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No. 1.

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co of Study 1. Greyfriars School.

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"Twenty!" shouted Lumley-Lumley. "Guineas!" said the Jam. "Hurrah!" "Go it, Lumley!" *(Read the magnificent school tale in this issue.)*

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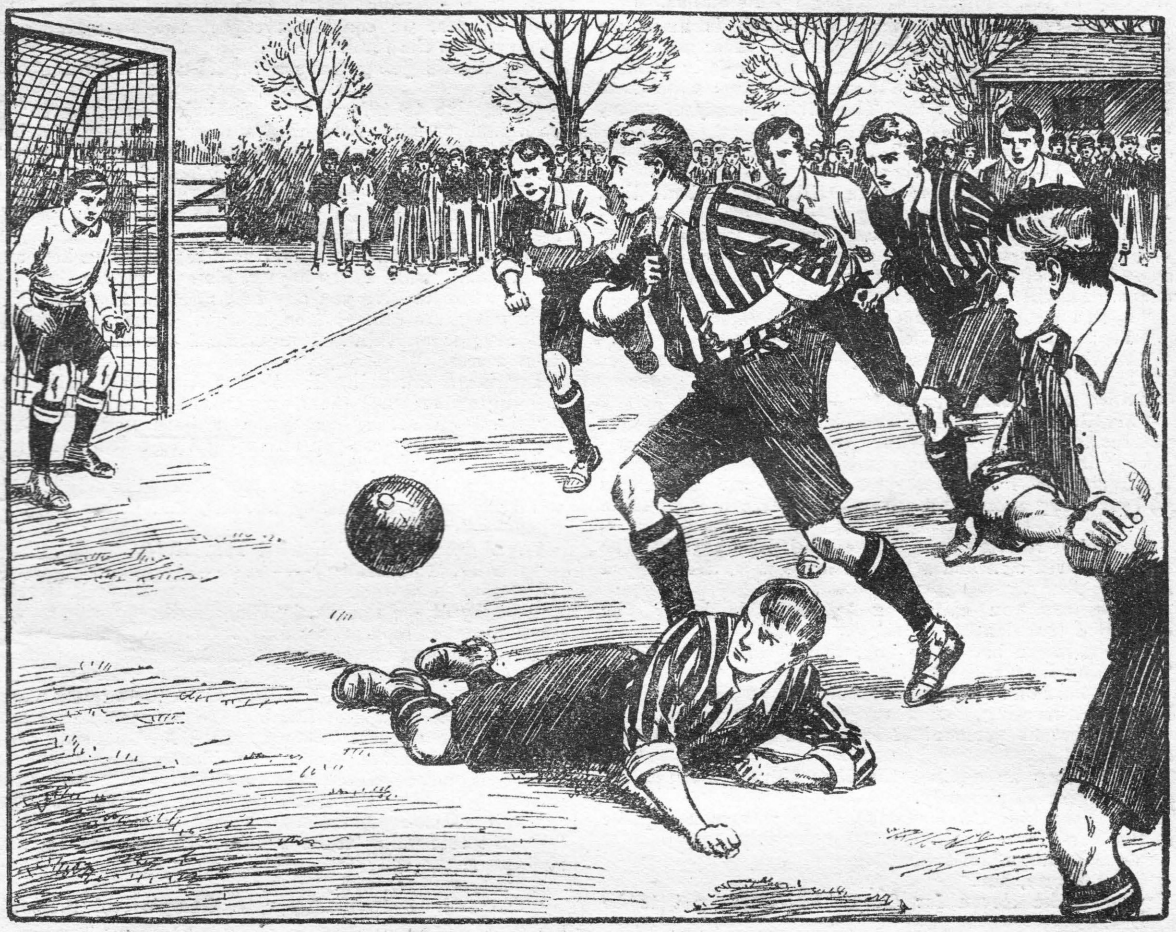
A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



The game came whirling back to midfield, and it passed over Crooke, who was still sprawling helplessly. "Why don't you get off?" growled Lefevre, the referee, as he passed him. Crooke panted, "I won't!" (*See Chapter* 13.)

CHAPTER 1.

A Good Suggestion Acted Upon.

"BREAKING up the happy home?"

Figgins of the Fourth asked the question.

Figgins & Co., the chums of the New House at St. Jim's, had just come over to the School House on important business.

They had arrived at the door of Tom Merry's study, in the Shell passage, and there they paused. The study door stood wide open. Inside the study Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were busy—very busy.

The Terrible Three were in their shirtsleeves. They looked somewhat warm and dusty. They were, apparently, breaking up the happy home, as Figgins expressed it.

The study table stood on its side in the passage. Near it stood the study bookcase. It was not very easy to get along the passage between them. Several chairs and boxes were also piled in the passage.

The few articles that remained in the study were being stacked away into corners. Even the fender was up-ended in a corner.

Figgins & Co. gazed into the study in astonishment.

"Moving job?" asked Kerr.

"Selling-off at a sacrifice on account of the war?" grinned Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry waved a dusty hand at the three fellows from the New House.

"You New House bounders, buzz off!" he said. "Can't you see we're busy?"

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'Yes; you look busy," agreed Figgins, "and rather dusty. If it's a sale, I'll go tuppence for the bookcase."

"It isn't a sale, fathead!"

"Then what the dickens is it?" demanded the puzzled Figgins. "It can't be that you're simply tidying-up. You School House chaps never clean up unless your Housemaster comes down on you!"

"Buzz off!"

"But we've come over to see you," objected Figgins.

"Well, take a good look, and clear!"

"About the Greyfriars match," said Figgins.

"Never mind the Greyfriars match now."

"But I do mind," said Figgins warmly. "It's jolly important. It's about playing a chap of my House in the eleven, you know. I'm backing up his claims."

"The eleven for the Greyfriars match is made up already, my infant," said Tom Merry. "No; we won't take the carpet up, Manners. Too much jolly trouble to get it down again. We'll make the fags wipe their boots before they come in. There'll be plenty of room, anyway."

"I say——" recommenced Figgins.

"Hallo! Are you still there?"

"Yes," roared Figgins; "I'm still here. About that New House chap I was speaking of——"

"Never mind the New House chap you were speaking of. No time now to bother about New House chaps or any microbes of that sort! Nearly time we got a wash, you chaps. They'll be along soon."

"Is it a meeting?" demanded Kerr.

"Yes; it's a meeting. Good-bye!"

"If it's a footer club meeting——" began Figgins.

"It isn't. Good-bye!"

"Now, look here, Tom Merry——"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, with exemplary patience, "we're busy. We're going to hold a meeting—a very important meeting—and we're making room for it. We've got to get ready for the meeting. The chaps will be along soon. Now, run away, like a good little boy!"

Instead of running away like a good little boy, Figgins of the Fourth clenched a pair of large fists, and stepped into the study.

"Who are you calling a 'good little boy'?" he demanded truculently.

"Well, like a bad little boy, then," said Tom Merry. "Anything for a quiet life."

"Yes, buzz off!" said Monty Lowther. "This is a very important meeting, for a very important purpose, by very important persons! No dogs or New House kids admitted!"

"Something up against the New House, I suppose?" said Figgins suspiciously.

"My dear kid, I'd forgotten there was such a place as the New House," said Tom Merry calmly.

"School House, fathead!"

"New House, ass!"

"About the eleven for Greyfriars—that's got to be settled."

"It is settled."

"It isn't settled!" roared Figgins. "You said yourself that Koumi Rao was going to have a chance in the footer. I'm backing up his claims. And he's a New House chap. You can leave Lowther out to make room for him."

"Why, you cheeky ass——" exclaimed Lowther indignantly.

"Or Gussy," said Figgins. "Gussy's not much good, anyway!"

"Bai Jove," said a voice in the doorway, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth came in, "I wegard that wemark as simply idiotic, Figgins, as well as extwemely personal! Tom Mewwy, what are these New House boundahs doin' heah? I undahstood that the meetin' was exclusively School House."

"So it is," said Tom Merry. "This rubbish has blown in as the door was open!"

"Why, you chump——" said Figgins.

"Pway wun away, Figgay," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This meetin' is a stwictly pwivate concern. We are not acquaintin' the whole school with the mattah. It is, in fact, a secwet. Undah the circs, we have decided to keep Skimpole's twoubles to ourselves, and help him out——"

"Shut up, Gussy!" roared the Terrible Three with one voice.

"Weally, deah boys, I am not goin' to tell Figgins anythin'. I quite appwove of makin' a House mattah of it, as Skimpole is a School House chap. We do not want to make it the talk of St. Jim's; those New House wottahs would simply cackle ovah it. I shall wefuse to tell Figgins one word."

"So Skimpole's in trouble, is he?" said Figgins, in wonder.

"Yaas—I mean, I wefuse to answah that question, Figgay. I wegard it as a leadin' question. Sowwy you should be left out, but it's quite a pwivate mattah; and, besides, we could not expect the New House to subscwibe to the fund."

"So there's going to be a fund?" said the astonished Figgins.

"I decline to inform you whethah there is goin' to be a fund or not. As I have alweady wemarked, it is a secwet. Besides, we can waise forty pounds without you New House boundahs chippin' in, I hope."

"Forty pounds!" roared Figgins.

"What on earth do you want to raise forty pounds for?" howled Kerr, in amazement.

"If it's for a feed, it would be a regular whacker, and no mistake!" said Fatty Wynn, his eyes glistening.

"I wefuse to give you any information, Figgins. You need not glare at me, Tom Mewwy. I am not goin' to tell Figgins anythin'. I pwesume I can be twusted to keep a secret."

Figgins & Co. grinned. Arthur Augustus' method of keeping a secret left them very little to discover.

"What on earth has Skimpole been doing?" asked Figgins. "I suppose you haven't got to bail him out, or anything like that?"

"Wats! It was only a mistake of Skimmay's. He weally thought the money was his, and he used it; so when——"

"Will you dry up?" howled Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Hallo!" said Jack Blake, as he came in with Herries and Digby of the Fourth. "Time for the meeting! You Shell bounders look pretty dusty. Do you generally hold meetings in your shirtsleeves?"

Several more juniors came along the passage—Noble and Glyn and Dane and Talbot and Gore of the Shell, and Reilly and Lumley-Lumley and Levison and Hammond of the Fourth. They crowded in, and still more footsteps were heard coming. Evidently it was to be a numerous meeting, and the Terrible Three had done wisely in shifting the study furniture into the passage.

"New House bounders here!" exclaimed Glyn. "Wasn't this going to be a School House meeting, and strictly on the Q.T.?"

Tom Merry grunted.

"They may as well stay now. Gussy's told them all about it," he said.

"Why, Gussy, you ass——"

"Bai Jove, I wepudiate the insinuation!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly. "Tom Mewwy, how dare you make such a statement! I have wepeatedly stated that I wefused to tell Figgins anythin'!"

"Kick the bounders out!" suggested Blake.

"Rats! We don't want to stay to your silly old meeting!" said Figgins scornfully. "Keep it and boil it! Still, if that ass Skimpole is in trouble, we'd be willing to lend a hand at getting him out of it, if required."

"That is the wight spiwit, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus. "You seem to have nosed it out somehow, aftah all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I pwesume that some sillay ass has been chattewin'——"

"Exactly," grinned Figgins. "That's just how it was—a silly ass has been chattering."

"Gentlemen," said Arthur Augustus, looking round, his eyeglass gleaming in his eye, "you are all awah that this meetin', and the object of this meetin', was to be kept stwictly pwivate. Figgins states that a sillay ass

has been chattewin', and so he has got on to it. I suggest that Figgins be called upon to name the person he is alludin' to, and that that person be forthwith bumped for bein' such a chattewin' ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for laughin'. Gentlemen, I put my suggestion to the meetin', and call for a vote."

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Vewy well. Figgins, deah boy, I call upon you to name the sillay ass whose widiculous chattewin' has enlightened you concernin' this meetin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

Arthur Augustus gazed round him in astonishment. He did not see any reason for the general outburst of merriment.

"Pway be sewious, deah boys," he remonstrated. "Figgins, will you give that name, or will you not give that name?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Unless you uttah that name at once, Figgins, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then I have no resource but to give the name," said Figgins seriously. "Gentlemen, the silly ass whose ridiculous chattering has enlightened me concerning this meeting is named Arthur Augustus Adolphus Fathead D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bump him!"

"Weally, Figgins—weally, deah boys—— Hands off! I wefuse to be bumped, and I considah—— You uttah wottahs! Leggo at once, you feahful beasts! Yowwwwww!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole's Scrape.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY sat on the study floor, and gasped for breath. It was a full minute before he recovered sufficiently to pick himself up. Then he jumped up, and pushed back his cuffs.

"You uttah wottahs——"

"Order!" said Tom Merry. "Justice having been done, according to D'Arcy's own suggestion, the meeting will now proceed!"

"Collar him!"

Arthur Augustus was rushing upon Tom Merry, but he was promptly collared by Blake and Herries and Digby.

"Take him back to Study No. 6 and lock him in!" said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to be locked in. I wefuse to allow this meetin' to pwoceed without me. I considah——"

"Chuck him out!"

"I wefuse to be chucked out! I——"

"Will you keep order, then," demanded Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy, kicking up a row at a public meeting. Where are your manners?"

"Why, you uttah wottah——"

"Order!"

"Silence!"

"I wefuse to ordah—I mean—— Blake, leave off dwaggin' at my yahs, you wottah! Undah the circs, I will thwash those wottahs aftah the meetin'."

And Arthur Augustus subsided, and was allowed to remain. He snorted with indignation as he proceeded to dust his beautiful bags, which had suffered somewhat from contact with the study floor.

"What about those New House bounders?" asked Manners.

"Oh, let 'em stay! They know all about it, thanks to Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Talbot suggested letting the New House into it," said Tom Merry. "Your suggestion is adopted, Talbot, nem con."

Talbot of the Shell smiled.

"Well, it seemed to me really a matter for the whole school," he said. "But, of course, I only made a suggestion."

"I always said Talbot was the only chap in the School House with any brains to speak of," remarked Figgins. "Still, if you fellows want us to clear, we'll clear. We don't want to nose into anything."

"Better stay," said Talbot.

"Yes, stay," said Tom Merry. "It's barely possible you may be able to make some suggestion. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I think we're all here," said Tom Merry, looking round.

Kerruish and Mulvaney minor had come in, and Crooke, and Skimpole, and Julian, and two or three others. Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, was blinking in a dreamy way through his big spectacles. The meeting was all about Skimpole, but he did not seem very much concerned.

If Herbert Skimpole was in trouble, evidently the person who was least worried about it was Herbert Skimpole himself.

Although nearly every article of furniture had been cleared out into the passage, preparatory to the meeting, there was not too much room. There was "Standing room only," and the standing was pretty close. Some of the fellows, plainly, did not know what the meeting was about, and had been brought along only by curiosity.

"Shut the door," said Tom Merry, who had donned his jacket again. "Gentlemen, the meeting has now—er—met."

"Hear, hear!"

"Skimpole! Bring that ass Skimpole forward!"

"My dear Merry, I am here," said Skimpole, blinking at the captain of the Shell. "I understand that you wish me to speak."

"Yes, ass! Get on this stool, and explain to the meeting."

"Go it, Skimmy!"

"With pleasure, my dear friends!" said Skimpole, getting on the stool, and beaming over the crowded assembly through his big glasses. "Gentlemen, as you are aware, I am the sole representative in this school of Socialistic opinions——"

"Ring off, you ass! That isn't the subject!"

"It is with much pleasure that I see this meeting gathered together to listen to a speech on the subject of Socialism," pursued Skimpole.

"Cheese it!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Levison of the Fourth indignantly. "Do you mean to say you've brought us here to listen to that?"

"No, no! Skimmy is off-side. Skimmy, you ass, explain to the meeting about the cheque and the mistake, and the rest of it."

"My dear Merry, it would be a waste of time alluding to such trivial matters, while the burning question of Socialism remains——"

"But that's what the meeting's about?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Then let it pass," said Skimpole. "Let us turn to more serious subjects. Gentlemen, in presenting the case of Socialism to you, I will take a simple illustration. Suppose there were two men on an island——"

"Scrag him!"

"Bump him!"

Several hands were laid upon Skimpole, and the stool was kicked from under his feet. Apparently the meeting wasn't prepared to listen to a speech on the subject of Socialism, burning as that question was.

Skimpole came to the floor with a bump, and several boots kindly helped him out of the way.

"I'd better explain," said Tom Merry. "No good trying to get that ass to talk sense."

"Pewwaps you had bettah leave it to me, Tom Mewwy," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will put it to the meetin'——"

"Order!"

"Oh, I don't care!" said Tom. "Let Gussy jaw; he will jaw, anyway, I suppose."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, that is not a vewy wespectful way of puttin' it. Howevah, I feel that I am the most appwopwiate person to addwess the meetin', as a fellah of tact and judgment, and of few words!"

"The fewer the better," said Crooke of the Shell.

"Pway don't intewwupt, Cwooke, and please do leave off jinglin' your money in your twousahs pocket; it wowwies me. We all know that you are fwightfully wich, Cwooke, and you need not keep on jinglin' your money!"

"Is this meeting about Skimpole or about Crooke?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I wish you would not intewwupt, Lowthah. Your wemarks put me out. Gentlemen, I will now pwoceed to explain. Our wespected fwiend Skimpole—of course, that is only a figah of speech, as it is imposs to wespect a fellah who holds such astonishin' ideahs, and actually pwoposes that membahs of the House of Lords should be tweated as twamps unless they get to work——"

"For goodness' sake, cut the cackle, Gussy!"

"Our wespected fwiend Skimpole has got himself into a fwightful difficulty. He is in debt to the tune of fortay pounds. I will explain to you how this happened in a few words."

"A few thousand, more likely!" groaned Blake.

"Our wespected fwiend Skimpole is, as you all know, a sillay idiot!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Among his othah widiculous ideahs, he thinks he is an inventah. He has invented a widiculous airship, and he was ass enough to send the plans to a papah called the 'Flyin' Times.' They sent him a couple of cheques, for instalments in payment, and he was idiot enough to believe that they were buyin' his sillay airship. Bein', among othah vawieties of idiocy, a Socialist, he spent all the money as soon as he could get the cheques cashed, the only sensible thing he did bein' to stand some wathah nobbay feeds."

"Hear, hear!"

"Then it came out, as Skimmay might have known, if he hadn't been a howlin' duffah, that the cheques were sent to him in mistake. They were weally intended for a gentleman named H. Skimpoll, who appeahs to have complained about not weceivin' his money, and so it came out that the cheques had been sent to the wong Skimpole. But by that time the howlin' ass had spent all the money. Mr. Skimpoll came heah to weclaim it, and Skimmay had only a halfpenny left. Naturally, Mr. Skimpoll was not satisfied with that."

"Naturally," grinned Blake.

"He demanded the wetuin of the money, but Skimmay was stonay. In order to keep him fwom goin' to the headmastah about it, we undahtook to find the money. It is a mattah of fortay pounds. If weported to the Head, Skimmay will get into a wow, and the bill will be sent to his patah. I undahstand that his patah will give him a fealiful thwashin', and will stop his allowance entiahly for a yah or more, accordin' to the time it takes to pay the fortay pounds. Wegardin' Skimmay as a born idiot, we came to the conclusion that it was up to us to see him thwough."

"Hear, hear!"

"Skimmay owes Mr. Skimpoll fortay pounds. It has got to be paid. We have undahtaken to pwovide the money, by hook or by cwook, as we wegard it as a debt of honah. We are goin' to save Skimmay fwom gettin' into a fealiful wow. That is how the mattah stands. This meetin' is called to considah ways and means of waising the money. It is a large sum."

"My only hat!" said Figgins. "Where in thunder are you going to raise forty pounds? It's a giddy fortune!"

"A collection will be taken to start with. Then we have got to put our heads together, and make suggestions. Evewy fellah with ideahs on the subject of waisin' the wind will be welcome to make suggestions. In any case, the fortay pounds has got to be waised by next week. Aftah the meetin', gentlemen will wetire and weflect upon the mattah, and send in their suggestions. Gentlemen, we will now pwoceed to the collection."

"Lemme get to the door, please," said Crooke. "I've got my prep to do."

"Same here," remarked Levison.

"Pway do not wetire until the collection is taken, deah boys. Especially you, Cwooke, as you are wollin' in money. I considah that you might stand a couple of pounds."

"Catch me!" said Crooke disdainfully.

"How much will you stand, then?"

"My dear chap, I can't even stand you!" said Crooke, And he walked out of the study whistling.

"Bai Jove! I wegard Cwooke as a wank wottah. Tom Mewwy, have you somethin' for collectin' the cash in—something large?"

"There's the coal-scuttle," said Monty Lowther. "If that isn't large enough, we might borrow a sack from Taggles."

"Try the inkpot," suggested Levison of the Fourth.

"Weally, Levison, the inkpot would not hold vewy much money."

"I dare say it will hold the collection, though," grinned Levison.

And Levison departed from the study, and there was a general exodus after him.

"Bai Jove! Where are you fellahs goin'? The collection hasn't been taken yet," shouted Arthur Augustus.

Half the meeting had dissolved already. The other half remained, generously going through their pockets.

