a remittance did not come for somebody, the chums of the Shell would be reduced to looking into some other fellows' study with sweet smiles, till they found somebody at tea, with enough to go round.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, the chums of Study No. 6, joined the Terrible Three at the door. They were in the same state of impecuniosity. Arthur Augustus was expecting a letter from his governor, which he hoped would contain a five-pound note as well as a considerable amount of kindly parental advice. Blake and Herries and Digby had nobly resolved to stand by him like true chums and help him spend the fiver—if it came.

"Money is gettin' wathah tight," Arthur Augustus remarked, as he polished his eyeglass. "The patah doesn't shell out as a fellow would natuvally expect, you know. I have w'ritten him a wathah severe lettah, though, and I think he will come up smilin' this time."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry, cheerfully. "If either of us gets a remittance, he whacks it out with the others—that's a good wheeze. I'm only expecting a quid—"

"A soveveign, deah boy!"

"A quid!" said Tom Merry, firmly. "If my quid comes, I'll relieve the general distress; and if Gussy's fiver comes instead—"

"In that case, I shall have gweat pleasure in welievin' the geneval distwess, deah boys."

"And if they both come, we'll have a gorgeous spread, and ask Figgins & Co. over from the New House!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

Levison of the Fourth came out of the house, and cast an anxious glance into the quad.

"Seen the postman?" he asked.

"Not arrived yet," said Herries. "You expecting a remittance, too?"

"Yes, rather!" said Levison, loftily. "And a whacking good one, too! I shouldn't wonder if it's twenty quid."

"Twenty rats!" said Herries, gruffly.

"Bai Jove! It would be wippin' to have twenty soveveigns at once," said Arthur Augustus. "You will be wollin' in money, deah boy."

Levison sniffed.

"I expect to be rolling in money, as a matter of fact!" he said. "My father's engaged in a big thing now on the Stock Exchange, and he will most likely be a millionaire next week. It's a jolly sure thing, and he had inside information, and he is simply whacking in the money. Some fellows who have been against me will be jolly civil then, I expect!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"You won't find any difference from me, for one!" he said. "And you'll still get bumped if you're found with cigarettes in your pockets."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison sneered.

"You'll change your tune, I expect, when it comes off," he said.

"Oh, rats!"

"Levison's got pals to stand by him, anyway," said Mellish of the Fourth, Levison's studymate and crony. "And he won't forget old friends when he's rolling in giddy riches, will you, Levison?"

"No fear!" said Levison. "And I sha'n't forget those who've been rotten to me."

Blake uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Look here, Levison, nobody here cares twopence whether your pater's a millionaire or not!" he exclaimed. "It won't make any difference to us. We wouldn't touch your money, if you offered it to us by the fistful—and you haven't got it yet, either. You're such a giddy Ananias, that I sha'n't believe in the golden quids, for one, till I've seen them!"

"Wathah not!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll see them jolly soon, then!" he said. "Here comes the postman!"

Blagg, the local postman, had heaved in sight. And there was a general shout from the juniors:

"This way, Blagg!"

And Blagg grinned, and came towards the School House steps. Blagg understood that it sometimes happened to juniors to become very anxious for letters from home.

Gore and Crooke of the Shell joined Levison. The news of Levison's expected wealth had spread—Levison had talked a great deal about it. Levison was not a fellow with many friends—some fellows had expressed wonder that even Mellish and Crooke could stand him. But human nature is human nature, all the world over, in school and out of school; and Levison as a millionaire's son was likely to be much more popular than he had been of old. Cutts of the Fifth had been seen speaking to him very civilly; a very great honour

from Cutts of the Fifth. To Tom Merry & Co. it did not matter anything at all whether Levison was rich or poor. But all fellows are not built the same way.

"Letter for me, Blagg?" asked Tom Merry.

"And for me, Blagg, deah boy?"

Blagg shook his head.

"Nothing for you this time, Master Merry."

Tom Merry groaned.

"That gives our giddy tea-party the kybosh!" he remarked.

"It all depends on Gussy's fiver now. A registered letter for D'Arcy, Blagg?"

"No, Master Merry."

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as weally wemarkably careless on the patah's part. I wote to him specially to explain that I should expect a fivah by this post!"

"These paters are so careless!" grinned Lowther. "You can't have been very careful in bringing him up, Gussy! In his tender youth you should have impressed upon him the sin of forgetfulness—"

"Letter for Master Levison!" said Blagg.

Levison grinned as he took the letter. Blagg shouldered his bag. Some of the juniors there gathered round Levison.

"From your pater?" asked Gore.

"Yes," said Levison.

"Oh, good!" said Mellish. "I hope it's twenty—but if it's only ten, we'll have a gorgeous celebration—what?"

"What-ho!" said Levison, as he slit the envelope. "And I shall make up a list of the fellows who're going to come to the celebration—and Tom Merry & Co. won't be on the list!"

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry, politely.

Levison's friends hung round him as he unfolded the letter and began to read it. The Fourth-Former's face changed suddenly.

"Hallo, there's nothing in the letter," said Mellish. "Did your pater forget to put the cash in, Levison?"

Levison did not reply.

His face had gone quite white.

The hand that held the letter trembled. Levison was devouring the page with wild, startled eyes. And the juniors stared at him in amazement. His expression was certainly not that of a fellow who had received news of great success, and a liberal remittance. His face told as plainly as words could have done that he had received bad news—news that was very bad indeed.

"What's the matter, Levison?" asked Mellish, uneasily. "Isn't your pater going to send you any cash after all?"

Tom Merry & Co. were looking at Levison, too. They did not like Levison; but they would have felt sorry for any fellow who looked as Levison looked at that moment. The cad of the Fourth was so white that his face seemed bloodless, and his eyes seemed starting from his head.

"What's the matter, old chap?" said Tom Merry. "Some of your people ill?"

Levison shook his head.

"Bad news, deah boy?" said D'Arcy, sympathetically.

"Good heavens!" muttered Levison.

"What is it?" snapped Mellish.

"My pater's ruined!"

"What!"

"The—the speculation hasn't turned out as he expected," said Levison, huskily. "He's lost all his money—instead of making a fortune—and—and I'm to go home!"

"Leave St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Well, my hat! The feed's off, for a cert," said Mellish. And he walked away.

Levison did not look at him. He crumpled the letter in his hand, and went slowly into the School House.

CHAPTER 3.

The Last of Levison?

LEVISON'S bad luck was soon known all over St. Jim's. He had been in a fair way to making quite a large

number of friends, when it was supposed that his father was about to become a millionaire.

Matters were changed now, with a vengeance.

Percy Mellish declared that he had thought there was something fishy about it all along; and Crooke of the Shell delivered the opinion that Levison had swanked a little too soon. Gore said it was a bad habit to count one's chickens before they were hatched.

Quite unexpectedly, so far as Levison was concerned, he received most sympathy from the fellows who, as he said, had always been against him.

Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to allow hard feelings to reign in their breasts, at such a time of misfortune for the cad of the Fourth.

The fellow was a cad, that was undoubted; but he had had cruel luck. St. Jim's would be all the better off without him; but they were sorry for a chap who had to go! His

prospects would be ruined—all things were at an end for him. For the rest of that evening Levison seemed stunned.

Mr. Levison had written to the Head by the same post, explaining that his son would have to leave St. Jim's, as he could no longer afford to keep him there. It would be necessary for Levison to work, and to share the fallen fortunes of his family. There was an opening for him to begin in an office, and he could afford to lose no time about it. Dr. Holmes sent for Levison, and was very kind to him. He did not like the boy—Levison had given the good old doctor more trouble than any other junior in the school. But the Head was kindness itself now, and he said that he hoped matters would soon wear a brighter aspect, and Levison would be able to return to school.

He was to leave in the morning.

Levison left the Head's study after that interview, his hard heart not at all softened by the doctor's kindness and gentleness.

He was seething with rage and spite now, as he had had time to think over the matter, and over all that it meant to him. He went into the junior common-room, and Mellish and Crooke stared at him. They did not feel misfortunes very acutely unless the said misfortunes happened to their noble selves.

Tom Merry & Co. were in the room, and Tom came over to Levison.

"I'm awfully sorry about this, Levison, old man," he said softly. "If there's anything I could do—"

"Yaas, wathah, Levison, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "If there's anythin' any of us could do—"

Levison gave them a bitter look. "Don't rot!" he said fiercely. "You're glad—you know you're glad."

Arthur Augustus turned crimson.

"Weally, Levison, I twust you do not think I am wottah enough to feel glad at any chap bein' down on his luck!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rot!"

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands for a moment. But it was only for a moment. He unclenched them again, and walked quietly away.

Levison evidently was not a fellow to be sympathised with. "I'm not glad, Levison," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't think anybody's glad. I'm sorry you've had such bad luck."

"It's a lie!"

Tom Merry started. Levison's eyes burned as he fixed them upon the captain of the Shell.

"You're glad I'm going," he said savagely. "You've said often enough that you'd be glad to see me shifted out of the school."

Tom coloured.

"Well, I've said that," he replied. "I meant it, too; but—but now it's happened, I'm sorry. We often say things without thinking much, Levison. I'm sorry."

"I don't believe you."

"I'd rather part friends, Levison, if you liked."

Levison sneered.

"You and I couldn't be friends in a thousand years, Tom Merry."

Tom looked at him steadily.

"No, I suppose we couldn't," he said quietly. And he turned away. He did not speak to Levison again.

Levison gave a scoffing laugh, and threw himself into a chair. To his distorted mind it seemed that all the fellows were pleased at his misfortune, and glad that he had to leave St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. had dealt roughly with him sometimes, and he had deserved it, and more. They were not sorry that they had condemned his "rotten" ways. They were simply sorry that he had had bad luck.

But Levison could not understand that. He would have rejoiced in the misfortunes of an enemy, and he could not understand a nobler nature than his own.

He hardly spoke a word for the rest of the evening. That night he packed his box. Percy Mellish helped him to pack, but Mellish did not waste much sympathy upon him. There was little comfort for Levison in Mellish's company. As a matter of fact, Mellish was not sorry to see him go. They had been "pals," but Levison had always had the upper hand, and when he was gone, too, there would be more room in the study. As for Crooke of the Shell, he did not speak to Levison at all. Crooke was the son of a millionaire, who had made his millions in the same Stock Exchange gamble where Levison's father had lost his all. In a gamble there could not be all winners and no losers—somebody must draw the blanks. Levison's father had drawn a very blank blank, evidently, and Crooke had no use for an acquaintance who had nothing, and was never likely to do anything for him but to borrow money of him.

Levison bestowed a bitter look on the chums of the Fourth when the juniors came up to bed.

"You think you're going to see the last of me, I suppose?" he said.

Blake looked at him.

"I haven't thought much about it," he said. "But, if you're going, I suppose we shall see the last of you."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"Well, you're mistaken. I'm not leaving St. Jim's for long; I shall be coming back. You won't get rid of me so easily."

"I don't know that we want to get rid of you," said Digby uncomfortably. "And I'm sure I hope that your pater's affairs will look up."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Whether they do or not, I shall come back," said Levison. "My father wants me to stick in an office, and earn money to help the home. Help the home! Catch me! If I earn any money, I'm jolly well going to stick to it!"

"Bai Jove, Levison, I should think you'd be jollay glad of a chance to wally wound your patah, at a time like this."

"My pater's served me a pretty rotten turn in sticking me like this," said Levison bitterly. "He can look after himself; I've got to look after myself. And I can tell you fellows that you haven't seen the last of me. I'm not going home."

"Not going home!" said Blake.

"Going home—to see faces as long as fiddles, and to hear them all snivelling?" said Levison fiercely. "No fear!"

"If that's the way you look at it, your pater will be better off if you don't go home," said Herries.

"Better off or not, I sha'n't go."

"But where will you go, then?" asked Blake.

"That's my business."

"Oh, certainly. Only asking out of politeness, you know," Blake explained cheerfully.

Levison went to bed, but not to sleep.

Long hours he lay awake that night, while the rest of the Fourth were sleeping the sleep of healthy youth.

When he rose in the morning, his face was pale, and his eyes burning.

Taggles, the porter, carried his box down. Toby, the School House page, lingered in the hall as Levison came down to take his place in the trap to go to the station.

"Good-bye, Master Levison," he said.

Levison looked at him with a sneer.

"Good-bye's no good," he said. "I'm stony broke now, and there won't be any tip."

Toby flushed to his ears.

"I wasn't thinking of a tip, Master Levison," he exclaimed indignantly. "I wouldn't take it if you offered me, seeing as you are down on your luck, sir. Master Merry wouldn't have thought I was hintin' for a tip."

"Oh, rats!" said Levison.

"The fellow's an utter cad," said Tom Merry, in a low voice, as Levison went out. "He knew very well that Toby wasn't asking for a tip."

"Jolly well rid of him, I think," said Herries.

And Tom Merry had to agree.

But were they rid of Levison? Tom Merry wondered, as he saw Taggles drive the trap away, with Levison and his box in it. Levison was a born schemer, and so long as he gained his ends he was not at all particular as to whether his schemes were right or wrong.

CHAPTER 4.

Where is Levison?

"BAI JOVE! My patah's playin' up, aifah all!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Morning lessons were over, and the juniors had come out of the Form-rooms.

Levison's place in the Fourth Form-room had been empty that morning, but no one seemed to have missed him.

"Got a letter?" asked Blake, as D'Arcy uttered the exclamation.

"He's wiwin it," said D'Arcy.

"Wiring you a fiver?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, good!" said Blake. "I don't want to have tea to-night off one sardine among four, and bread without butter, same as we did last night. But how do you know that your pater is wiring you a fiver?"

Arthur Augustus pointed into the quadrangle.

"There comes the telegraph kid, deah boy."

"How do you know the telegram is for you?" demanded Digby.

"I natuwallly conclude that it is," said Arthur Augustus. Blake chuckled.

"You concluded once before that a telegram was for you, and opened one for the Head!" he remarked. "You'd better make sure this time."

"Oh, I have no doubt about the mattah, deah boy. That

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A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

telegwam is for me, youngstah," added Arthur Augustus, as the telegraph boy came up.

The "youngster," who was at least two years older than Arthur Augustus, grinned.

"You Dr. Holmes?" he asked seriously.

"Certainly not."

"This telegram is for Dr. Holmes, sir."

"Oh, you'd bettah take it in, then." And the telegraph boy grinned and took it in.

The chums of the Fourth grinned as D'Arcy looked at them with a very crestfallen air.

"The noble pater isn't playing the game, after all," Blake remarked. "You'd better send him a wire to jog his memory, Gussy. Point out to him that four juniors are in danger of dying by inches, of famine—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dying by inches!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, joining them. "Then I should recommend you to get it over quickly. Instead of dying by inches, why not go round to the stable, and die by the yard?"

"Oh, suffocate him, somebody!"

"Weally, Lowthah, this is not a time for wotten puns," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "My telegwam turns out to be for the Head, and I am stoney. I wegard the governah as weally havin' failed to play the game."

Toby the page came out hurriedly.

"Ead wants Master Kildare," he exclaimed. "Something's up, young gentlemen."

And the page ran away in search of Kildare. He returned in a few minutes with the captain of St. Jim's, who went into the Head's study. Blake of the Fourth captured Toby as he passed.

"What's the row, Toby? Kildare's not in trouble, surely?"

"No, Master Blake. It's the telegram."

"Hallo, here's Kildare."

Kildare had not been long with the Head. He came out hurriedly to speak to the group of curious juniors on the School House steps.

"Do you kids know anything about Levison?" he asked.

"Levison!" repeated the juniors, in surprise.

"I thought we were finished with him," growled Herries.

"Hasn't he gone home?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, that's the trouble. He certainly left by the early morning train; Taggles saw him off," said Kildare, with a worried look. "But his father has wired to the Head that he has not come home, and asks whether he has left St. Jim's."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake started. He remembered Levison's words of the previous night—reckless words, that he had taken no note of at the time.

"Do any of you kids know whether Levison had any intention of not going home?" Kildare asked. "The Head wants to know."

"He said something about it last night, in the dorm," said Blake. "I thought he was only gassing. He said he wasn't going home."

"The young ass!" said Kildare. "The Head was afraid there might have been some accident. What can the young duffer be staying away from home for? I should have thought he'd have got home as quickly as he could, under the circumstances."

And Kildare returned to the Head.

"Then he meant what he said last night," said Blake.

"What an awful cad! It isn't a time for him to select to worry his father, if the old chap is ruined."

"Wathah not!"

"Rotten bad form, anyway," said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! I am not surprised at it, howevah; and I must remark that I trust St. Jim's has seen the last of Levison."

The juniors were very keenly interested in the question of what had become of Levison.

More telegrams passed to and fro.

It was known that night that Levison had not gone home; his box had been taken out of the train at Wayland Junction, and Levison had left the train there, and then he had vanished.

What had become of him?

D'Arcy's suggestion that perhaps he had run away to sea was not considered plausible. The cad of the Fourth had said that he would not go back to a ruined home, and that he would look out for himself. Apparently he was keeping his word.

"He said that he would come back to St. Jim's," Tom Merry remarked, "but I don't fancy we shall see any more of him. I'm sorry for the chap, but I can't help thinking the school will be better off without him. But I hope he hasn't come to any harm."

Further news of Levison, however, did not arrive.

Whatever had become of the cad of the Fourth, the school THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 278.

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saw nothing of him, and it was known that he had not arrived home.

But it came out that his father had heard from him, so all fear of an accident to the junior was over.

Levison had left St. Jim's, and he was staying away from home of his own accord. And St. Jim's went on its usual way, and soon forgot about Levison.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for one, had more to think about than the cad of the Fourth—something much more important. His pater had failed consistently to come up smiling, as D'Arcy expressed it, and the long-looked-for fiver had not arrived.

"It's weally vewy wemiss of the governah," Arthur Augustus remarked, as Blake looked into the cupboard at tea-time, in the hope of discovering some comestible that had been overlooked in previous investigations.

Blake grunted.

"Yes, rather! Nothing here! Your pater wants talking to, Gussy. And my pater is just as bad. He's written me a letter full of advice about working hard this term. Of course, I wouldn't mind that—paters do such things, and a fellow expects it. But he might have put in a postal-order."

"Yaas, wathah! I've a jolly good mind to earn some money, as I did once before. You wemembah the time I got a job as an interpwetah in an hotel—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to cackle at in that, deah boys. I wegard it as bein' up to evewy fellow to be able to earn his own livin', in case of accidents. Lots of fellows do, you know—in fact, the majowity of fellows, in all pwobability. If a chap could think of some way of earnin' money in his spare time, without interfewin' with cwicket, it would be a gweat thing. I wouldn't mind doin' litewayah work, if I knew an editah who'd pwint the stuff. A lot depends on that, you know. I could w'ite poems and things, if anybody would pwint them; but they won't."

"There's a new boot-boy wanted in the House," Digby suggested. "The place is really going begging. If you asked the Head—"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Of course, you wouldn't be much of a hand at cleaning boots; but you learn a lot with steady practice," said Dig wisely.

"I wegard you as an ass, Dig," said Arthur Augustus. "I should wequire a salawy of at least twenty guineas a week, if I worked. A chap with my bwains ought to be able to do something. It's wathah humiliatin' to wefect that Tobay can support himself, and a chap like me can't do it. I've a jollay good ideah to answer some of those advertisements about home work, you know, in the papahs. You send them five shillin's, and they pay you lots of money for doin' things in your leisure hours. Only I haven't got five shillin's just now. It's wotten!"

