

BREAKERS OF BOUNDS !

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.



THE SLEUTH-HOUND ON THE TRAIL!

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

BREAKERS OF BOUNDS!

By
Martin
Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Outside Left.

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW, of the Fourth Form, came along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study. In that apartment the Terrible Three of the Shell were all at home, and Cardew could hear their voices as he stopped at the door. They were discussing the Grammar School match, coming off on Saturday—the last footer match of the season for St. Jim's. "Clive or Lowther at half-back?" Tom Merry was saying, in a thoughtful tone. "Lowther!" said the owner of that name, with great promptness. "And what about Manners?" asked that youth. "Can't be did, old son!" said Tom Merry. "When you play footer as well as you take photographs, you go in right away. Until then I keep you for House matches and Form matches, old scout!" "Bow-wow!" said Manners. "Cardew grinned, and tapped at the door. "Oh, come in," called out Tom Merry. "Here's another ass wants to play against the Grammarians, I suppose? I've had fifteen offers already." Cardew entered the study. "Busy?" he asked. "Awfully!" said Tom Merry. "Good-bye?" "Shut the door after you," suggested Monty Lowther. "Cardew did not take the hint. He remained where he was, with his hands in his pockets, regarding the Terrible Three coolly. "I've dropped in to speak about the match on Saturday," he remarked. "I thought you had," agreed Tom Merry. "That's why we're busy. Take—"

"Last match of the season, I understand?"

"Exactly."

"Then I suppose you want all the best men?"

"I've got them," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I don't want an extra good forward who knows how to stagger humanity. I'm not looking for a wonderful back, who never lets the enemy see through unless there's an earthquake, and I'm not wanting for a marvellous half, who's usually good at helping the backs and feeding the forwards. In fact, the team's made up—when I decide on Lowther or Clive at half."

"That's decided already?" said Lowther warily.

"Well, I'm thinking—"

"Chuck it, then; it doesn't suit you, anyway, Tommy! Put my name down, and let's have tea. Hallo! Are you still there, Cardew?"

"Yes, I'm still here. The fact is, Merry—"

"Declined with thanks!" said the captain of the Shell.

"I'm not asking you for a place in the team!" shouted Cardew.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"You're not!" he ejaculated.

"No, I'm not."

"Oh, good! Take a chair, old chap!

"Stay to tea, will you?" said Tom, very cordially. "Any chap who doesn't want to help wallop the Grammarians on Saturday is as welcome as the flowers in May!"

"The fact is, I'm playing away on Saturday!" said Cardew loftily.

The Terrible Three looked at him curiously.

"Playing away?" repeated Manners.

"Yes; at King's Woodley."

"Running a footer team on your own?" grinned Lowther. "Or have the Corinthians asked you to play for them?"

"Neither," said Cardew. "A chap I know at King's Woodley has asked me, and I'm going."

"Awfully good of you to come and tell us," yawned Lowther. "I hope you'll have a good game."

"I didn't come here to tell you that," said Cardew calmly. "I came to tell Tom Merry that I want to take Levison and Clive with me, if he doesn't particularly want them for the match with Gay's lot."

"Oh, I see!" said Tom, rather slowly. "You can have Clive, and welcome!" said Monty Lowther at once. "It happens that I'm playing left half back this time."

"Well, that's a go!" said Tom Merry. "I don't know about Levison. I was going to put him in the front line."

"Row with Gussy if you do!" said Manners.

"Well, if you want him, I suppose it can't be helped," said Cardew, though he frowned. "I've been asked to bring two players. Some of the Woodley team are laid up with something or other, and they're short of men. Clive and Levison are in my study, and I wanted to take them."

"I don't know that it matters," said Tom, after some thought. "I was going to put in Levison, as he's in sn-h ripping form, but Gussy's quite all right. I was really thinking of giving Levison his turn, as much as anything else. If he'd rather go with you, you can tell him it's all serene."

"Right-ho!" said Cardew.

"And he's quitted the study."

"There's a shame! You've lost, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Might have had Cardew for the eleven. Possible five miles away are yearning for him, you see. Not to mention that his grandfather is a lord."

"Never noticed that he was much of a footballer," said Manners.

"Well, I've noticed him at practice."

"Yes, Tom. He's pretty good, but not up to our match form. I should have given him a chance in a House match sooner or later if it weren't so late in the season. I imagine that King's Woodley, whoever they are, are not quite at the top of the stack in the football line, if they're keen on having Cardew—though I'm too nice and polite to tell him so."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo!—Here's another ass! Oh, it's Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, stepped into the study.

"Just in time for tea, Gussavus," said Monty Lowther. "Run and fill the kettle, old son! It's a bit sooty, so I don't care about handling it myself."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Bring your own sugar, though," added Lowther. "Strict orders not to exceed the supply. If we use up too much sugar, there won't be any left for making whisky, and that would be a national calamity."

"Wats," said Arthur Augustus. The elegant Fourth-Form-or-extracted an eyeglass from the pocket of his handsome waistcoat, jammed it into his eye, and fixed it upon Tom Merry. His gaze was stern and reproachful.

"I am surprised at you, Tom Mewwy!" he said, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"What's the pow?" asked Tom.

"I'm w-eerrin' to the footah list you have in your hand at the present moment, Tom Mewwy."

Tom had just scribbled the last name in the footer list.

"What's the matter with it?" he asked.

"I refer to outside-left," said Arthur Augustus. "I an fah frown detracin' frown Levison's form as a forward, you know. You will remember that I have stood out several times to make room for him, and that I encouraged him to turn oval a bow leaf, and give up smokin' and worrin', an' take up footah. But on the occasion of the last match of the season, Tom Mewwy, I weally think that the vove's best p'ah possible ought to be played."

"That's what I'm going to do," said Tom, laughing.

"Howevah, I heah that you had Levison's name down."

"Yes; but—"

"Of course, I should not presume to dictate to my footah skipper," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity. "I shall, howevah, take the liberty of pointin' out, Tom Mewwy, that you are actin' like a cwass ass!"

"My hat!"

"Yas, wathah! I trust you will beat the Gwammawins, but I have vove strong doubts. I have not come hah to offer you advice, but I weally considah you had betterh make a change in outside-left; and I uttahly fail to see any reason for all that ridiculous cacklin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you sillay asses—"

"You're not satisfied with outside-left?" asked Tom Merry, with a very thoughtful look.

"Undah the cressin'!"

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do," said Tom Merry. "Here's the list. You can cross out outside-left, and put in any other name you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Manners and Lowther, who knew what name Tom Merry had written down, since he had decided not to play Levison.

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as vove sensible of you, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, here's the list."

Arthur Augustus hesitated. Then he waved back the list.

"No, Tom Mewwy. Upon the whole,

I will not take advantage of your offah. You are skippah, you know. I weally think your judgment is at fault on this occasion, but I will not insist."

Tom Merry chuckled.
"But, I insist," he said. "You've offered me advice, and I'm acting on it. Shove in another name for outside-left. Any name you like, so long as it's a different one."

"If you insist, dear boy—"
"I do!" said Tom solemnly.
"Vevely well," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "I will do as you request, Tom Mewwy."

The swell of St. Jim's took the list, and read it down. An extraordinary expression came over his face as he read:
"Wynn; Herries, Lawrence; Redfern, Noble, Lowther; Talbot, Figgins, Merry, Blake, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last.
"Well, what name are you going to put down for outside-left?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ahem!"
"You're thinking of Kerruish, or Kerr, or Julian, or Glyn, or Owen—"
"Bai Jove, no!"
"Hammond?" asked Tom gravely.
"Hammond's jolly good when he's in form."

"H'm!"
"Not Contarini?" queried the captain of the Shell. "He's picked up footer well enough for an Italian, but he's hardly up to our team form."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.
"—I—I was unawah that you had my name down, Tom Mewwy!" stammered Arthur Augustus.

"That doesn't make any difference. You can cross it out all the same," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps you were right in thinking that I was a crass ass to put it there."

"I withdrew that expression, Tom Mewwy. Upon the whole, I wathah think it is bettah form not to criticise the selection made by a footah skippah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, you wottahs, if you are twyin' to pull my leg—"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.
"Oh, wats!"

Arthur Augustus, with a very pink face, walked out of the study, leaving the chums of the Shell yelling. His face was still very pink when he came back to Study No. 6, where Blake and Herries and Digby regarded him inquiringly.

"Well, have you slain him with a glance?" asked Blake.
"Have you quelled him with the terror of your eye?" inquired Dig.
"Or your eyeglass?" added Herries.

"Wats! Upon the whole, I have decided that Tom Mewwy is the propwah person to decide who is goin' to play in the match," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, I feel that his judgment can be relied upon."

"Well, my hat!" said Blake, in astonishment. "And you're not going to grouse about outside-left?"

"Not at all, dear boy. I should wegard it as bad form."

"Well, I must say you're growing unusually sensible in your old age," said Blake. "To which Arthur Augustus rejoined:
"Wats!"

Blake & Co. could not quite understand Arthur Augustus' sudden satisfaction with Tom Merry's selection. It was not till they saw the footer list posted up on the board that they were enlightened.

CHAPTER 2.

By Order of the Head.

"MY hat!"
"Bai Jove! Somethin' must be up, you know!"
A group of juniors had gathered before the notice-board in the School House.

Some of them were interested in the junior eleven list, and some in the notice relating to the Junior Debating Society. But both those notices paled in significance beside a new notice in the handwriting of the Head of St. Jim's.

It was read with surprise and some resentment by the School House fellows. The restriction of school bounds was not popular, naturally. The notice ran:

"Until further notice school bounds are restricted to this side of Wayland Road. No one belonging to the school is permitted to pass these bounds, and the order applies to seniors and juniors alike.
"H. HOLMES, Headmaster."

"We musn't go into Wayland!" said Monty Lowther. "No more visits to the merry cinema. Aias!"

"Rough on Racke!" grinned Manners.
"I say, Racke, the Fri's out of bounds now."
Whereat Racke of the Shell scowled. His visits to the Frivolity Music Hall in Wayland were supposed to be strictly secret. That delectable place of entertainment being out of bounds in any case.

"Hold on, though!" said Julian.
"Part of Wayland is on this side of the Wayland Road. We can still go to the post-office."

"And the bank!" grinned Lowther.
"And the old church, too; but not the new church. I suppose the Head's got a reason."

"Reason's plain enough," said Tom Merry. "We're not to go south, for some reason, and the Wayland Road runs nearly east and west, so it's a convenient line, and a chap can't make out that he mistook it."

"By why?"
"Goodness knows! Also the Head!"
"Rotten, I call it!" growled Crooke.
"Why can't a chap go where he likes?"
"Better ask the Head."

"Probably the Head has some reason," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sagely. "Atfah all, we don't usually want to go furthah than the Wayland Wood, only when we're playin' away matches or goin' on bike spins or papal-chases. As a wule, our little walks are on this side."

"And we can go as far north as we like," grinned Lowther. "Nothing against a chap strollin' up as far as Manchester if he chooses."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And east and west," said Digby. "The Wayland Road cuts us off from the south. What or earth's going on there that we musn't see!"
"Munition works, perhaps," said Mellish.

"Yes; and perhaps they're going to have an explosion, and they've sent us word to keep clear," said Lowther.
And there was a chuckle.

"I think it's rot!" growled Crooke. "If there's any reason, why can't the Head give it?"

"Weally, Cwooke, it is wathah bad form to chawtwawise your headmaster's orders, wot!"

"Oh, bow-wow!"
"I wegard it as fein' up to us to respect the wishes of the Head," said Arthur Augustus, with a frown at Crooke.

"Especially as it will mean a lickin' if we don't," said Kerruish.

"I don't see that it will hurt us much," said Tom Merry. "It isn't as if we had matches to play away. The last match comes off Saturday, and that's on our own ground. As for bickin', a chap has north, east, and west to choose from. It's up to us to toe the line."

"We're not all good little Georges!" sneered Racke. "I know I'm going into Wayland on Saturday afternoon."

"What's that, Racke?" said a quiet voice, and Aubrey Racke spun round in dismay, to find the eyes of Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, fixed upon him grimly.

"Oh!" gasped Racke.
"So you're going to disobey the Head's order?" said the captain of St. Jim's.

"I—I—Numo—I—" stammered Racke.

"That will do," said the Sixth-Former contemptuously. "You all see the Head's order. If you've got any sense, you'll know that Dr. Holmes has a good reason for it. Any fellow going out of bounds will get into trouble. I may as well tell you that the Head has directed the prefects to keep a sharp eye open on Saturday and all half-holidays till bounds are changed. Better bear that in mind, Racke."

And Kildare walked on.
"He hasn't told us the Head's reason," remarked Kangaroo. "Still, I dare say he's got one, and I'm going to give the old sport a chance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's the news?" asked Cardew, joining the group. "My hat! That can't be right about bounds."

"It's right enough," said Tom Merry.
"What does it matter?"

"It matters a lot," said Cardew, knitting his brows. "King's Woodley is three miles the other side of Wayland."

"Oh!" said Tom. "You'll have to chuck it, then!"
Cardew bit his lip.

"I can't chuck it. Saturday's to-morrow, and I can't let Gilbert know in time."

"Letter posted to-night will get to King's Woodley to-morrow, some time before the afternoon."

"That's not good enough."
"Well, you'd better think twice before you break bounds, that's all!" said Tom, rather sharply. "The prefects will be looking out."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders, and walked away with a clouded brow. The new junior in the Fourth had very little sense of discipline; in fact, he was very considerably given to regarding authority. The mere fact that King's Woodley was placed out of bounds was sufficient to make Cardew keener on going there, even if he had no other reason. The risk of the escapee rather appealed to him than otherwise.

He went up to Study-No. 9, which he shared with Levison and Clive. Sidney Clive was working at his prep., but Levison was grinding through Entropius with Frank Levison, his minor in the Third Form. The three of them glanced curiously at Cardew's clouded face.

"Anything up?" asked Levison.
"Yes," growled Cardew. "You two fellows have fixed it to come with me to Woodley to-morrow, to play for the Rangers?"

"That's all right," said Levison. "We're coming."

"Glad to come, as far as I'm concerned, as I haven't a place in the junior team," said Clive.

"It's been put out of bounds."
"My hat! What for?"

"No reason given!" said Cardew savagely. "Just put out of bounds, that's all, by order of the Head. Treatin' THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 479.

us like a dashed set of infants! I'm not going to take any notice of it, for one!"

Levison looked grave. The former recklessness of Levison of the Fourth was not so conspicuous a trait in his character now.

"The Head must have a reason," he said slowly.

"Why can't he give it, then?"

"Well, perhaps he knows best," remarked Clive.

"Oh, rot! Look here, Gilbert asked me to come over on Saturday and bring two players, and I've promised to. You fellows have agreed to come. We can't leave them in the lurch. We shall have to chance the prefects and go."

"I suppose we could," said Levison. Clive shook his head.

"Can't be did," he said. "There must be a serious reason, or the Head wouldn't give such an order. You can wire to Gilbert."

"And leave him in the lurch!" exclaimed Cardew. "He's dependin' on us. He's got to play a team at Woodley, and he's short of men, or he wouldn't have asked us. Something's happened to some of his team—he didn't tell me what. We simply can't leave him in a hole like that."

"But the Head—"

"Oh, blow the Head!"

"You can't blow the Head!" said Clive, with a grin. "I know it's a bit hard on your pal at Woodley, but it can't be helped."

"Does that mean you're afraid to come?"

"The South African junior's eyes gleamed."

"You know it doesn't," he said quietly.

"Well, I do know that," agreed Cardew. "I take that back, Clive. But— Gilbert's depending on me, and I've promised him. You can't make me break my word to him, because the Head's put Woodley out of bounds, for some reason—perhaps for no reason at all!"

Clive was silent.

"Anyway, I can depend on you, Levison?"

"Yes," said Levison. "I think we ought to keep our word to Gilbert, and if there's a row, we can stand it."

Levison minor looked anxiously at his brother.

"Doesn't the Head know best, Ernie?" he said, in a low voice.

