

GREAT SCHOOL YARNS AND GRAND FREE GIFTS INSIDE!

No. 1,458. Vol. XLIX.  
EVERY WEDNESDAY.  
Week Ending January 25th, 1936.

**8 Grand**  
**FREE**  
**GIFT**  
**PICTURES**  
*in*  
*Full Colours*  
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*The*  
**GEM**  
**2d**



*A Near  
Thing for  
Tom Merry!*



# GETTING EVEN



Working swiftly and silently, Lowther drove a screw through the edge of the door slantwise into the jamb. "Figgy won't get this door open in a hurry!" he murmured. Tom Merry and Manners chuckled. Little did the Terrible Three know that it was Mr. Ratcliff they were screwing up in the study!

## CHAPTER 1. The Raiders!

"IT'S rotten!" said Tom Merry.  
"Simply rotten!" said Blake.  
"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dolorously. "Awfully feahfully wotten, deah boys!"

It was. For it was a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the day of the Junior House match, when Tom Merry & Co. of the School House had intended to give Figgins & Co. of the New House the licking of their lives, and Figgins & Co. had intended to give the School House fellows a never-to-be-forgotten whacking.

One side must have been disappointed in any case; but, as it happened, both sides were disappointed, for the ground was far too wet for playing at all.

And Tom Merry & Co., as they stared out of the window into the quadrangle, where the old elms were still glistening with recent rain, grumbled. The rain had ceased at last, but large pools of water had formed on the footer pitch, and play that afternoon was out of the question.

Tom Merry had made a pilgrimage to the pitch to see whether there was a chance. He came to the conclusion that there wasn't. And he came back to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,458.

the School House with muddy boots and a frowning brow, and pronounced that it was decidedly, undeniably, and exceedingly rotten.

"The question is, what are we going to do with the afternoon?" growled Lowther. "Footer is off—right off!"

"Might be able to take some photographs," Manners remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"  
"Pewwaps we might get up a little concert," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should be vevy happy to contwibute a few tenah solos."

"You might be!" agreed Lowther. "But the happiness would be strictly limited to yourself, you see."

*Many a time have Mr. Ratcliff's heavy-handed methods with juniors brought down trouble on his head. But never has the sour-tempered New House master had such a hectic time as when Tom Merry & Co., smarting under an unjust punishment, set out to get their own back!*

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"There's only one thing I can think of," said Tom Merry, after considerable thought. "We can rag the New House chaps. If we can't beat them at footer, we can rag them. After all, that's what the New House chaps are for—to be ragged!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But the beasts are indoors, and we can't raid their House!" said Manners. "Ratty would be down on us. He has rheumatic pains in his little feet in rainy weather, and it makes his little temper ratty."

"Figgins & Co. are going to have a feed in their study!" growled Herries. "I saw Fatty Wynn taking in a pie from the tuckshop!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"What price screwing Figgins & Co. up in their study while they're having their feed?" he asked.

"Couldn't be done!" said Blake.

"You Fourth Form kids couldn't do it," agreed Tom Merry. "But I think we could!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah; wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If I were a bettin' chap, Tom Mewwy, I would bet you a fiveah that you couldn't do it!"

"The other bounders would catch you at it, and mop up the floor with you," said Blake.

—A LIVELY LONG YARN OF FUN AND ADVENTURE WITH TOM MERRY & CO.

# WITH RATTY!

By  
**MARTIN  
CLIFFORD.**

"And you Shell chaps couldn't do it, anyway!" said Herricks. "It's above your weight, you know, a thing of that sort."

Tom Merry sniffed. "I'll take Gussy's bet!" he said. "But I didn't make a bet, deah boy! I said if I were a bettin' chap," said Arthur Augustus. "Bettin' is not respectable."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Monty Lowther. "We are told to respect our betters."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Weally, Lowthah, if you persist in makin' wotten puns on a wainy aftahnoon—"

"I'll take Gussy's offer!" said Tom Merry firmly. "Of course, I couldn't permit him to bet. It's my duty as a member of a higher Form to keep you kids from entering recklessly on the road to ruin. But if we succeed in screwing Figgins & Co. up in their study, Gussy spends his fiver in a feed in our study. If we don't, we stand you a feed in Study No. 6. Is it a go?"

"Good egg!" said Blake. "Done!" "Weally, Blake—"

"Done!" said Horries and Digby together. "Gussy agrees." "Weally, you know—"

"Right!" said Tom Merry. "Lowther, old man, get the screwdriver and a gimlet and some screws out of your toolchest, and we'll start."