The study door flew open under the impetus of a kick, and Tom Merry looked into the study with a sunny face.

"It's come!" he announced.

"My wegstahed lettah?"

"No; my quid!"

"Your soveveign, deah boy?"

"My quid!" said Tom Merry. "All gentlemen present are invited to my study for a high tea—the adjective not referring to the sardines! Come hon!"

"Corn in Egypt!" exclaimed Blake, with a gasp of relief. "Come on, kids!"

And the juniors gathered in Tom Merry's study round the festive board, and peace and contentment descended upon them, though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked from time to time that it was weally too bad of his governah.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy Chips In.

"MY hat, what a mop!"

Gordon Gay, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, uttered that exclamation. Gay and Wootton and Frank Monk were sauntering along Rylcombe Lane. They were not doing anything in particular, excepting keeping an eye open for St. Jim's fellows to relieve the monotony with a "rag," if the chance came their way. And they suddenly caught sight of a fellow turning out of the cross-road from Wayland, and Gordon Gay uttered that disrespectful ejaculation.

Wootton and Monk glanced at the stranger and grinned. He was a lad of about their own age, dressed very shabbily, with a face so dark as to suggest foreign blood. His hair, however, was of a specially aggressive shade of ginger, and his eyebrows, large and thick, were of the same hue. The effect, along with his swarthy face, was striking.

"What a giddy mop!" said Gordon Gay. "If ginger stands for pluck, that merchant must be a regular paladin."

Gordon Gay did not intend the stranger to hear his remarks. Careless as he was, he would not willingly have given offence to a stranger. But the boy with the red hair seemed to have unusually keen ears, and, although he was still at a distance, the look on his face showed that he had heard.

He slackened his pace as he came nearer to the Grammar School juniors, and stared at them, with a peculiar glint in his eyes.

"Well, you'll know us again, kid," said Gordon Gay good-humouredly.

"Not if you wash your face," said the red-haired youth.

Wootton major and Monk chuckled, and Gordon Gay turned pink.

"I suppose it is a face," went on the stranger, regarding Gordon Gay attentively. "There is what appears to be a nose, unless it is a strawberry, and a mouth, unless I'm making a mistake, and it's a cupboard."

"Look here," exclaimed Gordon Gay wrathfully, as Wootton and Monk chuckled again, "don't you be so jolly free with your remarks, or you will get a thick ear!"

"Well, you started it," said the red-haired youth. "Why can't you let my hair alone?"

"Well, I wouldn't touch it for anything; might burn my fingers," said Gay. "I didn't know you could hear what I said. You've got jolly long ears. Still, I admit I oughtn't to have remarked on your ginger top-knot, and I apologise."

"Good thing for you," said the other. "I was just thinking of wiping up the ground with you!"

Gordon Gay looked warlike at once.

"Better wire in then!" he exclaimed. "I was rude, and I've apologised, and that ends it, but if you're looking for trouble, I'm the very merchant you want."

The stranger backed away a little.

"It's alright," he said. "Don't you worry. P'r'aps you young gentlemen could tell me whether I'm on the right road for St. Jim's."

The three Grammarians stared at him. The youth had spoken, in the first place, like one of themselves, and he had suddenly dropped into a cockney accent that was most pronounced.

"You're going to St. Jim's?" asked Gay, with a curious look at the boy's shabby clothes and patched boots.

"Yes, sir."

"New fellow—eh?"

The stranger grinned.

"New boot-boy," he explained. "Leastways, I'm trying to get the job, and I ope as 'ow I shall be able to."

"Oh, I see!" said Guy. "Well, you're on the right road; keep straight on, and you'll pass the gates of the school."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

And the stranger touched his shabby cap and passed on.

Gordon Gay looked after him very curiously.

"That's a jolly queer merchant," he said. "Did you notice how differently he spoke? Quite all right at first, and then dropped into a horrible twang. Some kid who's seen better days, perhaps. Sorry for him, if that's the case. And if any of you fellows see him again, and chip him about his ginger hair, I'll squash you!"

"But we didn't!" exclaimed Wootton. "It was you did it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gordon Gay. "Don't argue!"

"But you said—"

"Rats! Come into Mother Murphy's and have some ginger-pop, and don't jaw on a warm afternoon!"

And the Grammarians walked on, and soon forgot the existence of the red-haired youth, who was going to St. Jim's to apply for the position of boot-boy there. The red-haired youth walked on, too, in the direction of St. Jim's. Although he had asked the Grammarians the way, he seemed to know it very well. There was a sudden yell as he came in sight of the distant school gates.

"My eye, it's a fire!"

The red-haired youth looked round. He knew that it was another reference to the peculiar colour of his hair. Two St. Jim's fellows had stopped in the lane, and were grinning at him. They were Croke of the Shell, and Mellish of the Fourth.

The red-haired lad started as he saw them, and drew a quick breath. Anyone observing him might have surmised that he had seen the two cads of the School House before. But the expression on his face was fleeting; it was gone in an instant. A look of stupidity took its place at once.

"Where did you get that mop?" asked Croke.

"Why don't you put your head in the ditch and extinguish it?" asked Mellish.

The red-haired youth showed no sign of anger.

"If you please, young gentlemen, is that St. Jim's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Croke, with a stare. "What do you want at our school, young Rufus?"

"Please I'm the new boot-boy."

"Oh, you're the new boot-boy, are you?" said Croke. "Dangerous to have you about the house, I should think, unless it's insured against fire."

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

"Chance for Tom Merry's giddy fire-brigade," grinned Croke.

"He, he, he!"

And the cads of the School House advanced upon the red-haired boy. They felt quite safe in bullying him. They were two to one, for one thing; and then a boot-boy in the school seemed to Croke a proper object for ragging and bullying, as, of course, he could not take his own part against one of the fellows. The red-haired boy backed away and dodged them, and ran for the school gate. The sight of the victim running was enough for Croke. He was bravery itself when the other party was afraid.

"After him!" he exclaimed.

"He, he, he!"

And they dashed after the red-haired boy. The latter reached the open gates just as an elegant form stepped into view there. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, taking a look down the road for the postman—the famous fiver not having arrived yet. The red-haired lad ran right into him, whether by accident or not, and the swell of St. Jim's sat down in the dust with a yell.

"Ow! Bai Jove! You uttah ass!"

"Sorry, sir," said the red-haired lad meekly. "Them young gentlemen is arter me, sir, and they're goin' to duck me in the ditch, sir."

D'Arcy struggled to his feet as Croke and Mellish panted up.

"Lend a hand, D'Arcy!" said Croke. "We're going to stick that flaming top-knot in the ditch and put it out!"

"You uttah wottah, Cwooke! How dare you make vulgah wemarks to a fellow concernin' his personal appearance!"

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Let that young person alone at once!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus angrily. "How dare you lay a fingah on him!"

And D'Arcy stepped in between the raggers and their victim. In his anger at what he justly regarded as the caddishness of Croke and Mellish, the swell of St. Jim's even forgot his dusty trousers.

"Look here," roared Croke, "you silly ass, get out of the way! He's only a boot-boy!"

"Only a whelp come to help Toby with the boots, and washing up dishes," said Mellish.

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"You awful cads!" he said. "There might be some excuse for waggin' a chap who could stwike out for himself; but to take advantage of a fellow bein' in employment here is cowardly as well as wotten. You are uttah outsiders!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Croke. "We're going to rag Rufus if we like! Clear out!"

"I wefuse to clear out!"

"Look here, if you don't shift, we'll jolly soon shift you!" roared Croke, who was a big powerful fellow, a head taller than Arthur Augustus.

But Arthur Augustus never counted size or odds before he plunged into a combat.

"I decline to shift, and I uttably wefuse to be shifted! Oh! Ow! You wottahs! Cwooke, I shall give you a feahful —ow!—thwashin'! Yow!"

Arthur Augustus struggled furiously in the grasp of the two cads of the School House. The new boots glanced at the three struggling juniors, and walked away calmly towards the School House, leaving D'Arcy in the grasp of his enemies.

"Bump the cheeky cad!" growled Croke.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus was a great fighting man. But he had no chance against two foes, one of whom was much bigger and heavier than himself. Croke and Mellish received several hard knocks which increased their fury, and then D'Arcy was down. And it would have gone very hard with Arthur Augustus if help had not arrived, in the shape of Figgins & Co. of the New House. The three New House fellows bore down upon the struggling juniors, and laid violent hands upon Croke and Mellish.

"Here, hold on; fair play's a jewel!" exclaimed Figgins, in disgust. "Not two to one, you rotters!"

"Let go, you New House cad!" yelled Croke.

"New House what?" asked Figgins, collaring Croke, and dragging him off D'Arcy, and jamming him against the wall with a grasp of iron. "New House what?"

"Ow! Ow! Rotter!"

Figgins jammed harder. Croke was no use in the powerful grip of Figgins, who was the champion junior athlete of the New House at St. Jim's. Croke's head rubbed hard on the rough surface of the wall, and he yelled furiously. He felt

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as if he were being scalped, and the feeling was not pleasant.

"Now, what did you say?" asked Figgins, pleasantly. Kerr and Wynn had collared Mellish. But Mellish was not giving any trouble. He was not a fighting man—excepting when the odds were in his favour. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up on the ground and panted.

"Thank you vewy much, deah boys!" he gasped. "The awful wottahs! They have simply wuined my waistcoat, and my twousahs are twightfully dustay."

"It—it was only a joke!" mumbled Mellish. "I—I'm sorry!"

"Bump him, deah boys. You will oblige me by bumpin' him!"

"Certainly!" said Kerr. "Anything to oblige!"

And the Co. promptly bumped Mellish, who yelled, and wriggled out of their hands and fled. Figgins was still scalping Crooke.

"You called me something, I think?" said Figgins, sweetly. "I think you used the wrong word. Now, what was it?"

"Ow! Ow! Ow! You—you're rubbing the skin off my beastly head!" yelled Crooke. He would have liked to plant both his fists full into Figgins's grinning face; but the result would have been that Figgins's fists would have returned the compliment—and Crooke would not have liked that at all.

"You called me something, I think——"

"Ow! I take it back!" groaned Crooke.

"Sorry?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"You really meant, I suppose, that I'm a nice jolly chap, and that you respect me most highly?" suggested Figgins, still grinding Crooke's head against the rough wall.

"Ow! No—yes—yes!"

"Good. Nothing like making these matters clear," said Figgins, releasing him. "Now you can cut off, and mind you're very careful to say what you really mean the next time you honour yourself by speaking to me."

Crooke ground his teeth and stamped away.

"What was the trouble about?" asked Figgins, grinning at the swell of St. Jim's, who was dusting down his elegant attire with a cambric handkerchief.

"The awful wottahs! They were waggin' a kid who's come here for a job—a boot-boy or somethin'," said D'Arcy; "chap with a wed head. I felt bound to give them a feahful thwashin', but—but——"

"But they were giving you one instead," chuckled Figgins. "These things do work out like that sometimes. Never mind, Gussy—always rely on the New House to look after you in times of trouble. What's the good of being cock-house of St. Jim's, if we can't look after the School House kids sometimes?"

"Why, you uttah ass——" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Figgins & Co. strolled away smiling. And Arthur Augustus, with a despairing glance at his rumpled waistcoat and his dusty trousers, hurried off to the School House for a clothes-brush.

CHAPTER 6.

The New Boot-Boy.

TOBY, the page, looked at the new arrival, and grinned. The red-haired youth favoured him with a stare in return.

"Ullo, Carrots!" said Toby.

"Hallo, Buttons!" replied the other.

"I s'pose you're the new boot-boy," said Toby, with a disparaging glance at the red-haired youth.

"Wotto!"

"What's your name?"

"Iggins!"

"Well, 'Iggins," said Toby. "Don't you know that a boot-boy ain't allowed to come into the 'ouse by that door? You're to come in by the entrance at the back."

"I've come arter the job," explained Higgins. "I want to see the 'Ead! You show me in to the 'Ead, and shet your mouth, Buttons!"

Toby snorted.

"You don't see the 'Ead," he replied. "The 'Ead don't engage boot-boys. The 'ousemaster engages all the servants for his own 'ouse, you fathead! You'll 'ave to see Mr. Railton!"

"Who's that?"

"Mr. Railton's the 'ousemaster of the School 'ouse—this 'ouse!"

"Well, trot 'im out!" said Master Higgins.

Toby snorted again. Mr. Railton was a great and respected person in the house, and Toby did not like the way Master Higgins spoke of him.

"You'd better larn your manners, if you want a job 'ere," said Toby warningly. "Boot-boys ain't allowed to be cheeky. And you'll be hunder my horders, don't you forget that?"

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"Hunder your horders, hey?" said Higgins. "Who are you, Buttons?"

"I'm Toby, the page!" howled Toby.

"Sounds more like a dog's name!" commented Higgins.

"Look 'ere, don't you gimme any more of your lip," said Toby, exasperated. "I'll take you to Mr. Railton, but I must say I 'ope he'll give you the boot!"

"Thanks, awfully!"

Toby looked at the new boot-boy suspiciously. The change of accent in his voice was very surprising to hear. But the page led the way to Mr. Railton's study, and tapped respectfully at the door, and informed the Housemaster that the new boot-boy wished to see him, and Mr. Railton ordered Higgins to come in.

The red-haired youth showed some slight timidity as he entered the Housemaster's study. He contrived to stand with his back to the light of the window, as Mr. Railton's gaze fell upon him.

"Ah! You are—er—Henry Higgins," said Mr. Railton, referring to a letter on his desk.

"Yes, sir!"

"You are applicant for a place vacant in this House—and I understand that you are recommended by Mr. Purkiss, the manager of the Servants' Bureau in Wayland?"

"Yes, sir. I'm a 'ard worker, sir, and I 'ope as I shall give satisfaction, sir."

Mr. Railton looked him over.

"Very well, you may report yourself to the housekeeper. Toby, take the boy to Mrs. Mimms!"

"Yes, sir!" said Toby.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said Henry Higgins.

And he followed Toby out of the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had just come in from the quadrangle, and he paused to speak to the red-haired youth.

"I twust those wottahs did not hurt you, my deah kid!" he said, kindly.

"No, sir, thank you kindly, sir," said Henry Higgins. "It was werry kind of you to 'elp me, sir. It will be a great pleasure to clean your boots, sir!"

"Vewy good! If any of the fellows should chip you at any time, my lad, you will only have to let me know, and I will pwotect you!"

"I'm sure you are very kind, sir."

"Not at all, deah boy. It is a case of noblesse oblige, you know!"

"I don't know what that means, sir, but I'm sure you're very kind," said Henry Higgins. "It is such a pleasure for a boy in my station in life, sir, to meet with real kindness from a young gentleman like you."

"Vewy good, vewy good!" said D'Arcy, rather hastily, and he went on to the stairs. D'Arcy liked civility; but servility was not at all to his taste, and the humility of the new boot-boy smacked a little too much of the manners of the celebrated Uriah Heep.

Henry Higgins followed Toby to the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Mimms subjected him to a rigid cross-examination. The things that a bootboy in the School House was expected to do seemed endless, and to do them all, and to do them well, would have required an Admirable Crichton at least. But Henry Higgins succeeded in satisfying the house-dame, and he was engaged.

"Toby will show you your duties," said Mrs. Mimms, and Toby, still sniffing, led the new bootboy away.

"I'm goin' to show you your duties," said Toby. "Your duties is to 'elp me in my work, and obey horders. You savvy?"

"Must I call you sir?" asked Henry Higgins, respectfully.

Toby gave him a sharp look. The humility the new boy had displayed towards Mr. Railton, and D'Arcy, and Mrs. Mimms, was complete. But Toby had an uneasy suspicion that it was all humbug; and that Master Higgins was, in point of fact, laughing in his sleeve at the various persons he was "spoofing."

"I suppose I ought to call you sir, as you're so superior to me?" Henry Higgins suggested.

"P'raps you'd better," said Toby, swelling with importance at the idea of being called sir by somebody. He had to call very many people sir, and why shouldn't he be called sir in turn by a fellow who was under him? Every dog has his day, according to the proverb. "Yes, you'd better call me sir, and I 'ope you'll learn your place, 'Enry 'Iggins!"

"I 'ope so, I'm sure!" said Henry Higgins, meekly.

"This 'ere is the boot-room," said Toby.

"Oh, this 'ere is the boot-room, is it?" asked Henry Higgins, glancing round the apartment as he entered. "Orlright. I suppose 'as 'ow I does my work 'ere?"

"Yes," said Toby. "Cept when you're wanted somewhere else. You 'ave to collect up all the boots of the young gentlemen, and bring 'em 'ere, and clean 'em—and mind you clean 'em proper, that's orl. Master D'Arcy is werry pertickler about his boots, but he 'ands out a good tip



The tiger gave a low, rumbling roar, the long body undulated—and then came the spring. Wharton did not flinch, but the great hammer swung in the air! (An exciting incident from the splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars, entitled "In Direst Peril," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of "The Magnet" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

sometimes, and if you're civil, you'll make a good thing out of it. Regler young gent, Master D'Arcy is—never looks at a 'arf-crown twice."

"Ow nice!" said Henry Higgins.

"Some of 'em," said Toby, "is bounders!"

"Some of the young gentlemen?" asked Henry Higgins.

"Yes," said Toby. "Some of them is real gents, like Master D'Arcy, and Master Tom Merry—they's the real thing, you know. Always civil to a chap, whether he's a page or a boot-boy or wot you like. Some of 'em is bounders, as I said. Don't think that a page can 'ave any feelings, you know. There's Master Gore and Crooke, two of the worst. And there was a bloke who's left now—jolly good thing too—a beast named Levison—"

"What!"

"He was a cad, if you like," said Toby, reminiscently. "Always lyin' and tellin' tales and bein' a rotten beast. He's ragged me orfen and orfen, cause in my place I can't complain of what they do, you know. Feller like me has to grin and bear it, and Master Levison 'ad a way of treatin' you

like dirt. Fellers as isn't real gents always does that with servants, I've noticed."

"Look here—"

"I've seen lots of 'em—'underds and 'underds," said Toby. "I know the real sort when I see 'im, you bet. Feller as is the real article is always civil to a servant, knowin' as he can't answer back because of his place. Feller as is a bounder and a spofer, pretendin' to be a gentleman, looks on a servant as mere dirt under is feet—that's because he wants to make out that he's real class. But it ain't the way—the real nobs see through 'im, and so do the servants. That there Levison was a 'umbug all the way through—lucky for you, you won't 'ave anythin' to do with him. There wasn't a servant in the 'ouse who didn't 'ate the beast!"

"Oh!"

"And he's got it in the neck now!" said Toby, with relish. Henry Higgins was glaring at Toby in a very peculiar way, but Toby didn't notice it. He was thinking with satisfaction of the way Levison had "got it in the neck!"

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"TOM MERRY'S SPECIAL NUMBER!"

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"What's happened to him?" asked the boot-boy, not dropping his H's this time.

"His father's ruined," said Toby. "Lost orl his money on the Stock Exchange, you know. Some swindle, and he got the worst of it. Don't feel sorry for 'im. Somebody would have been done, if he'd made money—now he's been done, and somebody else has made the money, and he's got to give up stocks and shares and do honest work, and serve 'im right!"