"Have you finished, D'Arcy?" asked Skimpole.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Then I will now address the meeting on the subject of Socialism——"

Skimpole got no further. Tom Merry took him gently, but firmly, by the ear, led him into the passage, and kicked him. Skimpole disappeared from the scene.

Monty Lowther produced an ancient teapot, minus spout and handle, and took it round the meeting. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy started the collection with a sovereign. But all the juniors were not so well provided with cash as the swell of St. Jim's. Very few of them were, in fact. There was quite a generous contribution—everybody wanted to help that ass Skimpole out of his scrape. But the coins that rattled into the old teapot were mostly of copper.

Each fellow departed after making his contribution. The meeting dissolved quickly. At length only the Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 remained in the room. Then Lowther turned out the teapot upon the table, and the loot was counted up.

"One pound nine-and-six!" said Tom Merry.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Blake. "That's a quid from Gussy, and nine-and-six from the rest of the meeting."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It is not weally a laughing mattah," said Arthur Augustus. "We have pledged our honah to see Skimmay thwough. Somethin' has got to be done."

"Something has!" agreed Tom Merry.

"We have pwomised Mr. Henwy Skimpoll his fortay pounds. It has got to be waised somehow."

"The only thing I can think of," said Monty Lowther reflectively, "is to suggest to Mr. Skimpoll to take the great Asquith's advice, and wait till June next year."

"Pway don't be funnay, Lowthah. I wegard this as bein' a wathah wotten outlook for the fortay pounds."

And the Co. agreed it was.

CHAPTER 3.

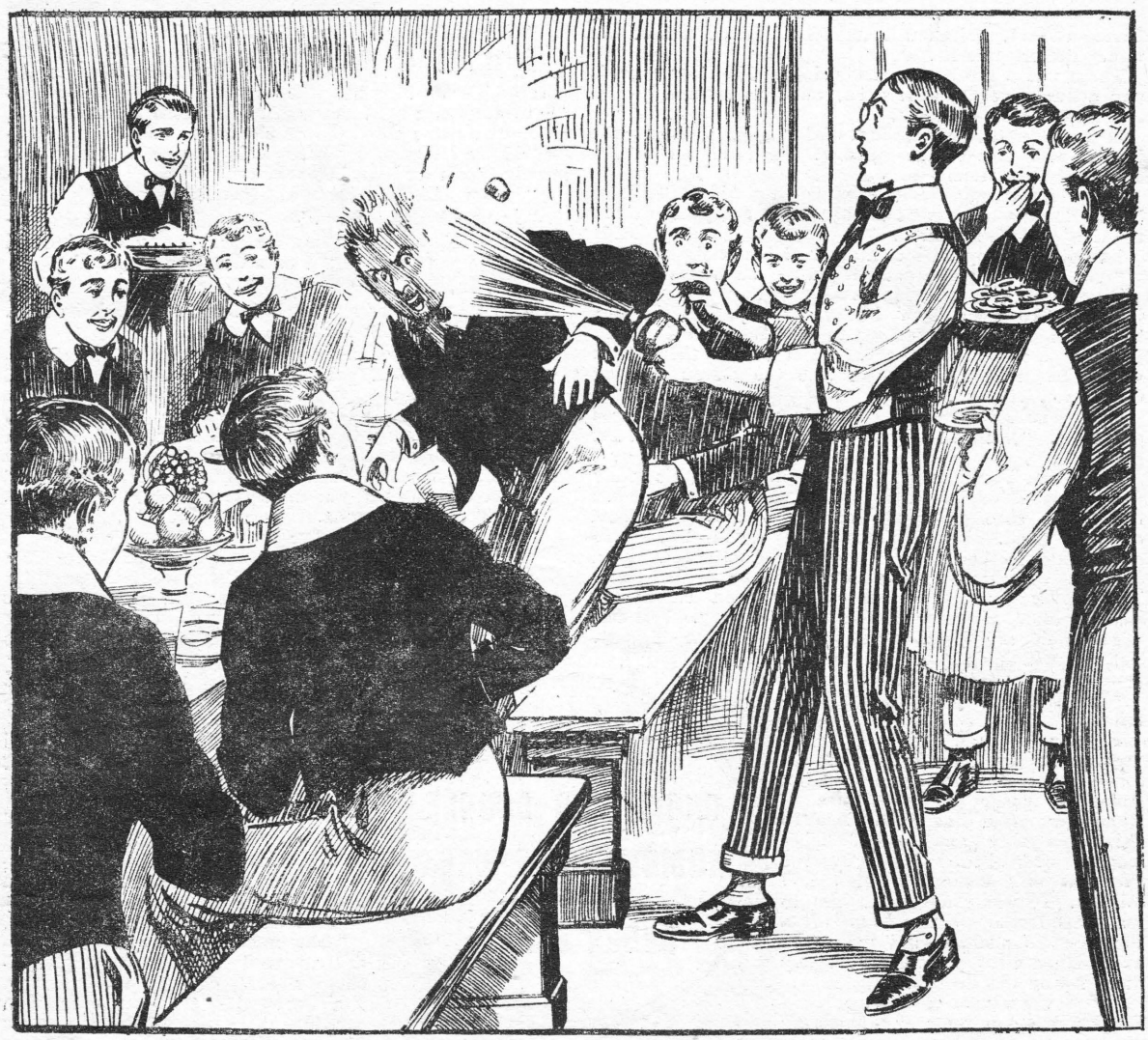
Up to Figgins & Co.!

"IT'S up to us!" remarked Figgins.

Figgins & Co. were at tea in their study in the New House.

The great Figgins had been thinking. The outcome of the unaccustomed mental exercise was stated in his remark.

"It's up to us!" repeated Figgins. "Those School House duffers will never be able to raise the money. It's really a debt of honour, as Tom Merry calls it, and it ought to be paid—and that idiot Skimpole will get into a frightful row if it isn't paid. But those School House chaps haven't the brains for a thing like this. It's up to us to help them out, if only to prove once more that the New House is cock-house of St. Jim's."



The waiter opened the ginger-beer somewhat clumsily. A stream of ginger-beer caught the humorous Levison under the chin, and he jumped up spluttering. (*See Chapter 8.*)

"Ye-es," said Fatty Wynn. "Pass the cake, Figgy!"

"Forty pounds is a whacking lot of money," said Kerr. "Bet you they won't make much of it by taking collections. Collections ain't much good."

Figgins shook his head.

"Utterly rotten," he agreed. "Just like those School House chaps. People don't give away something for nothing. It will have to be a fund, and fellows will have to get something for their money. What about a concert, and high prices for admission?"

"Nobody would come."

"H'm! What about a performance by the dramatic club?"

"Fellows would have to be paid to come and see it."

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins uneasily. "'Tain't so bad as all that. We could raise a pound or two that way. But forty quid is such an awful sum. What do you think, Fatty? Got any suggestion to make?"

"Yes; I think we'd better have the other cake now," said Fatty Wynn. "What's the good of keeping it till to-morrow. Something may turn up before to-morrow."

"Listen to him!" said Figgins, in disgust. "I didn't mean a suggestion about filling your unearthly inside, you porpoise! About the Skimpole fund."

"Oh, that!" said Fatty Wynn. "Yes, I dare say I could think of a wheeze. What about a feed?"

"A what?" roared Figgins.

"A whacking big feed."

"You thumping ass! How can we help the fund by having a feed?"

"I mean a subscription feed," explained Fatty Wynn. "Lots of tuck—every fellow to eat as much as he likes of the very best—and all the profits to go to the fund. Two-shilling tickets, you know."

"But we should have to buy the tuck."

"Buy it cheap in big quantities, and do the cooking ourselves," said Fatty Wynn, his eyes glistening at the thought of revelling in endless quantities of tuck. "Look at a tuppenny jam-tart!"

Figgins looked round.

"I can't see any jam-tarts here," he said.

"I mean look at it—think of it! A tuppenny jam-tart costs tuppence. Well, I can make jam-tarts—you know I'm a jolly good cook. I could make, say, five hundred ——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"At a cost of about a ha'penny each. Think of the profit! We could give the fellows two bobs' worth of tuck at a cost of about a tanner each, if we managed it well. And we could do that."

Figgins rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Might be something in that," he confessed. "It wouldn't raise all that's wanted, but it might raise a good whack towards it. Anyway, it will give the New

House a start, and show those School House duffers the way. Hallo, come in!"

There was a tap at the study door. The door opened, and a dusky youth, with dark, velvety eyes and gleaming white teeth, came in.

It was Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, the Indian junior, who honoured Figgins of the Fourth with his distinguished friendship.

"Trot in Jammy," said Figgins hospitably. "You're late! But there are some muffins left. Fatty hasn't had time to scoff them all."

Koumi Rao dropped into a chair at the study table.

"You have seen the footer captain?" he asked.

Figgins looked a little glum.

"Yes, I've seen Tom Merry, Jammy, but he was holding a fatheaded meeting in his study, so I wasn't able to jaw him," he said. "I'm afraid there isn't much chance of shoving you into the eleven to play Greyfriars."

"Why not?" demanded the Jam, his black eyes gleaming. "Am I not a good player? Why should I not play?"

"You see, Tom Merry's junior captain, and his giddy word is law," explained Figgins. "And I really don't feel quite sure that you could go into the team on your form. You are good—very good—but we've got mighty footballers in the Lower School at St. Jim's, Jammy. Somebody else would have to be left out, and Tom Merry would have to give a good reason for shifting him. However, I'll have another try. You see, it's one of our biggest matches, if not the biggest. Tommy will play you fast enough against Abbotsford or Rookwood."

"But I wish to play against Greyfriars."

Figgins & Co. grinned. Experience in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's had somewhat tamed the high and lofty pride of the Prince of Bundelpore, who had first come to the school with an idea of being monarch of all he surveyed. But the Jam was still sometimes high and mighty. It was difficult for him to understand that the wishes of a Prince of Bundelpore did not count any higher than the wishes of any other fag in the Fourth.

"We'll see what can be done," said Figgins. "Anyway, I'm putting you into the New House junior team for the next House match."

"But it is against Greyfriars that I wish to play. I know one of the Greyfriars boys, the Nabob of Bhanipur, and I should like to play because he is coming with the Greyfriars team."

"Well, I'll give Tom Merry another jaw," said Figgins. "Anything for a quiet life. We'll let you look on, anyway."

The Jam frowned.

"Perhaps if I make Merry a present he will put me into the eleven," he suggested.

"Eh?"

"I will give him a diamond ring."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why do you laugh at me?" exclaimed the Jam, as the chums of the New House burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "Jammy, you old duffer, won't you ever understand that you're in England, and not in India? If you offered Tom Merry a present to put you in the team he would punch your nose."

"In India we give presents when we desire a favour to be done," said the Jam. "It is our custom."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In England, too, I have heard that such things are done," said the Jam sarcastically. "In your business houses you wish to get a contract, and you give a present—what you call palm-oil—is it not so?"

"Well, I dare say such things have happened," admitted Figgins, "but it isn't considered playing the game; only rotters do it."

"You call me a rotter?" demanded the Jam.

"Bow-wow! If you fly into a rage at everything I say, Jammy, I shall rub your princely nose in the carpet," said Figgins. "For mercy's sake, don't let's have any sulks now. Your friend Figgins is worried."

Koumi Rao's clouded face cleared at once.

"If the friend of my heart is in trouble, Koumi Rao is ready to die for him," he said softly.

"Hum! Are you insured?" grinned Figgins.

"Insured? No. Why?"

"Then it's no good dying for me. If you were insured for forty pounds it would be a different matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My friend turns my words into a jest," said the Jam. "If it is money that is desired, behold!"

The Jam jerked out a purse and opened it, and displayed a wedge of golden coins inside. The Jam had plenty of money.

Figgins shook his head.

"I'm not going to rob you, Jammy. I'll let you contribute a quid to the fund, if you like, same as Gussy has. But you can take it over to Tom Merry yourself."

"And then he will put me in the eleven?"

"No!" roared Figgins.

"Suppose I give him five pounds?"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Figgins. "Go and offer Tom Merry five quid to put you in the eleven, if you want to leave his study by the window. Blessed if you won't turn your uncle's hair grey, Jammy. I won't let you contribute to the fund now, you're such an ass! Put that blessed purse away."

"But what is this fund?" asked the Jam.

Figgins explained.

"Bah!" said the Jam. "This fool—Skimpole—what does he matter? Why should he trouble you? He is not your friend."

"Not exactly a pal," said Figgins. "But he's a silly ass, and he's in a scrape, and we're all turning to to help him out of it, you know."

"But why?"

"Oh, my hat! Because—oh, because," said Figgins lucidly, "because a chap does do these things, you know. I'll tell you what, you can take a ticket for Fatty Wynn's feed. We'll arrange that, you chaps, and fix it for Saturday. We may as well draw up the notice now. You can cut up some cardboard into tickets, Jammy, and write 'Two bob' on each of them, and number them."

"While the stars shine, and the rivers roll, I shall always be at the service of my friend," said the Jam, in his grandiloquent style.

"Hear, hear!" said Figgins. "That's rather flowery, but I suppose it means that you're willing to be useful. There's the card, and there's the scissors. Now we'll get on with the notice."

And while Koumi Rao was busy in the manufacture of the tickets, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn put their heads together over a striking notice, which was to be posted up simultaneously in both Houses.

When it was finished Figgins made a second copy, and left the study. He posted up the first notice written by Kerr, in the New House. His copy he carried over to the School House.

In the School House he pinned it on the notice-board, and as he scudded away he had the satisfaction of seeing a crowd gathering to read it.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison Makes a Suggestion.

"BAI Jove! That New House boundah stickin' up a notice on our board!"

"Yank it down!"

"Like his cheek!"

"Let's look at it first," said Talbot of the Shell.

"Hallo! Figgy is getting to work already! This is for the fund."

A big crowd of juniors read the notice eagerly. It was in Figgy's big, sprawling handwriting, and in Figgy's own original brand of orthography.

"NOTICE!

ON SATURDAY next a Feed will be held in the common-room in the New House.

The best of evverything will be provided. Every felow will be wellcome to eat as much as he likes, of the very best! No limit!

Admission Two Shillings!

Tickets may be had from David Wynn, Esquire, New House. Only cash aksepted. Fellows who are hard up and wood like to go in on the nod are respectfully and kurteously requested to go and eat coak.

All prophets go to the Skimpole Scrape Fund.

Sined, GEORGE FIGGINS."

"Bai Jove! What does he mean by prophets?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha! Profits, perhaps," grinned Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Fancy that New House ass getting to work already!" exclaimed Blake. "It's rather like his cheek! This comes of letting New House bounders into it."

"All the better, my son," said Tom. "We'll all take tickets, and I suppose there will be a profit, and every little helps. It's jolly decent of old Figgins to play up like this to get a School House chap out of a scrape."

"Yaas, wathah! It's wathah cheekay, but I appwove."

"That's the last word," remarked Lowther. "Blake, you hear what Gussy says, he approves! Now lie down!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"It's a good idea," decided Tom Merry. "I only hope they won't let Figgins do any of the cooking, that's all. I remember the time he made a fig pudding——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!" said Arthur Augustus, with a shudder. "Befoah I hand out my two shillings I shall insist upon an assurance that Figgins does not have a hand in the cookin'."

There was another notice on the board, in Tom Merry's hand. It ran:

"Suggestions are invited for the Skimpole Scrape Fund. Apply to T. Merry, No. 9 in the Shell passage."

Tom Merry had already received a good many suggestions. Arthur Augustus had suggested that he should give a "wecital," promising any number of tenor solos, fellows to be charged, say, five shillings admission. To which Tom Merry had replied that the fellows would want to charge Arthur Augustus five shillings each all round to come and listen to his tenor solos, and that wouldn't help the fund—rather the reverse.

Having read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, so to speak, George Figgins' announcement, the Terrible Three went to their study to do their preparation.

They were thus occupied when Levison of the Fourth tapped at the door and came in.

The chums of the Shell gave him somewhat grim looks. The cad of the Fourth was not popular in that study. Of all the School House fellows, Talbot of the Shell was the only decent chap who seemed to be able to see any good in Levison. Levison's pals, Crooke and Mellish, were even blacker sheep than himself.

"Well?" said Tom Merry concisely.

"I've looked in to make a suggestion, if you'd care to hear it," said Levison.

"Go ahead!"

"Good egg!" said Lowther heartily. "Hand it over, Levison; there's the teapot. I remember now you had a quid out of Skimpole when he got the money. Your idea is to hand it back, of course."

Levison grinned.

"Not exactly," he replied. "That quid has gone the way of a good many other quids. Skimmy can't start in business as a Socialist without its costing him something. That's not the idea. But I can suggest a way for a good bit of cash to be raised."

"We'll be obliged if you can," said Tom Merry. "We've promised to pay the debt next week, and it's got to be done, but I'm blessed if I see at present where the money is to come from!"

"You're meeting the Greyfriars team next week," said Levison.

Tom Merry stared.

"Yes; but what has that to do with the fund?"

"I'm coming to that. I suppose you've made up the team that's going to play Greyfriars on Wednesday?"

"Yes."

"You three in it, of course," said Levison, with a sneering smile.

"Not us three," said Tom Merry quietly. "Manners is out. If you're curious about the team, you can read the list when it's up."

"No room for a rank outsider like me?"

"Hardly."

"Or a chap like Crooke?"

"Crooke! Crooke can't play footer, and he doesn't like the game, either."

"He would give a good bit to be able to say that he'd played in the junior eleven, all the same, against Greyfriars."

"Well, he won't have a chance of saying it as long as I'm captain. If he cares to give up smoking, and rotting about, and to take up regular exercise and practice, he'll have as much chance as anybody else, of course."

"He won't do that; but he'd like to play once, for the sake of swank."

"The St. Jim's second eleven, my son, was not instituted as a swanking-ground for bounders like Crooke."

"Well, here's my suggestion. Crooke isn't the only chap. There's that nigger in the New House, rolling in money the same as Crooke. There's myself, too; I'd like to get into the eleven for once. And there are others. Suppose you held an auction——"

"An auction!"

"Yes, and offered, say, four of the places in the team to the highest bidders."

"Wha-a-at!"

"You'd get some thumping good bids, and even if you got four shaky players, you'd have a good chance of beating Greyfriars all the same, with seven good men in the team. Anyway, you'd raise a big lump for the fund."

Tom Merry stared at him. He could scarcely believe that Levison was serious.

"Put up the places in the junior eleven to auction!" he repeated. "Is that meant for a joke, Levison?"

"Not at all; it's a suggestion."

"You must be off your rocker, I think."

"Don't you think it would raise a good bit for the fund?" said Levison. "You could get the consent of the club and the committee."

"It might," said Tom Merry. "But I certainly shouldn't think of doing anything of the sort."

"Swanking duffers like Crooke would jump at the chance," said Levison.

"And what sort of a game would they put up against Greyfriars?" demanded Tom Merry.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, the Skimpole fund comes before a footer match, I suppose," he remarked.

"Then your supposer is out of gear," said Tom Merry drily. "If you're not pulling my leg, I think you must be dotty."

"Then you won't act on the suggestion?"

"No!"

"Of all the caddish rot I ever heard——" began Lowther.

Levison flushed.

"I might have expected that kind of thanks," he said. "My idea was to do you a good turn, and Skimpole one. Not that I care two straws about you, or Skimpole either, but——" He paused.

"But what?" said Tom Merry curiously.

"Well, I don't mind telling you. Skimmy is Talbot's study-mate, and Talbot is awfully keen about getting him out of his scrape. And I'd do anything I could to do Talbot a good turn. He's the only one in your set who has ever treated me decently. As for you, personally, you can go and eat coke!"

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose you mean well, Levison, but—but—well, it's not a suggestion we can use, that's all. But we're much obliged, and—and we thank you for making it."

"Keep your thanks!"

Levison swung out of the study and slammed the door after him. The Terrible Three looked at one another oddly, and Lowther burst into a laugh.

"Queer beggar!" he said. "It's odd how he sticks to Talbot. Talbot's the only decent fellow who can stand Levison, and whom Levison can stand. But the idea of selling places in the junior eleven—it's rather thick! Even when that chap is trying to do a fellow a good turn, he's bound to come out with something caddish."

"It would raise the wind," grinned Manners. "That swanking ass Crooke would ladle out quids to be able to brag of having played in the junior eleven in the biggest match of the season."

"He won't have the chance," said Tom Merry drily.

And the Terrible Three went on with their preparation, without the slightest idea of making use of Levison's valuable suggestion.

CHAPTER 5.
Figgins Swears.

"WALK up, gentlemen!"

"Tickets two shillings!"

"Walk up! Walk up!"

It was after morning lessons the next day.

Figgins & Co. had taken up their stand in the Form-room passage. Each of them had a sheaf of tickets.

Tickets for the Fund Feed were now on sale. Figgins & Co. evidently expected to do a roaring business, judging by the number of tickets they were provided with.

"Back up, you fellows!" sang out Figgins. "Only two bob a time, and the best feed that's ever been seen within the ancient and historic walls of St. Jim's. Admission by ticket, two bob a time. Here you are, Gussy!"

"Thank you, deah boy! I will take two, one for my minah."

"Four bob, please!"

