

WALKER !

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



THE PLAYFULNESS OF ALBERT ADOLPHUS !

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

WALKER!

By
**Martin
Clifford.**

CHAPTER 1.

The Rivals of St. Jim's!

"**Q**UIET, dear boys!"
"Shush!"
"Weally, Blake—"
"Dry up, you ass!" said Jack Blake, in a fierce whisper.
"Sit on his head, somebody!" murmured Monty Lowther.
"Weally, Lowthah—"

Six distinct and withering glares were fixed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

It was a critical moment. The seven heroes of the School House of St. Jim's were on the war-path—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy of the Fourth.

They were approaching the woodshed on tiptoe in the summer dusk.

Within the woodshed could be heard the sound of voices. Figgins & Co. of the New House were there.

This secluded spot had been chosen for a rehearsal by the N.H.J.A.D.S., otherwise the New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society.

Figgins & Co. had selected that retired quarter, in the fond hope that there would be no interruption to the important business of rehearsing the new play which was shortly to take St. Jim's by storm.

But the Hun was at the gate, so to speak.

The School House party intended to interrupt the rehearsal—with emphasis. They were close up to the woodshed when Arthur Augustus felt called upon to warn his comrades to be quiet. The warning was really not needed; and it had the disadvantage of being audible inside the woodshed as well as outside.

Arthur Augustus had not considered that trifling point.

From within the woodshed Kerr's voice came—in a speech which formed part of that drama, entitled "The New Boy"—a thrilling drama of school life; and naturally Kerr had given himself a very good part. Some of the members of the N.H.J.A.D.S., indeed, had complained that Kerr did all the talking and nearly all the acting. But it had to be admitted that if Kerr had the lion's share of the fat, he did his work remarkably well.

"They've heard us now!" muttered Tom Merry, after a pause.

"They have probably heard Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "It is very weakless to jaw, Blake, when we are twyin' to take the enemy by surprise."
"Shurrup!" murmured Manners.
"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Why didn't you bring a gag for Gussy, Blake, you ass?" said Tom Merry. "Listen! They can't hear us. Kerr's still spouting!"
"Yaas, wathah! I considah— Gwoogh!"

Arthur Augustus' considerations were cut short by Blake's hand being clapped over his mouth. He gurgled.

The voice of George Francis Kerr was still going on. Apparently the re-

hearsers were too busy to hear the muttering voices outside.

"All serene!" whispered Tom Merry. "They haven't heard. Now, not a whisper till I get the door open, and then rush in and mop them up!"

"Gwoogh!"
The juniors tiptoed onward, closer and closer to the door of the woodshed, Arthur Augustus swallowing his wrath, and following in dignified silence.

Tom Merry reached the door, and put his fingers on the handle. He turned, and made a sign to his followers.

"Ready?"
"Yaas, wathah!"
"Follow your leader!"

Tom Merry threw the door open and rushed in. Blake & Co. dashed after him at top speed.

The School House juniors burst into the woodshed like a hurricane.

Had the N.H.J.A.D.S. been still concentrated upon the rehearsal they would certainly have been taken completely by surprise, and mopped up in the twinkling of the eye. The rehearsal would have ended most disastrously.

But that was not what happened. Tom Merry, as he rushed in, caught his foot in a cord stretched across the shed a foot above the floor, and staggered and fell headlong.

Before his followers even knew he had fallen, they were stumbling over him, and rolling right and left.

"Bai Jove!"
"Yow-ow!"
"Sock in to 'em!" roared George Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The sprawling juniors of the School House were in no condition for defence. As they sprawled, the New House fellows piled on them. The fallen juniors had no chance of getting up. They hardly knew what was happening before the New House rehearsers were sitting on them and pinning them down. There were only six of the New House, and there were seven of the invaders; but the latter were at a hopeless disadvantage.

Figgins' lengthy form was hurled upon D'Arcy and Digby, and he planted a knee in either back. They wriggled under him frantically, but Figg's sinewy knees were not to be shifted.
"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry, collapsing under Redfern's weight. "Get off my neck! Ow!"

Blake struggled furiously under Fatty Wynn; but he might as well have struggled under Oss, piled on Felion. Fatty Wynn's weight was more than equal to keeping him flattened on the floor.

"Rather a sell—what?" chuckled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Bai Jove! You are wuinin' my jacket, Figgins!"

"Go home!"
"Get off my neck, Lawrence, you rotter!" roared Herries.
"Not this evening!" chortled Lawrence.

"Yow-ow-ow!"
"Arooop!"

The School House seven struggled and wriggled and squirmed. But they were securely pinned down. And the New House six roared with laughter above them.

"Dear little innocent children!" chortled Figgins. "They didn't know we heard them prattling outside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" loudly roared the N.H.J.A.D.S. in chorus.
"They didn't guess that we let Kerr go on spouting to make 'em think we were going to be caught napping—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Whio we tied the cord across for the sweet little unsuspecting dears to fall over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Gwoogh! Blake, you ass, you see that you have mucked up the whole affair!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I warned you to be quiet, you wemembah!"

"Wait till I get up!" said Blake sulphurously. "Wait till this porpise gets off my back, and I'll squash you, Gussy! I'll rub your nose on the floor, you frabjous, chortling, burbling dummy!"

"Weally, Blake—"
Figgins reached out to the cord, jerked it up, and looped one end round Arthur Augustus' arm, and drew it tight. Then he curled it round Dig's arm, and knotted it. The two juniors being tied together by their arms, were helpless, and Figgins was able to rise. D'Arcy and Digby wriggled up into a sitting position, breathing wrath.

"Release me, you uttah wotah!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Figgins chuckled, and looped the cord round arm after arm among the helpless School House party, knotting it each time. By the time he had finished, Tom Merry & Co. were tied in a confused bunch, unable to resist, and unable even to struggle to their feet. They sat and gaped and glared, while the New House juniors roared with laughter.

"This is where we smile!" grinned Figgins.

And the New House smiled loudly.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

In Black and White!

TOM MERRY & CO. glared. They could do nothing else.

The tables had been completely turned upon the surprise-party.

Instead of scattering their old rivals to the four winds, the invaders of the woodshed had been trapped by the astute Figgins, and were quite at the mercy of the interrupted rehearsers.

Figgins of the Fourth felt in his pocket, and drew out a fountain-pen. The prisoners of war stared at that proceeding.

"Got a sheet of paper, anybody?" asked Figgins.

"Here you are!" said Kerr. He took out his pocket-book.

"Good! Now, Tom Merry, it's up to you!"

"What are you driving at, you New

House fathed?" growled the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry's eyes wandered for a moment past Figgins to the open doorway. In the distance he spotted a School House junior, who was glancing curiously towards the wood-shed.

It was Cardew of the Fourth.

Tom could see that Cardew had noted the state of affairs. Cardew disappeared at once round the buildings.

Tom Merry did not give a sign of having seen him, and the New House fellows, having their backs to the doorway, naturally had not noticed him. Tom wondered whether Cardew had gone to call the School House to the rescue. If so, the tables might be turned once more.

Figgins, grinning, held out the pocket-book and the fountain-pen to the captain of the Shell.

"Write!" he commanded.

"Eh? What do you want me to write?" growled Tom.

"To dictation. Take the pen!"

"Rats!"

"Shall I pull his ears?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"You fat boulder—"

"Never mind! I'll write, and Tommy can sign it," grinned Figgins. "They're all going to sign it, and we're going to stick it up in the Common-room in the New House—a confession of defeat, you know. Now!" Figgins rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and began to write, reading aloud as he wrote. The New House juniors chortled, and Tom Merry & Co. glared, as Figgins drew up the precious document as follows:

"NOTICE!

"We hereby confess that we are a set of silly asses, and that we have been licked to the wide; and that our silly old House can't keep its end up."

"There!" said Figgins, holding up the page detached from the pocket-book. "You fellows will sign that one after another."

"Bravo!" chorused the New House party, in great delight. This idea of Figgins's was really a corker. With that document, signed by Tom Merry & Co., pinned up in the New House, it could be taken as established that the New House was cock-house of St. Jim's, and that the rival House was nowhere. It would be a glorious triumph for Figgins & Co.

"Sign!" chuckled Redfern.

"Sign!" yelled the New House, in chorus.

"Rats!"

"Goavah!"

"No, and eat coke!"

"Yaas, wathah! I refuse to do anything of the sort, Figgins! I regard the mere suggestion as derogatory to my dig!"

"Awfully sorry, but you've got to sign," remarked Figgins. "We'll see if we can persuade you. There's some tar in that bucket, Reddy! Get the brush!"

Redfern fetched the tar-brush. "Now paint Tommy's face till he signs the paper, and then serve the other boulders the same."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry squirmed away from the grinning Redfern.

"You horrid rotter! Keep off—"

"Bai Jove! You fearful wuffians—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prefer to sign?" grinned Redfern, flourishing the tar-brush within an inch of Tom Merry's nose.

"No!" yelled Tom.

"Tar him! Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House juniors yelled with laughter. But before Reddy could get to work with the tar-brush there was a sud-

den rush of feet outside. Figgins gave a shout.

"Look out! School House cads!"

"Rescue!" roared Blake.

"Wescue, deah boys!"

Cardew and Levison and Clive of the Fourth came in with a rush, and after them Julian and Kerruish, Talbot and Kangaroo, Gore and Glyn and Dame, and Reilly and Hammond, and a crowd more of the School House. They simply swarmed into the wood-shed.

In a moment the tables were turned.

Figgins & Co. were hopelessly outnumbered. They were pitched right and left. Figgins and Kerr escaped by the door, and the rest bolted from the window, and in less than a minute the wood-shed was clear of the New House fellows.

"Bai Jove! I'm awfully obliged to you chaps!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"And we'll stick it up in the School House—just as those rotters intended to do—"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In great triumph the School House juniors bore that precious paper away to their House. A few minutes later it was pinned in a prominent position on the wall in the junior Common-room. Fellows came in crowds to read it and chortle over it. The news of it spread far and wide, and even Kildare of the Sixth looked into the junior quarters to glance at it. Kildare's eyes opened wide as he read, in the well-known sprawling list of George Figgins, that remarkable statement:

"NOTICE.

"We hereby confess that we are a set



The New House on Top!
(See Chapter 2.)

"Pway untie this wotten wope, Levison, deah boy."

Tom Merry & Co. were released. Blake grabbed up the tar-brush dropped by Redfern, and rushed out. But Figgins & Co. were gone. Tom Merry groped on the floor, searching for the paper that was still unsigned. His eyes were dancing.

"Dropped somethin'?" asked Cardew.

"No. Figgins has!"

Tom Merry caught up the leaf from Kerr's pocket-book. It had been trampled on, and was considerably soiled. Tom held it up.

"They were going to make us sign that!" he said.

"I should have wufused—"

"By gad! It's lucky I spotted you here, and called the fellows," grinned Cardew. "The New House would never have let us forget that."

"And we won't let the New House forget it!" chuckled Tom Merry. "It's not signed, and it's in Figgins's fist! Everybody knows Figgins's hand! That's a New House confession of defeat, as it stands—"

"Ha, ha!"

of silly asses, and that we have been licked to the wide; and that our silly old House can't keep its end up."

"That's Figgins's hand, I think," said Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How on earth did Figgins come to write that?" asked the captain of St. Jim's, in amazement.

"It's the truth, you know," explained Tom Merry. "They're a set of silly asses, they've been licked to the wide, and their silly old House can't keep its end up."

"Hear, hear!"

Kildare laughed.

"I can't quite understand Figgins saying so, all the same," he remarked.

"Have you been ragging Figgins, you young rascals?"

"He wrote it of his own accord!"

"Without being forced?" asked Kildare suspiciously.

"Quite!"

"Well, it's very queer!" And Kildare retired in a puzzled frame of mind.

The School House fellows chortled.

joyously. Figgins had certainly written that confession of his own accord, without being forced. It was not necessary to explain that Figgy had intended School House signatures to be appended to it. As it stood, it was an undeniable confession of defeat, and the School House fellows rejoiced over it.

CHAPTER 3.

Down on Figgins!

"FATHHEAD!"

"As!"

"Duffer!"

Those plain remarks, and many more of the same kind, greeted George Figgins as he came into the Common-room in the New House that evening.

The trophy in the School House was the cause.

Every fellow in the New House knew that that confession in Figgins' hand was being gloated over in the rival House. And, naturally, they were exasperated.

Figgins glared at his mutinous followers. Figg was exasperated, too, by the use Tom Merry & Co. had made of his document. But, as Figgins was leader, Figgins had to bear the blame.

"You—you chortling, chumps!" said Figgins wrathfully. "It was a jolly good idea, getting out that confession!"

"Fathhead!"

"You all thought it was at the time—all you were there!" roared Figgins.

"So it was, if the School House rotters had signed it!" said Lawrence.

"Well, was it my fault they didn't sign it?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Fathhead!"

"Figgins has let the House fairly down!" said Thompson of the Shell.

"They're making out over the way that it's a confession of defeat, and that Figgins wrote it on his own accord from regard for the truth—"

"Figgins wrote it of his own accord, right enough," said Owen. "I saw him."

"It was for them to sign!" yelled Figgins.

"Well, they didn't sign it!"

"It will have to be got back somehow!" growled French of the Shell.

"Otherwise, we want a new leader in this House!"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Diggs.

"Figgins is played out. Let's have a new election!"

"Kerr's the man!" said Pratt.

"Kerr's got more brains to the inch than Figgins has to the yard! Kerr—Yah, yah! Oh! Leggo, my nose, Kerr, you beast!"

Kerr, somewhat ungratefully, had taken Pratt's nose between finger and thumb, and his unfortunate backer yelled with anguish.

"You shut up!" said Kerr, as he released Pratt's nose at last. "Figgins is junior captain of the New House, and the best man for the job!"

"Now-or-never! I'll pulverise you!" roared Pratt.

The next two or three minutes were very busy. At the end of them Kerr dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, and Pratt retired to a bathroom to bathe his eye.

But the chorus of denunciation went on unchecked, though no one, after Pratt's experience, ventured to suggest Kerr as a new junior skipper. Figgins was very much inclined to run amuck among his mutinous followers; but he retired from the Common-room instead, with his faithful chums, leaving the New House juniors still excitedly discussing the matter.

