

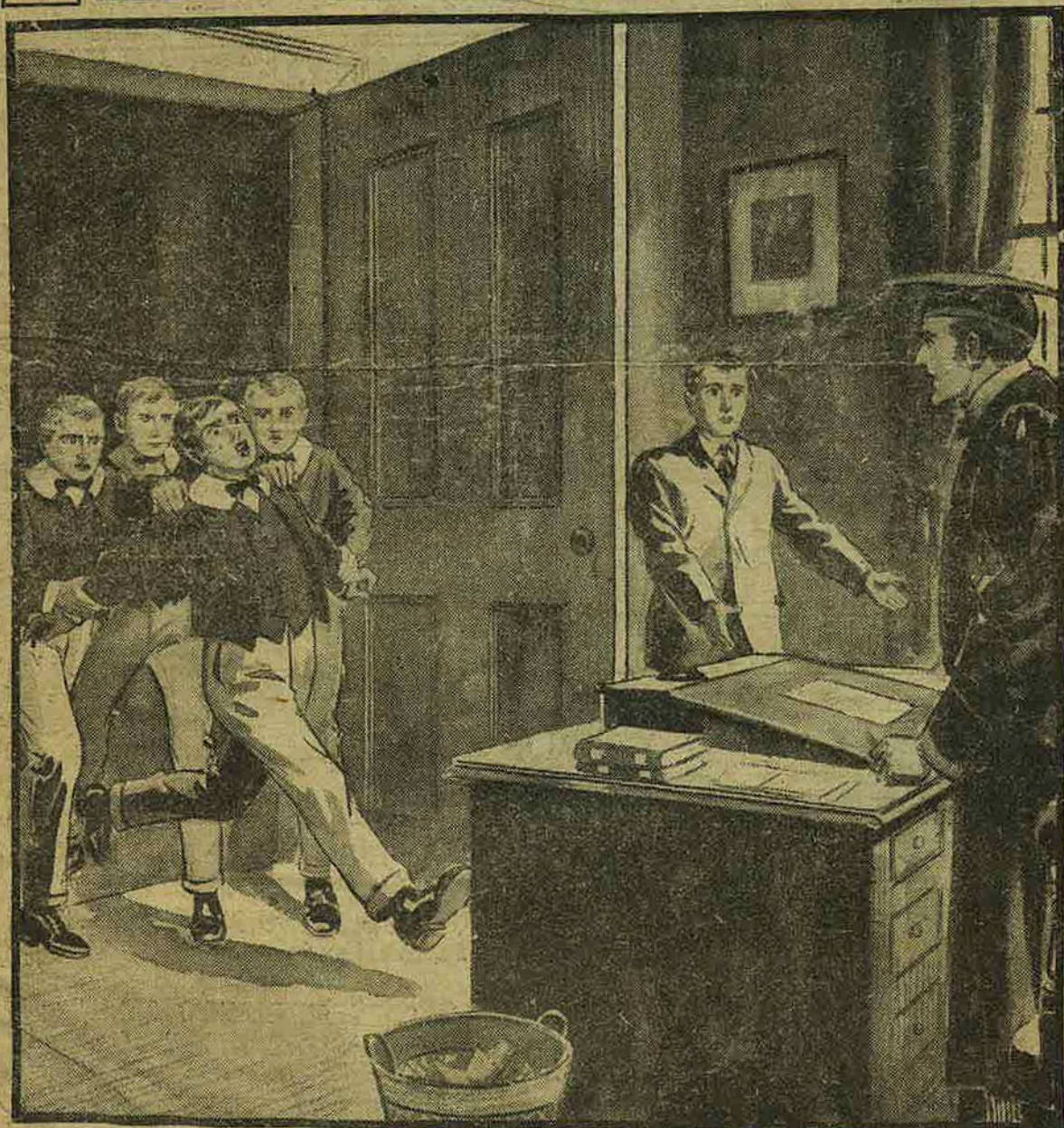
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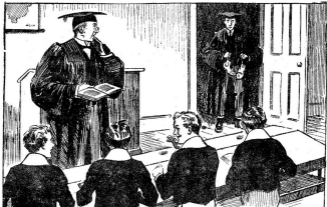


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"Free bygone my interesting you, Mr. Latham," said the Fourth Form-Master, strolling into the class-room with a pair of muddy football boots in his hands and a frown upon his brow. "Oh, certainly!" said the Sixth-former, glancing at the latter boots and wondering whether Mr. Latham had taken leave of his senses. (See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER I. Boots!

"**W**HAT the dress—"
"Who the dickens—"
"My hat!"

Those exclamations were not uttered aloud, but murmured under the breath, in the Fourth Form-room at St. Jim's.

Mr. Latham was taking the Sixth Form, as usual, that morning. The little Form-master was explaining, with deep satisfaction, some difficult point in Latin syntax to his bored class.

Mr. Latham was a very detailed Form-master—too detailed to suit the tastes of the Fourth. If a junior did not understand a thing, Mr. Latham would never leave off hammering at it till he did understand. And now, as Jack Blake observed in an anguished whisper, he had resorted to the abstruse absolute, and refused to discontinue.

Naturally, the attention of the Fourth-Formers wandered a little.

Blake had been providing himself with a little harmless and necessary relaxation by jotting paper pellets on the back of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's sock, and he derived

great entertainment from D'Arcy's efforts to brush away what he took to be a persistent fly.

The last fly of summer had long since vanished, as a matter of fact, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy continued to brush the back of his sock in the belief that a fly persisted in settling there. Several of the juniors watched the entertainment with keen enjoyment. It was much more entertaining than the abstruse absolute.

But Blake ceased the gratifying occupation all of a sudden, glancing towards the Form-room door. The Form-door stood open, and there was a view of part of the broad, flagged passage outside. From the high windows in the passage came a flood of morning sunlight, falling brightly into the less-lighted Form-room.

And across that bar of light in the doorway a shadow had suddenly fallen.

Someone had stopped in the passage outside, keeping out of sight of anyone in the Form-room, and apparently oblivious of the fact that, standing between the light and the doorway, his shadow was projected into the room.

Blake's murmured explanation drew the attention of the other fellows to the phenomenon.

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Nearly all the Fourth looked round at the shadow as the fever in the doorway.

"What was it?"
"What could anybody have concealed himself just outside the Form-room door for, in the name of all that was idiotic! Nobody could be supposed to want to listen to Mr. Lathorn expounding the mysteries of the relative absolute."

"If it had had been lesson time, those would have been no mystery about it. It might have been some member of Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell, waiting to hear the Fourth-Farmers as they came out. But at that hour the Shell were in their Form-rooms hard at work."

"But how?" murmured Arthur Angustus D'Arcy. "I regard this as really mysterious! I would like to see the deuce in it!"

"Hushed savodropper!" sniffed Levinson.
"Well, you needn't talk about savodropping," said Blake. "It's your favourite argument. And there's no harm in the fellow listening to old Lathorn if he wants to; but why should he want to? That beats me!"

"Old Lathorn will not be as soon as he wakes up?" murmured Figgins of the New House.

There was a chuckle. Mr. Lathorn was not asleep; that was only Figgins's humorous way of putting it. Mr. Lathorn was neck-deep in the relative absolute, and had no eyes for the shadow at the door, and no ears for the murmurs of his Form. He did not notice the wandering of the janitor's attention.

"Hallo! It's moving!" murmured Digby.
The shadow in the doorway moved. The arms—curiously elongated in the shadow—were in motion, and then that moment the janitor could see that the unknown person outside the Form-room was writing.

"There's a chiel among us taking notes!" chuckled Kerr.
"He, he, he!"

Erin, Mr. Lathorn woke up at that. He ceased his expounding, and cast a very serious glance at the Form over his spectacles.

"They keep a little better order, my boys!" he said. "I do not see anything coming in the relative absolute, and I fail to see any cause for laughing!"

"Right on the wicked there?" murmured Jack Blake.
"What did you say, Blake?"

"Ahem! I said you were quite right, sir."

"You will take fifty lines for laughing in class, Blake. My boys, you are not paying me attention. Something seems to be distracting you. I, D'Arcy, you may take that monicle from your eyes. I am assured that you do not need it to improve your vision."

"Weally, sir—"
"And now— Dear me!"

Mr. Lathorn had glanced round the Form-room. He could see that his Form were restless, and he sought the reason. Then he caught sight of the shadow in the doorway.

He gazed at it in amazement.
"How my soul!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Lathorn frowned. There was evidently someone standing concealed just outside the doorway, and Mr. Lathorn was annoyed. He concluded at once that it was a boy from one of the other Forms, and suspected that he had an understanding with the fellows inside the Form-room. He might even have been making disrespectful gestures behind the Form-master's back. Such things were not unknown.

Mr. Lathorn strode towards the door, his gown rustling as he strode.

Then the shadow moved.
The unseen boy had evidently heard the Form-master's exclamation, and his approaching footsteps, and knew that his presence was discovered. The shadow disappeared.

There was a sound of hurrying feet as the unseen intruder fled.

Mr. Lathorn quivered his paw, and reached the Form-room door, and looked out. He caught a second's glimpse of a figure vanishing round the nearest corner, but it was

gone before he could recognize it. He knew that it was a boy, and that was all.

But the unknown had left traces behind him. In the passage door, at Mr. Lathorn's feet, were two boots!

The little Form-master adjusted his spectacles, and gazed down at the boots in surprise.

"How my soul!"

He was utterly amazed.

That a fellow should lurk outside the doorway of the Form-room, and fly when he was discovered, leaving his boots behind, was simply astounding. Had he crept there on tiptoe, his boots in his hand? But why? It was evidently some joke that had been interrupted by the discovery of the intruder. Mr. Lathorn concluded, and his usually good-tempered face was darkly frowning now. Jokes were quite out of place in lesson-time.

Mr. Lathorn determined that he would discover the owner of those boots, and inquire upon him that there were proper shoes and seasons for japes. The impression would be made by means of a cane applied to the pairs of the hind—the most efficacious mode of impressing the junior mind.

Mr. Lathorn scanned the boots. Boots were very much alike, and it was difficult to guess the identity of the owner of them merely by looking at the boots. Mr. Lathorn picked them up, and carried these into the Form-room. The Fourth-Farmers simply gazed at the sight of the Form-master with a pair of football boots in his hand.

"This is a most amazing and ridiculous occurrence!" said Mr. Lathorn, frowning. "I want not you to tell me if you know anything about it. Some boy has crept to the Form-room door in his socks, apparently carrying his boots in his hand, and he departed so hastily that he left the boots there. Does any boy here know who it was?"

There was a general shaking of heads. The Fourth-Farmers hadn't the faintest idea who it was—not that they would have given him any if they had known.

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Lathorn. "Whoever the boy is, he should be in his Form-room at this moment. Apparently, he has left it on some errand, in order to tiptoe here, doubtless to play some trick which has been frustrated by my discovering him. However, none of you may recognize his boots. Pray look at them, and tell me if you know to whom they belong."

Mr. Lathorn placed the boots upon his desk, and the janitors marshaled out of their places and looked at the boots in amazement.

"If you please, sir," said Levinson, "they belong to Merry of the Shell."

The other fellows looked dizzily at Levinson. Some of them had recognized Tom Merry's football boots, but they had held their tongues. They couldn't imagine what Tom Merry had come along the passage in his socks for, but they did not want to betray him.

But Levinson had to scruple on that point. He was "up against" Tom Merry all the time, especially since Tom Merry had belittled Lora, the new boot-boy, for whom the end of the Fourth had a special dislike.

"Indeed, Levinson," said Mr. Lathorn, "boots are very much alike. How do you know that those belong to Merry of the Shell?"

"I noticed him with them on this morning before lesson, sir," said Levinson. "Melish happened to give him a back, and scratched along the boot. You can see the mark, sir."

"You utter nonsense!" murmured Blake. "Hold your tongue!"

"Did you speak, Blake?"

"Ahem!"

"Lots of boots have scratches, after football practice, sir," said Arthur Angustus D'Arcy.

"They don't have the initials T. M. in them unless they belong to Tom Merry," said Levinson satisfactorily.

"Indeed, that makes it quite certain!" said Mr. Lathorn. "Thank you, Levinson!"

"Not at all, sir."

"You may go back to your places."

Mr. Lathorn, with a frowning brow, picked up the boots, and walked out of the Form-room with them. He was evidently bound for the Shell-rooms, to confront Tom Merry with his boots, and to ask for an explanation. And as he left the Form-room there was an indignant murmur from the Fourth.

"Levinson, you said!"

"Speak!"

"Rotten!"

"Utah coward!"

Levinson turned a little pale. He had "smoked" in the hope of getting Tom Merry of the Shell into trouble, but from the expression of his Form-fellows it looked as if he had got himself into trouble, too.

"Oh, hold on!" he said. "I didn't speak. Lathorn was bound to find out that they were Tom Merry's boots; and

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Lathson started upon the knives with great industry. One after another broke in the machine, and the end of the Fourth Form gazed as he laid the broken knives among the others. (See Chapter 14.)

I really spoke without thinking. I'm sure I didn't mean to speak."

"Wait!"

"How?"

"You've been up against Merry ever since he shipped in to stop your ragging young Lyon, the boots," said Blake savagely. "If not before! You rotter! You've sneaked, and disgraced the Form. Gentleman of the Fourth, what do we do to a sneak who disgraces the Form?"

"Stump him!"

All the Fourth replied as one. Mr. Lathson could not really have left the Form-rooms at a more opportune moment, from the Fourth-formers' point of view.

"Look here!" yelled Levinson. "Hush off, I say! I'll complain to Mr. Lathson when he comes back—ow!—yarnoo!—yarnoo!"

"Bump, bump, bump!"

CHAPTER 2.

Seeking the Culprit.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in their places in the Shell when Mr. Lathson came in. All the Shell stared at Mr. Lathson as he stalked in with a pair of sturdy football boots in his hand and a frown upon his brow. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was as astounded as the juniors, and he gazed at Mr. Lathson blankly.

"Pray excuse my interrupting you, Mr. Linton," said the Fourth Form-master.

"Oh, certainly!" said the Shell-master, gazing at the factor boots, and wondering whether Mr. Lathson had taken leave of his senses.

"One of the boys of this Form has played an absurd trick," said Mr. Lathson. "I am sorry to complain, but it is

really intolerable that lessons should be interrupted by foolish pranks!"

"I quite agree with you there," said Mr. Linton. "If any boy in my Form has been playing pranks in lesson-time, you may be sure that he will be duly punished. May I ask the name of the boy?"

"Merry!"

Tom Merry jumped.

He had recognized his factor boots in Mr. Lathson's hand, and had wondered what on earth that gentleman was bringing them to the Shell-rooms for. It was not an unusual occurrence for Tom Merry of the Shell to be accused of playing pranks, certainly. But this time he was astonished. He had an unusual and quite comforting sense of innocence for once.

Mr. Linton's gaze turned upon him frowningly.

"Merry! Come out here, please!"

"Yes, sir!"

Tom Merry came out before the Form.

"These are your boots!" demanded Mr. Lathson.

"Yes, sir; they are mine."

"And why, sir," said Mr. Lathson sternly, "why did you come in your stockinged feet in the doorway of my Form-rooms, and look outside, and run away when I came out, leaving your boots behind you?"

Tom Merry gazed at Mr. Lathson in silence, too astonished to speak.

"Answer me!" said the Fourth Form-master.

"But I—!—I didn't!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Liar, Merry! You have admitted that these are your boots! Wherever came to the Fourth Form-rooms left his boots behind. You will not suggest that anybody else was wearing your boots?"

"I—I suppose not, sir."

"Then it was you! I suppose," went on Mr. Lathson. "But I—!—I didn't!" gasped Tom Merry. "THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 200. A Monthlong, Nov. Lond. Complete School Year at Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD."

struly, "that you were about to play some absurd trick when I discovered you. Was it not so?"

"But I—I—mean! I—I didn't! I—!" Tom Merry could only stammer.

"Pray, when did this occur, Mr. Latham?" asked the master of the Shell.

"Not more than five minutes ago."

"Indeed! Then it was certainly not Merry!" said the Shell-master.

"My dear sir—"

"Merry has been in his place since the commencement of morning lessons," said Mr. Linton.

"Oh! He has not left the Form-room!"

"No, Mr. Latham."

"Dear me! Then it is extraordinary!" said the Fourth Form-master. "Someone was lurking outside the door, and when he ran away he left these boots behind him. I naturally concluded, as they are Merry's boots, that he had been there."

Tom Merry smiled a little.

"I don't come into class in football boots, sir," he said.

"Dear me! They are indeed football boots," said Mr. Latham, gazing at them. "Quite so! When did you wear these boots last, Merry?"

"Footer practice before break, sir."

"And where did you leave them?"

"In my study, sir."

"It is extraordinary!" said Mr. Latham, in amazement. "Your assurance, Mr. Linton, shows that it was certainly not Merry. But someone has taken Merry's football boots from his study, and brought them down to my Form-room, and left them there. Is it not extraordinary?"

"Most extraordinary!" said Mr. Linton, compressing his lips. "It is apparently a joke, and I quite fail to see the humour of it. I should recommend sending the person who was so humorous, and reducing him to a state of gravity."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Latham. "It must have been someone who was out of his Form-room, so it should be easy to discover him. Pray excuse my interrupting you!"

And Mr. Latham marched out of the Shell-room with the football boots in his hand, leaving the Shell fellows staring.

As he emerged into the Form-room passage he heard a sound of whisper from his own Form-room. There was a sound of hurrying, and a loud voice raised in anger.

"Bang, bump, bump!"

"You—on! Yah!"

"Blas my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Latham, and he hurried towards the Fourth Form-room in alarm.

Quite an excited crowd burst upon his gaze as he strode in at the doorway.

Levison, in the group of five or six indignant janitors, was being banged on the Form-room floor without mercy, amid an accompaniment of shouts.

"Bump him!"

"Wag the wotiah!"

"Smack!"

"Cud!"

"Verrooh! Help! Oo! Yah! Legge!"

"Bump, bump!"

"Cease this riot at once!" shrieked Mr. Latham, rushing into the room, his gown flying behind him. "Boys, have you taken leave of your senses! Cease this at once! I shall punish the whole Form! Blake, what is the meaning of this?"

"Cave!" gasped Herbie.

But the warning was much too late, the Fourth-Formers were fairly caught in the act. They released Levison, who staggered to his feet, muttering with rage.

"Explain the cause of this uproar!" exclaimed Mr. Latham sternly.

"It's all right, sir," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We were only banging Levison, sir, for being an utter wotiah."

"Oo!" squeaked Levison. "I appeal to you for protection, sir! Oo!"

"Shook!" growled the Fourth.

"Bump, this unprecedented riot really—"

"Bump, sir!" said Blake. "We—we didn't mean you to see it, sir. I assure you, sir, that that's the fact!"

"Yes, wotiah, sir?"

Mr. Latham could not help smiling. He did not need that assurance that the janitor had not intended him to see them banging Levison.

"He sneaked about Tom Merry, sir," Figgins explained.

Mr. Latham frowned.

"Latham answered my questions," he said. "As it came out, it was not Tom Merry who was lurking outside the door five minutes ago. I do not know who it was. You had better not have touched Levison. You will take a hundred fees each for the whole Form, with the exception of Levison, if you touch him."

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and Meliah, who I see has kept his place. Now take your seats."

"Well, it was worth a hundred fees," murmured Blake as he sat down. "Levison won't speak about anybody again in a hurry."

"Wotiah and, dear boy!"

"Silence! The lesson will now proceed."

And leaving the investigation of the mysterious circumstance of the football boots till later, Mr. Latham pronounced the ablative absolute, and rode it to death. But he did not forget his determination to discover the person who had been the cause of the interruption of morning lessons, and when the Fourth were dismissed Mr. Latham passed his inquiries.

Tom Merry came down the passage with his chamber-matrons and Lewtrey, and the three were immediately stopped by Blake & Co. There was a great deal of seriousness upon the subject of Tom Merry's football boots. Who had brought them to the door of the Fourth Form-room, and why he had done it, were mysteries that puzzled the anxious wags much. They would have suspected Levison of having done it with the intention of getting Tom Merry called over the coals, but Levison had been in the Fourth Form-room all the time.

"Found out who was playing tricks with your boots, Tommy?" Blake asked.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No! I felt them in my study."

"It's very wotiahable," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must guess where any chap should bring your boots to the Form-room passage and plant them outside our door, dear boy."

"He might have been going to play some trick, when Latham spotted him," Dicky remarked. "But what did he want the boots for?"

"Levison's wasn't out of the room?" asked Lewtrey.

"No; he was in his place in the Form."

"Then it's a giddy mystery!"

"Latham's was about it," Blake remarked sadly.

"When he came back to the Form-room he found us banging Levison for having given away whom the boots belonged to. You've got a hundred fees each."

"You had!" said Tom Merry sympathetically. "Well, I'm glad you banged Levison. It must have been some lag out of his Form-room who brought the boots there, though why he should do it, unless he's off his rocker, I'm blessed if I know. As the Third got put!"

"Not yet, Latham's guess is to inquire of Selby!" growled Blake.

"Let's look!"

The door of the Third Form-room was open, and the chosen of the School House creaked back into the room. It was just the hour for dismissal, but the Third were still in their places, showing visible signs of impatience. Mr. Latham was standing near the Form-master's desk, speaking to Mr. Selby, the master of the Third. He was evidently inquiring if any number of that Form had been outside his Form-room during morning lessons. The janitors in the passage heard Mr. Selby's bark, and voice replying:

"Certainly D'Arcy ain't was out for five or ten minutes. I remember sending him to put on a clean collar, as he was in the Form-room in a mere slovenly state than usual, if possible."

"Oh, but Jerry!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Wally's in for it again?"

"Your blessed ninner!" growled Blake.

"Wotiah, Blake!"

"Wotiah!" said Tom Merry.

"D'Arcy ain't come here yet," called out Mr. Selby. And the janitors outside the door saw Wally rise from his place and come out before the Form, with an expression of wonder on his face. "D'Arcy ninner, I sent you away from the Form-room this morning to change your collar."

"Yes, sir," said Wally. "I changed it."

"Did you go near the Fourth Form-room?"