"One moment, Figgay. I twust that the cookin' will be all wight."

"First-class!" said Figgins. "I'm having a hand in it myself."

"Bai Jove! Then I insist upon the immediate weturn of my money, Figgins. You can take back your wotten tickets!"

"Why, you ass——" said Figgins indignantly.

"I uttahly wefuse to come to the feed if you have anythin' whatevah to do with the cookin', Figgins!"

"Same here," chuckled Monty Lowther. "We're willing to do anything for the good of the cause, excepting to die for it. We're too young to die!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly asses!" roared Figgins. "The cooking will be top-hole—simply topping! I'm making a big fig-pudding myself."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That does it!"

"Gimme my two bob back! Here's your tickets!"

Figgins glared at the juniors. All the fellows who had bought tickets were hurling them at Figgins, accompanied by demands for the immediate return of their cash. The news that Figgins was making a fig-pudding for the Fund Feed seemed to spread general alarm. Nobody had forgotten a celebrated fig-pudding that Figgins had once made for a feed, in which, in the innocence of his heart, he had introduced an enormous quantity of syrup of figs.

"Unless Kerr and Wynn pwomise, honah bwight, to westwain Figgins by force fwom havin' a hand in the cookin', I wefuse to come to the feed."

"We're not insured, you know, Figgins."

"Money back, you dangerous lunatic!"

"No fig-puddings for me!"

Figgins glared, and Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

"It's all right," said Kerr. "We undertake to chuck into the dust-bin anything that Figgins cooks."

"Look here, Kerr——" roared Figgins.

"Shush!"

"You know I'm a jolly good cook. I've undertaken to provide a topping feed, so I'm bound to see to the cooking."

"You can see to the eating, too," grinned Monty Lowther. "I'm not going to be cut off in the bloom of my blooming youth!"

"Life is sweet," said Manners. "You really can't expect it, Figgins. If we were old enough, we'd go out and face the Prussians. But you can't expect us to face your fig-puddings. There's a limit!"

"You frabjous ass!"

"I call upon Figgins to swear that he won't have anything to do with the cooking," said Tom Merry, "otherwise the feed will be off, and the fund will suffer. Now, Figgy, for the good of the fund!"

"You howling ass!"

"For the good of the cause, Figgy!" grinned Kerr.

"Look here, Kerr, you Scotch duffer——"

"Figgins ought to be scotched when he starts cooking," said Monty Lowther. "If Figgins isn't scotched, the feed will be scotched. I call on Kerr to scotch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I uttahly wefuse to be poisoned with Figgay's fig-puddin's. I would not condemn even a Pwussian to eat Figgay's fig-puddin's."

"Hear, hear!"

"Now, then, Figgy——"

"You frabjous chumps!" roared the justly-incensed Figgy.

"Are you going to swear?"

"No, you howling asses!"

"Then, for the good of the cause, I propose to bump Figgins on his neck till he swears to steer clear of the cooking!" said Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"Back up!" yelled Figgins, as the School House juniors swooped down on him.

But for once his bosom chums did not back him up. They joined in the swoop.

The enraged Figgins was swept off his feet in the grasp of many hands, including those of Kerr and Wynn. His own familiar friends had turned against him—when it came to eating fig-puddings made by Figgins!

"Why, you rotters! Yaroooh! Stoppit! You'll have the prefects here! Chuck it! Rescue! Yawp!"

Bump!

"Make him eat his tickets!" yelled Hammond of the Fourth. "They're better than his puddings."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooooop!" gurgled Figgins, as Hammond proceeded to stuff the tickets into his mouth. "Gurrrrrrrrg!"

"Are you going to swear?"

"Grrrrrrurrrrg!"

"No good swearing in Russian," said Lowther. "We want it in plain English. Swear to steer clear of the cooking, and we'll all come to the feed!"

"Groooooogggh!"

"Easy with those tickets, Hammond!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gurrrrrrrrrr!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Now, then, Figgins——"

"Yow-ow! Oooooch!" spluttered the unfortunate Figgins, ejecting a stream of two-shilling tickets from his mouth. "You thilly athes! Groooch! You fat-headed duffers! Oooooch! Leggo! I'll thmash you! Ow!"

"Swear!"

"I won't!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Oh, crumbs! Oh, crikey! I—I mean, I will, if you like! Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins sat up, looking considerably dishevelled and crimson with wrath. He spat out a few more tickets. Hammond had been very liberal.

"You silly chumps! You—you——"

"Swear to steer clear of the cooking, and leave it all

to Fatty, and don't even give him any advice," said Tom Merry.

"Ow! Yes. All right."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes!" yelled Figgins. "Lemme gerrup, you idiots! Here comes Kildare!"

Figgins scrambled up as Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, came down the passage with an ash-plant in his hand. Kildare was frowning.

"What's all this thundering row?" he demanded wrathfully.

"It's all right, Kildare," said Monty Lowther meekly. "It's only Figgins swearing!"

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins swearing!" exclaimed Kildare, aghast. "Figgins, you young scoundrel——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that cackling!" shouted Kildare. "This isn't a laughing matter. Figgins, I'm not surprised that you have been ragged if you have been making a young blackguard of yourself! It serves you jolly well right!"

"I!" yelled Figgins furiously. "I haven't—I didn't—I wasn't——"

"Lowther, you said——"

"I stated the facts," said Lowther, still very meekly. "All the fellows will tell you that Figgins was swearing. I will repeat what he said——"

"Don't do anything of the sort!" said Kildare sharply. "I hardly know what to make of this, Figgins!"

"Bai Jove, I will wepeat what Figgins said!"

"I shall cane you if you do, D'Arcy. How dare you!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let me explain, Kildare!" gasped Tom Merry, wiping away his tears. "Figgins was swearing——"

"You corroborate what Lowther says, then?"

"Ha, ha! Yes. Figgins was swearing——"

"Come with me to your Form-master, Figgins!" snapped Kildare. "You come, too, Merry and Lowther!"

"Figgins was swearing not to do any cooking for the feed!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kildare jumped.

"Figgins was what—what?"

"We're having a feed," explained Kerr. "Figgy wanted to cook, and we've made him swear that he won't. So he swore. We bumped him till he did!"

Kildare understood at last. The juniors were shrieking with laughter, but the prefect did not laugh. It was miles below the dignity of the head prefect of the School House to have his leg pulled by a humorous junior. Kildare turned to Monty Lowther with a grim look.

"So it was one of your little jokes, Lowther?"

"Ahem! I—I made an exact statement of the facts, Kildare," murmured Lowther. "I stated that Figgins was swearing. You didn't give me time to finish."

"I understand that you are a humorous kid," said Kildare. "You do a humorous column in your fag paper, I believe. I think you had better keep your humour for the columns of that paper. Humour is sometimes out of place. Hold out your hand!"

"Ahem! I—I say, Kildare, you know——"

"Hold out your hand at once!"

Monty Lowther sighed, and held out his hand. The ash-plant came down with a heavy swish, and Lowther gave a yell.

"Do you still feel humorous?" asked Kildare.

"Ow!" groaned Lowther. "No; not at all! Not a bit! Quite the reverse! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, all you noisy young rascals, clear off!" said Kildare. And he put the ash-plant under his arm and walked away.

Monty Lowther tucked his hand under his arm, and groaned dismally. The humour of the humorist was considerably damped. But the other fellows howled. Even Figgins was grinning now.

"Blessed if I see where the cackle comes in!" growled Lowther. "I'm hurt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind. Figgins has sworn," said Tom Merry. "Kerr and Wynn are expected to see that Figgy keeps that swear."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You thumping asses!" growled Figgins. "You don't know what you're losing. My fig-pudding would have been a corker. I sha'n't make it now. Now, anybody want any tickets? Two bob a time, and number unlimited!"

And Figgins & Co. proceeded to do a brisk sale in tickets, now that the juniors were relieved of Figgy's cooking. Before dinner-time fifty tickets had been sold, and Fatty Wynn, who was appointed caterer, had the sum of five pounds to expend in the purchase of tuck—a task that brought beatific smiles to the face of the fat Fourth-Former.

The New House "wheeze" was already going strong, and Tom Merry & Co. had to confess that so far the School House was "not in it" with their old rival.

CHAPTER 6.

A Good Pull-up for Carmen.

"EUWEKAH!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that extraordinary ejaculation.

It was in Study No. 6, the next evening. Blake and Herries and Digby, at the tea-table, were discussing the problem. The School House fellows were still at a standstill.

Blake had remarked very truly that it was up to Study No. 6 to show the way; those Shell bounders couldn't be expected to think of anything.

But Study No. 6 were stumped. They seemed to have no ideas left, any more than the Terrible Three. It was near the week-end, and the following week Skimpole's debt to Mr. Henry Skimpoll had to be paid. And all there was towards it was the one pound nine-and-six of the collection, and whatever should be raised by the Fund Feed in the New House.

The Fund Feed scheme was going strong.

Figgins & Co. were selling tickets on all sides. There was no further doubt that there would be a handsome profit—or prophet, as Figgy called it in his celebrated notice.

And Tom Merry & Co., although they backed up Figgins heartily, felt a little sore. For it was a School House scheme to get a School House fellow out of a scrape, and it was really up to them. It was too bad altogether for the New House fellows to be running the whole show.

"Euwekah!" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the chums of Study No. 6 allowed his first ejaculation to pass unheeded. Arthur Augustus's eye was gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"Blessed if I see anything to be done!" said Digby. "Concerts are off. I suppose we couldn't charge gate-money for the Greyfriars match on Wednesday?"

"Well, we could charge it, but nobody would pay any," said Blake.

"Euwekah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

Blake looked round at his noble chum.

"Have you got a pain, Gussy?" he demanded.

"Certainly not, you duffah!"

"Not a twist in your bronchial tubes and things?"

"No!"

"Then what are you squeaking like a little pig for?"

"You uttah ass, I was not squeakin'! I wemarked 'Euwekah.'"

"Well, isn't that squeaking?" demanded Blake. "What on earth are you doing it for if you haven't got a pain?"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake! Euwekah is a Gweek word, and it means, 'I have found it,' or somethin' of the sort."

"Oh, the blessed ass means Eureka!" said Digby.

"Yaas, I said 'Euwekah!'" said Arthur Augustus. "It flashed into my bwain. I've got it, as old Archimedes wemarked when he started that sayin'. Euwekah, deah boys! It's all wight!"

"What's all right?" demanded Blake and Herries and Digby together.

"I've got the ideah we want!"

"Oh, rats!"

"It will be all wight—we can waise the tin. I wondah it did not occur to me before. Howevah, it is not too late!"

"Well, what's the idea?" said Blake, not at all hopefully. Study No. 6 did not attach a high value to the ideas that flashed into the Honourable Arthur Augustus' noble brain.

"What's the mattah with 'Carmen'?" demanded Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

"Eh?"

"'Carmen' will get us out of this fix!"

"Carmen?" said Blake. "What carmen? And why should carmen help us? Do you mean making a collection among the carmen in Wayland? Why should they shell out for Skimpole?"

"Weally, Blake, I believe you are delibewately misunderstandin' me! I am alludin' to the celebwated opewah, 'Carmen.'"

"Oh, the opera!" said Blake. "What about it, ass? What the thumping thunder have you got in your potty brain-box now?"

"Pway, don't make wude wemarks, deah boy! I am thinkin' of an opewatic performance. 'Carmen' is always popular—it is a vewy populah opewah, indeed! When it is performed, you know, they always get a cwowd. Well, why shouldn't we give a performance, and charge half-a-cwown a head for admission? Two hundwed and fifty half-cwowns would amount to ovah thirtay pounds, and that would be a tewwific big whack towards the fund. In fact, with what Figgay is gettin', it would make up the fortay pounds."

"But where are you going to get two hundred and fifty half-crowns from?" shrieked Blake.

"Pwactically evewybody would come to a weally wippin' opewatic performance," said Arthur Augustus. "People only need encouwagin', you know, to appweciate good music. We could get Talbot on the piano to pwovide the orchestwah—Talbot is a vewy clever pianist. I know we are not well off for singahs; but I have a wippin' idea about that. I should take the tenah part, of course, and I would also take the bawitone—I should be Don Jose, and the Toweador, too! See?"

"Yes, that would save a lot of trouble in the scenes where they appear together," remarked Digby.

"We could cut out those scenes, deah boys. In fact, we should have to cut the whole thing considewably. There is not much time for wehearsals. I weally think, indeed, that we could awwange the opewah on something of wecital lines—I will give the pwincipal aiws as a sewies of solos."

"My hat!"

"And you fellahs can appeah as a kind of Gweek chorus."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And Talbot can fill in on the piano. You see, I have wathah studied that opewah, and, though I am weally a tenah, I can do the Toweador song wippin'ly. I will get Talbot to play it a bit highah, you know—he's an awf'ly clevah chap! I have not the slightest doubt that the whole school will simply wush in to see a weally good opewatic performance. It will be a gweat dwaw!"

"Great Scott!"

"If two hundwed and fiftay fellahs come, and pay half-a-cwown each, that will waise ovah thirtay pounds and will pwactically see us thwough. Now, what do you think of the ideah, deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

Blake and Herries and Digby gazed at their aristocratic chum, almost overcome. The idea of giving a performance of an opera with Arthur Augustus taking both tenor and baritone parts, music supplied by a piano, and the other fellows appearing as a kind of Greek chorus, wanted a little getting used to. Arthur Augustus was evidently very much taken with his idea. A success of brilliant solos by Arthur Augustus ought to bring down the house—that was how the amateur tenor of Study No. 6 looked at it.

"Well, my sainted aunt!" said Blake at last. "You really think the whole school would come, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You don't think you'd be massacred on the spot?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"There's one way it might be worked," said Blake musingly.

"I am willin' to listen to suggestions, deah boy!"

"Well, the fellows wouldn't pay to come in. But we might get them to come in for nothing. Then we could charge 'em five shillings each to get out when you started singing. They'd pay. Now, two hundred and fifty times five shillings amounts to over sixty pounds."

"You uttah ass! Will you be sewious on a sewious subject? I have selected 'Carmen' as the opewah to be performed, because I was well up in the music, you know, and the pwincipal part of the bizney will fall on me. Just listen while I show you how I wendah the 'Toweador Song.'"

"Mercy!"

But Arthur Augustus had no mercy. He started.

"Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre, signor, signor, car avec les soldats!"

"Shut up!" roared Blake.

"Wats! I'm showin' you how it will go! Howevah, I will get on to the chowus."

"Ring off!"

"Toweador, eng ga-a-a-ardey!
Toweador, Toweador!
Et sonjey bong et songe ong kongbattong.
Kurn ile nwaw te regarde,
Aker lammoor tattong——"

Arthur Augustus got no further with his great rendering of the "Toreador Song" from "Carmen." Blake and Herries and Digby rose to their feet with one accord and seized the amateur baritone, and whirled him off his feet and bumped him on the study carpet. The voice of Arthur Augustus suddenly changed from baritone to tenor on its top note.

"Yowwwwwl!"

Arthur Augustus struggled spasmodically.

Blake rolled the hearthrug round him, and Arthur Augustus disappeared save for his head and his feet. A strap was promptly put round the rug and buckled behind Arthur Augustus tightly.

Then Blake and Herries and Digby strolled out of the study, smiling.

Arthur Augustus staggered to his feet with some difficulty. The hearthrug somewhat impeded his movements.

"Oh, gweat Scott! You uttah wottahs!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "You fwightful beasts! Yooop! My clobbah will be uttahly wuined! Come and unfasten me, you wottahs!"

A chuckle died away down the passage. Arthur Augustus groped wildly behind him for the buckle of the strap. But it was well up in the small of his back and he could not reach it.

"Oh, bai Jove! The feahful beasts!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Aftah this I shall uttahly wefuse to give an opewatic performance! Oh, deah!"

Tom Merry looked in at the doorway. He almost fell down at the sight of Arthur Augustus wriggling in the rolled-up hearthrug.

"Great pip! What's the little game, Gussy?" asked the captain of the Shell, in astonishment.

"Pway, welease me, deah boy! I was singin' the 'Toweador Song.'"

"But that isn't the correct costume for a Toreador, is it?"

"Weally, you ass, it is not supposed to be anythin' of the sort! Those wuff wottahs wolled me up in the wug and stwapped it wound me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do not see anythin' to cackle at! Pway, unfasten this wotten stwap, and I will go and give them a feahful thwashin' all wound!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry kindly released him, and the rug fell to the floor. A good half of the dust on it had been transferred to Arthur Augustus' elegant clobber, and the

"Stay," said the Jam. "Look at this!" There was a flash and a glitter as he opened the little case. A diamond ring reposed inside. "What a beauty!" said Tom Merry, in admiration. "I give it to you, and you will give me a place in the eleven to play Greyfriars on Wednesday," said Koumi Rao. (See Chapter 7.)

swell of St. Jim's gazed down at his dusty bags in dismay.

"Oh, the uttah wottahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus rushed from the study in search of Blake and Herries and Digby, with the ferocious intention of giving them a fearful thrashing all round. And nothing more was heard of the scheme of giving an operatic performance of "Carmen" in aid of the Skimpole Fund; neither was the warbling tenor of Arthur Augustus heard again in Study No. 6 rendering the "Toreador Song."

CHAPTER 7.

His Highness Makes an Offer!

"WELL done Jammy!"

Tom Merry was looking on at the footer practice a little later. Koumi Rao was there.

"The Jam's coming on," said Figgins. "I really think he might go into the team for next Wednesday, you know."

Tom Merry grinned.

"I should have to leave somebody out to make room for him," he remarked.

"Well, you're captain, ain't you?" said Figgins. "You can make up the team the way you think fit. If you take my recommendation, you've a right to leave out a man to put the Jam in. He's a ripping forward."

"You really recommend me to do that, Figgy?"

"Well, yes, I think so. Koumi Rao is coming on splendidly."

"But the man I leave out would grumble."

"Let him."

"He would be ratty, very likely."

"Well, that needn't bother you. Besides, he should take it as a sport. He would have no right to grumble."

"You really think so?" said Tom Merry reflectively.

"Certainly!"

"Well, I'll think of it," said Tom. "After all, you can look on."

Figgins jumped.

"I! I can look on?"

"Yes, if I give your place to Koumi Rao," said Tom innocently.

"My place!" roared Figgins.

"Certainly! You're the chap I should leave out to make room for Koumi Rao."

Figgins' face was a study for a moment.

"You say you wouldn't grumble—you would take it like a sport; and as captain, of course, I've a right to act on your recommendation, if I see fit."

"I—I—I wasn't thinking about myself," stuttered Figgins, at last. "Of course, you would leave out one of the School House chaps. That's what I meant."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you ass! You're pulling my leg, are you?" growled Figgins, in relief. "Perhaps, on the whole, you'd better leave the team as it is."

"Perhaps I had," grinned Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! Heah you are, you wottahs!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived on the field, and bore down on Blake and Herries and Digby. "Now, you uttah beasts——"

The three juniors promptly raised their fists, and Arthur Augustus received three separate lunges.

"All hands repel boarders!" chuckled Blake.

"Ow! You wottahs! I am goin' to thwash you——"

"You're going to make it pax," said Blake cheerfully. "You asked us what we thought of your solo, and we showed you what we thought of it. You've got nothing to complain of, that I can see. Now, then!"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus was cornered against the wall of the pavilion, with three pairs of fists lunging at him.

"Is it pax?" asked Digby.

"Wats! No! I—yoocoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottahs! Undah the cires, I will make it pax. I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean, contempt."

"Hear, hear!"

Koumi Rao joined Tom Merry. Tom gave him a cheery nod. The Jam of Bundelpore drew the junior captain aside.

"You see that I play quite well?" he said. "I am all right with the ball."

"Not so bad," agreed Tom Merry. "Figgins might do worse than put you in the House team for the next House match."

"I wish to play against Greyfriars."

"Can't be did."

"It is my wish."

Tom Merry chuckled. The Jam of Bundelpore made that statement in a tone which was final. Evidently he considered that that ought to settle it.

"You will play me?"

"No."

The Jam's dusky brows contracted. He fumbled in his pocket, and took out a small leather case. Tom Merry watched him curiously, wondering what he was at.

"Stay!" said the Jam. "Look at this!"

There was a flash and a glitter as he opened the little case. A diamond ring reposed inside.

"What a beauty!" said Tom Merry, in admiration.

"It is yours," said the Jam.

"Eh?"

"Take it!"

"My dear chap, I can't take it. What do you mean?" said Tom, in wonder.

"I give it to you, and you will give me a place in the eleven to play Greyfriars on Wednesday," said Koumi Rao.

Tom Merry crimsoned. For a moment his hands clenched, and his eyes gleamed; but he unclenched his hands again at once.

"Put that diamond away, Koumi Rao," he said quietly, "and don't be a silly ass! If any other fellow had said that I should have hit out. I suppose you don't know any better. But don't talk to me like that again."

Tom Merry turned on his heel.

The Jam looked after him with a thunderous brow, and dropped the case into his pocket again. The diamond was worth a thousand rupees at least. But once more it was borne in upon the Jam's mind that English customs were not those of the native State of Bundelpore.

The Jam strode gloomily away from the field, with his dusky hands driven deep into his pockets. Figgins joined him on his way to the New House.