Figgins looked very gloomy and resentful as he came into his study. Kerr and Fatty Wynn were sympathetic.

"Silly asses!" growled Figgins. "How could I help it? We were taken by surprise when Cardew and that lot dropped on us."

"The chaps say a leader oughtn't to be taken by surprise," Fatty Wynn remarked, in a reflective sort of way.

Figgins snorted.

"As for that document, it was a jolly good idea. Of course, I never thought of the School House rotters turning it against us in this way."

"Chaps say that a leader ought to think of things," Fatty Wynn observed, in the same thoughtful manner.

Figgins glared at him.

"So you're joining in the chorus!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps you'd like to set up as skipper, then? You're welcome to the job, I'm backing you up, old chap," said Fatty placidly. "Still, it was a bloomer you writing out that paper, and it's no wonder the fellows are wild. We shall never hear the end of it!"

"That's so," agreed Kerr. "It's a regular score for the School House. We've got to get it back somehow."

"They'll take jolly good care of it!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I'm going to get it back, of course," said Figgins. "I never foresaw—Oh, don't snigger at me, Fatty! I'm going to get it somehow, after prep."

George Figgins was frowning darkly over his prep that evening. It was up to him to recover the unfortunate document, unless his prestige was to be lost for ever; but he knew that it would not be an easy task. Tom Merry & Co. were certain to take good care of their prize.

Towards bed-time Figgins slipped out quietly into the quad, and scouted towards the School House. He looked in, in the hope of being able to slip in, but a dozing chorus greeted him at once.

"Hallo! Here's Figg!"

"Like to read your confession over again, Figgins?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins disappeared into the darkness, followed by a shout of laughter. He returned glumly to the New House.

"N.G.," he said to Kerr. "I'm going to try again later. After lights out."

"You can't burgle the blessed House!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn.

"I'm going to."

"But—"

"Rats!"

Figgins had evidently made up his mind.

When the New House juniors went to bed Figgins had the pleasure of listening to the burning fire of remarks in the Fourth Form dormitory. He listened to them with burning ears, but without speaking. It was not till long after lights out that the New House Fourth ceased to discuss Figgins' awful bloomer. But sleep descended upon the dormitory at last on all but Figgins and Kerr. Fatty Wynn was sleeping the sleep of the just; but Kerr had remained awake. He knew that Figgins was not sleeping. And when George Figgins, at half-past ten, slipped out of bed, Kerr spoke in a whisper:

"Figg! That you?"

"Yes."

"You're really going?"

"Yes, I am. I'm!" growled Figgins.

"You won't be able to get into the School House."

"Easy enough. I can open the catch of the Common-room window with my knife. I'm going to try, anyway."

"I'll come with you!" said Kerr.

"Right-ho! You can bunk me up!"

The two juniors dressed quietly, and

slipped out of the dormitory. Very cautiously they dropped from a window at the back of the House, and scudded away through the darkness towards the School House.

CHAPTER 4.

A Fair Catch!

"I've been thinkin'."

Cardew of the Fourth made that remark, as he rose after finishing his prep in Study No. 9 in the School House.

Clive and Levison had already finished, but Levison was still busy, his minor having brought his books to the study for assistance. Frank Levison was diving deep into the mysteries of Eutropius under his major's guidance.

"I hear that they're awfully wild in the New House about that giddy document," went on Cardew.

"I fancy they will scalp Figgins," said Clive, with a laugh. "Poor old Figgy! always putting his foot in it!"

"They will want to get that paper back," said Cardew.

"Yes, rather!"

"Doesn't it strike you, then, that they'll try?"

"I don't see how they can, unless they burgle the House after lights out," said Levison, looking up.

"Well, that's what I should do, in Figgins' place," said Cardew. "What price goin' down after lights out, and keepin' an eye open?"

"Easier to lock up the paper," said Clive. "Tom Merry's put it in a frame now, and it's hanging on the wall. Easy enough to lock it up for the night."

"Better still to catch Figgins burbling," said Cardew. "I've got a bottle of red ink here, and we could send him home looking like a merry Apache."

Clive laughed.

"I'm goin' down, anyway," said Cardew. "You fellows can please yourselves. I'm certain Figgins will try, and it would be only obligin' to leave the window unfastened for him."

"Oh, I'm game!" said the South African junior.

"Any odd thing!" yawned Levison. "If we're caught out of the dorm after lights out, it means a liking, that's all!"

"We shan't be caught!"

Levison & Co. went down to the Common-room a little later, and found the fellows still grinning over the capture of Figgins' confession. That valuable document had been pasted upon a sheet of cardboard, and placed in a gilt frame, from which a portrait of some celebrity had been ejected for the purpose. It looked quite handsome and imposing on the wall of the Common-room, and was intended to be a permanent ornament there.

"Those boundahs will nevah get ova th their, deah boys," Arthur Augustus opined. "Whenevah they get their ceahs up, we can always make them sing small with that. Figgins & Co. will have to take a vevy back seat now."

And all the School House fellows agreed that Figgins' star was on the wane, and that he had nothing left to do but to hide his diminished head.

Tom Merry & Co. had half expected some desperate attempt on Figgins' part to recover the document. But it was still there in its frame when the juniors went to bed.

Ten minutes after lights out Cardew slipped from his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and Levison and Clive followed his example.

"Bai Jove! Who's gettin' up?" came in sleepy tones from Arthur Augustus' bed. The swell of St. Jim's sat up. "Is that you, Levison?"

"Yes. Don't wake the house!"

"I trust, Levison, that you are not going to break bounds?" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Levison, I must wemon-stawte, if you are beginnin' your old tricks again. I wogard it as watten in the extremity. Gwooooooh!" finished Arthur Augustus, as a pillow descended upon his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled out of bed in a wrathful mood.

"You uttah wootah! Where are you? Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gave a yelp as he caught his ankle on the leg of a bed. "Oh, deah! You uttah wootah, I am goin' to give you a feaful thwashin'!"

"Shut up, ass!" came from Blake's bed.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Do you want to bring Railton up here, fathead?"

"I have been struck with a pillow—"

"You'll be struck with a fist if you don't shut up and let a chap go to sleep."

"Wats! I weecat, wats!"

And, as Levison & Co. were gone, Arthur Augustus returned to bed, with vengeance still unsatisfied.

Meanwhile, Levison & Co. were creeping cautiously downstairs. The junior quarters were all in darkness, and they succeeded in getting to the Common room unseen and unheard. Cardew closed the door after they were in the room. He pressed his face to the window and looked out. There was a glimmer of moonlight on the trees and buildings without.

"Nothin' yet!" he drawled.

He unfastened the catch of the window and the trio waited. They had a good wait before them, in the darkness, and Levison and Clive nodded off into a doze in the armchairs. Cardew remained by the window, watching. He grinned as two moving shadows crossed the dim light outside.

"They're comin'!" he whispered.

Levison and Clive were wide awake at once.

They watched in breathless silence. Two figures had halted before the big window, and they recognised Figgins and Kerr. Kerr was bunking up his comrade to the broad stone sill. The juniors within heard the scraping of a knife on the sash.

Whether Figgins would have succeeded in pushing back the catch with his pen-knife, if it had been shut, was a question. But as it was already opened, Figgins had no difficulty. His blade glided along between the sashes quite easily, so easily that Figgins might have suspected that the catch was already pushed back, if he had been a more suspicious fellow.

"All serene!" Levison & Co. heard the cautious whisper outside. "Now we sha'n't be lowe, hee!"

"We sha'n't, right enough," murmured Cardew.

The lower sash was pushed up, and Figgins' head was pushed in. Figgins blinked round the dark room, seeing nothing. The three School House juniors had drawn back into the shadows.

Figgins thrust his leg over the windowledge and dropped into the room. All seemed plain sailing now. He had only to take the document from the wall, and—

"Good-evenin'!"

Figgins started violently as he heard Cardew's mocking voice. He spun round, and as he did so three pairs of hands closed about him.

"Fancy meetin' you!" drawled Cardew.

There was a suppressed chuckle.

Figgins breathed hard through his nose as he struggled silently. But his struggles were in vain; even the muscular Figgins was not of much use against three.

He was whirled back to the window, and pushed half-way out, and as he lay something wet and smelly drenched over his face. It was the red ink from Cardew's bottle.

"Gurrerrrh!" gurgled Figgins.

Kerr was clambering furiously upon the high sill, realising that his chum had fallen into the hands of the Philistines. Figgins, struggling and gasping, was shoved out fairly on Kerr's head. One of his boots clumped on Kerr's ear, and his elbow caught Kerr in the eye, and the Scottish junior rolled over on the ground, gasping. Figgins was dropped beside him by the hands above. Three grinning faces looked down at the sprawling juniors.

"Good-night, dear boys!" murmured Cardew.

The window was shut, and the catch clicked home. Figgins and Kerr staggered up, breathless and enraged.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Figgins. "My funny-bone's giving me jip! I've knocked it against something! Ow-ow!"

"Oh, you frajious ass!" groaned Kerr. "It was my eye, you chump! Ow!"

"I wish you'd keep your blessed eye out of the way," said Figgins crossly.

"Yow-ow! Fathead! Oh, my hat!"

"The dashed window's shut," growled Figgins. "I—I suppose it's all up."

"Wouldn't you like to buff your head through the pane?" asked Kerr, with head-sarcastism. "It would be like you."

"Look here, Kerr—"

"Oh, let's get back. We might have known they'd be on the look-out," growled Kerr. "Come on!"

"My face is wet. They've shoved something on me—"

"Oh, bother your face!"

In no very good humour, the New House chums retired. The game was evidently up for that night, at least. In his dormitory Figgins discovered what it was that was on his face, and with feelings that could not be expressed in words, he washed and washed and washed to get it off by dim candle-light. All the New House Fourth woke up while he was splashing and spluttering, and looked on and grinned. When Figgins went to bed at last he still had a very rosy complexion.

Levison & Co. had returned to their quarters in a merry mood. Several of the School House Fourth Formers woke up as they were turning in, and wanted to know what was the matter.

"So you have returned, you boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus sleepily but severely. "I wogard this conduct as uttably wotten, Levison."

"So, so!" said Levison cheerfully.

"Bweakin' bounds is uttably disgustin', and I am surprised to see you mixed up in it, Clive."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where have you fellows been, then?" asked Julian.

"On a gin crawl," said Cardew pleasantly. "We came home because all the pubs were closed. Good-night!"

"Bai Jove! Cardew, I wogard your conduct as uttably disgustin'! Levison, I am vewy sowwy to see—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, there is nothin' to cackie at in those howwid boundahs goin' out pub-hauntin'."

"You silly ass!" gasped Blake.

"Can't you see they're pulling your silly leg, you chumpion dummy?"

"I wufuse to be called a chumpion dummy, Blake, and if Cardew is pullin'

my leg, I wogard it as sheech impertinence!"

"Where have you been, Clive?" asked Herries.

Clive explained, and the juniors chortled, even Arthur Augustus condescending to join in the chortle. And the School House Fourth Formers looked forward with great anticipation to seeing George Figgins' complexion in the morning.

CHAPTER 5.

Nice for Figgins!

GEORGE FIGGINS of the Fourth Form, did not enjoy himself that morning.

He rose with a very red face. Redfern suggested that he was blushing for his long list of failures as a leader; but Figgins' blush, like the celebrated smile, was one that wouldn't come off.

He had washed and washed it over night, and he washed and washed it again in the morning. The red ink had been washed away. But it left a hue of red fairly grained in Figgins' skin. His efforts only reduced that hue to an artistic shade of rose-pink. His face had a striking appearance, and the New House Fourth Formers chortled whenever they looked at him.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn manfully strove not to chortle, but they could not quite help grinning a little. Figgins certainly did look rather queer.

It was worse when he went downstairs. All the New House fellows had a view then of his glowing countenance. Thompson of the Shell shaded his eyes with his hand, as if Figgins dazzled him. Monteith, the head prefect of the House, stopped him in the passage and demanded to know what game he was playing. Jameson of the Third raised an alarm that the Red Indians were coming. Figgins' ears were burning redder than his face when he went in to breakfast. Fortunately for him, he escaped the eagle eye of his House-master. But when the Fourth Form turned up for lessons in the Form-room Figgins found that the eyes of the School House Fourth focussed upon him.

"Bai Jove! He's blushin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Red as a rose is he!" sang Digby softly.

"Where did you dig that face, Fitty?" inquired Mellish.

"You, you dig it up, or did it grow?"

Trimble wanted to know.

Figgins only glared.

Mr. Latham, the master of the Fourth, became conscious of an undercurrent of merriment in his class, and he frowned at the juniors.

"Kindly keep order!" he said severely. "Mellish, the Form-room is not a place for laughter. Take fifty lines!"

"I couldn't help it, sir," said Mellish meekly. "Figgins' face is so funny, sir."

"What?" Mr. Latham looked at Figgins. "Bless my soul! What is the matter with your face, Figgins?"

"Nothing, sir!" stammered the unhappy Figgins.

Mr. Latham peered at him over his glasses.

"There is something very much the matter, Figgins. It appears to be a kind of rash. Are you suffering pain?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

"It is certainly a rash, and may mean an illness," said Mr. Latham. "Leave the class at once, Figgins, and go to your House-dame. She will summon medical assistance, if necessary."

"I—I—"

"Go at once, Figgins. If the matter

is serious, there is danger of infection," said Mr. Lathom hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
It was a yell of laughter, which the Fourth-formers could not restrain, at the idea of Figgy's red-inky complexion being infectious. Mr. Lathom stared at his hilarious class, thunderstruck.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Boys, how dare you laugh, when your schoolfellow is ill—perhaps seriously? I am surprised—shocked—"

"I'm not ill, sir!" spluttered Figgins.
"That dreadful rash—"
"It's not a rash, sir! It's red ink!"
Mr. Lathom jumped.

"Red ink?" he thundered. "You have dared, Figgins, to come into the Form-room with your face reddened with ink? Are you out of your senses, boy?"

"I—I—I—"
"I suppose this is a practical joke! You must learn, Figgins, that the Form-room is not the place for practical jokes. Go and stand in the corner!"

"Wha-ah-ah?"
"If you act like a child, Figgins, you must be treated as a child. Stand in the corner during the lesson!"