"I passed the door coming back, sir."

"Did you bring a pair of Tom Merry's boots and place them, and did you look outside the door for some time with the intention of playing some trick, which was frustrated by Mr. Latham's discovering you?"

"Wally's expression of astonishment was almost idiotic in its intensity."

"No, sir!" he gasped.

"I am afraid I cannot believe you, D'Arcy ninner. You appear to be the only boy who was out of his Form-room this morning," said Mr. Selby slowly.

"But I—!"

"I leave him to your hands, Mr. Latham," said Mr. Selby.

"My belief is that you have found the right person. Dismiss, excepting D'Arcy ninner!"

And Mr. Selby walked out of the Form-room, and the

Third dismissed, leaving Wally alone with the master of the Fourth. Wally was looking decidedly uneasy. He was expected to be found guilty this time on suspicion. Mr. Lathorn picked up the Form-master's case from the desk.

"I hope you will confess the truth, D'Arcy minor," he said quietly.

"But I've told the truth, sir."

"Yes, wretch, sir," broke in D'Arcy major from the passage. "You can rely on the word of a D'Arcy, sir, I assure you!"

Mr. Lathorn turned a frowning glance upon the junior in the passage, and without replying to Arthur Angustus's remark he closed the door in their faces. Arthur Angustus raised his eyebrows.

"Bel Jove, I regard that as wretched words of Mr. Lathorn?"

"Am I?"

"Wally, Tom Merry—"

"Please, Master Merry—"

The juniors turned round. Lynn, the boot-boy of the School House, whom Lathorn had dismissed the Dudge, had come along the passage. Tom Merry gave him a kindly nod.

"Hallo, kid!" he said cheerily.

"May I have your former boots, sir?" said Lynn. "That is, if you know where they are. I was going to clean them this morning, Master Merry, but—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, but somebody walked them off," he said. "I know all about it. Some silly boy brought them down from my study, and planted them outside the Form-rooms door here!"

Lynn coloured.

"Indeed, sir?" he gasped.

"Yes; it seems to have been D'Arcy major. He's going to be locked for it."

"Lacked, sir?" exclaimed Lynn.

"Wally, Tom Merry, my manah has denied that it was he, who collared the wretched boots, and I refuse to admit for a moment that he might have persuaded. It was some other silly boy!"

"Where is he now, sir?" asked Lynn hurriedly.

Tom Merry looked surprised. He did not understand the Dudge's interest in the matter at all, but he answered:

"In the Third Form-room here. Mr. Lathorn is going—"

Lynn did not wait for him to finish.

He ran to the door of the Third Form-room, opened it, and ran in, leaving the junior staring after him in astonishment.

"Well, but Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Angustus D'Arcy.

"Is that your price off his wretch?"

"Great Scott!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Very Queer Confession.

MR. LATHORN looked round sharply as Lynn ran in.

Mr. Lathorn was very cross.

He was pretty certain that D'Arcy minor was the individual he wanted to find; but Wally denied it stoutly, and Mr. Lathorn did not like to come here without absolute proof.

It looked as if the mystery of the boots would have to be given up as insoluble, and that did not please Mr. Lathorn at all.

The sudden and unexpected interruption by so insignificant a person as a boot-boy gave a new direction to Mr. Lathorn's wrath. He fixed an angry glance upon Lynn.

"Lynn, what do you mean? How dare you burst into a Form-room in this way?"

The Dudge panted.

"I'm sorry, sir. I—I thought you might be going to case Master Wally, sir?"

Mr. Lathorn glared at him.

"And what business is that of yours, Lynn?"

Lynn turned crimson.

"It was'n't Master Wally, sir."

"Oh, you are aware of the person who placed those boots outside my Form-room door this morning?" said Mr. Lathorn.

"Yes, sir."

"And it was not D'Arcy minor?"

"No, sir."

"Then you did quite right in coming to tell me, my boy," said Mr. Lathorn, more kindly. "If you have prevented an injustice being done, I am greatly obliged to you. Who was it, then, if it was not D'Arcy minor?"

"It was I, sir!"

"What?"

"I—I did it, sir!" stammered Lynn.

Mr. Lathorn stared again.

"You, Lynn! You a servant in this house, have dared

to play a prank here, and during lessons, too! Are you mad?"

Lynn bit his trembling lip.

"I had latched the boots down from Master Merry's study to clean them, sir," he said. "I knew he had made them waddy in football practice this morning. I had a little time to spare, so I thought I would get his football boots and clean them."

"That was quite right, Lynn. But—"

"I came back through the Form-room passage, sir, and—"

"And you latched outside the door of the Fourth Form-room," said Mr. Lathorn sternly. "I have reason to believe that you were there quite a little time."

"I—I'm afraid so, sir."

"You intended to play some football trick, or, rather, you were perhaps making signs to pass in the Form-room. They were very restless for some time before I discovered you there by your shaver."

"Oh, no, sir," exclaimed Lynn hurriedly. "Nothing of the kind, sir. I assure you that I meant no harm or disrespect in any way, sir."

"How long were you outside my Form-room door?" demanded Mr. Lathorn; while Wally looked on in wonder. Like the Form-master, Wally could think of no reason Lynn could have had for looking there, unless he had intended to play some trick.

"About ten minutes, I think, sir."

"And you ask me to believe that you stood outside my Form-room door for ten minutes, in concealment, as you supposed, with an object whatever?" the Form-master exclaimed, with magnificent sternness.

"No, no, sir."

"Then what, your object?"

"I—I was listening," Lynn's face was scarlet, and his master was full of confusion. "I—in fact, sir, I—I—"

"Well," said Mr. Lathorn grimly, "I am waiting for your explanation, Lynn."

"I—I was listening, sir."

"What?"

"There—there was no harm in listening to what you were saying, as far as that goes, sir. It was meant to be listened to by the young gentlemen in the Form-room!" said Lynn, with an involuntary bitterness in his tone.

"Certainly there was no harm in listening to a lesson," said Mr. Lathorn; "that would not constitute eavesdropping, certainly. Do you mean to tell me that you stayed outside my Form-room door to listen to the lesson?"

"I am sorry, sir. I know it was wrong."

"Was that the case?" asked Mr. Lathorn, with a very curious glance at the flushed and distressed face of the boot-boy.

"Yes, sir, I—I know it was impertinence on my part, sir, because—because I'm a boot-boy, and I suppose I ought not to take any interest in the young gentlemen's lessons; but—but I couldn't help it, sir. I was not really neglecting my work, as Mr. Lathorn had told me there was nothing to do for a quarter of an hour."

There was a short silence. Mr. Lathorn was scrutinizing the face of the boot-boy with a curious interest. He made a sign to D'Arcy minor.

"You may go, D'Arcy minor."

And Wally went—with pleasure.

"Now, Lynn," said Mr. Lathorn, as the door closed behind D'Arcy minor, "I desire to have more about this. Why did you listen to me this morning?"

"I—I wanted to know, sir."

"But what was I talking of at the time?"

"The Latin grammar, sir—the ablativus absolute."

"In the name of all that is extraordinary," exclaimed Mr. Lathorn in amazement, "what do you, a boot-boy, know of the Latin grammar and the ablativus absolute?"

Lynn winced.

"I suppose I ought to know nothing, sir," he said miserably; "but—but I do know something. I had to leave school early to go to work, but I have always tried to learn in my spare time from books. Since I have been employed here, Master D'Arcy and Master Merry have taught me a great deal."

"They have taught you?" Mr. Lathorn repeated in wonder.

"Yes, sir; they were very kind. They don't think it a check of a boot-boy to want to learn Latin, as some of the young gentlemen do, sir."

"It is not a check, as you call it, it is very mysterious," said Mr. Lathorn. "So you were listening to the explanation of the ablativus absolute, were you?"

"Yes, sir. And—and when I heard you coming to the door, sir, I thought you would be angry at finding me there, and I ran off. I—I had put the boots down while I was making notes, and I forgot them in my hurry. That was how I came to leave them there."

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chance for the giddy boot-boy. So he wants to become a St. Jim's fellow too. 'Ye gods!'

"It's disgraceful!"

"And he'll get in," said Mellich, scornfully. "Trust that sort! He'll swot over his books, and turn his hair grey, if necessary, but he'll get in!"

"Waddin' swot over your books, would you, Percy dear?" said Blake. "Nothing of that sort about you. You'd rather use a crib all the time."

"I swaged you cheap as snobs and wottah!" said Arthur Augustus sternly. "I wotah to discuss the match with you, Goss. You are a mule?"

"You—you tailor's dummy—"

"You wotah?"

"You apologise for a silly idiot—"

"You wotah outside?"

"I've a jolly good mind to lick you for suggesting the

idea to the end, you silly chump!" roared Gore, shaking a big fist in the aristocratic face of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Percy's eye flashed behind his goggles."

"But Jew! Hold my jacket, Blake, look here. Hold my

goggles, Tom Merway! Now, come on, you wottah!"

And Arthur Augustus pressed up to the body of the

Head.

There was nothing left to come on.

He came out, hitting out like a steam-hammer. But the

swell of the Fourth, slim and elegant as he was, was a

fighting-man to the finger-tips. He was not so big as Gore,

and not so strong, but he knew all about boxing, and he was

all black.

He sailed into the burly Shell fellow in great style, and

Gore, to his astonishment, found himself lying on his back

on the floor of the common-room, with Arthur Augustus

ducking round him and calling upon him to get up and be

"throughed."

"Ow?" gasped Gore, clasping his nose, and reddening his

fingers as he did so. "Ow! I'll smash you! I'll pulverise

you!"

"Come on, you wottah!" shouted Arthur Augustus ex-

ultedly.

Backer and bays again, and again Gore went down with

a heavy bump. The ring of jaxons cheered Arthur Augustus

loudly.

"Go it, Gossy!"

"Wallop him!"

"His in!"

"Get up, Goss, and take your medicine!"

Gore got up, but apparently he had taken enough medicine,

for he trembled out of the common-room clasping his nose.

Arthur Augustus parried and turned to Mellich.

"Now, Mellich, you wottah, if you want some of the

same—"

Mellich didn't, and he said so promptly.

"Levison? Whare's Levison! I may as well thrash

Levison while I am about it. Where is that wottah Levison?"

But Levison was gone, and Arthur Augustus allowed himself

to be persuaded at last into putting on his jacket without

thrashing anybody else. Levison was gone, and if Arthur

Augustus had guessed the purpose for which he had gone,

he would have been extremely sorry that he had not given

Levison a fearful thrashing, too.

CHAPTER 7.

A Spoke in the Wheel.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was alone in

his study when a tap came at the door.

The Head was thinking.

Mr. Lathorn had left him, after putting to him the case

of the boot-boy in eloquent words.

Mr. Lathorn was keenly interested in the boy who was

striving to get himself a good education in the face of

immense difficulties. He warmly possessed Lynn's claim to

be allowed to put down his name for the John Davis Scholarship.

The fact that the swimming had fallen into abeyance

ruled nothing—the bonus it still held good, and there

was no just reason why Lynn should not be given his chance.

And the Head had agreed.

He was very doubtful, but he was impressed by Mr.

Lathorn's kind advocacy of the boot-boy; and to his objection

that the other boys would despise and perhaps rag such a

new-comer, Mr. Lathorn had the reply ready that several

fellows in the Fourth and the Shell had already actually

been helping Lynn in his studies.

And so the Head's consent had been given, and Tom Lynn's

name had been taken down—the only name down for the

swimming. As there was no competitor, if Lynn succeeded

in getting the minimum marks, he would get the scholar-

ship, and from Mr. Lathorn's account of his proficiency, there

was little doubt of that.

The Head wished well to the ambitious boot-boy, certainly,

but he could not help being troubled in his mind.

The system of swimming had worked well enough, per-

haps, in ancient times, though the Head doubted even that.

Stubbishness on one side, poverty and pride on the other,

there was certain to be trouble. It was the revival of an

ancient custom at St. Jim's, but all the same it was an

innovation, and the Head was very doubtful indeed how it

would work.

As to the good character of Lynn, he accepted Mr. Lathorn's

assurance, and, above all, was impressed by the information

that Lynn was taken up by fellows like Tom Merway of the

Shell and Percy of the Fourth. They would certainly

have nothing to do with a fellow who was not thoroughly

desert. They might belittle him afterwards, too, and make

his way easier among the others—the Head hoped so. But

he was troubled about it, and very uneasy as to the results.

He started out of a not very cheerful reverie as a tap

came at his study door.

"Come in," said the Head.

Levison of the Fourth entered.

The Head gave him an inquiring glance.

Levison was looking very serious, and his manner was

very respectful.

"If you please, sir, I want you to take my name," he said.

"I understand that to-day is the last day for entering for the

John Davis."

The Head looked at him very curiously. It was the last

day certainly, and the Head had come to the idea that there

would be no entrants at all—till Mr. Lathorn had brought

him the name of Tom Lynn. Now, here was another—a

St. Jim's fellow, too, and one who had the reputation of

being clever, but a hopeless and incorrigible slacker.

"So you wish to enter for the swimming, Levison?"

"Yes, sir, if I may."

"You say, certainly," said the Head. "It is open to

any boy of a respectable character in the kingdom, whether

he belongs to this school or not."

"I think you will put my name down, sir?"

"I have seen of you and heard from your Form-master, I

am surprised that you should wish me to do so."

Levison looked puzzled.

"I know I've been a bit of a slacker, sir," he said—"I've

wasted a lot of time—but I can work when I try, and I'm

going to now. The fact is, sir, my father isn't so well off

as he used to be, and I want to help him. If I win the John

Davis, it will save him money in my next term."

The Head looked greatly pleased.

"I am very glad to hear you say this, Levison," he said.

"You could not have a worthier object than the desire to

help your father."

"Thank you, sir."

"I am glad, too, that you are taking up more industrious

habits," said the Head. "I wish you every success, Levison.

I shall certainly put your name down."

"You are very kind, sir."

And Levison left the study.

Dr. Holmes was distinctly pleased. He had seldom heard

any but bad reports of Levison, and more than once the end

of the Fourth had been on the point of being expelled from

the school. To see him taking up a difficult task, that would

occupy a great deal of his leisure time, for the purpose of

helping his father, was very gratifying. The Head would

not, however, have felt so gratified if he could have seen

Levison's face, and read his thoughts, as he went down the

passage after leaving the study. Levison was grinning in a

way that was neither pleasant nor amiable.

"I can beat the red, heads down!" he muttered. "I

shan't have to slug very hard—I could beat him on my

head!" And the pale, wild, and a fever if it save him

trouble! It's better to have to slug, but I shall be

putting a spoke in the wheel of that rotten boot-boy—bang

him! I think I shall make him properly sorry for himself

this time."

And Levison chuckled gleefully.

He went up to his study to do his preparations, and found

his study-rooms there—Hock and Mellich and Linsley-

Linsley. The latter glanced at him curiously. He knew

Levison, so he knew that the satisfaction in Levison's face

boded ill to somebody.

"Anybody ill?" asked Linsley-Linsley.

"Not that I know of," said Levison, with a stare.

"Somebody fallen down and broken his leg?"

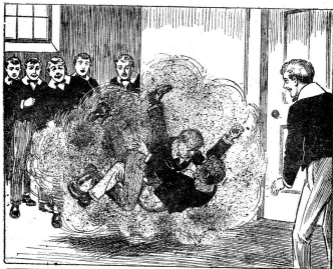
"No."

"I guess it's a licking for somebody, then?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Then what are you looking so happy about?" demanded

Linsley-Linsley.



Looked in a tight embrace, they reeled about the passage, and fell—and rolled on the floor. Clouds of soot arose, and the juniors backed away, sneezing and coughing. (See Chapter 3.)

Messed boot-cleaner—that piddly knife-grinder who's straggling up Latin instead of sticking to his knife-machine. Going to join the school. My hat! Coming into the school as a servant! Oh, cruazies! Entering for the John Davis Scholarship, and going to run it on the old lines—knife-grinding and boot-cleaning, and taking lessons with his form!

"My word!" said Levison.
 "The chap runs to lussie-stuck, staring, raving dotty!" said Gore. "Why, no fellow will speak to him, if he puts himself on a level with us."

"I shall speak to him, Gosh!"
 "Oh, you don't count, you tader's dunsy!" asserted Gore. "I refuse to be called a tader's dunsy!"

"Expecting for the John Davis?" said Levison. "Why, they always allow that scholarship as a sort of a fellow's form. There hasn't been a scortice here for a hundred years!"

"Let's wants to start it again. By gum!"
 "Awful cheek!" said Mellish.

"The Head oughtn't to allow it!"
 "Perhaps he won't!" suggested Levison.

"But by his!" said Tom Merry.
 "Hah!"

"It's a fact!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "And it's a yippin' good thing!"

"By-r-r-r!"
 "How the chap could have had the cheek to think of entering, I'm Messed if I know," said Gore. "It hasn't me!"

"He didn't think of it," said D'Arcy cheerfully. "I suggested it to him."

"You?"
 "Yess, wathah! And I persuaded him to speak to Lathson about it."

"Yes—you dunsy!"
 "If you persist in applyin' approposities epithets to me,

Gosh, I shall have no resource but to administer a fabled thrasher!"

"And what did Lathson say?" asked Levison.
 "Mr. Lathson thought it a good ideah. He takes a great interest in Lerrn. He went to the Head himself to explain, and to get Lerrn's name down."

"And the Head has agreed?"
 "Yess, wathah! He couldn't do anythin' else—the terms of the scholarship are haid!"

"He could sack that cheeky boot-boy!"
 "Perwaps the Head is not such a wositer such as you are, Gosh," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Shedd'n's wonder!" grinned Mooty Louthson. "Gosh's aristocratic prejudices get on my nerves. This is what comes of being an and heir to a groose!"

"My lather ain't a groose, you yetter!"
 "Well, he might be worse. What's the matter with a groose?" asked Tom Merry.

"Perhaps he is only a groose," said Louthson thoughtfully, "and in that case, Gore is only a groose!"

"Oh, keep that for the comic colossus in the 'Weekly'!" growled Gore. "I think Lathson might have minded his own business. I think the Head ought to sack that cheeky boot-boy. I think it's disgraceful. I think—"

"You're doing a lot of thinking," remarked Masters. "Look out—it has a bad effect on health not used to it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "The worst of it is," passed Gore gravely, "that there are no other entrants, and so the awful one has only got to get a certain number of marks—and he'll get it—and we shall have a boot-boy planted on us as a St. Jan's fellow."

"Shame!"
 "Rotten!"

Levison's eyes glistened.
 "No other entrants, of course," he remarked. "What a

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"With me!" This is the time he goes to Lethorn's study for his Latin lesson."

"The dear boy will have to miss it this evening," sneezed Levinson, "unless he goes in that state. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grough!"
"How did it happen, Lynn?" asked Tom.
The boot-boy gasped and gaped.

"It fell on me, Grough! I think it was a boot-boy!" he yammered. "Grough! There was a bag of soot over the boot-room door. Somebody must have put it there when I was in there. It fell on me as I came out. Grough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Well, it was a rotten joke," said Tom Merry. "I suppose it was you, Levinson?"

Levinson shrugged his shoulders.
"I don't see why you should suppose so," he said, with a sneer. "Lots of fellows in the House are led up with that low boonder's cheek."

"Yes, rather!" said Mellish, of the Fourth. "I think boot-boys ought to be kept in their places—and the boot-room is their place."

"Quite so!" said Gore, of the Shell.
"Oh, cut!" said Tom Merry. "It was rotten to treat him like this when he's nearly due in Larkham's study. Larkham won't like it if he doesn't come."

"I shall proceed to Mr. Larkham's study and explain," said Arthur Augustus, "and if I were certain which wretch had laid you this trick, I would give him a fearful thrashing. Was it you, Levinson?"

"Foul cut!"
"Hallo!" exclaimed Kangaroo, of the Shell, coming along the passage. "Ha, ha, ha! What's the sigger? Ha, ha, ha! Is that what you wanted the soot for, Levinson?"

"So it was Levinson!" said Tom Merry, with a glint in his eyes.
Levinson backed away.

"Well, Levinson got some soot from the sweep who did the kitchen chimney to-day," said Kangaroo. "I saw him."

"The rotter!"
"I suppose I can lay a boot-boy if I like!" said Levinson defiantly.

"That's your little mistake; you can't," said Tom Merry. "You can pipe an, or any other St. Jim's chap, but jarring Lynn is another matter. You've stained his clothes."

"Yess, wathah!"
"Grough! Ow!" murmured Lynn. "Master D'Arcy, if you would kindly explain to Mr. Larkham that I can't come—"

"Yess, wathah, deah boy. Hat deah't bersey away. Being Levinson leak, deah boy. What is sense for the goose is sense for the giddy gadah, you know."

"Hear, hear!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levinson made a spring to escape, but the grasp of half a dozen jokers closed upon him, and he was dragged back, struggling and kicking furiously.

"Leggo, you rotter!" he howled.
"It's soot for two!" grinned Blake.

"Yess, wathah!"
"Quite a most-able punishment," said Meesy Lowden.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Levinson was dragged towards the soot-covered boot-boy. He struggled wildly, but he struggled in vain.

"Now, Lynn, collar him!" ordered Tom Merry.
"Enkase him! Roll him over! Give him as much as you can. It will be a tip to him not to be quite as liberal with boot-traps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The jokers roared with laughter as Lynn, making both bad hands upon Levinson. The end of the Fourth struggled in his grasp, but Lynn was the stronger of the two. Locked in a tight embrace, they reeled about the passage, and fell, and rolled on the floor. Clouds of soot arose, and the jokers backed away, sneezing and coughing. Levinson was coughing and gasping and gurgling now as well as Lynn. A good half of the soot was transferred to his person in the struggle.

"Ow, ow! Leggo, you beast! Grough! You rotter! Yah! Grough! Gre-e-e-e-er!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Kidaro, of the Sixth, came up the stairs, with a cane in his hand.

"What's this row?" he exclaimed. "Why, what's what?" He stared blankly at the two sooty figures rolling on the floor.

"It's all right," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Levinson has laid a boot-trap, and he has caught two instead of one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
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Levinson tore himself loose at last and leaped to his feet. He turned a sooty and ferocious face towards Kidaro.