"You rotten cad—"

"Eh?" exclaimed Toby, in astonishment, staring at Henry Higgins. "Wot do you mean?"

"Er—nothin'!" stammered Henry Higgins. "I—I—" "Don't you call me names," said Toby. "I'd wipe you round the heye as soon as look at you. Lord, the number of times I've wanted to wipe that beast Levison in the eye! He knew I dursn't do it, cause o' losin' my place, and he'd have lied and lied about it, you know. He was an awful liar. I 'ope I shall meet 'im some day houtside the school, and then I'll show 'im something! The names he's called me, because I dursn't answer back—but now he's not a St. Jim's boy I can talk to 'im! And if I get a chance I'll talk to 'im—rather! 'E was a reg'ler beast."

"If you ain't got anythin' else to talk about—" began Henry Higgins, who had been very restive for a long time.

"I'm goin' to show you your duties," said Toby. "Ere's six pairs of boots, now—they want cleanin'. One of them belongs to Master D'Arcy, so take special care with that. These 'ere are Master Crooke's—you needn't be careful with them; he's a slovenly beast, anyway. Master Crooke will worry you to death about your 'air, and you can get your own back by chippin' his boots. I'll show you 'ow to make little cuts in the leather, that won't be seen, but they make a boot wear out werry quick. I've done that on that beast Levison lots of times."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Yes, I 'ave," said Toby, with much satisfaction. "Feller 'as to git his own back somehow, you know. Now you clean them boots."

"Is that orl, sir?"

"You'll have two nder to clean every mornin', and odd yairs durin' the day," said Toby. "Always be willin' and obliging, and you'll get on. I shall want you to clean my boots, too."

"Is that one of my duties?"

"You're hunder my horders, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'll clean my boots!"

"Yes, sir," said Henry Higgins meekly.

"Get on with them there, then," said Toby.

And he left the new boot-boy in the boot-room.

Henry Higgins closed the door after him, and then a peculiar change came over Henry Higgins. He executed a kind of triumphal dance in the boot-room, and chuckled gleefully.

"Here I am!" he said—and his voice was not at all like Henry Higgins's now, and he did not drop his H's. "I told the rotters that they wouldn't get rid of me from St. Jim's, and here I am! And I'll pay them all out for being up against me—I'll find the way somehow. I'll settle up with all of them, hang them! This is where I come in!"

If Tom Merry & Co. had heard those remarks from the new boot-boy, they would have been very much astonished. For now that he was alone, and safe from being overheard, the voice of the new boot-boy was nothing like the voice of Henry Higgins—but it was very like indeed to the voice of Levison of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 7. Tacks-Collectors!

"W!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that sudden and painful ejaculation, and the fellows in the Fourth-Form dormitory turned round to look at him.

It was morning, and the rising-bell had clanged out, and the Fourth were dressing, when Arthur Augustus contributed that howl to the hum of conversation in the dormitory in the School House. The swell of St. Jim's was sitting on the side of his bed, putting his boots on. He had one boot on, and was making frantic efforts to drag it off again.

"Ow! Bai Jove! Ow! Yow!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Jack Blake.

"Ow! Ow!"

"I told him his new boots were too tight," growled Herries.

"This is what comes of being a silly ass, Gussy. You must expect your boots to pinch you if they're too tight."

"Ow! You fathead! They're not too tight! Yow!"

D'Arcy dragged off the boot, and dropped it.

"Then what's the matter?" demanded Digby.

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"Faith, and if you're not hurt, what are ye howlin' about, intirely?" asked Reilly.

"Ow! I am hurt! Some awful wottah has been playin' twicks with my boots," howled Arthur Augustus. "There is a tack or somethin' in my boot, and it has wun into my heel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to laugh at, you wottahs. It hurts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fwightful asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus picked up the boot and examined it. Inside, where the heel rested, a tack had been fixed, with the business end upwards. The head of the tack appeared to be glued in its place, and it had been done very carefully. Arthur Augustus had jammed his heel down on that tack, with painful results.

"Well, that was a rotten trick to play," said Blake, looking into the boot. "That's more than a joke—you might have been really hurt."

"Ow! I am weally hurt, you fathead! Ow!"

"Just like one of Levison's tricks," said Lumley-Lumley. "I guess I should think it was Levison, if Levison were still here."

"I suspect vewy stwongly that it was Mellish," said Arthur Augustus, with a glare at the cad of the Fourth. "He is as gweat a wottah as Levison."

"He, he, he!" cackled Mellish.

"Did you put that tack in my boot, you beast?"

"He, he, he! No!"

"I do not take your word, Mellish," said Arthur Augustus, rising and putting his foot very gingerly on the floor. "It is just the kind of wotten twick you would play, and somebody here must have done it."

"Well, I didn't; but it's funny," said Mellish. "He, he, he!"

"You cacklin' wottah—"

"He, he, he!"

Mellish sat down to put his own boots on. He was still chuckling gleefully, but suddenly his chuckle changed to a horrible howl.

"Ow! Ow! Yaroo!"

He leaped up from the bed, hopping on one leg and dragging at the boot he had just slipped his foot into. The juniors stared at him.

"Well, what's biting you?" demanded Blake.

"Ow! My foot! Yow! My heel! Groogh! What beast has been putting tacks in my boots?" shrieked Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Mellish has got it, too! Do you think it's just as funny as you did, Mellish?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish scraped the tack out of his boot with a furious look. The joke did not appeal to him at all now that his own heel had been punctured.

"The rotter who did that ought to be scragged!" he yelled.

"Which of you was it? Own up, you rotter!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, in amazement. "It wasn't Mellish! Even Mellish wouldn't be idiot enough to play a twick on himself. But I weally don't think there is anybody else here caddish enough to do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well going to look at my boots before I put them on," grinned Blake. "My hat! Here's a tack in my boot, too!"

"And in mine!" yelled Lumley-Lumley.

"Faith, and in mine!" said Reilly.

"Some rotter has been doing this," growled Herries. "Some fellow from another dorm., I should say—unless the New House bounders managed it somehow."

"How could they have got at our boots, fathead?" said Blake. "Besides, Figgins & Co. wouldn't do a rotten thing like this."

"Well, it was somebody," said Herries. "Here's a tack in my boot, too. I wish I knew who had put it there. I'd pulverise him bald-headed!"

The Fourth were very much puzzled. It seemed impossible that their old rivals of the New House had been able to get at their boots overnight. Mellish, the first fellow they would have suspected of such a trick, was evidently innocent, as he had suffered himself. The natural conclusion was that it was a raid from another dormitory, and when they went out to go down, Blake & Co. tackled the Shell fellows on the subject. The Terrible Three were coming down the passage, and

ANSWERS

Lowther was limping slightly, and looking furious. Clifton Dane, the Canadian junior, was limping, too, and had an expression of anguish on his face.

"Look here, you chaps—" began Blake.

"Look here—" Tom Merry started.

"Somebody's been playing tricks with our boots—"

"Somebody's been playing tricks with our boots!" said Tom Merry, at the same moment.

"And I want to find him!" growled Monty Lowther. "I'm punctured! I want to get hold of the fellow who put a tack in my boot!"

"So do I!" groaned Clifton Dane. "Ow! I can't get my foot on the floor without hurting. I got nearly half an inch of tack in my heel."

"You fellows have had it, too?" exclaimed Blake. "We've had it. Gussy and Mellish are both punctured, and a lot of the boots had tacks fixed in them."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We concluded that it was some wottah in the Shell—"

"We concluded that it was some rotter in the Fourth," grinned Tom Merry.

"I want to get hold of him!" gasped Lowther.

"I want to get within easy punching distance of his chivvy!" groaned Clifton Dane. "I'd teach him to put tacks in my boots!"

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Manners. "It's just one of the tricks that Levison would have played—"

"Yaas, wathah; I made the same remark. But—"

"But Levison's gone."

"Who could have got at the boots?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It might have been some of the New House chaps—"

"Figgins & Co. wouldn't play such a rotten trick."

"Some of the other New House fellows might. After all, it would have been easy enough for one of them to get into the boot-room overnight, if he wanted to," said Tom Merry.

"Then Higgins would have found the tacks there when he cleaned the boots."

"Might have been done after they were cleaned. Chap might have got up very early in the morning to do it, you know, before the boots were brought up to the dorm. I'll speak to Higgins as we go down."

The red-haired lad was in the boot-room when the excited juniors arrived there. He was in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron on, and was polishing boots.

"Hallo, not finished the boots yet, kid?" said Tom Merry.

"These are Toby's, sir," said Henry Higgins.

"You clean Toby's boots?" asked Blake.

"Yes, sir. It's part of my duty, he tells me."

"Oh!"

"Some ass has been putting tacks in our boots," said Tom Merry. "Did any fellow get at the boots while they were here, that you know of, Higgins?"

"Oh, dear!" said Henry Higgins. "That accounts for the window bein' open, sir. I left it shut arter cleanin' the boots, and I found it hopen arterwards. I thought somebody had been 'ere, but I couldn't guess—"

"The window open!" said Tom Merry. "That settles it, you chaps! It was the New House bounders, and they got in at the window!"

"We'll go and see Figgins & Co. about it," growled Blake. And Tom Merry and his comrades sallied out into the quadrangle.

Across the quad, Figgins, Kerr and Wynn were sauntering under the elms, enjoying the freshness of the morning air. They started in surprise at the School House crowd, as the latter bore down on them.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "What's the— Hallo! Ow! Leggo!"

"Bump them!"

"Look here— What—hallo!"

Bump, bump, bump!

Figgins & Co., in the grasp of many hands, descended upon the ground with painful violence. They roared.

"There!" gasped Tom Merry. "Now you'll let our boots alone!"

"Boots!" roared Figgins. "Who's talking about boots? What do you mean, you silly chump?"

"Somebody got into the boot-room window and put tacks in our boots!" yelled Blake.

"You chump! You fathead! I didn't do it!" said Figgins. "You silly, frabjous asses—"

"Well, it was some of you New House bounders, anyway, and you can pass the bumping on, when you find out the right parties!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the School House juniors walked away, leaving Figgins & Co. sitting on the ground and gasping for breath.

CHAPTER 8.

Trouble in the Family.

KANGAROO of the Shell—his name was Harry Noble, but he was called Kangaroo for the excellent reason that he came from Australia—looked into the junior common-room that evening, with a countenance as bright as his native southern sun. There were glum faces among the juniors there. Study No. 6 were down on their luck—broke to the wide. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had written again to his noble father, and had followed the letter up with a telegram, and the telegram with another and longer telegram; but Lord Eastwood was not "playing up." He had not wired five pounds; he had not even sent a five-*fr* by post. D'Arcy was decidedly indignant; and Blake and Herries and Digby agreed that it shook their faith in the House of Lords, as an institution, very considerably. Blake and Herries and Digby had also, like the seed in the parable, fallen upon stony places, and so Study No. 6 was really "up against it."

The Terrible Three were in the same state. Tom Merry's remittance from his old governess had been spent royally, and had relieved the general distress for a time. But there were so many of the chums in distress that a pound did not go very far. Or rather, to speak more correctly—it did go far—very far from its possessor. Manners had had a remittance, but he had thoughtlessly expended it in new films for his camera; an act of reckless extravagance which his chums regarded more in sorrow than in anger. Monty Lowther had wild hopes of a remittance from his uncle, but the hopes had not materialised. As Lowther explained, his uncle was kindness itself—unremitting kindness.

But the sunny look on Kangaroo's face was reflected on other faces as the chums of the School House caught sight of him.

"Coo-ey!" said Kangaroo.

"Hallo, Kangy! Wherefore that joyous grin? Have you discovered a gold-mine, or a hidden treasure?"

"No; it's Manners who discovers hidden treasures," grinned Kangaroo.

And Manners turned red. The juniors chuckled. They had not yet forgotten how Manners had discovered a valuable document—specially compiled by Figgins & Co. of the New House—which gave, or rather did not give, a clue to a hidden treasure.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Manners. "I'm fed up with that story. Besides, we did get hold of a giddy treasure in our trip to Venice, though it wasn't ours. Have you had any good luck, or are you practising as a facial contortionist?"

Kangaroo grinned genially.

"I haven't had any; but Dane has, and it's all in the family," he said. "Clifton Dane has had a letter from Canada, and there's always something in his letters from Canada. We're blowing two quidlets on a gorgeous feed, and you're all to come."

The juniors fell upon Kangaroo's neck and hugged him.

"Oh, thou who bringest good things to Zion!" said Blake.

"Come to my arms, my lovely Kangaroo!"

"Let me fold thee to my bosom and weep!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Here cheese it!" roared the Cornstalk junior. "Don't play the giddy goat! Tea's at half-past six in the end study, and plenty of it. It will be rather a crowd, but that can't be helped. You'll have to hear Dane's parrot talk. But it's worth while for a feed, ain't it?"

"My dear chap, I'd hear D'Arcy talk at the present moment for a feed, let alone Dane's parrot!" said Monty Lowther feelingly.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Then be along in time," said Kangaroo. "Some of you can come with me to the tuckshop and help me carry in the things."

"What-ho!"

All the juniors were willing to lend a hand. The feed in the end study had come like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. The end study belonged to Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn. The three Shell fellows were great chums, though there were sometimes rows—in all senses of the word—in the end study. Bernard Glyn was an amateur inventor and engineer, and the weird contrivances he made sometimes caused great trouble in the School House. And every corner of the end study in the Shell passage was littered with wires and coils and bottles and boxes and cases and batteries, wet and dry. Clifton Dane kept a parrot in the study, by special permission from the powers that were; pets, as a rule, not being allowed in the house. Polly was a remarkably clever parrot, and learned to say things in next to no time, and the Canadian junior was very proud of him; but Bernard Glyn sometimes objected that Polly's remarks interested his abstruse medita-

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tions when he was busy upon his inventions. To which Dane would reply that his inventions could go hang.

When Glyn was working on an invention, and Dane was teaching his parrot to talk at the same time, the unhappy Kangaroo was frequently constrained to take his work into some other fellow's study to do. Indeed, he had frequently uttered threats of hurling Dane's parrot and Glyn's paraphernalia out of the window together, and their owners afterwards.

But the end study presented an aspect of unusual tidiness as Tom Merry & Co. came into it at half-past six.

Bernard Glyn's rubbish, as his study mates politely called it, had been cleared away into cupboards and corners, and the table was laid for tea. Clifton Dane was talking to his parrot, in the cage swinging before the window. Glyn was making piles of toast, and Kangaroo was turning out heaps and heaps of poached eggs.

"Bai Jove, I must wemark that this looks wippin!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You chaps are the wight fellows in the wight place!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Polly saying anything new, Dane, old chap?" asked Tom Merry, feeling that he was bound to take a polite interest in the pet belonging to the founder of the feast.

"What-ho!" said Dane proudly. "Polly's a giddy marvel! I tell you he picks up a thing he's heard only once. I called Kangy a fathead this morning, and when I looked at Polly, he screeched out 'You fathead—you fathead!'"

"Marvellous!" said Lowther. "How do you account for it? Had he just picked up the word, or was he speaking from experience?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Dane, laughing. "You remember how pleased the Head was when he heard Polly say 'the Head's a brick.' And Polly hadn't been taught that; he'd just picked it up from hearing us speak of the Head."

"Hurrah!" said Polly. "You fathead! Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chap ought to be jolly careful what he says before the giddy bird," said Monty Lowther. "If he had happened to say 'the Head's a duffer——'"

"He, he, he!"

"Hurrah! The Head's a duffer—the Head's a duffer!" shrieked the parrot.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Clifton Dane. "You've done it now. Polly will never get that out of his head."

"My hat!"

"Hurrah!" shrieked Polly. "The Head's a duffer! You've done it now! Hurrah! My hat!"

The juniors laughed; they could not help it.

"Tea's ready," said Bernard Glyn. "Sit down wherever you can find room."

And the juniors sat down wherever they could find room, and piled in.

Polly closed one eye, and regarded the feasters solemnly.

"My hat, this is ripping!" said Blake. "Pass the jam!"

"Pass the jam!" yelled Polly.

"He, he, he!"

"You've done it now! Pass the jam! That rotter Blake will scuff the lot! Hurrah!"

Blake started.

He had not expected to hear those words from the parrot. After what Dane had said about Polly picking up and repeating words that were uttered in the study, it was very curious, to say the least.

Blake turned very red, and a most uncomfortable silence fell upon the juniors. Clifton Dane and Kangaroo and Glyn stared blankly at the parrot.

"My hat!" said Dane, at last. "I never taught him to say that! He never heard any of us say that! I can't understand it."

Blake was silent.

"Here's the jam," said Digby, shoving it towards Blake.

"Thanks!" said Blake. But he did not touch it.

Clifton Dane flushed.

"Look here, Blake," he said quickly, "you can't believe that I taught Polly to say that! You can't think so!"

"All right," said Blake.

"And he didn't hear one of us say it, either," said Clifton Dane. "So if that's what you're thinking, you can get it out of your head."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus uncomfortably. "I am sure our fwiend Dane would not have made a wemark like that."

"Yaas, wathah!" shrieked Polly. "Yaas, wathah! Hurrah! Here comes that idiot, Gussy! How can they stand, Gussy? Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus looked quite sickly.

"Shut up, Polly!" shouted Clifton Dane. "D'Arcy, I

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assure you that—that I've never said anything of the sort to him!"

"Tom Merry's a rotter—Tom Merry's a rotter! You've done it now! Hurrah!"

It was Tom Merry's turn to redder.

"The Head's a brick!" continued the parrot. "The Head's a duffer! Give him some sugar! Pull his whiskers! Look here, I can't stand that chap Merry, and I shall tell him so! Hurrah! I won't have him in this study! You've done it now! Hurrah! Polly wants sugar!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I—I say, you chaps," exclaimed Clifton Dane, in great distress, "I tell you I can't understand it! Polly hasn't been taught that!"

"He seems to have picked it up then," said Tom Merry drily.

"But I—assure you—"

"You've explained to us how Polly repeats things he's heard said in the study," said Tom Merry bitterly. "He's proved you're right. You or your friends must have said that for Polly to hear."

"I—I suppose it looks like that."

"It jolly well does!"

"It jolly well does!" croaked Polly, giving another unwelcome proof of his great facility in picking up chance remarks. "You've done it now! The Head's a duffer! Here comes Monty Lowther! I'm not going to lend him any money! I'm not going to lend him any money! I'm not going to lend him any money! Hurrah!"

"Oh!" said Lowther.

Without another word the Terrible Three walked out of the study, leaving their unfinished tea on the table. The chums of Study No. 6 followed them. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Glyn sat in grim silence. It was useless saying anything. It was quite impossible to explain away those unlucky remarks of the parrot.

"Well, my hat," said Kangaroo at last, "our tea-party is a giddy hash! Dane, you ass, what induced you to say those things, with that blessed parrot here, too?"

"It was rather rotten!" said Glyn. "Can't wonder at the fellows getting their backs up!"

Clifton Dane glared at his chums.

"I tell you I didn't say anything of the kind!" he shouted.

"Must have been talking in your sleep, I should think," grunted Noble. "Polly must have heard somebody else say them if you didn't—somebody in this study. And the chap wasn't me."

"Nor I," said the Liverpool junior.