Figgins's face was redder now than if whole gallons of red ink had been spilt upon it. To be stood in a corner like a naughty fag of the First Form was a little too much. Figgins fairly limped to the corner of the class-room, wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"If you please, sir—"
"You may sit down, Cardew."

"But, sir, I spilt the ink on Figgins."
"Oh! Then you may take a hundred lines, and be silent," snapped Mr. Lathom. "We shall now proceed. Any further interjection will be punished by detention for the afternoon."

And as the afternoon was a half-holiday, the Fourth Form were very careful after that. Figgins remained standing in the corner, the centre of grinning glances, till at last Mr. Lathom ungraciously gave him permission to resume his place. Morning lessons were a horror to Figgins that day. But when the Fourth were dismissed, things were no pleasanter. In the passage a dozen School House fellows began to sing in chorus:

"Little Jack Horner,
Stood in the corner!"

Figgins hurried away to the New House, to hide himself and his blushing face from sight. In the quadrangle he encountered the Terrible Three, the Shell being already out from lessons.

They shaded their eyes as Figgins came by. Mounty Lowther fanned himself. Figgins gave them a Hunnish look, and rushed on.

He spent the next half-hour in a bathroom, scrubbing away at his face with hot water and lathering soap. His face was like a beetroot when he had finished, but most of the clinging traces of the ink had gone. When he came down, he had lost some of his high colour.

"By gad, Figgins is looking pale!" exclaimed Redfern. "Are you seedy, Figgins? Anything in the nature of a rash?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Better get into some quiet corner," advised Lawrence.

Figgins restrained his feelings, which prompted him to rush at his House-fellows, hitting out right and left, and went to his study. Kerr and Wynn joined him there, looking as grave as they could.

"How does it look now?" asked the miserable Figgins.

"Much better!" said Kerr loyally. "It must have been some beastly indelible ink."

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that villain Cardew used. It really doesn't show much now, though."

"Only a pretty pink!" said Fatty Wynn comfortingly. "It's wearing off, too!"

"Hallo, what's that?" Figgins looked round, as a paper was slipped under the study door.

He picked it up, and read it with a dark frown. Upon it was written:

"George Figgins! Take Notice!
"You're too funny for a skipper.
You're sacked!"

Kerr looked at it, and tore the door open. But the fellow who had slipped that paper under the door was gone.

Figgins crumpled it in his hand.
"I'm fed up with this!" he exclaimed.
"I'm going to resign! You can take on the job, Kerr, as the fellows seem to want you!"

"Rats!" said Kerr. "You're not going to resign. It will be all right when we've dished the School House rotters, and put them in their place!"

"Well, how are we going to do it?" demanded Figgins. "We've lost all our prestige. Can't you think out a wheeze? What's the good of having a dished Scotchman in the study if he can't think something out?"

Kerr smiled.
"I've been thinking!" he said quietly.
"Figgins looked hopeful. Figgins frankly admitted that his Scottish chum furnished most of the brains in the study, and his reliance upon Kerr was unbounded.

"Go it, old chap!" he said.
"We've been rehearsing our new play lately," said Kerr.

"Oh, blow the play! Never mind that now."

"Our new play, called 'The New Boy,'" said Kerr, unheeding. "When I was made up as the New Boy for the play, Figgy, you said that my own pater wouldn't know me."

"He wouldn't," said Figgins. "But what's that got to do with dishing the School House, and getting that blessed document back?"

"Let's see," said Kerr.
"Blessed if I see it!"
"Lend me your ears, then!" said Kerr mysteriously.

And the Scottish junior proceeded to explain in a low voice, and Figgins and Fatty Wynn opened their eyes as they listened—wide! And when Kerr had finished, Figgins rushed at him and fairly hugged him.

"It's the fag of the century!" he ejaculated. "E—if you can do it—if it comes off! Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah!" roared Fatty Wynn.
The door opened, and Redfern looked in.

"You fellows enjoying yourselves?" he queried. "Figgy's complexion having that effect on you?"

"Come in, fathead, and hear the wheeze!" said Figgins.

Redfern came in, and in a minute more he was roaring.

"Ha, ha, ha! But you can't do it, Kerr! You'll be spotted!"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Kerr could do it on his head!"
"I'm going to try!" said Kerr.

"But keep it dark," gurgled Fatty Wynn. "If the School House bouncers heard a whisper—"

"Not a syllable outside this study!" grinned Redfern. "Oh, what larks! We'll all lend a hand, Kerr! And if it comes off—"

"It will come off!" said Figgins solemnly.

And the chums of the New House proceeded to discuss, in subdued but excited voices, the terrific wheeze that had come into George Francis Kerr's fertile brain.

CHAPTER 6.

A Flattering Request!

"MERRY!"
"Adsum!" smiled Tom Monty.

The Terrible Three were sunning themselves on the steps of the School House after dinner. There was a Form match arranged for that afternoon between the Shell and the Fourth, and the chums of the Shell were debating whether they could safely entrust that match to the smaller fry, and have an afternoon up the river. The voice of Kildare of the Sixth interrupted the debate.

"You're wanted," said the prefect. "Telephone."

"My hat! Somebody 'phoning me?" exclaimed Tom, in surprise. "Thanks for taking the call, Kildare!"

Kildare laughed.
"It's Mr. Raitton," he said. "He's gone over to Wayland for the afternoon, and he seems to have rung up from there. He wants to speak to you."

"Oh, all serene!"
Manners and Lowther went with their chum to the prefects' room, all of them in a state of surprise. They had seen Mr. Raitton, the Housemaster of the School House, go out immediately after dinner, and were aware that he was attending a meeting in Wayland. It was a meeting of the Wayland Association for aiding wounded soldiers, and Mr. Raitton, who had been winged at the Front himself, was a very active member. Why the Housemaster should want to telephone to Tom Monty from the market town was a deep mystery.

Tom picked up the receiver.
"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" came a deep voice through the telephone. "Is that Merry?"

"Yes, sir. Is that Mr. Raitton?"
"Did not Kildare tell you that Mr. Raitton desired to speak to you?"

"Yes, sir."
"Very well. I do not seem to recognise your voice, Merry."

"I don't quite recognise yours, sir. It's the 'phone, I suppose."

"Well, well. I wish you to render me a small service this afternoon, Merry, if you have no objection."

"None at all, sir," said Tom, at once.
"Perhaps the captain of the Shell thought of the sunny half-holiday for a moment. But there were few juniors at St. Jim's who would not have sacrificed a dozen holidays to oblige the popular master of the School House."

"There is a new boy coming this afternoon, Merry."

"None at all, sir," said Tom, wondering how that concerned him.

"I find that I shall not be able to go to the station. Will you meet him at Rylcombe Station and take him to the school? I shall see him into the train here at Wayland Junction."

"Certainly, sir."
"He will arrive by the half-past two train, so there is little time to lose. I hope this will not seriously interfere with your occupations for the afternoon, Merry?"

"Ahem! Not at all, sir."
"I should prefer you to meet him, Merry, and perhaps you might take some friends with you—Manners and Lowther, and D'Arcy, if he is willing to lose. I desire this new boy to meet some of the juniors who enjoy my confidence and esteem, in order to give him a pleasant impression of the school on his arrival."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry.
He could not help being surprised. Mr. Raitton's opinion was very flattering, certainly, and Tom was quite conscious of the great merits of the Terrible Three. But he had really never expected to hear his Housemaster telling him of the

confidence and esteem he felt for the celebrated trio.

"What did you say, Merry?"

"I'll go with pleasure, sir."

"Very good! Please meet the train. You will know the new boy, I think—he wears glasses, and you will address him as Albert Adolphus Walker."

"Shall I?" murmured Tom.

"What?"

"I—I mean, yes, sir! Anything else, sir?"

"Kindly show the new boy every attention, Merry. He is a lad for whom I have a very great regard."

"Certainly, sir."

"You will explain to him that it is not necessary for him to report himself to the Head, but to wait for my return."

"Very well, sir!"

"That is all, Merry. I am much obliged!"

"Not at all, sir! Good-bye!"

Tom Merry hung up the receiver. His chums were regarding him questioningly.

"Well?" said Manners and Lowther together.

"No cricket for us this afternoon," said Tom. "We've got to oblige a Housemaster who regards us with confidence and esteem."

"Wha-a-at?"

Tom Merry explained. Lowther whistled.

"Very nice of Railton to put it like that," said Manners. "After all, we're rather estimable chaps, so it's not surprising. We'll go, of course. Blessed if I know why he wants us to take Gussy. Gussy was going to get a century for the Fourth in the Form match."

"Still, it would have taken him a couple of centuries to do it," remarked Lowther. "Let's go and interview the great and only."

The Terrible Three left the prefect's room, and looked for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They found him in spotless flannels in the quad, talking to Blake and Herries and Dig.

"I wathah think we're goin' to lick you boundahs this aftahnnoon," Arthur Augustus confided to the Terrible Three. "I am in wathah good form. I have been cultivatin' a lake cut that will surprise some fellahs."

"If it gets any runs, do you mean?" asked Lowther, innocently.

"No, Lowthah, I do not mean anythin' of the sort!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I warged you as a funny ass, Lowthah."

"We're cutting the match," said Tom Merry. "Talbot will captian the Shell Eleven."

"Oh!" said Blake. "There doesn't seem a run on cricket this afternoon. Figgins & Co. are cutting the match, too; they've gone out on their bikes. Of course, I can make up a topping Fourth Form Eleven without those New House bounders."

"The fact is, we're going to help you win," said Lowther.

"Eh! How?"

"By taking Gussy away."

"You uttah ass, Lowthah—"

"We want you, Gussy," said Tom Merry laughing. "We've got to meet a new kid at the station, and you're coming with us."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am sowwy, deah boy, but I cannot cut the match. My services are wequahied more than evah, as Figgins and Fatty Wynn are standin' out. I do not want the Fourth to wisk bein' beaten by the Shell."

"Nobless oblige!" said Tom. "You simy must come, Gussy—it's by special request of Mr. Railton."

"Bai Joye! That altahs the case, of course."

"Spoon!" said Blake suspiciously. "Fact!" said Tom. And he detailed the conversation on the telephone.

Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful.

"Of course, it is impos to wefuse the wequest of a Housemastah," he remarked. "Especially a brwik like old Waitlon. But it is wathah an awkward posish. Do you think you have a chance of beatin' the Shell if I stand out, Blake?"

"Lots!" said Blake cheerfully.

"Weally, Blake—"

"In fact, I think you couldn't help us in a better way," said Blake blandly.

"I warged that remark as asinine, Blake! Undah the cires, Tom Mewwy, I feel bound to accede to Waitlon's wequest, so I will come. Pwey wait while I change my clobber. I shall not keep you more than three-quarters of an hour."

"You won't!" agreed Tom. "If you keep us more than three minutes, we shall come and yank you out by the ears!"

"I shall uttally wefuse to be yanked out by the cabs, Tom Mewwy!"

And Arthur Augustus went in to change, and the Terrible Three walked down to Little Side with Blake to see the cricket match begin.

CHAPTER 7.

Albert Adolphus Arrives!

JACK BLAKE was captianing the Fourth Form Eleven, and Talbot of the Shell took Tom Merry's place. In a Form match the sides were picked from both Houses, and Figgins & Co. generally figured in the Fourth team. For reasons of their own Figgins & Co. had cut the cricket for the afternoon; but the Shell were also losing the services of the Terrible Three, so matters were about even.

Blake & Co. went into the field, and Talbot and Wilkins opened the innings for the Shell. Tom Merry glanced up at the clock-tower over the clus, after a few overs.

"Time to get off!" he remarked.

Wilkins' wicket was down to Redfern's bowling, and Levison had caught Talbot. Kangaroo and Gore were batting when the Terrible Three left the field, and went in search of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

They found the swell of St. Jim's in the Fourth Form dormitory, adorning himself before a glass in quite a thorough manner.

"Keovin' you waitin', deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, looking round.

"Yes, ass!"

"Sowwy! A chap is bound to make himself to look wathah respectablen' to meet a new fellah—a fellah the Housemastah knows, you know."

"We're not putting any bear's grease on our hair, fathead," remarked Manners.

"It is necessary for somebody to keep up the veputation of St. Jim's as a well-dressed school, Mammahs. Which of these ties would you wecommend, deah boys, to go with this waistcoat?"

"Which ever you like, so long as you buck up," said Tom Merry.

"I shall not be more than anothah quartah of an hour."

"Take hold of his ears!" said Tom.

"Weally, you ass—"

Tom Merry took out his watch.

"I give you one minute," he said.

"At the end of a minute, you're coming out, if you've got nothin' on but your trousers."

"You uttah ass—"

"Ten seconds!" said Tom.

"It's uttally impos for me to finish dweessin' in one minute, Tom Mewwy! I

have not even decided on my necktie, yet."

"Half a minute!"

"Moreovah, I have not finally decided whethah this waistcoat will do."

"Fifty seconds!"

"Look deah, you uttah ass, I wefuse to be huvwied! You are throwin' me into quite a fluttah. I wish it to be distinctly undahstood" that I wefuse to be huvwied."

Tom Merry slipped his watch back into his pocket.

"Time's up! Collar him!"

"Keep off, you wuffians!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to be collahed! Lowthah, I shall stwike you! Mammahs, you beast! Tom Mewwy, you wuffianly wottah! Yawwoh!" Arthur Augustus went out of the dormitory struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three.

"You uttah asses! I cannot go to the station in my shirt-sleeves! Wefesse me! Yawwoh!"

"Bring my jacket, Manners, while we help him along."

"Right!"

"And the necktie!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, as he was propelled towards the stairs. "And the toppah, and my gloves, and the cane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners ran after them with the jacket and the necktie and the hat, grinning.

Arthur Augustus was allowed to halt on the landing to put them on, which he did in a state of great wrath.

"Now, come on!" said Tom.

"Did you bwing my gloves, Mammahs?"

"What do you think?"

"Then I must return to fetch them! And I feah that my tie is not stwaight—"

Arthur Augustus was not allowed to finish. The Shell fellows seized him again, and propelled him downstairs, vainly resisting.

"Oh, you feahful wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You are wuppin' my clothes! There goes a button off my waistcoat, bai Joye! I warged you as uttah Pwussian Huns! How can I get to the station without gloves, you feahful hooligans?"

"I haven't any gloves," remarked Lowther.