"Wherefore that ruffled brow, oh, friend of my giddy heart?" grinned Figgins, who sometimes adopted the Jam's superb phraseology in a humorous mood.

"I have been refused a place in the team. Merry has refused me. I told him that it was my wish."

"Go hon!"

"I offered him my diamond."

"Then you're lucky to get off without a thick ear," said Figgins cheerfully. "I warned you. It can't be did, Jammy. You see, another man would have to be left out."

"Why not?"

"Ahem!" Figgins reflected deeply. "I—I—I think Tom Merry would put you in, Jammy, if a man offered to stand out to make room for you. I—I might do it, if you're so awfully set on playing."

"You!" said the Jam, opening his eyes wide.

"I—I—I might, if you buck up and get into awfully good form. You see, we've got to beat Greyfriars. And, really, you are in topping form, Jammy. I don't think it would be much risk."

The Jam shook his dusky head.

"I would not take your place, my friend. I will content myself; and, for your sake, I will not chastise the insolence of Merry."

Figgins chuckled. He found the Jam of Bundelpore very entertaining. The chastisement of Merry would have been a very painful process for the Jam.

After the footer practice, Figgins & Co. were very busy with the preparations for the Grand Fund Feed of the morrow. There were still a few tickets to be sold, and Figgins hawked them round persistently. He sold one to Monteith, his head prefect, though it was not likely that the prefect would come to the feed. He tried to get Sefton to take one—and the bully of the Sixth gave him fifty lines. But it was all in the day's work, and Figgy bore it philosophically.

Fatty Wynn was on the best of terms with the New House cook, and he had the run of the kitchen. His cooking was really a work of art. Into that business the fat Fourth-Former put all his thoughts and all his energy. And the cakes that came from the plump hands of Fatty Wynn were really marvels, the pies were wonders, and the puddings were miracles.

That night a hundred and fifty tickets had been sold, nearly all the juniors of both Houses taking them. And of the fifteen pounds thus realised, Fatty Wynn calculated that it would not be necessary to expend more than eight on the tuck, buying in quantities the "raw materials," and doing the cooking himself, with the assistance of the cook. A tip for the cook would be needed, too; but Figgins & Co. joyfully declared that there would be at least six or seven pounds for the fund.

"And the School House won't beat that," said Figgins. "I'll bet you they'll never raise the forty quid at all. Old Skimpoll, the giddy author, will have to be satisfied with an instalment on account, and it will all be raised by the New House. And, after that, even those cheeky beggars won't be able to say that the New House isn't cock-house."

In the School House at the same time there was much cudgelling of brains. After the rude reception of his idea of an operatic performance, Arthur Augustus had given it up. And after his mighty brain had ceased to labour on the subject, it was not surprising that ideas were scanty.

Tom Merry, in desperation, consulted Skimpole himself. Skimpole, as the party most concerned in the matter, might have been expected to take a keen interest in it. But he didn't.

He was very busy studying Professor Loosetop's latest volume on Socialistic questions, and he had no time for trifles.

That Skimmy would get into a frightful row if the money was not paid was quite certain; but it didn't seem to worry him.

"I suppose you don't want to know how we're getting on with the fund, Skimmy?" said Tom Merry, a little crossly.

Skimpole came out of his big volume, and blinked at him through his glasses.

"What fund?" he asked.

Tom stared at him.

"Your fund, you ass! The fund to pay your debt to old Skimpoll."

"Dear me! I had forgotten."

"Forgotten!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Yes. I have been thinking out some more serious matters. However, I hope you are getting on all right."

"Well, we're not."

"Dear me! I am very sorry! You must feel disappointed," said Skimpole amiably. "However, do not be downhearted. Perhaps it will all come right. You should not worry over a trifle. Let me read you what Professor Loosetop says——"

"Oh, you blithering ass!" said Tom.

"My dear Merry, Professor Loosetop's lucubrations are intensely interesting. Listen to this: 'The first principles of Socialism may be stated thus—Suppose there are two men on an island——' Yarooh!"

Tom Merry seized a great volume of Professor Loosetop, and smote Skimmy on the head with it, and left the study. Skimpole sat on the carpet, blinking in a state of great astonishment.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Skimpole. "What was Tom Merry so excited about, my dear Gore?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gore

"I really did not mean to displease him in any way," said Skimpole, rubbing his head. "It appears to me that he is bothering very much about a trifling matter; but I do not expect anything different from his somewhat limited intelligence. Really, Gore, I do not see anything at all to laugh at."

And Skimmy plunged once more into the intensely interesting lucubrations of Professor Loosetop, and forgot about the whole matter. Skimpole had no objection to Tom Merry & Co. raising the fund—none whatever; but he did not wish to be bothered with it. Matters of far greater importance occupied his powerful brain.

CHAPTER 8.

Something Like a Feed!

"WATHAH a cwam, bai Jove!"

It certainly was rather a cram.

The common-room in the New House was a large apartment, but its accommodation was taxed by the number of fellows who came to the Fund Feed.

Chairs and forms and tables had been borrowed on all sides, and arranged in order, and the good things laid out in enticing array.

After footer practice was over the ticket-holders came in in swarms, provided with excellent appetites.

The Co. had to act as waiters. Waiters were required, and the guests could not be expected to act as waiters, so there was nothing for it but to enlist the founders of the fund.

The Terrible Three, and Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co., therefore all set to work. Monty Lowther had urged Arthur Augustus to appear in evening clothes for the occasion, to give the affair tone. Arthur Augustus was quite willing to give any affair tone, and he was dashing away to change into his evening "clobber," when Blake fortunately discovered him, and yanked him back. The ten waiters waited in their shirtsleeves. The work was incessant, and it was warm.

Every fellow was entitled to eat all he wanted—as much as he could hold, in fact—for his two-shilling ticket, and most of the guests had come fully prepared to distinguish themselves as trenchermen.

The supply of tuck was simply enormous; but Figgins declared that Fatty Wynn would have to be muzzled till after the feast. It would never do for the supplies to run short.

Fatty was kept too busy fetching and carrying to be able to sit down and enjoy himself; but he indulged in a succession of "snacks" that probably equalled the feast of any other fellow present. It was Arthur Augustus upon whom the heaviest work fell. Somehow, the juniors seemed to take a special pleasure in making the Honourable Arthur Augustus fetch and carry. D'Arcy wired in most industriously—he felt that it was up to him. And he was given no rest.

"Waiter!" roared Levison of the Fourth. "Here! Where's that dashed waiter—the one in the eyeglass? Waiter!"

"Yaas, Levison."

"Don't call me Levison, waiter. Call me sir."

"Bai Jove!"

"Bring me some more jam-tarts, and hurry up! Blessed if I ever saw such a rotten waiter!"

"Waiter!" howled Crooke. "I've asked you twice for some cake. That waiter ought to be sacked."

"Sure, and I want some ginger-pop, Gussy!" shouted Reilly of the Fourth. "You're neglecting your duties, waiter. Ginger-pop, do you hear?"

"Yaas. Bai Jove! Yaas."

"Ginger-pop for me," said Levison. "Uncork it, waiter. What the dickens is the good of a waiter if he can't uncork the ginger-beer? There's a penny for you."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Put it in your pocket," said Levison. "It's for you."

"You uttah wottah! How dare you give me a penny!" roared Arthur Augustus, crimson with indignation.

"I always tip waiters," said Levison. "Nothing mean about me. Put that penny in your pocket, and open my ginger-beer."

"I wegard you as a wank wottah!"

"Blessed cheeky waiter, this fellow," said Levison. "Are you going to open that ginger-beer, waiter—— Yoooooooooooop!"

The waiter opened the ginger-beer somewhat clumsily. A stream of ginger-beer caught the humorous Levison under the chin, and he jumped up spluttering.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Crooke.

Then he yelled still more loudly as the bottle turned upon him.

"Ow! You fathead! Stoppit! Yooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I'm awf'ly sowwy! These accidents will happen, you know," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "You look wathah wet, Levison."

"Ow! You silly chump! You did that on purpose!" shrieked Levison furiously. "I'll—I'll—I'll——"

"Weally, Levison—— Oh, you wottah!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as Levison caught up a fat and jucy jam-tart, of Fatty Wynn's special make, and squashed it upon his aristocratic features. "Oooooooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus made a jump at Levison, and clasped him round the neck, and they struggled wildly. The table rocked as the combatants bumped into it, and glasses of ginger-beer went streaming over the knees of their owners. There was a roar of wrath on all sides, and infuriated feasters jumped up raving.

"Kick 'em out!"

"Turn that waiter out!"

"Scrag him!"

"Order!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Take that, you wottah! Take that, you howwid wascal——"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Figgins seized Arthur Augustus, and Blake and Kerr fastened upon Levison, and they were dragged apart by main force. Levison's nose was streaming red and Arthur Augustus was looking wild and ruffled.

"Welease me, you wottahs! I am goin' to thwash him! He has jammed me all ovah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick 'em both out!"

There were two heavy falls in the passage outside the common-room—first Levison, and then Arthur Augustus. Then the door was closed upon them. Sounds of conflict were heard from the passage, and then flying feet, and a few minutes later Arthur Augustus re-entered, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. Levison did not come

back. He was busily engaged just then in bathing his damaged features in the School House.

After that exciting interlude the feast proceeded jovially

The mountains of good things were diminished rapidly in size, and the well-spread tables gradually assumed a bare appearance.

The guests, as they were satisfied, and found that they could not possibly hold any more, gradually cleared off.

Some of them sagely put supplies in their pockets, to be finished later. The last half-dozen or two grumbled as they went, and declared that they weren't satisfied. When they were all gone, the waiters gazed at the bare tables and at one another.

"We don't come on in this scene," grinned Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I expected a clearance like that!"

"What price us?" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Not a blessed tart left! Not a beastly bun! That cad Mellish was filling his pockets all the time. So was young Piggott. And Crooke. That wasn't playing the game!"

"Nevah mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus. "It has been a gweat success, even if there is nothin' left for the foundahs of the feast."

Financially, the feed had certainly been a success. There were six pounds ten shillings to be handed over to the Skimpole Scrape Fund, which, added to the one pound nine-and-six already in the old teapot, made up a grand total of seven pounds nineteen-and-six.

Arthur Augustus cheerfully remarked that now they only wanted thirty-two pounds and sixpence.

But where that thirty-two pounds and sixpence was to come from was a great mystery.

CHAPTER 9.
The Only Way!

"NOTHING doing!"

That was the verdict when the Skimpole Fund committee met in Tom Merry's study on Monday after lessons.

Figgins & Co. attended the meeting, along with the School House fellows, though it was admitted that Figgins & Co. had done their "little" bit, and that it was up to the School House to make the next move.

"Hasn't anybody made any suggestions?" asked Figgins. "You had a notice up on the board asking for suggestions, you know."

"Gussy's proposed to give a song recital."

"Oh, rats!"

"And an operatic performance of 'Carmen'!" grinned Blake.

"Bow-wow!"

"And Lowther's proposed that Mr. Skimpoll shall be asked to take Mr. Asquith's celebrated advice, and wait till June next year."

"Anything with any sense in it?" asked Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Well, Levison made a suggestion," said Tom Merry. "It would be all right so far as money goes, but it won't work."

"I haven't heard of that," said Blake. "What's that? Levison is an awfully deep chap, and he might think of something."

"Yaas, I weally do not appwove of Levison, but he is a vewy deep boundah, deah boys. Let's heah Levison's suggestion."

Tom Merry laughed.

"He suggests selling some of the places in the junior eleven."

"What!"

"He says swanking asses like Crooke would bag them if they could, and pay for them; highest bidder at an auction, you know."

"My hat!"

"What a wotten caddish ideah!"

"As a matter of fact, it would raise the tin," said Figgins, with a nod. "Levison is right there. Koumi Rao would bid away like old boots; he's awfully keen to get into the eleven, so would that swanking ass Crooke, and several more fellows. Levison's one of them himself if he's got any money. But, of course, we couldn't entertain the idea for a moment. It would be a bit too much of a come-down to be auctioning the places in the eleven."

"Better not to pay the chap Skimpoll at all," said Kerr.

Tom Merry ran his fingers through his curly hair.

"But we've got to pay him," he said.

"If you can, you mean."

"Whether you can or not," said Tom; "it's a promise."

"Yaas, we have given our word," said Arthur Augustus. "I have pledged the word of a D'Arcy, deah boys!"

"Which is more valuable than the word of a Merry," remarked the captain of the Shell. "But the word of a Merry has to be kept, too."

"I did not mean to imply that, Tom Mewwy. I merely——"

"Merely talked out of your neck as usual," said Blake. "There's the word of a Blake to be kept, too. We're all up to our necks in it, in fact, except Skimmy. Skimmy isn't bothering."

"Pity the silly ass wasn't sent to a home for idiots long ago!" growled Manners. "It looks to me as if we've promised something we can't perform."

"We've got to perform it, though the skies fall," said Tom Merry. "I'd rather adopt Levison's suggestion than fail to keep the promise."

"Yaas, honah comes even befoah footah, deah boys."

"How is the fund getting on, since the feed?" asked Figgins thoughtfully.

"Well, it's climbing up. Gussy has screwed a quid out of his pater, and young Wally has contributed a tanner. I've had ten bob from Miss Fawcett, and Lowther's got five from an odd uncle he has lying about somewhere. Kangaroo and Lumley-Lumley have stood half-a-crown each. Two pound six—makes up a total of ten quid. That leaves thirty still wanted."

"It's such a blessed whacking sum," said Figgins. "Can't that idiot Skimpole raise something towards it?"

Tom Merry grinned.

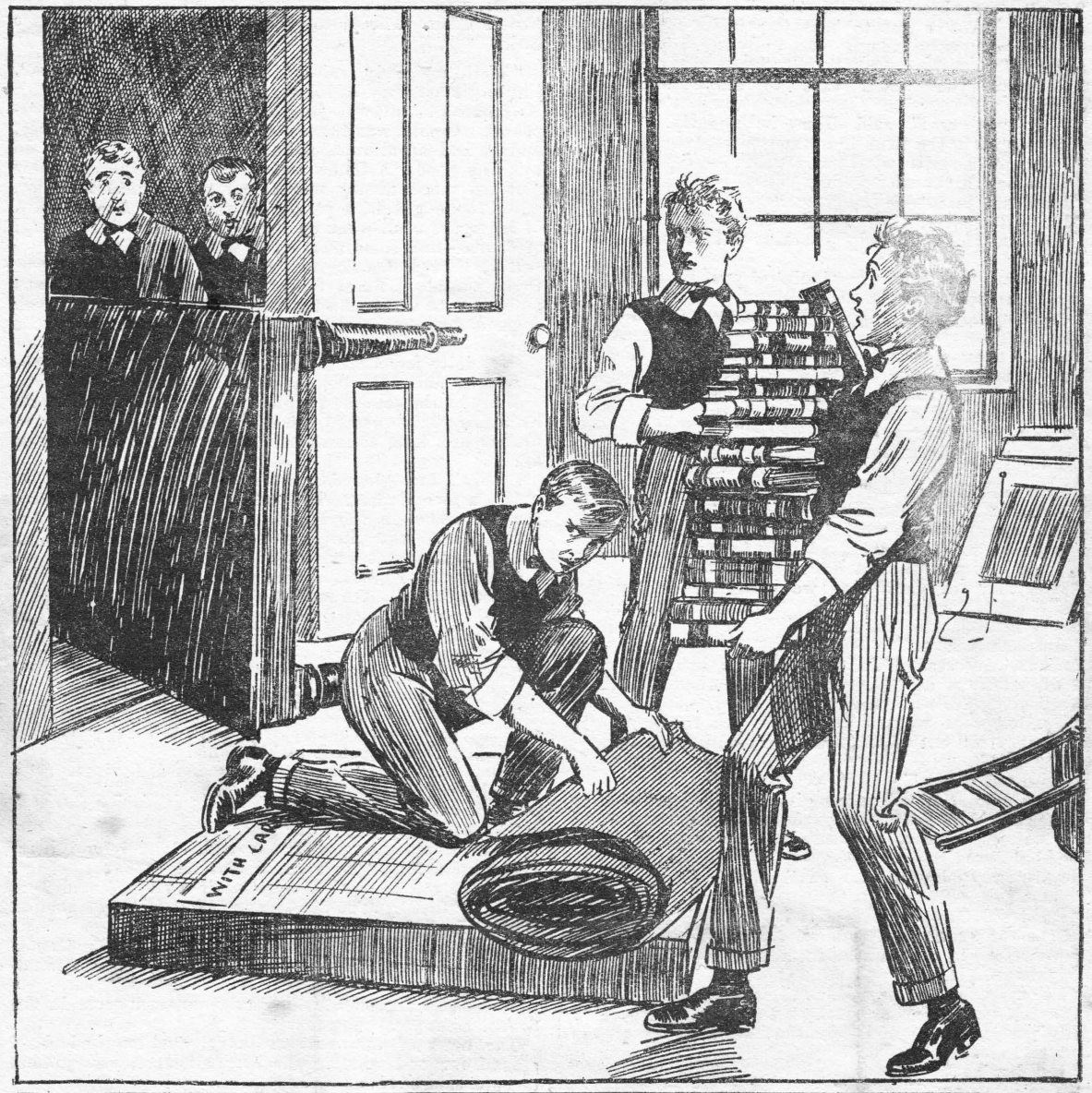
"He offered me a threepenny bit towards it. Only it turned out to be a threepenny-bit he'd changed for Mellish, and no good."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then what the dooce is to be done?" exclaimed Blake. "We simply can't break our word to old Skimpoll; and, besides, Skimmy would be landed if we did."

"It weally is a vewy awkward posish. Unless somethin' turns up we shall have to adopt that awf'ly caddish suggestion of Levison's."

"We should have to get the consent of the whole club for that," said Tom Merry uneasily.



Figgins & Co. gazed into the study in astonishment. "Moving job?" asked Kerr. Tom Merry waved a dusty hand at the three fellows from the New House. "You New House bounders buzz off," he said. "Can't you see we're busy." (*See Chapter* 1.)

"Well, we're the leading members of the club; we'd manage that," said Figgins. "Not much time to spare, as the match is the day after to-morrow. I don't like the idea, but if you decide on it, I'll back you up."

The committee of ways and means looked at one another in grim silence.

Nobody liked the idea of putting up places in the junior eleven to auction, yet all of them knew that that unheard-of step would certainly result in an influx of cash into the coffers of the fund.

"It wouldn't be as if the money was for ourselves," said Manners at last. "That would be caddish. But to raise the wind for a fund to pay a debt of honour concerning the whole school—that's a different matter."

"Yaas, undah the circs pewwaps I could appwove of it."

"Might offer one place," said Figgins, after another long silence. "You see, we've got to beat Greyfriars. If some duffer like Crooke got into the team he would be only a passenger, and two or three like that would give the match away."

"Somebody would have to stand out to make room for the new man," said Tom Merry. "It's not a matter for the footer captain to decide. Under the circs I couldn't ask a member of the team to stand out to let some swanking rich cad like Crooke buy himself in. Some chap will have to volunteer to slide out."

"Bai Jove!"

"It is the duty of a D'Arcy to lead the way," remarked Monty Lowther solemnly. "I call on Gussy to lead the way, as his ancestors did at the battle of Bunker's Hill."

"You uttah ass! My ancestahs were not at the battle of Bunkah's Hill."

"Well, the battle of Actium, was it?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Well, never mind the battle; your ancestors led the way, and it's up to you to live up to the noble traditions of the D'Arcy family."

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah!"

"Perhaps Blake will make an offer," suggested Kerr.

"Perhaps Blake won't!" replied the chief of Study No. 6, with great promptness.

"What about Kangaroo?"

"Can't spare him from the team," said Tom Merry decidedly. "We've got to beat Greyfriars. Wharton's team is a pretty tough one, anyway. We want Kangaroo."

"Pewwaps you would care to stand out, Tom Mewwy."

"Why, you ass!" said Tom indignantly. "Who's going to captain the team if I stand out?"

"I should be quite weady and willin'——"

"This isn't a time for joking."

"I am not jokin'——"

"Leave it to me," said Figgins heroically. "It's up to the New House to help you kids out of a fix. I'll slide."

"Bai Jove, that is weally wippin' of you, Figgay!"

But Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't spare you, Figgy. We want you to take goal."

Figgins drew a breath of relief. It had cost him an effort to make that generous offer. But he could not help feeling glad that it had not been accepted.

"What about Lowther?"

"Don't you worry about Lowther," said the owner of that name pleasantly. "Lowther is sticking in the team."

"Herries, old chap——"

"Bow-wow!" said Herries.

"You see, it won't work," said Tom. "Nobody can be expected to stand out, and this isn't a case where a skipper can put his foot down. It's N.G."

"But what on earth are we going to do for the quids?" said Manners dismally. "Mr. Skimpoll will be here on Thursday for his money."

"Goodness knows."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the dismal faces of the committee, experienced a little inward struggle, and made up his mind.

"Gentlemen, I wegard it as bein' up to me to get you youngstahs out of the scwape. I will stand out."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"I am afwaid it will mean givin' away the match to Gweyfwiahs, but honah comes first. It shall nevah be said that the word of St. Jim's was not as good as its bond, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry slapped the swell of St. Jim's on the shoulder.