"Somebody has taught him that to cause trouble, I suppose," said Clifton Dane, helplessly. "I know I've never said anything of the sort. As if I should say such rotten caddish things about fellows I'm on friendly terms with!"

"I'm afraid the friendly terms won't last much longer after this."

"Well, I can't help it."

"I can't help it!" shrieked Polly. "Give him beans! He's an old sneak! Polly wants sugar! Hurrah!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Dane irritably.

Cornstalk & Co. finished their tea with moody faces. And when Clifton met the Terrible Three downstairs again they did not look at him; and Study No. 6 were very stand-offish, too. Polly had caused serious trouble; but it was not Polly's fault. The Canadian junior pondered on the matter, and he could only come to the conclusion that some mischievous "rotter" had taught Polly those words, with the deliberate intention of causing a quarrel among friends. But who? Who could get into Dane's study without his knowledge to carry out such a trick?

When Dane was in the class-room, all the other fellows were in the class-room, too, and, when he was out, he might come into his study at any moment, and it would not be safe for the japer to be there teaching the parrot a lesson of that sort. The Canadian junior was utterly puzzled. It looked as if someone who was free during lesson-time had done it, for only in lesson-time would it be safe for the japer to play such a trick; at all other times the chums of the end study were either in the study, or liable to come in at any time. But if it was done during lessons, it could only be some servant employed in the house who had visited Dane's study, and given that peculiar instruction to the parrot.

And why should a servant in the School House do such a thing? Clifton Dane felt that it would be very difficult to get the other fellows to entertain such a surmise. And yet he had not said those things himself, and he was sure that Kangaroo and Glyn had not done so.

The Canadian junior could not guess; but he resolved to keep a very sharp eye open, and discover if he could, and when he discovered the author of that caddish trick, it would go very hard with him.

CHAPTER 9.

More Than a Joke!

"TIME for prep.!" remarked Tom Merry, in the junior common-room.

It was a couple of days after the incident in the end study, and relations were very strained between Cornstalk & Co. and the Terrible Three. They did not speak to one another when they met—a very painful result to that hospitable tea-party in the end study.

Lowther and Manners were playing chess in the common-room, and Tom Merry had just finished reading, and he rose and yawned.

"Time for prep.!" he repeated. "You won't have time to finish that game, you fellows. Chuck the pieces back in the box."

"All right—I've got Manners mate in three," said Lowther. Manners snorted.

"You couldn't mate me in three centuries!" he hooted. "I've got you mate in five, you chump, only you can't see it!"

"Then the game's as good as finished," said Tom Merry. "Lowther's mate in five, and Manners is mate in three, so Lowther wins by two runs."

"Oh, cheese it! How can I play chess when you're jawing?" said Manners crossly. "Now, Lowther, I'm waiting for you to move. Don't hurry. We're young yet, and have our whole lives before us. I'll make my next move when I'm sixty, if you like to take time to think."

"I'm jolly well not going to move in a hurry and spoil my mate," said Monty Lowther. "I've got you fixed in three."

"I've got you done in five."

"In three!"

"In five!"

There was a sudden rush of feet in the passage, and a red-headed youth in a tight-fitting costume with prominent buttons shot into the room. He dashed right into the chess-table, and sent it flying.

Manners and Lowther jumped up with a simultaneous yell.

"Higgins! You silly ass!"

"You fathead! How dare you?"

"Please, I'm werry sorry, sir," said Henry Higgins; "but Master Croke and Mellish is arter me, sir, and—"

Croke and Mellish rushed into the room. They stopped at the sight of the red-headed "boots" taking cover behind Tom Merry.

Lowther and Manners simply glared at the cads of the School House.

"Do you see what you've done?" roared Lowther. "You've sent that copper-topped idiot bumping into our chess table, and mucked up the game."

"Well, you can play another game, I suppose?" said Croke.

"I—I—I'll play you, you rotter!" gasped Manners; and he rushed at Croke. In a moment Manners and Croke were mixing themselves up with the chessmen on the floor. Lowther hurled himself upon Mellish, and got his head into chancery before the cad of the Fourth could escape.

"I'll give you upsetting a game of chess!" hooted Lowther.

"Take that—and that—"

"Ow!" yelled Mellish. "Yaroo! Draggimoff!"

"And that—and that!"

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Croke. "You're bumping my back on something hard—ow!—and it—yow!—hurts!"

"He's mating your king with his backbone, Manners!" grinned Lorne of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Croke and Mellish tore themselves away at last. They stood looking very dishevelled, and red and dusty, and furious.

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Tom Merry. "What were you ragging Higgins for? Why can't you let the kid alone?"

"Let him keep in his own quarters, then," growled Croke. "I found him mooching about the Shell passage, and I wasn't going to hurt him—only shove his head under the tap, to put the fire out."

Some of the juniors laughed.

"I can't 'elp my 'air bein' red, young gentlemen," said Henry Higgins. "I'm sure it's very rough on me to 'ave my 'ead put under the tap."

"They sha'n't do it," said Tom Merry. "If Croke puts your head under the tap, I'll jolly soon put his under it."

"You mind your own business!" snarled Croke.

"It is my business to see that you don't rag a kid who's not in a position to rag you back," said Tom Merry scornfully.

"Only a cad would do it."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

And Croke and Mellish swung out of the common-room, without pushing matters any further with the Terrible Three. Manners and Lowther picked up the chessmen, which had not been improved by Croke rolling on them. One of the knights

was in two pieces, and a queen had lost her head. The Shell fellows grunted as they packed them away.

"Never settle that rotten game now," growled Lowther. "Manners is an obstinate pig. He'll never admit that I had him mate in three."

Manners hooted.

"Not likely, ass, when I had you mate in five!"

"Call it a chess problem, and let it go at that," said Tom Merry. "And for goodness' sake let's go and get our prep. done, or we shall have a row with Linton in the morning."

And the Terrible Three made their way to their study. The study was, of course, dark, but Tom Merry felt for his matches as he moved in towards the gas burner. There was a sudden yell, and the sound of a fall.

"Hallo, what are you falling about for?" asked Lowther, still a little cross. "Can't you go into a study without falling over a chair? I think—ow! Ow! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh!" yelled Tom Merry, as Lowther fell on him.

"Gerroff! Oh!"

"I caught my foot—"

"So did I, ass! Look out, Manners, there's a cord— My hat!"

Bump! Manners had already found the cord—with his ankle—and he came sprawling over Tom Merry and Lowther.

Bump, bump! And a roar from all three.

Tom Merry struggled out from under his sprawling chums, and staggered up. His face was aflame with anger.

"My hat! I'll find the chap who tied a cord across the study, and scalp him!" he gasped.

He fumbled in his pocket, and found his matchbox, and struck a match. He lighted the gas, and Manners and Lowther picked themselves up, breathless and furious. And they were more furious still as they looked round the study in the light.

The room was a wreck!

The table had been overturned, and the books and papers belonging to the juniors had been crammed into the fire-grate, and were partly burnt and still smouldering. Teathings had been smashed and scattered on the floor, and the looking-glass over the mantelpiece had a huge star smashed in the centre. Every kind of property belonging to the three juniors had been dragged out, and either broken or strewn about.

The Terrible Three gazed at the scene with breathless rage. Study raids were common enough among the juniors, when they wanted to make things lively. Studies might be turned upside down, and wrecked, and things would naturally be broken sometimes in the process. But wanton destruction was a thing the chums of the School House would never have thought of.

And the destruction of the Terrible Three's property had been reckless and wanton. The half-burnt books in the grate had cost pounds, and the looking-glass was smashed beyond repair. The very carpet had been ripped through with a knife. It was by no means a study raid as the juniors understood such things. It was as if an enemy had raided the study, and done his utmost to ruin the possessions of the juniors. And he had succeeded very well, too!

Tom Merry simply gasped as he looked round the study.

"What rotten cad has done this?" he exclaimed.

"I'll smash him when I get hold of him!" roared Lowther.

rubbing his leg. All three of the juniors had been bruised by their sudden fall in the darkness upon the floor. A cord had been stretched across the room a few inches from the floor—a trap for the unwary in the dark, and a very dangerous trick, the kind of thing that did not enter at all into the raids and tussles of the St. Jim's juniors, as a rule.

"Look!" exclaimed Manners.

He pointed to the wall. On the wall-paper, traced in big, rough letters with a charred stick, were the words:

"WITH COMPLIMENTS FROM STUDY No. 6."

"Blake!" shouted Tom Merry. "The rotter! I'd never have believed that he'd do a thing like this! This isn't a joke—it's a rotten outrage! Come on, you chaps—we'll jolly soon make them sorry they came in here! We'll see how they like the same kind of thing in their own quarters."

"Yes, rather!" said Manners and Lowther together.

And with gleaming eyes the Terrible Three rushed down the passage, on the warpath.

CHAPTER 10.

Not Guilty!

STUDY No. 6 was very quiet.

Four juniors sat round the table, working at their preparation—Blake, and Herries, and Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake looked up at last from his books with a yawn.

"That's done," he said. "Nuff for old Latham, anyway."

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A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

When you chaps are finished we'll have some supper. I've got some ham sandwiches. Gussy, old man, I don't think we shall ever get a real feed in this study again, unless your pater comes round and sends that fiver."

"I have w'ritten to him again, Blake, deah boy——"
 "Then why doesn't he come up to the scratch?" said Blake.
 "I had ten bob yesterday, but it's nearly gone. Money does go!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove, what's that feahful wow in the passage?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as a sudden of rushing feet penetrated the calm of Study No. 6.

"Sounds like a foot-race in the giddy corridor," yawned Blake.

Blake had not time to finish.
 The door of the study was flung violently open, and Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther rushed in.
 They did not speak.

There was no need for words, and they had not come there to talk!

Tom Merry and Manners seized the table by the edge, and hurled it over, hurling Herries and Digby backwards over their chairs at the same time.

Books and papers and ink flowed upon the floor.
 There was a roar in Study No. 6.

Blake had jumped up, but Lowther had hurled himself upon him, and they were on the floor, and Monty was rubbing Blake's face in the fender.

"Groogh! What the——"
 "Bai Jove!"

"Who the—how the——"
 "What—what——"

"Rag 'em!" gasped Tom Merry. "Rag the bounders! Smash everything!"

"Yes, rather! Smash away!"
 Crash, crash, crash!

An inkpot smashed into the looking-glass. A chair crashed into the front of the bookcase. The carpet was dragged up with wrenches, and the chairs crashed on the floor, with terrible results to their legs.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy struggled up, and gazed in blank bewilderment at the Terrible Three, who seemed to be thinking of nothing but effecting the greatest possible amount of destruction in the shortest possible time.

"They're mad!" gasped Blake.
 "Mad as hattahs, bai Jove!"

"Mad or not, they're not going to wreck our study!" yelled Herries. "Kick them out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The chums of Study No. 6 had been so utterly taken aback by the sudden attack that they were paralysed for some moments. But now they rushed to attack the invaders. There was a terrific crash as the clock was swept off the mantelpiece by a chair wielded by Monty Lowther. Blake fastened on Lowther, and got his head into chancery, and pommelled at him furiously. Digby closed with Manners, and Herries with Tom Merry. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy groped wildly for his eyeglass.

Homer only could have described that combat. It was terrific. The fearful din from Study No. 6 brought a crowd along the passage, who gazed in upon the scene in blank amazement.

"Sure, and is ut dotty ye are, intirely!" yelled Reilly of the Fourth. "Phwat's the matter?"

"Mad as hatters!" said Kangaroo.
 "Go it!"

"Scrap away!"
 "Ha, ha, ha! You'll have the prefects here in a minute!"

"But what's the matter?" shouted Lumley-Lumley.
 "You'll hurt one another if you keep on like that."

"Faith, and they look as if they're hurt already!" said Reilly.

"Cave!" shouted Wally D'Arcy of the Third Form, from the staircase. "Here comes Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's came striding along the passage. The crowd of juniors there made way for him. Kildare simply glared in at the doorway of Study No. 6. The excited combatants did not even notice his arrival.

"Stop it!" roared Kildare.
 "Oh!"

And the desperate combatants separated at last, looking very much damaged. Kildare surveyed them, and their swollen noses and bruised eyes and ruffled hair, and looked round at the wrecked study.

"What's the cause of all this?" he demanded.
 Blake gasped.

"Blessed if I know. I think they've gone mad. They're all rather dotty in the Shell, you know. They rushed in here——"

"Yaas, wathah, they wushed in——"
 "Yes, we rushed in and wrecked the giddy study!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "I think this study is wrecked more than ours."

"What-ho!" chuckled Lowther and Manners.
 "Bai Jove, is your studey w'eked, Tom Mewwy?"

"Of course, you don't know!" scoffed Lowther.
 "How should I know, deah boy?"

"Because you fellows did it!" said Tom Merry hotly.
 "And we've given you tit for tat. You won't get this study to rights in a hurry."

"This sort of row can't be allowed," said Kildare. "If the kids here complained to the Housemaster of the way you've treated their study, Tom Merry, you would be caned."

"We're not going to do that!" said Blake promptly.
 "Wathah not!"

"Then Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther will take two hundred lines each from me," said the captain of St. Jim's, "and if there's any more of this rumpus, I shall come along with a cane."

"Weally, Kildare——"
 "And as you kids seem to have wrecked Merry's study, from what he says, you can take two hundred lines each as well," added Kildare.

"But we haven't!" roared Blake.

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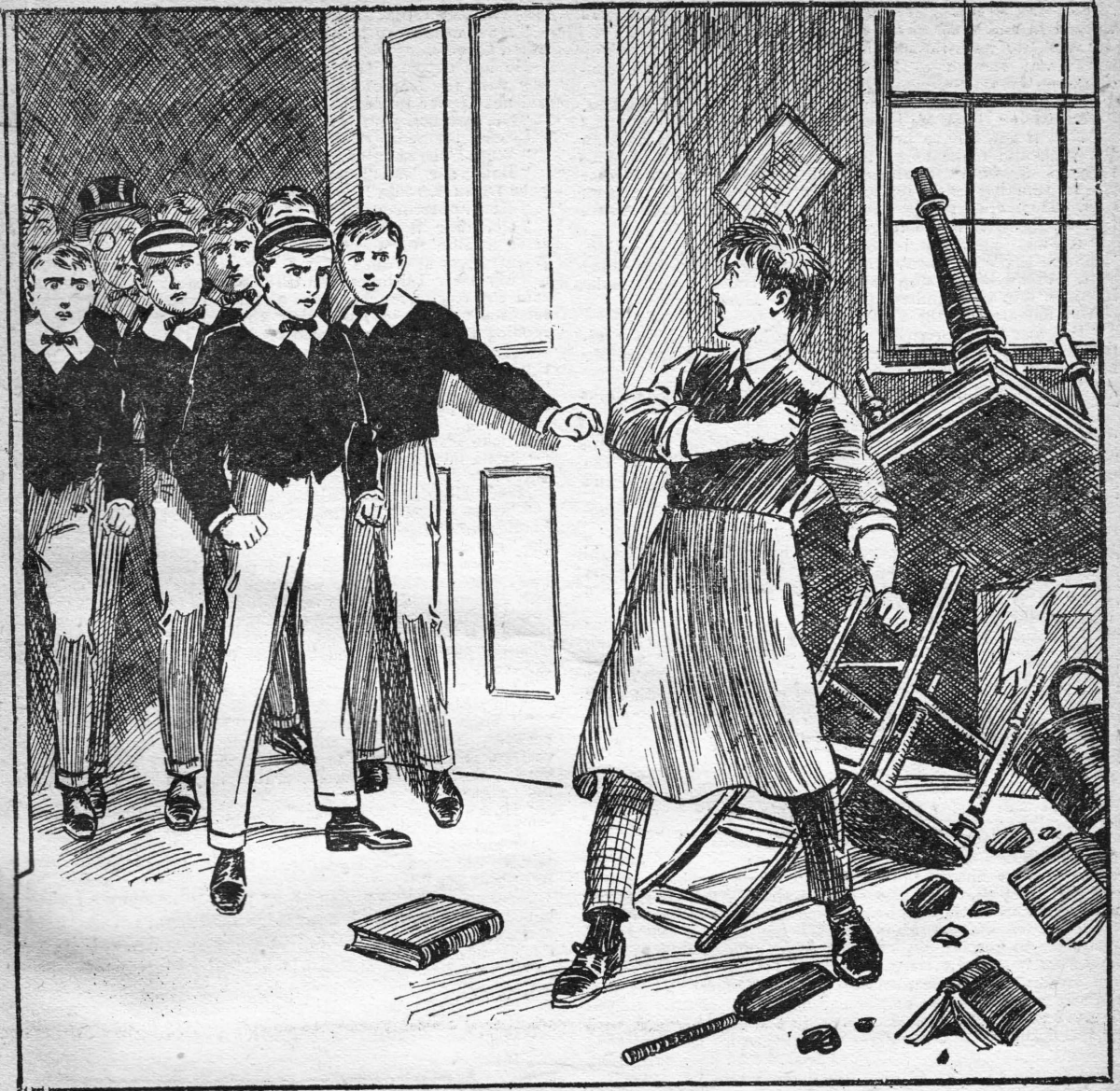
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3

1. COUSIN ETHEL
2. DR. HOLMES.
3. ERIC KILDARE.

No. 6. NEXT WEDNESDAY.
Owen, Lawrence, Redfern.



Bernard Glyn put the key in the lock. Click! There was a muttered exclamation inside the study. The Liverpool lad threw open the door, and the juniors stared into the study. Then there was an exclamation from all at once, "Higgins!" (See Chapter 15.)

"Certainly not, deah boy!"

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry. "I shouldn't have expected you chaps to fib about it, anyway."

Blake glared at him.

"Are you asking for another thick ear, to match the one you've got already?" he demanded.

"Yes, if you can give it to me," said Tom Merry readily.

"I'll jolly well——"

"Come on then——"

"Stop it!" shouted Kildare, as the combat seemed about to recommence under his very eyes. "I'll lick you, if you begin again!"

"Let him shut up then!" grunted Blake.

"Let him own up, then!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here, Blake," said Kildare, "have you and your friends done anything to Tom Merry's study?"

"No, we haven't!"

"Wathah not!"

"You can take Blake's word, Merry," said Kildare.

Tom Merry looked amazed.

"But they've written it up on the wall!" he exclaimed.

"They've left their own signature to it on the giddy wall."

"Let's see it!" said Kildare.

He followed the Terrible Three to their study. Blake & Co. followed, too, in great surprise. The Fourth-Formers grinned at the sight of the wrecked study. They stared in astonishment at the inscription on the wallpaper.

"Bai Jove, its a wotten swindle!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We nevah came neah at all, and somebody else has w'ritten that up there."

Tom Merry's jaw dropped. He understood now. Not for an instant had he doubted that the message written on the wall was genuine. But he saw clearly enough now that the unknown japer had written it there, in order to cause a row between the Terrible Three and Study No. 6.

"You ought to have known that we wouldn't muck up a study like this!" growled Herries. "It's not a raid, it's a blessed hooligan that's been here!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I was taken in!" gasped Tom Merry. "I never thought any fellow at St. Jim's would be cad enough to write that on the wall; it's like committing forgery. I naturally thought that you fellows had done it, as that was written there."

"I suppose it was natuwal, under the circs.," said Arthur Augustus. "But you might have inquired before you wushed in and w'ekked our studdy, deah boy."