"Oh, rats! We've broken bounds before!" said Levison.

"Yes; but this seems to be something special—"

"We don't want sermons from a fag, Levison minor," said Cardew. "When we want instruction from the Third, we'll ask for it."

Frank turned crimson.

"Well, you ought not to go!" he exclaimed. "And you know it, too!"

"Oh, cheese it, Franky!" said Levison uneasily. "It isn't such a terrific thing, breaking bounds once in a way. Let's get on with Eutropius."

And the subject dropped in Study No. 9.

CHAPTER 3.

Wally and Co. Take a Hand.

"PENNY for 'em, Tommy!" said Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three had come out after lessons on Saturday morning, and there was a thoughtful and preoccupied expression on Tom Merry's face. Hence Monty Lowther's offer of a penny for his thoughts.

"Thinking that you'd do better to put me in the eleven?" asked Manners.

"No!" said Tom, laughing. "I was thinking about Cardew."

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"Oh, bother Cardew!"

"I know he's thinking of breaking bounds this afternoon," said Tom. "Well, Railton spoke to me this morning, and asked me to see, as far as I could, that none of the juniors of our House went out of bounds. It seems to be something awfully important, somehow, though we don't know the reason. It puts me in rather an awkward position, knowing that Cardew means to clear, after what Mr. Railton said."

"It do—it does!" agreed Lowther. "But you're not responsible for every silly ass who kicks over the traces. We shall be playing footer, and you can't bother about Cardew. If he gets caught and licked, serve him right!"

"He oughtn't to go!" said Tom, frowning.

"All the more reason why he will go, from what I've seen of him," said Manners drily.

"I think I ought to speak to him about it," said Tom. "Here they come!"

The trio from Study No. 9 came out of the School House together, the Fourth Form having been just dismissed. The Terrible Three bore down upon them. Cardew eyed them somewhat grimly as they came up. Perhaps he could guess what was coming.

"Look here, Cardew," said Tom, plunging into the matter at once. "I don't want to interfere with you—"

"I shouldn't let you!" said Cardew coolly.

"Never mind that," said Tom, though his eyes gleamed for a moment. "Railton has asked me to see as far as I can that no juniors break the new bounds. From what I can see, there seems to be some important reason for it, though I don't know what it is."

"You'd like to keep the bounds, as the Head makes such a special point of it," said Tom.

"Never broken bounds yourself?" asked Cardew.

"Yes, more than once; but this seems to be a special occasion, and it's pretty certain the Head has a good reason. It's not an ordinary case. Look here, suppose you go to the Head, and ask his permission to go over to Woodley, and explain that you're bound to go?"

"N.G. If he refused, I couldn't go. They'd have an eye on me."

"Well, you ought not to go! It's not the right thing!"

"Any charge for sermons?"

"I'm not giving you sermons!" said Tom angrily. "I'm telling you what a decent fellow would think about it!"

"Thanks!"

"Anyway, I hope you fellows won't go," said Tom, looking at Levison and Clive.

"It's not the right thing, and you know it."

"I don't see that," said Levison, with a touch of his old obstinacy. "I've promised Cardew, anyway."

"And you, Clive?"

"I'm not going," said Clive quietly. "I wouldn't mind asking the Head for permission, though; I hadn't thought of that."

"No harm in that," said Tom, with a nod. "You may possibly get it."

"Good idea," said Cardew. "If he gives you permission, then I'll ask him. If he doesn't, I go, anyway."

Sidney Clive went into the House, and the juniors waited for his return. He came back in about ten minutes.

"Well?" asked Cardew.

"No go!" said the South African junior, with a shake of the head. "The Head refused at once. He says it's very important."

"No go!" said the South African junior, with a shake of the head. "The Head refused at once. He says it's very important."

"And he didn't give you the reason?"

"No."

"Well, I call it tyranny," said Cardew, "and I'm going, and Levison's going with me. You can stay in and see Tom Merry kick goals, if you prefer it."

Clive nodded, and walked away. His mind was made up. Breaking bounds on an ordinary occasion was only a matter of risk, and he did not fear the risk; but he felt that this was not an ordinary occasion. But the headstrong new junior meant to have his way, and he was carrying Levison with him. They moved away together, Levison looking somewhat moody. He knew in his heart that Tom Merry was right; and since his reform, the one-time black sheep of St. Jim's was anxious to stand well with Tom Merry. But he had palled with Cardew, and there was much in Cardew's reckless nature that appealed to his own.

"Look here," said Cardew abruptly, "we've got to have a third. Your minor can play footer, Levison. I've noticed him. He's jolly keen for a fag. Bring him along this afternoon."

Levison shook his head at once.

"No fear! You can leave Frank out of it!" he said curtly. "I'm not going to land him into trouble!"

"There won't be any trouble!" snapped Cardew. "I suppose we're not silly goats? We can work it without being spotted. Frank would like it. He's never had a chance of playing in the same team with you."

"I know he would. But—"

"Here, Franky!" called out Cardew. And Levison minor came up. "How would you like to come along this afternoon? We want another man."

Frank looked anxiously at his major.

"Are you going, Ernie?"

"Yes."

"I wish you wouldn't," said Frank wistfully. "Look here—"

"Oh, rot! Levison's coming with me, anyway!" said Cardew, interrupting the fag. "The question is, will you come with him?"

"I'll go if Ernie does, certainly!" said Frank, at once.

"You'd better not!" muttered Levison uneasily. Breaking bounds was not, from a junior's point of view, a very serious matter; but Levison felt a vague uneasiness at the idea of his minor joining in the escapade. "Look here, Frank, you had better not come!"

"Why shouldn't he?" said Cardew.

"Dash it all, it's only breaking bounds; you talk as if it were burglary or highway robbery! Let him come!"

"I'll come!" said Frank.

"Shush!" murmured Cardew suddenly.

Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, was crossing the quadrangle, and he passed quite near them. Mr. Ratcliff was Form-master of the Fifth, and he had just dismissed his class.

The New House master glanced at the juniors, and passed on.

"Not much good trying to get out if Ratty spotted us!" grinned Cardew. "He never can mind his own business, and leave the School House to Railton. Well, it's settled. We'll get out our bikes sharp after dinner, and start off towards Northwood; that will look all right for the prefects. Then we can take the Abbotsford road, and get away a mile from here. It means losing some time; but it's worth it."

"Done!" said Levison minor, and he walked away cheerily.

His doubts as to the wisdom of the expedition were not dispelled; but they were outweighed by the prospect of playing in the football-match with his major.

After dinner, while Tom Merry & Co. were preparing for the match with the Grammar School team, Cardew and

Levison were preparing for the afternoon's adventure.

They went down to the bicycle-shed, wheeled out their machines, and waited for Levison minor. The fag had arranged to be there at the same time, but he had not put in an appearance.

Cardew uttered an exclamation of angry impatience when five minutes had passed.

"Where on earth's your minor, Levison?"

"Blessed if I know! Selby may have detained him."

"Hallo! Waiting for somebody?" asked a cheery voice.

D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—came sauntering up, with Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne. The three heroes of the Third Form were grinning, as though over a good joke among themselves.

"Yes. Where's my minor?" asked Levison.

"In the box-room," said Wally coolly. Levison stared at him.

"What's he doing in the box-room? Buzz off and tell him we're waiting for him, there's a good chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three fags, in chorus.

"No good telling him you're waiting!" chuckled D'Arcy minor. "He knows that!"

"Then why doesn't he come?" demanded Cardew.

"Because he's locked in the box-room."

"What?"

"And I've got the key in my pocket," said Wally coolly. "You see, we know he was going to break bounds this afternoon, and we're taking care of him. He's been talking like a Hun through the key-hole; but, bless you, we don't mind—do we, you chaps?"

"Not a bit!" grinned Joe Frayne.

"Not at all!"

"And we're not going to let him out till you've gone," added Wally. "So the sooner you clear off the better it will be for Levison minor!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared Cardew. "Give me that key, or—"

"Or what?" asked Wally coolly.

"Or I'll lick you, confound your cheek!"

"Right-ho!" said Wally cheerfully. "Come and get on with the licking!"

Cardew gritted his teeth, and strode towards the fag.

Levison caught him by the arm.

"Chuck it, Cardew! Let's get off without Frank!"

"Let go!"

Cardew's eyes were gleaming with rage. He shook off Levison's detaining hand, and fairly hurled himself on D'Arcy minor.

"Back up!" yelled Wally.

D'Arcy minor alone would not have stood much chance against Cardew. But Gibson and Joe Frayne rushed in at once. Levison stood hesitating, while Cardew struggled furiously in the grasp of the three fags. Three of them were too much for him.

There was a heavy bump as Cardew was brought down, and he yelled as Wally, grabbing his ears, gave his head a bang on the ground.

Then the three Third-Formers scattered off, yelling with laughter, and Cardew sat up dazedly.

Levison was grinning.

"On rotter!" yelled Cardew. "Why didn't you help me?"

"Let's get off!" said Levison.

"I tell you—"

"Frank can't come," said Levison.

"Let's get off!"

"You're glad he's kept behind!" growled Cardew savagely, as he rose painfully to his feet.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

The two juniors wheeled out their bicycles. It was evidently hopeless to think of running down the elusive Wally and capturing the key of the box-room.

Cardew's face was dark with anger, but Levison did not look displeased. As a matter of fact, he was not sorry that his minor had been prevented from joining in the reckless expedition.

Tom Merry & Co. were coming out as the two juniors passed the School House. Tom gave them a glance, and his brows knitted, but he did not speak to them. They wheeled their machines on, and the footballers went down to Little Side.

CHAPTER 4.

A Nice Walk for Ratty!

KERR of the Fourth came out of Mr. Ratchiff's study, in the New House, with knitted brows. The Scottish junior had been in to see the New House master, and he did not seem pleased with the result of his interview.

past the low bounds, after the new notice was put up."

"Yes, we did, but Ratty doesn't trust us, so, in case of accidents, bike-rides are off."

"Beastly tyrant!" granted Fatty Wynn.

"That applies to Owen and me. Julian can do as he likes, as he's a School House chap," said Kerr. "Jolly good mind to wheel out my bike all the same!"

"Better not," said Figgins sagely.

"Ratty will have an eye open from his window. No good looking for trouble!"

"Walk out, and hire a bike somewhere," suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Might do that," agreed Kerr.

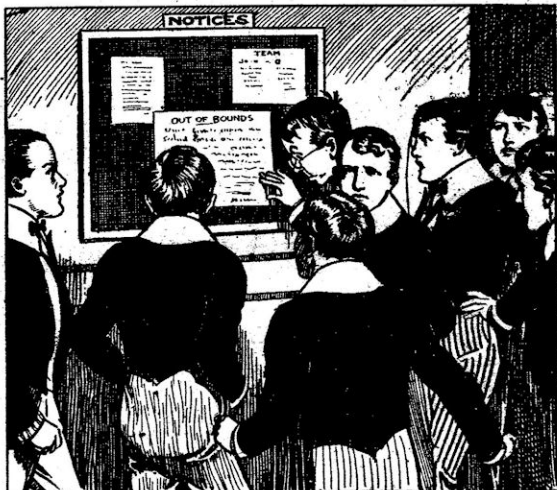
"Hallo, we're wanted!" said Figgins, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up.

"Come on, dear boys!" said D'Arcy.

"The Gwammawians will be here in a few minutes."

Figgins and Fatty Wynn followed Arthur Augustus to the football-ground.

Kerr made his way to the bike-shed,



On the Notice-Board.

(See Chapter 2.)

Figgins and Fatty Wynn, in football rig, with their coats on, were in the doorway of the New House, and their chum joined them there.

Figgins and Wynn were playing in the afternoon's match, but the kick-off was not due yet.

"Well, what did Ratty want?" asked Figgins, looking curiously at Kerr's clouded face.

"The rotter!" growled Kerr.

"Not licked?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"No. Hang him!"

"But what's happened?" asked Figgins.

"Bike-ride's off!" growled Kerr. "Ratty seems to have known that I was going out for a spin with Owen and Julian, as we're not playing this afternoon. Blessed if I know how Ratty knows everything!"

"Nosey old specimen!" agreed Figgins. "But you were not going out of bounds. You arranged not to go

where he found Owen and Julian. They were getting the machines out.

"You can shove that back, Owen!" said Kerr. "No bikes out this afternoon—Housemaster's orders!"

"Beast!" said Owen savagely.

"Rotten!" said Julian, with a grimace. "That knocks our spin on the head!"

"It doesn't apply to you, of course, Julian. Ratty can't give you orders, as you're in the School House."

"Well, I don't want to go alone, of course," said Julian. "I suppose you couldn't chance it?"

Kerr shook his head.

"Ratty can watch the gates from his study window, and you can bet he will. He would be jolly glad to catch us on the hop."

"Beastly Hun!" growled Owen. "It's a ripping afternoon for a spin. Look here, the bike shop in Wayland is this

side of bounds. Let's trot there and hire machines, and Ratty won't know."

"I was thinking of that. Like to walk your jigger as far as Wayland, Julian?"

"Certainly!" said Julian at once.

"Come on, then."

Two bikes were replaced on the stands, and the three juniors walked down to the gates, Julian wheeling his machine. They had to pass within view of Mr. Ratcliff's study window, and Kerr caught a glimpse of the Housemaster's thin, acid face there.

"Ratty's got an eye on us," he murmured. "Well, even Ratty can't complain at our going out for a walk."

And they turned out of gates. Dr. Holmes had restricted school bounds, and that it was exactly like Mr. Ratcliff to go an unnecessary step further. Mere restriction was not enough for the hard-natured and interfering New House master, unless it was made thoroughly unpleasant to somebody.

The bright spring afternoon cheered up the trio, however, and they were quite cheerful as they walked down the sunny field. But as they reached the stile Owen glanced carelessly back, and gave a start.

"Ratty!" he murmured.

"My hat!" said Kerr.

In the distance, towards the school, the thin form of the Housemaster could be seen. He was following them.

The three juniors exchanged glances of utter disgust.

"Spying, by gad!" said Owen.

Julian whistled.

"He's smelted out the little game," he remarked. "Ratty's going to watch his afternoon keeping an eye on you fellows. You won't be able to hire any bikes, my infants."

Kerr clenched his hands.

"Fancy a Housemaster playing a rotten spying game like that!" he said. "Raillon wouldn't even think of such a thing."

"No fear!" agreed Julian.

A sudden glimmer came into Kerr's eyes.

"My hat! Look here, instead of a spin, let's have a walk, and pull Ratty's leg. We'll give him a waltz round the country till he's tired of following us. Make straight for the Wayland road, and don't let the old horror know we've spotted him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr's brilliant idea was adopted at once. Pulling Mr. Ratcliff's was better fun than a bike spin. The juniors lifted Julian's bike over the stile, and started along the footpath across the fields for the Wayland road.

Mr. Ratcliff arrived at the stile, and paused there to look after them. The direction they had taken made the natural impression on his mind. Mr. Ratcliff was a very suspicious gentleman. If the juniors had headed for Wayland that town he would have suspected that Kerr and Owen meant to hire bicycles in order to dodge his unreasonable order. But as they headed for the open road from some distance from the town, near the old castle, he jumped to the conclusion that they were going straight out of bounds on foot. Certainly, he could not guess that they meant to walk two miles to the open high road and then turn back again. He was not in the least aware that they had spotted him, and guessed that he was spying—or, as he would have called it, investigating—from a stricter sense of duty.

Kerr & Co. were careful not to look back. Their game was to leave the Housemaster to suppose that they had not seen or suspected him. Only, every now and then they contrived in stoop-

ing to attend to a bootlace, to take a surreptitious glance to the rear, and ascertain that the Housemaster was still on the trail.

Mr. Ratcliff crossed the stile, and marched along the footpath. The New House master was not an athlete, and he was never in good condition, and the exercise was not enjoyable to him, even on that sunny spring afternoon. It is much to be feared that Mr. Ratcliff hoped that he would catch the three juniors breaking bounds, otherwise he would have his long walk for nothing.