"And we'll hang round as near as we can," said Blake generously. "You'll want us to carry you home after the New House chaps have done with you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Terrible Three of the Shell sniffed in chorus. Monty Lowther went up to the study for his screwdriver and the other requisites. Monty Lowther was the owner of a toolchest, and sometimes did carpentry in the study.

He soon came back with a gimlet in one hand and a screwdriver in the other, and a few screws.

"If you fellows are ready, we'll start," he said. Lowther put the screwdriver, the gimlet, and the screws out of sight in his pockets, and the Terrible Three left the School House. They walked off with an air of great confidence; but inwardly they were not feeling quite so confident as they looked. They had, in fact, taken on rather a big order. To gain entrance into the New House unobserved, and to screw up the door of a study in the Fourth Form passage there, without being discovered and captured by the enemy, was no easy task. But, having taken it on, the Shell fellows would not allow themselves to appear doubtful about the result.

Blake & Co. watched them go with a grin.

"As soon as they're in the New House we'll stroll round and pick up the pieces when they're chucked out on their necks!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" They watched the Terrible Three across the quad, and the trio disappeared into the porch of the New

House. Then the School House fellows strolled out into the quadrangle, with the charitable intention of picking up the pieces when the Terrible Three were ejected with violence from the New House.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Wrong Victim!

"**Q**UIET!" murmured Tom Merry. Manners and Lowther were not making a sound, but Tom Merry was leader, and as leader it was, of course, his business to give directions.

"Quiet yourself, you ass!" grunted Lowther. "Don't jaw!"

"Look here, Monty—"

"Look here, fathead—"

"Shut up!" murmured Manners.

"Don't rag now! Looks as if we've really got a chance, if we're careful."

It did look like it. It happened that the New House fellows were holding a meeting of the New House Junior Dramatic Society in the Common-room.

From that apartment came a buzz of voices, but the door was closed. The passages and the stairs were deserted. The raiders were in luck.

They tiptoed up the New House stairs and gained the Fourth Form passage.

THIS NUMBER CONTAINS  
ANOTHER SET OF  
**FREE GIFT**  
**COLOURED PICTURES.**

**8 MORE NEXT WEDNESDAY!**

(Turn to page 7.)

There was no one in sight. Some of the study doors were open, and the juniors could see into them; but the studies were untenanted.

"They're holding some giddy meeting downstairs!" murmured Tom Merry. "This is simply a slice of luck, my infants!"

"Unless Figgins & Co. are downstairs with them, and we can't screw them up!" grunted Lowther.

"H'm!"

Tom Merry had not thought of that for the moment.

But they were soon reassured. As they listened outside the door, they heard a sound of someone moving inside the study. It was unmistakable—they could hear papers being moved on the study table, and a shuffle of feet.

"They're here!" murmured Tom.

And Manners and Lowther nodded.

"Buck up with the screws! They might open the door any minute!" murmured the captain of the Shell.

"Leave that to me!" said Lowther,

He produced a gimlet from his pocket and began to bore into the door with a steady hand, silently. He drove the gimlet through the edge of the door slantwise into the jamb. Then he withdrew it, and inserted the screw and applied the screwdriver.

Lowther made hardly a sound as he worked. In a couple of minutes the screw was driven home to the head.

The Terrible Three chuckled silently. It would have required a great deal of force to get that door open without the screw being withdrawn. And the raiders were not finished yet.

Lowther knelt close to the door, and drove the gimlet in again, this time slanting through the door to the floor beneath. A screw was speedily driven into the hole made by the gimlet. Lowther, rather red with exertion, rose to his feet with a triumphant grin.

"They won't get that door open in a hurry!" he murmured. "May as well give 'em a few more to make sure, though."

"Cave!" murmured Tom Merry. He had caught sight of a junior coming up the stairs. It was Redfern of the Fourth.

The Terrible Three backed out of sight, and slipped into a study of which the door was open. They hoped the junior would pass on; but as soon as they were in the study, Tom Merry made a discovery.

"I—I say, this is Reddy's study!" he murmured.

"Oh, my hat! You ass—"

"Well, you didn't notice—"

"I'm not leader!" grunted Lowther.

"I think—"

"Shush!" said Manners. Redfern's footsteps came along the passage. It was possible, of course, that he was not coming to his study. If he passed on, all would be well. If he came in, he was certain to discover the raiders.

The Terrible Three crammed themselves behind the door and waited. If the alarm was given, it would not be easy for them to get out of the House; a single yell from Redfern would alarm the crowd of juniors below. They listened breathlessly to the approaching footsteps.