"Well, we were rather wild!"
 "It was enough to make anybody watty; but I considah—"

"I suppose you don't know who did this?" asked Kildare. Tom Merry shook his head.

"No; it must have been some awful cad to put that on the wall, and make us go for Study No. 6. It's as bad as forgery. It wasn't a House raid, Kildare, if that's what you're thinking of. Figgins & Co. wouldn't have written that. They always play the game. The fellow who wrote that on the wall would forge a cheque."

"It was mean and rotten," said Kildare, frowning, "though that's no excuse for your having played the giddy goat. You'd better stop to think next time. I shall make inquiries into this, and report it to the Housemaster."

And Kildare left the study.
 "I'm sorry, you chaps," said Tom Merry, looking penitently at the Fourth-Formers, "we have been rather hasty—"

"Yaas, wathah, you certainly have, you feahful duffahs—"

"We'll come and help you clear up," said Lowther, "Though we want some clearing up ourselves, too. But who could have done this, and written those lies on the wall? There's only one chap I know mean enough, and he's gone away from the school."

"Levison!"
 "Yes, if he were here, but he isn't."

"We'll find out who it was, and bump him hard!" said Tom Merry. "I can take a joke; but this isn't a joke, it's hooliganism and rotten treachery. And we'll make him sit up for it when we find him!"

But it did not prove easy to find the culprit. The chums of the School House were very busy that evening clearing up the wreckage, and setting their studies in order as best they could, with the result that their preparation was very much neglected, which led to painful explanations with their respective Form-masters in the morning. And nobody seemed to have any knowledge of the perpetrator of the outrage in Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three simply had to give it up.

CHAPTER 11.

Henry Higgins Knows Something!

"GOT him this time!"
 Crooke of the Shell made the remark, to Percy Mellish. The two cads of the School House had strolled round to the ruined chapel, in a secluded part of the extensive school grounds. Crooke had a new packet of cigarettes to dispose of, and for little amusements of that kind they required privacy.

But the ruins were not untenanted. As Crooke and Mellish came in among the old masses of masonry, they caught sight of a red-headed youth sitting there, in a secluded corner, with a paper in his hand, and a cigarette between his teeth. It was Henry Higgins, the new boots. The paper he held was a pink paper of the sporting variety, and he was looking down lists of racehorses, and smoking at the same time. Two or three cigarette-ends near him showed that he had been there quite a considerable time. Evidently Toby's instructions had not wholly impressed a sense of duty upon the mind of Henry Higgins.

Crooke and Mellish exchanged a glance of satisfaction. They had, as the cad of the Shell remarked, "got him" this time.

Not that Henry Higgins had specially offended them in any way. But they had started to rag him, and Tom Merry & Co. had stopped them, and that made the cads of the School House all the more determined. And they had him at a great disadvantage now, for he was neglecting his duties, and in such a way that, if it had become known, he would have been instantly discharged from his situation. Crooke, indeed, felt virtuously indignant, forgetting for the moment that he had himself come there to smoke cigarettes, in contravention of the school laws.

"Hallo, Red-head!" said Mellish.
 The boot-boy looked up quickly.

"Hallo, Face!" he replied.
 Mellish turned red with anger.

"Why, you—you cheeky cad!" he exclaimed. "How dare you speak to me?"

"You spoke to me, didn't you?" demanded Henry Higgins.
 "That's different. You're a servant," said Mellish.

"And a nice way you spend your time," said Crooke.
 "You've been sent on an errand, I suppose, and you've come here instead, to smoke fags."

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Henry Higgins nodded calmly.

"You've 'it it," he said.
 "How would you like me to report this to Mrs. Mimms?" asked Crooke.

He had expected that that remark would terrify the boot-boy with the fear of being discharged. But Henry Higgins did not appear terrified.

"Oh, you boil your 'ead!" he replied.
 Crooke jumped.

"What!" he shouted. "What did you say?"
 "Boil your 'ead!" repeated the boot-boy. "Go and fry your features, cocky!"

"You impertinent whelp—"
 "Oh, dror it mild," said Henry Higgins. "Don't you start a-callin' of me names. Wot are you, frinistance? Beauty, you are, ain't you—I don't think!"

"My hat! I'll bump you till you see stars by the million!" said Crooke, advancing upon the boot-boy. "And then I'll mention to Mrs. Mimms that you were here smoking and reading racing papers instead of doing your work."

"And I'll mention somethin' to somebody about the same time," remarked Henry Higgins. "You 'ad better keep your 'ands off'n me. S'pose, frinistance, I mentioned to Mr. Railton, quite permiscus like, 'bout seein' you in the Green Man pub?"

Crooke started back.
 "It's a lie!" he exclaimed fiercely. "You haven't seen me there!"

Henry Higgins chuckled.
 "S'pose I mentioned 'bout you and Master Mellish breakin' bounds arter lights out, to go and see the sportin' gents' at the Green Man?"

The two juniors turned quite pale. How Henry Higgins had learned of their little ways was a mystery, and a startling one. Their little plunges into "life," as they called it, were kept strictly secret; no one but themselves and their departed friend Levison knew about the matter, so far as they knew. The knowledge displayed by the boot-boy seemed almost uncanny.

"You've been spying on us, you cad!" said Crooke fiercely.
 Henry Higgins chuckled.

"I knows you," he remarked. "Knows you like a book, cocky. You'd better not put your 'ands on me, Master Crooke. S'pose I was to mention to Master Kildare, frinistance, that you 'ave a secret drawer in your desk, where you keep cigarettes?"

"How do you know that?" yelled Crooke.
 The boot-boy chuckled again.

"I knows you, you see, Master Crooke. And if hever you tries to rag me agin, I goes strite to Master Kildare and tells him—you bet."

Crooke and Mellish exchanged helpless glances. How the boot-boy had gained his knowledge they could not guess, but certainly he knew enough to get them expelled from the school, if he chose to give them away.

"You've been spying on us," repeated Crooke.
 "Master Kildare would be interested if he knew wot I could tell 'im," Henry Higgins remarked. "I don't know whether it ain't my dooty to do it."

"Hold your tongue, you fool!"
 "Why should I 'old my tongue?" said Henry Higgins coolly. "You ain't treated me werry well, young gentlemen."

Crooke stammered. He did not think any longer of ragging a person who could ruin him if he chose.

"I—I'm sorry," said Crooke. "It was only a lark, you know, I don't really want to hurt you. I'm going to let you alone."

"Certainly," said Mellish; "and—and there's a bob for you."

"Make it half a quid, and I'll forget all about it," said Henry Higgins.

"You won't get half a quid out of me," said Crooke.

"Rot! You're the son of a millionaire—though he made his millions swindling on the Stock Exchange," said Henry Higgins. "And you made a lot of money out of the racing last week—Mr. Griggs the bookie paid up."

Crooke jumped.
 "How do you know that?" he almost screamed. "That was before you came to your job here."

"P'raps a little bird told me," said the boot-boy calmly.
 "Anyway, I think it's worth 'arf a quid, don't you?"

Crooke looked at him hard. There were beads of perspiration on the brow of the cad of the Shell. Dearly he would have liked to hurl himself upon the boot-boy, and hammer him right and left. But he dared not. The young rascal knew too much.

Slowly and silently Crooke extracted a half-sovereign from his pocket, and dropped it into the grimy hand of Henry Higgins.

Then Crooke and Mellish left the ruins, in grim silence.

"How did he know?" said Mellish at last.

Crooke shook his head.

"Blessed if I can tell! But he does know."

"He could get us sacked!" said Mellish nervously. "Once start the prefects on the track, and they'd soon have proof enough, and then—"

"Wish we'd let the beast alone now," muttered Crooke. "How on earth did he find out? He can't be an ordinary boot-boy—boot-boys as a rule don't read sporting papers, and know so much as that chap knows. Blessed if I can understand it. But I'm going to keep jolly clear of him in the future."

"Same here!" said Mellish.

The boot-boy, left to himself, chuckled gleefully. He looked at the half-sovereign, and bit it to make sure that it was a good one, and put it into his pocket.

"My hat!" he murmured aloud—and his voice was strangely unlike that of Henry Higgins now—"My hat! I shall be able to make a good thing out of this! Those rotters haven't the nerve of white rabbits, and I know all their secrets. Seems to me I shall be able to make this job pay!"

And Henry Higgins chuckled again. Having finished his cigarette and his examination of the racing-lists, he rose, and stuffed the pink paper into an inside pocket, and made his way cautiously out of the ruins, and round to the back of the School House. Mrs. Mimms, who had sent him on an errand, scolded him for having been so long gone, and the boot-boy bore it with meek patience; but with a gleam in his eyes. Had Mrs. Mimms known how he had been spending his time, it is probable that she would not have contented herself with a scolding.

CHAPTER 12. Was it Levison!

"**B**AI JOVE!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed into Study No. 6 with a startled face, and gasping for breath.

Blake and Herries and Digby stared at him. Evidently something very unusual had happened, and the swell of the School House had completely forgotten, for the moment, the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"What on earth's the matter?" demanded Blake.

"Levison!"

"What?"

"I've just seen Levison!"

The three juniors started to their feet.

"Levison—here?"

"Yaas!"

"He's come back?" demanded Blake, in amazement.

"My hat!"

"Yaas!"

"That is to say, he must have come back," said Arthur Augustus. "I have seen the boundah. I've seen him in the School House."

"Oh, you're dreaming," said Herries, sitting down again. "What rot! If he had come back to St. Jim's, we should have heard something of it."

"Of course we should," said Digby. "You're dreaming, Gussy."

"I have seen him, deah boys."

"Did you speak to him?"

"Yaas; but he bolted without wepynin'."

"Tell us all about it," said Blake; "where was it?"

"I have just beeft out in the quad, for a little twot befoah goin' to bed," Arthur Augustus explained. "I was twotting along when I saw somebody move neah the wall—you know where the slantin' oak is—the place where fellows climb up when they wanted to bweak bounds—"

Blake grinned.

"Yes, I fancy I know it," he said. "I've been there myself. What about it?"

"Well, it stwuck me that pewwaps some weckless youngstah was goin' to bweak bounds," explained D'Arcy, "so I regarded it as my duty to speak to him, and warn him of the ewwah of his ways."

"Spoken like a Dutch uncle!" said Blake heartily. "Gussy, you ought to have been born a grandfather. You're wasted here."

"Wats! I regarded it as a dutay to save any weckless youngstah from makin' a sillay ass of himself," said Arthur Augustus, "so I wan up, and caught him by the arm, just as he was climbing up the oak. I said: 'My deah boy, this won't do, you know?' And he said something—"

"What did he say?"

D'Arcy coloured.

"I will not wepeat what he said. It was a personal wefection upon myself. But he looked down as he said it, and I saw his face—"

"Oh, he had a face?" asked Blake, with the air of a fellow who was extremely interested, and wanted to have all the points made clear.

"Yaas, you ass. I saw his face—"

"It would have been better to saw the tree," said Blake; "that would have brought him down again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake, and leave those wotten puns to Monty Lowthah. I saw his face—"

"How often did you see it?"

"Once, of course, as he was off in a moment."

"You've told us three times," said Blake, with a shake of his head.

"I've told you three times that I saw it once!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Oh, I saw—I mean, I see. Well, after you had sawn his face—"

"I recognised him at once. It was Levison—and I was so surprised—in fact, thwown into a fluttah—that I jumped back. I called out to him, but he whipped ovah the wall and disappeared in a flash."

"Then it wasn't dark at the time?"

"Of course it was, you ase—vevy dark!"

"But in the flash—I suppose you mean a lightning flash—"

"You uttah ass, that was a figure of speech. I mean to say that he disappeared vevy quickly."

"Oh, I see—I mean, I saw! I suppose he disappeared so quickly because he was afraid you were going to saw his face again," said Blake thoughtfully. "A chap might be wooden-headed, and yet he wouldn't like you to saw his face—"

"I wish you would be sewious, Blake. Do you not wegard it as a vevy we remarkable thing that Levison should be in the school, although he's gone away?"

"Yes; it's a very unusual gift, to be able to be in two places at once," agreed Blake.

"I don't mean that, you fathead. I mean, although he is supposed to have gone away. You remember what he said—that he wouldn't really leave St. Jim's. He has kept his word—wathah a we remarkable thing for Levison, when you think of it. He wasn't much of a fellow for keepin' his word. But in this case, you see, it causes twouble—and that is why he has kept it. The wotah has been hidden somewhere about the school all the time, and he nevah weally went away at all."

"Great Scott!"

"You wemembah we all know that he nevah awvived home. It came out that the Head had heard from his pater again, sayin' that Levison had w'ritten that he'd got a job somewhere, and wasn't comin' home. It was a whoppah, of course, like all Levison's statements—he was weally hidin' w'ound the school somewhere."

"Living on air, I suppose?" asked Digby.

"Well, that is wathah a difficult point, I know—still, you wemembah that he did hide himself once, and play ghost, and laid in a supply of pwovisions somewah," said Arthur Augustus.

"My dear chap," said Blake, "it was dark, and you were thwown into a fluttah, and you've made a little mistake. The chap you saw go over the wall will turn out to be Mellish or Crooke or Gore—"

"I suppose I know Levison's face, Blake."

"Well, you'll know it again, if you sawed it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah aes! I tell you it was Levison, and I saw his face distinctly!" shrieked Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"All right, we'll take your word for it," said Blake soothingly.

"Besides, don't you see," pursued D'Arcy, "that accounts for the wecent happenin's that have w'owwied us. It must have been Levison who wecked Tom Mewwy's study, and w'rote on the wall that we had done it. Don't you see?"

Blake started. He had concluded that D'Arcy was mistaken in thinking that he had seen Levison; but this certainly was a point to be considered.

"It's possible!" he said. "Levison's an awful cad, and he's got nerve enough for anything. We never found out who played those tricks with the tacks in the boots, either. That was very like Levison! My hat! I wonder—"

"I know it was Levison I saw—"

"Hallo, what's that about Levison?" asked Tom Merry, passing the open door at that moment with Manners and Lowther.

"Hop in," said Blake. "Gussy has made a wonderful discovery, or thinks he has! Pitch it to them, Gussy, and we'll take their opinion."

D'Arcy explained breathlessly.

"I saw his face cleahly, though it was dark," he said.

"I saw him—"

"What kind of a saw did you use?" asked Monty Lowther.

seeing his opportunity, and seizing it. "A hand-saw or a fret-saw—"

"Shut up!" roared Herries. "Blake's done that already! We've had that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard this as a sewious mattah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If Levison is lurkin' wound the place, and playin' twicks—he ought to be nabbed."

"It would be like him," confessed Tom Merry. "But he can't have lived without grub for days—though there are plenty of corners he could hide in. He's been gone a week now, and it's no good thinking that he could stay hidden for a week. Yes, I know he hid himself in a secret passage once, but that didn't last a week—it couldn't have! And we know he really left St. Jim's this time, because Taggy drove him to the station."

"But he never got home!" said Blake.

"He must have got home by this time, though, I should say. Still, he might be staying in the neighbourhood somewhere, and might have sneaked into the school to play rotten tricks on us," said Tom Merry. "He knows his way about the place as well as we do, and it would be like him! But—"

"But it sounds rather steep!" said Manners.

"Sure you weren't mistaken about the chivvy, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"I am quite sure!" he replied. "I am not in the habit of makin' mistakes—"

"Sorry, I thought you were!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, I've got a suggestion to make," said Monty Lowther. "If Levison's lurking about the place, he ought to be caught."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And as Gussy is the chap who makes these startling discoveries, and is, moreover, a fellow of well-known tact and judgment, I consider that it is up to Gussy to catch him."

"Yaas, I wegard that as bein' quite cowwect."

"Therefore, I suggest that Gussy sits on the school wall

all night and watches for him," said Lowther blandly. "He can take an umbrella in case it rains."

"Hear, hear!" said Tom Merry and Manners.

"You uttah asses—"

"It's up to you, Gussy," said Lowther.

"I wegard you as a sillay ass! I considah—"

"And if you catch him, bring him to our study, and we'll boil him in oil," said Lowther impressively.

And the Terrible Three chuckled and departed. Blake and Herries and Digby chuckled, too. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon them witheringly.

"I am quite sure that it was Levison!" he said emphatically. "And it will come out in time that I was quite wight."

And Arthur Augustus sat down to his preparation with an air of very great dignity indeed.

CHAPTER 13.

The Question Who?

"POLLY wants sugar!"

Kangaroo grunted as he came into the end study, and the unmusical voice of the parrot fell upon his ears. Clifton Dane was seated there, with a moody frown upon his brow. The Canadian junior had been very worried by the breach with the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6. The breach had not been healed, and it seemed likely to be permanent and grow wider. Polly, the parrot, was the unfortunate cause of it, and Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn did not regard Polly with feelings of affection, though Dane was as fond of his troublesome pet as ever.

"Polly wants sugar!" said the parrot, with a screech. "Poor Polly—poor Polly! Here comes that beast Blake! He's not going to scoff all the jam! Hurray!"

Kangaroo snorted.

"Can't you make that beastly bird unlearn those things, Dane?" he demanded.

Clifton Dane looked distressed.

"He'll forget 'em in time, if he doesn't hear them said any more," he said. "That's all. Blessed if I know how



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he picked them up! Some beastly cad must have sneaked into the study when we weren't here, and taught him."

"Must have been a fellow with some nerve, then, to risk being caught doing it!" growled Kangaroo. "One or another of us is always here, excepting in class-time."

"I've been thinking about that," said the Canadian junior. "I think it must have been done during class some time or other. It looks to me like a trick of some servant here, but I can't think which one could have done it. I'm sure Toby wouldn't play a trick like that, and it would be absurd to suspect one of the housemaids."

"There's that new boot-boy, Higgins—or, 'Iggins, as he calls himself."

"I've spoken to him," said Dane, "but it seems that he didn't even know I had a parrot. Besides, why should he do it? I haven't bothered him—I chipped in once to stop Gore, who was going to chuck some water over his topknot. I simply can't make the matter out at all. Mellish is mean enough to do it, but he wouldn't take the risk of being caught. He hasn't the pluck. I—"

"I'm going to smash these things!" screeched the parrot. "There he goes again!" said Kangaroo. "What is the beast talking about now?"

"I don't know. That's something new," said the Canadian junior, glancing in surprise at the parrot. "I've never heard Polly say that before."

"Smash the things—smash the things!" yelled Polly. "I'm fed up with Glyn and his rubbish in this study! Give him some sugar! Hurray!"

"Hallo! What's that?" asked Bernard Glyn, coming into the study. "Who's fed up with me?"

"It's that blessed parrot," said Kangaroo.

Glyn frowned.

"He didn't think of that for himself," he said. "He's heard somebody say that."

"Well, he didn't hear me say it!" growled Kangaroo. "As a matter of fact, I am pretty well fed up with your giddy inventions, but I didn't say so to Polly."

"Same here," said Clifton Dane.

"Smash 'em—smash 'em! Smash the rubbish!" yelled Polly. "Oh, won't Glyn be pleased! I'm fed up with him in my study!"

Glyn looked decidedly unpleasant.

"If anybody has been smashing my things, there will be trouble!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" said Kangaroo. "Why should anybody smash your things?"

"Look here!" yelled Glyn.

"What's the matter?"

"Look! Who did this?"