His eyes glittered as the party drew near to the Wayland road. They lifted the bike over the last stile at last, and then a high hedge hid them from his view.

Beyond the hedge was the last field, with a short path leading to a gate on the high road. If the juniors went through that gate they were out of bounds. And Mr. Ratcliff had not the slightest doubt that they were about to do so. He hastened his steps, and came up to the stile quite breathlessly. Then he paused to pump in breath and look about him. The three juniors were not in sight. Mr. Ratcliff set his thin lips.

"Ah, the young rascals!" he murmured. "It is well I came. They have undoubtedly gone into the road, probably beyond it. I shall—"

"Got the sandwiches, Owen?"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped as he heard the voice. He could not see the speaker. But he knew Kerr's voice. He leaned further over the stile, stretching his long, thin neck to see along the hedge.

Three juniors were sitting under the hedge with the bike at their feet. Julian was unrolling a paper packet of sandwiches. They did not look up, and did not seem to know that Mr. Ratcliff was there.

The expression that came upon the Housemaster's face was quite Hunnish. Kerr & Co. were not out of bounds. They were twenty yards within bounds. And apparently they had settled down for a rest after their walk, and did not intend to go out of bounds at all. Mr. Ratcliff could see that they were grinning as they started on the sandwiches, and it slowly dawned upon his mind that the merry trio had seen him, and guessed his intention, and deliberately led him upon that fatiguing walk.

Mr. Ratcliff remained silent for some minutes, breathing hard. The three juniors ate their sandwiches and chatted cheerily, without a glance towards the stile, though Mr. Ratcliff was pretty certain that they knew he was there. He called out to them at last:

"Kerr! Owen! Julian!"

The three juniors jumped up, lifting their caps very respectfully to the New House master.

"Yes, sir!" said Kerr.

"What are you doing here?" said the Housemaster harshly.

"Eating sandwiches, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed.

"Why did you come to this spot?"

"We've had a walk, sir," said Kerr calmly. "You told us we mustn't take out our bikes to-day, sir. That's Julian's bike."

"You are very near to the limit of school bounds, Kerr!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I cannot help suspecting, Kerr, that if I had not chanced—ahem!—to see you here, you intended to go beyond bounds."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Kerr. "Not at all!"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Owen.

"Shouldn't think of it, sir!" said Dick Julian.

Mr. Ratcliff set his teeth hard.

"You will return to the school at once!" he snapped out.

"But it won't be calling-over for a long time yet, sir!" said Kerr, in astonishment.

"Obey me!"

"Oh, very well, sir!"

It was the sheerest tyranny on the part of the disappointed Housemaster, but the juniors had no choice but to obey. Julian, as a School House fellow, was not under Mr. Ratcliff's orders, but he did not want to leave his friends.

The bike was lifted over the stile again, and the trio started for St. Jim's. "Awful rotter!" murmured Owen when they were out of hearing. "Never mind! We've given him a jolly long walk. He looked quite pumped."

"We'll see the finish of the footer match, anyway!" remarked Julian.

And the three walked on in quite good spirits, finishing their sandwiches as they went.

Mr. Ratcliff was not in quite such good spirits, however. He had sent the juniors home. But even he could find no excuse for further punishing them, and he was fagged out with the walk across the fields. He sat on the stile, and pumped in breath and scowled.

CHAPTER 5.

Nil Desperandum!

"LET me out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps!"

"Go it!"

"You rotters!"

"Keep it up!"

Outside the door of the upper box-room there were three or four fags of the Third in a state of great excitement. Through the keyhole came the voice of Levison minor raised in wrath.

Frank Levison was a prisoner in the box-room. His pals in the Third were looking after him, much against his will.

"You awful rotters!" yelled Frank, through the keyhole. "My major's waiting for me."

"No, likely!" chortled Wally. "He's gone."

"Oh, you fathead!"

"And we'll let you out as soon as you promise not to break bounds," said Reggie Manners. "Better make up your mind!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let me out, you fatheads?" howled Frank.

"No jolly fear! Now, are you going to promise, young Levison?" asked D'Arcy minor. "We can't waste all the afternoon here."

"Rats!"

"You can come down to Rylecombe with us, and have some of the toffee," said Joe Frayne. "Ain't that good enough, you young ass?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Last time of asking," said Wally, tersely. "Are you coming out with your old pals, or not?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Good-bye, then," said Wally. "We'll call for you in about an hour or so. Come on, kids!"

"Let me out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally & Co. walked away, and scuttled down the stairs.

Frank Levison, in the box-room, heard them go, and breathed wrath. His pals had hustled him there after dinner, and locked him in, having discovered his intention of breaking bounds in the afternoon. Undoubtedly Wally & Co. had acted wisely on their chum's behalf. But Frank Levison was far from appreciating their kindness.

His major and Cardew had started for

Woodley without him; but Frank knew the road they would take, and he could have scorched after them, and rejoined them, if Wally had let him out. But Wally was gone, with the key of the box-room in his pocket.

Frank was not much given to such escapades as breaking bounds; but the fact that he was going with his major made all the difference to him. He wanted very much to be with Ernie that afternoon; perhaps partly because he had a vague distrust of Ralph Reckness Cardew, and a secret misgiving about that wayward junior's influence over his major.

"Oh, the rotters!" muttered Frank savagely, as the footsteps of his kind friends died away on the staircase. "I've a jolly good mind to yell for help!"

But the imprisoned fag did not yell. He did not want to bring a master or a prefect on the scene, and get Wally & Co. into hot water, greatly as he was exasperated with them.

He examined the lock on the door, with a wild idea of breaking it open; but it was a little too solid for that.

Then he crossed to the window, and opened it.

Underneath was the window of the lower box-room, from which it was easy to reach the leads of an out-house in the rear of the building. But it was ten feet down to the lower window. Thick ivy clustered on the wall; ivy almost as old as the ancient wall itself, growing in thick, tough tendrils. Frank looked at it, and hesitated.

He had plenty of nerve, and the ivy was strong enough to fall more than his weight. But to fail a moment's dizziness—meant a crash on the leads far below, and then—

The fag set his teeth hard.

"I'll chance it!"

He had made up his mind. There was little danger unless he lost his nerve; and his nerve was strong. With quiet, deliberate movements, he climbed out of the window, and crouched on the sill. There was no one at the back of the big School House to observe him. He grasped the ivy, and drew a deep, deep breath, and trusted his weight to it.

The thick ivy shook and rustled as he hung. But it held fast—and Frank's grip was strong. With a steady head and steady hands, he lowered himself, slowly, but surely, till he had passed the lower window, and the flat leads were under his feet.

There he stood, panting for breath, his heart beating violently.

But he paused only a couple of minutes, then he dropped from the leads to the ground, and scuttled away for the bike-shed. His machine was ready there, with his football clothes already fastened up in a bundle on the handle-bars. He had seen to that before dinner. He lifted the machine from the stand, and wheeled it out.

"Goal!" came a roar from the football ground. And Frank glanced towards Little Side as he wheeled his machine to the gates.

The Grammarians had arrived, and the match was well on its way. The ball had gone in from Tom Merry's foot, and the St. Jim's crowd were cheering.

But Frank had not time to bestow attention upon the football match. He rushed his bike away to the gates, fearful of being spotted by some over-diligent pal in the Third. There was little danger, however, as Wally & Co. had already started for Rylcombe. Frank mounted outside the school gates, and started. He had to pass through Rylcombe village to get to the Abbotsford road, which Cardew and Levison major were following, in order to avoid suspicion by taking a roundabout course

to their destination. He was half way to the village when he sighted Wally & Co. ahead of him on the road.

Levison minor grinned, and drove harder at his pedals.

"Ting-ting-ting!" went his bell, as he came close-up behind the party of fags. Wally & Co. jumped out of the way, and the cyclist went hurtling past. Then there was a yell from Wally.

"My only Aunt Jane! It's young Levison! Stop him!"

"After him!" shouted Frayne. The fags broke into a run, dashing after the cyclist. Frank grinned as he drove at his pedals. The pursuers, on foot, hadn't much chance.

"Stop, you young rotter!" roared Wally, halting at last.

"Stop!" yelled Reggie Manners. "We'll seal you, young Levison."

Levison minor did not look back, and he did not stop. He whizzed on at top speed, and disappeared into the village, leaving Wally & Co. panting and furious.

"How the dickens did he get out?" gasped Wally. "My only Aunt Jane! We'll slaughter him when he comes home."

And with that prospect the fags had to be content. Levison minor was gone from their gaze, riding hard.

CHAPTER 6. A Narrow Escape!

"MY hat! It's your minor!" Cardew uttered that exclamation.

Levison and Cardew were cycling along the Abbotsford road at a good rate, when the latter raised back at the buzz of a loud bicycle-bell. "A youthful cyclist was coming on at top speed, red and dusty."

"My minor!" ejaculated Levison. Cardew chuckled.

"He got away after all! Good egg!"

The two Fourth-Formers slackened speed. And Frank came up with them. Cardew gave him a smile and a nod. Levison major did not look so pleased.

"So, you not away?" grinned Cardew.

"Yes," panted Frank. "I've had a scorch to catch you up, too."

"Good for you! Did they let you out of the box-room?"

"No."

"How did you get out, then?" exclaimed Levison sharply.

"From the window."

"You reckless young idiot!" said Levison.

"I—I couldn't get out any other way, Ernie!"

"You might have broken your neck!" said Levison, biting his lip. "Why the dickens couldn't you stay where you were?"

Frank's lip quivered, but he made no reply.

Cardew laughed.

"The kid's a good plucked 'un," he said. "I'm jolly glad you came, Frank. Go easy for a bit. You don't want to get pumped, or you won't be much use for a footer match."

"Right-ho!" said Frank.

The three juniors rode on, Levison major with a clouded brow. He had joined readily enough in Cardew's reckless scheme, but it troubled him to see his minor playing the same game. But Cardew was in high spirits now. The trio turned into the Wayland road at last. They were riding at a moderate pace now, to give the fag a chance to recover from his scorch. Cardew chatted cheerfully all the time, apparently not noticing Levison's silence.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Cardew suddenly.

Levison looked round.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Ratty, by gum!"

"Phew!"

The cyclists had to cover a quarter of a mile more to reach the turning that led to King's Woodley. They were riding now on the Wayland road, which was the limit of school bounds.

There were open fields to their right, intersected by fences and hedges. And on a stile, twenty yards or so back from the road, an angular figure was seated. At that distance from the school they had not expected to see a St. Jim's master—at least of all Mr. Ratcliff, who was no pedestrian. But there he was, seated on the stile, with his face towards the road. A field lay between him and the road, but he could see the three cyclists as they came along as soon as they passed a gap in the hedge by the roadside.

And he was looking towards the road, and, even as Cardew spotted him, he gave a start.

"He's seen us!" muttered Frank. Cardew set his teeth.

"Bend low and ride hard!" he muttered. "He can't have recognised us at that distance. He's as blind as a bat, you know."

"But—"

"Do as I tell you, you young ass!"

There was nothing else for it. The three riders bent low, keeping their faces away from Mr. Ratcliff as well as they could, and scorching on at top speed.

The Housemaster had only caught a glimpse of them, so far—enough, perhaps, to tell him that they were St. Jim's juniors, but it was very improbable that he had recognised them individually. As they rode on, with heads down, the high hedge hid them from his sight.

But they heard hurried footsteps as they scorching on.

Mr. Ratcliff had jumped from the stile, and was running towards the gate on the road.

Before he could reach it, however, the three riders swept by in a whirl of dust.

The Housemaster reached the gate, to see the three disappearing down the high-road, clouds of dust rising behind them.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

His voice did not even reach the three juniors as they pedaled on furiously. The New House master dragged the gate open, and ran into the road, waving a bony hand wildly.

"Stop! Come back!"

But the cyclists had already swept round the turning, and were gone from his sight. The Housemaster ran a few paces down the road after them, and then halted. He realised that it was not much use to pursue three cyclists who did not intend to be caught.

"Bless my soul," murmured Mr. Ratcliff—"bless my soul!" Kerr, and Owen, and Julian, of course! I could not recognise them, but I have little doubt that it was those three young rascals! They did not go back to the school as I commanded them!"

The Housemaster leaned on the gate, gasping for breath. His short run had winded him.

There was little doubt in his mind that the three cyclists he had seen were Kerr and his friends. That they were St. Jim's fellows he was absolutely certain—in fact, their sudden flight could mean nothing else. Doubtless they had made a detour after getting out of his sight, and had hired machines in Wayland, as from the first he had suspected to be their intention.

When he had recovered his breath, Mr. Ratcliff walked down the road to Wayland. He knew that Hainey's, in the High Street, was the place where bikes were hired by St. Jim's fellows who

did not possess machines. An inquiry there would establish the identity of the three delinquents beyond doubt.

But the Housemaster met with a disappointment at Mr. Hanney's appointment. No fellow belonging to the school had been there that afternoon to hire a jigger, so Mr. Hanney assured him.

Mr. Ratcliff was not satisfied. He considered it quite possible that Mr. Hanney was departing from the facts, in order to shield his customers. He questioned Mr. Hanney so closely that that gentleman lost patience, and told Mr. Ratcliff that he had business to attend to, and went forthwith back into his office, leaving the St. Jim's master fairly fuming.

There was evidently nothing more to be done, and the New House master left the shop and walked to the station, to take a train home to Rylcombe. But Mr. Ratcliff's luck was out that afternoon. Owing to the restrictions of railway traffic, the local service to Rylcombe was limited to two trains a day—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The afternoon train had been gone ten minutes when Mr. Ratcliff arrived and inquired after it.

There was not even a taxi to be had. The taxi-men had gone to the war or the munition factories. And even the ancient hack that sometimes haunted the station was not there. There was nothing for it but to walk home to St. Jim's. Mr. Ratcliff was already tired out, and he started on his long walk with compressed lips and glooming eyes. The dusk was falling before he came in sight of the school, and he was so aching with fatigue that he went directly to his study and dropped limply into his armchair, even vengeance upon Keat and Owen and Julian having to wait till he was a little recovered.

CHAPTER 7.

The Rangers' Match.

"JOLLY glad to see you!" Dick Gilbert, the skipper of the Woodley Rangers, greeted Cardew and his companions very warmly. Cardew presented his comrades, and the Rangers' skipper glanced rather curiously at Levison minor, Gilbert was about sixteen, and the Third Fern fag of St. Jim's looked rather diminutive beside him.

"Other chap couldn't come," Cardew explained. "If Levison minor isn't up to what you want, and you've got another man, you can leave him out, and he can look on."

"I don't mind," said Frank at once. Gilbert looked at him rather doubtfully.

"The fact is, I depended on your bringing two, Cardew," he said. "I wish I'd said three, as a matter of fact. Another of my men is knocked out."

"Three short, then?"

"Yes, worse luck!"

"Rather queer, isn't it?" said Levison curiously. "What's knocked your men out, after another—you reserves, too, I suppose?"

"Yes; there's six down altogether."

"Not a dashed epidemic?" asked Cardew, startled.

"Oh, you're safe enough," said Gilbert reassuringly. "I shouldn't have asked you over here if there'd been any danger, of course. The fact is, I didn't know what was the matter myself, when I asked you to come out since."

"Well, what is it?"

"Scarlet fever."

"Great Scott!"

"I suppose you're not alarmed?" said Gilbert, laughing. "The cases were isolated the instant they were detected. That's compulsory, you know. Those

chaps happened to live in the part of the town where it's broken out, that's all. The doctor's run the rule over all of us, in case there might have been any possibility of infection, and he's pronounced us all serene. You surely don't think I'd have asked you if—"

"No; that's all serene," said Cardew slowly. "I know you wouldn't. But—"

"That's why the Head put King's Woodley out of bounds," said Levison, very quietly.

"That's settled."

"Is this place out of bounds for you, then?"

"Yes; it's just been made so."

"Then how are you here?" asked the Rangers' captain, puzzled.

"French leave," said Cardew.