"What cad has embroiled me with soot!" he roared. "Ha, ha, ha, the boot-boy! He ought to be flogged! The House will—"

"Hold on!" said Kidaro quietly. "Who brought the soot into the House in the first place?"

"I—"
"It was you, Levinson!"
"I—"

And Lynn is giving you some of it back. Is that it? You can clear off, Lynn."

"Yes, sir," said Lynn; and he cleared off. Kidaro fixed his eyes sternly upon Levinson.

"You had no right to play such a trick on a boy employed in the House, Levinson. It would have been bad enough on one of your school-fellows. You should've said this because you know Lynn can't very well complain, because of his position as a servant here. That is cowardly and mean."

"Grough!"
"You have been caught persevering that lid before, though he seems to be a very civil and inoffensive little chap," said Kidaro. "I have warned you once to let him alone. You require chastising, Levinson, I will say you!"

"Yarook! Ow, ow!" roared Levinson, as clouds of soot rose from him under the vigorous application of the prefect's cane. "Yarook! Ow! Leave off! It was only a j-j-joke, You! Ow!"

"Don't play any more jokes of that kind," said Kidaro, passing a little with his cane. "Now go and clean yourself, you young rascal!"

Kidaro walked away. Levinson shook his fat over the prefect and staggered away, blind with rage and soot. But he did not get any sympathy from the jokers. A yell of laughter followed the sooty cad of the Fourth as he disappeared in the direction of the dormitory. In the dorm, Levinson cleaned himself and changed his clothes, grinding his teeth with rage.

"The cad! The rotter! The low boonder! I'll make him suffer for it, somehow!" he muttered again and again. And the object of his wrath was Tom Lynn, the Dredge of the School House. "I'll put a spoke in his wheel, somehow—somehow!"

And, though Levinson did not know it just then, the opportunity was at hand for him to put a spoke in the wheel of the Dredge, with effect.

CHAPTER 6.
Startling News.

"SERVITOR!"

"What rot!"

"Piffle!"

"A boot-boy in the Fews! Oh, dear, it will!"

Those remarks greeted the ears of Levinson, of the Fourth, when he came down to the junior common-room some time later. Levinson was looking clean again—nearly-come and garbished, so to speak—and he was in a state of suppressed fury that was positively dangerous, if he could have found some helpless victim upon whom to pour the vials of his wrath. He pricked up his ears as he came into the common-room and caught the loud remarks of an excited group of jokers.

He knew that the loud remarks of an excited group of jokers. Though for the moment he did not catch their drift.

"Look here! It isn't a fact!" exclaimed Gore, of the Shell. "It can't be! It's impossible! It would be a disgrace to the House."

"I should jolly well say so!" said Mellish. "The New House fellows would chop us to death over it if it came off."

"I really don't see why they should," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly. "I regard it as a really good idea."

"Ha, you would!" sneered Gore.
"So do I," said Tom Merry. "As for it's being a disgrace to the House, that's all silly piffle, and you ought to know it, Gore!"

"What!" roared Gore. "Why, the horrid boonder might be put in the Shell!"

"I shouldn't wonder."
"A boot-boy in the Shell! Oh, crumble!"

"It's too thick!"
"It's rotten!"
"The Head ought to put his foot down on it!"

"The fellow ought to be kept in his place!"
"Unragous!"
"Depusting!"

Feeling recently ran high—among some of the fellows at all events. Levinson, his canacity keenly aroused, joined the excited group.

"What's it all about?" he asked.
"What's it all about?" roared Gore. "It's about that

admitted many more poor scholars than rich ones, and public schools were run upon a more rough-and-ready footing.

In the early days of the old school, in the reigns of the Tudors, when the scholars ate from wooden platters, and wringing was on a more primitive footing, the scholarships had been founded.

Scholars too poor to pay the school fees could compete for the scholarships—which enabled them to share the lessons of more fortunate boys, on condition of performing the menial work of the school.

In lesson hours, they were pupils—out of class hours, they were servants, with wooden platters to wash, rooms to sweep, boots to clean, and so forth.

But, with the change of manners and customs, there had been a change in those scholarships, and at this time of day only one survived in its original form.

That one, founded by an Old Boy in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, had been so hedged about by conditions that it was impossible to change it.

Up to quite a recent date, comparatively—in the early part of the nineteenth century—there had been a solitary specimen of a servant at St. Jim's.

But of late, though the servitorship still existed, no school-boy-natural had ever taken it; when it was won in the exam, the value of it was deducted from the fees payable by the winner, so that it had a cash value, and was worth winning by boys whose parents were not in affluent circumstances.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jumbled his monic into his eye, and looked round upon the astonished faces of his friends. He expected an outburst of surprise and admiration at his tremendous idea.

The outburst came—but it was not of admiration.

"You see," said Blake.

"Crump!" said Digby.

"Fardoul!" remarked Herries.

"Jabberwock!" and the Terrible Three together.

"Weally, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Weally, I was thinkin' that you would have sufficient intelligence to see what a weally rippin' deah this is. Young Lynn could pass that exam, all right—especially as nobody else has entered. He will only have to get a certain number of marks—and he could get them on his head."

"As?" said Blake. "What's the good of it to him?"

"Twenty pounds, I believe."

"Books that last year," said Tom Merry. "It meant twenty pounds off his fees, and it was useful to him. Can't he get it now?"

"No, that's the rule," agreed D'Arcy. "That old chap John Davis, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was a sensible old chap, who founded that servitorship. Most things founded about that time for the benefit of poor scholars have been woped in, in our time, by rich scholars, which weally is not quite right. You see, it's really a kind of way of giving the poor bighats."

"Go on!"

"But this one has survived, somehow—and it's the right thing for young Lynn. Why shouldn't he take it? I'll coach him for the exam."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"How's he going to get time for working up an exam, when he's got boots and knives and things to clean, and bells to answer, and so on?" demanded Manners.

"But what would be the use of it to him?" asked Tom Merry.

"The money value would be allowed off the fees of the fellow who won it—but I suppose Lynn hasn't any chance of raising the rest of the fees. Twenty quid a year isn't much towards the expenses of a fellow here."

"I am not thinkin' of it like that," said D'Arcy calmly.

"That scholarship is generally used to reduce a fellow's fees, I know—but that isn't what it was founded for—and the old conditions are still in force, if any chap liked to take advantage of them."

"But?"

"There used to be servitors—there was one here as late as the reign of George the Fourth," said D'Arcy. "Why shouldn't there be another one in the reign of George the Fifth—what?"

"A—o—a servitor?" gasped Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nodded calmly.

"Yes! The servitorship enables him to share all the lessons of the Form he's put in, and at certain times he's a servitor—that is to say, a servant. That would let young Lynn down to the ground."

"My hat!"

"It's impossible!"

"Rise!"

"Go home!"

Arthur Augustus listened to that outburst of opinion quite unmoved. He was evidently greatly taken up with his great idea for helping the Deserve of the School House.

"I insist that it is a rippin' deah, my deah fellows. It is quite true that there hasn't been a genuine servitor deah for a hundred years or so—but that's no reason why there shouldn't be one."

"The Head wouldn't allow it."

"He'd have to," said D'Arcy, with a chuckle. "Any wannab that servitorship can claim to hold it on the old terms if he chooses."

"Nobody ever chooses."

"No—because their parents can pay their fees. Lynn's people can't. Therefore, he can claim to hold the servitorship on the original terms—and it's all the simpler, because he's got a job here already."

Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose that's quite true," he said slowly. "Any chap winning that servitorship can claim his rights as a servitor—lessons, and employment by the school. But it's unusual of us in our time. How would the other fellows treat a servitor—a boot-boy who came into the Form-room for lessons?"

"I fancy they must always have had a pretty werry time of it," said D'Arcy. "These were always arabs in the country, I suppose, even in the great days of Queen Bess. But no decent chap would ever look down on a chap because he worked for his livin'. In fact, I myself have a very great admiration for people who work. We ought always to remember, deah boys, that if the workah did not work we should not be able to live without workin'—and it's my opinion we ought to be grateful to them."

"I suppose none of us would be down on a servitor," said Tom Merry. "But we're the cream of the giddy school—aren't we?"

"The cream de la cream!" said Lovelace solemnly.

"Top-notch in everything!" agreed Manners. "We'll greet the servitor like a man and a brother. I intend to fold him to my bosom and weep!"

"Weally, Munnahs—"

"The chap's life wouldn't be worth livin'," said Blake.

"He would be ragged to death by fellows who didn't like having a boot-boy in the class. Guess, old man, you're off-side, and you'd better chuck up the idea—and take that last egg with you've got a chance."

"I refuse to chuck up the deah—and I want you fellows to back me up!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly.

"We're goin' to persuade Lynn to enter for the servitorship, and help him win it—and then give him a welcome into our own ranks."

"You're a first-class, glib-tongued little idiot," said Blake affectionately. "After all, perhaps there's something in it—if the Head will let him enter—and if he can get the marks—and if the fellows don't lynch him afterwards. We'll think about it—while I'm eating that egg! There's some bread and butter left, Guay."

"But Jerry! What's that?"

"That" was a sudden speaker in the passage outside; and the chairs of the School House rushed to the door to see what it was.

CHAPTER 5.

Sooty!

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Who is it? What is it?"

"It's black but comely," gasped Merry

Lovelace.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yelling crowd in the passage. They were gathered round a youth who was quite unrecognisable. He was smothered with soot from top to toe, and his very features and clothes had vanished under the sooty covering. From the sooty figure came gasps and gurgles. Some of the soot had evidently got into the mouth of the unknown.

"Who is it?" roared Tom Merry. "Who are you, deah?"

"Grough?"

"Where did you get that soot?"

"Grough?"

"H A, ha, ha!"

"Is it a lissed skinner-sweep?" asked Blake. "What is he doing here?"

"Grough! Or! You!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it's Lynn," said Lovelace, of the Fourth, with a grin. "Heerly dirty state, that for a boot-boy."

"Lynn! But Jerry! Is that Lynn?"

"Grough!"

"Look here, this is a rather trick, anyway!" said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "Who's been smothering Lynn?"

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"You were making notes?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wish the boys in my Form were quite as interested in the Latin grammar as you appear to be, Lynn," said Mr. Latham, with a slight smile. "My work as a Form-master would be considerably easier. Have you those notes with you now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show them to me, please."

Lynn, with a trembling hand, drew a little cheap notebook from his pocket, and handed it open to the Form-master. Mr. Latham glanced at it with great interest. The writing was a large, inelegant round-hand, but the notes were written neatly and concisely.

"Example in Hooper's *Curiosities*, verse 27," Mr. Latham read out. "It is true I gave that example to my Form this morning. Lynn, and told them where to find it in Hooper, but few of them, I fear, will have the curiosity to look it out. Is it possible that you read Hooper?"

Lynn smiled meekly.

"I do my best, sir. Master D'Arcy allows me to use his books, and so does Master Merry."

Mr. Latham pursed his lips thoughtfully. All his anger had vanished long before this. He was a kind-hearted, little gentleman, and he was greatly moved.

"I—I hope you are not angry with me, sir," muttered Lynn, to whom the Form-master's expression seemed severe. "I'll never do it again, sir."

"I am not angry with you, Lynn. I was thinking, to what use do you intend to put this unusual education, if you succeed in pursuing it?"

"I don't know, sir," said Lynn frankly. "I want to learn, because—because I want to, sir. I don't care if it isn't any use. It makes me teach happier, and makes me more contented."

"That is no enough, certainly," said Mr. Latham, with a smile. "Well, Lynn, you have surprised me very much. I did not expect this before. If it were possible, I should be very glad to allow you to share the Latin lessons with my Form. I should be glad to have so close a pupil. That, however, I fear, is not practicable. But if you are seriously in earnest, I will help you."

"Oh, sir!"

"If, without neglect of your duties, Lynn, you can find a half-hour each evening, you may come to my study, and I will undertake your instruction in Latin," said Mr. Latham kindly.

The boot-boy gazed at him.

For some moments he did not speak—his heart was too full for words. Mr. Latham peered at him over his glasses, wondering why the boy did not reply; and he started as he saw that the tears were rolling fast down the boot-boy's cheeks.

"Lynn!" he exclaimed, startled.

"I—I—swear to you, sir," stammered Lynn. "I—I—I don't know how to thank you, sir. I haven't done anything to deserve your kindness."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Latham gently, "if you feel a keen desire for knowledge, it is everyone's duty to help you. It will be a real pleasure to me. Now, run away to your duties, and I shall expect you in my study this evening—in fact, I will speak to Mrs. Minors, and see if I can make the arrangements for you."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Lynn left the Form-master with his eyes wet, but looking as if he were walking on air.

CHAPTER 4.

Gassy's Great Idea!

"**B**AI JOYE, you know, I've got it!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that announcement in excited tones.

He had rushed suddenly into Study No. 6, considerably making a cheerful little tea-party gathered there.

Blake and Herrick and Digby, Tom Merry and Mansons and Leather and Kangaroo of the Shell were gathered round the hospitable board.

They had been wondering why the swell of St. Jim's did not come in, when he dashed into the study, his aristocratic repose quite gone, and his manner full of excitement that was not at all according to the traditions of Vere de Vere.

"I've got it, deah boys!"

"Well, that's all right," said Blake. "Put it on the table!"

"No!"

"And open it!"

"Well, Blake—"

"Why, you haven't got it!" exclaimed Blake, noting that the hands of the elegant French-Farmer were empty.

"Haven't you been to the bookshop for the jam?"

"Blew the jam?"

"What do you mean by saying you've got it if you haven't got it, you swabber?"

"Weedle, Herrick—"

"Softening of the heels, I suppose," Mesty Leather remarked sympathetically. "Poor old Gassy! I've seen this coming on for a long time."

"Weedle, Lorchak—"

"How lucky we've in funds," said Tom Merry. "I suggest you should go to buy Gassy a suit—waistcoat, and—"

"Tom Merry, you say!"

"What do you mean by coming back without the jam, you fellow?" growled Blake.

"Nevah mind the jam, deah boy. I tell you I've got it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"But you haven't got it!" roared Herrick. "Are you deah?"

"You haven't got the jam!"

"I was not a-blowin' to the jam, Herrick. How the jam?"

"Then what have you got?" asked Mansons. "Another box?"

"No, deah boy!"

"Then what is it?" howled Blake, exasperated.

"The idea!"

"What idea?"

"The great idea—the idea of the season!" said Arthur Augustus proudly. "A splendid wippin' whoson, deah boys. When I went down, there were a lot of fellows weedin' something on the notice-board in the hall. I looked at it. And what do you think it was?"

"Lot of the First Eleven in the Abbotford match?" asked Tom Merry, with some show of interest.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Noddin' of the sort."

"Extra half-holiday announced by the Head?"

"Wats?"

"Pass the serfines," said Blake. "We left you camp and home, Gassy; but we're going to fine you your audacity for not bringing the jam."

"How the audacity! The notice on the board was from the Head, and it announced that this is the last day for entries to the exam. for the serfinitorship."

"Blessed if I see anything to get excited about in that," yawned Blake. "I suppose we're not entering courses for a blessed serfinitorship, are we?"

"Swat up, and have tea before the serfines are all gone," said Digby.

"We've got to have out some copy for the 'Weekly' after tea, you know, Mansons remarked. "The 'Weekly' is late—no usual!"

"How the 'Weekly'?"

"Serfines all gone," said Blake. "The ham will soon follow, if you don't back up—and there's only one egg left."

"I'm not thinkin' of tea, deah boy. I'm thinkin' of old Lynn!"

"Lynn?" said the juniors, all together.

"Yas—the Dredge, you know, as that wotah Levin named him."

"Not in trouble, is he?" yawned Blake. "He's a good little kid, Gassy, but we can just possibly get fed up on him, you know."

"I take a great interest in the Dredge," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I regard him as a very deservin' chap. I think it is quite right and proper of Mr. Latham to take him into his study for eyerchin' of an evenin', as he's been doin' for the past few days."

"Latham's a good little ass!" said Blake.

"It's a stroke of luck for Lynn!" Leather remarked.

"Yas, watsah! I quite approve of Mr. Latham's conduct."

"That would make him happy if he heard it," Blake remarked gravely. "You ought to tell him that, Gassy—he may be anxious about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! But to come back to my idea, what about a serfinitorship for Lynn?"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed triumphantly at his astonished chums.

They gaped.

There was no doubt that the swell of St. Jim's had succeeded in making an impression.

The fellows knew all about the serfinitorship, though they did not take much interest in it. It was, in point of fact, a survival of ancient times—of the days when St. Jim's had

ANSWERS

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Book and Mellish chuckled, and Levison scowled angrily. "I guess it's bad luck for somebody when you look so jolly cheerful," Levison-Lansley remarked.

"If you want to know," said Levison loftily, "I'm doing a jolly decent thing."

"Draw it mild!"

"Give us something easier than that!" implored Book.

"Be, he, he!" chuckled Mellish.

"It's a fact!" said Levison. "You know, my father had mine bad luck in business a little time back—I had to leave St. Jim's for a bit—"

"I thought he'd got over that," said Lansley-Lansley.

"Well, you; but at the same time, I want to save his money if I can. That's why I've entered for the John Davis Scholarship."

There was a shout from the three juniors at once.

"You've entered!"

Levison nodded coolly.

"Yes. Why not?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish. "Why, I never thought of that, you know. What a ripping idea! The best-dressing cad won't have a chance against you."

Lansley-Lansley frowned.

"I suppose you've told the Head that you are waiting to help your father?" he asked.

"Certainly!"

"Well, you can tell it to the Head—or tell it to the Marquis—but I guess it cuts no ice with me. I don't believe a word of it. You've entered for the exam, simply to cut out that poor devil Lynn."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You can't think what you like," he remarked.

"I guess it's a low-down game to play," said Lansley-Lansley. "You don't really need the money, and it would be a bad thing for Lynn to get it."

"We don't want boot-boss in the Fourth," said Levison, with a grin. "Lynn is welcome to get it—if he can beat me in the exam."

"Ho, he, he, he!" chuckled Mellish again.

Lansley-Lansley left the study. He looked into Tom Merry's study a little later—where the Terrible Three and the juniors of No. 6 were roasting and eating chestnuts, and chatting absently. They were discussing Tom Lynn's chance for the John Davis Scholarship, with hearty good wishes for his success.

"Hear the latest?" asked Lansley-Lansley.

"What is it, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Come in and have some chestnuts, and get your nose off your chest," said Tom Merry hospitably.

"Levison's entered for the John Davis!"

"What?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"The awful cad! I never even thought of that. Only a cad like Levison would do it; but he can't be stopped!"

"What?"

"Gussy, old man, he can enter if he likes—"

"Then I suggest that we wag him, and make him get out again!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, excitedly and indignantly. "I refuse to allow him to rob the poor old Dredge of the chance of a lifetime!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I don't know about ragging him," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "He's within his rights. But we might sympathize with him, and point out to him that he's not doing the dearest thing."

"Lot of good that will be with Levison!" sniffed Blake.

"I am quite willing to sympathize with the wretch—but if you can't think of any good, then I trust upon waggin' him! Come along, dear boys, and hand me up. I refuse to allow the old Dredge to be wobbled!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off in a white heat of indignation to Levison's study, with the Co. at his heels.

CHAPTER 8.

No Go!

LEVISON was expecting that visit. He had showed no signs of that as Tom Merry & Co. crowded into the study.

He was sitting at the table, at work, with Mellish and Book, and he did not look up as the Co. came in with Jerald Lansley-Lansley. Apparently he was too deeply engrossed in his work to notice that they had entered.

"Levison, you wotnah—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Shush!" said Tom Merry chidingly. "Gussy, old man, you've forgotten your nice little manners. Leave it to me, Levison, my honoured and esteemed schoolfellow, may I

have the honour of a few minutes' polite conversation with you?"

"Ek! Did you speak?" said Levison, looking up. "Hallo! What do you fellows want? I really think, Levison, you might leave crowding the study with your friends till after work's finished. I've got a lot to do, as well as my prep."

"We've come to see you," said Mooty Leather.

"That's very kind of you, but I'm busy."

"Taken up with, by way of a change!" Jack Blake asked sarcastically.

"Exactly!"

"We won't keep you long," said Tom Merry. "It's about the John Davis."

"It's that that makes me so busy," said Levison calmly.

"You see, I'm entered for that, and it will mean a good bit of sweating."

"You uttah—"

"Shush!"

"Waddy, Tom Merry—"

"Look here, Levison," said the captain of the Shell, "we know why you've entered for the John Davis. You don't want it. You've simply entered just to give the Dredge one in the eye by beating him in the exam."

"The Dredge?" said Levison, with an air of reflection.

"By Jove, yes! I remember now hearing you mention that he had entered. Like his cheek, I think, to compete for a scholarship against a gentleman!"

"He isn't doing that," said Levison. "The only other competitor beside the Dredge is myself, as I understand."

The juniors chuckled, and Levison scowled. He did not speak, but beat away his work again. Tom Merry made his chest a warning sign. This was not a time for Mooty Leather's little jokes.

"Listen to us, Levison," urged Tom. "We all think that the John Davis ought to be left to Lynn. He needs it more than you do. You don't need it at all, in fact. Don't you think you ought to do the handsome thing, and stop out?"

"Hessed as if he did!" remarked Percy Mellish.

"You shut up!" growled Blake. "Nobody asked for your rotten opinion!"

"Yaa, wotnah; shut up, Mellish, you wotnah!"

"Well, if Levison takes my advice—" began Mellish.

"Sharpp!"

"You needn't trouble to give Levison any advice, Mellish. He is quite prone enough to act as a wotnah cad without your assistance."

"Are you finished yet, you chaps?" asked Levison calmly.

"I've remarked that I've got a lot of work to do. You're interrupting me."

"Not quite finished yet," said Tom Merry. "Look here, the whole House will know what you've entered for, Levison."

"Really?"

"You pretend to despise the Dredge because he's a wotnah, and yet you chip in with him for the servileplah."

"As a matter of fact, I regard it as a duty to keep that low bounder out of the school if I can," said Levison. "I think a lot of fellows ought to enter for the exam, before it's too late, so as to make sure of keeping him out."