Bernard Glyn had opened the lid of a case in which a great deal of his "rubbish" was kept. The rubbish was expensive rubbish, and could not have been purchased by anybody but a fellow whose father was a millionaire. But it was not worth very much now. The three Shell fellows stared blankly into the case.

The things had been damaged with a reckless hand. Wet batteries had been smashed, dry batteries ripped open. Coils of wire had been hacked into pieces with scissors. Bottles of chemicals had been broken, and their contents had run over the other contents of the case, mingling with spill powders and torn scraps of paper that had contained notes relating to Glyn's valuable inventions.

The Liverpool lad looked at the havoc, and his face became quite pale. It was an act of utter and wicked Vandalism, and the loss was very great; and Bernard Glyn's dismay was so intense that he forgot even to be angry.

"Who—who has done this?" he panted.

As if in answer to him, there came a fresh yell from the parrot:

"Smash 'em up—smash 'em!—I'm fed up with Glyn's rubbish in this study! Polly wants some sugar! Hurray!"

Bernard Glyn started.

"You hear that?" he exclaimed.

"Jolly well can't help hearing it!" said Kangaroo. "That blessed parrot ought to have its neck wrung!"

Glyn's eyes gleamed.

"Somebody has smashed up these things, and the parrot heard him say that it was because he was fed up with having them in this study," he said. "I don't see that anybody outside this study should care whether they're here or not. Which of you fellows was it that smashed my property?"

"I didn't do it," said Kangaroo, "and I can't believe that Dane did it, either."

"I certainly did not," said Clifton Dane. "I did not know anything about it till you opened the case just now."

Bernard Glyn was silent. As a matter of course, he would have taken the word of his chums. But—there was a "but" in the case now—the parrot had undoubtedly heard the destroyer say that he was smashing the things because he was fed up with having Glyn's rubbish in the study. To

whom could that apply excepting Kangaroo and Clifton Dane? Glyn might have piled the study ceiling high with any kind of rubbish without affecting the comfort of anybody but his study-mates.

"It's a rotten trick of—of somebody," said Clifton Dane at last. "There's some mean rotter sneaks in here and teaches the parrot those things. That's the only way to account for it."

"He ought to have his neck wrung!" growled Kangaroo.

"I'll wring his neck fast enough when I find him!"

"I mean the parrot."

"Oh, rats!"

"I don't see why anybody should play a rotten trick like that," said Bernard Glyn coldly. "Who'd do it?"

"That's a rotten puzzle. I simply can't guess. If Levison were still here, I should suspect him at once."

"But he isn't."

"No; and I don't know whom to suspect," said the Canadian junior, with a gleam in his eyes. "But I'll make him smart when I find him out. Look here, Glyn! You can't suspect Kangy or me of doing a rotten thing like that! You can't think that we should smash up your props!"

"You can't, old man!" said Kangaroo.

Glyn was grimly silent.

"It's plain enough that it's a trick," said Dane—"the same as that one before that made trouble between us and Tom Merry and Blake. It's got the same object—to make us row with one another. I think we should be fools to fall into the trap."

"But who—" said Glyn.

"We've got to find out," said Clifton Dane. "It's somebody who sneaks into the study when we're at lessons, I feel sure of that. Nobody would risk being caught at it. I've been keeping a careful eye on the study, too, ever since that last trick, and I'll swear that nobody could have got in out of lesson-time without my finding him out. It's been done during lessons, and the cad feels safe in doing it, as we can't keep a watch when we're in the Form-room."

"I don't see how he's to be spotted, if that's the case," said Kangaroo.

"Look here, Glyn! You're a giddy inventor. Can't you plan some trap or other to catch him?" exclaimed the Canadian.

Bernard Glyn brightened up. His instincts as an inventor were appealed to, and he was keen at once.

"Jolly good idea!" he exclaimed.

"If the chap comes again—" said Kangaroo.

"He will, if we don't rag with one another," said Dane quietly. "You can see what his object is—to make us quarrel, as he's made us quarrel with Tom Merry and Blake. If we don't do it, he'll have another try."

"He must be a frightful rotter."

"That's pretty clear, and I can't guess who it is. It may be some chap who makes an excuse to get away from lessons, to come sneaking here. It wouldn't be a Shell chap—in that case, we should have noticed; but it might be one of the Fourth—perhaps Mellish, after all. Whoever it is, one of the fellows or a servant here, we've got to catch him and make him smart. How are you going to do it, Glyn?"

Glyn wrinkled his brows in thought. He was quite convinced now of the innocence of his study-mates, and he was very keen to get on the track of the real perpetrator.

"By George, I'll think it out!" he exclaimed. "An electric alarm-bell would be easy; but even if we heard it, we couldn't leave the Form-room to nail him. We must have some dodge for keeping him here if he once enters the study—some dodge for making the door fast, so that he can't get out again."

"My hat! That's ripping if you could work it!"

"He couldn't get out of the window. It's a sheer forty feet, with nothing to catch hold of," said Glyn. "Once he was bottled up here, he'd have to stay till we came to let him out—I've got it!"

"Got the idea?"

"Yes; a new lock on the door—without a key," said Glyn, his eyes gleaming. "A lock that shuts when the door's shut, and can't be opened again without a key. Any Yale lock would do, you know, or something of that kind. I can do the business easily enough. I put a new lock on this door once, and I can do it again."

"But if it won't open without a key, the raider won't be able to get into the study when he comes."

"Ass!" said Glyn politely. "We shall leave the door open for him. The doors are left open often enough. We shall leave it ajar every time we leave the study; but when he's here doing his rotten tricks he's sure to close it, in case anybody should pass along the passage. Once he's closed it—"

"Good egg!" said Kangaroo and Clifton Dane together.

And there was a screech from the parrot:

"Good egg! Ha, ha, ha! Hurray!"

CHAPTER 14.

Caught!

"**B**AI Jove! It's the Head!"
 "Lecture, I suppose," groaned Blake.
 And the Fourth-Formers assumed expressions of patient martyrdom.

The Fourth had gone into their Form-room that morning; but instead of Mr. Lathom taking the class as usual, the Head walked in. The Head did not often visit the junior Form-rooms, and the Fourth naturally expected a lecture on something they had either done or not done. They prepared to listen patiently. As Figgins remarked in a whisper, it was up to them to give the Head a little run.

Mr. Lathom called for silence. The Head was looking very grave.

"My boys," he said, "I have something to say to you before lessons commence. You remember that about a week ago Levison, of this Form, left the school—"

The juniors stared. About the last thing they had expected the Head to mention was Levison. It was evidently not, after all, some delinquency of their own that Dr. Holmes had come there to deal with.

"I have heard from Levison's father again," said the Head. "Levison has not returned home. He wrote to his father from Wayland to inform him that he had found employment, and would not be returning home. Since then his people have heard nothing from him. It happens that there is good news for him if he could be found. Mr. Levison informs me that there has been a favourable turn in his affairs, and matters are going so well with him that he is able to send his son back here. It unfortunately happens that he does not know where to find him."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It has occurred to me," resumed the Head, "that Levison may be staying somewhere in the neighbourhood, and in that case he will doubtless have been in communication with some of his old acquaintances here. I therefore ask you whether any of you know anything about his movements? If you can give me any information, it will be a great service to the boy himself."

Arthur Augustus glanced at Blake.

The Head waited.

"I need not point out to you," added the Head, "that Levison will not be punished by me for having absented himself from home. That is entirely a matter for his father to deal with, and does not concern me in the least. You need not, therefore, have any hesitation in speaking. It is important for Levison's own sake that he should be found, and informed that he may return to St. Jim's."

"I think I ought to speak, sir," said D'Arcy.

The Head glanced at him.

"You know something of Levison's whereabouts, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir; but I have seen him."

"Indeed! Where?"

"In the quad, sir."

The Head looked surprised.

"Indeed! I was not aware that Levison had visited the school since leaving. He came here to see someone, I suppose—some member of this Form?"

"I think not, sir. I saw him last night—about nine o'clock, in the quadrangle, sir. He ran away when I saw him."

"Ran away!" repeated the Head, in surprise.

"Yaas, sir. He bolted over the school wall."

"Indeed! That is very odd? You are quite sure it was Levison, D'Arcy?"

"Quite suah, sir."

"That proves, then, that he is in the neighbourhood still," said Dr. Holmes. "Doubtless he felt a desire to visit his old school. I can quite understand it, as I am sure he felt very deeply being compelled to leave. If any of you boys should hear anything further of him, please let me know at once, so that he can be found."

"Yes, certainly, sir," said the juniors.

And the Head left the Form-room.

There was a good deal of whispering in the class that morning during lessons. The Head's information was not wholly pleasing. Levison would be coming back; and although the juniors had been sorry for him, they did not wholly relish the prospect of the return of the cad of the Fourth. The fact that he was not at home, and that his father did not know his whereabouts, lent colour to the supposition that he was really staying somewhere in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's, and that D'Arcy had really seen him in the quad, as he declared. And that, again, made it only too probable that Levison was the author of the tricks that had been played in the School House.

"Just like the rotter!" Blake growled, under his breath.

"If it turns out to be Levison who wrecked Tom Merry's study, he will have some trouble on his hands when he gets back here, that's all."

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"Yaas, wathah!"

When the Fourth Form were dismissed, the news spread to the Shell fellows. The Terrible Three stopped in the passage to discuss it with Blake & Co. The chums of the end study paused as they heard Levison's name.

"What's that about Levison?" asked Kangaroo, forgetting that he was on bad terms with the others for the moment.

"Levison seen about St. Jim's?"

"Yaas; I saw him last night in the quad," said D'Arcy.

"My hat! What was he doin'?"

"Getting ovah the wall into the wood."

"Levison about St. Jim's!" said Clifton Dane, as the trio moved on. "My hat! I never thought of anything of the kind, you fellows! If Levison is hanging about the school, we needn't look any further for the rotter who played tricks in our study."

"Just what I was thinking," said Kangaroo.

"Please, Master Noble—"

"Hallo, Toby!" said the Cornstalk. "What's the trouble?"

Toby was looking worried and exasperated.

"You 'aven't seen young 'Iggins, I suppose, Master Noble?" he asked.

"The boot-boy? No."

"'E's disappeared," growled Toby. "'E's allers goin' hoff somewhere and leavin' me to do 'is work. Now he's been missing for more'n an hour, Master Noble, and Mrs. Mimms she's sent me round lookin' for 'im, and I can't find him nowhere."

"Well, you ought to be able to see him at a distance," grinned Kangaroo. "Look out for a pillar of fire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll warn 'im when I do find 'im!" said Toby. "I'm about fed up with the cheek of 'Enry 'Iggins, I am!"

And Toby moved away discontentedly.

"Let's get down to the cricket," said Kangaroo. "This is a bit rotten, being on scragging terms with Tom Merry. It makes it difficult about being in the team."

"It will be all right when we've caught the rotter who played those tricks, and can prove it against him," said Glyn.

"Yes, when!"

"Well, the lock's on the door, all right, and if he goes to our study again he'll be nabbed, as sure as a gun!" said the Liverpool lad. "Might as well have a look at the study before we go to the cricket."

He glanced up at the study window, high up above, as he spoke. Then he gave a sudden start.

"My hat!"

"Hallo! What is it?"

"There's somebody in the study!" said the Liverpool lad excitedly. "I just saw somebody move at the window!"

"By Jove!"

The three Shell fellows stared up at the window. They could see nothing now but the glint of the sun on the panes. But Bernard Glyn was quite sure that he had seen someone move at the glass a moment before.

"Caught, by Jove!" said Glyn, with great satisfaction.

"Whoever it is can't get out, that's a dead cert. And he must have gone in there during lessons; so he can't pretend that he just walked in by chance to see one of us! He's fairly caught!"

"Good egg!"

"Let's go and have him out," said Clifton Dane.

Kangaroo held up his hand.

"Go slow! We's got to have the other fellows on the spot when we nail him—Tom Merry and the rest. They've got to be witnesses, so that nobody can say we worked it up as an explanation. Nothing like making sure."

"Right! Let's look for them."

Tom Merry & Co. had gone down to the cricket-ground. They were about to begin practice when the Cornstalk and his comrades arrived.

"We want you, Tom Merry—" began Clifton Dane.

"Then you can want!" said the captain of the Shell curtly.

"I'm busy."

Dane flushed.

"This is important," he said. "Look here! Listen to me. You fellows cut up rough the other day because of something my parrot said—"

"We don't want to talk about it."

"But I do," said Clifton Dane. "I said at the time that some cad must have been in my study, teaching the parrot to say these things, to cause trouble—"

"Well, if that's the case, it's all right," said Tom Merry. "But you must admit for yourself that it's rather steep."

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must remark that it is vewy steep, indeed, deah boy!"

"I should want some proof, for one," said Blake bluntly.

"That's what we're going to give you," said the Canadian quietly.

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

"Yesterday a lot of Glyn's things were smashed up in the study," said Clifton Dane, "and the parrot said things that made Glyn believe that Kangaroo and I had done it."

"Bai Jove!"

"It was jolly clear, then, that, some cad was playing tricks, and teaching the parrot to say things," said Clifton Dane, "and we laid a trap for him. Glyn put a new lock on the door that works with a spring, and can't be opened without the key when it's closed. We left the door ajar this morning when we went to the Form-room. Now there's somebody in the study; Glyn saw him at the window."

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Somebody gone in during lessons?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then it can't be one of the fellows?"

"I don't see how it could, without his being missed."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"Levison!"

"Impossible!" said Blake. "He couldn't come here in broad daylight without being seen and recognised—and nobody's seen him."

"He's cunning enough for anything," said Clifton Dane. "I don't know who it is—whether it's Levison or not; but, whoever it is, he's locked up in the study now, and can't get out till Glyn goes there and unlocks the door. We want you fellows to come with us to nail him, so that you can all be witnesses."

"Good!" said Tom Merry. "If that's it, we'll come with pleasure!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the whole crowd of juniors started towards the School House. They glanced at the high study window as they passed the House wall, and Blake uttered an exclamation:

"Look! There's somebody at the window! He's gone now!"

"Bai Jove! Did you recognise him, Blake?"

"No; only it wasn't Levison. Looked to me as if he had red hair."

"Wed hair! Bai Jove!"

"Couldn't be Higgins, surely?" said Kangaroo. "Toby just told us he was missing, and couldn't be found!"

"Jolly soon see!"

And the crowd of juniors hurried into the School House, and up the stairs, and ran down the passage to Bernard Glyn's study.

CHAPTER 15.

An Amazing Discovery.

THE study door was shut and locked.

Inside, the juniors could hear someone moving about. It was evident that the study was occupied, and that the trick had worked successfully. The intruder had entered the study while the juniors were at class, and he had closed the door to secure himself from observation; and, in doing so, he had made himself a prisoner. Whatever damage he had done in the study would be a witness against him; and certainly he must have done some damage—he would not have gone there for nothing.

Bernard Glyn felt in his pocket for the key of the spring lock.

"Line up, you chaps!" he said. "The beggar may make a rush, and he's not to get away!"

"What-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall wefuse to let him get away, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, pushing back his spotless cuffs.

Bernard Glyn inserted the key in the lock.

Click!

There was a muttered exclamation inside the study. The Liverpool lad threw the door open, and the juniors lined up to prevent a rush from the captured marauder.

They stared into the study. Then there was an exclamation from all at once:

"Higgins!"

It was the red-headed boot-boy!

And Higgins was not all they saw. The study was in a state of terrific disorder. Articles had been broken and scattered about. The looking-glass was smashed, and the glass doors of the bookcase shattered.

Polly, the parrot, was chattering away in the cage at a great rate. He gave a scream at the sight of his master.

"Polly wants sugar! Go it, Blake! Smash 'em up, Blake!"

"Blake—eh?" said Jack Blake grimly.

"Pile in, Blake! Smash the glasses! Hurray! Polly wants sugar! Give poor Polly some sugar! Hurray!"

"What are you doing here, Higgins?" asked Tom Merry quietly.

The red-headed youth had cast a wild glance towards the doorway. But it was blocked with juniors, and there was no escape for him.

He backed away, his breath coming thick and fast. Cool and ready-tongued as the young rascal was, he knew that he was in a situation now that it would be difficult to escape from, lied he never so cleverly.

"I—I—I—" he began.

"You've been wrecking this study!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Me, sir? Oh, no, sir!"

"You've been teaching the parrot again—teaching him to say things to make us think that Blake wrecked the study!" said Kangaroo.

"Certainly not, sir!" said Henry Higgins. "I 'ope you don't believe as 'ow I would do such a thing, sir!"

"You smashed up my property yesterday," said Bernard Glyn, "and you taught the parrot to say things to make me believe that Noble and Dane had done it!"

"I ain't done nothin' of the sort, Master Glyn!"

"You taught the parrot to say things about Blake and Tom Merry before, so that when they came to tea here they thought that we had been talking about them in a caddish way, and got their backs up!" pursued the Liverpool lad grimly.

"Oh, no, sir! Never, sir!"

"You came here while we were at classes this morning, and did some more damage, and if we hadn't been up to the trick, we should have fancied that Blake had done it," said Bernard Glyn.

"I'm sure I don't hunderstand you, sir!" mumbled Higgins.

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Yaas, wathah! Explain that, you wottah, before we bump you bald-headed!" said Arthur Augustus wrathfully.

The juniors gathered round Henry Higgins with grim looks. The boot-boy was breathing thick and fast. But they gave him a chance to explain before they laid hands on him. If he had any explanation to make they were willing to hear it.

"Got anything to say?" asked Blake curtly.

"Ye-e-es, sir—yes, certainly, Master Blake!"

"Say it, then—quick!"

"I—I was passing down the passage, and—and I heard something breaking in here!" stammered Higgins. "I looked in, and a fellow went out—the fellow who had done all this damage!"

"What was the fellow's name?" asked Tom Merry. "I don't believe a word of it; but we'll give you every chance! What was his name?"

The boot-boy hesitated.

"It was Master Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form, sir!" he said at last.

There was an angry exclamation from D'Arcy:

"My minah! You uttah lyin' wottah! Bai Jove, you fellows, I'm goin' to give him a feahful thwashin' for slandewin' my minah—"

"Hold on, Gussy—"

"I wefuse to hold on! I am not goin' to hear my minah slandahed in this wotten way! Welease me, Blake, or I shall stwike you on the nose!"

Blake chuckled.

"Keep your wool on, Gussy! We don't believe a word the rotter says, but we've got to give him a chance to clear himself, if he can! Let him run on!"

"I wefuse—"

"Oh, sit on him, somebody!"

"I decline to be sat upon! I— Oh! Ow! Mind my waistcoat, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We all know why he's made it a Third Form chap," said Tom Merry quietly. "If any fellow got out of class to come here and do this, we should know it if it were a Fourth Form or a Shell chap. So he says it was one of the Third, because we can't be certain whether a fag got leave out of the Form-room!"

"Yaas, wathah; the slandahin' wottah—"

"It—it is true!" stammered Higgins. "I—I came into the study then, to—to put things in order, and the door closed, and—and—"

"And you were caught!" said Bernard Glyn grimly. "You may be interested to hear that I put that lock on the door specially to catch you next time you came, and you've walked into the trap beautifully!"

Henry Higgins ground his teeth for a second. Then he was the humble and civil Henry Higgins once more, as he remembered himself.

"I'm sure I'm very sorry I came in, Master Glyn, as you don't like finding me here," he said meckly. "But I meant no 'arm; I was honly goin' to set the room to rights!"