"Good old Gussy! The offer is accepted, and Gussy shall be the auctioneer, and sell the giddy prize. Let's get a meeting in the common-room, and mind that everybody comes to it."

"I'll whip in the New House," said Figgins briskly. "You see that all your slackers turn up. Gussy is a giddy jewel! He's saved the situation, and perhaps the Greyfriars match, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Figgins!"

The committee broke up at once, to get to the business of the meeting, and to prepare for that exceedingly curious auction sale.

CHAPTER 10.

A Startling Announcement.

CROOKE of the Shell stared.

He could scarcely believe his eyes.

But his eyes did not deceive him.

On the notice-board was a newly-written notice in the handwriting of Tom Merry, captain of the junior eleven. It was such a notice as had never appeared before on the notice-board at St. Jim's. No wonder Crooke of the Shell rubbed his eyes, and rubbed them again. For the paper ran:

"NOTICE TO FOOTER ASPIRANTS.

"D'Arcy of the Fourth will hold an auction in the common-room, at seven o'clock precisely, for the sale of his place in the St. Jim's Junior Eleven, cash being urgently required to assist a deserving fund. This sale will be held with the full consent of the captain, committee, and members generally of the St. Jim's Junior Footer Club. The place goes to the highest bidder for cash. (Signed) TOM MERRY."

"Well, my only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Crooke, jingling his money in his trousers-pocket.

Crooke was always jingling money in his trousers-pocket. Crooke was the son of a millionaire stockjobber, and he had an allowance that was much too large to do him any good. A fellow with a far from high character and too much money was bound to get into mischief, and Crooke got into plenty of mischief. A good deal of his spare cash went on "geegees"—in strict secrecy, of course—and some more of it went on smokes.

But, though Crooke was too lazy and self-indulgent to keep himself fit or to bother about practice, he was ambitious to shine as a footballer. He would have given a good deal to be able to swank as a member of the eleven.

Especially so on the occasion of the Greyfriars match. That was one of the biggest matches played at St. Jim's.

Many of the fellows' people came to see the game, and St. Jim's was always gay on that occasion with the bright dresses and hats of innumerable sisters and cousins and aunts.

Crooke's face glowed with satisfaction as he read that notice a second time. To let his people see him playing for the school in the biggest match of the season was worth something. He jingled his over-plentiful cash in his trousers-pocket more loudly than ever.

Other fellows gathered round the notice on the board. Levison of the Fourth read it with a sneering smile.

"So you've adopted my suggestion, after all?" he remarked, when he met Tom Merry.

Tom nodded.

"Yes; much obliged!"

"It doesn't seem quite so caddish now—what?"

The captain of the Shell coloured a little. It certainly was rather hard to characterise Levison's suggestion as caddish, and act upon it all the same.

"Don't trouble to apologise," grinned Levison. "I thought you'd come to it in the long run. I see you're offering only one place?"

"Yes; D'Arcy offered his place."

"You won't get enough tin unless you offer others. I suggested four. That would give me a chance."

"We've got to beat Greyfriars if we can," said Tom Merry. "Still, you're welcome to bid at D'Arcy's auction if you like."

"I shouldn't have a chance against a fellow like Crooke or that New House nigger," said Levison. "Never mind. I'll wait."

Towards seven o'clock the junior common-room in the School House was crowded.

The news of that extraordinary auction had been spread far and wide in the Lower School, and juniors of both Houses rolled up in swarms.

Wally, the younger brother of Arthur Augustus, came in with a swarm of fags of the Third. The Third-Formers could be seen consulting in eager whispers in a corner, and Wally was apparently making a collection of cash. D'Arcy minor was anxious to shine in the ranks of the second eleven.

It was not probable, however, that the financial resources of the Third Form would be equal to the strain.

The common-room was soon swarming. Figgins & Co. had shepherded in almost every junior belonging to their House. Tom Merry & Co. had seen to it that all the School House juniors were there. The bidding was expected to be lively.

There were many fellows who considered that their claims to play in the St. Jim's junior team were simply undeniable, and who doubted Tom Merry's judgment and even his sanity when they were left out. Here was a chance for them to wedge into the team, and show St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and the world generally, what they could do at a big match.

Tom Merry was feeling decidedly uneasy inwardly.

He wanted very much to win the Greyfriars match. It was the first time in his career as a footer captain that he had even thought of admitting anybody into the junior team excepting on his form as a player.

Even the claims of close friendship yielded to his severe sense of duty as captain of the eleven. His own chum, Manners, had been left out to make room for Redfern of the New House, because Redfern was a better man in the team. Indeed, Tom Merry would have stood out himself if he had seen a better man to take his place.

If some clumsy and swanking "foozler" like Crooke should bag the place in the team under these new and extraordinary conditions, it might have serious results for St. Jim's on the field of play. For the Greyfriars team was a hard nut to crack at any time. Tom Merry had played them before, and he remembered the fine form of Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Field, and the rest.

Still, even with one "passenger" in the team, he felt that St. Jim's ought to be able to hold their own with such mighty men as Figgins and Kangaroo and Talbot, and such a top-notch goalie as Fatty Wynn.

If the place went to an average player there was nothing much to fear; but if Crooke "bagged" it, then he had ground for uneasiness.

However, the risk had to be run. It was the last chance of raising the wind for the Skimpole Scrape Fund, and, as Arthur Augustus had sapiently remarked, honour came before even footer.

That Crooke meant to bid, and bid high, was evident. The cad of the Shell was there with his friends, jingling his money as usual.

The door was closed at last, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was to act as auctioneer, mounted upon a stool behind the table, which had been drawn into a corner. He tapped upon the table with a ruler, that served him as an auctioneer's hammer.

Rap, rap!

"Gentlemen," sang out Tom Merry, "the sale is about to begin! Order, please!"

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the numerous and eager meeting.

"Gentlemen——"

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Gentlemen, you are awah of the nature of this sale. We are waisin' a fund to get a sillay idiot out of a feahful scwape——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Undah othah circs we should scorn to accept filthy lucre for a place in the footah team; but circs altah cases. Honah comes first. We have pwomised to pay that fathead Skimmay's debt, and we are bound to keep our word. This sale is the last wesource. The New House have wallied nobly, and helped us to waise the sum of ten pounds, at which the fund now stands. But anothah thirty is wequired."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gentlemen, under the circs, I have offahed to withdwaw fwom the team and put up my place for sale, with the genewal consent of the club. I twust that the biddin' will be vewy high. This is a gweat opportunity for a chap who thinks that he can play a good game for St. Jim's."

"Bravo!"

"The sale will now pwoceed——"

"Hold on!" said Crooke. "No catches, you know!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed the cad of the Shell with lofty disdain.

"I fail to undahstand that wemark, Cwooke."

"Then I'll make it clear," said Crooke coolly. "What I mean is, if a fellow pays down hard cash for a place in the eleven for the Greyfriars match, he's going to play in that match. The captain will not be at liberty to drop him if not satisfied with his style of play?"

"In case of the playah bein' dwopped as you suggest, Cwooke, the purchase pwice will be handed back. We are not swindlahs!"

"All serene!" said Crooke. "Nothing like having it clear. Pile in!"

"Fire away, Gussy!"

"Go it, auctioneer!"

Rap, rap!

"Gentlemen, I now offah for sale the one and only lot in this auction—a place in the juniah eleven of St. Jim's. What offahs?"

There was a general forward movement of fellows who intended to bid. Koumi Rao, who had come in with Figgins & Co., joined the bidders, with a gleam in his dark eyes. It was the Jam's chance at last!

CHAPTER 11.
High Bidding!

"WHAT offahs, gentlemen?"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Tuppence!" sang out Wally of the Third, amid general merriment.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass severely upon his minor.

"Wally, you young wascal, this is not time for your wotten fag jokes. Pway keep ordah. Wun away!"

"Oh, come off!" said D'Arcy minor independently. "I suppose I can bid as much as anybody else. I offer tuppence."

"Threepence!" squeaked Joe Frayne.

"Fourpence!" yelled Curly Gibson.

"Half-a-crown!" said Digby.

"Five bob!" said Lumley-Lumley. The son and heir of Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, the railway magnate, was as well supplied with cash as Crooke of the Shell, and he was a much better footballer. He had the good wishes of Tom Merry & Co. as he started to bid.

"Ten bob!" said Crooke.

"Fifteen bob!" rapped out Lumley-Lumley.

"Gentlemen, fifteen shillings I am offahed——"

"Bobs," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Shillin's, deah boy."

"Bobs——"

"Shillin's——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A quid!" said Crooke. And the moneyed man of the Shell flourished a pound currency note in the air.

"Gentlemen, I am offahed a soveweign——"

"A quid!"

"A soveweign——"

"Twenty-five bob!" said Levison of the Fourth.

"Hurrah!"

In the corner, Wally & Co. were holding a hurried and desperate consultation. The bidding was already going up beyond the financial resources of the Third Form. But D'Arcy minor was not to be beaten if he could help it.

"You'll all have to whack out all you've got," he whispered. "You can sell your bikes and your white rabbits—any old thing. This is a chance for the Third, you know. If we bag the place, we'll toss up afterwards who's to have it. See? That's fair. If it goes under two quid, we can manage it."

And the inky brigade assented.

"Thirty shillings!" sang out Wally.

"Thirty-five!" said Crooke.

"I guess I'll make it two quids!" said Lumley-Lumley.

The sale was getting exciting. All round the bidders, the juniors were cheering them on with encouraging yells. Koumi Rao had not yet spoken. Perhaps he did not deem it worthy of the dignity of a Prince of Bundelpore to speak while the bidding was still in common or garden shillings.

Crooke gave Lumley-Lumley an unpleasant look, and took out his purse, and opened it, showing a wedge of currency notes.

"You may as well chuck it," he said. "I'm going to have that place."

"I guess I'll see you out," said Lumley-Lumley coolly. "I reckon I shall make you quit, sonny."

And Lumley-Lumley also produced a well-filled purse. The faces of the committee of ways and means were brightening up. Levison's suggestion was working out well, so far as the financial aspect of the matter was concerned.

Levison himself had ceased to bid. The bidding was beyond his resources now. Digby had soon dropped out. The contest was among the moneyed men—Lumley-Lumley, and Crooke, and Koumi Rao, who had not yet spoken. Wally's bidding was taken seriously only by himself.

Rap, rap!

"Gentlemen, I am offahed two pounds for this valuable lot——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Guineas!" shrieked Wally.

"Weally, Wally, you cheekay young wascal, I am quite suah that you have no such sum as two guineas, or anythin' like it."

"Cheese it, and take the bid," said Wally. "Don't you bother about my resources, Gussy. I offer two guineas."

"I wepeat——"

"And I repeat! Two guineas! Knock it down to me!" shouted Wally.

"Hold on! Two-ten!" exclaimed Crooke.

"Two-fifteen!"

"Three quid!"

"Three-ten!"

"Three-fifteen!"

"Four!"

Arthur Augustus' eye beamed through his eyeglass. The bidding was mounting up. Wally, in utter disgust, retired from the scene as a bidder. The Third Form could not "stand the racket" any longer. Wally contented himself with uttering an occasional cat-call, and making personal remarks to the bidders who had outbidden him.

"Four pounds I am offahed, gentlemen! This wippin' lot is goin' for four pounds. Did I catch your eye, Koumi Wao?"

"Four-ten!" said Crooke, at once.

"Five!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Look here, you rotter, you can shut up!" exclaimed Crooke, losing his temper. "I believe you're only running me up to help their rotten silly fund!"

"Order!"

"Cwooke, that is a vewy impwopah wemark. If you wepeat that wemark, you will be called upon to wetire fwom the auction. Pway wemembah your mannahs. Lumley-Lumley has offahed five soveweigns——"

"Five-ten!" snarled Crooke.

Crooke's blood was up now, and he meant to have that "lot," if it reduced him to a state of stoniness. Crooke was making a mental calculation. If he posed before his people on the great day as a champion footballer in the school eleven, he was sure of being able to extract generous tips from his pater and his uncles. Crooke was a calculating youth

"Six!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Six-ten!"

"Seven!"

There was a buzz of excitement. Seven pounds was offered; and seven pounds was a sum which few of the fellows present ever possessed at any one time. They were not all the sons of millionaires.

Crooke paused.

He had plenty of money, and he could afford to go higher for an object upon which he had set his heart. But he did not like parting with money.

Rap, rap!

"Gentlemen, I am offahed seven pounds! Goin'—goin'——"

"Seven-ten!" said Crooke reluctantly.

"Eight!" said Lumley-Lumley, without turning a hair.

"Bai Jove! I am offahed eight——"

"Go it, Crooke!" sang out a score of voices. "Don't be beaten! Bag it for the Shell, old man! Pile in!"

Crooke jammed his purse back into his pocket with a scowl.

"The rotter's only running me up," he growled. "I've not got a fortune to spend. Let him have it, and pay eight quids. I don't care!"

This was not exactly a truthful statement, for Crooke did care, very much indeed.

But Lumley-Lumley was not simply running up the bidding. He was ready to pay, and he began to count out currency notes.

"Gentlemen, the lot's goin' for eight pounds, which is the highest offah. Goin'—goin'——"

Rap, rap!

"Ten pounds!"

It was the voice of Koumi Rao, the Jam of Bundelpore, at last. And Figgins & Co. gave a cheer.

"Hurrah! Go it, Jammy!"

Lumley-Lumley looked at the Jam, and sniffed. He was on his mettle, too. But the bidding was getting very high now, even for the heir of Lascelles Lumley-Lumley, railway magnate.

"Gentlemen, I am waitin' for your offahs! I am offahed ten pounds! The valuable lot is goin' for ten pounds to his Highness the Jam of Bundelpore——"

"Eleven, I guess."

"Fifteen!" said the Jam calmly.

This was a tremendous jump, and there was a cheer. Lumley-Lumley blinked at the Jam, and hesitated. But the fellow who had once been called the Outsider of St. Jim's was famous for his nerve.

"Twenty!" he said.

"Guineas!" said the Jam.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Lumley!"

Lumley-Lumley drove his hands into his pockets.

"Gentlemen, I'm no hog, and I guess I know when I've had enough. This is where I take a back seat."

But Arthur Augustus did not "knock down" the lot to the latest bidder. He looked inquiringly at his chums. Tom Merry & Co. hesitated, too. They wanted to raise the wind for the Skimpole Fund. But——

"Then the place is mine," said the Jam coolly. "You will knock down the lot to me, as I have made the highest bid, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, but—but weally——"

"The fact is," said Tom Merry hesitatingly, "we—we never anticipated whacking bids like this, and—and we don't think we can take so much money, even for the fund."

"Bah! It is my will!" said the Jam, in his lordly manner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Koumi Rao gave the laughing juniors a glare. The Jam's lordly manners and customs never failed to have an entertaining effect upon his schoolfellows.

"I insist!" exclaimed the Jam, with a flash in his dark eyes. "You have offered the place for sale, and I have made the highest bid. A Jam of Bundelpore is not to be denied. While the stars shine——"

"And the rivers roll," grinned Figgins, "a Jam of Bundelpore claims the right to play the giddy ox."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Koumi Rao opened a pocket-book and took out a bunch of banknotes. He extracted four fivers and a currency note for one pound, and threw them on the table. It was evident that he had much more left.

"There is the money!" he exclaimed.

"Well, the silly ass seems to have plenty," said Blake. "If he insists, I don't see how we can back out."

"Go it, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, making up his mind, and taking up the banknotes.

Rap, rap!

"Gentlemen, the bid of twenty guineas is accepted, and the lot—I mean the place—is knocked down to his Highness Koumi Wao, the Marmalade—I mean the Jam of Bundelpore. Koumi Wao is a membah of the St. Jim's juniah eleven for the Gweyfwiahs match."

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins.

The Co. thumped their congratulations upon Koumi Rao's back and marched him off in triumph. The Jam walked off with a lofty stride and his dusky nose in the air. He had his ambition at last, he was to play in the Greyfriars match. As for the money, he did not give it a thought. His Highness was one of those fortunate individuals who have never had to consider the value of money.

"Gentlemen," said the amateur auctioneer, "the sale is now ovah! Befoah the meetin' bweaks up, howevah, a collection will be taken for the fund——"

There was a general rush for the door.

Before even the cracked teapot could be produced the common-room was clear, and the committee of ways and means were left to themselves.

"Bai Jove! What have all the fellahs wushed off like that for?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Total, thirty-one pounds for the fund!" said Tom Merry, who was treasurer of the Skimpole Scrape Fund. "It's topping! Ripping, in fact! But where, in the name of the dickens, is the other nine quid coming from?"

"Echo answers where!" said Monty Lowther.

The committee of ways and means gave it up.

CHAPTER 12.

The Last Chance!

LEVISON'S suggestion had "panned out" well.

The Skimpole Scrape Fund had received a "leg-up" such as its founders could not have anticipated. They congratulated themselves on their good fortune. They were well on the way to getting Herbert Skimpole out of his fix. But there still remained a deficit of nine pounds. How it was to be made up was a deep mystery. The next day the committee of ways and means thought it over, and talked it over, and discussed it in all its bearings. They had had phenomenal good luck so far. But the deficit remained.

On Wednesday the Greyfriars match was to be played, and on Thursday Mr. Henry Skimpoll, to whom the genius of the Shell owed forty pounds, was coming for his money. It had been promised to him. The chums of St. Jim's could not fail in their promise. A debt of honour was a debt of honour.

But what was to be done?

To put another place in the eleven up to auction seemed the only resource. Crooke of the Shell might have gone up to nine pounds for it. But there was a difficulty in the way. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to be the only member of the team whose spirit of self-sacrifice was equal to such a strain.

True, Figgins had offered, and Talbot followed his example. But neither Figgins nor Talbot could be spared from the team if the match was to be won.

Some of the fellows observed that it was "up" to Monty Lowther. But Monty Lowther did not seem to see it.

Wednesday came, and with it came a letter from D'Arcy's elder brother, Lord Conway. Lord Conway was home on leave from the Front, and Arthur Augustus had written to him for contributions. The viscount sent a letter and a cheque. The letter told Arthur Augustus that he was a cheeky young ass. The cheque, which was really much more to the point, was for five pounds.

When Arthur Augustus displayed that letter and cheque there was a general buzz of satisfaction from the committee of ways and means. Only Arthur Augustus did not look satisfied.

"Hurrah!" chortled Blake. "Old Conway is a brick! That leaves us with only four quid to raise."

"Topping!" chorussed the committee of ways and means.

"Railton will cash that cheque for you, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "He knows your brother, so he'll hand out the dibs at once."

"I am afwaid it will be imposs to cash this cheque, Tom Mewwy."

"Eh? Why not? You don't mean to say that your brother can't meet his own cheques!" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wegard that wemark as asinine. But I feah it is up to me to send this cheque back to my majah."

"What for, fathead?"

"You see what he says in the letter. He chawacterises me as a cheekay young ass. I uttahly wefuse to be wegarded as a cheekay young ass. I shall weturn this cheque to Conway with a wathah stiff lettah."

Blake jerked the cheque out of Arthur Augustus' hand.

"You can please yourself about the stiff letter, my son, but this cheque's going to the fund," he remarked.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Here's a fountain-pen. Endorse it at once!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I wegard this as a mattah of personal dig. I shall point out to Lord Conway——"

"Then there's only one thing to be done," remarked Monty Lowther, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"What is it, Lowthah?"

"Hold your head under the tap till you endorse the cheque."

"Hear, hear!"

"I should uttahly wefuse to have my head held undah the tap, Lowthah. I wegard the suggestion as widiculous. Undah the circs, I cannot accept this cheque, accompanied as it is by oppwobwious wemarks——"

Tom Merry closed one eye at the committee of ways and means.

"Gussy," he said, with great solemnity, "I am surprised at you. Considering that Lord Conway is going out again next week to fight the Huns, I must say I am surprised at you!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that! Pewwaps, undah the circs I could overlook Conway's wude wemark. Pewwaps it would be wathah wuff to wite him a cwushin' lettah when he is just goin' out to woll in mud and blood on the stwicken fields of Flandahs," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps, upon the whole, I had bettah take this lyin' down. I will ovahlook the mattah."

"That's right," said Blake affectionately. "I knew we could depend on you to act like a born idiot——"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Now get this cheque to Railton, and get the tin for it, and shut up, and write Lord Conway a nice letter, and tell him we all hope that he will capture the Kaiser and trim his moustache for him."

"Hear, hear!"

So the cheque was cashed, and the sum of five pounds added to the fund. Of the total required, only four pounds were still wanting. But the final four seemed to present as great difficulties as ever.

Crooke of the Shell came up to the Terrible Three early after dinner.

"Fund all right?" asked Crooke.

"Four quid still wanted," said Monty Lowther. "As you're rolling in money, you can make a contribution if you like."

Crooke shrugged his shoulders.

"Catch me! I don't see any sense in getting that dummy Skimpole out of a scrape. He doesn't seem to worry about it himself. But I'll make you an offer. I'm a better footballer than you are, Lowther."

"Go hon!"