The footsteps paused outside the study, and Redfern came in. The door was half-open, and Redfern pushed it wide open as he entered. There was the sound of a loud crack as the door collided with Manners' head, and a yelp from Manners.

"Ow!"

Redfern jumped.

"Why, what—who— Hallo! School House cads! My hat!"

"Collar him!" gasped Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three leaped at the New House junior. To collar Redfern, lock him in his study, and bolt—that was the programme. But matters did not go according to programme. Redfern was a particularly wideawake youth. He made a backward spring through the doorway into the passage, and the Terrible Three tumbled over one

another instead of Redfern. The next instant Redfern was tearing along the passage towards the stairs, and bawling at the top of his voice:

"Rescue! School House cads! Rescue!"

He went down the stairs three at a time.

"Run for it!" gasped Lowther.

The Shell fellows ran down the passage. They descended the stairs by means of the banisters, with a wild whiz, and rolled over one another in the hall below.

Redfern had the door of the Common-room open, and was shouting to the juniors meeting there.

There was a rush of feet.

"School House cads! It's a raid! This way!"

A crowd of New House juniors came swarming out. Foremost among them was a tall, slim junior, and after him came a decidedly plump youth—and the Terrible Three gasped as they recognised Figgins and Fatty Wynn. And Kerr, the other member of the famous Co., whom the raiders had believed to be screwed up in their study, came dashing out after them, followed by the crowd.

"M-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. They had screwed up Figgins' door. Somebody was in Figgins' study. But Figgins & Co. evidently weren't. Figgins & Co. were here—rushing at them with warlike looks.

There was no time to think out the problem then. The Terrible Three made for the doorway; and the New House crowd made for the Terrible Three.

Three juniors bounded down the steps together—twenty boots came crashing behind to help them go! Three wild roars awoke the echoes.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Yah!"

Three raiders rolled over one another outside the House.

"After them!" roared Figgins.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther picked themselves up in a twinkling and ran. After them rushed the New House crowd, determined to capture them and avenge the raid on their quarters.

The Terrible Three dashed across the quadrangle as if they had been racing on the cinder-path.

"Collar 'em!" yelled Figgins. "We'll teach 'em to raid our House! We'll—"

"Rescue!" shouted Blake, and the Fourth Formers dashed to the aid of the Terrible Three.

There was a collision of the two parties in the quad, and the New House pursuers had to stop. For a few moments there was a tussle, and then the Terrible Three and their rescuers retreated into the School House; and the New House crowd, after delivering a series of yells and cat-calls, returned to their own side of the quad. In the School House, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther gasped breathlessly, and Blake & Co. grinned.

"Lucky for you we were on the spot," chuckled Blake. "They'd have wiped up the ground with you! I told you so!"

"Yaas, wathah! And you will wemembah that I told you so, too, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You owe us a feed!" grinned Herries. "I saw Figgins & Co. in that crowd. You haven't screwed them up in their study!"

"I can't understand it!" gasped Tom

Merry. "We've screwed up Figgy's door—and there was somebody in the study! Of course, we thought it was those bounders. It must have been somebody else."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's somebody at Figgy's study window," said Kangaroo of the Shell, who was looking out of the study window. "I can't see who it is—he's too far away—"

"Get your glasses, Gussy!"

The juniors rushed up to Study No. 6. They were very curious to know whom it was that the Terrible Three had screwed up in Figgins' study.

Arthur Augustus produced his handsome opera-glasses and focused them upon the study window in the distant House. Then he staggered back.

"Oh cwumbs! Oh scissahs! It's Watty!"

"Oh!"

It was Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, whom the raiders had screwed up in Figgins' study. And the silence of utter dismay fell upon the hapless raiders. To screw up the rival juniors in their study was a howling joke. But to screw up a Housemaster, and a particularly bad-tempered Housemaster at that—

"Well," said Jack Blake, apparently essaying the role of Job's comforter, "I must say you chaps have really been and gone and done it now!"

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A Rat in a Trap!

**F**IGGINS & CO. returned hilariously to the New House.

The School House raiders had been caught in the act, and they had been kicked out of the New House and chased home to their own quarters.

Figgins & Co. had reason to feel triumphant.

"The bounders!" said Figgins. "Fancy having the cheek to raid us—in our own quarters! I wonder what they were going to do if Reddy hadn't spotted them?"

"Might have been after my pie," said Fatty Wynn, with sudden anxiety. "I told you, Figgy, it would be better to have the feed before the meeting—"

"They didn't take the pie away, anyhow," grinned Kerr. "They went in too big a hurry to think of taking anything with them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Might have taken it inside," said Pratt.