"I shouldn't have asked you to take that risk," said Dick Gilbert, with a somewhat clouded brow. "Of course, I never knew anything about that. You'll get into a row if your headmaster finds it out."

"He won't," said Cardew. "And we could face the music, anyway. Let's get changed!"

"Here's your dressing-room."

The three St. Jim's fellows had arrived a little late, owing to the roundabout route they had been compelled to follow. The rest of the footballers were already on the ground, the opposing team being Abbotsford school. Levison nodded to Yorkie, the Abbotsford skipper, whom he knew. St. Jim's played Yorkie's team regularly. The three juniors had the dressing-room to themselves to change.

"The murder's out now," said Cardew, with a grin. "We shall be able to tell the fellows why bounds have been changed when we get back."

"Better not," said Levison drily. "It will get out that we've been over here."

"Right! We'd better not," agreed Cardew. "I suppose your minor won't go chattering among the fags?"

Frank coloured.

"I shan't chatter," he said. "But— but oughtn't we to tell the Housemaster, at least?"

Cardew stared at him.

"Ask for a licking, do you mean, you young don?"

"I don't care for a licking," said Frank. "But— but suppose we should catch something along with us—infection, I mean—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said Cardew roughly. "How could we? Do you think my pal would have asked us here if there'd been danger?"

"He mayn't know whether there's danger or not."

"What rot! He says the doctor Johnny has looked them all over. Of course, that was only sensible, as they'd been with the chaps who've caught it. I suppose the medical Johnny knows."

"I—I suppose so."

"Besides, Abbotsford are here," said Levison. "This place isn't out of bounds for Abbotsford."

"They mayn't know at Abbotsford yet about the scarlet fever," said Frank.

"Besides, Abbotsford is close here, and that makes a difference."

Cardew burst into a scornful laugh.

"Look here, you silly fag, if you're in a blue funk—" he began.

Frank crimsoned.

"I'm not in a funk at all!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I was only thinking of the other fellows. We've no right to take danger to them."

"There isn't any danger, you young ass! Don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Get into your clobber."

"If you think we ought to keep it dark, Ernie, about our having been here—"

"We must!" said Levison. "There's

no danger—that's all rot. The Head drew up bounds just as a precaution, that's all. It was the right thing for him to do, if you come to that. If I'd known his reason, I wouldn't have come over. But we shall have to keep it jolly dark now, as it turns out there was such a jolly good reason for cutting down bounds. There would be a fearful row if it got out. As for taking infection to St. Jim's, that's impossible. We're not going anywhere near the chaps who've got it."

"Ratty saw us on the Wayland road," said Frank.

"He didn't recognise us, though. If he knew we were St. Jim's chaps, that's the most he could have known."

"But if he knows that much, he won't let it rest."

"Oh, bother Ratty!" broke in Cardew angrily. "The teams are waiting for us! Get ready, can't you?"

The teams finished changing, and joined the footballers in the field. They lined up with the Rangers, and the whistle went. Levison was put in as outside-left, Cardew as centre-half, and Levison minor as right half-back. The fag of St. Jim's looked very diminutive among the Rangers, whose average age was sixteen, but Dick Gilbert had no choice but to play him. One of the forwards was not much bigger than Levison minor, and was evidently a mere emergency man.

The fag, however, soon showed that he could play a good game of footer. He was not much use against a charge from the Abbotsford fellows, but he was wonderfully quick on his feet, and his passing was first-rate. Cardew showed up very well at centre-half, too, and the first goal to the Rangers came to Levison, who received the ball from Cardew.

"Good egg!" said Gilbert, as they lined up for the goal. "That's a good man you've brought with you, Ralph!"

"One of the best," agreed Cardew. "He plays for our junior team. In fact, he would have been playing this afternoon, only I made him come."

"Much obliged!" said the Rangers' skipper, laughing.

Yorkie scored for Abbotsford in the second half, and the score was level, and remained so till close on the finish. Just on the stroke of time, however, a clever pass from Levison enabled Gilbert to put the ball in. Then the whistle went, and the game ended with the Rangers victors by two goals to one. In the dressing-room, after the match, the Rangers were very cordial to the recruits from St. Jim's.

"You pulled us through," said Gilbert gratefully. "I'm jolly glad you brought Levison with you, Cardew! We've had rotten luck all through the season, and I did want to finish with a win. And now we've done it—I only hope you won't get into a row when you get back."

"Oh, that's all serene!" said Cardew, with a smile. "The boys won't have the least idea of where we've been. We can get in by dark if we search a bit."

And after changing, and fastening their bundles on the handlebars of their machines, the three St. Jim's juniors took leave of the Rangers, and started on the homeward journey.

"Jolly glad we went!" said Cardew.

"What do you fellows say?"

"Well, I'm glad we helped the Rangers," said Levison. "Gilbert seems to be a very decent chap. I wish we hadn't come, all the same."

"Getting uneasy now we've got to face the music?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Buck up!" said Cardew. "We've got to go round a bit home. Mustn't come in from the direction of Wayland. If we're late for locking-up, it will bring

a lot of attention on us, and we don't want that. Get a move on, Levison minor!"

"I'm doing my best," panted Frank. "I can't keep up with you two if you ride so hard."

"Oh, rats! Put your beef into it!" Levison major deliberately slackened down, and Cardew shot ahead of the two brothers.

"Go easy, Franky!" said Levison. "Don't fag yourself out." "Come on!" shouted Cardew. "Go and eat coke!"

Cardew waited savagely for the two to come up. He gave them a lowering look as they came level again.

"Look here, at this rate we shall miss calling-over!" he exclaimed. "Can't be helped. Frank's not up to scorching after a footer-match, and he's not going to try," said Levison coolly.

"I—I could go a bit faster, I think," faltered Frank.

"You can't, and you won't!" "Let him try!" fumed Cardew.

"I won't let him try! Keep level, Frank!"

"Yes, Ernie." "If we're late for call-over, it very likely means being bowled out!" said Cardew, biting his lip.

"Let it!" "Oh, you're a silly ass!"

"You can go on ahead, if you like," said Levison. "There's nothing stopping you. I know I'm not going to let Frank pump himself out."

"I've a jolly good mind to!" "Do!"

"Oh, rats!" said Cardew. He did not go ahead but kept pace with Levison major, who carefully regulated the speed so that Frank should not be overworked. Frank was a tough little fellow, but a hard footer match and the ride both ways told upon him heavily. He stuck to it gamely, but the pace slackened.

"I—I say," gasped Frank at last, "you two clear off, and I'll chance it."

"You won't," said his brother coolly. "I don't want to get you into a row, Ernie."

"Bow-wow!" Levison dropped his hand on his minor's shoulder, and helped him. By free-wheeling every now and then, while his major propelled him along, Frank rested his weary legs. The three juniors came down the Rylcombe road at last, as the dusk was falling.

Old Taggles had not locked the gates, however, when they arrived. They could see him moving in the doorway of his house as they wheeled their machines in. But they were gone before the old porter came down to the gates. The bicycles were put up, and the three juniors strolled towards the School House in the dusk.

"Mind, mum's the word!" said Cardew.

And they went in.

CHAPTER 8.

Mum's the Word!

"**B**AI Jove. Heah you are!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was lounging elegantly in the doorway of Study No. 6 when Levison and Cardew came up. Frank had scuttled off downstairs.

"Yes, we're here," said Cardew cheerfully. "How did the match go? Did the Grammarians beat you?"

"Wats! It was a dwaiv!"

"One all!" said Jack Blake, looking out of the study. "We missed you on the wing, Levison."

"Weally, Blake—" "Weally, Blake—" "Though, of course, Gussy was a host

in himself," said Blake solemnly. "But the Grammarians were in great form. Where have you fellows been?" "Oh, up and down, and round about!" said Cardew carelessly. "We went out on our bikes, you know."

"I trust you have not been out of bounds?" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyesglance upon Cardew.

"I trusted not," agreed Cardew. And he walked on with Levison to Study No. 9. Clive was there.

"I waited tea for you half an hour," he said. "Then I piled in. Yours is ready."

"Thank goodness!" yawned Cardew.

"I'm famished!"

"Same here!" said Levison, and jolly tired, too!

Clive produced the tea, and placed it on the table. The two Fourth-Formers were hungry, and they did the meal full justice. War-time restrictions were rigging in full force at St. Jim's, and had made a considerable difference to the once-plentiful tea in the study. But there was enough, and the two footballers finished it to the last crumb.

"You've been to King's Woodley?" asked Clive.

"Of course."

"How did the match go?"

"We helped the Rangers beat Abbotsford."

"Oh!" said Clive. "Abbotsford were there?"

"Yes, York and his lot," said Levison. "It was a good game, and I'm sorry you missed it, Clive."

"The place doesn't seem to be out of bounds for Abbotsford, then," Clive remarked.

"No. I suppose they haven't had the news there."

"Eh? What news?"

"Oh, nothing!"

The South African junior looked sheepish.

"Do you mean that you've found out at King's Woodley what the bounds have been changed for?" he asked.

"Well, we heard something," said Levison. "Least said soonest mended. For goodness' sake, don't let it out that we went, or there'll be a thundering row! Might mean a flogging."

"Breaking bounds doesn't mean a flogging at all," said Clive.

"It might in this case."

"You mean that there's something serious on?"

"Well, yes."

"I thought there must be, from the Head's order," said Clive quietly. "The Head wouldn't give such an order for nothing. You needn't tell me what it is. I'm not curious. As for keeping it dark, of course, I've not said a word about your going, and don't intend to. But other fellows know."

"Merry and Manners and Lowther," said Cardew, with a nod. "By Jove, and those dashed fags, too!"

Levison whistled.

"D'Arcy minor, Frayne, and Gibson, if not the rest of the gang," he said uneasily. "Still, they didn't exactly know; they could only have guessed."

"They won't give your minor away," said Cardew. "Your minor is popular among the fag fraternity, blessed if I know why!"

"Levison minor was with you?" exclaimed Clive, in surprise.

"Yes. We had to take a third, and you wouldn't come."

"It was rotten to take a fag with you!" exclaimed Clive heavily.

"Pile it on!" said Levison. "I know it was."

"Yes, pile it on, by all means," sneered Cardew. "No charge for sermons, I suppose?"

"It's pretty certain to be jawed about

the school, if a crowd of fags knew it," said Clive.

"I don't think they'll round on Levison minor. They only nosed it out, and chipped in out of fag friendship. Can't be helped, anyway. I'll speak to Merry, and warn him to keep his head shut."

Cardew strolled out of the study, having finished his tea, and dropped in at No. 10 in the Shell passage. He found the Terrible Three there, engaged upon "Tom Merry's Weekly." There was a warm argument proceeding on the subject of the "Weekly." The terrific cost of paper had caused a great reduction in the size of that famous journal. By setting out the paper in three columns to a page instead of two, more matter could be got into a smaller space; but the "Weekly" had had to be cut down to a single leaf notwithstanding, and evidently somebody had got to go.

D'Arcy's fashion column had gone, and Blake's thrilling serial, and Figgy's short stories of footer, and several other features, and now the fate of Monty Lowther's comic column was trembling in the balance. And Monty Lowther warmly maintained that, whatever else was dispensable, his comic column was indispensable. Manners, however, was of opinion that the comic column ought to be combed out, to leave room for the photographic article. And Manners was quite excited when he found that the chief editor considered it his duty to use the comb upon the photographic article as well as the comic column.

Cardew grinned as the warm discussion went on, none of the Terrible Three noting that he was in the study.

"Can chap get a word in edgeways?" asked Cardew at last.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Monty Lowther. "Now, look here, Tom, my comic column—"

"Oh, bother your comic column!" said Manners. "When it comes to combing out a ripping article on photography, I must say it's time to draw the line."

"Paper famine, my sons," said Tom Merry. "The Huns won't let our paper cargoes come in, and the Government have cut 'em down, too."

"Fity they don't cut down gas instead of paper," snorted Manners.

"Agreed. Perhaps they'll cut that down as well in the long run. There's a lot of gas wasted in the House of Commons," agreed Tom. "But there you are. Paper's short, and you're lucky to get a paper at all in war-time. So, you see—"

"I see that the rotten thing may as well be chucked if my comic column is going to be left out!"

"Blake said the same thing about his serial—"

"Oh, that's rot!"

"And Gussy—"

"Oh, bother Gussy!"

"For goodness' sake, let a fellow speak!" exclaimed Cardew. "Look here, I want you fellows to be very careful not to mention my going out of bounds to-day. It will be awfully serious if it comes out!"

"Bless your going out of bounds!" said Tom Merry. "You were a rotter to do it, if you want my opinion; but we're not going to give you away."

"What is there awfully serious about it?" asked Lowther. "Have you found out the merry, mysterious reason?"

"Yes."

"And what is it?"

"I dare say you'll find out soon enough. But, remember, mum's the word!"

"Oh, get off!" said Manners. "You needn't be afraid."

"I'm not afraid, you silly chump! But —"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 479.

"Hallo, dear boys! Julian heah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking in.

"No, fathead! Anything wrong?" asked Tom, as he caught the expression on Arthur Augustus' face.

"Yaas, wathah! Watty's just come ova—"

"Ratty!" exclaimed Cardew, with a start.

"Yaas; and he's b'wrought Kerr and Owen with him; and he's with Mr. Wallton, and they've sent for Julian," said Arthur Augustus. "Somebody's been b'wrought bounds."

"Oh!" said the Terrible Three together.

"Not really?" said Cardew calmly.

"Yaas, wathah! It appears that Kerr and Owen and Julian have broken bounds, the weckless young asses!" said Arthur Augustus severely. Kildare's told me to look for Julian. We'll say he's gone to tea with a Shell chap—"

"Kangaroo's study, I think," said Manners.

"Thanks, dear boy!"

Arthur Augustus went along the passage to Harry Noble's study, in search of the junior who was wanted. The Terrible Three looked grimly at Cardew.

"Looks like a fair catch already," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, ratty! Ratty's on the wrong tack," said Cardew.

"You'll have to own up, if they fix it on the wrong parties."

"I should do that, of course. But if Julian and the rest have been out of bounds, that's their look-out. They should be careful not to be caught."

"I don't believe they have," said Tom Merry. "In fact, I'm sure they haven't. It's a mistake of Ratty's. Did you see anything of Ratty this afternoon?"

"Well, yes."

"Oh, that accounts for it!"

"I know he didn't recognise us," said Cardew.

"I suppose he's jumped on those chaps on suspicion. Just like Ratty! I shall see whether they get clear before I open my mouth."

"Well, that's right enough."

"And mum's the word," said Cardew.

"Yes, unless the wrong party gets it in the neck," said Tom Merry. "Mum won't be the word then, by long chalks!"

"That's understood."

Cardew quitted the study, and met Julian on his way downstairs.

"Were you out of bounds?" he asked.

"No fear!" said Julian, with a grin.

"Ratty is off-side this time!"

"I hope he is," said Cardew grimly; and he went back to No. 9.

In Tom Merry's study the argument was still proceeding on the subject of the "Weekly," and the drastic combing-out of valuable contributions which was necessitated by the paper famine.

CHAPTER 9.

A Disappointment for Ratty.

DICK JULIAN looked quite cheerful as he entered Mr. Raitton's study. He had, so far as he could remember, no special sins upon his youthful conscience just then.

He found Mr. Raitliff there with the School House master and Kerr and Owen. The two juniors were standing silent, with suppressed resentment in their looks. In Mr. Raitton's handsome face there was a slight trace of impatience.

"Here is the boy, Mr. Raitton," said the New House master acidly as Julian presented himself.

"Come here, Julian! Mr. Raitliff informs me that you were out of bounds to-day in company with two boys of his House. As boys of both Houses are concerned, Mr. Raitliff and I are inquiring into this matter together!"

Kerr seemed about to speak, but Mr. Raitliff made him an angry gesture to be silent.

"Julian, you will kindly tell your story, without hints from your companions!" he said. "We shall see whether it agrees with the story already told by Kerr and Owen!"

"It's better to say," said Julian calmly. "I'm quite sure that Kerr and Owen have told the truth!"