"And I'll hand out four quid on the spot for your place in the team."

"Nothing doing!" said Lowther, though he hesitated a moment. "I'd rather let Lumley-Lumley have it."

"Too late!" grinned Crooke. "Lumley's gone home for the afternoon, and it's your last chance. You can take it or leave it."

Monty Lowther looked at his chums. Manners and Tom Merry said nothing. But Monty thought that he could read their thoughts.

"Dash it all!" said Lowther uneasily. "It would be enough to make us lose the match, if that slacker plays, Tom."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Tom.

"Look here, I'll do as you say!" exclaimed Lowther. "I don't see any other way of raising the other four quid."

"Not unless Crooke contributes it to the fund. It would be only decent to help old Skimmy out of a scrape, Crooke."

"Is that meant for a joke?" asked Crooke pleasantly. "I've got something better to do with my money than help silly duffers out of scrapes. But my people are coming down to St. Jim's to-day, and I'd like them to see me in the eleven. Are you going to take my offer or leave it?"

Monty Lowther made up his mind.

"Take it!" he said.

Lowther's face was a little grim.

Tom Merry's face was grim, too, as he walked away with Crooke. He did not want the slacker and black sheep of the Shell in the junior eleven. But it was the only way.

"Where's Lowther?" asked Jack Blake, as Tom Merry joined the team in the quad ten minutes later.

"Isn't he playing?" exclaimed Figgins.

"Crooke's playing."

"My hat!"

"And the fund's complete," said Tom Merry grimly. "We've saved Skimmy, and we may have lost the Greyfriars match. Still, our promise came first."

"We must play up like thunder," said Figgins. "You can depend on the Jam. Honestly, I think he's jolly nearly as good as Gussy. As for Crooke—well, it will be carrying a passenger, that's all. But we'll all play up like—like billy-oh!"

Tom Merry nodded.

The match was going to be a tougher one than usual, but it was the only thing to be done, and all the St. Jim's players resolved, in Figgy's expressive words, to play up like billy-oh!

CHAPTER 13.
A Fight to a Finish!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. of Greyfriars descended from the brake which had brought them from Rylcombe Station.

They were a fine-looking set of juniors, and the St. Jim's fellows knew from old that they were "hot stuff" on the football-field.

Tom Merry & Co. greeted them warmly.

A dusky junior who came with the Greyfriars team, and who rejoiced in the impressive name of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, was greeted in a weird language by Koumi Rao with great warmth. To the other fellows the words they uttered seemed, as Figgins remarked, like cracking nuts, but the two Indian juniors smiled and talked, and talked and smiled, at a great rate, evidently very pleased and contented.

Crooke came down with the team, smiling.

About the fate of the match Crooke was not much concerned, so long as he had his money's worth, as he expressed it. His father and his uncles had arrived—three fat and prosperous-looking City gentlemen, who wore rings, and diamond pins, and big gold watchchains, and shining silk toppers, and fancy waistcoats, and seemed to bring a whiff of the unhealthy atmosphere of Threadneedle Street with them to the playing-fields of St. Jim's.

And Crooke meant to have his four pounds' worth, and allow his elderly relatives to see him pose as a footballer, and to extract tips from them for footballing expenses on the strength of his performance in the match.

Crooke tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"Where am I going to play?" he asked.

Tom shrugged his shoulders slightly. It did not matter much where Crooke played, so long as he kept out of the way; he was only a passenger at the best.

"Lowther's place, I suppose?" asked Crooke. Lowther was a forward in the team.

Tom shook his head.

"No; I'll put you in at half."

"I'd rather play forward."

"That's for me to settle. I'm going to put you where you'll do most good—or least harm, at any rate."

Crooke scowled, but he had no more to say. Harry Wharton of Greyfriars won the toss, and gave the kick-off to St. Jim's.

From the kick-off the game was hard and fast.

The St. Jim's front line was composed of Figgins, Koumi Rao, Tom Merry, Talbot, and Blake. It was a splendid forward line, and strong in the attack. Koumi Rao was playing up in a way that delighted his chums, and astonished the School House fellows. Tom Merry had hoped for the best, but he had not expected to see the dusky Jam shine as a footballer. It was a very

agreeable disappointment for him. The Jam was as fast as any fellow on the field, as cool as a cucumber, and a sure kick. Even the great Arthur Augustus himself would not have done better in his place. And Arthur Augustus, looking on, cheered the Jam generously.

In the second line Crooke was a passenger, and a little more. Before the game had been going a quarter of an hour the black sheep of the Shell was in difficulties for breath. Countless cigarettes had spoiled his wind, and it was not long before he had hardly a run left in him.

It was a weak spot in the defence, and the Greyfriars players were not slow to take advantage of it.

They pressed their attack, giving Crooke a good deal of their attention, and they came through at last, and the ball got home, in spite of the energetic defence of Fatty Wynn in goal.

It was first blood to Greyfriars.

Fatty Wynn tossed out the leather, and the players made their way back to the centre of the field. Tom Merry touched Crooke on the arm.

"Pull yourself together, Crooke," he muttered. "You simply let them walk over you."

"Grooh!" said Crooke, scowling.

"Eh? What's the matter with you?"

"Grooh!"

That was all Crooke could say. He wanted his second wind before he could say any more.

The teams lined up again. This time it was the St. Jim's attack that got home, after hard struggling up and down the field. The ball went in from Tom Merry's foot, almost on the sound of the whistle.

"One all," said Blake, as they rested in the interval. "Not so bad, considering that we've got Crooke on our shoulders."

Crooke snorted.

"And what do you think of the Jam?" said Figgins proudly. "Isn't he first-class, best-quality jam, better than any marmalade going?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Topping!" said Tom Merry heartily. "I'm jolly glad you got into the team, Koumi Rao. You're a giddy jewel!"

The Jam's dusky face flushed with pleasure.

"We'll beat 'em!" said Talbot.

"We'll beat 'em, if Crooke will only fall down and stay there!" said Figgins.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Crooke.

The whistle went for the second half, and the footballers lined up keenly. Crooke almost limped into his place, panting.

"You can go off, if you like," said Tom Merry, taking pity upon the unfortunate slacker of the Shell. "We can finish without you, Crooke."

Crooke scowled savagely.

"I'm not going off!" he growled. "I've paid for a place in the team, and I'm going to play it out."

"Just as you like, of course."

But ere long Crooke more than half repented that he had not jumped at Tom Merry's offer. A rush of the Greyfriars forwards came through the Saints, and the halves failed to stem the tide. Crooke was left on his back as the attack swept on to goal. He remained there. There was a long, hard struggle before the goal, and thrice the ball went in, only to be fisted out by the Welsh junior between the posts. Fatty Wynn was not to be beaten again.

The game came whirling back to the midfield, and it passed over Crooke, who was still sprawling helplessly.

"Why don't you get off!" growled Lefevre, the referee, as he passed him.

Crooke panted.

"I won't!"

Right up to the Greyfriars goal the game surged, but it was swept back again. Again Crooke, limping on his feet now, found himself in the midst of the whirl. Harry Wharton's shoulder bumped him out of the way, and he went sprawling. The game swept on, and Crooke lay and blinked at the winter sky.

"Bai Jove! Make him crawl off!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Kick that sillay slackah off the field!"

"Get off, Crooke!" roared the crowd.

"Pick yourself up, man! You're not hurt!"

"Get out of sight, Crooke!"

Crooke picked himself up, crimson with exertion and rage. His "people," who were to be so impressed by his presence in the school eleven, were hearing those derisive shouts. It was really rough on Crooke; he felt he wasn't getting his four pounds' worth after all!

There was still a quarter of an hour to go; but not for untold wealth and untold swank would Crooke have gone through that remaining fifteen minutes. He was fed-up! He limped off the field, the crowd receiving him with mocking laughter, and disappeared. Crooke of the Shell was not seen again for some time. He was in the dormitory, stretched on his bed, with an ache in every slack limb, winded to the wide, wishing sincerely that he had never spent four pounds on a place in the St. Jim's junior eleven.

Tom Merry & Co. were playing a man short. But a man short was really an advantage, considering that the "man" was a hopeless duffer and slacker, and had been a trouble and a nuisance in the ranks.

The score was still one to one; and time was getting close. Greyfriars were attacking hard, determined to win. But every fellow on the St. Jim's side was equally determined to do or die. They had raised the Skimpole Fund, and they were resolved not to lose the great match as the price of it.

Three minutes more, when Tom Merry led a desperate attack on the Greyfriars goal. The defence was good; but as Talbot captured the ball from a pass, he got through, and as Johnny Bull of Greyfriars bumped him over, he let the leather slip across to Koumi Rao on the other wing. Koumi Rao saw his chance, and rushed the leather in, and kicked. Out it came from Bulstrode in goal, only to meet Tom Merry's head, and fly in again like a flash. It beat the goalkeeper, it lodged in the net, and there was a terrific roar from St. Jim's.

"Goal! Goal! GOAL!"

Goal it was!

The whistle rang out.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Good old Jam!"

"Yaas, wathah! Huwway, huwway!"

St. Jim's had won, after one of the toughest matches that had ever been played on that historic ground.

. . . . . .

There were high jinks at St. Jim's that evening.

With a satisfaction that almost equalled their satisfaction at winning the match, the juniors despatched the forty pounds to Mr. Skimpoll. Skimmy had been rescued from his scrape, the debt of honour had been paid, and Greyfriars had been beaten as well!

No wonder the heroes of St. Jim's rejoiced. Skimpole was dragged from his study to join in the celebrations. Reluctantly he left the delightful volume of Professor Loosetop, and listened in an absent-minded way while it was explained to him that it was all right, that the debt was paid, and it was all serene.

"Understand, fathead?" asked Blake, thumping him on the back.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Yes, my dear Blake. It appears that you have paid some money—I think you said—to somebody——"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Your debt, fathead!" roared Tom Merry.

"Oh, yes! I remember! I had quite forgotten!"

"Forgotten!" yelled the juniors.

"Yes; I have some very important matters to think of, and it had quite slipped my memory. However, if you are satisfied, I am. I assure you I have no objection to your paying Mr. Skimpole, none whatever."

"Oh dear!"

"Still, I am glad it has ended satisfactorily," said Skimpole.

And Skimpole joined in the celebration that followed; and was restrained by force from making a speech on Socialism. And so, happily, ended Skimpole's Scrape.

THE END.

Next Wednesday's Great Christmas Double Number will contain a grand, extra long, complete story of St Jim's entitled "A Stolen Holiday!" Order early.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 406.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.

Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

SOMETHING LIKE ECONOMY!

They were a saving old couple, and as a result they had a beautifully-furnished home.

One day the lady of the house missed her husband.

"Joseph, where are you?" she called.

"I'm resting in the parlour," came the reply.

"What, on the sofa?" cried the lady, in horrified tones.

"No; on the floor."

"On my best carpet?" was the anxious query.

"It's all right, dear; I've rolled it up," came the comforting reply.—Sent in by Frank Sharrod, Attleborough, Nuneaton.

SORRY SHE SPOKE.

An officer seeking billets for his men called at the house of a certain wealthy lady and inquired if she could accommodate two of them.

"Certainly not!" replied the lady. Then, after a moment's thought, she added: "But there's a nice dry shed at the end of the garden."

The officer, accustomed to this kind of reply, asked to be allowed to look over the house. On seeing the dining-room, he remarked:

"Nice room, this."

"Yes," agreed the lady.

"Well," said the officer calmly, "have it ready for four men Monday."

"Impossible!" gasped the lady. "Where shall I put this costly furniture?"

"There's a nice dry shed at the end of the garden," remarked the officer drily.—Sent in by Leonard Butler, Ipswich.

BEYOND CORRUPTION.

A commercial traveller had taken a large order for a consignment of goods, and endeavoured to press upon the Scottish manager, who had given the order, a box of cigars.

"Nae," protested the manager, "don't try to bribe me! I cudna tak' them. I am a true member of the kirk!"

"But surely you'll accept them as a personal present?"

"I cudna," said the Scot.

"Well, then," said the traveller, "suppose I sell you the cigars at a merely nominal sum—say, sixpence?"

"Well, in that case," replied the manager, "since you press me, and not liking to refuse an offer weel meant, I think I'll be taking two boxes." — Sent in by S. Barton, Grappenhale, near Warrington.

OBVIOUSLY.

An officer, entering the guard-room, found it occupied by a solitary private, who lounged sulkily in a chair, smoking a Woodbine.

"Where's the sergeant of the guard?" demanded the officer angrily.

"Gone over to the mess, sir," replied the private.

"And the sentries?"

"In the canteen, sir!"

"Then what the deuce are you doing here?"

"Me, sir?" came the calm reply. "Oh, I'm the prisoner!"—Sent in by G. Tristram, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 406

PROVING HIS WORDS.

"No," complained the professor to his students, "you do not use your faculties of observation."

He then picked up a jar containing chemicals of vile odour. Dipping a finger into it, he drew it forth again, and began sucking with evident relish.

"Taste it, gentlemen!" he commanded.

After each of them had licked his finger and shown a profound disgust with the stuff, the professor exclaimed triumphantly:

"I told you so! You did not use your faculties. If you had been observant, you would have seen that the finger I placed in my mouth was not the one I dipped into the jar."—Sent in by F. B. Boswell, Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

THE OLD ORIGINAL.

A tourist was travelling in Scotland, and when staying at one of the villages near Stirling he saw an old man chopping wood with a very ancient-looking axe.

"That is a very old hatchet you have there, is it not?" he remarked.

"To be sure it is," said the old man. "It once belonged to Sir William Wallace."

"Well," said the tourist, "I should not have thought it was really as old as that."

"No wonder," replied the old man. "It has had two new heads and three new handles since then."—Sent in by J. I. Clerk, Edinburgh.

HE KNEW.

"What do you want?" demanded Mr. Newlywed, as he confronted the tramp at the door of his house. "Breakfast or work?"

"Both, sir," replied the tramp.

"H'm!" murmured Mr. Newlywed, and he disappeared momentarily inside the house.

Presently he returned carrying a large piece of his wife's home-made bread.

"Then eat that," he exclaimed savagely, "and you'll have both!"—Sent in by Miss K. Ayers, Islington, N.

HEE, HEE!

The diminutive Jap was sitting in the corner of a carriage in a train on an American railway, and sitting opposite was a big, scowling American.

"Say," drawled the Yank, "what kind of an 'ee' are you, Chinee or Japanee?"

"I'm a Japanee!" was the quick reply. "Now perhaps you will tell me what kind of an 'ee' you are—monkey, donkey, or Yankee?"—Sent in by W. B. Landowne, Hampstead, N.W.

AT IT AGAIN.

Old Lady (residing in small village): "This be a terrible war, doctor!"

Doctor: "It is, indeed."

Old Lady: "It's a pity someone don't catch that there old Kruger."

Doctor: "Ah, you mean the Kaiser, don't you?"

Old Lady (indignantly): "Oh, he's changed his name, has he—the deceitful old varmint?"—Sent in by Miss L. Sproson, Wolverhampton.

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OUR SPLENDID NEW SERIAL!

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's and their Girl Chum. Specially published at the earnest request of readers of the "Gem" Library.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

LAST WEEK'S INSTALMENT TOLD HOW—

ETHEL CLEVELAND, a pretty English girl, and cousin to ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, the swell of St. Jim's, goes to St. Freda's School to continue her education.

Upon arrival, she is kindly received by MISS PENFOLD, the principal.

Later she goes to the dormitory, and is there confronted by another pupil about her own age, with a handsome, dark countenance.

"You will get on here!" said the girl abruptly.

"I hope so," said Ethel.

"Oh, you are sure to! You are the kind of girl Miss Penfold will like. You will like the school and Miss Penfold. Bah!" The dark girl made a passionate gesture. "I hate it!"

(Now read on.)

A Strange Schoolmate.

Ethel started.

"Why do you hate it?" she said.

"Oh, it is dull here, and the girls—— I don't like them, either, and they don't like me! I shall not like you, for that matter!" replied Dolores.

Ethel could not help smiling. The dark girl was certainly not wanting in candour.

The other looked at her quickly.

"Why are you laughing?"

"I—— You see——"

"I thought you might be a girl I could like," said the other. "That is why I came to see you, to see what you were like. But you are the same as all the others. You have no esprit, any more than they have!"

"But——"

"You will be like all the rest. You will say, 'Yes, Miss Penfold,' and 'No, Miss Penfold,' and 'Good gracious, Miss Penfold!' and the rest."

"But——"

"Oh, don't interrupt me! I suppose you are joining the classes this afternoon? You will find them deadly dull, of course; but I have no doubt you will like it all."

"I shall like St. Freda's if I can, of course," said Ethel. "But are you unhappy here?"

"Do I look happy?" said the girl. "Besides, I am in disgrace now."

"Oh, I am sorry!"

"I don't see why you should be sorry, as I am a stranger to you. You do not know my name. I am Dolores Pelham."

"Dolores?"

"Yes. It is a Spanish name; my mother was Spanish," said the girl proudly.

"It is a pretty name."

There was a sound of a voice calling in the passage. It was a thin, piping voice, which Ethel did not like.

"Dolores! Dolores!"

The owner of the name did not even turn her head. She must have heard, but she took no notice whatever of the call.

"I am in disgrace," she resumed, taking a seat in the window beside Ethel, and leaning her dark head on her hand. "But I am always in disgrace, so it does not matter."

"And what is wrong?" asked Ethel, feeling that she ought to show some interest in the matter, and indeed feeling some, for the dark, wayward girl strangely interested her.

Dolores gave a slight shrug.

"I was impertinent to Miss Tyrrell."

"Oh, dear!"

"I told her I hated lessons," said Dolores. "She told me I had better take a walk in the garden. I have been walking in the garden, and I am sick of it!"

"I saw you there," said Ethel.

"Oh, you saw me! Where were you?"

"In the drawing-room, waiting for Miss Penfold to come down."

"Oh! Do you know, I have been very curious, ever since I heard that a new girl was coming to St. Freda's, to see you?"

"I hope you are not disappointed?"

"Frankly, I am! I don't think I shall like you, as I said!"

"Well, never mind," said Ethel calmly. "Perhaps you will grow to like me better, and if you don't, there will be no need for you to speak to me, will there?"

Dolores looked a little puzzled at the matter-of-fact remark.

There was a moment's silence, and the piping voice was heard from the passage again:

"Dolores!"

"Someone is calling you, I think," ventured Ethel.

The Spanish girl nodded.

"Oh, it is only Enid!"

"Enid?"

"Yes; Enid Craven. I suppose Miss Tyrrell has sent her to look for me, as I have not returned to the school-room."

"Had you not better go?"

"Are you tired of my company, then?"

"No," said Ethel, puzzled to know quite what to say to the wayward girl; "but surely Miss Tyrrell will be angry if you do not return."

"Oh, she is always angry with me!"

"But you give her cause, if you are disobedient."

Dolores shrugged her shoulders in her curious foreign way.

"Oh, I see! I was quite right. You are one of those thoroughly English girls who never do anything that is not quite correct. I shall dislike you!"

"Oh, please don't! But——"

"Dolores!"

A girl came into the corridor by the row of cubicles, and came along towards the window, catching sight of the two girls in the window-seat. Dolores made a gesture of repugnance; and indeed Ethel did not like the look of the girl. It was evidently the Enid Craven Dolores had spoken of. She was a short, pale-complexioned girl, with eyes that had a quick, birdlike look in them and a mincing and affected manner.

"Oh, Dolores, I have been looking for you everywhere!" she exclaimed.

"You need not have taken the trouble!" said Dolores.

"Miss Tyrrell sent me for you."

"Well, now you can tell her you have found me!"

"But you are to return to the class," said Enid. "You are to return at once, and I am to take you back with me."

Ethel looked keenly at Enid.

There was no mistaking the girl's tone. It would have

pleased her if the Spanish girl had refused to obey, and she had put the matter in precisely the words that were most likely to provoke Dolores to disobedience.

Dolores' dark eyes flashed.

"Well, I won't come with you!" she said.

"You must!"

"Must!"

"Yes. I am to take you back. Come at once!"

"I will not!"

"Then I shall have to tell Miss Tyrrell that you refuse to return to the class," said Enid Craven spitefully.

"Tell her what you like!"

Enid walked away.

Dolores looked out of the window with a moody brow. Ethel touched her gently on the arm, and Dolores looked round.

"Well?"

"Had you not better return to the class?" said Ethel softly.

"What does it matter to you?"

"Nothing; but you ought to go. It is not right to disobey your mistress, for one thing, and it will lead to trouble, for another."

"Oh, Enid is always making trouble for me! She dislikes me as much as I dislike her," said Dolores. "Enid Craven is a sneak!"

"But why let her make trouble for you? Better go!"

Dolores hesitated.

"Do go," said Ethel. "It will be better."

Dolores nodded, and rose. She walked away, and Ethel was left alone. The new girl at St. Freda's fell into a fit of musing.

So far, she had made two acquaintances at St. Freda's. One of them she liked, and one she did not like. But it was not Enid, with her thin voice and sly eyes, whom she liked—it was the half-foreign girl, who had certainly been the reverse of courteous to her, but in whom Ethel found herself taking a great interest.

And what would the other girls be like?