"That is wathah diffewent, Lowthah. I am not a slovenly fellow."

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to come on without my gloves!"

"If you don't come at once, we'll take you out without a necktie or a hat," said Tom Merry.

"That dire threat was enough. Arthur Augustus ceased to resist, and the Shell fellows walked him out of the School House. In the quadrangle Arthur Augustus made an attempt to bolt, but Tom Merry and Lowther took his arms, and walked him down to the gates. Manners walked behind.

"Keep going, Gussy," he remarked. "I'll help you with my boot whenever you lag. Thus!"

"Yawwoh!"

"And thus!"

"You feahful wuffian, you are makin' my twousahs mudday!"

"Well, buck up!"

Arthur Augustus bucked up, and the four juniors left the School gates, and walked down the lane towards Rycocomb.

"We've only got just time to meet the train," said Tom Merry. "Let's chase Gussy's ass hat to the village—what?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther heartily.

"Check it down, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort,

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you howwid Prussian! I shall stwike you if you touch my hat!"

And Arthur Augustus strode on ahead, keeping a safe distance from his comrades. The Terrible Three followed him, smiling cheerfully. The juniors arrived in Rylcombe, and reached the station as the train from Wayland Junction was signalled.

"Just in time," said Lowther cheerfully. "Lucky we didn't wait for Gusey's gloves!"

"Wats!"
"Put on your best smiles," said Tom Merry. "This new kid must be somebody a bit out of the common for Railton to bother about him. Might be a relation of Railton's. Don't scowl, Gusey!"
"I am not scowling, you uttah ass!"
"Is it St. Vitus' dance, then?" asked Lowther.

"I wefuse to answah such a widiculous question, Lowthah!"

Arthur Augustus composed his noble features into an amiable expression as the train came in. He wanted to make a good impression upon the new boy, about whom Mr. Railton seemed so particular. The train stopped, and the four juniors looked out rather curiously for the new boy.

It was not customary for the School House master to take so much note of the arrival of a new junior, and it seemed to indicate that Albert Adolphus Walker was a new kid a trifle out of the common. If he was a connection of "old Railton," the juniors were prepared to make very much of him. "Old Railton" was the idol of the School House fellows, especially since he had been inviolated home from the Front.

There were only five or six passengers in the local train from the junction. One of them was a boy in glasses, so the juniors decided at once that this was Albert Adolphus Walker.

They surveyed him with interest. He was a lad about their own age, and dressed in Etons, with a silk hat. His face was highly coloured, as if he had been considerably sunburned. His eyebrows were very thick, and dark, and bushy. His hair, what could be seen of it, was of that bright colour commonly called ginger. He wore a very large pair of glasses, which imparted a somewhat owl-like aspect to his face. Taken altogether, he was a somewhat striking-looking youth.

"I suppose that's the merchant!" said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the St. Jim's juniors bore down upon the newcomer, with their most agreeable smiles in action.

CHAPTER 8.

A Very Remarkable New Boy.

TOM MERRY & CO. saluted the stranger politely. "The stranger blinked at them through his big spectacles, and raised his hat in response, disclosing a very rich head of hair.

"You're Walker?" asked Tom Merry. "Eh?"

"Are you the new chap for St. Jim's?" The youth put a hand to his ear, and bent his head slightly.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked. "Bai Jove! The poor chap's deaf!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Are you Walker?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh! Have you come to meet me? I am going to St. Jim's!"

"Eh?"
"Yes, we've come!"

"Oh, my hat! We've come to take you to the school!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Not at all!"

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"Eh?" It was Tom Merry's turn to say 'Eh'.

"I do not take you for a fool," said Master Walker. "I daresay you state the facts, but I do not yet know you, and I cannot say."

Manners and Lowther chuckled, and Arthur Augustus grinned. Tom Merry turned pink.

"We've come to take you to St. Jim's," shouted Tom. The other passengers were looking round, and old Trumble, the porter, was staring and grinning.

"Oh! That is very kind of you."

"Come on!" said Tom. "Where's your box?"

"Eh?"
"Where's your box?" shouted Tom.

"On my feet," said Master Walker, with an air of wonder.

"Your—your—your feet?" stammered Tom.

"Didn't you ask me where my socks were?"

"Oh, crums! No; your box!" roared the captain of the Shell.

"Oh, my box! Excuse me! I did not quite catch your words! Perhaps I ought to mention that I am somewhat hard of hearing."

"No need to mention it!" grinned Lowther.

"Eh?"
"Have you a box with you?" shouted Tom, beginning to wish that Mr. Railton did not esteem him so much. He would quite willingly have left to any other fellow the task of looking after this new merchant.

"Oh, no! Only this umbrella!"

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Augustus D'Arcy. "This chap is wathah a corkah. Let's get him away."

"Come on, Walker!" bawled Manners. "Eh?"

"Come on to the school."

"Dear me! Yes, now you mention it, he does look a little stupid," said Master Walker, still blinking at P.C. Crump. "But is it quite polite to call him a fool?"

Mr. Crump gave the juniors a glare and strode majestically away. The Terrible Three were red with vexation.

"I am afraid the policeman heard your remark," said Master Walker, blinking at Manners. "Don't you think he looked offended?"

"He heard you, you silly ass!" gasped Manners. "Eh?"

"For goodness gracious sake, let's get this fellah away!" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall have the whole village wound up soon."

Albert Adolphus Walker was marched down the street. But he did not seem in a hurry to get to the school. He persisted in walking slowly, and blinking round at every object of interest, and making remarks in his painfully loud and penetrating voice.

He paused as he sighted the stout and rubicund vicar of Rylcombe coming down the street. The juniors "capped" Mr. Hutton respectfully, and Albert Adolphus remained dumb.

"What a very stout clergyman!"

Mr. Hutton gave the juniors one glare, and strode on, with a face like thunder. Tom Merry & Co. wished that the ground would open and swallow them up.

They looked at Albert Adolphus Walker, wondering whether it would do him good to begin his school career with a good bumping. Albert Adolphus Walker blinked at them innocently.

"Get him along!" gasped Manners.

The juniors breathed more freely when they got Albert Adolphus out of the village into the lane. They piloted him away to St. Jim's, Walker ambling on contentedly, with his umbrella under his arm.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study; but his brow gradually cleared.

"Hway don't be watty with this fearful boundah, deah boys!" he said, speaking with the conviction that Albert Adolphus could not hear him. "Mr. Wailton has requested us to look aftah him, and we are bound to play up."

"No wonder Railton wanted the animal looked after!" said Monty Lowther. "No wonder he picked us out to do it! I don't think any other chaps at St. Jim's would stand him."

"It was a vevy great compliment to us, Lowthah."

"Bow-wow!"

"Besides, the poor chap is labouwin' undah a vevy heavy infliction in bein' deaf," said Arthur Augustus. "We are bound to treat him with sympathetic consideration."

"He can't help being deaf, but he can help shouting offensive remarks at people!" growled Manners.

"Bein' deaf, deah boy, he does not realise that his voice cawwes so fah. I twest you fellows will not lose patience with him, and fail to cawwy out Mr. Wailton's request."

"Oh, we're going to look after him!" said Tom Merry.

"Are you fellows speaking?" asked Walker.

"Ahem! Yes. Come on!"

"You have not yet told me your names," said Albert Adolphus, with a beaming smile. "Please do so. I hope we are going to be great friends and constant companions."

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You're a very hopeful merchant, then?" muttered Manners.

"Eh?"

"I'm Tom Merry!" said Tom. "This is Manners—"

"Your name is Cherry?"

"No, Merry."

"Oh, Sherry! What a very peculiar name!"

"Let it go at Sherry!" groaned Lowther. "Come on!"

"And what is your friend's name—the one with the funny face?" asked the new boy, with a nod after Lowther, who had strode on.

"With the what?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Don't get watty, Lowthah; he did not know you could hear him when he blurted out that wathah unpleasant fact—"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I was only explainin'—"

"His name's Lowther," shouted Tom.

"Grouser?"

"No, Lowther."

"Oh, Moulder! I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Moulder."

"It's more than I am to make yours!" growled Lowther, not at all pleased by the variation of his name.

"And this is Manners!" continued Tom.

"I am very happy to meet you, Spanner!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And this is D'Arcy of the Fourth."

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Charley! But what is your surname?"

"Not Charley—D'Arcy!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Eh, cwums! Let him call me Charley if he likes," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "I do not mind in the least. Heah we are, deah boys."

The juniors came up to the gates. Albert Adolphus stopped to stare at Taggles, the porter, who was looking out of his lodge.

"Is that the school porter, Sherry?" he asked.

Tom nodded. It was the easiest way of answering Albert Adolphus in the affirmative.

"What a very crusty-looking porter!" Taggles glared, and went into his lodge and slammed the door.

"Oh, come on!" gasped Tom Merry. And Adolphus Walker was marched in.

Two juniors who were chatting within the gates looked round. They were Figgins and Fatty Wynn of the New House.

"Hallo! What have you got there?" asked Figgins.

"New kid," said Monty Lowther.

"Named Albert Adolphus Walker, deaf as a post, with the manners of a Hun or a New House chap."

"School House chap?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"I suppose so, as Railton asked us to bring him in. Otherwise, you'd have had the pleasure," said Tom Merry.

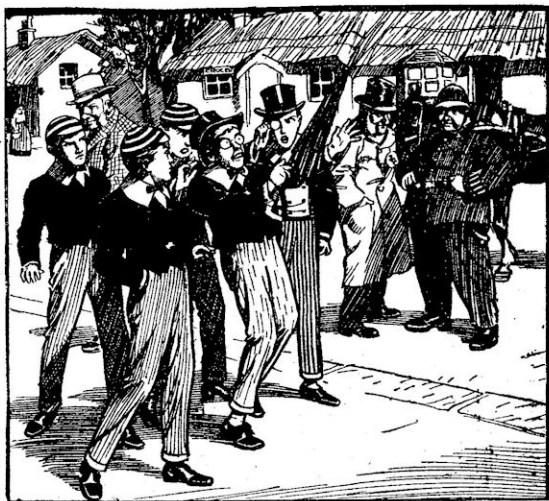
"Come on, Walker!"

"These are friends of yours, Sherry?" asked Walker, with a smile. "Pray introduce me, Sherry!"

"Oh, my hat! Figgins and Wynn," shouted Tom. "The long-legged duffer is Figgins, and the fat bouncer is Wynn."

"Dear me! I am very pleased to meet you, Higgins and Squint! Did you say Higgins or Stiggins, Sherry?"

Tom Merry marched his protege on without replying. Figgins and Fatty Wynn watched the School House juniors as they went on, grinning. The two New House fellows seemed to be highly tickled by the arrival of Albert Adolphus Walker.



The Outside Edge in New Boys!
(See Chapter 8.)

"Glad we got back to see them arrive," remarked Figgins, with a merry chuckle.

And Fatty Wynn chortled.

Which seemed to indicate that Figgins & Co. had been aware of the forthcoming arrival of the new boy for the School House—which was somewhat peculiar!

CHAPTER 9.

An Amazing Raid!

KILDARE of the Sixth was coming out of the School House, with a bat under his arm, when Tom Merry & Co. arrived there with their charge. The captain of St. Jim's stopped, and looked at the new boy.

"It's the new kid, Kildare," explained Tom.

"Hallo! I didn't know there was a new kid for this House to-day. What's his name?"

"Walker."

Kildare looked puzzled.

"You'd better take him in to the Head, as Mr. Railton is out," he said.

"Have you brought him from the station?"

"Yes; Mr. Railton asked us to meet him there," explained Tom Merry.

"That was what he was telephoning about from Wayland."

"Oh!" said Kildare. "It's rather odd."

"Mr. Railton says we're not to take him to the Head, but he's to report to Railton when he comes in."

"Oh, all right! Mrs. Minns will give him some tea if he wants any. This your first school, young 'un?" added Kildare, with a kind nod to the new boy.

"Eh?"

"Hallo! Is he deaf?"

"Deaf as a merry-adder!"

"Oh! Well, be decent to him. He can't help being deaf, you know," said Kildare good-naturedly. "He looks rather a sheepish young ass, and you kids might look after him a bit, if you're not busy."

"Oh, we're going to!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Railton asked us to."

"Yaas, wathah! We warged it as bein' up to us."

Albert Adolphus was apparently listening with all his ears, as if trying to hear.

"I can't hear you," he said, blinking at Kildare. "Did you speak to me? I ought to mention that I am a trifle hard of hearing."

Kildare smiled.

"All serene," he said.

"No. It is not necessary to scream; just speak clearly, that's all."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Eh? Did you say scat? Why did you say scat?"

"No!" gasped Kildare.

"Blow! Blow whom?"

"Great Jove! Take him in!" gasped Kildare. "His people had better send him an ear-trumpet, I think."

"Yes, please," said Albert Adolphus.

"Wha-a-at?"

"I will have some ginger-beer."

"Ginger-beer!"

"Yes. Didn't you ask me to have something to drink?"

"Ha, ha! No."

Kildare walked hastily away. He had had enough of Albert Adolphus. The latter blinked after him apparently in surprise.

"Who is that, Sherry?" he asked.

"Kildare, the captain of the school."

"Dear me! He does not look like a silly fool; but I dare say you are right."

Kildare paused a moment, but he walked on. Tom Merry & Co. fairly dragged Albert Adolphus into the house.

"I suppose we'd better stand him some tea after his journey," said Tom Merry.

"Are you hungry, Adolphus?"

"Eh?"

"Would you like some tea?"

Adolphus shook his head.

"No; not while submarines are about," he said.

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"Submarines?" said Tom Merry dazedly.

"Yes. It would hardly be safe to go to bed, would it?"

"Oh, crumbs! Not sea-ten!" roared the captain of the Shell. "Would you like some tea in the study?"

Albert Adolphus looked down at his boots.

"Dusty, you mean," he said, "not muddy, so far as I can see."

"Bai Jove! I wathink this chap will reach me out in time. However, it is up to us!" said Arthur Augustus heroically. "Hallo! Where the mewy dickens is he goin'?"

Albert Adolphus sauntered down the passage into the junior Common-room. He was blinking about him with an air of great interest.

"What room is this?" he asked, as the juniors followed him in.

"Junior Common-room."

"Dear me! What is this document?"