Mr. Raitton coughed as the New House master bit his lip.

"Do you prefer to question Julian, Mr. Raitliff?" he asked.

"I should prefer it—certainly!"

"Very well. Julian, you will answer Mr. Raitliff's questions frankly!"

"Yes, sir!"

The New House master fixed his sharp, suspicious eyes upon Julian's dark, handsome face. Perhaps he hoped to read signs of a guilty conscience there. But, if so, he was disappointed.

"I saw you this afternoon within twenty yards of the Wayland road, the present limit of school bounds, Julian!"

"Yes, sir; with Kerr and Owen."

"I ordered you back to the school, and you did not go!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Julian quietly. "You had no right to order me back to the school, as you are not my House-master!"

"What?" thundered Mr. Raitliff.

"But I felt that I had better obey the order, as Mr. Raitton would most likely have preferred me to do so," said Julian, unmoved. "I came back to St. Jim's with Kerr and Owen."

Mr. Raitton looked relieved.

"I was sure of it," he said. "There has been some mistake, Mr. Raitliff!"

"I do not think so for one moment! Let me finish questioning this boy! Instead of returning to the school, Julian, did you go with your companions to some place where bicycles could be hired, and then go for a ride?"

"No, sir."

"Did you cycle along the Wayland road afterwards, in the direction of Woodley Lane?"

"No, sir."

"H'm! What did you do when you came back to the school?"

"We were in time to see the finish of the football match, sir."

"Then you were on the football-ground?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Raitliff paused, his eyes gleaming green. The School House master broke in:

"Julian's explanation agrees precisely with that made by Kerr and Owen, Mr. Raitliff. They have made exactly the same statement."

"I acknowledge it, Mr. Raitton. I have not the slightest doubt that they have concocted the story in advance. I am absolutely assured that three boys—juniors—passed me on the Wayland road, though too quickly for me to recognise them. I am convinced that these are the three. And I have not the slightest doubt that the matter can be proved!"

"Very well. You are at liberty, of course, to take any steps to prove it!" said Mr. Raitton. "I am satisfied with the assurance the juniors have given!"

"You state that you witnessed the close of the junior football match?" said Mr. Raitliff, eyeing Julian.

"Yes, sir."

"Was there a crowd there to witness the game?"

"Yes; dozens of fellows!"

"Did you speak to any of them?"

"Yes; several."

"Very good! Then some of the boys will be called as witnesses, and if they corroborate your statement, I shall accept it that you are cleared!" said the New House master, with a bitter smile.

Mr. Raitliff expected to see uneasiness and alarm in the faces of the three culprits. They did not turn a hair, however. The New House master bit his lip, and stepped to the door and opened it. Darrel of the Sixth was passing down the corridor, and the master called to him.

"Kindly step into Mr. Raitton's study, Darrel!"

The prefect, looking somewhat surprised, came in. Mr. Raitton controlled his impatience with an effort.

"Darrel, will you find half a dozen boys who witnessed the junior match this afternoon, and bring them here?"

"I am sorry to trouble you, sir," said Darrel. "I'll be back in a few minutes!"

He left the study, and there was a grim silence while the two masters and the culprits waited for his return. Darrel was not long gone. He returned in five minutes, followed by Kerruish, Reilly, Hammond, and Boulton of the School House, and Pratt and Koumi Rao of the New House. The six juniors were looking surprised and uneasy as the prefect marched them in. Mr. Raitton made a gesture to the New House master to take up the questioning again.

"You juniors witnessed the match on Little Side this afternoon?" asked Mr. Raitliff.

"Sure we did, sir," said Reilly.

"Darrel's just asked us—"

"Did you see these three boys on the football ground?"

"Faith, I don't remember—"

"Yes, I did!" said Hammond.

"And I!" said Boulton. "They came in just before the finish!"

And three more voices added the same information. Mr. Raitton smiled slightly. Even the suspicious New House master could hardly suspect that six juniors, chosen at random, could have been primed with a concocted story in advance. Mr. Raitliff bit his lip hard.

"At what time did the football match finish?" he asked.

"About four, sir," said Boulton.

The New House master compressed his lips.

"Can you tell me whether these boys left the school again afterwards?"

"Sure, Julian didn't!" said Reilly.

"He came into the study to say—"

"Owen didn't," said Pratt. "He was in the gym with me."

"How long before the close of the match did you see them?"

"About twenty minutes, sir."

"That will do!" said Mr. Raitliff sourly. "You may go!"

The surprised six filed out of the study. Julian, Owen, and Kerr waited, but an angry gesture from Mr. Raitliff dismissed them also.

"You are satisfied?" asked Mr. Raitton.

"So far as those three juniors are concerned, I must admit it!" said the New

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House master reluctantly. "The three boys I saw on the Wayland road could not have been in the school at a quarter to four, certainly. But it is an undoubted fact, Mr. Raitlon, that three juniors were out of bounds this afternoon! I shall question, personally, every boy in my House, and I recommend you to do the same!"

Mr. Raitlon shook his head. "That does not seem to me a good method," he said. "It is tempting a boy to tell a falsehood. If there were the slightest evidence, it would be a different matter. I shall, however, ask the prefects to inquire into the matter informally."

"You will doubtless follow your own methods, and I shall follow mine!" said the New House master sourly; and he quitted the study, much to Mr. Raitlon's relief.

Ten minutes later there was a regular cry of questioning going on in the New House at St. Jim's. If Mr. Ratcliff had been an old-time official of the Holy Inquisition, he could not have played the part of an inquisitor more thoroughly.

But the result was nil. Every fellow in the New House denied most emphatically having been out of bounds. With his keenest questioning, Ratty could not catch any of them tripping. So he could only conclude that the three juniors he had seen belonged to the School House.

If that House had been under his authority, Mr. Ratcliff flattered himself that he would have unearched the culprits quickly enough. But it was not, which was probably fortunate for the breakers of bounds.

CHAPTER 10.

Tom Merry is Called In.

"FRINSTANCE, leave out the leading article—"

"My dear ass, the leading article's cut down to a quarter of a column! Besides, it's the best thing in the mag!"

"The sports notices could be cut—"

"They've been cut too much already!"

"Now, look here! As a sensible chap, what's the good of a school paper without the comic column?"

Kildare of the Sixth grinned as he heard that argument going on in Tom Merry's study. It ceased, however, as the captain of St. Jim's put his head into the study.

"Terrifically busy?" grinned Kildare.

"Oh, yes!" said Tom Merry. "Still, we can give you a minute, if you like!"

"A minute will do!" said Kildare gravely.

"Two, if you like!" said Manners generously. "Looking for really good recruits for the cricket?"

"None at your service, if you are!" added Lowther.

"No, not exactly. The fact is, it's a serious matter!" said Kildare.

The Terrible Three groaned in chorus. "What have we done now?"

"Nothing, you young asses—at least, if you have I'm not aware of it."

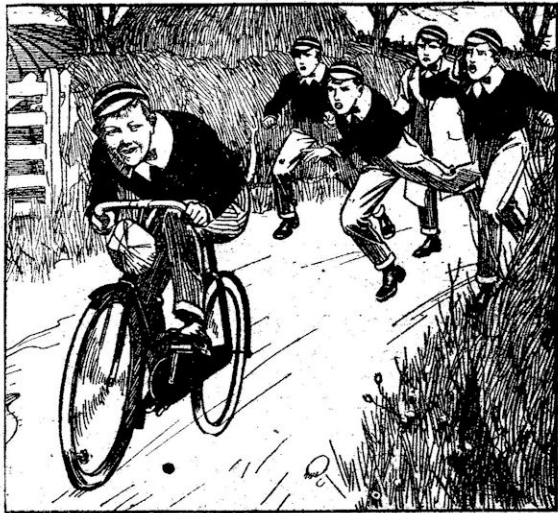
"Thank goodness for that!" said Monty Lowther. "Always try to preserve your sweet and child-like innocence and unsuspectance, Kildare. It's your most fascinating quality."

Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. The captain of St. Jim's gave the humorous Monty a warning glance, and went on:

"I've come to you as junior captain of the House, Tom Merry. I've just been with Mr. Raitlon."

"Yes?" said Tom.

"Mr. Ratcliff thinks he spotted three fellows out of bounds this afternoon," said Kildare. "As he didn't recognise



Levison minor did not look back, and did not stop.
(See Chapter 5.)

them, it's possible that a mistake was made. He appears to have satisfied himself somehow that they were not New House juniors—so he tells Mr. Raitlon. I hope he was mistaken, and that no chap belonging to this House broke bounds after the Head's special orders. Mr. Raitlon has asked me to look into the matter."

The Terrible Three looked grim. All three of them heartily condemned Cardew's reckless escapade, but they had not the slightest intention of giving Cardew away.

Wild horses would not have dragged his name from them. But Kildare knew that. He was not the kind of fellow to ask one boy to sneak about another. He had not come there to pursue Mr. Ratcliff's inquisitorial methods.

"It's not an easy matter for me to deal with," continued Kildare, apparently not noticing the Shell fellows' peculiar looks. "As the fellows weren't recognised, a whacking lie in answer to a question would be enough to see them clear, and I don't want to make a fellow into a liar by putting him into an awkward position. So I've come to you."

"Oh!" said Tom, not quite understanding.

"I've seen the Head," continued Kildare, "and under the circumstances he has decided to let it be known why bounds were restricted. It's a beastly unpleasant thing, and he did not intend to let the school know. But for the sake of avoiding any possible danger from foolish fellows breaking bounds, he has altered his intention."

"Danger!" repeated the three juniors in a breath.

"Yes. There's been an outbreak of scarlet fever at King's Woodley and in the surrounding district."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, these mightn't be any danger, but there might, and for that reason bounds are drawn to this side of

the Wayland road till the affair is well over—and done with. It would not be exactly a joke to have an outbreak in a big, crowded school."

"I should think not!" gasped Tom.

"You can inform the others, if what I've told you. There's no need for any silly kids to be alarmed, of course. But you can see for yourselves now that it's important for everybody to keep this side of bounds."

"Yes, rather!"

"The Head did not state the reason at first, so as not to cause needless alarm. He took it for granted that every fellow would have sense enough to abide by an order issued so specially. But since Mr. Ratcliff's report he has decided to let it be known. I think that's best myself. Now, if any juniors have been out of bounds they ought to bejolly well licked, and I shouldn't wonder if you three fellows can guess who they are."

"I'm not going to ask you," added Kildare. "I know that in a matter of this kind I can trust you, Merry. You can inquire into the matter unofficially. It will not be sneaking for any fellow to give you information, and nothing need come to the masters' ears. The three young rascals concerned want a lesson, and want it badly. Can I trust you to see that they get it?"

"You can, Kildare!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"I think I can," said the prefect, with a nod. "I leave it in your hands, then. You will not report anybody to me, of course; but you can let me know that the matter has been settled."

"Right-ho!"

Kildare quitted the study, and the Terrible Three looked at one another.

"So that was it?" said Lowther, with a deep breath.

Tom Merry knitted his brows. "These three silly fools into the school!" he said. "I suppose there was no danger

actually, as they only went to a football field, but—

"But there might have been—lots!"

"The fools!" said Tom. "The silly idiots! I just to think of what might have happened from their playing the giddy goat like that!"

"Kidnare a sensible chap!" said Manners. "We can look into it better than a prefect, especially as we know the chaps—two of them, at any rate."

"What's the programme?" asked Lowther. "House meeting?"

"No. No need to tell the whole school that fellows have been to that place, considering. Some duffers might get alarmed, especially the kids in the Second."

"But we can't deal with the merry culprits on our own," said Lowther. "We are awfully important chaps, of course—ahem!—but—"

"Twelve is enough for a jury," said Tom. "We'll pick out twelve of the leading fellows—nine besides ourselves. We'll call the silly rotters over the coals in their own study, with the door locked!"

"Good wheeze!"

"You out off to Study No. 6, and call Blake and Herries and Dig and Gussy. That's four. Call at No. 5 for Julian and Reilly. That's six. I'll call Talbot and Kangaroo and Wilkins."

"Right-ho!"

The question of "Tom Merry's Weekly" and the paper famine was postponed. The Terrible Three proceeded to call the jury together.

Kildare had left the matter in the hands of the junior captain, confident that it would be well dealt with; and there was no doubt that Tom Merry & Co. would deal with it efficiently.

CHAPTER 11.

Called to Account.

SUPPER was going on in No. 9 study in the Fourth.

Cardew and Levison and Clive were at the table together. Cardew and Levison were feeling relieved in their minds, and satisfied that their escape had blown over.

They had seen Julian, and learned that the three juniors accused by Mr. Ratcliff had cleared themselves. To do Cardew justice, he would have owned up at once if his offence had been visited upon an innocent party. But the discharge of the three accused "without a stain on their merry characters," as Julian put it, saved the real culprits from that disagreeable necessity.

So far as they could see, the matter was over and done with.

Indeed, Cardew had proposed a visit to Dick Gilbert on the following Wednesday afternoon. Gilbert, as he explained, had a ripping place at King's Woodley, and a half-holiday there would be topping.

Levison declined the suggestion at once. Cardew, whose recklessness seemed to grow with impunity, declared that he intended to go, in any case. Levison and Clive could come if they liked. At that Clive broke out angrily.

"I sha'n't go, and you won't go!" he exclaimed. "Don't be such a silly ass, Cardew! You've said yourself there was a serious reason for the Head drawing in bounds—"

"Oh, rats! Why shouldn't we go? Any more ham?" yawned Cardew.

"Not till Monday!" grinned Levison. "Strict orders from the Head to keep within the limit!"

"Oh, dash it, the food regulations!" growled Cardew. "I don't see what the Head wants to interfere with our grub for. Might as well be a poverty-stricken bounder like Baggy Trimble!"

"If we had more than Trimble at a time like this it wouldn't be playing the game!" said Clive. "Money don't matter."

"You can blow your tin on things there isn't shortage in," said Levison. "We're not quite so badly off as Germany yet. And the war bread's a distinct improvement on the colourless stuff we used to have. I hope they'll keep it on after the war."

"Well, about Wednesday?"

"We're not going!"

"Well, I'm going!" said Cardew sulkily. "I'm the best judge whether it's safe or not, and the Head can go and eat cake! We'll take your minor."

Levison grinned.

Frank's fed-up with breaking bounds, I think. His pals in the Third have been ragging him. They made him run the gauntlet in the Third Form room."

"Cheeky young sweeps! Hallo! Come in!" rapped out Cardew, as there came a knock at the door.

The door of No. 9 opened, and the Terrible Three of the Shelf presented themselves. They walked quietly into study, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy followed them.

After them came Julian and Reilly, followed by Kangaroo and Talbot and Wilkins. Twelve juniors in all came into the study, pretty well filling it.

Levison & Co. stared at the numerous visitors in blank astonishment. It was evidently not a friendly visit. The dozen juniors all looked grim, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy especially having a very severe expression upon his aristocratic countenance.

"Hallo!" said Cardew coolly. "I don't remember asking you fellows to supper."

"We have not come to suppa, you vottah!"

"That's lucky! There's only a crust of war-bread left," said Cardew coolly. "Still, you're welcome to it. Will you carve, D'Arcy?"

"Wais!"

"Anything on?" asked Clive.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "This study is on his trial, and we are the jury."

"Oh!" said Levison.

Cardew's lip curled.

"If you're takin' it upon yourselves to criticise this study, you can do it in my absence," he remarked, and he made a movement towards the door.

"Stay where you are, Cardew!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"Are you givin' me orders?" sneered Cardew.

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"Shut up, Cardew!" said Blake.

"Yaas, watah! Dwy up!" said D'Arcy. "Your faithful cheek is not wanted now, dear boy."

"What's this confounded rot about?" demanded Cardew angrily.

"You'll see directly," said Tom Merry.

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"Ratty has reported to Railton that the fellows were out of bounds this afternoon. Railton called in Kildare, and Kildare's left it to us."

"Are you settin' up as a prefect?"

"In a way, yes," said Tom, unmoved. "We're going to see into the matter, and hand out punishment."