"But they were in my study," said Redfern. "That's where I found the bounders!"

"Might have eaten my pie, all the same," said Fatty Wynn. "I think I'll go and see if it is safe. You can't be too sure in a really important matter."

The New House juniors crowded upstairs to see what damage, if any, had been done by the raiders. Figgins had half expected that the uproar would have brought Mr. Ratcliff out of his study—which would probably have meant lines for all concerned. But there was no sign of the Housemaster, much to Figgins & Co.'s relief.

The juniors came up to the Fourth Form passage, and Fatty Wynn turned the handle of the door. But the door did not open. There was a sound of a movement within.

"My hat!" exclaimed Fatty, in amazement. "There's one of the bounders still here! He's locked himself in!"

"Phew!"

"Oh, good!" grinned Figgins. "There were more than three, then; and this

chap couldn't get away in time. We'll make an example of him!"

"Yes, rather!"

Figgins knocked at the door and shook the handle imperatively.

"Let us in, you rotter!" he shouted through the keyhole. "We've caught you, you waster! We're going to make an example of you!"

"Figgins, how dare you!"

Figgins staggered back in horror.

There was no mistaking the rasping tones of Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House.

"Ratty!" he gasped.

"Oh, my hat!"

There was an angry knock on the inside of the door.

"Let me out at once, Figgins! How dare you play this trick on your Housemaster! You wicked, ruffianly boy, I command you to let me out!"

"Mad!" murmured Redfern. "Quite dotty! How can we let him out when he's locked himself in? I've often thought Ratty was rather dotty."

"Do you hear me, Figgins?"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Figgins. "I—I didn't know it was you in there, sir. I thought I was talking to some chap in the School House, sir."

"Nonsense, Figgins! You knew perfectly well that I was here! You deliberately locked me in the study!"

"I didn't, sir! I haven't been here at all—and the key's on the inside of the door," said Figgins. "I can see it in the keyhole. You must have locked the door yourself, sir."

"What! What! How dare you say anything so absurd? I—" Mr. Ratcliff broke off as he discovered that the key was indeed on the inside of the lock.

He tried to turn the key, and then made the further discovery that the door was not locked at all.

"The door is not locked, Figgins!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You are holding it from outside. I command you to open the door at once! I shall punish you severely for this!"

"The—the door won't open, sir. Are you sure, sir, that you haven't locked it?" stammered Figgins. "I don't see why it won't open if it isn't locked."

The screws that Monty Lowther had driven into the door were buried deep in the dark wood, and could not be seen without a special search for them. And it did not occur to Figgins for the moment that the door had been screwed up.

"You know very well that the door is not locked, Figgins. You are keeping it shut in some manner. You knew I was here, and you have fastened me in. I shall deal with you severely for this, Figgins. Open the door at once!"

Figgins turned back the handle and shoved the door hard. But it did not move.

"I can't open it, sir," he said. "It seems to be jammed, somehow. Try if you can open it from inside."

"Figgins, how dare you lie to me—" Figgins flushed with anger.

"I'm not lying," he retorted. "There are a dozen fellows here, and they can all see that the door won't open. I don't know anything about your being in the study, either. It's not usual for a master to be in a junior's study without the fellow knowing."

"Shut up, you ass!" murmured Kerr, catching Figgins' arm.

"Jolly good mind to tell him what I think of him!" growled Figgins.

The juniors all knew what to think of Mr. Ratcliff. The Housemaster had not gone to the study for any reason that





"Stop 'em!" roared Mr. Oates, panting after Tom Merry & Co. The two farm-hands put up their pitchforks in a defensive attitude, and the three juniors had to halt. Between the enraged farmer and his men they had no chance of escaping!

would have done him credit. Mr. Ratcliff had stealthy, inquisitive ways that made him very unpopular. He had gone to Figgins' study during Figgins' absence from it for reasons of his own—to make an investigation, he would have said. To spy, the juniors would have said—among themselves, of course, and not to Mr. Ratcliff.

It was particularly exasperating to the Housemaster to be caught in the act; for although he was satisfied with himself, he was not anxious to draw public attention upon his little peculiar ways.

The angry Housemaster shook the door-handle furiously. But the juniors either could not or would not let him out, and he crossed to the window in the hope of seeing some senior in the quadrangle whom he could call to the rescue. Fortunately, Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, was just coming in, and Mr. Ratcliff shouted to him from the window:

"Monteith! Monteith!"

The prefect looked up in surprise at hearing his name shouted from above.

He stared in astonishment at the angry face of Mr. Ratcliff staring down at him from the window of the junior study.