There were about forty altogether, as Ethel knew—and a dozen or more, at least, would be in her own class.

What would they be like? What would life be like at St. Freda's? Dolores was not happy there.

The sound of a bell and of footsteps in the passages roused Ethel Cleveland from her musing.

A bright, cheery face looked into the dormitory.

"Dinner!" called out a cheery voice.

"Thank you!" said Ethel.

And she rose to go down.

Dolores in Disgrace.

The dining-room at St. Freda's was a long, lofty, oak-panelled apartment, with high windows in a row looking out on well-kept gardens and stately trees. It had been a refectory in old days, when St. Freda's had been a very different kind of establishment. Now in the old stone passages where the feet of the old monks had trod, sounded the merry patter of girlish steps. When Ethel Cleveland entered the long, lofty room, the tables were already surrounded by the girls of St. Freda's. There were three long tables, with Miss Penfold at the head of one, Miss Tyrrell at another, and a lady Ethel did not know at the third. She was an under-mistress at St. Freda's, and her name, as Ethel afterwards learned, was Braye. Miss Braye was thin and angular, with hair tightly drawn back from a bony forehead, and a far from amiable expression of countenance. She had round eyes like a parrot, which seemed to be glittering here, there, and everywhere at once. Her round eyes glittered at Ethel as the latter came in, last of the girls. She raised a thin finger to beckon to the new girl.

"Ethel Cleveland!"

Ethel came towards her, with her light, graceful step.

"You will sit at this table for the present," said the teacher, in an acid voice. "Pray take your chair."

"Thank you!"

Ethel sat down in the vacant chair.

She glanced round the hall several times, in a quiet way, during the meal.

Dolores Pelham and Enid Craven were at Miss Tyrrell's table, and so was the bright-looking girl who had called Ethel to dinner. Dolores was sitting with her eyes on her plate, and with a dusky flush in her olive cheeks. It was clear that Dolores was still in an annoyed mood.

After the meal was over, and Miss Penfold gave the signal for retiring, Cousin Ethel went out with the other girls. The bright-faced girl who was sitting beside Dolores joined her in the doorway. She gave Ethel a gentle touch on the arm, and smiled at her.

"You are the new girl, of course?" she said.

"Yes," said Ethel, smiling back.

"And your name——"

"Ethel Cleveland."

"Mine is Dolly Carew. Of course, my name isn't really Dolly, but that's what I am called," said the girl, laughing. "You don't know anybody here yet, of course?"

"I have met Dolores Pelham."

"Oh, Dolores! How do you like her?"

Ethel hesitated a little.

"I think I shall like her very much," she said at last.

Dolly Carew gave an expressive little shrug of her shoulders.

"Then you will be alone in your taste," she said. "Dolores isn't popular. She is awfully clever, you know, but she is bad-tempered, and one never quite knows how to take her, and we don't bother. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see."

"She is always in some trouble or other," said Dolly. "She was in disgrace this morning. She is to apologise to Miss Tyrrell before the class, or——"

"Or what?"

"Or something dreadful will happen," said Dolly, laughing. "I don't know what—something lingering, with boiling oil in it, perhaps."

Ethel smiled.

"But what did she do?"

"She told Miss Tyrrell she hated lessons, and wanted to be anywhere but at St. Freda's."

Ethel glanced at Miss Tyrrell, who had just come out of the dining-room. The second mistress of St. Freda's had a kindly, though somewhat severe, face.

"Yes, she looks kind enough," said Dolly, interpreting Ethel's thought. "But Dolores was discontented. And she won't apologise."

"Then——"

"She will be punished."

"I am sorry!"

"Oh, we're all sorry!" said Dolly carelessly. "But Dolores is always in hot water, you know. Are you coming out?"

"I should like to."

"Come, then!"

Dolly Carew ran out into the Close, and Ethel followed her. Ethel was looking serious. She was interested in Dolores, and sorry for her.

Ethel was immediately surrounded by a group of girls, who were curious to know her name, where she came from, what class she was going into, whether she had been at school before, and so forth.

Ethel was answering these questions to the best of her ability, when she was called into Miss Penfold's room, and the head-mistress of St. Freda's occupied the next quarter of an hour with questions of a different sort.

"You will go into Miss Tyrrell's class," she said finally; and Ethel was dismissed a few minutes before the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Ethel entered the big school-room with a crowd of other girls.

Dolly Carew pulled her down on a form beside her, with a cheerful smile.

"So you are with us?" she said.

"Yes," said Ethel.

"I'm glad!"

"So am I. I hoped I should be with you," said Ethel frankly.

"My cubicle is next to yours in the dormitory," said Dolly. "Dolores' is on the other side. But, mum——"

"What is it?"

"Miss Tyrrell is looking awfully serious. She is going for Dolores."

"Poor Dolores!"

"Yes, she has been looking for trouble, and has found it," said Dolly.

Miss Tyrrell glanced at the class, and the whispering voices died away. The mistress's face was very grave.

She stood before them quietly, and her large, serious eyes fixed themselves upon Dolores Pelham. Dolores sat with her eyes on the floor, but the colour was deepening in her dusky cheeks.

"Dolores Pelham!"

Miss Tyrrell's voice was very quiet, but very ominous.

Dolores did not speak.

"Dolores Pelham!"

Dolores looked up.

"You must apologise before the class for your impertinence," said Miss Tyrrell quietly. "I am waiting, Dolores."

Dolores' lips set in a thin red line, and she did not speak.

"I am waiting."

Silence.

The whole class looked at Dolores, and there was sympathy in many of the glances; and the girls waited breathlessly for the denouement.

"Have you nothing to say, Dolores?"

The girl's lips opened at last.

"Nothing."

"Then I shall have no recourse but to punish you," said Miss Tyrrell. "Stand out here, Dolores!"

Dolores hesitated a moment, and then rose, and stepped out before the class. Miss Tyrrell looked at her gravely.

"You are disobedient and disrespectful, Dolores," she said. "I have been very patient with you. Will you not say that you are sorry?"

Dolores' lips quivered.

"I am not sorry," she said.

"Very well. You will take this note to Miss Penfold."

Miss Tyrrell wrote a little note, folded it, and handed it to Dolores. The girl took it and walked out of the school-room with a firm step, and with her head held proudly erect. Ethel whispered to her neighbour:

"What does that mean? Will she be caned?"

Dolly nodded.

"Yes. There isn't much caning here, and only Miss Penfold inflicts it—and Dolores is the chief sufferer."

"Oh, she likes it!" said Enid Craven, with a little snigger. "Dolores is always looking for trouble."

"Oh, bosh!" said Dolly brusquely.

Enid looked spiteful.

"You don't like her any more than I do," she said. "What do you want to stand up for her for, Dolly?"

"Rubbish!" said Dolly.

"Silence in the class!" exclaimed Miss Tyrrell.

And the afternoon's work began.

In the work of the class, Dolores was soon forgotten—by all but Ethel. The Spanish girl did not return to the class; but Ethel could not help thinking of her. There was something about the most unpopular girl at St. Freda's that appealed to her strangely, and when classes were dismissed at half-past four, Ethel looked for Dolores.

Dolores' Resolve.

Dolores was not to be found.

Cousin Ethel looked for her in the Close, and in the passages and the library, but the Spanish girl was not to be seen. Her cubicle was vacant, too. Ethel wandered out into the Close again, and Dolly Carew called to her to come and play rounders; but Ethel shook her head. She was anxious about Dolores, and determined to find her. She came upon her at last, sitting alone on a wooden seat under the thick old elms in a corner of the Close. The Spanish girl was sitting quite still, her hands clasped in her lap, looking straight before her, and she did not make a movement or look up as Ethel came.

The new girl looked at her quietly.

"Dolores!"

Dolores did not speak or move.

Ethel sat down beside her.

Then the Spanish girl's big black eyes turned upon her, full of slumbering fire.

"Why do you seek me out?" she said.

"I could not help thinking of you," said Ethel, in her frank way. "I am so sorry you are in trouble. I wish I could help you."

Dolores looked at her hard.

"You really mean that?" she said.

"Of course!"

"You will help me?"

"Yes," said Ethel. "If there were anything I could do, I should be glad. How can I help you?"

"You can—if you choose."

"How?"

"I am going to leave this place," said Dolores, in low, quick tones.

Ethel started.

"You are leaving St. Freda's?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry. I hoped we should be friends."

"I cannot stay longer," said the Spanish girl passionately. "I hate the place. Nobody here cares for me. The teachers dislike me, because I am different from the others. It is not a place for me. I am going away."

Ethel looked very grave. Dolores' meaning began to dawn upon her mind.

"You do not mean that your parents are taking you away, then, Dolores?" she asked.

Dolores smiled scornfully.

"My parents are not in England; I hear from them twice a term, that is all."

"Then how——"

"Don't you understand? I am going to leave St. Freda's of my own accord.'

"You cannot!"

"I can, and will! I am sick to death of the place! I shall not stay here," said Dolores, in low, passionate tones. "I am going away."

Ethel sat dumb.

She had said that she would help the girl; but she had not dreamed of anything of this sort. She did not know what to say.

"You will help me?" went on Dolores eagerly. "I shall go to-night. You will help me to get out of the house?"

"Impossible!"

"You said——"

"My dear, you cannot do this!" exclaimed Ethel. "What is to become of you? Where will you go? You cannot—you must not!"

"I shall!"

"Then——"

Ethel paused. What was she to say?

Dolores gave her a dark look.

"You will not betray me?" she said, in a low voice. "Even if you do not help me, you cannot betray me. I trusted you in speaking."

Ethel shook her head.

"I shall not repeat what you have said to me. But—but you must think better of it, Dolores. It would be madness. However much you dislike St. Freda's, it is better to remain here than to go among strangers. Besides, I am sure that Miss Penfold and Miss Tyrrell mean to be kind, if you only understood them better. Dolores, do think better of it!"

The Spanish girl remained silent.

Ethel sat in deep distress. She was in a difficult position. If the Spanish girl really intended to run away from school, surely Miss Penfold ought to be warned—but all Ethel's nature rebelled against the idea of anything like tale-bearing. Besides, she hoped that this was only a passionate outburst that would not be followed by a reckless action.

The Spanish girl gave her a scornful glance.

"So that is what your offer of help is worth?" she said.

"I did not suspect——"

"Pooh! It is nothing—so long as you keep silent!"

"I shall do that."

"That is enough."

"Then you really mean——"

"Yes."

"It is madness!"

Dolores shrugged her shoulders in her curious foreign way.

"All the same, I shall go!"

And she rose to her feet. Ethel would have detained her, but the Spanish girl shook off her hand impatiently, and walked quickly away. Ethel was left alone, with a troubled face and a troubled heart. What was she to do? It was a strange and difficult position in which she found herself upon this, her first day at St. Freda's."

Tea at St. Freda's.

Dolly Carew came to look for Ethel, to take her in to tea. Tea at St. Freda's was served in the dining-room, at the long tables. Cousin Ethel thought of the cosy little tea-parties in the juniors' studies at St. Jim's, where her cousin was, a little regretfully. There was great fun in getting one's own tea in one's own room, she thought. But manners and customs were different at St. Freda's. Dolly explained things to the new girl as she walked her off across the Close.

"We have bread-and-butter for tea," she explained, "but all the girls are allowed to take in anything extra they like, you see. If you want to do so, there's time—and it is only a few steps to the shop."

Ethel smiled. She had a good, healthy appetite, and after an afternoon in the school-room she was inclined to eat something more substantial than bread-and-butter.

"I should certainly like to!" she exclaimed.

"Then come this way!"

Dolly led the way through the elm-trees, and through a little gate. On the other side, in a trim garden, was a little cottage, in the window of which were several ginger-beer bottles and some superannuated tarts.

"This is Dame Phipps' cottage," said Dolly. "She does all the trade with St. Freda's because the village is so far off. Come in!"

Ethel followed her volatile new friend into the cottage, and found a motherly old woman there, who greeted the girls with a smile and put on her spectacles to serve them.

"This is Ethel Cleveland, the new girl, Mrs. Phipps," said Dolly. "Now, I must run off—I have to find Dolores. Mrs. Phipps will give you all you want."

"Thank you!"

Dolly ran out of the little shop, and Ethel was left alone.

"What can I get you, my dear?" asked Dame Phipps,

looking kindly through her spectacles at the sweet, frank, young face of the new girl.

Ethel hesitated a moment.

While she was hesitating, another girl came into the shop, with a sort of bouncing run, and stopped breathlessly at the counter.

She was a short, stout girl, with a freckled face, and very fat cheeks, and a round, plump figure, and dancing eyes. She stopped breathlessly at the counter. She nodded and smiled to Dame Phipps, who did not, Ethel thought, seem wholly glad to see her, and then turned to the new girl.

"I have been going to speak to you all day!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you noticed me? I was sitting behind you in class this afternoon."

"I did not look behind me," said Ethel, with a smile.

"Quite so—of course not!" agreed the other at once. "Well, I am Milly Pratt. I suppose you have come round here to get something for tea?"

"Yes."

"We are simply starved at tea-time," said Milly Pratt, in a confidential tone. "We don't have too much at dinner, but at tea-time we're famished!"

Ethel could not help thinking, as she looked at the plump girl, that she did not look as if she were starved or famished, but she did not say so.

"Now, I have a good appetite," said Milly. "I always like enough to eat—not a lot, you know, but enough. I'm not one of the girls who go about pretending to have a fairy appetite. I think it's silly!"

"So it is," agreed Ethel.

"Quite so! I'm glad you agree with me. Dame Phipps, I'll have some of the ham and the patties, and a cake, and——"

"Yes, miss, but——"

"And I am in a hurry."

"Yes, miss, but——"

"That is so like Dame Phipps!" exclaimed Miss Milly. "When one is in a dreadful hurry, she says nothing but 'but.' Do be quick, Mrs. Phipps!"

"Yes, miss, but——"

"Don't have any of the pork-pies," she said; "they are rather wangy."

"Rather what?" asked Ethel.

"Wangy—a little high, you know."

Ethel could not help laughing. Mrs. Phipps looked annoyed.

"Oh, Miss Milly——"

"Well, they are, you know," said Milly Pratt practically. "Buy just what I tell you, Ethel, and you will be all right."

"Thank you!"

Ethel's purchases were soon completed, and she accompanied the plump girl of St. Freda's from the little shop.

The crossed the Close to the School House, and joined a crowd of girls going into the dining-room.

Tea was a less formal meal than dinner, and the girls collected in groups at the big tables, and a continual buzz of conversation went on.

Dolly Carew joined Ethel as she came in, and they sat down together.

Dolly looked in surprise at the extensive provender with which Milly was laden.

"Have you come into a fortune, Milly?" she asked.

Milly coloured.

"Oh, nonsense!" she said.

"But you were stony to-day," said Dolly. "You tried to borrow of Enid Craven, and she wouldn't lend you anything!"

"I asked Enid to lend me a shilling because I had left my purse somewhere," said Milly Pratt warmly.

Dolly laughed.

"Yes. Have you found it?"

"No."

"Then how——"

"Ethel Cleveland has lent me something till I find my purse."

"Good! Perhaps you will find it by the time she is quite, quite an old lady!" said Dolly, laughing.

"Oh, don't be silly, Dolly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Mrs. Phipps, you have said that often enough. Do be quick and serve me, or I shall be late for tea!"

"Yes, miss, but——"

"I will pay you to-morrow," said Milly, in a rather hurried way. "I have left my purse somewhere. I suppose that is all right?"

An expression of firmness came over Mrs. Phipps' motherly face.

"I am afraid, miss——"

Milly made a pettish gesture.

"Now, isn't this most annoying?" she exclaimed. "I have left my purse somewhere, and there is no time to look for it, and we shall be scolded if we are late for tea!"

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Perhaps you will let me help you out of the difficulty?" she said.

Milly turned to her quickly.

"Oh, thanks so much! I only want a couple of shillings!"

Ethel opened her little purse.

Milly's eyes glistened in her round, fat face as she saw the glimmer of gold and silver in the open purse.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. "You must be rich!"

Ethel laughed.

"Not at all—but I have spent nothing here yet, you know."

"Perhaps you had better lend me five shillings," said Milly meditatively. "I will repay it when I find my purse."

"Certainly!"

A very peculiar expression appeared upon Mrs. Phipps' face, and she seemed about to speak, but she did not.

Ethel counted the five shillings in Milly Pratt's willing palm, and the plump girl turned to the counter again.

"Now, dame, do be quick—we shall be late for tea! And Miss Cleveland wants to be served, too! You are so slow! I will have a whole cake, I think, and a dozen buns, and a dozen jam-tarts, and——"

"Yes, miss."

The five shillings were soon expended to the last penny. Then Ethel made some more modest purchases under the advice of Miss Milly, who evidently knew what she was about when it came to purchasing provisions.

Ethel looked a little puzzled. But Dolores came in at that moment, and drew her thoughts elsewhere.

Ethel signed to Dolores to come and sit beside her. The Spanish girl did not seem to see the gesture, but passed on, and sat down by herself. Ethel coloured a little. She could see that Dolores was angry with her, and did not wish to speak. Dolores had her tea quite alone. No one addressed a word to her. But she was used to that.

Enid Craven came to sit down beside Cousin Ethel. Her manner was as agreeable as she could make it, but Ethel was very cold. She did not like the girl—partly, perhaps, because she had seen that Dolores did not like her.

"What was Dolores saying to you in the Close?" Enid asked.

Ethel started.

She had not known that her talk with Dolores in the Close had been observed, but it was evident that Enid's eyes were everywhere.

"Dolores?" she repeated.

"Yes."

"Why——" Ethel paused.

Enid's little, round eyes were fastened upon her face.

"Was she telling you a secret?"

"Really——"

"You might tell me!" said Enid curiously.

"You should not ask questions," said Ethel coldly. "Why should I tell you what Dolores said to me? It could not interest you."

Enid coloured.

"Then it was a secret?"

Ethel turned to her tea again, and did not reply.

Enid Craven gave her a far from pleasant look, and left her. But after that she was seldom very far from Ethel, and if Ethel had noticed her much, she would have guessed that the girl meant to discover what that secret was.

(Another long instalment of this grand school Serial in next Wednesday's Magnificent Christmas Double Number. Order at once. Price 2d.

OUT TO-DAY!

FRANK NUGENT, Art Editor.

H. VERNON-SMITH, Sports Editor.

HARRY WHARTON, Editor.

ROBERT CHERRY, Fighting Editor.

MARK LINLEY, Sub-Editor

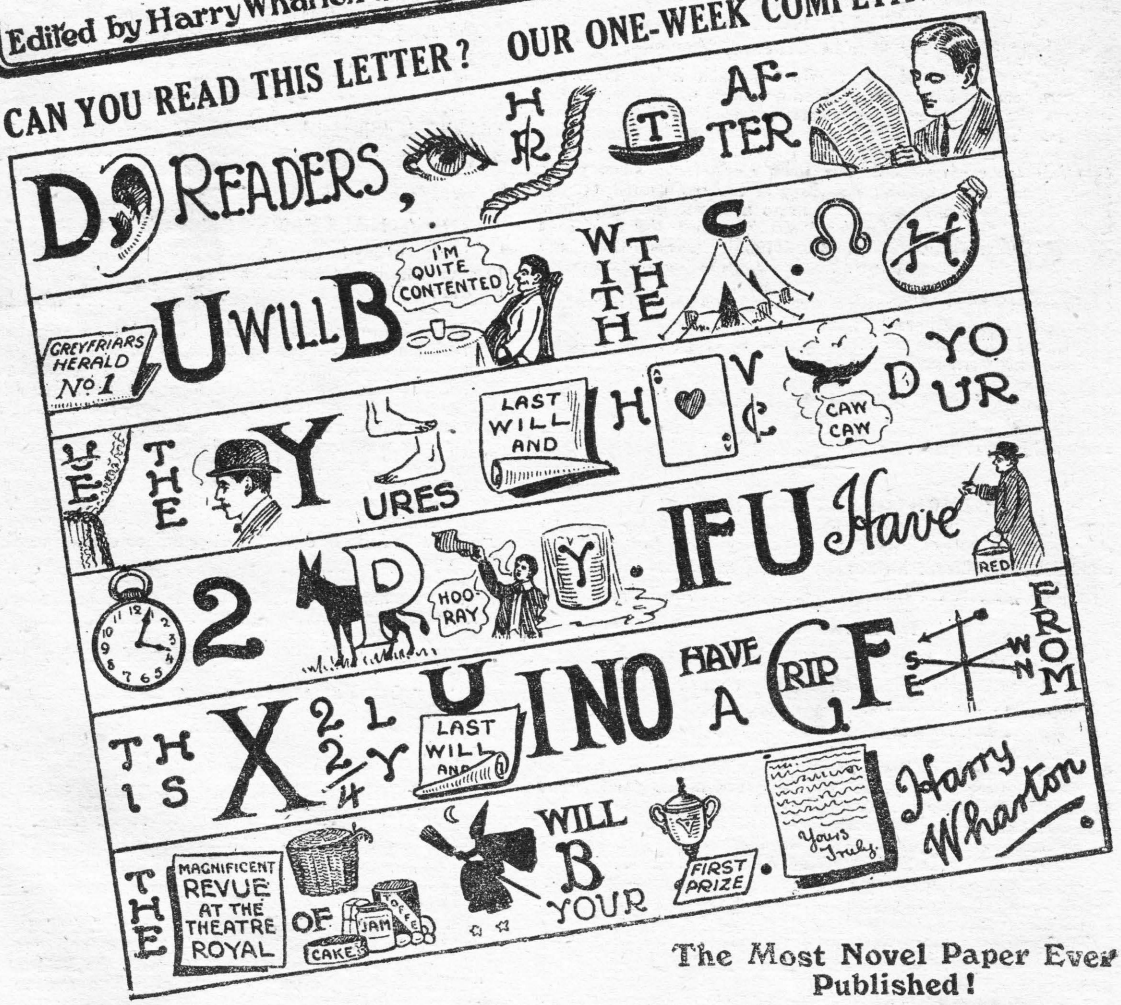
BUY IT AT ONCE!