"You uttah—"

"Shush!"

"Nobody else is likely to enter, and the Dredge. Of course, you have every chance of beating him—as he can only wrap up the work in his spare time, and you have hours of time for it. I suppose there isn't much doubt that you will beat him—but all the fellows here think that you ought not to try."

"All the fellows here can go and cut coke!"

"You uttah—"

"Shush!"

"I refuse to shush. I regard Levison as an uttah wotnah, and I insist upon explainin' to him how I regard him, Levison, you are an uttah wotnah!"

"Thanks!"

"If you had a wag of decency in your wotnah nature, you would withdraw from the exam, and leave it to the Dredge."

"Go on?"

"I put it to you, in the name of the Fourth Form, to which you are a howl'd digwag," said Arthur Augustus earnestly. "I put it to you whether you will withdraw from the exam, or not."

"No fear!"

"Then we shall take measures to stop your uttahish twicks."

"Will you?" Levison's eyes glittered unpleasantly.

"You mean you'll interfere with me in my work for the exam, is it?"

"Yes!"

"Very well—I call all you fellows to witness that D'Arcy

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"threatens to interfere in my work for the exam," said Levinson slyly. "We will see what the Housemaster has to say about threats of that kind."

"But Jove!"

"Shut up, Gussy, old man!" implored Blake. "You're putting your silly foot deeper and deeper into it every time!"

"I decline to shut up! Levinson can speak to the Housemaster if he likes. He is used to wotting meakin', anyway. I refuse to shut up. I am going to tell Levinson what I think of him. He is tryin' to wot the Druvide, and I won't allow it."

"Would you mind getting out of my study?" asked Levinson. "I've got a lot to do, and I can't work while you're fussin'."

"So you're going on with this?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, certainly."

"Then there's no more to be said. You're a cad and a rascal. Everybody in the house will think the same."

"They're welcome!"

"Oh, let's get out!—he makes me ill!" gasped Herries.

"Get out as soon as you like!" said Levinson angrily.

"The sooner the quicker. Shut the door after you, won't you?"

"Come on, Gussy?"

"I decline to come on. I shall not leave this study until Levinson has agreed to stop his wotting tricks, and leave the poor old Druvide alone!"

"Levinson rose to his feet.

"You'll get out of my study, and let me work, or I shall complain to a prefect," he said. "I'm fed up with this. Get on!"

"I guess you'd better leave, Gussy!" remarked Lomley-Lemley. "It's no good talking to Levinson. He can't help being a mean case."

"I am goin' to thrash him unless he agrees to stand out of the exam, and act like an honest person for once."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I refuse to do anything of the sort—I mean, I regard you as a wotter, a wack outside. Will you sweep this wotting device over and for all!"

"Rats!"

"But Jove! You can all see that the wotter is makin' for a lead, desk boys. I'm goin' to give him one!"

"Hold on!" roared Blake, catching the excited junior's arm as he made a rush towards Levinson, and swinging him back.

"Keep off, you creep! What do you think Herries will say if he hears you've harassed Levinson for refusing to check the exam?"

"I don't care a rap!"

"You can't do it!" said Tom Merry. "Levinson is a rutter, but he's within his rights, and he can't be interfered with."

"Wots! If I thrash him long enough he will stand out of the exam," said Arthur Augustus obstinately. "I regard it as the only way."

"If you lay a finger on me, I'll report it to Mr. Bailton, and call these fellows to witness what you did it for," said Levinson.

"Let me go, Blake!"

"Fairhead! Bailton will skin you if you do—when he knows what you've lashed Levinson for—can't you see that the red is in the right this time?" howled Blake.

"I ain't! I'm goin' to thrash him."

"Lead a hand here, you chaps," said Blake.

"Welcome me!"

Arthur Augustus made a terrific effort, and broke loose from Blake. He rushed round the table at Levinson, and in another moment the end of the Fourth would have been very roughly handled—but fortunately Tom Merry gasped the excited junior in time. He dragged Arthur Augustus back with an arm round his neck, struggling and sobbing.

"Oh! Good! Welcome me, you wotter!"

"Lead me a hand!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh! You wotter—yah!"

The juniors gasped. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on all sides, and he was curled kicking and straggling from the study. All the way down the passage his voice could be heard, imploring upon immediate release so that he could return and thrash Levinson.

But he did not return—his claims are to that. They did not intend that D'Arcy should place himself helplessly in the wrong by an attack upon a fellow for the reason that he had entered for the John Davis exam. In Study No. 5 they talked to D'Arcy like a whole family of Dutch noses, as Lomley put it—and did not release him till he saw reason. Meanwhile, Levinson worked away cheerfully in his study. He did not like hard work, certainly—but the knowledge that he was doing one of the meanest things of his whole career, gave it a zest now.

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CHAPTER 9.

Trouble Below Stairs.

TOLBY, the page of the School House, grunted as he came into the boot-room.

Lynn was there—at work!

Piles of boots surrounded him. It was a marred how Tom Lynn contrived to clean so many pairs of boots—and they were always well cleaned, too. The boot-boy's face was bright and cheerful—and as he worked he was murmuring to himself, his eyes glancing up every now and then at a paper pinned on the wall.

Toby glanced at the paper—and grunted. The paper contained a list of Latin (irregular) verbs, and Lynn was memorizing these, and their conjugations, while he polished on the boots. Toby's grunt was expressive.

The boot-boy was under Toby in position. Toby had treated him very very kindly, especially after Levinson had begun to persecute him. Toby himself had suffered from Levinson's malicious tricks. It was one of Levinson's little ways to make himself unpleasant to any person who stood not in a position to retaliate.

But Toby was not in a good temper now. His manner had changed when he learned that Tom Lynn had entered for the John Davis scholarship, and in the days that had elapsed since, he had become more and more morose towards the boot-boy. Toby regarded it as a swack upon the part of the boot-boy—and Levinson had contrived to "rub it in." He asked Toby sometimes how he liked the idea of having got out over his head as a St. Fin's fellow. Toby did not like the idea at all.

"Look 'ere, young Lynn," said Toby gruffly. "This ain't work!"

"What ain't?" asked Lynn.

Toby pointed a grumpy finger at the paper pinned on the wall.

"That ain't!"

"What's the matter with it?" asked Lynn slyly. "No harm in my learning a few verbs while I clean the boots is there?"

Toby snorted.

"You ain't paid to learn verbs," he said. "You stick to your work, young shaver, and learn your blessed verbs another way."

"I don't have very much time afterwards," said Lynn.

"Well, that's the business of a boot-boy to learn verbs, and enter for schoolships and things," said Toby. "It don't leave you time to do your work. And if you think that, you're going to shove it out on me, you're mistaken, young fellow—lead!"

"But I don't think so," said Lynn. "I haven't asked you to do anything for me, have I?"

"Thinkin' of verbs, and schoolships and things," said Toby, without replying to the question. "Look 'ere, you other knee, your place. You're a boot-boy, ain't you?"

"That's a servant, ain't it?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, you be a servant," said Toby. "Don't you try to be like your betters. You check up all this 'ere rot, and stick to your own trade. Swankin' round as a school-boy over my 'ead! Ugh!"

"But I'm not a school-boy yet," said Lynn. "I haven't really had a chance, especially as Master Levinson's entered—and most likely it will come to nothing."

"Then you're wasting your time."

"Oh, no; what I learn, I shall remember, and it will be so much to the good."

Another snort from Toby.

"Say you the other day reading a book on Latin," said Toby. "Mean to tell me that you like doin' that?"

"Yes."

"Rot!" said Toby decisively. "Nobody could like doin' that. The young gentlemen don't because they has to; they don't like it. You don't like it either. You're only swankin', that's what it is."

Lynn made no reply to that. He did not want to quarrel with Toby. He went on polishing boots, and for the moment left off murmuring irregular verbs.

"Master Levinson says you'll soon be givin' me orders," went on Toby savagely. "It'll be Toby 'ere and Toby there! Hey!"

"I certainly shouldn't think of giving you orders, Toby. If I got that scholarship, I shall be a servant all the same, out of school hours."

"Ain't and 'ard," sneered Toby.

"And you shouldn't really listen to Master Levinson, Toby. He doesn't talk to you for any good matter. I think he would like to make trouble below stairs, as well as everywhere else, if he could."

That was, as a matter of fact, exactly Toby's opinion of Master Lyons; but he did not choose to admit it for the moment.

"Don't you criticize your betters, young slave," he said sternly. "Toby's got a kid in a boot-room to look after Master Lyons."

"Very well; I won't then."

"You stick to boot-cleanin' and knife-cleanin', and let Lating verbs alone," said Toby. "Don't you forget your place."

"Well, I won't."

"You're forgetting it already," said Toby, feeling that he had a grievance, and being determined to give it a run, so to speak.

"Puttin' an air over a fellow wot is above you—that's mean—and wot has been kind to you."

"I'm sure I've never asked to put on any airs, Toby."

"You just 'em on in the werry way you speak," said the infuriated Toby. "Never drops an stitch by no chance, eh?"

Lyons grinned.

"Do you want me to drop my slouch, Toby?" he asked.

"I don't care whether you drop 'em or you don't. But I don't like a boot-boy puttin' on airs," said Toby, who was given to adding extra aspirates when he was excited. "I think it's cheeky, if you want to know my opinion."

Lyons was silent. He knew that trouble in the boot-room was bound to follow Lyons's malicious interference, but he did not see how he was to stop it. Toby had a simple nature that was easily played upon by the cad of the Fourth.

Toby looked round the room, so evidently in search of something to grumble at that Lyons could not help smiling as he saw it. If Lyons had neglected his duties for the sake of study, Toby would have had just cause for complaint. But that was a thing the boot-boy never did. His work was always well done, and he was always willing to do anything that was asked of him, over and above his regular duties, a trait in his character that made him very popular below stairs.

Toby halted at the knife-machine, and uttered a loud exclamation.

"Well, you chancy lass!"

"What's the matter now?" asked Lyons.

"Breakin' the knives in the machine!" exclaimed Toby excitedly. "Why, I never breaks a knife in that machine wot I clean 'em. One, three, five, six knives broke. You'll 'ave to pay for 'em out of your scope, young fellow-me-lad!"

"I haven't broken any knives."

"Mean to say that I did it?" belittled Toby.

"No, no! You don't use the machine now," said Lyons.

"But those aren't any knives broken, Toby."

"Mean to say I'm blind or drunk, boy?" roared Toby.

"Look at them knives, and say whether they're broken or not."

Lyons hurried over to the knife-machine, and gave a gasp of dismay. There were a heap of knives beside it, and six of them, certainly, were broken.

"Breakin' 'em!" said Lyons.

"Breakin' knives in the machine and telling lies about it," said Toby scornfully. "Is that wot you learn along with the Lating, Master Lyons?"

"But I didn't break them," said Lyons, in distress. "I don't understand it. I cleaned half the knives this evening—I was going to finish presently. And when I left them there, there wasn't a single one broken. I haven't looked a knife in that machine since I've been here. It's a good machine."

"Eythse you or no broke them knives," said Toby; "and I don't see the machine werr. If you say it was me, you're a liar."

"I didn't say it was you," said Lyons.

"Then it was you?"

"I wasn't."

"I suppose as 'ow the knives broke themselves, then," said Toby scornfully. "Put them into the machine, I dunsay, and broke 'em!"

"Somebody else has been here, if you didn't do it, Toby," said Lyons quietly.

"Nobody else comes to this 'ere boot-room," said Toby.

"I s'pose you don't think the leather come in 'ere and broke your knives; or the 'ome-dams?"

"No, of course not!"

"By one of the 'ome-mids—what?"

"No, no; but somebody did."

"No, then?" demanded Toby.

Lyons shook his head. He knew that someone must have slipped into the boot-room when his duties called him elsewhere, and did not openly break the knives in the machine; and he guessed that it was done in order to get him into trouble.

Who had done it? Leveon—Middish—Gooe—Crooks—No; Crooks was laid up in the school hospital. Leveon, it is all probability. But Lyons knew that it was useless to state

such a suspicion, without a particle of proof. One of the snobs of St. Jim's, who was irritated by his entry for the John Dean Scholarship, had played this trick on him. Lyons was pretty certain of that, but he was helpless. If he said so, it would only be regarded as an absurd fabrication, in excess of his own chubbiness and laziness.

Truly, the way of the ambitious boot-boy was not with thorns. Not only had he his own hard work to do for long hours—and hard study in his society lessons moments—but he had the opposition of the fellows who did not want to see him come into one of the Lower Forms at St. Jim's. And that opposition was evidently taking an active form.

"I'll 'ave to tell this to Mrs. Mirman," said Toby. "The value of them knives will be stopped out of your salary. I reckoned yer to check up Lating verbs, and stick to your business, young Lyons. It'll be better for you."

Lyons stamped out of the boot-room.

Lyons went on mechanically cleaning boots. But he glanced no longer at the list of irregular verbs pinned on the wall. He had'stuck at the heart for that now. He had a miserable feeling that Toby was right, and that he would do better to shove up all his auditors, and seek to the blacking-brushes and knife-machine.

CHAPTER 10.

In Diagram.

GORE, of the Sixth, uttered an angry snarl. He was sitting on the side of his bed in the early morning, with his boots in his hand. He had been there with a sword.

"This is what comes of encouraging boot-boys to take up Latin and examinations and things!" he exclaimed savagely.

"Look at my boots!"

"And look at mine," growled another fellow, holding up a pair of very dirty boots for inspection. "This is getting too thick."

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He had got on a boot, and he drew it off again hurriedly, with a shriek of blacking sticking to his sock. His expression was a little queer. The most careless of bootblacks ought to have known better than to leave a chunk of blacking inside a boot.

Gore burst into a snacking and triumphant laugh.

"Getting fed up yourself, eh?" he exclaimed. "I'm jolly glad you've got it too. Look at my boots—smoothed inside with blacking, and outside with sand. Do you think I'm going to wear boots in that state, because the kiddie boot-boy wants to work for an exam. You're mistaken, then, I can tell you."

"I dunsay the kid has lots to do," said Tom Merry. "No good grumbling over a little thing like that."

"I don't call it a little thing. That chap is paid to clean boots, and if he doesn't clean them properly he's a swindler."

"Oh, rascal!"

"I know I'm not going to wear boots in that state," snorted Gore. "I'm going to take them to the Housemaster."

"You don't want to get Lyons into a row," said Tom Merry, who was busy changing his blackened sock. "Let the poor kid alone."

"Blow the poor kid. You may like blacking on your socks, but I don't."

"I must say it's a bit thick," remarked Kargness. "My boots are simply filthy. Old Linton will notice it if I go into the Form-rooms in them like this. I think we'd better give Lyons the tip to be a bit more careful."

"That's all right, Kargney," said Tom Merry. "But you don't want to complain of the kid and get him into trouble."

"Of course not," said the Constable at once. "I can quite understand that he's been giving a bit too strong on the Latin, and a bit too easy on the boots. Just a word to him will be enough."

"Quite so!" remarked Mervyn Lowther. "My boots are pretty dirty, too. Looks as if he had been riding 'em about the floor instead of cleaning them. But, here you, I can give them a rub myself."

"Same here!" remarked Mervyn.

"You chaps may like cleaning boots," growled Gore. "I don't! I don't think I'm called on to clean my boots when there's a cad employed for the purpose. I'm not going to clean my boots. I'll shove 'em on as they are, and if there's any remark on them, Lyons can explain what he's done it for."

"Might as well give 'em a rub," said Tom Merry, glancing at Gore's boots. The boots were certainly in a very dirty state, and Tom Merry was well aware how particular Mr. Linton was about the neat and clean appearance of boys in his Form. Gore had been sent out of the Form-room only a few days before to comb his hair.

"I'm not going to give 'em any rub," said Gore.
 Then Merry protested.
 "Look here, Gore! It's the first time the kid's done it.
 Go on!"
 "Rats!"

"Well, I'll give 'em a rub along with my own, if you like," said Tom Merry, with an effort. He didn't like the idea of cleaning Gore's boots, but he was very unwilling that Lynn should get into trouble for his carelessness.

But Gore was obstinate. It was a chance of "getting one in" at the notorious boot-boy who applied to become a St. Jim's fellow, and Gore did not mean to let the chance go by.
 "I'm going down in these boots just as they are," he declared.

"You want to get the kid into a row," growled Manners.
 "Hate to you!"
 "Look here, Gore—"

"Not!" And George Gore settled the matter by walking out of the dormitory in his boots just as they were.
 Tom Merry looked troubled.

He was concerned for Lynn, and he was beginning to wonder, too, whether he and the others had been quite wise in postponing the struggle to elect the scrubbers. To work up for a third exam. required time and thought, and they might have guessed that it would interfere with his duties. Somehow they had supposed that Lynn would be too useful for that. But evidently he had acted as might have been expected—he was giving all his attention to the exam, and neglecting his duties. That was certain to get him into trouble before stairs, and it would be a sorry ending to his ambitions if he were discharged as an incapable scrubber, instead of winning the scrubbership.

When the janitor went into the School House fixing-room to breakfast the state of Gore's boots caught the eye of Mr. Linton at once. Mr. Linton was almost fanatically particular in such matters, and as Gore was generally slovenly he had had more than one passage at arms with his Foremaster on the subject. So Mr. Linton's voice was very sharp as he called George Gore's attention to the state of his footwear.

"How dare you come in with your boots in that condition, Gore?" the warden of the Shell exclaimed acidly. "It is quite impossible for you to learn habits of cleanliness, and, indeed, of common decency!"

"I'm sorry, sir—"
 "You will take fifty lines—"
 "If you please, sir, it isn't my fault," said Gore. "I couldn't help it. The boots are just as they were brought to the dormitory this morning. They weren't cleaned overnight, sir."

"What?"
 "I'm sorry, sir, but I suppose I'm not called upon to clean my own boots before I come down in the morning," said Gore sulkily.

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Linton, with a frown. "If what you state is the case, Gore, I shall excuse you, and speak to the house-keeper about it. But I am sorry to say that you are not always a thankful boy."

"The other fellows saw it, too," said Gore sulkily. "Tom Merry had to clean his own boots before he came down, so did Lawther and Manners and Noble."

"Is that the case?" asked Mr. Linton, glancing at Tom Merry. He knew that he would get the truth from the captain of the Shell, if he got any information at all.

Tom Merry flushed uncomfortably. He could not possibly refuse to answer the Foremaster's question, of course, much as he wished to screen Lynn's carelessness.

"Well, yes, sir," he said, "the boots weren't quite up to the mark, but it wasn't nothing. I didn't mind giving them a bit of a rub."

"Not at all, sir," said Manners. "We're not such delicate little dears as Gore, sir."

"It was very improper for the boots to be taken to the dormitory in a dirty state," said Mr. Linton, frowning. "I shall certainly see to the matter. Under the circumstances, Gore, I shall excuse you, but immediately after breakfast go to the boot-room and ask the boot-boy to clean your boots."

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 300.

After breakfast Gore presented himself at the boot-room. Toby and Lynn were there, and Toby was grumbling—as usual. He had dropped into the habit lately of growling. More knives had been broken in the machine, and more spouts had been lost, and Toby was getting fed up.

"Here, young shaver, clean my boots!" exclaimed Gore, striding in. "And if you send them back dirty again you'll get the sack!"

Lynn looked at him in surprise.
 "I cleaned your boots last night, Master Gore."
 "Yes; and brought them back in that state!" sneered Gore. "Look at 'em! Do you call that a fit state to send a fellow's boots back in?"

"No," said Lynn quietly, "and I did not take them back in that state. They were bright and clean when I left them."
 "And they walked about and made themselves dirty afterwards, I s'pose!" said Toby, in a vein of heavy sarcasm.
 "I'm sorry for this, Master Gore. It's all through young fellow-me-lakin' sp' Lovin' and things instead of attendin' to his duties."

"I know that well enough," sneered Gore. "If I were the Housemaster I'd sack him. How long are you going to be, Lynn? If you make me late for chapel you'll hear about it."

Lynn, without a word, and with a heavy heart, took his brushes, and Gore put his feet one after the other on a bench, and the boots were busily cleaned. While the cleaning was going on Gore favoured Lynn with his opinion of him at some length. The boot-boy did not answer a single word. Gore stamped away at last, leaving Lynn still silent, but quite as miserable as even Lovin' could have wished.

Then Toby started upon his usual morning yapping.
 "It's got to stop!" he said. "Bewildin' looks in the machine, boot's spouts, and now takin' dirty boots for the young gentleman to their dormitory. I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself, I do really."

"The boots were quite clean when I left them," said Lynn, in a low voice. "Somebody has deliberately soiled them since."

"Oh, don't tell me blessed lies!" said Toby. "You're the biggest liar I've ever struck in my natural. You tell 'em out all day long. Who'd take the trouble to make the boots dirty. You like to know, Mr. p'raps!"

"Not you, Toby."
 "Then 'oo!" demanded Toby angrily.

"How can I know? It must have been done after I left them."

"One of the young gentlemen, p'raps, japs! you?" sneered Toby. "As if they'd descend to play jokes on a boot-boy. You'll 'ear of this, young fellow-me-lad! I warn you!"

Lynn did hear of it. During the morning he was called into the house-keeper's room, and Mrs. Mirzess gave him a piece of his mind.

Mrs. Mirzess was a kind old lady, and she had when a liking to the clean, respectful lad, who was always industrious and obliging. But she had shaken her head when she learned of the entry for the scholarship, and she had warned Lynn in very plain terms that he was expected not to neglect his work for the sake of his meddling ideas. But now it looked as if her forebodings had been realised with a vengeance. For several days the good dame had been growing more and more annoyed, with reason, from Toby, and breakings in the boot-room. Now she had received a visit from Mr. Linton, and some very sharp remarks which she passed on to Lynn with ill-conceal.