Albert Adolphus halted before the handsome gilt frame which contained the celebrated document in Figgins' fist. His eyes opened wide behind his glasses as he read:

"NOTICE.

"We hereby confess that we are a set of silly asses, and that we have been licked to the wide, and that our silly old House can't keep it's end up."

"What does that mean, Sherry?"

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!" Tom Merry did not feel equal to explaining to Albert Adolphus at the circumstances of the House rivalry at St. Jim's, and the history of that remarkable document.

"Never mind that—"

"But what does it mean?" persisted the new boy. "Why cannot your silly old House keep it's end up?"

"Not our House—the other House!" shouted Tom. "It means that we've licked Figgins & Co. of the New House."

"Oh! You have been licked by Stiggins of the New House!"

"No!" shrieked Tom. "We've licked Figgins!"

"Eh?"

"Come and have tea, for mercy's sake. Tea, tea!"

"Yes, thank you. I should like a little tea," said Albert Adolphus, blinking. "Do you mind if I rest here a little first, on this very comfortable sofa? You need not trouble to remain. I will take a little nap."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, in great relief. "We'll come and tell you when tea is ready, Walker."

"Thank you. It do not care for pork. A little bread-and-butter."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Tom Merry & Co. were glad enough to escape the company of Albert Adolphus for a time. They left him resting on the sofa in the Common-room, and hurried out.

"Buck up, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "The chap is wathink a twial, but I am suah he means well."

"My hat! Listen to that!" said Manners.

It was the sound of a heavy snore from the Common-room.

"Well, thank goodness he's asleep!" said Tom. "It will give us a bit of a rest. Let's get tea for the bouncer."

"Dash it all, I want a rest as well as Walker!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's go and have a look at the cricket first."

"Well, we mustn't be long," said Tom.

The chums of the School House walked down to the cricket-field. They found Figgins and Eatty Wynn looking

on at the game. Kerr was not to be seen. The Fourth were batting now, and Levison and Clive were at the wickets.

"Hallo, where's your new friend?" asked Figgins.

"Snoring in the Common-room," granted Manners.

"In the Common-room?" ejaculated Figgins, with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes.

"Yes; thank goodness!"

"How's the rust goin', dear boy?"

"Shell all out for fifty," said Eatty Wynn. "Fourth seven down for thirty-six. Fourth will win."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three.

The juniors watched the cricket for some time, till a sense of duty drove them back to the School House to look after the new boy.

Tea was prepared in Study No. 6—a frugal war tea, but the best they could do. Then they descended to the Common-room to call Albert Adolphus.

A steady sound of snoring greeted them as they entered. The new boy was stretched on the sofa, just as they had left him.

"Betwah wake him up," said Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly.

"Bai Jove!"

"New House rotters have been here! My hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the trophy on the wall. The frame was still there, and the glass was there, but the document in Figgins' fist was gone. It had been removed from the frame. It had vanished. In its place was a brief message pencilled on the cardboard mount.

"RATS!"

"RATS!"

"WITH KIND REGARDS FROM THE NEW HOUSE!"

CHAPTER 10.

Extraordinary!

TOM MERRY & Co. stared blankly at the message.

There was no doubt that the document had been raided by a New House fellow. A fragment of charred paper in the fender indicated what had become of it. And that message had been left in its place.

But how?

There were School House fellows in and out of the House all the time, and the slightest sign of a New House raider would have caused an alarm. Indeed, the new boy had been in the Common-room when the raid must have taken place—snoring within a few yards of the raided document. The windows were open only at the top; and in the daylight New House fellows could hardly have ventured to climb into the School House by the windows. It could certainly not have been done unobserved.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"It—it must have been Figgins—"

"Figgins was on the cricket-ground," said Manners. "So was Wynn."

"Kerr, then. I noticed Kerr wasn't there. The blessed rotter sneaked into the House somehow—"

"But how could he have sneaked in?" exclaimed Lowther. "There's Kerruish and Gibbons playing chess in the window-seat, they'd have given the alarm. They couldn't have seen him!"

"And there's that silly ass snoring on the sofa," exclaimed Manners. "Of course he had to be snoring, the howling dummy! Here, wake up!"

Manners shook the new junior roughly by the shoulder. Albert Adolphus

started up, and hit out suddenly. Manners gave a yell, as he caught Walker's knuckles with his nose, and sat down violently on the floor.

"Yaroooh!"

Walker sat up, blinking behind his spectacles.

"Dear me! Did I knock something?" he ejaculated.

"You frabjous idiot!" roared Manners. "You've nearly squashed my nose!"

"Whose toes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners jumped up.

"Look here, that silly idiot wants a licking, and I'm going to give him one," he exclaimed. "I don't believe that was an accident!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Tom Merry caught his exasperated chum in time.

"Hold on!" Tom dragged Manners back, while Walker blinked at them from the sofa. "Keep your temper, old chap. It was an accident, of course!"

"Mannahs, I trust you are not going to be guilty of the extremely unpwevpehensible act of stwinkin' a chap with glasses—"

"Oh ring off!" growled Manners. "I'm not going to hit the silly beast! But I'm fed up with him!"

"Dear me! Is anything the matter?" asked Walker.

"Yaas, wathah! Somebody has wathid that document off the wall, Walkah."

"Eh?"

"Did you see anyone come into the room while we were out?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Not at all. He was very rough with me, but I should not think of calling him a lout."

"Oh, my hat!" somebody's been here!" yelled Tom. "Have you been asleep all the time?"

"No. Spanner was rough, but it was not a crime."

"Do you wake up at all while we were gone?" raved Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right! If Spanner only meant to give me a shake-up, I don't mind. Is tea ready?"

Tom Merry groaned, and gave it up.

"Yes, tea's ready. Come on!"

"Eh?"

Tom grasped Walker by the shoulder, jerked him off the sofa, and walked him out of the Common-room.

Lowther dragged the New House message from the frame, and tore it in pieces. The trophy was lost for ever, and it remained a mystery how it had been raided from the Common-room.

Arthur Augustus fanned himself as he followed the new boy and Tom Merry to Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "I have several times met fellows who were wathid corks, but that fellow Walkah takes the whole cake, you know. He is the weirdest corkah I have ever met!"

Albert Adolphus Walker sat down in Study No. 6, with an affable smile upon his face. He seemed in high good humour, and did not appear to observe the growing though suppressed exasperation of his companions. Flattering as Mr. Railton's esteem was, Tom Merry & Co. wished heartily that some less-esteemed persons had charge of the new boy for the afternoon. How he was going to get on at St. Jim's was a great mystery.

Master Walker had a good appetite, and he did full justice to the war fare in No. 6. The sound of yelling from the cricket-ground drew the juniors to the study window before tea was finished.

"Well boyed, Talbot!"

"Shell wins! Bravo!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "I rather thought we should pull it off!"

"Yaas, I was wathah afraid of what would happen if I stood out of the match," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

The juniors turned back to the table. A tramp of feet sounded in the passage, and Blake and Herries and Digby came in. They looked very warm and ruddy after the cricket.

"Sowwy we've been licked, Blake! I wathah expected it, though."

"Fathread!"

"Bai Jove! That is my tea, Blake." Blake was unable to reply, as he was pouring D'Arcy's tea down his thirsty throat. But all of a sudden he began to splutter wildly, and the tea-cup dropped on the table with a crash.

"Grr-r-r-r-ring!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?" Blake spluttered and spluttered, and glared at the swell of St. Jim's like a savage Hun.

"You silly ass!" he howled.

"Gweat Scott!"

"You funny idiot!"

"Whatevah is the mattah, deah boy?"

"What do you mean by having salt in your tea?" roared Blake. "I know there isn't any sugar! But what do you want with salt?"

"Salt!" said D'Arcy blankly.

"Grrr-ghooooohoooh!"

Arthur Augustus stared blankly at the broken tea-cup. It had left a trail of spilt tea and a sediment of salt on the table-cloth.

"Bai Jove! Lowthah, you ass, if you have been playin' twicks with my tea—"

"I haven't, ass!"

"Somebody has been puttin' salt in my tea. How vevy fortunate that Blake dwank it instead of me!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Fortunate, was it, you shrieking ass?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I wogard it as vevy luckay indeed. I might have dwunk it myself, you know!"

"Oh, you—you—you—" Words failed Blake, and he rushed out of the study, to wash his briny mouth under a tap.

Monty Lowther tasted his tea vevy suspiciously. It was salt!

"Let your tea alone, you chaps," said Lowther. "This funny merchant has been salting it while we were looking out of the window."

"Walkah, bai Jove!"

"Is anything the matter, Monther?" asked Master Walker, blinking at Lowther.

"You funny chump!"

"Eh?"

"What have you put salt in the tea for, you silly dummy?"

"Certainly, Monther. I hope we shall be vevy chummy."

"Did you put salt in our tea?" yelled Manners.

"Yes, thank you; I will have another cup."

"I—I suppose he did it," said Tom Merry slowly. "He looks too big an idiot to be playing tricks; but—"

"Pewwaps somebody slipped into the study while our backs were turned, deah boys. We were several minutes at the window," said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"Did you see anybody in the passage as you came, Hewwies?"

"No!"

"Howevah, it is poss. Bai Jove, what's that?"

Arthur Augustus had taken the loaf from the plate. Under the loaf was a slip of paper, and on the paper was scrawled in pencil:

"This study is played out! Rats!"

"That's Kerr's fist!" shouted Lowther. "Kerr's been here! He's hanging about the House somewhere! I knew it was that Scotch villain who bagged the document in the Common-room!" Lowther grasped Walker by the shoulder and shook him. "Look here, you deaf idiot—"

"Eh?"

"Did somebody come into the study while we were hanging out of the window?" roared Lowther. "Did you see him put that note under the loaf?"

"Eh? Yes; I saw him!"

"Why didn't you stop him, you howlin' ass?"

"Eh?"

"B-r-r-r-r! Was it a chap with freckles on his chivvy?"

"I did not see any winkles."

"Not winkles, idiot—freckles!" roared Lowther.

"Oh, yes!"

"That was Kerr, then!" said Tom Merry. "What a nerve! We hadn't our backs turned for more than two minutes. And that dummy hadn't sense enough to speak, of course! Fancy the dummy sitting there like a stone image while Kerr put salt in our tea! Why didn't you call out, Walker?"

"Impossible!"

"What?"

"As you are still in the study, Sherry, you could not have fallen out," said Walker, with a look of surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Bai Jove! Not much, good askin' him questions! I wathah think he is a born idiot!"

"Is that the new chap?" asked Herries.

"That's the merchant!"

"What have you got it here for, Gussy?"

"We are lookin' aftah the howlin' ass by Mr. Waitton's request, Hewwies. But, wally, I shall be vevy glad when Mr. Waitton comes in and takes him off our hands!"

"And D'Arcy's comrades fully concurred."

CHAPTER 11.

Very Mysterious!

JACK BLAKE came back to No. 6, and he snorted emphatically when he learned of the surprising visit

Kerr had apparently made to the study. Blake agreed that it was utterly idiotic of Walker to have sat silent while Kerr played his tricks, and he added the further opinion that it was equally idiotic of Tom Merry & Co. to let a New House bounder play tricks just behind their backs. Blake was still delivering this opinion emphatically when Albert Adolphus Walker jumped up.

"Excuse me," he said. "There is something on your back!"

"My back!" ejaculated Blake.

Walker passed his hand over the back of Blake's blazer, and held up a small

card, with a bent pin attached. The juniors all stared at it. On the card was scrawled in pencil:

"The champion ass at St. Jim's, bar none!"

Blake gazed at the card as if mesmerised.

"How—how—how did that get on my back?" he stutered.

"Bai Jove! It's Kerr's fist!"

"Who's the idiot now?" roared Lowther. "Who's the idiot now? You let Kerr stick that on your back without seeing him?"

"I—I didn't! I couldn't have! Where was he, then?" Blake fairly stutered. "I—I—I— Look here, if that New House rorter is hanging about the House, let's rot him out and scalp him! Come on!"

Blake, breathing wrath, rushed from the study. Tom Merry & Co. rushed after him. To be braved in their own House by a New House fellow in this manner was the limit! They rushed for the stairs. Levison and Cardew were chatting on the lower landing, and Blake shouted to them.

"Has Kerr passed you?"

"Kerr? No," said Cardew, with a stare. "Is Kerr here?"

"Yes. Mind he doesn't pass."

"What ho!" said Levison.

Tom Merry & Co. scampered through the passages hunting for Kerr. Several other fellows joined in the search. But no trace was discovered of the elusive Kerr. If he was still in the School House he had concealed himself very effectually.

The juniors returned to Study No. 6 at last, red and warm and cross. The sound of a deep snore greeted them. Albert Adolphus Walker sat in the armchair with his eyes closed, snoring deeply.

"Asleep again!" snorted Lowther.

"Look there!" yelled Blake, pointing to the looking-glass.

Upon the glass was daubed in chalk:

"MOORE RATS! THE SCHOOL HOUSE IS PLAYED OUT!"

"Ho—ho—he's been here again!" stutered Tom Merry helplessly.

And that sleeping beauty here all the time!" snorted Lowther. "By Jove, I'll wake him up!"

He rushed towards the junior in the armchair. Just as he bent over him, Albert Adolphus yawned and sat up suddenly. The top of his head came into violent contact with Lowther's chin, and the Shell fellow staggered back, with a fearful howl.

"Oh, oh! Ah! Yah! Oh!"

Master Walker rubbed the top of his head.

"Dear me! I have knocked my head against something!" he exclaimed.

"Have I been asleep? Is anything the matter, Monther?"

Lowther rubbed his chin, and looked daggers and machine-guns at the cheerful Albert Adolphus.

"I shall slaughter him!" said Lowther wildly. "I know I shall! There'll be a dead deaf idiot found in this House soon!"

"Eh?"

"I'm fed up with him!" howled Lowther. "Railton can get somebody else to look after his prize idiots. I've had enough."

"Patience, deah boy! Waitton will be in soon, and we can hand him ovah," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, he is wathah twyin'. But where can that wottah Kerr be hidin' himself?"

"I should vevy much like to take a walk about the school, Sherry," said

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*Eat less
Bread*

Master Walker. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to guide me."

"No, I do not sing," grunted Tom. "I can play a solo on the violin if you like."