"Punishment!" exclaimed Cardew fiercely.

"Precisely."

"Yaas, pweesely," said Arthur Augustus. "But we want the third wotah. It wasn't Clive, Tom Mewwy, I saw Clive wathin' the football match."

"I was pretty sure it wasn't Clive," said the captain of the Shell. "Levison, you and Cardew went over to King's Woodley this afternoon."

Levison nodded.

"You had another chap with you. Who was it?"

Levison was silent.

"I'm going out of this!" exclaimed Cardew, and he strode savagely to the door.

"Keep that ass quiet!" said Tom. Cardew was pinioned at once by Kangaroo and Talbot. He struggled fiercely in their grasp.

"Let me go!" he shouted.

"When we've done with you," smiled Kangaroo. "Better keep order, or I shall twist your arms—something like that."

"Yah! Oh!" yelled Cardew.

"Sorry! But you asked for it," said Kangaroo politely. "If you ask for it again, you'll get it again."

Cardew did not ask for it again.

"You can let go!" he growled. "I'll stay."

"Right you are, dear boy!" Cardew thrust his hands into his pockets and stood waiting, with a sardonic expression on his face. Levison of the Fourth was looking troubled.

Stdney Clive did not speak.

"You were not the third in the party, Clive?" Tom Merry asked.

Clive shook his head.

"Who was it, Levison?"

"You can leave him out," said Levison, in a low voice. "He didn't want to come. He tried to keep me from going, too. And he's been ragged already by the chaps in his Form for going."

"Oh!" said Tom. He understood.

"I think I see. Well, the other party can stand out, then. But I'm surprised at your leading him into a silly game like that, Levison."

Levison's face was crimson. He did not reply.

"I suppose you are alludin' to Levison minah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was weally wotten of you to take your minah, Levison."

"Pile it on!" said Levison.

"The young rater ought to be licked for it," granted Wilkins.

"He's been licked by the fags, and after all he didn't want to come," said Levison.

"Yes; I think that's so," assented Tom Merry. "You're to blame for the two, Levison?"

"Admitted."

"So we're on our defence!" sneered Cardew.

"Yes," said Tom.

"And what right have you to interfere in the matter at all?"

"Kildare's left it to me."

"Rot!" said Cardew.

"Rot or not, we're dealing with the matter," said Tom Merry coolly. "As you mayn't understand how serious it is, I will tell you that there's an epidemic of scarlet fever at King's Woodley, and it's dangerous for the whole school for a fellow to go there."

Clive uttered an exclamation.

"You set it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, that's it."

"You needn't be nervous, Clive," grinned Cardew. "We didn't go visiting the patients. We went straight to the footer ground of the Rangers' Club, and brought back."

"I'm not nervous," said Clive. "I don't think there's any danger; but you might have brought infection back, all the same. There was a chance."

"How much of a chance?" snapped Cardew.

"Enough to make the Head change bounds, anyway."

"Oh, rot!"

"Did you know about the epidemic, Cardew?" asked Tom Merry ominously.

"Not till we got there. My friend Gilbert told us there," replied Cardew.

"I don't see anything in it myself."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cardew—"

"Well, have you finished?" sneered Cardew.

"We haven't begun yet," said Tom Merry. "We're not going to spread it over the school that you fellows have been to Woodley. It might make some of the fags nervous. You're going to be put through it, fair and square! If you've got any complaint to make of the House jury, here present, you can make it."

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"You can join the jury, Clive."

"Leave me out," said Clive. "I'd rather not take a hand against these fellows, if you don't mind."

"Well, that's so; as you choose," said the captain of the Shell. "You can be the public in court, if you like."

Clive grinned, and nodded.

"Take your seats, gentlemen!" said Arthur Augustus. "As foreman of the jury, I will proceed—"

"Who made you foreman?" inquired Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Sit on him, somebody!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"I wufese to be sat upon, Lowthah. And I wegard the suggestion as widdleous," said the swell of St. Jim's. "As a fellow of tact and judgment, I should naturally be selected as foreman of the jury."

"Ring off!"

"I wufese to wing off, Mannahs!"

"Dry up!" said Julian. "Tom Merry's foreman of the jury. Go ahead, Tommy!"

"You fellows agreed on that?" asked Tom.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Undah the circs, Tom Mewwy, I am willin' to go by the majowity, and leave it to you," said Arthur Augustus gracefully.

"Are you willing to leave off burbling?" Herries inquired.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Silence in court!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Blake and Digby collared the swell of the Fourth, and sat him down forcibly in Cardew's armchair. Arthur Augustus gasped and expostulated in vain.

"Now dry up, or we'll sit on you!" said Blake warningly.

"You uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I distinctly wufese to be sat upon. I considah— Yaroh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus's elegant form disappeared under Blake and Digby. Blake took a comfortable seat on Arthur Augustus's chest.

"Now get on," he said.

"Gweooigh!"

"Stick a pin into him, Dig, if he makes any more row."

"What-ho!" grinned Dig.

"Order!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"It's not law for jymren to sit on one another! Keep order, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus struggled out from beneath his grinning chums, and gave them a look which ought to have withered them on the spot.

"You uttah wuffians—"

"Order!"

"I wufese to orlah—I mean—"

"Shut up!" roared the whole jury, with one voice.

And Arthur Augustus shut up at last; and the proceedings proceeded, as Blake expressed it.

CHAPTER 12.

Justice!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW stood with his hands in his pockets, and a sardonic smile on his face. He evidently wished to make it clear that the whole proceedings of the House jury excited only disdain in his breast. The grandson of Lord Reckness had never looked so supercilious as at that moment. Levison's expression was quite different, for Ernest Levison was not the Levison of old.

There had been a time when he would have taken the matter in Cardew's own spirit, and it was not very long ago. The sense of wrongdoing came home to the one-time black sheep of St. Jim's with unaccounted keenness. He was anxious to set himself right in the eyes of the other fellows, but he knew that the task would be difficult.

Levison's look showed what he was feeling, and Tom Merry's stern expression relaxed as he noted it. He did not want to be hand upon the fellow who had made an uphill fight from the slough of reckless blackguardism; but he had his duty to perform.

"Now, if you've got anything to say, go ahead!" said Tom Merry. "You're going to get fair play!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Cardew laughed recklessly.

"I've nothin' to say. I suppose you've come here to rag us. Well, you can go ahead. I shall hit you, I warn you!"

Tom's brow darkened.

"Is that all you have to say, Cardew?"

"That's all!"

"You don't want to make any defence?"

"None."

"Very well; you can stand aside. What about you, Levison?"

"I've something to say," said Levison quietly. "I'll say this—that as soon as I knew the reason why bounds had been changed, I wished I hadn't gone. But I did not know when I started. I think we were justified in going."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Well, if you can make that out, the jury will be satisfied. You know that nobody here's got anything against you."

"I know that, of course. I'm willing to leave it in the hands of the fellows present," said Levison. "If you say I haven't played the game—"

"That's the question," said Tom. "Of course, I dare say there isn't a fellow here who hasn't broken bounds one time or another. We're not a committee of Good Little Georgies!"

"Wathah not!"

"Dry up, Gussy!"

"But this isn't an ordinary case," said Tom. "The Head changed school bounds, and we know he wouldn't do it without a good reason. It was putting the school on its honour. Fellows couldn't be watched all through a half-holiday. There isn't a master at St. Jim's who'd spy on a chap, excepting Ratty—"

"And Ratty did!" said Julian.

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"Yes; and you know what we all think of Ratty for it," said Tom Merry. "Our Housemaster doesn't play that kind of game. Raitlon wouldn't! He trusted us so see that the Head's order was regarded. He would rather trust a fellow than watch him like a snacking detective!"

"Hear, hear!" said the jury.
"But if fellows can't be trusted to toe the line when a special order's given, that rather justifies Ratty in his mean tricks," said Tom. "The point is that we were really put on our honour!"

"Yaas, wathah! Have you anything to woply to that, Levison?"
"Go it, old chap! We'll give you a fair hearing," said Talbot.
Levison nodded.

"I think I can make out a case," he said. "Cardew had promised to take two players over to Woodley. Of course, Gilbert would have taken it all right if he'd wired he couldn't come. But the point is that the Rangers were depending on us for the match!"

There was a general nodding among the jury. They were quite ready to admit the importance of keeping a football engagement.

"As it happened," resumed Levison, with more confidence, "we practically won the match for the Rangers!"

"You did, you mean," said Cardew. "I'm not taking credit for that!"

"Well, I bagged a goal," said Levison. "Anyway, the match was won, and the Rangers would have been badly beaten if we hadn't been there. They had lost four men, and their reserves could only fill one place—badly. The Rangers would have had to play three men short, or stick in anybody they could pick up at the last minute—which meant a licking in the last match of their footer season—and they've been having a lot of bad luck. If we hadn't gone, we should have left them badly in the lurch!"

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good case," deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a sage nod of the head.

"I don't deny that we were on our honour, in a sense," said Levison. "But we were on our honour, too, not to fail a chap who'd been led to rely on us. That's my case, and I leave it to the jury!"

"That's my case, too, and you can go and eat coke!" said Cardew flippantly. Cardew's remark passed unheeded.

"That's all, Levison?" asked the foreman of the jury.

"That's all."
"Then the jury can consult," said Tom Merry.

The jury consulted. Levison's defence had made quite a good impression upon them, and it was admitted that he had made out a good case, so far as it went. But the opinion of the juniors was not changed. There was a buzz of voices in the study for some minutes.

"Undah the cires, I will put a question to the pwisonah at the bah," observed Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Oh, cheese it, Gussy!"
"I refuse to cheese it, Weilly! Pwisonah at the bah—"

"Ye abee to grinned Levison.

"Are you still of opinion that you ought to have gone to Woodley, in spite of the respected ordah of the Head, or have you changed your mind?"

Levison hesitated.
"Yes, that question's in order," said Tom Merry.

"Well, I don't want you to think I'm begging off," said Levison, flushing. "As a matter of fact, if it happened over again I shouldn't go!"

"Good enough!" said Tom Merry. "If you see it like that, the jury can let you down lightly."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sentence," asked Blake.
The foreman of the jury delivered the sentence:

"Guilty of playing the giddy ox, and putting a stain on the honour of the House. But, taking into consideration the accused's recent good character, and his having reconsidered his action, he is sentenced to one day in Coventry!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Thanks!" said Levison quietly.
"And the othah pwisonah, deah boy?"

"Have you anything more to say, Cardew?"

"Nothin', exceptin' that it's like your cheek to be askin' me questions, an' if it happened over again I should go all the same!" said Cardew, in his most arrogant style.

The jury consulted again, and the foreman delivered the sentence:
"Guilty of dishonourable conduct and

mulish obstinacy! Sentenced to a week in Coventry, and to be whacked with a cricket-stump till he gives his solemn word of honour not to break bounds again till the Head's order is withdrawn!"

"Hear, hear!"
Cardew's eyes glanned.
"I shan't do that!" he said.
"Execute the sentence," said the foreman of the jury coldly.

Cardew made a rush to the door. He was promptly collared, and stretched face downwards on the table, struggling and panting. Reilly picked a cricket-stump out of the cupboard.

"Lay it on!" said Tom.
Whack—whack—whack—whack!
Cardew struggled furiously. Levison and Clive loomed on grimly. Cardew had asked for it, and he was getting it now; there was no mistake about that. Reilly seemed to think he was beating carpet.

Whack—whack—whack!
"Oh! Ah! Yah! Oh! Leave off!" yelled Cardew.

"Word of honour wanted," said Tom Merry.

"Go and eat coke!"
Whack—whack—whack!
"Yow-ow-ow! Leave off! I—I—I'll promise if you like!"

"Good enough! Honour bright?"

"Yes!" panted Cardew.
He slid from the table, flushed and furious. The jury filed out of the study. Justice was satisfied.

Tom Merry looked into Kildare's study later. The captain of St. Jim's gave him an inquiring look.

"All serene!" said Tom.
Kildare smiled.

"I won't ask you any questions," he said; "but—"

"There won't be any more of it. You can take that as a cert!"

"Right!" said Kildare.
And the matter ended there—quite satisfactorily, though the Housemaster and the prefect never knew who had been the breakers of bounds.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.—THE CHUMS OF STUDY No. 9.) BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE CHUMS OF NUMBER 9!"

After their experience as breakers of bounds, Levison and Cardew—though not so much Cardew as Levison—are inclined to lie low for a time. They are, in fact, behaving in a manner to which no one could fairly object when suspicion rises against them, and Clive is also involved in it. The three take to being absent from the playing fields very often, and the story is put about by Racke, Crooke, and fellows of their kidney, that the chums are going the pace. What the cause of their mysterious conduct was, what came of the attempts of Racke, Crooke, and Mellish to find out all about it, and who scored in the upshot, you will learn next week.

FATHER'S APPROVAL.

The letter which follows was addressed to Mr. Martin Clifford, who was naturally pleased with it—as was I when he THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 479.

showed it to me. It is always good to have the approval of parents and guardians, and I wish I could be sure that all the schoolmasters who condemn my papers without reading them—and the condemnation always comes from these—would see it. Mr. Maguire is good enough to say that he does not mind its reproduction on this page, and it is so excellent a testimonial that I have pleasure in giving it.

"40, Cambridge Road,

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"January 24th, 1917.

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"Yours faithfully,

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Your Editor

EXTRACTS FROM

"Tom Merry's Weekly" & "The Greyfriars Herald."

A DORMITORY RAG.

Dick Rake Tells a Story of His Old School.

"PLEASE, sir, isn't your watch wrong?" asked Raddles, a member of the Upper Fourth, of the French master at Wingham.

A chuckle of highly improper delight came from the rest of us. It was not at all a correct question to put. But Raddles was rather in the way of making the life of Monsieur Tiances interesting; that was what Raddles called it.

"My watch, eet ees not wrong. Non, non! Mauvais garçon! Go last!"

"And 'Mossoo' gave a quick sweep of his hand towards the bottom of the class.

"Please, sir," protested Raddles, "I only asked you a question! There's no harm in asking questions, is there, sir?"

"Zis ees ze harm to ask zem in English. You must eay eet to me in ze French. Go last! Ask of me ze same zing in French, and to ze topmost one more you go."

That was where Mossoo had Raddles. He was no dab at French. He scrambled and pushed his way to the last form amidst titters, that showed the Upper Fourth did not consider the score entirely on his side.

Then Gorringe tried his hand. If there was a cheekier chap than Raddles in our Form, that chap was Gorringe.

"It really has gone twelve, sir!" he said.

"Non, non! Eet haf not gone twelve!"

"Oh, yes, sir! Ever so many times! It went las night, sir!"

It was a cheap joke, but we howled at it. Raddles, in his excitement, hurled his French grammar at my head.

"How's that, umpire!" shouted Gorringe as I caught it.

"Oh, wonderful!" yelled Raddles. "Chuck it back, Rake!"

I did so. And Raddles wished I hadn't. For he failed to make the catch. The book took him under the chin, and rattled his teeth quite nicely.

Mos. Tiances put his hands to his ears, looking wildly round the room. He really wasn't what you could call great on discipline.

"Cease, cease, cease!" he cried. "Zis ees too much!"

"I should say it is, rather!" shouted Gorringe. "Too much French! It's the too-too-muchness we bar!"

"Ze last, Gorringe!" snapped Mossoo. Then he sent Wiggins down to the foot for "looking at him wiz ze loonatic eyes"—old Wig was a wild-looking beggar—and then me. I forgot for what. But, anyway, Raddles was getting to the top automatically, if this sort of thing went on. And Raddles' place in the French class most certainly was not the top.

Carstairs put his foot in it then. He was a heavy, spiteful lout, the sort that generally does the wrong thing.

"Yah! Waterloo!" he howled. "Shame!" we yelled. "That's not cricket!"

And it wasn't, you know. For after all Mossoo was no end of a decent sort, and even before the war there was enough friendship between France and us on this side to make that sort of thing off the rails.