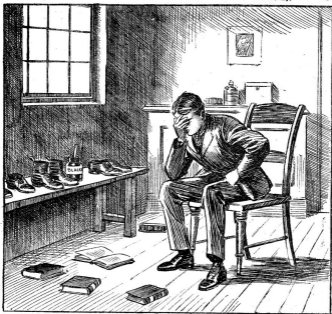
Tom Lynn listened in silence. It was impossible for him to defend himself, to say that he had not done what he was supposed to have done. Such a plea would have been brushed aside with contempt. Even Toby, who knew Lovin's realities inside, did not believe Lynn's contention. Mrs. Mirzess was certain not to believe him. Indeed, she would probably regard it as a lie and a slander, and might report it to the Housemaster. Lynn could not help smiling to himself that what he had to say would sound merely like a clumsy excuse for his own laziness.

So he did not speak. Mrs. Mirzess ran on at considerably length, annoyed, too, by the boy's silence.

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As Toby slammed the door of the boot-room, Lynn, miserable and heart-broken, threw himself into a chair, and burst into tears. (See Chapter II.)

"If this goes on," she wound up, "you will have to go. You were a good servant before you took up this scholarship nonsense, and if you like to be a good servant again, well and good. If not, I shall ask Mr. Hamilton to discharge you. Now you may go, and don't let me hear any more complaints about you."

And Lynn went in down-hearted silence.

CHAPTER II. Under a Cloud!

MR. LATHOM looked very grave when Lynn propped himself in the Form-master's study that evening for his usual coaching.

The complaint of Lynn had reached Mr. Lathom's ears, and, indeed, he had been greatly inclined to make complaints himself. For it was not only in the Hall that the boots had failed to reach the proper standard of cleanliness that day. Lovison and Mellish had appeared in class with extremely dirty boots, and in excuse had avowed that they came to the dormitory in that condition, and upon inquiry Mr. Lathom elicited the fact that Blake and D'Arcy and several other fellows had had to re-clean their boots before they came down. Mr. Lathom was shocked and grieved.

It was no small thing for the Form-master to devote half an hour or an hour every evening to Lynn, and he had undertaken the task in the hope of improving the boy's chances in life; but if it resulted in making him neglect the

work he was paid to do, evidently Mr. Lathom would have to reconsider the position.

Lynn read his expression easily enough when he came in, and his heart sank. He put his books on the table in silence.

"Before we commence, Lynn, I must say a few words to you," said Mr. Lathom, looking at Lynn over his glasses very kindly but very firmly. "I am pleased to see you so enthusiastic in your studies, and glad to help you in every way. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir, and I thank you," said the Dudge.

"But it appears that you have been neglecting your duties for the sake of your studies. Since you have so keen a desire for knowledge, it is unfortunate that you are not able to devote your whole time to a study. Certainly such behaviour would be very admirable in a member of my Form. But you must remember, Lynn, that you are employed to perform certain duties in this house."

"I do remember it, sir."

"You must not allow study to take your attention from your work, which must always come first."

"I do my best, sir."

It was upon Lynn's lips to make an explanation—to tell Mr. Lathom the truth. But he held back the words.

What was the use?

He had no proof to offer—he could not even say for certain that he suspected Lovison. There were half a dozen other

"He can't beat the Dredge without working for it, unless he beats him by foul means."

"Tom Merry nodded.
"Well, that's all right. I hope Manners will spot him if he tries the game again. If he does we'll overlook his standing out of the footer."

All thought of the Dredge and Lewison was soon banished from the minds of the Juniors. The School House janitors were playing Piggies & Co. of the New House, and the match was a very keen one.

Lewison of the Fourth shuffled down to the ground with Gere and Mallik to watch the game. After a time, however, he left his two friends, and wandered away. Lewison had other work on for that afternoon.

"Hullo! Going in?" Mallik called out.

"Swotting for the exam," Lewison called back.

"Well, time you did," remarked Gere.

"Lewison nodded into the School House. But he did not go to his study. The House was deserted upon the first half-holiday. There were three footer matches in progress among the various Forms, and the fellows who were just playing were watching the games. Lewison looked for Toby, and spoke to him in a very friendly way.

"Busy, Toby, kid?" he asked.

"Not very, Master Lewison," said Toby, more civilly than of old. Lewison had once been in the habit of beating Toby, but since the coming of the Dredge, it had suited his plans to be kind to the page.

"If you've got anything special to do, you might do something for me," said Lewison. "We've upset a bottle of ink in my study. I'll stand you a tawnee if you'll see to it."

"Batting, Master Lewison."

Toby went upstairs. Lewison smiled softly; the page was occupied now for the next ten minutes. Lym, he knew, was gone out, and not likely to be back for some time. Lewison cast a careless glance round him, and plunged into the Piggies below stairs.

He reached the boot-room unobserved.

The room was empty, and Lewison stepped in quickly, and closed the door behind him. If he was heard there from the kitchen, it would only be supposed that Toby or Lym was there. And he did not intend to remain long.

The boot-room was well lighted by a window looking out upon a green patch of garden. There was a large rhodo-dendron clump near the window, which was open. Lewison cast a careless glance out of the window, and saw no one in sight. He did not waste a moment. He was quickly at work at the knife-machines.

He noticed that the position of the machine had been changed a little, bringing it directly in line with the open window, and full in the light; but he attached no importance to this circumstance.

By the machine lay a heap of knives ready to be cleaned. Lewison started upon them with great industry. One after another he took in the machine, and the end of the Fourth Form was as he laid the knives among the others.

He was occupied only five minutes at the task, and then he left the boot-room as cautiously as he had entered it.

He ascended up into the School House, and made his way to his study. Toby was cleaning up the ink which Lewison had purposely split for him, and when he had finished Lewison handed over the promised sponges. It was worth the small amount of sixpence he had paid for the Jobs Davis Scholarship sent away from St. Jim's, he thought.

Lewison settled down to work in his war. He did not open his books. He took a yellow-bellied novel from his desk, and lighted a cigarette, and sat down to smoke and read trash. That was Lewison's method of swotting.

He yawned and looked up as Lamsley-Lansley came into the study, with a flushed face and gleeful manner.

"Heater 'em!" said Lamsley-Lansley.

"H!"

"We've beaten the New House," said Lamsley-Lansley.

"Two goals to one?"

"Oh, blow your goals!"

"Slacker!" growled Lamsley-Lansley.

"Am?" retorted Lewison.

"Better have been watching the match than smoking fifty cigarettes here!" exclaimed the other. "You've made the study white like a blessed top-saw!" Groah!"

"You need to be head enough of a jaw yourself!" Lewison answered.

"Lewison I became sensible and checked it," said Lamsley-Lansley. "If you had the sense of a mouse, you'd go and do likewise. Are you going to smoke your way through the exam? Blamed if I am, you don't do any work!"

"Oh, I can beat a kitchen drudge easily enough!"

"I guess I wouldn't bet on that. Lym has been grinding away jolly hard, and the exam is pretty near now. It's a case of the hare and the tortoise; you'll walk up too late to win the race, I guess!"

THE NEW LIBRARY—No. 200.

THE GABINET LIBRARY.

Every Monday.

"Oh, not!" said Lewison.
Tom Merry & Co. came in very cheerfully after the football match. They had beaten Piggies & Co., and it was another point in favour of the School House in their never-ending contest with Piggies & Co. Manners was in the study when Tom Merry and Lewison came in. There was a satisfied smile on Manners' face as he looked at his chums.

"Oh, so you've turned up again!" said Tom Merry.

"Large as life," said Manners. "How did the match go?"

"We're seven—ten to one!"

"Good egg!"

"Well, you didn't help," said Tom. "What have you been doing?"

"Taking snapshots."

"Oh! Photographing the match?" asked Tom Merry, with interest. "Did you get me when I got the goal?"

"I haven't been snapping any old footer match. I've been doing varieties."

"Interests of what?"

"The boot-room."

Tom Merry and Lewison gazed at Manners in amazement. Manners was certainly a very enthusiastic photographer, and he took pictures of all sorts of places, and there were few corners of St. Jim's that he had not photographed, inside and out. But to take an "interior" of a commonplace apartment as a boot-room seemed extraordinary.

"Of your studies?" asked Lewison at last.

"Not quite. Will you come and see me develop my films? Lathson's letting me use his dark-room."

"Rate! I'm hungry!"

"Let's have tea," said Tom Merry. "You might have got it ready, as you've got nothing else to do."

"Come and see me develop the films," urged Manners.

"I've left it till you came in, because I thought you'd be interested."

"Something wrong with your thinker, then?" snuffed Lewison. "I'm chiefly interested in toast and eggs at the present moment."

"Better come!" said Manners.

There was something mysterious and impressive in Manners' tone, and the chums of the school gave him respectful looks. They read the satisfaction in his eye, and the triumphant gleam in his eyes, and understood that there was something "on."

"Look here, what's the little game?" asked Tom. "What have you been getting in your photograph?"

"Interior of the boot-room, taken from the clump of rhodo-dendrons outside the window," said Manners cheerfully.

"Oh! A light broke upon Tom Merry. "Anybody in the boot-room?"

"Yes; one person, using the knife-machine."

"And you were out of sight, I suppose?"

"Quickly."

Tom Merry gave Manners a thump on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Bravo! Come on; let's see 'em developed!"

"Or! You needn't dislocate my shoulder, father!"

gaped Manners.

"Back up!"

Manners proudly led the way. The Terrible Trios entered Mr. Lathson's dark-room, of which Manners was allowed a key. Tom Merry and Lewison looked on keenly while their chums set to work. They understood now why Manners had missed the football match, and the clever trip he had laid for the end of the Fourth, and they could only hope fervently that it had succeeded. They were intensely eager to see the negative.

They watched Manners with all their eyes as he inserted the film. In the glow of the red lamp their faces were keen and tense, and their eyes gleamed. There was an exclamation from all three as the figures on the film flashed into sight in the developer.

The interior of the boot-room was easily recognizable, and the knife-machines, and a figure bending over it, with a clear-cut profile.

In the negative, of course, the darks were lights, and the lights darks; but in spite of that the juniors recognized the figure. The end of the Fourth had a well-marked profile, with a prominent nose and a somewhat pointed chin, and the juniors would have known it anywhere. And there were three pictures, taken within a few seconds of one another, and each of them clearly showed Lewison at the knife-machine.

"My hat!" gasped Lewison. "This beats it!"

"Oh, copping!" murmured Tom Merry.

Manners removed the film from the developer.

"You got it, this," he remarked. "It's too late to-day to take any prints; but anybody could recognize Lewison from the negative. And if Lym gets into a row to-day, it's up to us to reveal the giddy truth—what?"

"Bal Jove! There he is!"

D'Arcy sprang in the direction of the sound, collided with a door, and stumbled, and uttered a fearful yell.

"What up, you cat! Bal Jove! You!"

"Shut up, you cat! You'll wake the house!"

"Ow! I've startled my beautiful skin! Ow!"

"It's a cat!" exclaimed Blake, as a dark form with gleaming green eyes shot past him in the darkness, and there was a shrill miaow. "My hat! Cocky's heard you now! Cut!"

"Ow! My skin!"

"Cut, you dunnery!" said Blake, in a fierce whisper.

"I refuse to be called a dunnery!"

Blake grasped his chain by the end and dragged him out of the boot-room. He rushed D'Arcy along the passage just as the cook and the housemaid came along, the former carrying a lamp.

"Lor! Bless us, it was only the cat!" they heard the cook say as they fled.

Blake and D'Arcy did not linger. It was impossible to pursue any further investigations in the boot-room.

"Better get back to the dorm," growled Blake. "If Lovison's there, cocky will find him—and, anyway, we don't know where the beast is."

"Ow! My skin!"

"Blow your skin!" said Blake un sympathetically.

"It wasn't the cat!" came a voice from the distance.

"The cat couldn't knock a chair over, Juno. Someone has been here."

"Back up!" whispered Blake.

"My skin!"

"Do you want to be caught, behind? It will be a taking for being out of the dorm, if we're spotted. You can groan over your skin in the dorm."

"Weally, Blake, you un sympathistic heart!"

"Oh, come on!"

They reached the dormitory unobserved, and were glad to get inside and shut the door. There D'Arcy sat down on his bed to rub his skin.

"We'll catch the cat as he comes back," said Blake, setting his teeth. "We'll collar him when he comes in, and make him explain where he's been."

"Yess, that's a good idea. I shall threaten him. My skin is weally very painful. It was weally quite idiotic of you to forget the matches, Blake."

"Oh, come on!"

They waited for Lovison—shivering in the cold. Two or three of the fellows had awakened, and they wanted to know what the row was about; but Blake replied only with grunts. He was not in a good temper.

Sill, no one entered the dormitory, and eleven o'clock struck. Blake was amazed. After the alarm bell rang, surely Lovison could not have gone on with his reluctant work, whatever it was. Why did he not come back?

"What are you silly asses doing out of bed?" asked Lonsley-Lansley, waking up again. "Trying to catch cold?"

"We're waiting for Lovison to come back, dear boy."

"Lovison. Is he gone out?"

"Yess."

"Then who's in his bed?" asked Lonsley-Lansley.

"Nobody, dear boy. His bed must be empty, as he's out of the dorm."

Jervall Lonsley-Lansley chuckled.

"Then the pillow must be breathing exactly like a chap," he said. "There's certainly somebody in the next bed to mine, and that's Lovison's."

"Gwreat Scott!"

"Oh, yes—your image!" said Jack Blake, between his teeth. "You've led us a dance for nothing, and the cat is in bed all the time."

He groped about the dormitory for matches. As usual in such cases, matches were not easy to find; but Blake discovered some at last. He groped towards Lovison's bed, and struck a match, and looked.

Lovison was in bed, his eyes closed as if in slumber. His clothes were all neatly folded up upon a chair, and showed no sign of having been disturbed. It was pretty evident that the cat of the Fourth had not been out of the dormitory that night.

"Are you asleep, Lovison?" asked Blake grintly.

Lovison breathed steadily.

"Pat the match on his nose, dear boy; he's only pretending."

"Good egg?"

Lovison opened his eyes.

"Hallo," he said sleepily, "what's the matter? What are you up for? Did you hear somebody, too?"

"Hear somebody?" repeated Blake.

"Yes, I woke up, and heard somebody grumping about the passage some time back," said Lovison calmly. "I thought it might be some of the Shell chaps coming to raid us, so I

got up and looked out into the passage. I couldn't see anybody, so I got back into bed."

Arthur Augustus's face was a study. He did not believe Lovison's explanation; but it was clear enough that Lovison had done so he had said. Knowing that D'Arcy was watching for him, he had got out of bed, opened and shut the door of the dormitory, and gone back to bed again. The feelings of the cat of St. Jiar's were too deep for words.

The watch went out.

Jack Blake deliberated for some moments whether he should consider matches and lattices upon Lovison on the spot, or go back to bed. He decided to go back to bed. He passed by D'Arcy's bed to give the well of St. Jiar's his opinion of him. That opinion took three or four minutes to deliver, and was couched in expressive language. Then Blake turned in.

"I will overlook your remarks, Blake, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus, from his bed. "I trust that you will apologise for them to-morrow. Undoah the clock."

"Are you going to sleep up and let me get some sleep to-night, you fumbling jabbercock?" came Blake's voice in unpolite tones.

"I refuse to be called a fobbin' jabbercock. Lovison has taken on in, and I must remark that he was within fifty of you not to guess that he was in the dorm, at the time. You might have thought of lookin' at his bed before you got off on a wild-goose chase!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"You—you—!" Blake's voice failed.

"Pshaw! let that be a lesson to you for the future, dear boy," said D'Arcy, with a kindly forbearance of manner. "Pshaw! learn not to be in a hurry. More haste, less speed, you know—testra leste?"

"Will you dry up?"

"I have not finished yet. I was goin' to say—ow!—ow!—ow!"

Arthur Augustus was not really going to say that; but he said it because a pillow whirled through the air, and boomed him clean over.

"Now, dry up, and let's get some sleep!" howled Blake.

"Ow! You mean watch! I refuse to address a single word to you again!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I would you be a beast!"

And Arthur Augustus laid his head upon the pillow, and was soon in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER 13.

Manners Does the Trick.

"WHERE'S MANNERS?"

"Where's that see Manners?"

"Where's that cheap Manners?"

To which polite questions there was no reply. Manners had vanished late this morn; or, at all events, seemed to have done so. And as Tom Merry & Co. were playing football that afternoon, and Manners was wanted in the team, there were inquiries for his right and left.

"I saw the see you set with his camera soon after dinner," Kangaroo retorted.

Thus Merry grunted. If Manners had gone out with his camera on a fine afternoon, he was not likely to return till all his films were hit. The enthusiastic amateur photographer of the School House placed his camera eyes before the great game of foater.

"Lots of chaps you can put in," said Blake. "After all, Manners is only a Shell chap."

"Yass, watch! Why not play try mimic, Tom Mowery, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Blow your ass!" said Tom Merry politely. "I'll put in Bally, that will be all right. But Manners couldn't be here yesterday of his that, the ass!"

Merry Louther drove Tom Merry aside as they walked down to the junior football ground.

"I fancy there's method in his madness, my son," Louther remarked in a low voice. "He said something about being on the watch this afternoon."

"For Lovison, do you mean?"

"Yes, and the Dodge."

"The Dodge has gone out," said Tom Merry. "I saw him go. Mr. Hainoo has sent him over to the vicarage with a message."

"All the more chance for Lovison to play his watten tricks."

"Well," said Tom Merry doubtfully. "He seems to have dropped that. It's days since he did it, and since he discovered that he was being watched he has changed it. Gony gave the show away in the Fourth Form dorm, the other night, but it was good enough. It stopped Lovison. He hasn't dared play any tricks since."

"I know; but he might only be waiting for a chance. I don't trust him," said Louther. "We know jolly well that he means to win the team, and yet he isn't wanting for

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"We'll take a hand in the little game," Jack Blake remarked. "The cad is in our dock, and we can keep an eye on him. And if we find him out—"

"No if about it!" said Tom Merry decisively. "We've got to find him out. But keep it dark—mean's the word!"

And that evening the Co. gave the matter a great deal of thought. Only their aid stood between the Drudge and dismissal; but they realized very clearly that as earning a reward as the end of the Fourth would not be sought easily. It was a task that was likely to tax all the faculties of Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 13.

Arthur Augustus on the Watch.

AFTER lights out that night, there was one fellow in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House who resolved to remain awake. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who made that heroic resolve.

It had been agreed that a watch was to be kept on Levison, so that he could be spotted in his next attempt to injure the victim of his persecution.

Then came the consideration that Levison would probably play his next trick at night, which was extremely probable—or, as D'Arcy put it, extremely probab.

To remain awake for the purpose of keeping a wide-open eye on the cad of the Fourth was a rather large order. The Shell fellows, of course, could not undertake it, as they were in a different dormitory. It was up to the Fourth Formers, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy nobly undertook the duty. How he would succeed in carrying it out was another question.

Not a word had been said to Levison on the subject. It was useless to put the cad of the Fourth on his guard. And that, of course, would have been the only result of speaking to him on the matter. An appeal to his better feelings was not likely to have any result, for the simple reason that Levison did not appear to have any better feelings.

But Arthur Augustus, although he regarded himself as being a perfectly secure repository for the most valuable secrets, was perhaps not really the person most fitted to keep one.

He did not say a word to Levison about what the boot-boy had revealed, certainly; but his ferocious glance the next time he encountered Levison was so striking that Levison could hardly help remarking it. He asked the swab of the Fourth what was biting him—a disrespectful inquiry to which D'Arcy vouchsafed no answer. He passed Levison with his aristocratic mien very high in the air, and Levison chuckled, and Perry Mellish, who was with him, looked puzzled.

"What's the matter with the swab now?" Mellish asked. Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"He was down in the boot-room this evening," said Mellish. "Perhaps Lynn has been pinching him some yarn. Only you've been letting Lynn alone lately. It was time, I must say. You were too rough on the poor beast."

"Do you want a boot-cleaver in the Fourth?" asked Levison, with a curl of the lip.

"No; I don't. Still, it's a bit below a fellow's dignity to keep on ragging at a servant," said Mellish loftily. "Besides, he seems to be looking for the swab now, without your help. They won't stand much more of his latest little ways."

"I fancy that's so. You're not sweating much over the exam, Levison," Mellish remarked. "It's not as very far off now, and the Drudge is sagging away. You don't want to be beaten by the boot-room?"

"Probably he won't be at the exam, at all."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Well, if he gets the sack, for instance."

"That's so; but I wouldn't have too much to chance. Some of the fellows are very keen in egging him on. It would be a bit rotten if one of us got beaten by a filthy kitchen cad in an exam."

"No chance of that. I shall get the servanthood all right," said Levison confidently. "I could beat him hands down, anyway. And I'm not going to waste time sweating when there's easier ways of beating him."

"What easier ways?" asked Mellish, in surprise.

But Levison did not reply to that question. He strolled away by himself, thinking. It was very likely that Lynn had confided his troubles to D'Arcy, and that D'Arcy suspected Levison of being the author of them—indeed, now he thought about it, Levison was pretty certain that that was the case. And in that case it behooved him to be very careful. He knew what treatment he had to expect at the hands of the Co. if he should be discovered.

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While Arthur Augustus was keeping an eye on Levison, therefore, it happened that Levison was keeping an eye on D'Arcy.

When the Fourth Form went to bed, D'Arcy did not remove his clothes. Levison did not appear to be observing him, and D'Arcy considered it was better to keep something on in case he had to turn out suddenly to watch Levison. The November nights were cold.

Levison did not look once in his direction, but there was a grin on the face of the cad of the Fourth as he turned in.

Kidney set lights out in the dormitory, and then Arthur Augustus set himself to his task of keeping awake.

The murmur of voices died away in the dorm., and silence reigned, and the swab of the Fourth found himself dropping into slumber.

"But Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "This really won't do! I really must not go to sleep!"

He propped himself up in bed on his pillows and bolster, and, with great fortitude, kept his eyes open.

Half-past ten struck from the clock-tower.

D'Arcy, in spite of himself, was nodding. But as the half-hour chimed out, he awoke again, and blinked into the darkness.

Then he gave a start. Further along the dormitory, in the direction of Levison's bed, there was the sound of someone getting up.

D'Arcy listened acutely.

Yes, there was no doubt about it. One of the fellows was getting up, and there was not the slightest doubt that it was Levison. D'Arcy was wide awake now, and all his senses were on the alert. In the darkness he could see nothing, but he could hear distinctly, and his ears were strained to listen.