The GREYFRIARS HERALD. 1/2

No. 1. Vol. 1. Week Ending Nov. 20th, 1915.

Edited by Harry Wharton & Co of Study 1. Greyfriars School.

CAN YOU READ THIS LETTER? OUR ONE-WEEK COMPETITION.



GRAND TUCK HAMPERS AS PRIZES!

The Most Novel Paper Ever Published!

The Paper With "The Magnet Library" Behind It!

THIS·WEEK'S·CHAT

Whom to Write to — — — — —

EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON ST. LONDON, E.C.

OUR ·· THREE ·· COMPANION ·· PAPERS!

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY — EVERY MONDAY | THE "PENNY POPULAR" — EVERY FRIDAY. | CHUCKLES. — ½D — EVERY SATURDAY.

OUR GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER NEXT WEEK!

On Wednesday of next week, I shall present to my chums the magnificent Christmas Double Number of the "Gem" Library—a number which will worthily uphold the highest traditions of the old paper.

The outstanding feature, of course, will be the

SPLENDID, EXTRA-LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY,

entitled

"A STOLEN HOLIDAY!"
By Martin Clifford.

This story is one of the very best which it has been my pleasure to read from Mr. Clifford's able pen. The very title betrays the daring scheme entered upon by certain lawless juniors. The fact is, the Head has occasion to forbid the customary vacation, and the disappointment is very acute, especially as arrangements had been made for a large party of the juniors to visit the residence of D'Arcy's uncle on the East Coast. Accordingly, the fellows take the law into their own hands, and depart for the "Vac," despite the persistent efforts of Mr. Ratcliff to detain them. Exciting times are spent at Sir Pulteney Vane's residence. The Zeppelin raiders put in a startling appearance, and Kerr of the New House distinguishes himself greatly in connection with the nocturnal visit of the baby-killers. In face of Kerr's valiant action, the kindly old Head has no recourse but to forgive the reckless juniors who went on

"A STOLEN HOLIDAY!"

and there is a happy ending to Tom Merry & Co.'s breathless and exciting escapade.

OTHER GREAT FEATURES!

In addition to the extra-long complete school story of the chums of St. Jim's, next Wednesday's bumper issue will contain a magnificent instalment of that wonderful serial,

"COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS!"
By Martin Clifford.

This is a story which needs no recommendation, for everyone admires Cousin Ethel and her boy chums.

Then there will be the

DELIGHTFUL COLOURED COVER,

executed in sparkling style by our old friend, Mr. R. J. Macdonald, who for many years now has given of his great talent to the "Gem" Library.

A most useful and interesting piece of work is the

SPLENDID FOUR-PAGE SUPPLEMENT,

which is chock-full of information concerning St. Jim's. Notes on the leading characters and their ages, together with many useful tips in connection with the school, will be given; and as a work of reference, next Wednesday's grand supplement will be found invaluable. Don't forget to tear it out and retain it.

Two full pages of Chat, together with numerous replies to my many chums, will go to complete an issue of which I am justly proud.

Owing to the troublous times through which we are passing, only a very limited number of copies can be printed; and, in view of this rather alarming state of affairs, it is absolutely essential to order our

BUMPER CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER TO-DAY!

ANOTHER GIGANTIC TREAT!

My Gemite chums will be overjoyed to learn that on Friday, December 3rd, a great new threepenny book-story will appear, introducing Tom Merry & Co., Figgins & Co., Redfern & Co., and all their rivals from the other famous schools.

The story will be entitled:

"SCHOOL AND SPORT!"
By Frank Richards,

and that it will make a considerable sensation I feel assured. Tell all your friends and relations of this welcome surprise!

A NASTY KNOCK FOR FREDDY!

The following letter, which I have had no space to publish before, will doubtless make Freddy Stephens the Slanderer squirm:

"Bideford, Devon.

"Dear Sir,—Reading in the 'Gem' that you have been the recipient of an insulting epistle from a certain F. Stephens, of mighty London, I feel that, at least, you should receive a modest pat on the back for the straightforward way in which you have conducted the 'Gem' Library, and for the splendid characters which you have portrayed therein.

"As one who has seen a little of the modern schoolboy, I would assure you that your weekly stories tend to keep a sound mind in a sound body, and I, for one, would regret to feel that you were in any way influenced by the utter rubbish which you appear to receive from a class of boy whose mind is evidently full of 'Jack the Ripper,' or similar unwholesome characters.

"It is quite within the range of possibility to believe that the above-mentioned F. Stephens is disgusted that your hero does not swear, drink, or gamble. It is always inadvisable to judge others by one's self.

"With every wish for the continued prosperity of your paper, Faithfully yours,

"AN OLD PUBLIC SCHOOL BOY OF TWENTY YEARS AGO."

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Leonard Lambert (South Wales).—The reader in question failed to send me her full address.

Raymond McCann, of Homebush, Haigh Road, Waterloo Park, near Liverpool, is the captain of a junior football team (average age 11). Will other junior teams of that age in the district who require matches, kindly communicate with Master McCann?

Will any Gemite who happens to know Alfred Day, living near Cambridge Road, Bethnal Green, and working in Holborn, E.C., please communicate with the Editor?

"The Terrible Three" (Transvaal).—The answer to your question is in the negative.

G. M. W. (Bedford).—Dr. Holmes is about fifty years of age, and Cousin Ethel is fifteen.

Continued on page iv of cover.)

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, England. Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z. South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Saturday, November 20th, 1915

HOW 'TOMMY' DOES HIS 'HAIR-DRILL.'

The Most Welcome "Duty" amongst Our Brave Boys at the Front.

1,000,000 'HAIR-DRILL' GIFTS FREE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

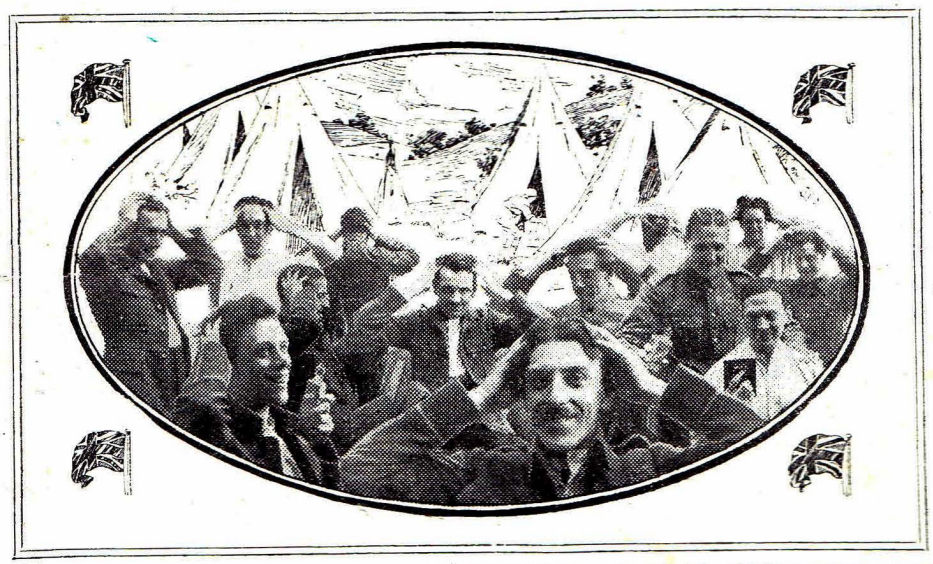
IT is universally agreed by friend and foe alike that there is no soldier the world over to equal, for smartness of appearance, "Tommy," the British Soldier on whom to-day the fate of the world depends.

Whether at home in the good old times as smartest of City Clerks, Departmental Manager, Commercial Traveller—or whether now under the all-embracing word "Tommy," in Barrack Room, Wooden Hut, Tent, or by Camp Fire, or yes! in the very battle-field itself, our men have always taken a wonderful pride in their appearance.

"Tommy" at this time certainly has a hundred and one duties to perform, and undoubtedly one of the most welcome to him is the morning toilet task, when he can not only have the "clean up," as he calls it, that makes him feel fresh and ready for any call upon his energies, but can perform, as he used to at home, that wonderful and delightful task that adds so much to his smart appearance, "Harlene Hair-Drill."

ANOTHER MILLION "HARLENE" FREE GIFTS.

As readers of this journal will know, Mr. Edwards in his great plan to teach everyone how to gain beautiful hair has placed no limit to his magnificent gifts of "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfits, and to-day, so that everyone, man and woman alike, who desires to possess a rich, healthy, luxuriant head of hair may commence his rational system of hair culture, he has decided to repeat his offer of **one million parcels containing the complete "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfit, with all necessary materials to carry out a Full Week's Test Free to the public.**



There is no country in the world where the fame of "Harlene Hair-Drill" has not penetrated, and it is no wonder then to find "Somewhere in France" our gallant men and their Allied chums all delighting to keep their smart appearance by adopting this hair-growing method. It gives to us at home a lesson which we may follow—men and women alike—by accepting this splendid "Harlene Hair-Drill" Gift offered here.

There is just that pleasure and delight in "Harlene Hair-Drill" that "Tommy" fully appreciates. He has taught this secret of smartness to many an Allied soldier companion. "Tommy" sets a good example which you can follow without cost by accepting the absolutely Free Gift offered in the Coupon in this page.

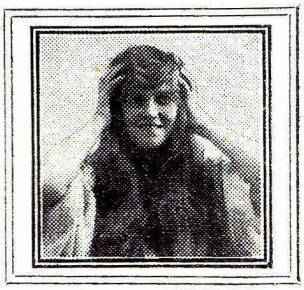
If you are one of those who have not yet tested this marvellous method of growing healthy hair, you cannot appreciate what a simple yet perfectly delightful toilet task this is, and in addition it must be remembered that behind "Harlene" and the famous "Hair-Drill" method there is concentrated the science and a knowledge of a lifetime given to the study of hair culture.

Mr. Edwards says definitely, "There is no reason why anyone should remain with weak, impoverished hair," and it is to prove this that to-day he repeats his offer of a million "Harlene Hair-Drill" Gifts.

WILL YOU ACCEPT THIS GIFT?

The splendid "Harlene Hair-Drill" parcel that will be forwarded immediately you send the coupon below consists of:

1. **A Trial Bottle of "Harlene," the Wonderful Hair Grower which has been proved to grow hair at any age, in the rich and lustrous abundance of health.**
2. **A Packet of "Cremex" Shampoo Powder, the most wonderful Hair cleanser and scalp refresher in the world, which prepares the head for "Hair-Drill."**



The charm and beauty of the Englishwoman lies greatly in her hair. "Harlene Hair-Drill" has given the British women a premier place for hair beauty, and the Inventor-Discoverer asks every lady to accept his Free Hair-growing Gift to prove immediately how wonderful his method adds to her attractiveness.

3. **A Bottle of Uzon Brilliantine.**
4. **A Copy of the specially written "Harlene Hair-Drill" manual, giving Full Directions for carrying out this delightful hair-growing Toilet Exercise.**

Send for your free supply, using the form below and enclosing 3d. stamps for return postage. When you know the splendid change it will make in your hair you can always obtain larger supplies of "Harlene" in bottles at 1s., 2s. 6d., and 4s. 6d., Uzon Brilliantine 1s. and 2s. 6d., and Cremex in 1s. boxes of 7 Shampoos (single 2d. each) from any chemist, or direct, post free on remittance, from Edwards' Harlene Co., 20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C. Postage extra on foreign orders.

Everyone writing for the free Harlene Hair-Drill Gift will receive particulars of a great £10,000 Profit-Sharing Distribution of Toilet Dressing-Cases, which will enable them to practise beauty culture of the complexion and hair at home free of cost.

GREAT FREE "HARLENE HAIR-DRILL" GIFT.

Fill in and post to Edwards' Harlene Co., 20-26, Lamb's Conduit Street, London, W.C.

Dear Sirs,—Please forward me, free of all charge your "Harlene Hair-Drill" Outfit, and all materials for a Seven-Day Trial. I enclose 3d. stamps to pay postage to any address in the world. (Foreign stamps accepted.)

Name .....

Address .....

.....

REPLIES IN BRIEF—*continued from page 28.*

The Claredale Football Club requires matches for the present season at home or away. Average age 15½. Apply by post to Cyril Brown, 30, Harvey Road, Ilford Lane, Ilford, Essex.

J. W. A. (Limerick).—I am very grateful to you and your society for the parcel of books you sent me, and which have now been distributed to the British troops.

"A Constant Sufferer" writes: "Our Form-master is a very hasty man, with a heavy hand. Do you think we should bump him, or send him to Coventry?" I am afraid this master's hastiness is caused in no small measure by his unruly pupils; and even if he does happen to be a beast—which I doubt—I should certainly not advise either bumping him or sending him to Coventry. The former offence would undoubtedly be visited with the "sack," and the latter would be rank bad form. Try and do the right thing by your master, "Constant Sufferer," and I have no doubt that he will do the right thing by you.

Albert E. B. (Manchester).—(1) The better boxer of those you name is Frank Nugent; (2) St. Jim's possesses the best fighting-men of the schools mentioned; (3) The Christian names of Mulvaney major and minor are Patrick and Michael respectively. Thank you for your loyal remarks.

Will the following readers, who wrote to me some time ago in condemnation of Master F. Stephens, please accept my belated thanks for their letters and loyalty? George P. (Leeds), Fred W. (Manchester), P. Chase (Poplar), W. S. W. (Gateshead), H. (Queen's Park), "Liskerret" (Cornwall), J. L. Scott (Hornsey Rise), "A Loyal Dublin Girl Reader," Elsie F. M. J. (West Kensington), "Ossey" (Plaistow), L. C. Arnold (High Barnet), A. V. (Battersea), Lawrence Smith, Jack F. and Fred W. (Wallasey), "Silvia" (Hillsborough), Will Ellis, A. R. Williams (Stratford), "A Hull Reador," F. M. (Leicester), "A Reader of the 'Gem'" (Portobello), "A Reader" (Stepney), A. L. (London, E.), R. W. F. and K. K. (Kingston-on-Thames), R. Snow, James Tate (Portadown), Edna Barker (Regent's Park), C. R. (East Ham), N. Barnden (Portslade), and A. W. B. (Notts).

Gladys T. M. L. (Lancs.).—The lines you quote are from Longfellow. Yes, it's a very nice poem indeed. Congratulations on having won a Storyette Prize at the first attempt. Your success should encourage others who read these lines. Sorry I cannot tell you where the play in question can be obtained.

E. Moller (Cape Town).—"Tom Merry's Weekly" will not be published unless the "Greyfriars Herald" builds up a tremendous circulation. This is unavoidable, as no Editor can afford to be stranded with two papers which do not pay their way. The "Herald" must be backed up, might and main, or Tom Merry's paper will never adorn the bookstall. In the event of the St. Jim's journal being published, it will appear every Wednesday at a halfpenny. Many thanks for your letter and photo.

A. T. (Tufnell Park).—Thank you for the many communications you have been good enough to send me from time to time. I have no intention of discarding the Tom Merry stories in the "Penny Popular." The suggestion was that they should remain, but that Harry Wharton & Co. should be introduced also. Your grumble is quite a minor point, and you are the only reader who has complained on that particular subject. I hope you will be an editor yourself one of these days, and then you will realise the almost insurmountable difficulties one is beset with.

"An Old Reader" (Portsmouth).—You must bear in mind that a little exaggeration is necessary for the sake of effect. I quite agree that Grundy's spelling is "the limit," but it affords considerable amusement, nevertheless. Your other criticisms are duly noted.

George M. Green (Maida Vale).—Tom Merry will not disappear from the "Penny Popular," so don't alarm yourself.

"A Manchester Citizen."—I think it is unfair to draw odious comparisons between the "Gem" readers and the "Magnet" readers. One would imagine by your letter that the Gemites were thoroughly true blue, and the Magnetites outsiders. As a matter of fact, both classes are singularly loyal. The failure of the "Dreadnought" was not, as you say, due solely to the "Magnet" readers. The Gemites were just as much to blame. But let us wipe that affair off the slate now. Why can't we all pull together?

"A Brum Reader."—I considered it a wise policy to bring out the "Greyfriars Herald" on a Monday, as on that day the "Magnet" Library appears. They will thus go hand in hand.

E. John (Glamorgan).—Thank you for your suggestion, but pressure on our space prevents my carrying it out.

J. Kelly (Tunbridge Wells).—I do not think Mr. Railton will return to the theatre of war. Yes, Wayland is the St. Jim's telephone exchange, as you will see by next Wednesday's special supplement to the "Gem" Library.

S. S. Bresler (Johannesburg).—Many thanks for your letter. Glad to hear your budget of interesting news. I should have liked to write you personally, but we are terribly overworked at present at this office.

J. F. H. Pearson (Natal).—Tom Merry is well-versed in all manner of scoutcraft, and so are his chums. Glad to hear you enjoyed "The St. Jim's Volunteers."

C. H. Bond (Clerkenwell).—You are not the only reader who would like to get hold of the address of Master F. Stephens, so that you could write and tell him a few home truths. Unfortunately, the London libeller has not written since he "downed" the "Gem," and I do not know his whereabouts from Adam.

Eileen O'Connor (Kimberley).—For the duration of war, our Correspondence Exchange has been suspended. So soon as peace is proclaimed, this jolly old feature will be revived.

"A Loyal Manx Reader."—I am well aware of the loyal host of Gemites I possess in the Isle of Man. They are indeed boys and girls to be proud of. Kerruish may be in the limelight again shortly, but I can make no definite promise. There are such a lot of characters to cope with, you know!

John Tully (Northumberland).—Glad you were able to convert your chum from the belief that the "Gem" Library was a "blood-and-thunder" book. I am deeply indebted to you for your loyalty to my papers.

Leonard C. (Manchester).—Yes, you are right; we do have a busy time. That you may have some sort of an insight into our Editorial duties, I append a few items of our programme: (1) Reading through all the "Magnet," "Gem," "Boys' Friend," "Penny Popular," "Greyfriars Herald," and "Chuckles" manuscripts, and marking them out for the artist to illustrate; (2) Replying to not less than 2,000 letters weekly; (3) Correcting the proof-pages of all the papers; (4) Writing four sets of Chat, together with numerous Replies in Brief. So you will see that we have our hands full. Sorry to hear of your interrupted football match. In my opinion, the park-keeper was entirely in the wrong.

"Tomboy" (Victoria).—I was very interested in your letter, and your comments on the Australian troops. Everyone in the Old Country is proud of them.

E. Robinson.—The "Greyfriars Herald" is obtainable from all newsagents.

Albert E. Monks (Bristol).—Postcards only, please! Storyettes cannot be considered unless the rules are adhered to.

J. G. Davies (H.M.S. Impregnable).—Many thanks for your splendid letter!

"A Loyal Lancashire Chum."—Your poem on the Kaiser, though true in detail, is a bit too fierce for publication. Yes, you are too young to enlist. Wait a little longer.

"A Faithful Reader" (near Taunton).—Hope you like "Cousin Ethel's Schooldays." Tom Merry is slightly older than Harry Wharton.

"A Loyal Gemite Heart and Soul" (High Wycombe).—Very pleased to hear from you again. I passed on your cheery message of congratulation to Mr. Clifford.

Eunice Maynard (Worthing).—Very many thanks for a most charming letter!

Reggie Collingwood (Leeds).—Joke not quite up to the standard. Try again!

"A Jewish Reader" (Deptford).—Send your work along to me, and I shall then be in a position to advise you.

"Gordon Gay" (Doncaster).—You ask how it is that Harry Wharton & Co., although of the same age as Tom Merry & Co., are only in the Lower Fourth, while the St. Jim's heroes are in the Shell. The explanation is that the standard of work is higher at Greyfriars, and the Remove Form at that school is equivalent to the Shell at St. Jim's. Yes, Talbot receives an allowance from Colonel Lyndon. By all means send along your proposed contribution to "Tom Merry's Weekly."

Gordon F. S. (Oxford).—Jokes not quite up to standard. Have another shot.

Bob B. (Southsea).—Thank you for your cheery letter, Bob! I have made exhaustive inquiries in the matter of badges for "Gem" readers, and find that in consequence of the war they are very difficult to obtain just now. We must wait until William the Kaiser has been brought to book. Our Correspondence Exchange has been temporarily discontinued.

Your Editor