"Did you call me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Monteith! The juniors have fastened me up in this room!" said Mr. Ratcliff, breathing hard. "Will you come and release me?"

"Certainly, sir!" said the astonished prefect.

Monteith hurried into the House, and up the stairs. He found a crowd of juniors all talking at once outside

Figgins' door. The juniors were getting a little scared now. They could imagine what Mr. Ratcliff would be like when he was released.

"The young rascals!" Monteith exclaimed. "You will catch it for this! Open the door at once, Figgins!"

"I can't," said Figgins. "It seems to be fastened, somehow. I mean, Mr. Ratcliff says he hasn't locked it; but it won't open."

Monteith tried the door. It remained fast.

"Are you sure it isn't locked, sir?" he said through the keyhole.

"Of course I'm sure, Monteith!" rapped out the Housemaster. "Don't be foolish!"

Monteith turned red. He did not exactly like being told not to be foolish before a crowd of juniors. Most of the juniors grinned.

"Well, I can't open it, sir," said Monteith shortly.

"Are not the boys holding it?"

"No, they are not."

"Then it must be fastened in some manner from outside," said Mr. Ratcliff.

Monteith made a careful examination of the door. He felt over it, and felt the head of one of the screws driven in so deftly by Monty Lowther. Then he understood.

"It is screwed up, sir!" he said.

"My hat! Screwed?" said Figgins, in wonder. Then he burst into a chuckle involuntarily. He understood now what the School House fellows had done. They had screwed up the Housemaster in mistake for himself!

Monteith looked at him sternly.

"This is no laughing matter, Figgins. You will get into trouble over this."

"I!" exclaimed Figgins indignantly. "I didn't do it! I hadn't the faintest idea that the door was screwed up!"

"Then who did it?"

Figgins did not reply. He knew very well who had done it, but he did not intend to say so. It was not his business to "sneak."

"Screwed up!" said Mr. Ratcliff, seeming to speak with difficulty. "The authors of this—this outrage shall suffer for it! Pray get a screwdriver, Monteith, and release me!"

"Very well, sir."

The prefect hurried away, and returned with a screwdriver. He unscrewed first one and then the other of the screws. Then the door swung open and Mr. Ratcliff strode forth, with rustling gown and flaming face.

"Now," he thundered, "which of you screwed up that door, knowing that I was in the study?"

There was no reply.

"Was it you, Figgins?"

"No, sir."

"I do not believe you. The assumption is that it was you, as I was in your study. And if no one else here admits having done this—" Mr. Ratcliff paused, and swept his little steely eyes over the crowd of juniors; but no one spoke. "Very well. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, you will follow me to my study! I shall cane you most severely!"

"We didn't do it, sir," said Kerr.

"Silence!"

Mr. Ratcliff stalked away. The three dismayed juniors followed him. They

were adjudged guilty, and there was no way of saving themselves—unless by giving away the Terrible Three. And that did not even enter their minds. There was always warfare between the juniors of the two Houses; but it was always fair and loyal, and not a fellow on either side would have dreamed of "sneaking."

But just as the Co. were following Mr. Ratcliff into his study, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther arrived on the scene. They followed Figgins & Co. in.

Mr. Ratcliff picked up the cane, and turned round, and then stared in surprise at the School House fellows.

"What are you doing here?" he asked harshly.

"If you please, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, sir. It was we who screwed up the study door," he said.

"What!"

"Figgins hadn't anything to do with it, sir," said Tom Merry. "We were japing Figgins. We heard somebody in the study, and thought it was Figgy, and screwed up the door."

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard. He understood that the School House juniors had chivalrously come over from their House to own up as soon as they knew that their little joke was likely to get somebody else into trouble. But Mr. Ratcliff did not feel any admiration for such chivalry. He was only exasperated.

"You dare to admit this, Merry?"

"Yes, sir. We had no idea you were in the study."

"I do not believe you, Merry!" said the Housemaster, between his teeth. "I believe this is a trick to save Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn from their just punishment. Doubtless, you hope that I shall let them off, and then hand you over to your own Housemaster, knowing that I do not approve of Mr. Raiton's leniency. Well, Merry, you will be disappointed. Your offence has been committed in my House. I shall take your punishment into my own hands!"

Tom Merry flushed.

"We don't mind that, sir. We don't want you to report us to Mr. Raiton. But we didn't mean any harm, sir! We thought we were screwing Figgy up in the study—"

"Do not repeat that ridiculous story, Merry. I know perfectly well that this was a concerted trick among you all."

"It was nothing of the sort, sir."

"Certainly not, sir," said Figgins.