Cautious footfalls crossed the dormitory to the door. The door opened, and shut again.

Then there was deep silence.

Arthur Augustus was out of bed in a moment, dragging on his trousers. His heart was beating with excitement, and his eyes gleamed. He jerked Jack Blake by the shoulder, and started him out of a dream in which he was kicking an invisible target of goals in a match with the New House.

"Gee-hoo!" murmured Blake. "Warmer warmer!"

"Wake up, dear boy!"

"Gee-hoo!"

"That watch Levison has just gone out!" whispered D'Arcy—a whisper thrilling with excitement. "Get up and come along with me!"

"Sure?" asked Blake, sitting up in bed.

"Yess, wathah! I was on the watch, you know!" chuckled D'Arcy. "We've caught the watch this time! We shall find him in the boot-room playin' his wotten trick."

"Good egg!"

It was not pleasant to turn out of a warm and comfortable bed in the cold and darkness of the November night; but Blake tugged on manfully, and hurried on his clothes. The two juniors groped towards the door in the darkness, and went out into the passage, closing the door softly behind them.

The passage was dark, but from the stairs came a glimmer of light. At that hour there were many still up in the house.

"I suppose he's gone down to the boot-room," muttered Blake, with a shiver.

"Let's look there first, dear boy."

"Some of the servants are still up," said Blake. "We shall see."

"We must risk that, for the sake of the Drudge, old fellow."

"Oh, all right."

By devious paths the two juniors gained the regions below, and reached the boot-room. They and Lynn were gone to bed, but in the kitchen the cook and a housemaid were chattering together. The two juniors moved quietly. They did not want to be seen out of the dormitory at that hour.

Blake cautiously opened the door of the boot-room. The interior was in darkness.

"The wretch's skivvin' in the dark!" murmured D'Arcy.

"Search a watch, dear boy."

"Haven't one?" growled Blake.

"But Jove! And I haven't, either, dear boy! It was wathah wathah thoughtless of you, Blake—"

"Hah! Why didn't you bring a box of matches?" asked Blake crossly.

"I never thought of it. Pshaw, there are some here. I'm sure the wretch is here, and can hear us speakin'. Levison, you skivvin' scoundrel, show yourself!"

There was the sound of a movement in the darkness of the boot-room.

Latham's study. He was trying to control his emotion, and to conceal the fact that he had been crying, but without much success. The clanks of the School House made an elaborate pretence of not noticing the obvious signs on his face.

"May we come in, dear boy?" asked D'Arcy politely.

"Yes, please, sir," said Lynn.

The janitor, feeling decidedly awkward and uncomfortable, walked into the best-room. Arthur Augustus coughed miserably. It was plainly not a propitious moment for the kindly little creature he had intended to deliver to the Drudge.

"Pussy wick in, Tom Merry?" murmured the wretch of St. Jim's, after an awkward pause.

"Aren't I come here with you, Gussy?"

"Not at all, dear boy; you're got something' to say to Lynn!"

"You mean you have?"

"Well, Tom Merry—"

"Go it, Gussy?" murmured Louthier.

"Aren't I see, dear boy—you were goin' to say, Tom Merry?"

"That I jolly well wasn't," said Tom Merry promptly.

"You wasn't?"

"Aren't I?"

They then was a pause. Lynn, gaining better control of himself, looked at them imploringly. He did not speak; he could not trust his voice yet.

"Aren't I?" murmured D'Arcy again. "The—the fact, Lynn, dear boy, we've looked in to see how you're gettin' on, you know. How are you gettin' on?"

"Right as rain, boy?" said Manners.

"I—I'm coming to see you, sir," said Lynn abruptly.

"I—I've got something to say to you, young gentleman. I hope you won't think me ungrateful—"

"But?" said D'Arcy. "You don't owe any of us any gratitude, so we could hardly regard you as ungrateful, dear boy. But what's the matter? Pity on?"

"I must give up the scholarship exam."

"But Jove!"

"That's what I wanted to tell you, sir," said Lynn heavily. "It won't do. It won't work. I know you'll understand how sorry I am. But I can see now that it won't work."

"You mean you can't win the study along with your duties, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus compassionately.

"It is that?"

Lynn shook his head.

"Get it all your own, Lynn," said Tom Merry, encouragingly. "We're your friends, you know, and we want to look you up. I suppose you've been getting into a row about the boots, ain't that it? Well, our waders don't make a summer—you won't put your feet in it again like that. You won't do it again."

Lynn nodded miserably.

"I haven't done it at all, Master Merry," he said. "I suppose you won't believe me—"

"I shall believe whatever you tell me," said Tom Merry quietly. "I know you're as straight as a die!"

"Yess, waddah!"

"I cleared the boots all right," said Lynn. "They were muddled with after I'd laid them. Somebody is making trouble for me, and, of course, I know why it is; it's to prevent my entering for the John Davis examination. I—I can't keep my end up, sir. Somebody—I don't know who—breaks knives in the knife-machine, and—loses things, and—end now there's a valuable crust damaged, and they has taken it to Mrs. Minniss. It will very likely mean the sack for me. I can't keep my end up against that kind of thing. If I withdraw from the examination, the fellow may let me alone—otherwise, it means discharge."

The janitor looked at him in silence.

"I—I don't dare to get the sack," went on Lynn miserably. "The wages here are—see here to see that the scholarship or anything else. You mean to say that the scholarship how it is. My family is poor, and they oughtn't to have money I can spare. I can see now that I oughtn't to have entered for the examination. I felt at the time that such a thing was too good to come true." And in spite of his self-control, the tears welled into Tom Lynn's eyes again.

"But Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, after a long pause.

"I—I didn't know anything about this, dear boy. I—I say, you know—that's a very queer story!"

"You don't believe me?" said Lynn bitterly. "Of course you don't. You can't believe that a St. Jim's fellow would be mean enough to try to ruin a poor drudge of the kitchen like me. But it's true. I tried to explain to Mr. Latham, but he wouldn't even listen. They don't believe me. It's no good. I've got to withdraw from the examination, or else be sacked!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "Honor bright, Lynn, this is the truth!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I—I swear," said Tom hastily. "You haven't got fobbed up with the sweating for the exam—you don't meanly want to get out of it—"

"I've told you the truth, Master Merry," said Lynn heavily. "I don't expect to be believed!"

"But I believe you, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's that wretched Latham again. This is just one of his wretched tricks!"

"Have you seen Latham about the best-room, Lynn?" asked Tom Merry.

"He wouldn't be likely to let me see him," said Lynn, with bitterness. "The crust was damaged while I was with Mr. Latham this evening."

"Then you think it's Latham?"

"I don't know, sir. Master Latham hates me—I don't know why; I'm sure I've never given him cause. But he does."

"I don't think even Mellich would be mean enough to do a thing like that," said Manners. "It's Latham or nobody."

"Yess, waddah! Let's go and find the rotten cad and bang him!"

"No good doing that!" said Tom Merry. "He would deny knowing anything about it, and Lynn would be called a liar by the whole House."

"Oh, it's a woman!"

"We'll keep this dark, and look into the matter," said Tom. "If it's Latham, he's got to be caught in the act and shown up. The miserable cad! He's played tricks on all of us, but nothing quite so beastly recent as this. If it's Latham, if it's anybody, and we're got to catch him in the act, or there'll be no good. It's no good making accusations that can be set down at glances."

"Yess, waddah, that's so. Well, on us, Lynn, dear boy; we'll see you through, somehow."

"And don't say anything about giving up that scholarship, Lynn," said Mesty Louthier. "You are going on with it. If Latham is playing those rotten tricks on you, we'll soon bring him up to him."

"Yess, waddah!"

"I—I'm afraid it's gone too far, sir. There will be a row about the crust—"

Lynn looked off as the door of the best-room was thrown open, and Mrs. Minniss came in with a red and angry face, the crust in her hand. It was but when that the majestic head-dress paid a visit to the best-room, but this time she had come with a purpose. The presence of Tom Merry & Co. somewhat disconcerted her, and she turned on them sharply.

"I shall be glad if you young gentlemen will not come here, leaving Lynn away from his work and putting foolish ideas into his head," she exclaimed, with asperity.

"Well, Mrs. Minniss—"

"He is the worst servant in the House already. I am going to see Mr. Bailton to discharge him!"

"But Jove!"

"You needn't do that, Mrs. Minniss," said Lynn modestly. "I'll go if you want me so."

The boy's white, stretched face struck the house-maid, and she returned a little. She was a kindly woman at heart, but she had a temper.

"You young gentlemen had better go," she said, and the young gentlemen accordingly went, feeling very much concerned for poor Lynn.

"Now, Lynn, look at that crust! You know it is valuable, and you have treated it as if it was any old bit of bread, out of sheer laziness and carelessness. I wonder you can face me now!"

"I didn't damage it, ma'am!" Lynn faltered.

"Then who did?" exclaimed Mrs. Minniss sharply. "Was it Toby?"

"I don't think so, ma'am!"

"Then it was you—and it's disgraceful. Scholarship and no more—that's the cause of it," said Mrs. Minniss.

"Once for all, you must put that stuff out of your foolish young head. What is this paper pinned up here?"

"A—a—a list of verbs," muttered the Drudge.

"Take it down at once. Never let me see such a thing here again. Now, Lynn, if you have no more chance, I expect you to do better. Mind, the very next fault you commit you will be discharged. The very next!" said Mrs. Minniss, with great emphasis.

And she frowned away.

In the upper regions of the School House Tom Merry & Co. were discussing the matter with very grave faces. That even Latham would descend to such baseness it required an effort to believe; and yet they could not doubt the Drudge.

"It's the limit!" said Tom Merry, setting his teeth.

The limit, even for Latham. If he isn't found out and stopped the Drudge will get the sack—and that will be the faith for him. We've got to stop him."

"Yess, waddah! The awful waddah!"

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follows who might have saved him this ill-torn, and he could not point to any of them.

What was the use of making a vague statement that was certain to be disbelieved? He would simply be regarded as a liar. He knew it, and yet—

"Well, I hope you will always do your best, Lynn," said Mr. Lathorn. "You have neglected to clean the boots, however. Their cleanliness is an honorable an occupation as any other; and like all things that are worthy to be done, it should be done well."

"I always do it well, sir," Lynn broke out. "I've never left a boot in a dirty state after it's been in my hands."

Mr. Lathorn elevated his eyebrows.

"To judge by some of the boots in my Form this morning, Lynn, you are mistaken," he said dryly. "I may mention that even my own boots were in a far from satisfactory condition."

"I left them outside your door quite clean, sir."

"Come, Lynn!"

"Someone must have interfered with them afterwards, sir," said Lynn, feeling that he must speak, whatever the result. It was too bitter to be regarded as late and ungrateful by the man who had been kind to him.

Mr. Lathorn frowned.

"I can hardly believe that anyone would have done such a foolish thing," he said. "But that is not all. I have heard that there are complaints of you below stairs—that you lose articles given you to be cleaned."

"I have never lost anything, sir."

"But the articles—spoons and forks and so forth—have disappeared."

"I know it, sir."

"If an article disappears while in your charge, Lynn, the natural inference is that you have lost it by carelessness."

Lynn was silent. What was the use of going on? Even as he made his denial, he knew that they sounded like the vague and rambling statements of a servant caught in the act of carelessness, and ready to say anything!

Mr. Lathorn turned to the books.

"We will not say anything more about it, Lynn," he said gently. "I have only spoken as a warning to you. If you neglect your duties, you cannot expect to rise—that should be evident to any thoughtful boy. Now let us drop the subject. Let us see—where were we? You have brought your list?"

"Here it is, sir."

"Book XX.—The Carthaginian War," said Mr. Lathorn. "and they plunged into the most ancient campaigns of Hannibal, and the supposed delinquencies of the boot-boy were dismissed from discussion."

But Lynn could not fix his attention upon his work as usual.

He felt that it was all up; his enemies had been too much for him. If nothing more happened, certainly things might go on as well as before. But he knew that more would happen. His secret persecutor was not finished yet. Tomorrow, or the next day, the boots would be found dirty again; more knives would be broken in the machine; other accidents would happen in the boot-room. Even now, while he was working with Mr. Lathorn in the seclusion of the Form-master's study, it was quite probable that his enemy was at work somewhere doing him injury.

With those thoughts in his mind, the unhappy boy could not give his usual attention to the work, and Lily was difficult—dreadfully difficult.

More than once his attention wandered, and he showed an unusual amount of care, and once or twice he saw Mr. Lathorn's eye compressed.

The Fourth Form-master was beginning to think that he had overrated Lynn's shiftness, and his character, too; that he had taken up the boot-boy under a mistake, when he was not really in earnest at all.

That was a humiliating thought for the Form-master. He did not like to think that his judgment had been at fault, and that he had been deceived in Lynn. But he was very nearly convinced that such was the case by the time the lesson had finished.

Instead of going on, as he often did, longer than the stipulated time, Mr. Lathorn closed his book sharply at the end of the half hour.

"I think that will do, Lynn," he said coldly.

"Yes, sir, thank you," faltered Lynn.

He left the Form-master's study with his heart very full. Mr. Lathorn struck his head heavily at the door closed behind the Dodge.

Lynn went downstairs with a heavy heart. Toby's voice had and angry, greeted him as he came into the boot-room.

"Oh! You've come back, 'ave you? Finished your list, 'ave, and ready to best some more of the knives."

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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

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And p'raps you'll give me a 'ot what I'm to say to Mrs. Minna about that crust?"

And Toby held up the crust for inspection. It was a handsome silver crust, and it had been in Lynn's hands to be cleaned and polished. Lynn had left it in the boot-room, shining like new brass. Now it was dark and dished with blacking, and tarnished, as if it had fallen heavily on the floor, and perhaps been trodden on.

Lynn looked at it. His enemies had not been unfeeling; while he was in the Fourth Form-master's study, his enemy had not forgotten him.

"I think that gets the lid on!" said Toby, with righteous indignation. "Do you know that these crusts is worth twenty quid, young shaver, and 'ere I find it on the floor where you've been treadin' on it?"

"I left it on the table," said Lynn heavily.

Toby smiled.

"Don't tell me no more of your lies!" he said savagely. "I've never to take this 'ere crust to Mrs. Minna just as it is, and 'ere we ain't goin' to 'ave no support as 'ow I've done it. And look out for the sack, young fellow—no! Those won't be no scholarships for you—there'll be the boot-sharp! Put that in yer pipe and smoke it." And Toby marched off with the crust.

Lynn did not reply. As Toby slammed the door of the boot-room, the miserable boy threw himself into a chair, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER 12.

Tom Merry & Co. Take a Hand.

"YOU fellows comin'?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question, and he addressed the Terrible Three.

"That's accordin'," said Tom Merry. "If it's the tack shop, we'll come with pleasure. If it's a visit to your tailor, we've got another engagement."

"What! I've been thinkin'—"

"Oh! draw it mild," remonstrated Louthan.

"Peay draw it mild," remonstrated Louthan, "deah boy," said D'Arcy, turning his eyes severely upon the baronet of the Shell.

"I've been thinkin' that we'd better give young Lynn a tip."

"He won't take tips," said Manners solemnly. "Custom of the Fifth offered him a tip and he refused it."

"I am not woderin' to that kind of tip, you duffah. I should not dream of makin' Lynn by offah's' him a gratuity, as you know very well. I mean a tip above his conduct. I think it's up to us to warn him not to neglect his lesson for the sake of the exam, you know. I'm afraid he'll get into trouble, and that will mark up the whole shop. I'm awery to see him growin' weakish, and peewaps a worse in danger, you know, may back him up."

"Well, it's not a bad idee," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I don't want to interfere in his affairs, but they have been a lot of complaints about him lately, and perhaps a word of advice would be useful to him."

"That's right. As a matter of fact," D'Arcy went on confidentially, "I don't like doin' it, but it seems to me to be necessary; I should like you fellows to come."

"Lead on, Macbeth!" said Monty Louthan.

"Peay remember it is a serious matter, Louthan, and don't make any of your wotten jokes," said Arthur Augustus warningly.

"I will be as serious as a Dutch uncle, and as solemn as a bellied owl!" Monty Louthan assured him.

And the four descended into the regions below the School House, and made their way to the boot-room.

Arthur Augustus had just raised his hand to tap at the boot-room door, in his usual courteous way, when he stopped, a very good expression on his face.

"But Jove!" he murmured.

"What's the matter now, Guss?"

"Listen, deah boys!"

The Shell fellows heard it, then; it was the sound of a job in the boot-room.

"Oh!" murmured Tom Merry.

"I—I woderh whether we'd better intrude, woderh the crew," D'Arcy murmured hurriedly. "Peewaps the poor kid has been waggered by the housekeeper already."

"Or by Guss or Louthan," said Louthan. "Better look into it, and if those cads have been worryin' him, we can put in ten minutes walkin' them."

"Yaas, woderh; that's a good idee!"

Tap!

There was the sound of a hurried movement in the boot-room, and then Lynn opened the door. There were very evident traces of tears on his face. His books lay on the table, where he had laid them after returning from Mr.



The Fags v. The Sixth-Formers! (An incident from the great tale of Greyfriars School, entitled "THE COKER CUP" by Frank Richards, which is contained in the current issue of our splendid companion paper "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale everywhere. Price One Penny.)

"Hear, hear!"

The Terrible Three left the dark-room in great spirits. It was no business of theirs to give Levison away, unless he had done something that was to be laid to the charge of the Bridge, as they were pretty certain he had.

They knew well the conditions Mrs. Misses had imposed upon Lynn—at the very best itself, he was to be discharged. And Levison knew it, too, and with anxious anticipation knew he had laid his miserable plans.

"But these will be a spoke in the wheel this January!" said Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three sat down to tea in their study. "We'll keep an eye open, and if young Lynn is called over the coals, that is where we chip in!"

And Masters and Leather said "Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 15.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"LYNN, you pease blight!"

Toby's voice was sharp and resonant. Lynn turned towards him wearily. He was polishing silver in the boot-room, with a clouded face and a heavy heart. He had

found the broken knives when he came in, and he knew what it meant. His enemy had been at work again, taking advantage of his absence, and of Tom Merry & Co. being occupied with the football match. And it was the end!

"Well!" said the Doctor.

"You're to go to Mr. Railton's study," said Toby. "I may as well tell you it's the work. Mrs. Misses was simply wild when she found you'd broken five more knives in the machine. This 'ere is not come of Lating verbs!"

"I did not break them," said Lynn.

Toby sniffed.

"Doctor tell that to Mr. Railton, or to the mistress," he said. "Mrs. Misses has asked him to sack you. I may as well tell you. And he's going to. You're to go into his study and get the boot!"

"Very well!"

"Doctor 'ere stuck to business, and let Lating verbs and scholasticisms alone," said Toby. "I'm sorry for yer, but you'd 'ave to go!"

Lynn made no reply. He left the boot-room, rearing his speech and washing his hands, and proceeded to the upper regions. In the passage, as he went to the Housemaster's

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NEAT
WEDNESDAY—

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

study, he recognized the Terrible Three. They were checked and starting.

"Hallo! Why that worried brow, young 'un?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm tickled, Master Merry."

"So bad as that?"

"Yes. Mrs. Minors has asked Mr. Railton to sack me, and I'm going to him now for it," said Lynn dreadfully. "They've found knives broken in the machine. It was done while I had gone out. But it's no good saying so; they don't believe me."

The charms of the Shell exchanged a jocular grin. Manners turned the pocket where a little roll of films was kept.

"Back up!" said Tom Merry. "They'll believe you this time. Rely on us. We'll see you through. We can prove what you say this time."

Lynn started.

"Oh, Master Merry!"

"We told you we'd take a hand in the matter," grinned Manners. "We're been doing it. Go to Mr. Railton and tell him the facts, and we'll back you up. Rely on us. It's all secure."

Lynn's face brightened up. "I'll do as you say, sir," he replied. And he went on to Mr. Railton's study with a lighter heart.

Mr. Railton's face was very grave when Lynn presented himself. He was sorry for the boy, and he had been interested in him; but he had no choice but to accede to the request Mrs. Minors had made. However deserving the boot-boy might be in other respects, if he was a careless and unsatisfactory servant he could not remain in his situation.

"You know why I have sent for you, Lynn," said the Housemaster, not unkindly. "Mrs. Minors has complained of you again, and she wishes you to leave. I have no reason but to discharge you. I am afraid you have allowed your ambitions to have interfered with your duties. It is very unfortunate."

"But I haven't, sir!" said Lynn.

Mr. Railton made a gesture.

"I am afraid that I cannot listen to anything against Mrs. Minors's statement, Lynn. These matters are entirely in the hands of the housekeeper."

"But Mrs. Minors is mistaken, sir," said Lynn eagerly. "And if she knew it she would not wish me to be discharged: Will you allow me to explain, sir? It won't take me many minutes; and—and this means a lot to me, sir."

"I suppose it does," said Mr. Railton. "I am sorry for you, as I said. You may explain if you like, but I cannot interfere with the house-dame's decision."

Lynn burst out eagerly, passionately. Mr. Railton listened, with a face growing sterner and sterner, and interrupted the boy with a sharp gesture at last.

"I cannot listen to this, Lynn. I cannot credit for a single instant that a boy belonging to this school could be bad enough to play such tricks upon a lad in your position; and you can't say what object he could have in doing so. You make the regular statement without a particle of proof! I cannot believe you. I—"

Mr. Railton was interrupted. There was a sound of scuffling and bumping in the passage, and then the door was thrown open, and four janitors came whirling in. Levison of the Fourth whirled into the study in the grasp of the Terrible Three.

Mr. Railton's brow became like a thundercloud.

"Merry, Manners, Lovelace! How dare you! How dare you sally into my study in this unseemly manner! I—"

"Sorry, sir," gasped Tom Merry. "But Levison wouldn't come, sir, and we had to bring him in!"

"What? I—"

"Levison can explain about Lynn, sir. He wouldn't come?" gasped Lovelace.

"Nonsense! This unseemly conduct—"

"Explain, you said!" said Tom Merry, shaking Levison by the collar.

"Merry!"

"I don't know anything about it, sir, of course," said Levison. "These fellows have dragged me here. I haven't the faintest idea what for."