"Oh, you idiots!" snarled Carstairs. "You're too soft for anything!"

"Stand out, ze boy who say 'Vaterloo!'"

Carstairs kept his seat. A silence fell upon the Form, and Mossoo's face wore a look we had not been used to seeing on it.

"Ze boy who called to me zat insult vill stand out! Ozzervise ze whole Form vill stay till one o'clock!"

Mossoo could keep us in all right, of course, though he seldom did it.

But Carstairs didn't stir. There were elbow searching his ribs, but still he sat tight.

"Cad!" whispered Raddles.

"Funk!" growled Wiggins.

But, of course, no one could tell Mossoo who the culprit was.

"Vairy well; vairy well indeed! Ze whole Form zey vill stay in till one o'clock!"

"Oh, sir, no, please!" we pleaded.

"Mcs garçons, I vill to vat I haf said stiek tight!"

And he did. But he gave old Raddles a chance to say in French that his watch was wrong, and, with a bit of prompting, Rad only made about six mistakes, and Mossoo beamed upon him.

Rad didn't want extra detention that day. The one o'clock bizney was bad enough. He had to go into the town to meet a hamper from home—a really important engagement. I suppose the hamper might have got to him even if it hadn't been met at the station; but Rad did not seem to think so.

Directly the School clock boomed the hour we were dismissed. Mossoo had had enough, and a bit over, of us.

There was just time before dinner to attend properly to Carstairs. We did it, too, you bet! He talked about fighting Raddles, who was the first to pile in on him, but it fizzled out in talk. So we bumped and frogs-marched him till I guessed he wished he had never heard of Waterloo!

II.

RADDLES got his hamper after classes that afternoon. Besides grub in abundance, it held a parcel which proved to contain a wig and some false whiskers. Rad had a scheme, it appeared.

"Put 'em on, Dicky!" he said in our den. He and Gorringe and I shared a study.

"Now, you chaps, who's he like?"

I could not see any great resemblance myself, but Rad and Gorringe were dead sure I looked just like the Head. About the hair and face fungus, I suppose. Otherwise there must have been lots of difference.

It was not so easy to get grub up to the dormitories at Wingham as it is at Greyfriars. For one thing, we were

strictly forbidden to go up during the day, and for another order was kept by masters, not by prefects. A master stood at the top of the stairs as we fled up.

"How's it to be worked, Rad?" said Gorringe.

"Hide it in the changing-room. Snuggles it up under some overcoats when we go to roost. One of us must get Mossoo conversing while the others get past," answered Rad, who usually had a scheme cut and dried in such cases as these.

"Mossoo on duty? Oh, it will be dead easy, then!" said Gorringe, a sanguine youth.

The overcoat dodge was based on the fact that when anything wanted mending the game was to take it up and leave it in the dorm for the matron's staff to collect. Mossoo was not unduly suspicious. He might have snatched a rat if the whole Form had overcoats in need of repairs all at once, but we could get three or four past him if he did not look too hard.

"Tell you what, Dicky, old son. You go up to him, and pretend you feel horrid pains in your little tum-tum!" suggested Rad. "You can do that sort of thing no end well."

I shouldn't have been on with any other master. They might have buttered me all they liked—n.g.! But Mossoo was different. He really was an innocent old lamb in some ways.

"We did it like that. The bell rang for 'dormitories.' Rad rushed to the changing-room. He and Gorringe and Wiggins carted the hamper up under their overcoats, and I went just ahead of them, with my hand to my waistcoat.

Mossoo stood at the top of the staircase curling his moustache, and looking very cheery.

"Vy, Rake, mon garçon, vat ees ze matter?" he asked.

"I did not quite enjoy it. He was so genuinely kind. It seemed rather mean to be doing him down. But I remembered the hamper. Needs must, you know!"

"Vat haf you got zere, Rattles?" he asked. He always called Rad "Rattles."

"It was time for me to do something. 'Groom!' I groaned. 'Mossoo, do you think a pain in the—abdomen is dangerous?'"

"I zink eet ees zat you eat too much an' too queeck, Rake," he answered.

"I dunno; sometimes, perhaps." But I was thinking of Rad's hamper. "I was thinking of Rad's hamper."

"Ven ze ozzer boys are in zeir beds, you to ze matron had better come wiz me, Rake."

"If I don't feel better by that time, sir, I suppose. I fancy it seems to be passing off now."

Rad and Gorringe and Wiggins were passing on, anyway, which was what really mattered. In another half-hour.

minute the convoy would be out of the danger zone.

They were passed, and the hamper was safely stowed away before Mossoo followed us into the dorm.

"V, Rake, you are into ze bed getting!" he said.

"Yes, sir. I feel quite all right now." But Mossoo shook his head. I need not dress again, he said; but something must be done.

It was no good worrying. I hoped he would forget. Mossoo had a pretty good forgettery.

The lights were put out, and Mossoo departed. Then young Hobson stood at the door to keep "Cave!" while Rad lugged out the hamper.

"Old Whiskers is out to dinner," said Gorringe, "so we're safe from him."

I regret to say that the reference was to our respected Head.

But we were not safe from everyone, it seemed.

"Cave!" It was the matron. Rad had got the hamper away just in time.

She had some beastly stuff for me to take—the very limit. I had to neck it down somehow. After it I really felt that there were pains in my Little Mary. But it would have been no good arguing. Mrs. Smythe was She-Who-Must-Be-Obedied, and she smelt a rat a good deal more quickly than Mossoo.

Heroic of me, I reckoned. The other asses seemed to think it was a jape. But Rad was decent. I had the first cut of the pork-pie, and a whacking chunk it was; and after a bit that took the taste out.

Carstairs crowded round with the rest. "You ain't in this act!" said Rad, with no end of decision.

"Why not? Don't be a mean cad, Raddies!"

"The mean cad was the chap who got us all kept in this morning because he hadn't the decency to own up!" said Gorringe.

"Hear, hear!" said the rest of us. Carstairs slunk back to bed. We might have known that he would try to get back on us some way. But we forgot all about him.

My word, that was a hamper! I don't remember ever being introduced to a better one. But it would only make your mouths water to be told what was in it. Pork-pie, sausage-rolls, tarts of half a dozen varieties, chicken and ham-oh, "nuff said!"

We pitched in. By-and-by Rad nudged me. It seemed to me I was forgetting something. I had not really forgotten, but I was loth to leave that spread, and after swallowing that beastly stuff of the matron's, I thought in justice, to my interior, I ought to fill up well.

But Rad whispered that he was saving something for me, and I quietly mizzled.

III.

"WHAT does this mean?" The light was switched on, and a familiar figure in cap and gown stood at the door.

Everybody but Rad and Gorringe thought it was the Head, so it must have been a pretty hefty make-up. Our Head was a little chap, though fierce.

There was a scamper and a scuffle for beds. But Rad and Gorringe went on wolfing the grub, to the amazement and consternation of the rest.

What I want to know is—I demand an instant answer on pain of my most severe displeasure—how much green baize would it take to make a pair of trousers for an elephant at one-and-a-half the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 479.

penny-three-fathings per square mile? And, when made, what would the colour be?" Hobson, tell me!"

"Please, sir—"

"O, you spooner, Rake! It's only Rake, Hobby!"

They swarmed out of bed again. Rad and Gorringe were really so industrious that I began to wonder whether they might not clear up what Rad said he was saving for me, as well as the rest of the grub. And the jape had been played out—too soon, perhaps, but there was the grub waiting, you know—at least, I hoped it was waiting.

I got to take off the things. In the gloom of the corridor someone barged into me. He seemed to be coming from our dorm.

"Who's that?" I asked. But there was no answer. I did not even think of Carstairs. I thought it might be some chap who wanted to work off a wheeze on me.

Whoever it was cleared quickly. But then I ran into someone else. It really was beastly dark. A light was switched on, and I saw that it was M. Tiances!

"Ze Head!" he cried, letting go my arm, which he had seized. Then he looked at me hard, and a queer sort of grin came over his old dial.

"Keet ees not ze Head!" he snapped.

"No, sir. It's me—Rake!"

Then on a sudden the light went out again. I did not understand it—not even when I heard a tread that I knew well on the stairs. Our Head had big feet, and trod like a chap twice his size.

Mossoo drew me back. Now I began to understand. What an old sport he was! I knew jolly well he would punish me himself—and jaw me, too, for disrespect. But he did not intend to give me away to Whiskers. Whiskers could not tolerate a joke against himself, and it might have meant expulsion for me.

"Tak zem off—queek!" hissed Mossoo in my ear.

"And you bet I did! There was no chance of warning the other fellows. A row was a dead cert. But a dorm feed did not mean expulsion, anyway."

I shoved the things into a cupboard, and followed the Head, hoping to get into the dorm behind him without being noticed.

And I just managed it. Mossoo had disappeared.

Gorringe had a narrow escape of the sack. When the light showed again he reckoned I had come back. He hurled a pillow right at the Head's cocoa-nut!

If it had hit him—oh, my hat! It did not hit him because I managed to stop it on the way.

Then—ructions! Those fellows were really frightfully untidy eaters. There were crumbs all over the floor, and jam on the sheets, and chicken-bones lying about—a horrible mess!

Every eye but mine was upon the Head. But I saw Carstairs sink in and crawl into bed. And I know who had given us away.

I dare say you can imagine how the Head stormed. He let himself go at times like this—no too dignified, I thought his way.

We were booked for an interview next day. But everyone agreed, when Whiskers had gone, and I told them what Mossoo had done, that, if he was a Frenchman, he was the brickest of bricks.

It was a promenade of the Form to the Head's study next day, and Carstairs joined the promenade.

"No, you don't!" I said. "You're not in this!"

"Oh, let him have the birching if he wants it!" grinned Gorringe. "After all, the poor chap didn't get any of the

grub. Let him have something, Dicky—some little thing to comfort him."

"He'll get that later on." I answered. Carstairs understood. He fell out. I fancy he had hoped that the Head would keep him back to last, and let him go un-birched. But he couldn't be sure of it, and the risk was too big to take, with the certainty of a Form ragging later.

Mossoo was coming out of the study as we went in. He looked downcast. We could guess why. Whiskers wasn't quite nice to what he called his "staff." He was a nagging little specimen.

It was rough on Mossoo, for nobody in his senses could have expected Mossoo to keep discipline.

We went through it—a stiff dose. Then I trotted off to see Mossoo.

He was no end decent. Yes, he did jaw a bit, but in a friendly way. And he gave me five pages of the French exercise book to write out—and, what's more, I did it! We did not always do the inputs Mossoo set.

We attended to Carstairs—the cur! He had known all along that Whiskers was not out to dinner.

Gorringe found out that it was Mossoo's birthday the next week, and a dozen of us put our little bits together and bought him a silver cigarette-case.

There were tears in his eyes when he took it. He said he should keep it till he died. I hope it will be a long time first! He was at Verdun, I heard, through the hottest of it all. Let's hope his luck will hold!

For Mossoo is a white man!

ST. JIM'S LIMERICKS.

By M. ADMAN.

If a bet on a gee-gee you'd book,
If you yearn in some nice shady jook

To smoke Turk or Gypsy—
Shell passage—look slippy!
Inquire for George Gerald Croke!

"Downright Yorkshire," they say; and I take

Leave to add that there's no better nake
Of man on this earth!

Does St. Jim's know the worth
Of the type? Why, you bet! We know
Blake!

We are proud of our skipper. He's fair
And a sportsman. Although he ain't
wear

A caubeen in his hat,
And his name isn't Pat,
He's Irish all through, is Kildare!

His own mean additions embellish
The tales which he tells with a relish
About other fellows.

To act as the bellows
To the fire of scandal suits Mellish!

He can keep his wool on when the fur
Starts to fly. He can stick like a burr
To a clue he once seizes.

He's a great man at wheezes,
And a first-rate good fellow, is Kerr!

He's no shining light, although "lamp"
Forms part of his name. Since that
scamp

Of a Hake was drummed out
The New House, beyond doubt,
Doesn't hold a worse rotter than C—e!

The Grammarians took him arrive;
They were kind—saw him out for a
drive.

Gordon wasn't so Gay.
When he fell by the way,
Taken in by the shinness of Clivo!

BAGGY'S BAG.

By TOM MERRY.

WE were coming back from Wayland—Talbot and Lowther and Manners and I—when we saw Baggy Trimble ahead of us. He was carrying a bag, and he seemed to find it rather heavy, for he shambled along with the shoulder of the laden arm down and the other shoulder up, making him look such a figure, that if he hadn't been moving we should have taken him for a scarecrow.

"Been on the grub-hunt!" growled Manners.
"Something ought to be done about it," said Talbot. "That sort of thing is dead off!"

"Something shall be done!" answered Monty, grinning. "Or somebody—Baggy for choice!"

But it was not just easy to see how there was little doubt that that the bag was full of grub. Everybody at St. Jim's had known from the first that Baggy was not the chap to stick out the new food regulations. Everybody felt pretty sure that he was bringing in grub. But so far he had not been caught at it.

The day was drawing in, and the sky was cloudy. Wayland Moor is not a flat expanse. It is rolling, like the prairies, and has ups and downs in it. If you are on one of the rising parts you can see from some distance away, and you can see anyone down in the dip before you when people behind you in the next dip have not caught sight of him.

If Baggy had looked round he could not have helped seeing us. But he did not look round. As for him, he stood out very plainly to our sight at the top of one of the rises, with a patch of clear sky outlining his figure—a queer, hunched-up figure, as I said before.

But we could not see who or what was in the dip in front of him, though we knew he must have seen somebody when the bag suddenly disappeared, and the shoulder that had dropped went up.

Then Lowther disappeared, too. Well, not exactly, for we could still catch a glimpse of him now and then, as he dodged swiftly through the gorse-bushes.

But even if Baggy had glanced round I don't think he would have spotted him.

But Baggy did not look round. He, too, passed out of sight for a minute or two. When we three reached the top of the rise, he stood a few yards away in the dip, talking to Railton.

It was not that Baggy felt conversational. He would have given something to have been able to dodge the House-master, I am sure. But he had not the chance.

"Oh, no, sir!" we heard him say. "I assure you that you are mistaken, sir! I had no bag, sir. I—I wasn't carrying anything. I—I hate carrying things, you know, sir. I think it's low!"

"That depends a good deal on what is being carried, Trimble!" said Mr. Railton drily. "I am sorry that I cannot take your word. But I cannot doubt my own eyes, and I am absolutely sure that you were carrying something! It looked to me like a bag."

"Oh, I know now, sir!" said Baggy, struck by a happy thought. "It was a— a bunch of flowers, sir. Quite a big bunch, you know. I—I'm very fond of flowers, sir!"

"Then I am sorry that I startled you so much as to make you drop them," said

Mr. Railton. "Turn back with me, and you can pick them up."

It was not until that moment that either of them noticed us. Us three, that is, for Lowther was invisible. Unless we were very much mistaken, he had found Baggy's bag; but we were in the dark as to what he meant to do.

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Trimble reports the—er—loss of a bunch of flowers," he said sarcastically. "Perhaps you three will help us to look for it?"

"Pleased, I'm sure, sir!" said Talbot. And Manners and I murmured assent.

"If it should turn up in some strange disguise—as, for instance, that of a bag—do not let it pass by," the House-master said. "There are curious old stories of witchcraft told in connection with this moor, and Trimble's bunch of flowers may have been metamorphosed into a bag—I almost think that will be found to be the case."

"Oh, don't trouble, please, sir!" pleaded Baggy.

"I am in no trouble, I assure you, Trimble; and if you are guiltless of the offence with which I suspect you, there is no reason why you should feel troubled in mind. Picking flowers is quite a harmless pastime. It is quite odd of Railton's line to meddle with anything that does not concern him. But this was a special matter. The Head had spoken strongly about keeping to the rules imposed upon us, and not doing the very thing that we all felt sure Baggy was doing; and of course our House-master is a genuinely patriotic chap."

We guessed that Baggy must have dropped the bag into a clump of gorse, meaning to get it again after the enemy had passed. We also guessed that by this time Monty would have found it. But we did not expect to see him sitting by it just on the other side of the top of the rise.