"Silence!" said Mr. Ratcliff, his thin lips closing tight. "I shall cane you all in turn. You are all equally culpable, to my mind. Hold out your hand!"

There was nothing for it but to obey.

The juniors went through the caning with feelings too deep for words. The injustice of it cut deeper than the cane. Any other master at St. Jim's would have accepted Tom Merry's explanation, and dismissed Figgins & Co. unpunished. Not so Mr. Ratcliff. A victim once gathered into his net had little chance of escaping unscathed.

The six juniors were caned in turn. Then Mr. Ratcliff threw the cane upon the table, and waved his hand towards the door.

"You may go," he said, "and I trust this will be a lesson to you!"

The juniors went without a word. But outside, in the passage, they looked at one another, and they found words enough.

"The rotter!" murmured Tom Merry.

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

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"He's all that, and more," said Figgins miserably. "It was jolly decent of you fellows to come over and own up. But it was no good with Ratty. He was wild with us, you see, because we found him spying in our study through your fellows screwing him in. He was bound to put us through it, the cad! Still, it was jolly decent of you to come over!"

"Jolly decent!" said Kerr.

"Yes, rather," said Wynn, rubbing his plump hands; "and—and you can come up and have some of my pie, if you like."

Tom Merry groaned.

"I don't feel much like pie now," he said. "I feel like slaughtering Ratty! If you ever find a dead pig lying about the quad, you'll know what's happened to Ratty! So-long!"

And the Terrible Three returned lugubriously to their own House.

#### CHAPTER 4. A Big Order!

"CAUGHT it bad?" asked Blake sympathetically, as the chums of the Shell came back into the School House.

The Terrible Three groaned in chorus.

"Yes, rather!"

"Nevah mind, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus comfortingly. "You did the wight and pwopah thing in ownin' up, you know, and gettin' Figgins & Co. off."

"But we didn't get them off!" said

### TO IRISH FREE STATE READERS.

Readers in the Irish Free State are requested to note that when free gifts are offered with the GEM, they can only be supplied when they are of a non-dutiable character.

Manners. "Ratty pretended to think that we were all in the game together, and he licked them, too."

"Bai Jove!"

"Awful cad!" said Blake.

"But we'll make him sit up for it!" said Tom Merry. "How were we to know that he was spying in Figgins' study? He's licked us as much as if we'd screwed him up in his own study. He's a beast! But we'll make him sorry for himself, somehow."

"We jolly well will!" said Monty Lowther, with a grimace. "Anybody in the prefects' room, do you know?"

"Most of the Sixth are out," said Blake. "What do you want in the prefects' room?"

"I want to use the telephone."

"Well, you can use it if the prefects are there, if you ask permission."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"But I don't want to ask permission," he explained. "It's a giddy little secret. I think I'll go and see if the room's empty."

Monty Lowther walked away towards the prefects' room, and the other fellows, curious to know what the idea was the humorist of the Shell had in his mind, followed him.

Monty Lowther tapped at the door and entered.

The room was sacred to the use of the members of the Sixth Form who

had attained the rank and dignity of prefects, though other members of the Sixth sometimes used it. But juniors were quite barred.

There was a telephone in the room, which fellows were allowed to use after asking a prefect's or a master's permission. If there had been anyone in the room, Lowther had an excuse ready; but, fortunately, the Sixth were all out of doors.

"All serene!" he remarked, as he approached the telephone and took up the receiver.

"What's the little game?" demanded Blake.

"Listen, and you'll find out!"

On the shelf under the telephone was the telephone directory, and Monty Lowther glanced into it quickly.

A voice came from the exchange to know what number he wanted.

"Wayland 1001."

Lowther waited patiently with the receiver in his hand. The other juniors regarded him in surprise; Wayland 1001 was the telephone number of Mr. Rutter, the outfitter and general provider in Wayland, from whom the juniors obtained most of their sporting requisites.

A voice came through.

"Is that Rutter's?" asked Lowther.

"Yes."

"This is St. Jim's. Kindly book an order for Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's!"

"Yes, sir."

"Three dozen footballs and three dozen football jerseys as advertised," said Monty Lowther.

"With pleasure, sir."

"Kindly deliver them to-morrow morning at half-past nine, as nearly as possible."

"Our van shall call at that time, sir. Can we supply you with anything else? We specially recommend our football boots."

"No, thank you, that will do. Kindly deliver without fail at half-past nine in the morning. Remember, Mr. Ratcliff—Horace Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's."

"Certainly, sir."

Lowther rang off.