"How long have you been here?" demanded Glyn.

"Not very long, sir—perhaps twenty minutes—"

"Then what have you been doing for the last hour? I've just heard from Toby that you've been missing for an hour, and he couldn't find you anywhere, though he was hunting for you."

CHAPTER 16.

The Last of Henry Higgins.

"Ahem! I—I may be mistaken about the time—"
 "Yes; I fancy you are, and about some other things!"
 The Liverpool lad glanced at the juniors. "I think it's pretty clear, you fellows."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Quite clear," said Tom Merry. "What I can't make out is, why he has done it? No fellow here has done him any harm that I know of. Some of us have clipped in to save him from being ragged by Crooke and Mellish. He is an utterly ungrateful beast. It's pretty clear now that he wrecked my study, too, and put that writing on the wall to make us think that Blake had done it. The rotten cad must have been deliberately trying to cause trouble among friends."

"And he did it, too, successfully, so far as we were concerned!" growled Kangaroo. "You silly idiots have had your backs up against us!"

Tom Merry coloured.
 "Sorry, Kangy. But how were we to guess that anything of this sort was going on—that a perfect stranger, and a kid we've been very decent to, would play such rotten, cowardly tricks on us?"

"Yaas, it's jolly queeah, but I apologise to you fellows most sincerely," said Arthur Augustus. "I realise now that that wed-headed wotah must have taught the pawwt to say those wotten things."

"And now he's going through it," said Kangaroo.
 "Yes, rather!"

"I suppose you know you'd be sacked for this, Higgins, if we complained?" said Tom Merry.

"I 'ope as 'ow you won't do that, Master Merry—"
 "No, we won't; we don't want to make you lose your job. We'll take you in hand ourselves, and give you such a ragging that you won't want to play any more rotten tricks on us!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Why did you do it?" demanded Blake. "You can't lie yourself out of it, Higgins. Tell us why you did it, when we've never done you any harm."

"I—I—I—"
 "Oh, no good asking him to tell more lies!" said Herries. "Collar him, and I'll lather him with a cricket-stump."
 "Hurrah!" shrieked Polly. "Pile in, Blake—pile in! Hurrah!"

Henry Higgins dodged desperately round the table, but many hands were stretched out to collar him, and he was easily captured.

"Now, you cad," said Tom Merry, "you're going to have the hiding of your life. Not because you've spoiled our things, but because you've tried to make us quarrel with one another, like a low-down rotter! Shove him over the table!"

"Yaas, wathah! Come heah, you wottah! It's all wight, I've got hold of his hair. Bai Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus staggered back, with a shriek of astonishment.

He had caught hold of the boot-boy's mop of red hair to hold him, as he was struggling savagely in the grasp of the juniors.

And the red hair had come off in his hand!
 D'Arcy staggered.

For the moment he was under the impression that he had unintentionally scalped the boot-boy.

"Gweat Scott! Look here—what—"
 But D'Arcy's voice was drowned by a roar from the other fellows.

LEVISON!"
 "Gweat Scott!"
 "Levison!"
 "The cad!"

"The schemer!"
 "So we've caught you at last, you worm!"
 Levison sprang back, panting.

He had made many skilful changes in his appearance. The dark complexion, the thick and bushy eyebrows, changed his looks very much, but the glaring red hair had been the chief disguise.

Now that the wig had been torn off forcibly, and his own closely-cropped dark hair revealed, the juniors knew him, in spite of the rest of his disguise.

It was Levison!
 Henry Higgins, the boot-boy, was Ernest Levison, the cad of the Fourth!

It was amazing!
 Tom Merry & Co. stared at him in blank astonishment.
 "Levison!" almost stuttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Levison, you wottah! You have been lyin' again, and takin' us all in!"

"That accounts for the cad wrecking our studies, and making us quarrel with one another, with his rotten tricks!" said Clifton Dane. "I said that if Levison had been still here, we shouldn't have had to look far for the rotter! And he is here, all the time!"

"Levison—in disguise! My hat!"
 "A giddy boot-boy!" exclaimed Blake. "What on earth put it into your head to do honest work, Levison? It's not in your line at all!"

"Now we know who put the tacks in the boots!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 Levison grinned.
 The sudden discovery had taken him aback, but he was very quick to recover his coolness.

"I suppose the game's up now?" he said. "It couldn't go on for ever. I couldn't have stood the life—too much work, and too little pay. And it was risky getting out to have a little fun—I had to take these things off, and go out in my own character—and that fool D'Arcy spotted me doing it last night—"

"Weally, Levison—"
 "I told you I wouldn't leave St. Jim's!" continued Levison, in the same cynical, sneering tone. "I was right, you see. You were all jolly glad to get rid of me, but I said I'd come back, and I came."

"As a boot-boy!" said Digby.
 "Well, I had to come somehow, and it gave me a chance of getting even with some of you," said Levison, between his teeth. "And I tell you, you've not done with me yet. You can give me away if you like, but I'm not done with St. Jim's."

The juniors were grimly silent. They remembered the Head's communication of that morning.

It was only too true. Levison was not done with St. Jim's. He did not know it yet, but he was free to return to the school, in his own character, whenever he liked! The Fourth Form were not rid of him, after all!

"Now I'm going out of this study—" said Levison.
 Kangaroo jumped into his way.

"Not till you've been licked for what you've done," he said. "Henry Higgins, or Levison, or whatever you like to call yourself, you're going through it for the rotten tricks you've played us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "If you want a fair fight, you can fight any fellow here present," said Tom Merry. "We'll give you fair play—more than you want!"

Levison backed away.
 "I'm not going to fight you—"
 "No; I didn't suppose you'd want to," said Tom Merry, with a curl of the lip. "You prefer to hit in the dark, like a coward and a cad as you are. But you've been bowled over this time, and you've got to face the music. Stand up to me, or take a licking with a cricket-stump, whichever you like."

Levison gritted his teeth.
 "Of the two, I'd rather fight you," he said; "but—"
 "Put up your hands, then!"
 Levison was cornered, and he had the courage of a rat in a corner. The furniture was moved back, and the two juniors faced each other in their shirt-sleeves. And then was witnessed such a combat as the end study had certainly

(Concluded on page 26.)

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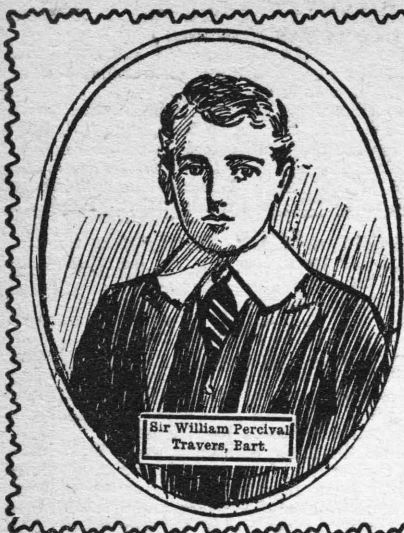
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SIR BILLY, OF GREYHOUSE!

*A Splendid Serial Story
dealing with Public-
School Life.*

By R. S. WARREN BELL.



Sir William Percival
Travers, Bart.

READ THIS FIRST.

Sir William Percival Travers, Bart.—to give him his full title—is a slight, fair lad of twelve when he is first sent to "Fighting Greyhouse" by his guardian. His Form-fellows in the Lower Fourth are considerably older than "Sir Billy," as the youngster is soon nicknamed, and he has to put up with a good deal of bullying. His great hero is Wardour, the captain of the school.

The Old Boys' Cricket Match at Greyhouse brought down the usual large number of old Greys; to one of them, at least—a fellow named Parsons—the visit brought back only the most painful recollections. He cast his mind back a dozen years, and remembered, with vivid distinctness, how as a Greyhouse senior, he had been the bane of a junior, named Moody's, existence. Owing the fag a grudge, Parsons had spoken to him thus: "I haven't time to lick you now, but it will keep till last day. It'll be something for you to look forward to!"

(Read on from here.)

Last Day!

With this humane speech Parsons walked away, leaving, as he knew he would, the small boy in a most uncomfortable frame of mind. Moody had only been at Greyhouse a year, but he was quite familiar with the rhyme used at the end of every term:

"Last day but two
Taste my shoe!
Last day but one
Take it all in fun!
Last day—
Pay-day!!!"

And his licking was to keep till Pay-day!

Snow and ice—glorious long slides in the Upper Field—box-packing, train-hunting in Bradshaw, party-forming for travelling purposes, general disorder and confusion, and no one attempting to do a stroke of work, masters as well as boys being full of holiday anticipation and Christmassy good-fellowship. It was the last day of the term, and everybody was in the wildest and highest spirits. It promised to be a real old-fashioned Christmas, with plenty of skating and sleighing, and ice hockey, and snow fort building, not a miserable, snivelling, damp-day-in-April sort of Christmas, as we generally have nowadays.

And 'twas Pay-day!

Still, what paying out there was to be done was done good-humouredly—indeed, most of the fellows forgot that they had any paying-out to do. And rightly so, for is not Christmas the Queen of Feasts, when there is peace on earth and good-will amongst boys? Surely 'tis a time for hand-shaking and forgiving, for making up rows, and forgetting injuries. There must be something wrong about a nature on which the prevailing good-fellowship of Christmas has no effect. To my mind, Christmas Day is the sweetest and best day of the whole year, no matter what the weather may be, though, to be sure, old Mother Earth looks best in her white cloak, with the holly-berries showing red upon it!

For six weeks young Moody had been brooding over Parsons's threat. When he got out of bed this last morning he shivered. To-day was Pay-day! His chums chipped him about his solemn countenance, but Moody had no banter to exchange for theirs; laugh and merry jest had gone from his lips. It was Pay-day!

He stole into Hall for breakfast behind a clump of chattering chums, and slid into his seat hastily, fearful lest he should

catch Parsons's eye. After breakfast he did not rush for those glorious long slides with all the rest, but went and hid himself in his class-room. Here, at any rate, thought he, there wouldn't be much risk of encountering Parsons.

But just as Moody had got out a book he was reading, the door was opened, and Parsons looked in. He hesitated on the threshold, then closed the door and went away. He meant to prolong the agony a bit.

No rest for Moody, even in the class-room, thought Moody. So after dinner he mingled with the crowd in the play-box room, and, getting into the darkest corner, began to pack up his play-box, taking no pleasure in this usually pleasurable occupation.

Suddenly a voice sounded close by his shoulder.

"Moody, go and ask Cripps for a bit of cord, and look sharp."

"All right, Parsons."

Poor Moody ran as fast as his legs could carry him, and came racing back with the cord without wasting a moment.

"There'll be a bit left over for you to-night," grinned Parsons, roughly taking the cord from the white-faced fag.

Moody hastily finished packing his own box, locked it, and got out of the box-room as soon as he could.

To-night! So Parsons was reserving his licking until the very last thing. On the night of Last

Day there was a theatrical performance in Big School, and after that a bit of a spread in Hall, and then fellows went to bed, much later than usual.

All was turmoil and confusion and romping. Very little attempt on the monitors' part was made to keep order. The very night of all the nights in the term for a bully to do his worst!

Moody mooned about at the lower end of the Upper Field long after it was dark. In the distance he could see the fellows sliding in long lines, all as jolly as could be, laughing and jeering when some unlucky chap came a cropper, shouting out warnings to those in front, singing and hallooing. How Moody envied them!

After tea he went listlessly to his dormitory, and put on his best suit, as well as a spotless shirt, tie, and collar. Greyhouse made a fine show of clean linen in Big School that night, for many visitors from the neighbourhood had come, and there were heaps of girls, by Jove!

Moody crammed himself away into a corner at the very bottom of the room. Here, at any rate, it wasn't probable that Parsons would see him. Whether Parsons saw him there or not, it is quite certain that Parsons was waiting for him by the door when the theatricals were over. He made a sign to Moody to follow him, and Moody meekly obeyed.

Arrived in one of the side corridors, Parsons said:

"Go up to your dormitory, and wait till I come."

Nobody saw the two together. Moody was such an unobtrusive little fellow that the other juniors didn't miss him in Hall. Besides, it was such a hurly-burly and scramble that it was hard to find anybody, even if one had looked for him.

Moody went slowly upstairs—to the first floor, and then to the second, and then to the third. Here his dormitory was situated. He and Parsons, by the way, were both members of Middle House—that one under the dome.

He was quite unstrung by the suspense of the last few weeks, and this last awful Pay Day. He was a weakish chap at the best—not built for roughing it—and he felt pretty well done now.

Parsons was going to lick him. Nobody would hear or see—servants, masters, monitors—not a soul was about in these silent upper regions; besides, if there had been, he couldn't have sneaked.

A wild longing for escape, flight, anything, took possession of him. Couldn't he hide somewhere?

He had it! There was one room, at the top of Middle House, which was never used. There was a rumour that it

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 278.

A Magnificent, Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

was haunted, but Moody's fear just now was of a flesh and blood enemy, not ghosts. What if he hid in the haunted room until Parsons had gone to bed? Parsons would never dream of looking for him in that top room.

Holding his breath, Moody listened by the staircase, and presently he heard a heavy step on the landing below. Parsons was coming up!

It must be the top room. There was a bed in it. If the worst came to the worst, he could sleep there.

A narrow, winding staircase led to this top room. He raced up the steps, treading very warily, and reached the door of the top room just as Parsons arrived on the landing below.

No good hesitating. Moody turned the handle, and entered the top room, closing the door softly behind him. Now he was safe from Parsons!

Alive!

Turn we now, twelve years later, to this day of the Old Boys' Match, as well as the old boys who had come to play or look on.

Present Greyhouse thronging down to the playing-fields, gazed with awe at Past Greyhouse. Some of the old boys were young fellows still at the 'Varsity—whom many present Greys could remember as boys at the school—while others were men of thirty and forty, and grizzled family men of fifty and sixty. The indefatigable Phillips had succeeded in enticing down a couple of bishops, an admiral, a cabinet minister, and a judge—all O.G.'s.

Greyhouse had heard that the judge's nickname in police circles was "Hanging Henry," and so Greyhouse awaited his awful lordship's arrival with morbid curiosity, for they understood that his sobriquet had been given him on account of the severity with which he dealt with murderers. The school's disappointment, therefore, may be imagined when they found "Hanging Henry" to be a rubicund, jolly old gentleman, who insisted on standing endless tuck to anyone who wanted it, and cracked jokes unceasingly as Present Greyhouse—at his invitation—cheerfully cleared the shop out. After the match the old boys crowded into the Masters' common-room, but, there hardly being enough space for them in this quarter, they overflowed into the seniors' common-rooms in the various houses, asking Present Greyhouse many questions about prevailing customs, telling each other stories of times long gone by, and, in a word, enjoying themselves most thoroughly.

The two bishops, after wandering aimlessly about for some time, at length found seats in the juniors' room of Middle House, and here, to the wondering kids, they related how, half a century or more ago, they were both flogged for making a midnight raid on the gooseberry-bushes in the Head's garden!

Phillips was talking to half a dozen old boys at once in the common-room, when he observed that some of the men were looking hard at a stranger who had just entered the room.

The term "stranger" is not misapplied, for, presumably an old boy, the new-comer looked anxiously about him as if not quite sure as to the welcome which would be accorded him. Nobody recognised him, but so nervous were his movements that very soon everybody was staring at him.

"Hallo!" said Phillips. "Who's this? Can't fix him, can you?" turning to an old boy who was at Greyhouse during his captaincy.

"Hanged if I can! Looks more like a ghost than a man. George! I never saw a fellow so wasted away in my life."

Mr. Phillips, as organiser and M.C. of this monster meeting of O.G.'s, was obliged to do the civil by everybody. So he approached the stranger.

"Excuse me—you are an old boy?"

"Yes, yes, I am an old boy. Is your name Phillips?"

"Yes. And yours?"

"Parsons."

"Parsons!"

Quite a number of the men present echoed the name. Of course, Parsons! Old Parsons! Certainly they remembered Parsons—one of the grandest "three-quarters" the school had ever had. Left before anyone thought he would, at the end of a winter term. Wrote to some of his chums, saying that he had persuaded his pater to let him go to India, instead of returning to Greyhouse, as he had been offered a good billet on the railway out there. That must have been a dozen or more years ago. And not a thing had been heard of him since that time. Rather queer he should turn up suddenly like this, after dropping his friends for such a length of years. However, here he was, looking more dead than alive, and there was no reason why he should not be made welcome.

Phillips, a contemporary of Parsons, chatted with him for THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 278.

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some minutes. He noticed, however, that Parsons still continued to look very nervous and ill at ease.

"Look here, old man," said Phillips, "I suppose India has knocked you up a bit, eh? Come and sit down, and have a drink of some sort. You look very seedy."

"Oh, I look worse than I really am!" said Parsons, with a ghastly smile. "You see, I lived in the jungle a lot by myself—at least, I was the only white man in the district. I got fever, and that laid me out, and I was finally invalided home. I met a man at my club in London who told me of this O.G. gathering, so I thought I'd run down. Hope it's all right?"

"Of course it's all right, old fellow. Very glad to see you, and hope English air will buck you up. By the way, a lot of these men are staying the night. Will you?"

Parsons looked strangely agitated.

"Sleep here? No, no! I couldn't! I couldn't sleep at Greyhouse."

"Nonsense! You can't go back to-night. The men bound for town will be off in ten minutes. The rest are sleeping here. I'm sure I can find you a bed. Now, look here, Parsons, you're knocked up. Get into that easy-chair till dinner-time. I'll go and see about a bed for you."

Parsons dropped into the chair without a word, and closed his eyes, heedless of the scrutiny he was subjected to by many of the men who had been boys with him at Greyhouse. Personally, Phillips had absolutely forgotten about the Mother Cadby incident—he simply recognised in Parsons a man who had been at school with him, an O.G., and therefore one to whom it was his duty to be hospitable.

He went to the matron of Middle House—a plump, good-tempered little womap.

"Oh, Mr. Phillips, what a to-do, to be sure! Every bedroom packed, and how they'll all dine, I don't know! And it's all your fault!"

"My dear madam," said Phillips, with a smile, "I am sure you are equal to the emergency. You are never beaten!"

"Flattery!" cried Mrs. Dolman demurely. "Well, and what is it now—another bed?"

"Exactly. An old boy has turned up suddenly from India."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the good matron. "They seem to have come from all parts of the globe. There's a missionary from China, and an explorer from Abyssinia, and a gentleman who has been to the North Pole—"

"You must blame the school, Mrs. Dolman," said Phillips, "turns out such good men, you see. They go everywhere, and get to the top."

"The judge has been talking to me," said Mrs. Dolman archly, "and I must say he is very nice. What a shame to call him 'Hanging Henry'! He doesn't look as if he could condemn a mouse to death. He has been telling me how he used to come to Greyhouse by stage-coach. He is really a charming old gentleman."

"At Petershall Assizes," laughed Phillips, "he is the reverse to charming. But, come, Mrs. Dolman, about this bed. I want one bed. Only one. Is it to be had?"

Mrs. Dolman reflected.

"There's only a bed in the Top Room left," she said.

"The Top Room? I thought it was never used now."

"It isn't. But not seeing why it shouldn't be used, I had two beds made up there. One of them is taken—Wardour came to me for a bed for a gentleman—I forget his name—who was a monitor here when he was a little boy. Your friend can have the other bed. I don't suppose he knows the room's said to be haunted—"

"I'd forgotten all about that," said Phillips. "What is the story, Mrs. Dolman?"