"I weally do not know how that fellow will get on in this school!" said Arthur Augustus, with a deep breath. "I feah that his Form-mastah will find him wathah twyin' in class. I twest he will not get put into this studah!"

"He will go out jolly sharp if he is!" growled Herries.

"Gussy ought to be glad he's come, though," said Monty Lowther, recovering his good-humour—a sign that a humorous effort was coming.

"Bai Jove! Why, Lowthah!"

"Because you're not the biggest duffer at St. Jim's now, old scout."

"You uttah as."

"If you are ready, my dear Sherry—"

muttered Master Walker.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom.

Master Walker left the study with the captain of the Shell, Arthur Augustus, a glare to considerations of noblesse oblige, followed. Manners and Lowther exchanged glances.

"I've had enough," said Manners.

"Same here!" said Lowther. "I don't want to kill him, but I feel that I shall if I see any more of him. Let's have another look for Kerr. The beast must be hiding somewhere, as he hasn't got away."

Quite a crowd of the Fourth and the Shell were hanging still for Kerr of the New House. The news that the trophy in the Common-room had been destroyed roused the School House fellows to great wrath. But though they hunted high and low, they did not find the Scottish junior, and the fellows on the watch at the door declared that he hadn't passed them. Where Kerr had concealed himself was a burning mystery, and the search was given up at last, with most of the searchers in a state of intense exasperation.

Meanwhile Tom Merry and D'Arcy, manfully sticking to their troublesome charge, walked him into the quadrangle. They had agreed to look after the new boy till Mr. Railton came in, and they were going to do that. But they had never been quite so eager to see their House-master before, excepting upon the celebrated occasion when Mr. Railton came home from the war. Master Walker's affliction of deafness could have been borne with sympathetically if he had not been a thoroughly exasperating fellow in every other way. But he was. "What is that building?" asked Walker, swinging round his umbrella to point to the clock-tower. He persisted in carrying his umbrella. As he swung it round it collided with Arthur Augustus's beautiful silk hat and sent it flying. "Dear me! Have I knocked something over?"

"Oh, my hat! My toppah!"

Arthur Augustus plunged frantically after his hat.

"Allow me!" gasped Walker, and he rushed after the hat, and fielded it with the umbrella. "There! I've caught it for you, Charley!"

He held up the hat triumphantly, stuck on the end of the umbrella.

Both Arthur Augustus gazed at the hat, and gazed at the smiling, cheerful face of the youth who presented it to him stuck on the umbrella. Never had the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere been put to so severe a test.

But Arthur Augustus did not slaughter Albert Adolphus on the spot. With a great effort he mastered his homicidal tendencies. He reached out and took the hat, and said:

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"Thank you vewy much, Walkah!"

"I am so glad I was able to catch it for you, Charley!"

Arthur Augustus did not speak again. He was trying to smooth out the ghastly gash in the hat.

"Hadh't you better leave your umbrella indoors, Walker?" asked Tom Merry, wondering whether his head would be the next to suffer.

"Oh?"

"You don't want an umbrella on a sunny day, do you?"

"A vewy nice fellow indeed," said Walker. "I am sure that Charley and I are going to be great friends."

"Oh, crickey!"

Tom Merry gave it up, and Albert Adolphus walked on with his two friends, pointing at objects of interest with his umbrella, and keeping Tom Merry and D'Arcy in a perpetual state of breathless dodging.

CHAPTER 12.

Spoofted.

THE new boy at St. Jim's was attracting general interest by this time, though he seemed quite unconscious of it. Fellows stared at Tom Merry's companion from all sides, and a cheeky gang of fags of the Third followed them about, grinning. D'Arcy minor, Levison minor, Reggie Manners, and two or three more of the Third, haunted the footsteps of the trio, heedless of the severe glances Arthur Augustus gave them from time to time. The news of the egregious Walker having spread, fellows joined Tom Merry in order to look at him, and hear him talk, and to watch his guides dodging his umbrellas. It was agreed on all hands that St. Jim's had never seen a new merchant quite like this before.

"What is that building?" asked Walker, stopping and pointing to the New House with his umbrella, which Tom Merry just dodged as it swung round.

"That's the New House!" gasped Tom.

"Eh?"

"The New House—rotten old casual ward!" said Tom, for the benefit of Figgins and Fatty Wynn and Redfern, who had joined the procession.

"Bow-wow!" said Figgins. "I say, have you seen Kerr this afternoon, Tom Merry? I hear that he's been in your House."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House juniors.

"Where's the giddy trophy gone?"

"Are these nice boys New House boys, Sherry?" asked Walker.

"Yes—that is, they're rotters belonging to the New House!" growled Tom.

"Let's get on, for goodness sake! We don't want half the dashed school round us!"

"What rot!" chuckled Cardew.

"Give him his head! He's entertaining!"

"Please take me to see the New House, Sherry."

"Yes, do!" grinned Figgins. "We'll be glad to see your School House bouncers in our House! We'll send you home sooted and glued!"

"We'll send Kerr home like that when he's found!" growled Tom Merry.

"He's still hiding in the School House somewhere—Hallo, Monty! Have you found him?"

"No!" growled Lowther, coming up.

"Must have hooked it out of a window, I think."

"I say, Railton will be in soon," said Manners. "Let's shove that funny merchant into his study, and leave him there."

"Good idea!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! I weally considah that we have done our duty!"

"Come on, Walker!" shouted Tom, taking Albert Adolphus's arm. "Yah! Keep that broily away from my nose, you snad idiot!"

"I am so sorry, Sherry—"

"Oh, you dummy! Come on!"

"Certainly!" said Walker, starting towards the New House.

"Not there, fathead! We're going into our House!" roared Tom.

"Yes; I am going to see the New House! Perhaps Stiggins will be kind enough to show me over it, if you do not wish to," said Walker, blinking at Figgins.

"Pleased!" said Figgins. "Come on!"

Tom Merry hesitated. He was glad enough to hand the terrible Walker over to Figgins, but—

"No larks, Figgys, on a new kid!" he said.

"Not a bit!" said Figgins. "We'll treat him like a chum, Honour bright!"

"Good, then! Take him and welcome!"

"Come on, old scout!" said Figgins.

"One moment, Sherry!" said Master Walker, fumbling in his pocket. "I have a note for you."

"A what?"

"A note! It was written in the study by the young person in frockles, when you left me there. Perhaps I should have handed it to you before!"

"You howling ass!" roared Tom.

"You let Kerr give you a note, and never said a word! Oh, you dummy!"

"Eh?"

"I don't want the dashed note! Keep it!"

"It is very important," said Master Walker, blinking at him, as he extended a folded sheet of paper. "It contains a very interesting communication, which will delight you all, I am sure."

Tom Merry took the note, and Walker hurried away quickly with Figgins and Fatty Wynn to the New House. Tom opened the paper, wondering what was written therein. It contained a pencilled message in Kerr's handwriting.

"Tom's eyes grew wide as he looked at it.

He gasped.

"Dai Jove! What is it, dear boy?"

exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as Tom Merry stood staring at the pencilled note as if it mesmerized him.

"Some New House cheek?" said Monty Lowther. "Let's see it!"

Tom Merry held up the note, speechlessly, and the juniors crowded round to read it. And this is what they read:

"Dear Little Innocent,—"

"Next time Railton telephones to me from Wayland, make sure that it is Railton on the 'phone, and not Figgins putting on a bass voice.

"Next time you go to meet a new kid at the station, make sure that it's really a new kid, and not G. F. Kerr of the Fourth Form!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Yours affectionately,

"GEORGE FRANCIS KERR.

"(Alias Albert Adolphus Walker.)"

"KERR!"

"Kerr!"

"Kerr, bai Jove!"

The name of Kerr, in every tone of surprise and stupefaction, was repeated by the crowd of School House juniors.

"Kerr!" said Cardew. "By gad!"

"Spoofted!" yelled Lowther.

"Spoofted!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Kerr!" said Arthur Augustus dazedly. "But it wasn't Kerr! Kerr hasn't wed hair, and he doesn't wear glasses—"

"That's why Walker had red hair and wore glasses!" yelled Levison. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kerr!" yelled Manners. "We left him asleep in the Common-room! He wasn't asleep! He scoffed that document. He punched my nose on purpose! I knew he did—"

"He buffed my chin on purpose!" yelled Lowther. "I'll scalp him!" Kerr all the time. You ass! Tom—"

"He has ruined my toppah, the awful wotbah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—"

Tom Merry stuttered. "It—it was Figgins who telephoned, not Railton at all! Oh, that's why the beast's gone to the New House, before Railton comes in! Oh, my hat! After him!"

The Terrible Three rushed furiously to the New House, with a crowd of fellows at their heels. It had taken them some minutes fully to realise that it was Kerr—the shining light of the N.H.J.A.D.S.—who had played the part of Walker, the new boy. It was the most astounding spoof in their experience. They knew now why the new boy had named him—

self "Walker"—a little joke which they did not see till too late! And the Terrible Three had a consuming desire to collar the spoiler and bump him hard! They came up to the New House with a rush and a yell, and found the doorway crammed with New House juniors roaring with laughter. All the New House were aware of the joke now. The prestige of Figgins's study was more than restored. A derisive yell greeted the School House juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spoofig!"

"Who's cock-house of St. Jim's?"

"New House! New House! Yah!"

Tom Merry & Co. charged furiously up the steps. They were rolled down again at once. The doorway was crammed with laughing New House fellows, and there was no chance.

With feelings too deep for words, the heroes of the School House limped away, followed by a roar of merriment. "Bai Jove! Look here!" exclaimed

Arthur Augustus, pointing to the window of Figgins's study.

The School House fellows looked up. Figgins's study window was open, and there stood Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn in a row. Kerr was waving a red wig with one hand, and a pair of spectacles with the other. Tom Merry & Co. gave one another sickly looks, and limped away. There was no doubt about it this time—the School House had been fairly done, and for once Tom Merry & Co. had to hide their dimmed heads while the New House rejoiced, and the hero of the hour was the junior who had succeeded so amazingly in spoofing the School House.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"A QUEER BARGAIN!" by Martin Clifford.)

THE FOOLISHNESS OF FOUR!

By MONTY LOWTHER.

The Fairy Queen's not often seen;

She's apt to move by whims;

But one day on her carpet she

Blew over to St. Jim's.

She raised her voice as she came down—

So loud it made them jump.

(Don't laugh, you fatheads, for the Queen

Had not dropped with a bump.)

"I'm going to take you fellows all

To Fairyland," she said.

"So just remember, for the time,

St. Jim's to you is dead."

And then she raised her queenly head,

And as she waved her hand,

The fellows all were lifted up.

And dropped in Fairyland!

But on the way a wondrous thing

Occurred to everyone.

Their clothes were changed! Attired as Pan,

Racke grumbled like a Hun.

The Fairy Queen took note, and smiled

A sympathetic smile.

"Don't fret and fume," she said; "because

To trumble's not worth while."

"Now, here you have a splendid chance

To play by limpid pools,

And lead a healthy life," Racke said;

"We're not such silly fools!"

"Be silent!" snapped the Fairy Queen.

"If you're decent chap

You'll have a topping time!" Said Racke:

"Let's have a game of Nap!"

The Queen she frowned on gay-dog Racke,

And said: "You're light and airy—"

The brilliant sun—the verdant nook—

And beauty everywhere.

"And here, that you may get about,

You'll see I've brought a moke!"

Racke grunted: "Stow that silly rot!

You might, surely, find some merriment."

The Queen turned angrily away.

She saw a queer new elf—

An elf whose waistcoat offered proof

He did not starve himself!

She hailed that elf as "Peter Pan."

But Trimble, I'm afraid,

Is not the usual sort of stuff

Of which a fairy's made!

He grunted in a sulky way,

And scowled upon the Queen.

While she beheld, with wondering eyes,

His neck—which wasn't clean!

"Now, Trimble, don't you think," she said,

"That you would like to be

A pretty little elf, and roam

These lovely woods with me?"

But no reply fat Baggie made.

She tried another scheme,

And told him as a goblin he

Would look a perfect dream.

Then Baggie's eyes were opened wide,

And now he smiled, indeed,

And said: "Yes, gobbling's quite my line!

I'm dying for a feed!"

The Fairy waved her magic wand,

And Trimble knew that he

Had quite displeased her Majesty,

And blundered horribly.

She caught him by his grimy neck,

And said: "You little fool,

Become a water-baby!" Straight

She buried him in a pool!

Then Gussy came upon the scene

As Trimble's struggles ceased.

He looked a classy fairy, with

His garb of leaves—well creased!

"Tway, madam," said he gallantly,

"I really must request

Some cloddish more of the curren't mode,

Some ties—a fancy vest!"

And Grundy followed on his heels,

And took a stubborn stand.

He said: "Of course, I've got to be

The Boss of Fairyland!"

The Fairy Queen felt back a pace,

And groned a little groal.

"With subjects like to dress," she said,

"I can't call aught my own!"

Again she waved her magic wand,

The fellows sailed away,

And found themselves within St. Jim's

Again that self-same day.

That's how those four—the Tale I tell

I trust you'll understand—

Quite spoiled our chance of staying in

The Realm of Fairyland!

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"A QUEER BARGAIN!"

By Martin Clifford.

Cardew is the fellow who makes the bargain—on the one side, of course, for two are needed to a bargain. On the other side, Tom Merry makes it, but lets on his own account that as a kind of compromise a syndicate which wants to do a good turn to a very worthy old lady.

The events which lead up to that bargain include a cruel race, a low trick on the part of a person (or persons) unknown at the time, which wrecks the race; and an auction-sale. But the bargain itself is very whimsical. Cardew is willing to do a good thing—but only on conditions. And no one can quite make out why he imposes those conditions.

Why should Cardew want to edit an issue of "Tom Merry's Weekly"? That is the question. The answer will be found in next week's story!

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Last week told you something about "The Twins from Tasmania." I need not tell you much this week, because you have the first instalment of the story itself to judge

by. I hope and believe—nay, I am sure—that you will like it.

I did not mention Cocky last week; but Cocky's part in the story will be no minor one, I can promise you.

Johnny Goggs, who appears in the first chapters, will reappear later in the yarn. To tell you more than that would be to give away too much in advance.