Tom Merry & Co. stared at him blankly. The nerve of Lowther's proceeding simply took their breath away.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You awful ass, Lowther! What will Watty say when they delivah those things to-morrow mornin'?"

"I really don't know," said Lowther blandly. "But whatever he says, it will be interesting, I think." And he rang up again.

"Wayland 108," he said to the exchange. "Hallo, hallo! Is that Wayland one nought eight—Mr. Robinson?"

"Yes, this is Robinson's."

"Have you a very comfortable arm-chair—real leather, well padded, at a moderate price? This is St. Jim's."

"Certainly, sir. Our special library easychair is exactly the thing you want, sir. The price is absurd. Merely six guineas."

"H'm! Six guineas! You can recommend that chair?"

"Absolutely, sir."

"Could you deliver it here at a quarter to ten to-morrow morning, without fail?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Very well. Deliver to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's, and kindly send the bill with it, and instruct bearer to ask for payment."

"With pleasure, sir."



And Lowther serenely rang off. Tom Merry sank into a chair and gasped. The other juniors grinned and stared at the humorist of the Shell. Monty Lowther prided himself upon his sense of humour. But certainly his sense of humour had never been known to proceed to this length before. And he was not finished yet.

After a minute had elapsed, he rang up the exchange once more, and asked to be put on to Rylcombe 606.

"That's Bunn!" exclaimed Blake.

"What do you want with Bunn?"

"You'll see. Hallo, hallo! Is that Mr. Bunn's, the confectioner's?"

"Yes, sir."

"This is St. Jim's. Can you fulfil a large order at a very short notice—two hundred jam tarts and one hundred pound-cakes—currant cakes—by ten o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Certainly, sir. My establishment could easily fulfil a larger order than that."

"Very well. Kindly deliver to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's, without fail at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Very well, sir. Thank you, sir."

Lowther rang off. He gave the exchange one minute's rest between rounds, as he expressed it, and then rang up again. This time it was for Mr. Wiggs, the costumier and tailor, and dealer in ready-made clothes in Rylcombe.

"Hallo! Is that Mr. Wiggs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it Mr. Wiggs speaking?"

"Yes. What's wanted?"

"This is St. Jim's," said Lowther, disguising his voice as well as he could, for he had a personal acquaintance with Mr. Wiggs. "The last time I—er—passed your establishment, Mr. Wiggs, I noticed that you were—er—advertising a new line in ready-made attire for boys."

"Certainly, sir! My two-guinea suits are a marvel—for style, fit, wear, comfort, and elegance. They are fully equal to the fifty shilling suits sold by rivals in Wayland."

"Quite so! Can you send me fifty of your two-guinea suits immediately, Mr. Wiggs? Can they be delivered by ten o'clock—ahem—I mean a quarter-past ten to-morrow morning, without fail, Mr. Wiggs?"

"Certainly, sir! The sizes—"

"All of a size, please—the same size as the sample suit outside your shop, Mr. Wiggs. I may rely on you?"

"Absolutely, Mr. Ratcliff!"

"Thank you! Good-bye!"

"You—you awful ass!" roared Manners, as Lowther blandly rang off. "Chuck it! What will Ratty say when they deliver fifty two-guinea suits to-morrow morn'g? My hat! Whom are you ringing up now, you frabjous ass?"

"Pilbury, the chemist. Hallo, hallo! Is that Mr. Pilbury?"

"Yes. Who is there?" came back the reply on the phone.

"This is St. Jim's. Kindly deliver twenty large-size bottles of cod-liver oil to-morrow morning, at half-past ten, to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's."

"Very well, sir."

"Drag him away!" gurgled Blake. "There will be an earthquake to-morrow, if this goes on. Shut up, Lowther! Ring off, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm ringing on," grinned Lowther, busy with the telephone again. "Thank you, miss! Will you give me 801? Thank you! Hallo, hallo! Is that Mr. Snorks?"

"This is Snorks."

"Kindly deliver ten legs of mutton

and twenty pork chops, at a quarter

to eleven to-morrow morning, personally

to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, at this school—St. Jim's."

"Most certainly, sir!"

"Yank him away from that telephone," said Tom Merry faintly. "The—er—awful ass! Monty, old man, chuck it!"

"One more order," said Monty Lowther. "Ratty ought to be laying in coals. It's good economy to buy coals in large quantities. You save a lot of money that way. 210 Wayland, miss, please! Thank you! Hallo, hallo! Is that 210 Wayland—Welsher & Co., coal merchants?"

"Yes."

"This is St. Jim's. Kindly tell me your lowest winter price for twenty tons of good house coal."