"I can't tell you what the story is, Mr. Phillips, but I've always been told it's supposed to be haunted."

Phillips laughed.

"Ignorance will be bliss in the case of both. Then, Mrs. Dolman, I'll tell my man a bed has been found for him."

"Very well, Mr. Phillips. Fortunately, none of the maids have heard anything of this nonsense, although they know the room isn't used. I dare say the gentlemen will spend a very good night there, and laugh at the idea of a ghost when you tell them in the morning of the room's reputation."

Parsons excused himself from going into dinner, on the plea of ill-health. So Phillips had some light refreshment sent to him in the common-room.

After dinner most of the old boys who were sleeping at Greyhouse that night sat in the common-room talking of bygone times. Parsons alone was silent. At intervals he lit a fresh cheroot, and smoked feverishly. As in many like cases, tobacco was his only solace—his only friend.

The majority of the O.G.'s laughing and chatting, did not pay particular attention to this haggard fellow. The average athlete has very little sympathy with those of his fellows who enjoy (paradoxical phrase!) indifferent health. Parsons's

contemporaries regarded him with pity largely mingled with contempt. Poor chap! quite broken up! great pity! such a fine fellow as he was once upon a time!

Phillips, more thoughtful than the rest, suggested to Parsons that he should make a fourth at whist. Parsons accepted the invitation with astonishing alacrity, but threw his vis-à-vis into a state of despair by revoking, trumping tricks already won by his partner, and committing other heinous crimes. At the end of the rubber the other three rose with a sigh of relief that was quite pathetic.

The men dropped off to bed one by one. At length, when the school clock sonorously announced the midnight hour, Phillips and Parsons found themselves alone.

"Well, old man," said Phillips, with a healthy yawn, "it's time we were trotting. Your room's just over mine—I'm on the third floor. You'll have company—so full up had to put you in a room with another man."

"Who's my friend?" asked Parsons.
"Dunno. Such a crowd, haven't been able to go round the lot."

Parsons looked as if he would like to sit up for another hour or two, but he recognised the fact that he must keep school hours—as far as the common-room was concerned. With the exception of Phillips and himself, Greyhouse was slumbering.

"All right," he said. "Show me the way, will you? It's twelve years since I was here, you know."

"Ah, so it is!" said Phillips, lighting a couple of candles. "Just about twelve years."

Phillips turned off the gas in the common-room, and the two men, after passing through several corridors on the ground floor, came to the private staircase that was used by the masters. They went up.

"This is my room," said Phillips, softly opening the door. "You see, I've already got a man sleeping in my bed, or I could have put you in it. I'm dossing on the floor myself. However, you'll be all right. Come on!"

Changing to look at Parsons he noticed that his companion was deadly pale—paler than was his wont. However, he put this down to fatigue.

They ascended the narrow staircase.
"Here you are!" said Phillips. "Snug little crib, eh? Other man seems to be asleep. Well, good-night, old chap. Hope you'll feel a bit better in the morning."

"Good-night!" said Parsons, walking into the Top Room. As he did so he dropped the candlestick.

"Hallo!" said Phillips. "Hand a bit shaky? Here, take my candle. There, that's all right! If you feel queer in the night, just hammer on the floor with your boot, and I'll come up. Good-night!"

So saying, he shut the door on Parsons and went to his own room, where, with some overcoats and blankets, he soon made himself up a bed. He turned into this and quickly dozed off.

He did not, however, sleep very long, in spite of the fatigues of the day. After a fitful snatch of slumber he awoke, and for some time lay listening to the regular breathing of the man who was occupying his bed.

The moon had by this time struggled away from the clouds which had formerly enveloped her, so that various pale shafts now illuminated Phillips's room and increased his unwelcome wakefulness. His thoughts, as he lay in his makeshift bed, turned upon Mrs. Dolman's lugubrious hints regarding the Top Room. Could it, Phillips wondered, really be haunted? He would ask some of the old boys at breakfast—

There was a noise as of a bed creaking overhead, and then Phillips, who had got up on his elbows, heard a muffled exclamation in a man's voice. Then something struck the floor overhead. He suddenly recollected that he had told Parsons to hammer on the floor with a boot if—

Soon there came a frantic hammering. Shaking off his coverings, Phillips hurried up the little staircase to the Top Room.

Sitting on the edge of his bed, looking little more than a skeleton in his night attire, was Parsons, staring with ghastly eyes at the occupant of the other bed. The object of his gaze was lying so that the moonlight fell full on his face, giving him a somewhat uncanny and death-like appearance. He was, too, a fair, smooth-faced fellow, with a naturally pale complexion.

"What's the matter?" demanded Phillips.
"See—there!" gasped Parsons, pointing towards the other bed. "Moody, the fellow I murdered!"

"Nonsense!" said Phillips, though Parsons's twitching lips and shaking limbs gave him an uncomfortable turn.

"He hid here," said Parsons, in a low, strained voice, "because I was going to look him. In the morning he was found lying dead on the bed—"

Phillips approached Parsons and seized him roughly by the shoulder.

"You're dreaming, man. I remember now. It was

thought that Moody was dead. He was only in a fit—he came round on the following day—"

"What!"
"He came round and went home as well as anybody a week later. Nobody knew why he hid in this room—"

"He wasn't dead?" Parsons stood up and fixed his haggard eyes on Phillips. "Do you say he wasn't dead?"

"Yes; there he is now, sound and hearty. I had no idea he was to share this room with you, although I knew he was coming down to play in the match."

Parsons fell back on to his bed, and covered his face with his hands.

"And all these years," Phillips heard him mutter, "I have been cursed by the thought that I was his murderer. Are you sure?"

He started up, and, crossing to the other bed, shook the sleeper.

Moody—for Moody it was, a grown man now—opened his eyes.

"Hallo!" And he yawned sleepily.

"Are you Moody?"

"Yes; who are you?"

"Parsons!"

"Parsons—Parsons! Seem to remember the name. Were you at the school in my time? Anyhow, why the dickens are you waking me up at this time of night to ask me questions?"

Parsons was beginning: "Don't you remember—" when Phillips pulled him away.

"Now, Parsons, don't be a fool. He doesn't remember anything about it—couldn't have remembered that it was this room. All serene, Moody," he added, turning to the other man. "Parsons has had a bit of a nightmare."

So with a grunt Moody turned over and composed himself for sleep again.

"I can't go back to bed," said Parsons; "this has been too much. For twelve years I've been haunted by this thing. I thought I killed that fellow!"

"Well, you can see for yourself that he's alive, and as well as I am."

"Served me right," muttered Parsons. "I was a brute!" Then he turned to Phillips, and said: "How do you account for his going into a fit?"

"Imagination," said Phillips; "knew the room was supposed to be haunted, and thought he saw something."

"Well," said Parsons, who was beginning to look a different man, such was the load that had been taken off his mind, "this is the biggest bit of luck I've had since I left Greyhouse. By Jove! I'll go back to India and start life over again!"

"And put on some flesh," laughed Phillips; "you can do with it, you know."

Parsons, still unable to realise his good fortune, again approached Moody, and bent over him.

"Is it really you, Moody, alive—"

"It is really me," replied Moody, sitting up suddenly, "alive and kicking. I'll convince you of the latter in a minute if you don't let me alone!"

(To be continued in next week's issue. Order early. In the meantime make a point of securing the great 25th Birthday number of ANSWERS, the most marvellous value ever offered for one penny.)



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"THE SCHEMER."

(Continued from Page 22.)

never witnessed before. There were no rounds—it was logging from beginning to end.

Levison knew something of boxing, and he was desperate. At first he lay still when he was knocked down, hoping the fight was at an end; but Kangaroo "touched him up" with a cricket-stump, till he was glad to get up and face his opponent again.

And then Levison fought as hard as he could.

Tom Merry fought hard, too, in a grim humour, determined that the cad of the Fourth should pay dearly for the harm he had done, and for his black treachery.

For ten minutes it lasted, and by that time Levison was in a state he had never experienced before. It was the most terrible thrashing he had ever known, and a flogging he had once received from the Head was as nothing to it. He went down at last, and lay on the floor, panting, and this time it was evidently genuine. He could not get up!

Tom Merry put on his jacket.

"Bwavo, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, patting the captain of the Shell on the shoulder. "Well done!"

Tom Merry dabbed his nose with his handkerchief.

"Will you kindly explain what this means?" said a voice at the door; and the startled juniors looked round, to see Mr. Railton looking in.

The Housemaster's brow was very stern. He had seen the red wig lying on the table, and Levison, without the wig, lying on the floor. And he had recognised the cad of the Fourth!

Levison staggered to his feet, gasping.

"Levison!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir!" panted the junior.

"Am I to understand, Levison, that you came here in disguise? That you were the boy known as Henry Higgins?"

"I—I wanted to come back, sir," whined Levison. "I—I couldn't bear to leave the school, sir. I—I—"

"You had no right to play such a trick, and I fear that your motives were not so good as you would have me believe, Levison," said the Housemaster coldly. "Your school-fellows seem to have appraised them at their real valuation, Levison. However, I am glad you are found. You are, perhaps, not aware that your father has communicated with Dr. Holmes, to the effect that his affairs have taken a turn so much for the better that you need not leave the school."

Levison started.

"I—I didn't know that, sir!"

"You had better go and remove that trickery from your face, and change into your own clothes, and report yourself to Dr. Holmes," said Mr. Railton sternly.

"Ye-es, sir."

And Levison departed. Mr. Railton strode away, without another word to Tom Merry & Co., much to their relief. The Housemaster probably knew that Levison had had only what he deserved, and probably not so much as he deserved.

"So that wottah's coming back!" said D'Arcy at last.

Toby, the page, looked into the study.

"Registered letter for Master D'Arcy!" he said.

"Bai Jove! It's my fivah at last!"

And it was!

Levison succeeded in making good his explanation to Dr. Holmes, and he reappeared among the juniors of St. Jim's, who did not give him a hearty welcome by any means—not that Levison cared for a little thing like that!

But Tom Merry & Co. had no thoughts to waste upon Levison now. The famous fiver had arrived, and the long period of stoniness was over, and that evening there was a glorious feed in Study No. 6, with Arthur Augustus as the founder of the feast. And the chums of No. 6 and the Terrible Three and the Cornstalk Co. gathered there on the best of terms, all ill-feeling among them having been banished by the discovery that Levison had been at the bottom of the trouble.

The next morning Levison appeared in the Fourth-Form room as usual. The schemer had two black eyes, a swollen nose, and a decidedly thick ear, so he was by no means unpunished for his rascally schemes.

THE END.

Another splendid long, complete tale of Tom Merry and Co. next week, entitled "Tom Merry's Special Number," by Martin Clifford, and is a tale which everybody should make a point of reading. Order in advance to avoid disappointment.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 278.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

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A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

R. Lette, "Corra Lynn," 59, L. Myers, Geelong, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Wales and Scotland, age 14.

S. A. Shah, 46, Parry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Port Sunlight or Bourneville.

M. D. Greenfield, Crystal Street, Petersham, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards.

M. L. Cole, 500, Blood Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers, age 16-17.

K. S. Henry, care of T. C. Fookes, Esq., Solicitor, Stratford, Taranaki, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 17.

W. G. Ashlin, Hopetoun, Dover, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers of "The Gem," age 17-20.

A. F. Stafford, 629, Chapel Street, South Yarra, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles interested in postcards.

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L. Kreser, Reddersburg, Orange Free State, South Africa, would like to correspond with a girl reader, living in Australia, India, or England, aged 18 to 20.

A. R. Kershaw, Clifford Street, Day Dawn, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Egypt interested in postcards.

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V. Rosenstein, 17, Bree Street, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with Scotch readers, age 12 to 13.

J. H. Harris, 184, Upper Autumn Street, Geelong West, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with English, Scotch, and Welsh readers.

L. Lithgow, 51, Mary Street, St. Kilda, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 15 to 16.

L. O. Bell, 19, Freeman Street, North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, living in Kent, age 18.

C. Markby, Orlando Street, Hampton, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers interested in steel manufactures, aged 14 to 16.

E. M. Verral, 14, Argyll Street, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamp collecting in any part of the world.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

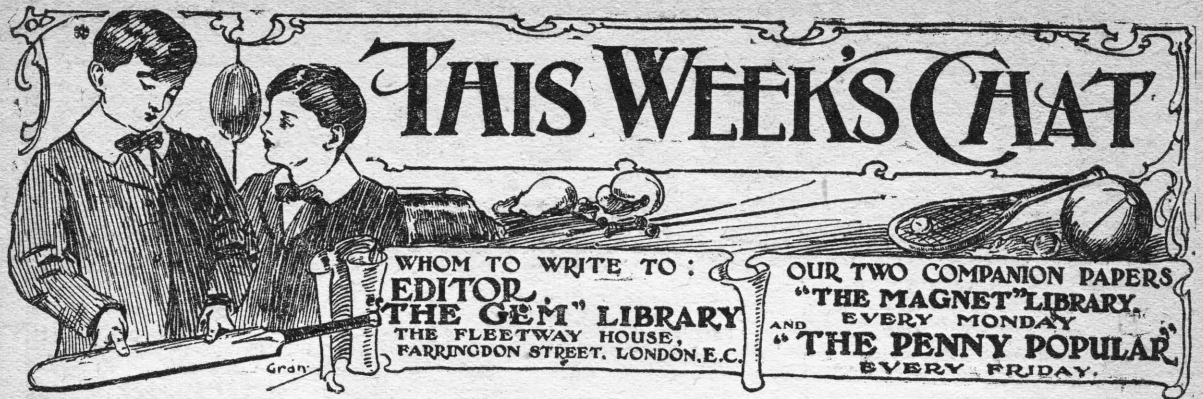
FAMOUS FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG. No. 5



Specially drawn for "THE GEM" Library, by C. H. Blake.

On June 7th, 1896, the Egyptian Infantry, forming part of the Dongola Expedition, under the command of Lord Kitchener, attacked the native village of Ferkeh. Covered by the Maxims of the North Staffords, they advanced steadily in face of a heavy fire, and carried the village with a gallant rush.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday,

"TOM MERRY'S SPECIAL NUMBER!"

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

In our splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., for next week, the Editor and staff of that famous publication, "Tom Merry's Weekly," come in for a troublous time. In some mysterious way, the "copy" reaches the hands of the printer in a form very different from that which was approved by the editorial staff, with the result that the printed copies contain certain items which cause a great sensation at St. Jim's. Tom Merry & Co. are furious, but are unable to trace the author of the trouble until a word from Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth Form, puts them on the right track. Then there is some more trouble for someone!

"TOM MERRY'S SPECIAL NUMBER"

is full of interest and humour of the best kind, which all Gemites will be sure to appreciate.

READER TO READER.

One of my Scottish chums, John McBride, who informs me also that he is the agent for Scotland of the "Swansea Gemites League" (which includes the three companion papers), requests any of his fellow-readers living in Scotland or Ireland who may be interested in the League to communicate with him at 173, South Wellington Street, Glasgow, N.B.

Readers living in the Muswell Hill district of London who wish to join a "Gem" League, are invited to apply to Maurice Cathie, 8, Birchwood Mansions, Muswell Hill, London, N.

E. A. Makin, of 45, Kelvin Road, Highbury, London, N., is anxious to form a nigger minstrel troupe on the lines suggested in recent articles on this page, and this reader would, therefore, be glad to hear from fellow-readers of "The Gem" who would care to join the troupe.

F. Hughes, of 19, Salisbury Row, Walworth, is also forming a troupe of minstrels, and wishes to hear from fellow-Gemites to whom the idea appeals.

THE ROMANCE OF "ANSWERS."

Some twenty-five years ago there began, in a very small office in Paternoster Square, London, a journal called "Answers to Correspondents." It was not a very large paper, and it did not commence with any amazing blare of trumpets.

To be strictly truthful, it was not an instantaneous success. Not that it was by any means a failure, however, for slowly but surely, step by step, that paper began to win popularity and regard. All this was in 1888, just a quarter of a century ago.

To-day—this very week, indeed—that same paper now known universally as "Answers," celebrates its twenty-fifth birthday. During the past twenty-five years it has built up for itself a wonderful reputation, and has grown to be the best and most widely-read journal for home and train.

In celebration of its twenty-fifth birthday, a unique and striking number is being produced. It is almost a double number, containing no fewer than thirty-six pages, yet the price is one penny only. Lord Northcliffe, founder and first editor of "Answers," contributes a long and interesting article, and there are contributions by the recognised leaders in almost every phase and walk of life.

As showing the world's progress of twenty-five years, its change of ideas and thought, and for the purely personal interest of a twenty-fifth birthday, this week's special issue of "Answers" should on no account be missed.

Replies in Brief.

My best thanks are due to the following readers for their very interesting letters:

"A Sydney Reader," "Welsh Girl Reader," "Two Girl Readers of Oldham," A. E. C., "Scotch-Canadian Reader," "A Dalston Reader."

R. K. (Wood Green).—I am afraid I cannot introduce the feature you mention into our popular companion paper just yet.

V. H. R. (Lancashire).—I hope to publish the particular feature you mention in a very short time.

HOW TO WRITE A PICTURE-PLOT.—No. 4.

By a Successful Photo-Playwright.
THE SCENARIO PROPER.

I gave specimen scenes in Article 2, so there is no need to repeat them; but let me emphasise the importance of making the division between the scenes very plain, it being a popular fault with beginners to jam one scene up against another. Be careful to keep the exterior scenes (acted outside) from the interiors (acted inside). For instance, don't write "Tom and Bertie on seat, receive letter, and go into drawing-room, where they find uncle," etc. The garden and drawing-room must constitute two different scenes, an interior and an exterior.

Remember that all the actions you represent must be interpreted by expression—motion—nothing can be explained by conversation, so don't introduce things which would be puzzling without the adjunct of explanatory conversation. It is well to keep in view the object of the scenario—to explain the working out of a plot, and in the explanation, nothing detracting from the main interest must be introduced. In the earlier days of cinematography, a favourite trick was to show a man having breakfast—rise, don hat and coat—exit—then exterior of house, man leaving, portion of street, man walking along, exterior of office, man walks to door, and, lastly, interior of office, man arrived safely. In all, five scenes to get a man from breakfast-table to office. Modern firms would show two scenes—breakfast-room and office—and leave it to the intelligence of the audience that the man must have got to the office somehow.

Sub-Titles.

A sub-title is a notice, thrown on the screen, to explain the action of the plot, or the lapse of time. The perfect photo-play should require little or no sub-titling, but should explain itself by means of the actions and gestures of the players. Other explanations may be given in the shape of telegrams, letters, and extracts from newspapers. As a rule, the sub-title should not exceed twenty words, and letters, etc., thirty, to which there are occasionally exceptions. Endeavour to make your sub-titling attractive, and dished up so that it not only explains the situation tersely, but appeals to the audience by its original and catchy wording.

Use telegrams or letters in preference to sub-titles when possible, as there is always more interest attached to the reading of them. People are naturally curious to see what is in that letter which has so upset the man on the screen.

Arrange your manuscript so: Front page, containing title and synopsis, next your scenario, with cast, and, lastly, on a separate page, the scene plot. Your name and address should appear on every sheet.

(Another article of this splendid series next week.)
THE EDITOR.