Highlife, Cliff House, and Greyfriars all come into the story; whether St. Jim's does so or not you will learn later. I think it is quite possible; though, of course, Tom Merry & Co. cannot play leading parts.

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newsreader to get it from

Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
111, Rue Reaumur,
PARIS.

GOGGS.

A good many of you read

"THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM."

when it ran as a serial in the "Magnet." But some of you who did not, and who have found interest in the recent visit of Johnny Goggs to St. Jim's, will be glad to have the yarn in book form. It appears next week as a number of the "Boys' Friend" Lib. and if you want to get it you will do well to order in advance.

Tell your friends about it, and also about the "Magnet" serial. Don't forget that we can always find a welcome for new readers!

Your Editor



THE TAFFIES FROM TASMANIA



Our Great New Serial Story!

CHAPTER 1.

Flip, Flap, and Some Others.

"HERE we are, Flip!" said the boy, as the taxi rolled up to the portals of Victoria Station—Brighton line.

"This all right, sir?" asked the driver.

"I suppose it is all right, Flip?" said the girl.

"Of course, it is! Why shouldn't it be?" the boy returned. "That's just like a girl—finding difficulties where they don't exist. Give me Cockey, will you?"

The girl handed out a biggish bird-cage, containing a white cockatoo with quite an unusually fine crest. Philip Derwent took it as if he valued Cockey highly. As a matter of fact, he did.

He led his sister get out without help. But she did not need any. Philippa Derwent was a most capable young person—in some ways rather more capable than her brother. But anyone who had told Philip so would have offended him greatly.

Flap and Flip, they had called these two at home in far-away Tasmania, which some people say is the most delightful island in all this round earth.

Flap and Flip were twins, and quite wonderfully alike. If Flap's hair had been cut and Flip's had been allowed to grow long, and they had changed clothes, Flap would have passed for the boy twin and Flip for the girl. But here again Flip would have been offended had anyone told him so.

"The taxi-driver stands at them. He had noted the resemblance.

"What's the damage, old chap?" asked Flip.

"You can look at the clock, Flip," said his sister.

She meant the indicator. But Flip made a point of not understanding that. He stepped out into the yard, away from the kerb, and looked up at the big clock over the offices.

"Look out there, you young juit!" roared the driver of an incoming Cricklewold 'bus; and Flip had to scuttle to the kerb.

"It's twenty-five to two, Flap," he said, treating his narrow escape as though it were of no account. "How much do you pay this chap when it's twenty-five to two?"

"You pay him two shillings and twopenny, fourpence extra for the two boxes outside, and a tip—a shilling will do for that, I dare say," replied Flap, quite unperturbed.

"And suppose, it had been twenty-five past?"

"Then perhaps you wouldn't have been nearly run over, though I'm not sure about that, for the 'buses seem to be coming along pretty much in a string. Perhaps if it had been twenty-five past you would have dropped Cockey, and Cockey would have been run over," the girl answered.

"Ad you there, sir," said the driver, grinning.

Flip grinned, too.

"I'm trying to bring her up to be exact," he said, handing the driver three-and-six.

"Thanker, sir! Good luck to you an' the young loid! Though between me an' you an' the Cricklewold 'bus, sir, I wouldn't wonder if she ain't very well able to teach you a thing or two!"

Another fare hailed the driver, and the twins were left standing with their luggage and Cockey in his cage on the kerb, with their

backs to the booking-office. Porters were at a premium that day, it appeared. But they were in no great hurry; there was plenty of time before their train was due out.

The scene upon which they gazed interested them.

Quite a lot of schools were reassembling for the Christmas term that day. Taxicabs glided in at the rate of a score a minute, of thereabouts, and every cab disgorged two or more boys or girls, with their luggage. Scarcely a 'bus rolled in but had its containing on top—mostly boys, these, with their heavier luggage sent out, no doubt.

"Hallo, Squiff!" sang out a fellow on top of one 'bus to one on another. "Seen anything of old Piet?"

"Not yet. We shall find him in the station, I guess, Brownie," replied the other.

They shook hands as soon as they were down, and the twins noted that both wore caps of blue and white.

"I'm sure those two are Colonials," said Flap eagerly.

"Dunno about that. But they're from the same school, I'm sure, sitting together. What school is it? Our colours are black and yellow, you know, Flap."

When Flip said "our colours," he meant those of Highcliffe. But, of course, Flap was not a Highcliffe. His home was not in Highcliffe. His home was in South Africa. These Colonial boys could not go home for the holidays, of course; but they had all been having a good time with friends.

The two blue-and-white caps disappeared in the crowd, which fact prevented Flip Derwent from noticing that their wearers did not make for the booking-office, before which he and his sister were standing.

A porter came at last. He did not stop to inquire whether they were bound, or what train they wanted, but piled up their luggage on a truck, and wheeled it inside. There he shot it down at the labelling place, took his tip, and bustled off.

Flip had said "Courtfield" to him. He said "Courtfield" again now, and the man to whom he spoke nodded, and began to paste labels on the boxes.

"Catch hold of Cockey, and stand there just under the clock, so that I can spot you; and I'll go and get the tickets, Flap," said the boy.

His sister took up her place on the spot indicated, and set down Cockey's cage, which was rather heavy, by her side.

Cockey twisted his head round.

"Flip!" he said very distinctly.

"Wrong, Cockey!"

"Phil-p-pa!" said Cockey, with quite a leer.

"That's better!"

"Philippa, Cockey wants a pen-unt."

Flap produced from a pocket of her loose, light coat a packet, and Cockey had a pen-unt.

"Ere, I say! Come an' 'ave a dekkio at this 'ere bird!" called one ragged urchin to another. "Is 'e a parrot, miss?"

"No' exactly," replied Philippa Derwent, smiling.

"'E ain't a nostridge?" said the wail doubtfully.

"No; he's a cockatoo."

The small, boy's friends were gathering. There were half a dozen of them, and they were all very much interested in Cockey.

"E ain't English," remarked one. "I never see none like 'im when I was in the country."

"Garn, Sniffy Bill! You wasn't on'y a week there. You didn't see everything," said another.

"He's Australian," Philippa said.

She did not like to order the boys off. They were ragged and dirty, but there was no snobbishness in Flap, and she smiled at them nicely, and felt quite friendly disposed.

But she wished they would not press quite so closely. And now they were beginning to tease Cockey, which certainly would not do.

"She's a nallien," said Sniffy Bill. "Orstr-tri-dra's 'er name."

"Garn! That's Orstria. The Orstralians, they're on our side. See plenty of 'em round this way any day. Anshacks they call 'em—I dunno."

"Jump, Joey—jump!" said the first comer, thrusting into the cage a stick thick.

Cockey was very much annoyed.

"G'way!" he said.

"Oh, make 'im 'ork agin, Bob!" said Sniffy Bill, in delight.

"You mustn't do that. He doesn't like it," said Flap, as severely as she could bring herself to speak. There were porters near, and she might have called to them; but she did not want to get these ragged intruders into a row. She guessed that they were intruders, and would be ordered off at once if she complained.

"It ain't wot 'e likes," said Bob. "We wants to see 'im jump."

Flap looked round for her brother. Some girls, in her place, would have been distressed. But the modern girl—and especially the Australian variety—does not get flustered so easily as her mother or her grandmother would have done.

She wished Flip would come; but if he did not come quickly she was capable of protecting Cockey.

"That is very wrong. An Australian boy would know better," she said gravely to Bob.

She looked down on him like a young queen, and he, on his knees by the cage, looked up at her with a light of admiration dawning in his eyes. It may be doubted whether Bob had ever consciously admired anybody before in all his youthful life; but he was quite sure about his feeling.

"Oh right, miss," he said submissively.

"Wot you say goes, an' you annerstand that, don't yer? I eard a Anshack say that. But you speak English 'most as well as me."

The girl smiled again.

But Sniffy Bill was not one to succumb to female smiles. He snatched the stick from Bob's hand.

"Ere, you gimme that back, or there'll be a row 'bout it, an' you'll get the blessed kick-out!" Bob said shrilly.

"Sha'n't!" growled Bill.

Bob went for him.

But both their collars were seized, and

Philippa Derwent saw that he who had wedded them was a bit of somewhere about her own age—a rather tall, very lean boy with a saggled face that at first sight looked somewhat silly. But not when one looked again, Flap thought.

"I fear that they were annoying you," said this boy, in a very grown-up manner.

As he spoke he dexterously shifted the collar of Bill so that the same hand held both him and Bob. Then, with his left hand engaged hand, he lifted the bright-ribboned straw hat from his head.

"Oh, not really," said Flap. "They don't mean any harm. But Cocky doesn't like being teased."

"Naturally he does not," said the boy gravely. "My young friends, you have allowed the effluence of your spirits to carry you too far."

Nothing ever really daunts the London street-rat, who is like the sparrows of his own gutter. If he were a tender plant he would never grow up into a soldier of the King—and a jolly good one—as so many of him have grown up into. They have proven their manhood and their cheerfulness on the stricken fields over there, those lads who never had a fair chance till the Army took them. And for their sake, let us hope those who come after them may get an earlier chance.

But if Bob and Bill were not daunted, they were impressed. There was no hostility on the part of either boy or girl—they saw nothing.

Their comrades had cleared off, with a porter driving.

"Orright!" We won't do it no more, will we, Bill?" said Bob.

"No. May as well leggo, guv'nor," said Bill.

The thin boy relaxed his hold.

"Don't go for a moment, my young friends," he said, and he slipped a hand into his trousers-pocket.

There were two sixpences in that hand when it emerged. The grimy paw of Bob took one, and Bill muttered "Thank yer." The even grimmer paw of snuffy Bill received the other, and Bill scuttled. The manners of Snuffy Bill were even more conspicuously inferior than the manners of Bob. But what chance had they ever had?

"That was jolly decent of you!" said Flap warmly. "Poor little chaps!"

"They do not pity themselves. I think that I like 'em better than the boy. 'Can I be of any assistance to you?"

"I think you have been," replied Philippa, with her brightest smile.

"That was nothing. Perhaps if you are alone—I do not mean to be intrusive—but I might get your ticket for you and see you to your train?"

"Thank awfully! But I am expecting my brother. He has gone to get our tickets. Oh, here he is!"

CHAPTER 2. Goggs as Guide.

PHILIP DERWENT came pushing his way through the crowd on the outer platform, which every minute grew thicker.

"Hallo!" he said, as he saw his sister talking to a stranger.

But Philippa was quite equal to the occasion.

"I can't introduce you properly, because I don't know your name," she said to the boy in the grey frock.

"That's my brother, Philip Derwent, and I am Philippa."

"My name is Goggs," said the stranger, with a funny little bow.

"Flap did no harm," he stated. He did not offer his hand either.

"Some small birds were teasing Cocky," explained Flap.

"Yes, face beared."

"Oh, I see!" he said. And he and Goggs shook hands.

Just then three fellows in red-and-white caps walked Goggs.

"Hallo, Goggs! old scout! Going our way?" asked one of them.

"No, Noble. I have just come up from Brighton, and am on my way to Frankingham."

"Can't stop, old chap! Our train's nearly due out!" said another of the three.

"Sorry, Dan!"

The trio hurried on.

"What school are they from?" asked Flap.

"St. Jim's, in Sussex. Noble, Dan, and Glyn—three very nice fellows indeed!"

"No!" Do you know the school that has blue-and-white caps?"

"Yes. That is Greyfriars."

"I say, Flap, I haven't got the tickets now! They say this is the wrong station. Silly dummies! This is Victoria Station, isn't it, Goggs?"

"Yes. But there are two Victoria Stations. This is the London, Brighton, and South Coast one."

"Then I guess it's the other we want," said Flap, with a wry grin.

If Flap had said "Told you so!" at that moment he would have been quite angry. But she did not, though she might have done. For she had at least suggested that he might inquire whether it was all right, although she knew no more than he did that alongside of which they had been driven to there was another.

"That is the South-Eastern and Chatham," said Goggs. "May I, without seeming unduly curious, inquire whether you are bound?"

Flap stared at him again. Goggs' grown-up manner gave Flap an inclination to laugh derisively. He thought Goggs a well-meaning ass.

Now, Johnny Goggs of Frankingham, though as well-meaning as a fellow could be, was very far indeed from being an ass.

"My mother is going to Highelle, and I to a school called Cliff House, quite near," said Flap.

"The station's Courtfield," added Flap. "And those silly chumps over there have laboured over the message. A chap would have thought they'd know. Look here. We're from Tasmania," he added, with a sudden burst of confidence. "We've been in England quite a time, but not tucked away in a little place in the country; not had bad, but miles off anywhere. Now, we can't get back home while the war's on, and they're sending us to English schools. We don't know anything about our name up to our own this morning because our name was ill. She never said there were two Victorias. You must think us awful mugs, but—"

"I assure you that I do not think you any one of the sort," said Goggs, as he panned.

And Goggs smiled in a way that Flap understood. But Flap did not know, or somebody that this one-looking "mug" was not in the way of considering people "mugs" because they didn't know everything; but her mother was rather in the habit of fancying that he did know everything that was said, and when he slipped up on anything it gave him rather a nasty job.

"We'd better be getting along to the other station," reckoned Flap. And he picked up Cocky's case.

"If you will allow me—"

"Oh, we can get along all right!" said Flap.

"We shall be awfully obliged, if it isn't delaying you," said Flap at the same moment.

It was to the girl that Johnny Goggs paid heed.

"As a matter of fact, it was delaying him. He would miss the train he had meant to catch. But that mattered less, as none of his special chaps was travelling by it."

Flap did not protest as he led them out of the station, with the bustling crowd, to the smaller one by his side, rather less crowded, as a rule, but just now full of hurry and excitement.

"That is the Laning cap," said Goggs, in reply to a question from Flap, who wanted to know pretty nearly everything, and had now made up his mind that this was the end of the fellow's one-look ask.

"One of the fellows is High-ell. And the two are Brighton. That—I am not sure, but Midhurst, I think. They are all Sussex schools, and the fellows who wear them will assuredly be Devon, there's Laning, in a minute we shall be among the Kentish crowd."

Sure enough, blue-and-white caps were speckled all over the station, and a contingent which swarmed in the South-Eastern Station. And there were other colours, which Goggs picked out for his new friends with speed and accuracy. "Devon, there's Laning, and again the South-Eastern College, or King's School, Canterbury."