"Levison did it!" shrieked Manners. "We suspected him, sir, and I was outside the window of the boot-room to-day, and saw him at the knife-machine!"

"What?"

"It's a lie!" said Levison promptly.

"Manners! Pray be guarded in what you say!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "I should want the most positive and convincing proof that such was the case."

"I have never used the knife-machine in my life, sir," said Levison.

"But I've got the proof, sir!" shrieked Manners.

"Indeed! And is it as good as proof?" said Tom Merry. "The Gen. Library—No. 280."

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Weekday.

can hardly expect me to believe such an accusation on your bare word."

"I photographed Levison in the room, working the knife-machine, and I've got the photographs," cried Manners triumphantly.

Mr. Railton's manner changed. He glanced at Levison. The end of the Fourth had become white and sickly to look upon.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton. "That alters the case, certainly. I will look at the photographs, and judge for myself."

Manners handed out the roll of films.

"It was too late to-day to take prints, sir; but I can get prints to-morrow. But you can recognize Levison easily enough in the negative. Hold it up to the light, sir."

Mr. Railton quietly unrolled the films and held the strip up to the light. Levison's knees knocked together. He gave Manners a glare of deadly hatred. He was caught now, and he knew it. Tom Lynn put his hand upon the table to steady himself. The sudden change in the aspect of affairs almost overcame him. He was seared, and he was safe now from the further prosecution of the end of the Fourth. Levison had been shown up with a vengeance!

Mr. Railton gazed steadily at the pictures on the film against the light. It was quite easy to recognize Levison's strongly-marked profile on the film. The Housemaster laid the negatives on the table at last.

"There is no need to wait for the prints," he said. "This negative is quite clear. Levison, this is a photograph of you at the knife-machine in the boot-room. You have just assured me that you have never on any occasion used the knife-machine in the boot-room. What have you to say now?"

"What had Levison to say?"

"He would have lied and lied, if it had been any use; but he is weak or cowardly, or both. He could only stand silent, dismayed, terrified, his face sickly white, and wait for his sentence."

"You admit what Manners says!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

"I—I—!" Levison's whisper died away.

"Very well!" said the Housemaster, compressing his lips.

"Manners, I am very much obliged to you. You have prevented a very serious injustice from being done. Lynn, I am sorry to say that you have been the victim of a miserable trick, and that the schemer was a boy who dares disgrace his school by belonging to it. I shall explain the matter to Mrs. Minors, and she will be as sorry as I am that justice has been done. You may go, and you may be sure that your position here is safe, and will be safe in the future."

Lynn staggered out his thanks, and left the study with the Terrible Three. Levison would gladly have followed them, but the Housemaster was not finished with him yet. Mr. Railton selected his stoutest cane.

"I will not say how disgusted I am with your duplicity and treachery, Levison," said the Housemaster. "I fear you are too hardened to care for words. There is only one way of appealing to your feelings, and that way I shall adopt. I am going to give you a very severe flogging."

Levison moistened his dry lips with his tongue, but he did not speak.

"There is one other matter," pursued the Housemaster with emphasis. "You have entered for the John Davis Scholarship. There is a proviso in the terms of that foundation, that only boys of good character are allowed to enter for it. You have not a good character, Levison. You have a very bad character! I shall report this matter in full to Dr. Halshaw, and your name will be struck out. You will not be allowed to compete for the scholarship at all. Upon that point you may be quite sure. I trust this lesson will not be lost upon you. Now remove your jacket!"

And for some minutes after that sound of English was heard proceeding from Mr. Railton's study. Levison was going through it, coping his well-deserved punishment, and learning once more the lesson he had learned many times before, that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Lynn was not "sacked."

When Mrs. Minors learned the facts from the Housemaster she was kindness itself to the boot-boy, and even Tom Merry was vexed.

Troubled no longer by the prosecution of the end of the Fourth, who had learned to leave him very severely alone, Lynn worked hard for the scholarship, and on the day when the news came that he had won it there was a tremendous celebration in Tom Merry's study in honour of Lynn's luck!

(Another Grand Long, Complete Tom Merry story next Wednesday, entitled, "4200 REWARD" by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of "THE GEN" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE CORINTHIAN.



A Magnificent New Story of the Old-Time Prize-Ring. By BRIAN KINGSTON.

READ THIS FIRST.

Hilary Bevan, a sturdy young Britisher of gentle birth, who has been living in the country, walks to London

TO SEE HIS FATHER.

Sir Patrick Bevan, whom he has not met for three years. Arriving at his father's house, Hil learns that the latter has been absent for three days at the home of Sir Vincent Brookes, one of the leading bucks of the time. He also learns that Sir Patrick has earned the nickname of

"PLUNGER" BEVAN,

and is heavily in debt, having dissipated his fortune.

Sending his steps to Sir Vincent Brookes' house in Grosvenor Street, Hilary

FINDS HIS FATHER AT THE GAMING-TABLES,

where he has been for three days and nights.

Sir Patrick cues from the table as utterly ruined man. Hilary's next act is to accept a challenge offered in the presence of Mosley Hunt. His opponent is a Jew pugilist, Barney Isaac by name, while Hil, fighting under the name of Harley, beats him, and awakens the interest of a young Christian named Dr. Argy Vavasour.

HIL DECIDES TO ADOPT THE PRIZE-RING AS A CAREER, and at a supper which is attended by the leading patrons of "The Fancy" Vavasour matches him for a thousand guineas against any horse of his weight that Sir Vincent Brookes may select.

Immediately after a shocking contest, Sir Vincent tells Hil that his father is lying dangerously ill at Barcham. Without hesitation, Hil springs on a horse and makes for Barcham.

Arrived there, he finds that nothing is known of his father, and that

SIR VINCENT HAS DECEIVED HIM.

Before he can return, however, Hil is caught by a press-gang and sent to sea. After many exciting adventures he manages to return to New Man's Land in Hertfordshire, where he is due to fight Fossil, a Birmingham pugilist.

After a terrific fight, Hil beats his opponent, and Sir Vincent Brookes drives away from the ring-side with the knowledge that he is a ruined man. Suddenly he turns to his companion:

"Cokerley, you are a good bloodhound! If you think you could find Sir Patrick Bevan and bring him to me in three days!"

(Now go on with the story.)

Captain Cokerley's Mission.

"I can," was the prompt answer. "A man I know saw him but a week ago, and once I get my nose to a scent—"

"Then get down and start at once," Brookes interrupted peremptorily. They were standing along Oxford Street. He patted up the horses. "Get to work, and report to me as soon as you find."

Alone on the driving seat, the horse's head turned towards home, Sir Vincent chuckled to himself.

"The lot laugh—the lot laugh! And it is mine!" he cried gleefully. "The son runs the father; the father runs the son! And the holder of the winning card is myself! A good wheeze—a horse is a million, hound! Time—give me five—only a few days, and there will be a turning of the tables very much to my satisfaction! They thought my last stake was gone—that I was cleaned out; but there it soothes them yet! Oh, the fool, the foolish fool, to think to match himself against me!"

Captain Cokerley was a man of his word; that is to say, and provided that he could see a handsome profit for himself stacked, if he made a promise to do any certain thing he could be depended upon to keep it. He had no notion whatever what was in the mind of Sir Vincent Brookes that required the co-operation of Sir Patrick Bevan, but since he had been told to find that gentleman, and knew he would be well paid for his success, he began his mission without loss of time.

He really deserved to be called a clever fellow. But for his cleverness he would never have succeeded in concealing for so long his pocketings of the regimental money when serving with the Peninsular army—when he was not known as Cokerley. It had been a pure accident that led to General Patrick Bevan's discovery of the chest, and the subsequent cashiering of Cokerley.

He was a man with the nose of a hound and a prodigious memory. In addition, he had a large acquaintance among all the riff-raff of the prize-ring and the turf and the many other shady characters infesting London. From one of these he had heard quite casually of Sir Patrick, and he at once went to see the man.

He found him without a lot of trouble, in a shady gambling den in Leicester Square, invited him to a meal, and then put his question.

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A Halfpenny, New, Large, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"£100 REWARD!"

"When was it I saw him?" repeated the man. "Why, one day more than a week ago. I was on business down at—"

He stopped suddenly, and looked at Colodry with a curious expression.

"You're wanting to find him—oh, really?" he asked.

"Not I; but I've some good news for him, from another party, if I should happen to come upon him."

"What is it worth—to me?" asked the other bluntly.

Colodry crossed, giving his acquaintance thoughtfully. Then he took a couple of guineas slowly from his pocket and laid them on the table. The man's face brightened.

"It was Hornham I was doing business in," he said briskly. "Bit of a fair on. Plenty of the ready 'going about, and not too much trouble to take care of. You know these chaps—beings. They couldn't find the man under the table, sleep as they thought themselves. I did a good trade at first."

"What has all that to do with my man?" demanded Colodry.

"I was getting to him. I had to leave the fair, and went to try my luck where there was nothing going on—was at three farmers' races. I made a guinea or so, and then, dash it, my wig, if there didn't come up a crew who'd seen me at the other place. That covered my pitch, and I had to trifle."

"Well?"

"Well, looking on at the racing, I saw Bevan."

"You're sure?"

"Of course I am. Haven't I seen his way too often at Masley & Tattersall's not to know him? Looked ran, he did, as none so gay as I have seen him."

Colodry handed over the two guineas, and left his friend. His eye was sufficient; Hornham was easily to be reached by coach; and he promised himself before many days to be able to inform his partner of Sir Patrick Bovatt's whereabouts. He was as good as his word.

While Colodry was thus engaged and Sir Vincent Brooker, sitting in his private room, was reckoning up his debts and planning the means whereby he was to be effected his revenge upon the young man who had thwarted him and brought him to the verge of ruin, Hil and D'Arcy Vavasour were sitting in an upper front room of the White Hart Inn, St. Albans. There they would stay the night, returning comfortably to town the next morning.

A hot bath, the attentions of his servants, and two hours of sleep had left but little outward evidence of the gruffling contest through which he had passed, and none would have suspected he had been in the ring for two hours with such a killer as Fesend. Thanks to his fine style of defence and the sensible lining of his opponents, few blows had reached his face. A scarcely noticeable discoloration beneath one eye, and a swelling out on the lip, were the only visible marks.

He was well enough when he returned to his D'Arcy Vavasour at supper, pouring himself a good tumbler of wine. "It is my mistake," observed Vavasour suddenly, the maid having removed the remnants of the meal. "to walk two miles every night before going to bed. Will you join me, Ned?"

"With pleasure, sir."

"You are not too tired? I had forgotten you have probably taken, to-day, all the exercise that is good for you."

"A little more won't hurt me," the lad laughed. "I should like it." And he rose with alacrity.

"The walk," went on the Christian, speaking very solemnly, "is conducive to quiet sleep, and hence the preservation of my health. My lord Peterham declares that the night air operates detrimentally upon the skin of one's face, but I find myself unable to agree with him. More than one discussion we had upon the matter, but he is in the wrong, and I have been unable to convince him of his error. The practice is entirely agreeable to me, and I rather myself I am a better example of the consequences of my theory than Peterham is of his neglect. I consider it a matter of importance that a gentleman should consider his appearance, particularly in respect of the clearness and freedom from blemish of the face."

At a gentle pace they strolled down the quiet street in the direction of the cathedral. There talk was of the fight. Hil's early dinner came in for discussion, and he explained the cause.

"I'm really pleased that you were beaten," Vavasour admitted. "Of course, you were unable to see the face of Sir Vincent Brooker. I can assure you, Ned, it was worth studying. My dear lad, I have no wish to make you apprehensive, but after this day you will need to go warily. I need hardly say that anything which is in my power to do for you shall be done."

"I, too, sir, have something to remember," Hil replied shortly. "Of course, it is a big satisfaction to me to know

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"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

that I have done something towards upsetting Sir Vincent's carefully plans—"

"Yes, Ned, you have done something," interrupted Vavasour, smiling quietly.

"But, at the same time, sir, I have not forgotten that there are personal matters between me and him for which I require satisfaction," said Hil decidedly.

He would not readily forget the attacks upon himself, the risks he had undergone as a result of the lie that had sent him on a wild-goose errand into Essex, and, above all, the ruin of his father.

"Unless, sir," Hil added suddenly, "in consequence of what happened this afternoon, you consider you have a prior claim to satisfaction upon Sir Vincent, and intend to call him out."

"For trying to run me down, Ned? No; I shall not take advantage of that."

And then Hil gave Vavasour the true story of the attack by the baronet's hired ruffian upon John Rider's cottage.

Without change of expression Vavasour listened, but when Hil had finished he drew a long breath.

"That makes my determination absolute," he said.

"To challenge Sir Vincent?" cried Hil, remembering what his companion had said about the late incident in the inn.

Vavasour made a gesture of disgust; his lip curled.

"Why, no, Ned; certainly not," he answered. "To claim the satisfaction due to a gentleman from such a fellow as he would be to do the usual a great and undeserved honour. I do not wish to sell my hands; they have been kept clean up to this present. For this that you have told me, Ned, I am more than grateful. It had been my determination to call Sir Vincent out. You have spared me a humiliation from which I should never have recovered."

"No," he went on, speaking very distinctly; "the determination of which I spoke is to have no more to do with the jobbing. Your honest blackguard, I can tolerate, providing I have no contact with him; but such a cut as Sir Vincent I absolutely refuse to have any association with such as he. And as he will not sever his connection with the Ring—why, I must. And yet I am half tempted to cut my words, for your sake, Ned."

"There was silence for a few minutes. Then—"

"You will not leave your present—occupation, Ned?" the Christian asked; and, in spite of his assumption of carelessness, there was a real anxiety in his voice.

Hil laughed.

"I am afraid, sir, I cannot," he replied. "I have not done so ill, and I fear I should be hard put to it to find another in which I might do as well. Thanks to your kindness, I have been able to earn money, and so long as I earn it honorably I am content."

"Yes. Perhaps your efforts may help to keep at bay the growing blackguardism that is killing the Ring." But Vavasour sighed.

"But I could wish, sir, that I might continue to fight as your representative," said Hil.

"You will not need to regret my defection, Ned. After to-day, you will have no lack of men only too willing to back you, even I—"

"No, sir," Hil interrupted firmly. "I will not ask you to alter your determination to remove your patronage from the Ring because of an interest in myself. I owe much to you Mr. Vavasour; thanks to your kindness, I am in the position I hold, and I am grateful. You have said I have done well enough to-day to gain the confidence of others; for the opportunity I have to thank yourself, and I would rather not take advantage of your kindness. You have helped me to gain a footing—"

"And now you are confident of being able to stand alone—oh, Ned? Well, it is such confidence as that I like. And though I perceive in my intention never again to take a prominent part in the Ring, yet I wish you to believe, Ned, that I shall always be your friend, and if at any time my poor services can be of assistance to you, you have but to demand them."

"I am sure of that," cried Hil heartily.

And impulsively he held out his hand, which D'Arcy Vavasour grasped at once.

But more than one of Vavasour's acquaintances would have been mightily surprised could they have witnessed and heard such pledges of friendship between the exclusive sportsman, with whom so few of his equals were on terms of real intimacy, and Ned Harley, the latest recruit to the Fanny, and winner of one of the most exciting contests that the records of the Ring contained.

D'Arcy Vavasour was a little surprised at himself. To Ned Harley he certainly owed much; but had not his intention directed in the last something more than mere outward appearances indicated, he could not have brought himself to

great as an equal one who gained a living as a professional boxer.

"Who is he?" Vincent asked himself again and again, when in his bed-room. Then he smiled to himself. "Ned Harley, whom you and you are positively certain can be neither in the valour of being cautious. But there is one thing certain; my instinct is not at fault. That lad is one with gentle blood in him."

Before visiting Hill good-night he had invited the lad to accompany him to a supper-party to be given by Lord Alvanley, in three days' time. The cream of the Continental world would be present, and every guest had been asked to bring a friend.

Hill accepted the invitation gladly, the more because he was assured that among the gentlemen present were those who would be ready to take the place of Arce Vivasor as a scouter, and provide him with the chance of being matched again.

In those days were no men who made a livelihood by professional battles in the ring, holding out the inducement of a huge purse to tempt leaders into making a match; and but for the confidence of wealthy supporters of the Ring in the skill or game of fighters whom they personally favoured, contests would have been few enough. There were no championship titles at various weights to be fought for, and men fought to decide the actual question of superiority, instead of with the hope of gaining a huge monetary reward. As for a loser's end of the purse, such a thing had no existence. But a fighter who had proved himself seldom lacked a rich supporter willing to stake largely on his behalf.

Had, however, Hill been aware of the result that would arise from the invitation he had accepted, he would have been a far less hopeful and expectant young man than he was.

The Baiting of the Trap.

The forenoon of the day for which Lord Alvanley's supper-party was fixed saw Sir Vincent Brookes driving his high-stepping cattle along the high-road which leads through Epsoes and Dorking to Honham. He was alone, and it is a very good reason, although there was nothing good-humoured in his remarks, to such a mass of slow-moving vehicles upon the road as hindered for a second or two his progress.

He was invited to Lord Alvanley's supper, and he was on his way to fetch the guest he intended taking.

He possessed himself much entertainment, and some profit, from the evening night's banquet.

He had settled, temporarily, his financial difficulties, thanks to a long-headed and none too scrupulous Jew money-lender of Duke Street, and now he was taking the first step towards the retaliation upon Hilary Bevan for various injuries received.

His scheme was a good one; the only flaw that he had been compelled to impart some of it to Mr. Barney Innes of Duke Street, 24th, that Bevan had to be allowed to stand. Without it, the means for carrying out his fine idea could not have come into existence.

That the scheme was wholly dishonest worried neither Brookes nor the Jew. In its success the one saw his revenge, and the other a very substantial profit on the cash he risked.

At ten minutes before noon, Sir Vincent drew up his cattle outside a very small cottage upon the borders of St. Leonard's Forest. The name of Captain Cokerley had not proved untrue. At this cottage it had run Sir Patrick Bevan to earth.

Sir Patrick was making believe to be working in his garden when he heard his name called. Turning, above the quick-set hedge he could see the upper half of a man seated in a high chair.

"Sir Vincent Brookes?" he exclaimed.

"The one friend from whom you had no right to hide yourself, Sir Patrick!" called the other from his seat. His voice was reproachful.

"A ruined man has no friends, Vincent."

Sir Patrick looked indeed as though he believed what he said. He seemed ten years older since the night when he had given the faithful Foster his final instructions.

"And what! I conclude I made an enemy because Fate chose my house as the final scene of your misadventures?" asked Brookes.

"No, no; I have said no such thing," cried Bevan. "But when the catastrophe came, I— But of what use to speak of it? It happened, that is sufficient. I am not one who trades upon friendship."

"Nor I one who forgets it!" retorted the baronet. "You did wrong to slip away and bury yourself in one knew where. What was there to justify that? Your debts were paid—"

"And I was a beggar. Beggar, Vincent, here no place in the world I know. How came you to find me here?"

"The greatest chance, and that was I expiated to see you, and well I might have been. None knew where you had gone."

"And very few cared."

"The loss of his son, and the realisation of his own folly had weakened Sir Patrick's spirit; grief and remorse had made him bitter, and although it was evident that he was still without suspicion of the sincerity of the man he believed his friend, he showed no pleasure in the meeting.

"I will not detain you on your journey, Sir Vincent," he said, with weary politeness.

"But I fear I must be rude enough to detain you," and Brookes laughed. "Surely you can spare an hour for an old friend? I am driving into Honham. Will you not join me? I believe the Archer may be relied upon for a not too detestable meal."

Sir Patrick refused; his visitor insisted, and with so much of good nature and sincerity that Bevan at last permitted himself to be persuaded. It was good to find one friend had not forgotten him.

The rest the baronet accomplished without great difficulty. A pleasant meal, a good bottle of wine, the company of a man of his own class, a dozen guineas judiciously lent by his host over as many hands of cards contributed to effect a change in Sir Patrick. His refusal to join Brookes at Lord Alvanley's supper was half forgotten and overcome.

"None but old friends, and all vastly delighted to see you again," Sir Vincent assured him. "Moreover—and this is a piece of news I have kept in reserve—after supper I expect the good fortune of meeting you. You will recall Captain Cokerley, who can give you some news of your son."

"My son?" cried Bevan, and his worn face lighted up.

Brookes nodded.

"Then I will come. Thank you, my friend; thank you a thousand times!" Bevan cried excitedly. "My poor boy, how glad I will be to see him!"

He drove back with Sir Vincent, and on reaching the house a servant informed his master that a gentleman waited to see him. The caller proved to be Cokerley. He greeted his patron enthusiastically.

"I do not know if it is of any importance to you," he said; "but I understand that Ned Harley is to be taken to Lord Alvanley's tonight as Vivasor's guest. I thought you might like to know."

"The deuce!"

"Here was a blunder. To take Sir Patrick Bevan with him was essential to his scheme, but for father and son to meet just then spoiled disaster."

"The deuce!" Brookes repeated. "Sure your news is correct?"

"Quite. In fact, Lord Alvanley's man, informed me. Is it important, then?"

It is imperative that Bevan, who goes with me to-night, does not meet his son, and learn who and what his son is. If he does your work goes for nothing, and my plan fails."

Cokerley did not know what the plan might be, the time not being ripe for him to be entrusted with the details.

"Can't young Bevan be prevented from going tonight?" he asked.

"A easily done suggestion," sneered his master. "Perhaps your brilliant intellect can go still further, and discover how such an event may be accomplished."

Cokerley took the sneer with equanimity. He was used to such; but it stimulated his cunning brain.

"Send him a letter telling him his father is in danger, and must see him."

Brookes turned upon his creature with a string of oaths and insults. Did Cokerley mean mocking him? Once before the suggested expedient had been tried.

"But why not let the letter be read? Bevan is in your house," he said.

"For several seconds Sir Vincent stood silent; then an exclamation broke from him.

"There is some sense in the creature after all," he said loudly.

Catching Cokerley by the arm, he dragged him from the room, and into that where Sir Patrick Bevan was waiting.