"Have you found a bunch of flowers, Lowther?" asked Mr. Railton.

"No, sir! Have you lost one?"
"I have not. Trimble says that he dropped one. Is that your bag, may I ask, Lowther?"

"Not mine, sir. My conscience is fair to middling, I think; but I should be afraid to be seen carrying a bag home in these times. People are so suspicious, you see."

"Is it yours, Trimble?"

Mr. Railton had smiled at Monty's japing, but he spoke sternly now.

"Nun-no, sir! No, it isn't mine. I—I never saw it before!"

"It has your initials upon it!"
"B. T." But that might be Boadicea Tomkinson, or Benjamin Trott, or Boanerges Tubthumper, or anything, almost," murmured Lowther, as if he was talking to himself.

"But I am inclined to doubt all those hypotheses, Lowther."
"So are I, sir, if it comes to that, though I rather favour Boadicea. I don't know why."

"Open the bag, Lowther!"

"Do you think I ought, sir? Boadicea might—"

But the steely glint in Mr. Railton's eyes made Monty drop up.

He opened the bag. We three were

between Baggy and them. Baggy tried hard to see, but could not. That was because we would not let him. And we did not see because we were too busy looking after Baggy.

There was a moment's suspense. Then Mr. Railton said:

"You may take your bag, Trimble. Perhaps you fellows will see that Trimble goes straight back to the school?"

Baggy gave a sigh of relief that Manners said nearly knocked him over—it was more like half a gale of wind than any ordinary sigh.

We said we should be pleased, and we felt so, though at an ordinary time we don't exactly yearn for Baggy's company.

Mr. Railton strode off towards Wayland, and we politely escorted the relieved Baggy towards St. Jim's.

But if Baggy was relieved in mind, he was not so in body.

He grunted and groaned and perspired. But when Lowther—not in the least meaning it—offered to carry the bag a little way, he only gripped the handle tighter, and refused to let it out of his own care.

"It's grub, of course, Baggy?" said Manners, when we were in the quad. Most likely Baggy felt safe there. We could not very well confiscate his stuff in public, though we might have done it out on the moor. Anyway, he said, with a cunning wink:

"What do you think? Really, I did fancy Railton was a bit smarter! It was a good dodge of mine to put a 'Daily Mirror' over the tuck; but it ticks me how he missed looking underneath. He, he, he! What do you think?"

"We think you deserve all you can eat after carrying it all that way," said Lowther. "Hope you'll enjoy it, Baggy."

Baggy stumbled in. That bag had got very heavy by this time. Which was hardly to be wondered at, as Lowther remarked, and we agreed, though we did not quite understand.

"It won't feel so heavy when it gets inside him," said Manners.

"I think it will," replied Lowther, shaking his head. "In fact, though I ain't any great friend of Baggy's, I hope he won't eat it. Stones and gorse prickles wouldn't be precisely good for his poor tum!"

"Then you—"

"What do you think? As Baggy said."

"And Railton?"

"Railton is wide, Tommy. I showed him. He tumbled. Baggy had still a longish way to go, and Baggy don't like carrying things."

"And what did you do with the grub?"

"I didn't wolf it, Talbot, and it won't be wasted. We'll go back now, and get it. I know of an indigent family in Rylcombe to whom it will be as a feast of the gods, and there isn't really much fear that it will cause them to exceed the rations."

"My hat!" said Manners. "We guessed you were up to something with the bag. But it was sporting of old Railton. Come along!"

As we turned to go, Baggy suddenly appeared in the doorway of the School House.

"Beasts! Thieving beasts!" he howled.

"Be comforted, Baggy," said Monty. "You are about to give alms to the poor!"

But somehow Baggy did not seem at all comforted.

THE RED TAPE MYSTERY!

An Adventure of Herlock Sholmes.

By PETER TODD.

I FIND, on consulting my notes, that at this period of our residence in Shaker Street, Herlock Sholmes was engaged upon three cases of the first importance. First and foremost was the Case of the Premier's Spectacles, which, involving as it does, the State secrets of the deepest import, must be reserved till after this war.

Then there was the Mystery of the Tinned Tongue, which caused Sholmes to undertake a trip to Chicago, and which his wonderful knowledge of chemistry enabled him to solve. It may truly be said that Sholmes was the only man who had ever succeeded in tracing out the various ingredients used in this product. Then there was the Red Tape

But his health had naturally suffered from his devotion, and as his medical adviser, I suggested a long rest. But duty called him, and Sholmes was never slow to obey the call. I could not blame him—for the Red Tape Mystery was a case in which the fate of the whole Empire was involved.

Sholmes had been deep in thought for some time, and I had not ventured to interrupt him. He had consumed gallons of cocaine over his usual allowance, and he had let both his pipes go out, which proved that his astonishing brain was working at high pressure.

"It must be there!" he exclaimed at last. "Yet—"

"Sholmes!" I remonstrated. "You are not fit really to undertake a new case



They swamped the floor, and rose around us in piles.

Mystery, the solution of which stands as a lasting monument to the perspicacity of my amazing friend.

The case came under his notice immediately after his return from Chicago. Sholmes was somewhat feeble in health at this time. In his keenness to solve the Mystery of the Tinned Tongue, he had not hesitated to taste that curious product of modern American science. Danger never deterred Sholmes. In the course of an investigation his courage was equal to the most crucial test.

until you have recovered from the effects of your visit to Chicago.

He made an impatient gesture.

"You do not realise what hangs upon this, Jotson! It is a matter of imperial importance. The whole administration is paralysed until I can discover the clue to the mystery."

"You amaze me, Sholmes! What has happened?"

He rose to his feet and paced the room hurriedly, his dressing-gown whisking behind him.

"It is a case of mysterious theft in the Circumlocution Department," he explained. "A quantity of red tape—the whole supply available at the present moment—has been mysteriously abstracted. You are aware, Jotson, of the great importance of the part played by red tape in this war. Without a constant supply of this article the administration cannot move. Every important letter must be tied in red tape before it can be stacked away in a pigeon-hole. Volumes of reports, observations, remarks, annotations, etc., must be bound up in red tape, in order to be forwarded from the Circumlocution Department to the Sealing-Wax Office, and from there to the Pencil Department, thence again to the Lead-Pencil Office, and again to the Permanent Consideration officials, before they find a final resting-place in the Waste-Paper Department. Without the usual supply of red tape nothing can be set in motion. The Germans, of course, are well aware of this, and a German agent is at work."

He paused for a drink.

"For a week past, Jotson, the supply of red tape, as far as it has arrived at the Circumlocution Department has been abstracted! It is under the charge of an old, experienced official, a gentleman named Slack Karr, who is responsible for it. It is delivered daily, in large quantities, in Mr. Slack Karr's office, and then—it vanishes!"

"Good heavens, Sholmes!"

"The public, Jotson, unreasonable as the public generally are, complain of slackness on the part of the administration. The public, of course, are not in the secret. Deprived of red tape, the officials are helpless, like asses deprived of their thistles. It must be found, Jotson, and I must find it. But where?"

"There is no clue—"

"None! A watch is kept in the Circumlocution Office, and it is impossible that the thief can have escaped with his valuable plunder. Everyone employed there, even the German employees, is searched on leaving the building. Not an inch of red tape has been discovered on any of them. The priceless plunder is evidently still within the walls of the Circumlocution Department. But where—where? I have searched the Department, Jotson, and failed to find it."

"You are not in your usual form, Sholmes. The lingering effects of the American tinned tongue—"

"I suppose that is it, Jotson," he said, passing his hand across his brow. "But the mystery must be solved. Everything is at a standstill. Orders for shells cannot be despatched until they are tied in red tape. Decisions to commanding officers are accumulating on the desks—impossible to forward to the various fronts till this mystery is solved. It is not too much to say, Jotson, that the fate of this great war hangs trembling in the balance. Come, Jotson!"

I had never seen Sholmes so agitated.

I endeavoured to console him as we walked down Shaker Street, and turned our steps in the direction of Whitehall.

But Sholmes was silent and moody. The mystery which as yet he had been unable to solve, lay heavily upon his mind, and indeed, I could not help realising the terrible importance of the matter. After so long a struggle, after so much gallantry by land and sea, was the Empire to be robbed of victory by this base design of the enemy—this last desperate device of the plotters of Berlin! All depended on Herlock Sholmes!

(Continued on page 20.)

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The RED TAPE MYSTERY!

(Continued from page 18.)

II.

MR. SLACK KARR received us at the Circumlocution Department. He adjusted his glasses and carried cordially, in spite of the fact that we had awakened him from a nap. He acceded to Herlock Sholmes' request to leave us alone in the Bureau, and retired to finish his nap in an adjoining apartment.

"Here, Jotson, we are on the scene of the mystery," said Sholmes, gazing round the Bureau, at the innumerable shelves, wall-cases, and pigeon-holes stacked with important communications. "As you see, the work of the department has been arrested in, full time. Thousands of important documents have been tied in red tape and stacked away—but thousands remain nap. To be dealt with, and cannot be touched till this mystery is solved. In this apartment, Jotson, the thefts are committed daily, but where and oh where, Jotson, is the price-less loot?"

I shook my head.

The problem was beyond my powers. Herlock Sholmes moved restlessly to and fro. It had been proved that it was impossible for the loot to be removed from the Circumlocution Department. On Sholmes' masterly system of reason, that the least likely was the most probable, it seemed only natural to conclude that it had been so removed, in spite of the impossibility. Yet, though search had been made in the most unlikely places, and even in likely places, no trace of the missing red tape had been found. For once in his amazing career Sholmes seemed at a loss.

But, as every reader of these memoirs will have noted, it was impossible for that amazing brain to be at a loss for long.

A sudden gleam darted into Sholmes' eyes. He was scanning the immense array of pigeon-holes, only half-filled with documents tied with red tape.

"Jotson!" he ejaculated.

"Sholmes!"

He smote his forehead.

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "Jotson, it was the Chicago tinned tongue. I am sure of it. It has affected me more than I supposed, or I should have guessed it before! The loot is here!"

"Here?" I exclaimed, in amazement.

"In this room, Jotson."

"But—this search—"

He smiled.

"There is one portion of this apartment, Jotson, that is safe from research. These thousands of pigeon-holes, in which documents are stacked after being tied in red tape, are never touched by a human hand. Once the documents are dis-turbed away, there is no reason for disturbing them again. The work of the Circumlocution Department finishes there, Jotson, look!"

Sholmes dragged out from the pigeon-holes a vast pile of bundles, all neatly tied in red tape. They swamped the floor, and rose round us in piles. There were documents of all kinds, in myriads, which, but for Sholmes, would never have been disturbed till the end of time.

Behind them, in the recesses of the pigeon-holes, should have been empty, dusty space. But the space was filled! With an ejaculation of triumph, Sholmes drew out bale after bale of red tape, which had lain concealed there since the

moment when it had been hidden by the cunning thief!

"Jotson! Call Mr. Slack Karr."

I rushed into the adjoining room, and awakened the official.

"Found!" he ejaculated, as he entered the Bureau.

"Found!" said Sholmes carelessly. "And I have no doubt, sir, that if a search is made in the rest of the pigeon-holes, some thousands more bales will come to light."

Mr. Slack Karr grasped his hand.

"Mr. Sholmes," he said, his voice trembling with emotion, "you have saved the Empire!"

III.

HERLOCK SHOLMES smiled as we walked homeward. Success had a wonderfully renovating effect upon Sholmes, and he looked fully equal to new. He had recovered at last from the dire effects of his visit to Chicago, and his perilous investigations to express my admiration. Mr. Slack Karr had not, in his gratitude and relief, over-stated the case. Herlock Sholmes had saved the Empire! Once more abundantly supplied with red tape, all the departments were working at full pressure—and even before we had shaken the dust of Whitehall from our feet matters were taking their old course—volumes of reports, observations, minutes, remarks, despatches, annotations, etc., were being tied in red tape, and forwarded from the Circumlocution Department to the Sealing-Wax Office, thence to the Pipeclay Department, to the Lead-Pencil Office, then to the Permanent Consideration officials, to reach their last resting-place in the Waste-Paper Department!



"T. M. W."

CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN.

R. A. C. K. Biter.—You dare me to print your limrick. I accept the challenge, and leave you to the scorn of my readers:

There once was a bounder named Cherry,
And a beastly outsider named Merry.

They arranged for a bout,
But 'twas never fought out,
For both heroes were timorous—very!

Can I do a better one? Waal, I should say so, stranger! Here it is:

There exists an outsider named R—e,

At betting and-banker a crack,

A war profiteer's sonny,

He's plenty of money,

But of breeding an absolute lack.

Or is this the way you would like it done?

In the Shell there's a bounder named R—e,

Who stabs better chaps in the back.

The gallant Bob Cherry,

Or our good old Tom Merry,

Could lick him with their heads in a sack!

F. T. F. (Greyfriars).—You offer us your story in fifty-three spasms and a breakdown—but you call them chapters and an epilogue—for fifty dollars. Nope, sir! That ain't no dollars in it. Indeed, there is not even sense (cents) in it. (Seems a pity to have to elaborate a simple joke like this; but I understand that the Second Form and G—y of the

Shell read this column diligently, and you cannot make things too plain for immature and undeveloped minds.)

G. A. G. (Shell).—I have been reported to you, you say, that I has expressed myself as having no respect for your intelligence. First I've heard about it, dear boy!

S. G. (Third Form).—It is not my opinion that washing behind the ears and round the back of the neck should be suspended altogether during the comparatively brief period between a fellow's ceasing to be attended to by mamma or nurse and the time when he reaches the Fourth Form. Please convey my regards to the rest of your Form, who would appear, from what I have observed, to have accepted you as a prophet in this matter without due consideration.

"Prefect,—You prefer the 'Athenaeum' to our rag, do you? You would. People of your sort like to be seen reading things they don't understand. It is not easy to prove their lack of understanding, and, of course, it looks no end like being brainy. As it is the only symptom of the complaint you are ever likely to show, stick to it."

G. G. (Fifth).—Who said I had no respect for you? No one has the right to go divulging my inmost feelings in this way.

A. Spriant.—Contributions written in pencil on brown paper may be accepted by mere London editors, though I have my doubts. Most certainly I am not regarded with favour in my office.

T. Rivers.—Typewriting is as near to print as you are ever likely to get, unless you publish at your own expense. It is true that typed stuff is preferred, but the accent should not fall upon the "stuff."

"Horatio."—Your suggestion that we should rechristen ourselves "The St. Jim's John Bull" is declined without thanks.

B. T.—You have lost your bet that Nelson commanded the British Army at the Battle of Hastings. Never mind; there is no danger of your cashing up.

I. Doot.—It is not true that a contribution by Mr. George Bernard Shaw was ever announced for publication in these pages. We intend to maintain the high literary standard of "T. M. W.," and on that ground alone we should turn down Mr. Shaw without hesitation. Also we happen to be pro-British in this war.

G. W. (Shell).—So you don't think much of me as an inventor of new dishes? And Gunn does not, either, and the illustrious George Alfred threatens bodily harm to me? My dear fellow, I don't think much of myself in that role. I am humbled. But it was not wholly my blame.

"Another Disgruntled Experimenter." Why half a kipper, you ask? Was such a thing likely to improve the dumpings?

I really don't know. I could not be sure what might or might not improve the dumpings, but that an ounceful of dis-infectant might do it. You don't seem to catch on to what journalism means. Do you suppose the clever ladies who invent recipes for "Kitchen and Nursery," the "Woman's Wash-Out," and papers of that kind, actually try the recipes before printing them? Not likely! They may not know it all, but they know enough not to do that.

"Starvation." Were the Devonshire Dumpings tried in Study No. 10? Ask me another! But do give us credit for a little common-sense!

G. H.—No, I do not think it would be reasonable to ask you to sacrifice Tower in deference to the opinions of those who consider it a waste of food to feed dogs at a time like this. Before I would see our friend Tower get short I would share the last bit of my Tommy and Manners had with him!