"I say, though, how jolly well up you are in these things," said Flap, with a long breath of something like admiration. "Can you see any High-ell caps?"

Goggs could see none. There was a squad of High-ellians on the platform, not far from where they were securing tickets, and the only one among them with the Frankinghamian knew personally had his back turned.

"Flap!"

"Yes, Cocky!" said Flap reprovingly.

"Phil! Cocky wants a pea-ut!"

"That is an amusing bird," remarked Goggs.

"He's got to have one," said Flap. "It's part of the contract. The old rascal would expect the end of the world if he asked properly and didn't get it."

"Here you are, Flap," said his sister.

"That won't do. He asked me. Now, where did I put the things?"

Flap began a search in his pockets. To Goggs' amazement, that a packet from the packet the girl offered would have served Cocky's turn just as well. But Flap did not think so.

He found his own packet at length, after being grumbled at by several passers-by for creating an obstruction. But when he stooped to give Cocky the pea-ut, he discovered that the catch of the cage had become loose.

"I think we had better retire into a waiting-room and see to it," said Goggs. "We are rather obstructing traffic here."

"What's the odds?" growled Flap. But he went, all the same.

"Oh, I say! I've clean forgotten our luggage!" said Flap, in great moment, in dismay. "Stay here with my young friends, Goggs, while I bolt back and see about it!"

"With pleasure," answered Goggs gravely. Flap rushed off.

"He's waiting for train-time," the girl remarked anxiously. "And he hasn't got our tickets yet."

"If you would allow me—"

"If you would allow me if you will stay here with Cocky," said Flap.

"Certainly I will! Let me point out to you, however, the exact place to which you should go. I can easily do so from the door."

The waiting-room held no one else. When Flap had tripped off, Johnny Goggs was left alone with Cocky. His quick fingers put the catch as nearly right as might be, and in a few tools, while Cocky regarded him with head on one side.

"That's all serene now, old chappie," said Goggs.

"Flap and Flap! What-no, she bumps! You're a jolly good fellow!" burst out Cocky, fluttering his wings.

"I thank you very much for your kind expressions, and I regret very much that the circumstances of the case prevent my offering you any libit refreshment in the form of peanuts," replied Goggs, as if the bird could understand.

Perhaps he could. Anyway, he answered, with quite a pathetic intonation on the second word.

"Cocky wants a pea-ut!"

Somebody looked in. It was a well-dressed fellow of fifteen or so, not at all bad-looking, but with a superior and sneering expression. He wore a silk hat, and carried a sash and elegant umbrella.

"Thought I spotted you, by gad!" he said. Goggs turned to spot you, by—er—Gadby?" he answered.

The new-comer was Gadsby, of the Fourth Form at High-elle, one of the nuts.

Gadsby was the only stentorian junior with whom Goggs had yet come into contact. And Goggs' opinion of Gadsby was by no means high. He had no desire to introduce his new friends to Gadsby, or to put Flap under that youth's wing.

Goggs and Gadsby had met during the Easter holidays, and had discovered that they had a great deal in common. Gadsby had made stronger than that, for Gadsby had made himself so particularly objectionable that Goggs had been forced to give him a thrashing. It had been administered in private, and Goggs had had confidence in the fact that to anyone else, Gadsby might have told his nutty friends if they could have helped him to vengeance upon Goggs. But he had never expected to see his conqueror again, and as there was nothing in the affair which required to his credit—even from the nutty point of view, which glorified strange things—he had kept it dark.

CHAPTER 3. The Nuts!

"YOUR bird, eh?" asked Gadsby.

"Yes," replied Goggs. He was taking out his glasses and putting them into a pocket.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Gadsby.

"My business," replied Goggs.

"You're the same silly ass that you were when we met before," remarked the High-ellian, pushing the ferrule of his umbrella between the bars of Cocky's cage.

"And you," Goggs answered, if a tone more

restrained than the words, "are still, I perceive, the same ill-behaved puppy."

"Oh? Do you want a thump?" snapped Gadsby, half-turning, but not removing his umbrella.

"My hearing for anything of that nature is less than yours seems to be," said Goggs. "Unless you remove that umbrella instantly I shall be compelled to look for an attack before I observe it without regret that the expert employment in cleanliness through the employment of female cleaners does not yet appear to have materialised as far as this little concern."

"By gad, what a word-slinger it is!" yawned Gadsby, who felt fairly safe, believing that Goggs would not for an attack before touching him in public a place, and not in the least meaning to make an attack.

"You can talk better than that, I guess, old sport, can't you?"

But he gave Cocky a prod with the end of his umbrella.

"Chuckit! That don't go!" shrieked Cocky. "Drop it! The bird ain't yours!" You said so," roared Gadsby, as Goggs caught him by the collar.

"Here's a giddy row!" sang out Cocky. "I am in charge of him," said Goggs, fighting his grip. "And, in any case, I do not allow cruelty to animals when I can hinder it. Your memory must be defective, Gadsby, or you would recall that fact."

"You're right, but I won't stand it," I tell you," roared Gadsby.

Ponsonby and Vavasour and Monson minor, his special chums, were not far away. Gadsby regarded them with a certain amount of envy. The waiting-room had prompted him to leave them without saying why.

"They did not hear his roar."

"Remove that umbrella!" snapped Goggs. "Oh! Tell you let go me—dashed if I do!"

"I think you will!"

Well, perhaps it was not Gadsby who removed the umbrella. And not the whole of the umbrella was removed. There must have been a flaw in the stick, for the sharp and sudden twist by which Goggs had taken Cocky's snuff had, and an inch or two, with the ferrule attached, fell into the case, which turned over on its side.

Cocky, neither hurt nor greatly alarmed, pounced upon the fragment, and, with a look of displeasure when he discovered that it was not eatable.

"What a sell!" he croaked.

Gadsby might have spoken the same words. He had also been a sell for Gadsby, though his previous acquaintance with the methods of Goggs might have warned him.

But Gadsby said nothing for the moment. He was down on his back in the dust, with one of Goggs' long knees pinning him down; and his red and angry face, lit up at the mild, blue-eyed countenance of Goggs in speechless wrath.

It was at that moment that Flip returned.

"Oh!" she said.

"I regret this extremely, Miss Derwent," said Goggs gravely. "Or rather, to be precise, I regret that you should have witnessed such a scene. I can only say that it is a matter. This—our gentleman asked for it, and has had what he asked for. I will now allow him to rise, and I trust that he will regard the decision as retro, without any renewal of our little argument in the presence of a lady."

Gadsby growled something.

"Give your pardon up," said Goggs politely.

"My hearing is quite good, but your articulation leaves something to be desired."

"Oh, well, make it pass!" Gadsby growled sulkily.

Philippa Derwent was righting the overturned case. She could guess what had been at the root of the trouble.

Goggs helped Gadsby up.

"How me to remove some of the dust," he said.

Gadsby was surprised. If one of the nuts had made such an offer to an enemy there could have been a trick behind it.

But somehow Gadsby understood that there was in Goggs a chivalry to which the nuts were strangers; and he stood sulkily with the fellow who had hit his head, and just hid him down, much to the detriment of the operator's own appearance.

"Thanks!" growled Gadsby ungraciously. "The fellow is a cheap umbrella, and saw what had happened to it. An oath rose to his lips; but he choked it down. The impulse to smite Goggs with the umbrella was strangled upon his retina, that, and was not out of any sense of gratitude that he did so; only because he had no wish to

be put through it again before this particularly pretty girl.

He retreated.

Philippa held in her hand the fragment of umbrella.

"I can see with this is," she said, "and I can guess what happened. I shall keep this to remind me of you, for I don't think I shall ever see another boy who would have brushed that—that cad down as you did. I'm not sure that it wasn't silly, but I am sure that it was most uncommunally decent."

"It is very nice of you," answered Goggs simply. "That will make quite a novel keepsake. I shall not need anything to remind me of you."

He had not said it in a spongy way at all. If he had Flip would have hated it. He said it as he might have done to a kid half her age, or to a grown-up lady twice it. But he was sure that he would not have said it if he had not meant it.

Now Flip appeared, followed by a porter with the luggage.

"The silly asses didn't reckon they were going to give them up at first. Said I said 'Eckfield.' How could I, when I'd jolly well not heard of the place? Don't believe there is any such place at all!"

"They wouldn't have labels for it if there wasn't," said Flip practically.

"Eckfield exists," Goggs said. "Having been a name for that. But it is quite a long way from Courtfield."

"I know that!" Flip growled. "I didn't before, of course. But you needn't rub it in before me. It is only a place. What about tickets? And these blessed things will have to be labelled again, too."

"I have the tickets," said Flip.

"And, if you allow me, I will attend to the labelling," Goggs said. "Perhaps you had better go at once and take your seats in the train. I will see that the luggage comes out after you. But case I do not find you here when the train goes out, we should say good-bye now, I think."

He had forgotten the state of his right hand after his ministrations to Gadsby. Flip took a look at it, and, as if he had not seen black with soot she would have taken it all the same. As for Flip, he did not notice.

The last of him that the girl saw—after he had taken the train—was the red of his face, with a face once more goggled, and a very dirty hand held out for the contemplation of the eyes behind the disfiguring goggles. She had not realised till then that the glasses had been off; but now she remembered a gleam of bright, blue eyes, and a face queerly altered for the better.

"Decent sort," said Flip. "Isn't every chap I'd trust not to pinch our traps. But he won't, I'm sure."

"Oh, you are a young ass, Flip!" said his sister hotly.

He stopped, swiveling Cocky's eye in his hand, to stare at her.

"My word! You don't often let fly like that, Flip. And I'm not, you know. I don't know what you and I don't behave like one. So how can I be?"

"Oh, come on! You're so jolly well satisfied with yourself, Flip? Of course, you're all right in your way; but on one's soul, such an amount of genius, do you think you are?"

"Don't set on your giddy ear, Flip! I said the blunder wouldn't. Now, if I'd said he wouldn't, you'd hardly be so silly as that, would you?"

Flip's tone was quite snappy. But it needed a good deal to take down Philip Derwent's opinion of himself.

"Better give me the tickets—if you haven't lost them," he said.

Flip's violet eyes glared as she handed them to him.

They found their train filling fast. No space sufficient to take them and Cocky in comfort offered itself until they had marched more than half its length.

Then Flip lifted before the door of a compartment which had only four boys in it.

They were Highfellians, but he did not know it. They were Gadsby, Ponsonby, Monson minor, and Vavasour. Their names would have meant nothing to him as yet if he had been told them. And, not having seen Gadsby before, of course he did not know them.

"Not in there, Flip," said Flip, in a low tone, to her brother.

"Rats!" said Flip to Philip.

"I don't think you've got Gadsby to life chums." "We don't want those kids in here."

"Rot!" said Ponsonby to Gadsby. "That's

the prettiest girl I've seen in a dog's age, by gad! Get your silly legs out of the way, and let them in. I can stand a cub brother when there's a sister like that!"

So might he have done in other circumstances. But just now it was not to the cub brother he objected, but to the pretty girl—and to that friend of a cockatoo, who turned out to be another boy who would get from his cage. Gadsby was not at all sure that Cocky might not tell the whole story.

But he had to get his legs out of the way. He could not explain his objection.

Cecil Ponsonby was very polite indeed. He insisted upon taking the case, and when Flip and Vavasour were in, it was Pon who put the girl's light luggage in the rack, while Vavasour hung round, looking elegant, but prevented by his chief from doing more.

As for Monson minor, he looked rather more sulky than Gadsby. Monson minor was at heart more lost than nut. He followed the Ponsonby lead, but he did not get the same satisfaction out of fine clothes and sent and costly goggs' trifles that Pon and Vavasour and Gadsby got.

"Thank you," said the girl. She had a nice way in her words or her manner to give him the slightest encouragement.

In fact, Philippa Derwent had taken an instantaneous liking to the spot. It may only have been because he was obviously a friend of Gadsby's; but she did not think it was wholly that.

As yet she had no notion that those fellows were Highfellians. Neither had Flip, though he was wondering whether by any chance it was possible.

It was a first-class compartment, and six filled it. Flip and Vavasour settled down in the seats farthest from the platform, with Cocky's gaze on the floor between them. Pon gave up the corner seat. He had bargained to Monson, saying nothing of course, and sat next to Philippa. Philip had the elegant Vavasour as his neighbour, and the other two corner seats were occupied by the sulky Gadsby and Cecil Ponsonby.

Flip turned her gaze towards the platform. She felt sure that Goggs would come along if he had time.

Flip had no idea of the other window. He had forgotten all about Goggs, and was speculating as to whether he could summon up nerve enough to inquire to what school these two belonged.

Goggs was not to appear. He had got a platform ticket; but the relabelling of the luggage took some minutes, and the guard's whistle shrieked before he had peeped into half a dozen compartments.

He gave it up then, stood for a moment or two to watch the train start, and then bolted for a wash and brush-up.

Meanwhile, Cecil Ponsonby had taken from a pocket a new pack of cards.

"What's it to be, Pon," he asked—"map or hombury?"

"Oh, he had, it's too beastly hot to-day to be playing cards," drawled Pon.

Gadsby and Monson exchanged glances.

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour, giggling.

Pon stole a look at Philippa Derwent. He regarded her with a certain interest at the suggestion of gambling. But she did not even seem interested. Her face was turned from him, and she was watching the many houses of the platform.

The red roofs there and there were cheerful, and so were the little strips of gardens. But what a lot of chimney-pots there were! And what a row of gables and gables on the streets above which the victuaries carried the rail!

London was a wonderful place to Philippa, and she was far more interested in seeing what she could of it than in Cecil Ponsonby.

"I should like to write that rotten bird's neck!" whispered Gadsby.

"Oh, I don't know! I think he's all right," replied Monson.

"Philip! Cocky wants a peanut!"

Cocky got one, and disposed of it in a trice. Then his voice was heard again:

"Philippa! Cocky wants a peanut!"

The girl supplied Cocky's requirements.

Monson was frankly interested; but Pon yawned, and Vavasour giggled, and Gadsby frowned.

Pon considered that Cocky was getting attention that might have been accorded to him. Not, of course, that the lovely Cecil Ponsonby wanted peanuts, though he might have been a little more with them from the fair hands of Philippa Derwent. Pon considered himself quite a ladies' man.

(To be continued.)