"Here, Sir Patrick," he called, "here is the gentleman who believed he has seen your son. You meet him earlier than expected, but none the less ready for that. Now, sir, have the goodness to tell my friend, Sir Patrick Bevan, where it was you saw his son."

"My son, Sir Patrick?" cried Sir Patrick eagerly. "You have news of him. I long to see and hear you all together."

For once the shrewd Captain Cokerley was at a loss. What was in his patron's mind he had not the faintest notion. What was wanted of him he did not know. Staring at Sir Patrick, he stammered:

"Now, sir, sir—"

"Yes, yes, captain," broke in Sir Vincent impatiently.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 26.

Next Wednesday—

£100 REWARD!

A Reward, New, Lond. Complete School Tale of
 Wm. Henry & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Did you not mention to me that you had seen Sir Patrick's son at—St. Albans, was it not?"

"Near St. Albans. He was—"

"Unawares where Sir Patrick is now staying," broke in Brockton. "My dear friend, why not send a note to your son at once. Tell him where you are now living—near Harbottle? And if he be the son you ought to have, he will be anxious to see you without delay."

It was a clever trap, and the villain fell into it. Pen, ink, and paper were thrust on Sir Patrick, and in a very few minutes a short note informing Hill where his father was staying, and asking him to come to see his parent was written. This note, Sir Vincent undertook should be conveyed to Hilary Bevan without delay. He would send his grocer with it at once.

Ten minutes later the letter was in Hill's hands. Having read it, he went to D'Arcy Yavassov's dressing-room.

"Will you forgive me, and also make my excuses to Lord Alvanley?" he asked. "I ought to go at once."

"Do not let the letter be Yavassov's hands."

"You have no doubt of the genuineness of this?" the latter asked, having read.

"Not the least. The handwriting is my father's."

"Then you can do no less than act upon it; you must go at once." And then Yavassov smiled. "So you are the son of Sir Patrick Bevan," he said.

"Yes, sir. I should have told you at first," replied Hill, flushing. "But I was not sure. A professional fighter—"

"My dear boy, I understand. There is no need for explanations. I honour your pluck. Take the best of my wishes, and start at once."

So it happened that when D'Arcy Yavassov reached Lord Alvanley's house to wait on the young lord, whose name was on the lips of all those who had not been present at the ring-side at No Man's Land, he had heard accounts of the great battle.

"Urgent personal business has prevented him accompanying me," explained Yavassov in answer to the many inquiries.

"My boy, I must make excuses to you for Ned Harley's detention."

(This thrilling sporting story will be continued in next Wednesday's issue of "THE GEN" LIBRARY. Order your copy EARLY.)

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.

Colours 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.

Wanted correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gen," 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 Gen' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.1"

C. J. Malborough, St. Joseph's College, Robinson Road, Hong-Kong, China, wishes to correspond with a boy reader, age 18—19.

The Misses Edith and Dorothy Harris, Box 18, Kooragang, Barr, South Australia, wish to correspond with boy readers, age 15.

H. Dasher, Violet Street, Eden Terrace, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers living in America, age 15—18.

W. J. Doherty, P.O. Box 85, Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 13—20.

L. O'Malley, care of Post Office Pharmacy, Queen Street, Brisbane, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers in England and Ireland, age 14—15, interested in stamps.

J. Dickinson, High School, Perth, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15—17, living in England.

H. Barry, care of Robertson & Moffat, Murray Street, Perth, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 15—18, living in England.

A. Mackay, care of Andrews Bros., Flinders Lane, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a Scotch girl reader, age 14—16.

R. Latta, 45, Gertrude Street, Geelong, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

R. Fleming, care of Roads Board Office, Geelong, Victoria, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers in England, Ireland, or Scotland.

E. J. Sarge, 14, Ripon Road, Borealla, Bombay, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 19—20, in England.

C. W. Hanson, Pokuru, Auckland, North Island, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers in Great Britain, age 17—20.

Miss H. Liebenberg, 88, Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with male readers, over the age of 20, living in the United Kingdom.

Miss D. L. Cook, 88, Height Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy readers, age 16.

R. Knight, 109, Ferrier Avenue, Toronto, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

Miss E. Webster, Gars House, Ballina, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers in England, Canada, and America, age 17—22.

W. Clonest, P.O. Box 2078, G.P.O., Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers, age 14.

H. Vulp, 2132, Garden Drive, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in South Africa or Australia, age 15.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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Our Companion Papers.

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GRAND NEW SERIES OF FOOTBALL ARTICLES!

GOAL-SAVING

BY JOHN EWART

Goalkeeper for Bradford City.



SOMEBODY once said that goalkeepers are born and not made. Now, to a certain extent, that may be true, and it is quite certain that many of the finest goalkeepers of to-day have shown a liking for the position in quite early days.

I quite agree that you cannot possibly make a goalkeeper, or, as far as that goes, a player of any sort, out of a player who has not the natural physical requirements to start with, but there is no reason why any young fellow who is possessed of good eyesight, is quick to think and quick to act, and who is physically sound and strong, should not come to the front as a goalkeeper, provided that he is eager to get on, and does not mind plenty of hard work and hard knocks.

But the physical strength and the courage are necessary—do not make any mistake about that. I once heard a little story of a young player who thought he would like to be a goalkeeper. Well, on one occasion he was given the opportunity of showing what he could do between the posts in a certain match. Well, the game had not been in progress long and the opposing centre-forward beat the back, and when he shot—a terrific kick—the goalkeeper only made a very half-hearted attempt to get to the ball.

"Why didn't you stop it?" he was asked by one of his side immediately afterwards.

"Stop it?" said the man, and he was trembling in every limb. "It took me all my time to get out of the way of it!"

Now, that worthy gentleman was not a born goalkeeper, and could never have been made into one. If that is how the rooster feels when a hot shot is sent in, he will be sure to try some other position on the field, or, perhaps, poultry-farming will be more to his liking.

Having decided, then, that you really want to be a goalkeeper—and I can assure the reader that although the position has its disadvantages, its trials and its worries, it also has its compensations—then you can go ahead with this matter of goal-saving.

In the first place, I should say to the aspiring goalkeeper that he must have plenty of practice. That much you may rest assured of. And there is one point about this practice which is in favour of the young goalkeeper—there are plenty of opportunities for getting in. Don't miss them. Whenever you see a number of boys playing about with a football, go and offer your services as the target. Let them shoot at you as hard and as often as they like—the harder the better, and only begin to grumble when they stop putting in the piddlers. That is the sort of practice for the young goalkeeper.

Now there comes the question of how to go about stopping the shots—how to keep them from entering the space which the goalkeeper has to guard. It is not an easy matter, I admit, for it has to be remembered that just as goalkeepers are experts in stopping shots, so are forwards experts in sending in efforts which take a tremendous lot of stopping.

In the first place, the goalkeeper must learn to get his hands to the ball every time; there must be no kicking at it except when his opponents are so near that it would be folly to try and get the ball in your hands. You see, the goalkeeper is in a different position from that of any other player on the field. If any of the other boys make a mistake there is the possibility that it may be rectified by another member

of the side. If the half-back, for instance, fails in his tackle there is the full-back who is ready to remedy the error. But if the goalkeeper makes a mistake, it means a goal against his side—he is the last hope. Hence, it becomes obvious that the goalkeeper must make as few risks as he possibly can, and to kick at the ball is to take risks.

Do not develop the habit which is so wrong in many goalkeepers of falling on the ball almost every time you save a shot. That is the way to get a kick in the head or a pore rib or two, and at the same time it is not doing your side much service.

If you have not time to get in a kick at it, then throw it somewhere out of harm's way. And, remember, is this matter of throwing that if you cannot get the ball far, it is much better to throw it out in the direction of the wings than into the middle of the field. If you throw it just a little way out, and in the middle of the field, it is more than likely that the opposing centre-forward will pounce on it and shove it back into goal before you have had time to recover, but if you throw it in the direction of the wings, then it will be much less likely to come back quickly.

Another bad habit which will be noticed in many goalkeepers is that of bringing the high shot down at their feet. This results in no end of goals, for the forwards are generally waiting ready and willing to get the ball back in the net; and it is the easiest thing in the world for them to do it if the ball is dropped right at their feet. If a shot is so high that he cannot catch it, or if his opponents are so near that it would be unwise for him to do so, then the goalkeeper is justified in tipping it over the bar for a corner-kick. In fact, that is the safest way.

Provided the defenders know their business, not too many goals should be scored from corner-kicks, and, at any rate, it is a lesser evil than bringing the ball down at the feet of your opponents, who are waiting in goal.

A mistake which I am sure worries young goalkeepers a lot, judging from the number of times I have been asked about it, is whether they should run out of goal. It is difficult to lay down a hard-and-fast rule on this point—so much depends on each individual circumstance. Let us put it like this, however. In the first place, the goalkeeper's position is between the posts, and there is no justification for leaving it without a good reason. But that good reason seems to me to come when the forward has beaten the full-back, and he is rushing on towards the goalkeeper with nobody else to beat.

In the first place, if the goalkeeper comes out to meet the man with the ball, he automatically reduces the angle-space at which the forward has to shoot. In addition, he is naturally to put the forward off his shot by going out to meet him; that he would by staying in his place.

This may be taken as a golden rule: Reduce the space at which your opponent has to shoot until it is as small as possible.

If you forget the other things I have written, remember the goalkeeper must play for safety. He must take the fowls possible rings, and get rid of the ball in the shortest space of time possible. There are the first secrets of success.

John Ewart



If his opponents are so near that it would be unwise for the goalkeeper to catch the ball, then he is justified in tipping it over the bar.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



THIS WEEK'S CHAT

WHOM TO WRITE TO :
EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.
 EVERY MONDAY
"THE PENNY POPULAR"
 EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday.

"£100 REWARD!"By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

In this, our next grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., the partners of St. Jim's have a grand opportunity of displaying their powers as amateur detectives, and they are not slow to take advantage of it. An escaped convict is lurking in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's—a dangerous rascal for whose capture a large reward is offered. This fact leads Cutts, of the Fifth Form—one of the black sheep of the school—to turn amateur detective also.

He traces the convict, and finally comes face to face with him—with the most surprising consequences!

From that time Tom Merry & Co. find Cutts working against them, but in spite of this it is through the instrumentality of the janitor that the

£100 REWARD

finds its way ultimately into the coffers of the Rylands Cottage Hospital.

TO MY OVERSEAS CHUMS.**YOUR EDITOR'S GREAT NEW SCHEME.**

I have long realised that the great popularity enjoyed by "The Gem" Library and its companion papers, "The Magnet" and "The Penny Popular" in our Colonies is due to a large measure to the personal efforts of my loyal Colonial chums in introducing their favourite journals to their friends out there.

A great many new readers have thus been obtained by my chums, who have done this simply out of goodwill towards their friends and Editor, and from the desire to be their friends into a "real good thing."

I am pleased to say, however, that I have now contrived a new scheme whereby Colonial readers willing to introduce "The Gem" Library, and its companion papers, "The Magnet" and "The Penny Popular," to their friends in the district will be able, without any extra trouble, to add substantially to their weekly income. I can assure any of my Colonial chums taking advantage of my special offer that I mean to take care that they receive ready

GENEROUS TREATMENT.

I shall not only give them an absolutely free start by sending them a large number of

FREE COPIES.

But I shall put money into their pockets as well. By taking advantage of my special scheme, any "lads" and enterprising Colonial boys or girls readers of "The Gem" Library can in his spare time, with a minimum of trouble and no capital outlay, make a very nice, independent

ANNUAL INCOME.

Some of my chums may possibly consider this generous offer of mine too good to be true, and hesitate to take immediate advantage of it. I will only ask these hesitating ones to consider for a moment, firstly the standing of the paper which makes this offer, and of the huge and world-famous firm which backs it up; and secondly, the great discredit which would attach to this paper—discredit which would be absolutely fatal from a business point of view—if it failed to carry out its pledges to the home. A reputation

for scrupulously fair dealing, such as I am thankful to say "The Gem" Library and its companion papers have always enjoyed, is a paper's most valuable asset, which the Editor is most careful to preserve, come what may.

A SPECIAL DEPARTMENT

has been appointed to deal with this great new scheme, which is, of course, only open to Colonials who are genuine "Gem" readers. My chums abroad who wish to edit and add to being about a substantial addition to their weekly pocket-money or earnings should write at once for full particulars of my grand new scheme, addressing their letters to:

Export Department,
 "The Gem" Library,
 The Fleetway House,
 Farrington Street,
 London, E.C.
 England.

ANIMAL CINEMA ACTORS—No. 2.**How Reynard's Life-Story was Filmed.**

How would you like to be able to sit within a few yards of a wild life without your legs being aware of it?

This was the unique experience which led to the lot of Mr. F. Newman, who is a naturalist and a cinematographer.

This gentleman wanted to secure moving pictures of the life-story of a fox; but how to get it puzzled him for a long time. At last he hit upon the idea of taking the films from a cow-made of cardboard. This cow was large enough for him to lie inside, and contained his couch, so that he might rest when needed a stove for cooking his food, chair, table, and cinematograph all complete. Then it was painted to resemble the cow, and all was ready for the film to be taken.

As soon as the light was sufficient, Mr. Newman had to be ready at his camera, to film the fox as he emerged from his hole. Mr. Fox, all unsuspectingly, was filmed as he left his hole, a record taken of his time of getting up, and again on his return to his lair. All his private habits were recorded by the camera, and a clever little plan was arranged to take living pictures of Reynard's method of catching and killing his food. A specially constructed batch was placed near the hole, in which were held captive a number of rabbits. Beside the cow was a switch which opened the door of the batch. One fox entering Mr. Fox, on arriving from his couch, sniffed the air cunningly, and decided that he could smell rabbit. The next minute the batch door swung open, and several fine, fat rabbits scampered out. Reynard made no mistake about catching one of them, at least, and the naturalist turned away at the bundle of his camera, as Mr. Benny was fast killed, and then partly devoured by the voracious fox.

A special Kinetograph Camera, called a stop-camera, was used. With this camera the operator may stop in the middle of a film, and continue the next day, if he so wished, without the finished film upon the screen showing any signs of the lapse of time between one photograph and the other.

(Another of this grand new series of articles, specially written for "The Gem" Library, will appear next Wednesday.)



FREE FOR SELLING 12 BEAUTIFUL XMAS CARDS AT 1d. EACH.



As an advertisement we give every reader of this paper a splendid present absolutely **FREE** simply for selling 12 Cards at 1d. each. (Gold-mounted, Embossed Folders, Glossy, etc.) Our up-to-date Prize List contains hundreds of different kinds of free gifts for everyone, including **Ladies' and Gents' Gold & Silver Watches, Ostrich Feathers, Furs, Cycles, Telescopes, Chains, Rings, Accordeons, Cinemas, Gramophones, Air Guns, Engines, Toys, etc., etc.** All you need do is to send us your name and address on Coupon below (or a postcard will do), and we will send you a selection of lovely cards to sell or use at 1d. each. When sold send us the money obtained and we will immediately forward gift chosen according to the Grand List we send you. **Start Early.** Send a postcard now to—



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(Dept. 7), KEW, LONDON.



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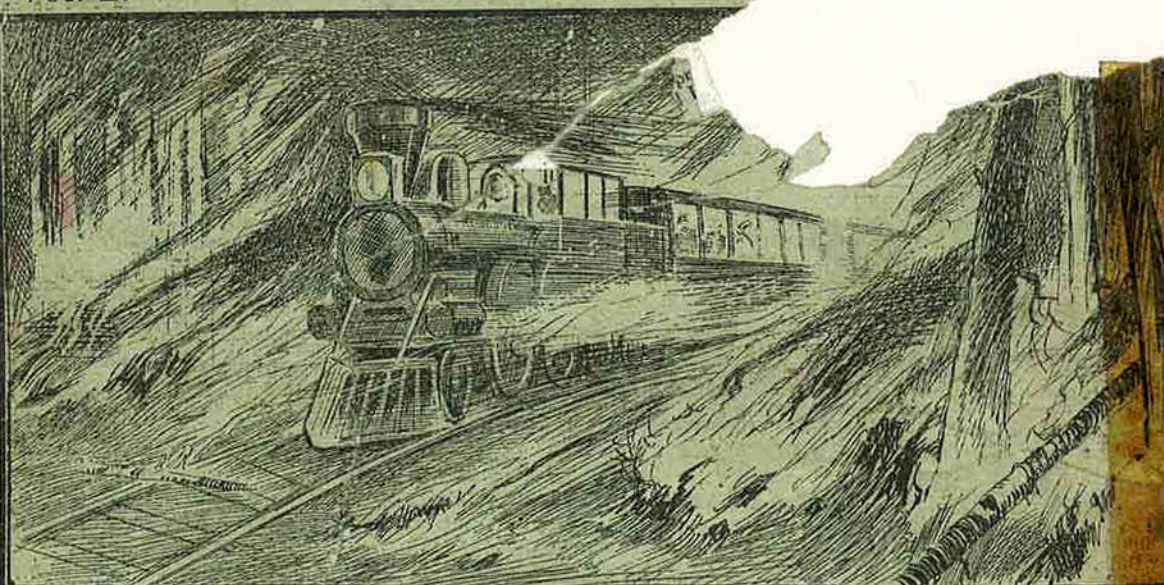
Dear Sirs,—Please send me a selection of Xmas and New Year Cards and 1914 list of Free Gifts, as mentioned above.

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No. 56. THE PENNY POPULAR



The above picture illustrates a thrilling incident in "THE RIVAL PRESIDENTS!" the grand, long, complete tale of Jack, Sam, & Pete, by S. Clarke Hook, which is contained in the current issue of our grand companion paper "The Penny Popular." This splendid pennyworth also contains "Tricking the Turk" and "The Guy of St. Jive"—two wonderful, complete stories you would be sorry to miss. Order "The Penny Popular" to-day.

NOW ON SALE.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

HE'S HAPPY IN THE SUMMER.

"Please help a poor fellow wot can't get work at his trade on account of the weather!" whined the tramp.

"Here's a sixpence," said the charitable lady. "How does the weather interfere with your work?"

"Thanks, lady! Yer see, I'm a pickpocket, an' the cold makes everybody keep their hands in their pockets!"—Sent in by J. Clow, Allon.

READY FOR HIM.

An Irish youth was in search of a situation, so he went to the gasworks. As he was proceeding down the yard, he was met by a foreman.

"What do you want?"

"Work."

"What can you do?"

"Almost anything."

"Well," said the foreman, bent on having a joke with the youth, "you seem to be a very smart fellow, but could you wheel a barrow of smoke?"

"Yes, certainly," replied the youth. "I could easily do it if you would fill it for me!" He was taken on.—Sent in by J. Clow, Allon.

Manchester.

NEW.

Teacher of the school was giving a

word 'stan' at the end of a
Afghanistan means place of
of Hindus. "Can anybody

in the class. "I can."
Sent in by J. L. Martin,

didn't you

ise.
want to

at us using the
after man!"—Sent
in by B. Hudson, Birmingham.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

Jack: "You have a new baby at your house, I hear."
John: "Great gums! And we live four miles apart! I had no idea that anyone could hear it at that distance!"—Sent in by M. Depty, Whitley Bay.

ALLOWING FOR THE TIDE!

Two miners recently took part in an excursion to the seaside, and, gazing upon the ocean for the first time in their lives, were considerably amazed at the sight. As they returned to the railway station, one of them noticed that his friend was carrying a small bottle, half full of water.

"What have ye got there?" he inquired.

"Well," was the reply, "my nither's niver seen the sea, so Ah'm takin' her a drop to lirk at!"

"But why didn't ye fill the bottle?"

The water-carrier looked at his companion with a superior air.

"Why, ye idiot," he ejaculated, "what should Ah do when the tide came oop and burst the bottle?"—Sent in by G. Williams, Ludlow.

MEASURED.

A two-foot rule was given to a labourer in a shipyard to measure an iron plate. The man, not being well up to the use of the rule, after half an hour returned.

"Well, Mick," said the plater, "what size is it?"

"Well," replied Mick, with a grin of satisfaction, "it's the length of your rule, and two thumbs over, with this brick, and the breadth of my hand, and my arm from here to there, bar a finger!"—Sent in by E. Skues, Halifax.

TWINS.

Nurse had bathed the twins and put them to bed, when she heard them laughing loudly.

"What are you laughing for?" she asked.

"Nothing," said one of the youngsters. "Only you have given Elsie two baths, and me none!"—Sent in by H. Tinkler, Middlesbrough.

DON'T MIND ME!

A West End gentleman, who had imbibed wine while it was red, found himself in Trafalgar Square, sitting half in and half out of a fountain, with the water up to his knees, and his umbrella up.

A policeman came along and told him to "move on."
"I sh all right, offisher. Don't mind me. I sh all right," he answered, in tones both quick and husky. "Save the women and children first!"—Sent in by A. W. Lane, Greenwich.

SHARP PRACTICE.

Mrs. Jones was very particular about politeness, and, consequently, her young hopeful Tommy caused her no little anxiety. So now and then she gave him a lecture on that subject.

"Now, Tom dear," she said, "supposing you trod on an old gentleman's foot, what would you say?"

"I would say, 'I beg your pardon, sir.'"

"That's right, my boy," smiled the delighted mother. "And supposing the gentleman gave you a penny for being polite, what would you say then?"

The innocent look departed from Tommy's face. "I'd stamp on the other foot, and say, 'Beg pardon, again, of course.'"—Sent in by S. Gottheimer, Stamford Hill.

AND BILLY DID!

Billie bent over the face of the girl he loved.
"Darling," he whispered, "if I were to ask you in French if I might kiss you, what would you answer?"

The beautiful maiden hastily ran over her limited vocabulary.

"I think I should say 'Billet-doux!'" she whispered.—Sent in by Miss S. Franks, Birmingham.

WITH THE TIDE.

It had been raining hard, and the field was more like a lake than a footer-ground, and a big crowd had assembled to see the match, so the referee decided that the match could not be postponed.

"What!" gasped the captain of the visiting team. "Surely you are not going to play in this?"

"Certainly! Now, don't hang about. You've won the toss. Which side are you taking?"

"Well, if we've got to play," came the answer, "I guess we'll kick with the tide!"—Sent in by J. Clapton, London.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.