"We can do a good house coal at fifty shillings a ton, at present, sir, taking twenty tons. We could make a reduction for a larger quantity."

"Indeed! A substantial reduction?"

"Fifty tons could be supplied for forty-five shillings a ton, sir—best quality house coals. I may add that we defy competition."

"Very well. Make it fifty tons. Only I require them to be delivered at a time when I can personally superintend the matter. Do, please, let your vans arrive here at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Certainly, sir; that can be arranged."

"Kindly deliver to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. Jim's, and send the invoice at the same time. I do not want any account to run."

"It shall be as you wish, sir."

"Thank you!"

Lowther rang off. He was turning over the leaves of the telephone book when his chums made a sudden swoop on him and bore him off by force. He

was rushed out of the prefects'-room by main force.

"That's enough!" said Tom Merry, laughing till the tears came into his eyes. "Anything after the fifty tons of coal would be an anti-climax. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fancy Ratty will be rather worried to-morrow morning, with so many tradesmen delivering their goods," said Lowther thoughtfully.

The Terrible Three chuckled gleefully, consoled for their larking by the anticipation of the surprise and rage of Mr. Ratcliff when all those articles, so recklessly ordered by Monty Lowther, were delivered to him in succession on the following morning.

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CHAPTER 5.

Hare and Hounds!

"THE question isn't settled," Jack Blake remarked, after a time.

"What question?"

"What are we going to do with the giddy afternoon?" replied Jack Blake. "My idea is that we want to prove a strong alibi for this afternoon. There may be inquiries to-morrow as to whether anybody was seen near the telephone. Let's make it a paper-chase."

"Who says paper-chase?" asked Tom Merry. "Hands up for hare and hounds!"

Many hands went up. It was obviously the best way of filling up an otherwise empty afternoon.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Look out for the scent—Gussy's contribution to the next number of the 'Weekly' will do. Tear 'em up small!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy!"

"And Skimpole's scientific books,"

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said Lowther. "It will save him from the awful labour of reading them. Who's going to be here?"

"Three hares this time," said Tom Merry. "We three, as we're the best runners in the Lower School."

"Good egg!" said Manners and Lowther heartily.

The Fourth Formers did not say "Good egg!" They glared.

"Well, of all the silly asses!" began Jack Blake emphatically.

"Yaas, wathah! Of all the cheeky duffahs—"

"You chaps leave off talking about yourselves for a bit," suggested Lowther, "and let's get to bisney."

The scent was made, all sorts and conditions of papers being torn up for the purpose. Old exercises, and fly-leaves of volumes, and old magazines and numbers of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and scientific books belonging to Skimpole, and volumes of poetry belonging to D'Arcy, were added to the pile, and three bags were soon filled. The word went round that hares and hounds were starting, and a large pack gathered.

Figgins & Co. and a crowd of New House fellows joined the pack, and more than a hundred fellows lined up in the quadrangle to start.

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was in the quad, and he smilingly agreed to start the hunt.

The Terrible Three, looking very fit in their running clothes, with their bags of scent slung on, stood ready for the Housemaster to give the word. The ground was wet and it was cold, but the sun was shining, and it was likely to turn out a pleasant afternoon.

"The run goes round by the wood, over the moor, and back to Rylcombe over the bridge and the level crossing," said Tom Merry. "When you fellows get in, you'll find us at tea."

"Weally, Tom Mowwy—"

"Go!" said the Housemaster.

The Shell fellows trotted off, and disappeared out of the gates of St. Jim's.

They had five minutes start before the pack was let loose on them, and they made the most of it. The three hares were in splendid form, and they ran fleetly down the road, and took the path over the fields towards Wayland. There the scent was dropped as they ran. They were in the midst of wide fields when the sound of a bugle on the clear air was wafted to their ears.

"That's Blake's toot!" said Monty Lowther. "They're after us!"

"Come on!"

The hares ran on fleetly. They turned into the wood, leaving the scent among the underbrush, and waded across the woodland stream. All the hounds who did not like water would have a long way to go round there, and the pack would be diminished. On the opposite bank the scent was laid again, and the juniors came out at last on the high road to Wayland. They turned off before they reached the town, however, and ran upon the wide, lonely moor, scattering the scent as they ran. Another ta-ra-ra on the bugle warned them that they were seen, and they looked back and saw the figures of the pursuers dotting the moor in the distance.

"They're sticking to us," said Monty Lowther. "Let's give 'em a run across Mr. Oates' farm. Oates will make things pleasant for 'em."

Tom Merry looked serious.

"Oates is a bad-tempered old chap," he said. "He may cut up rusty. You know he's sworn that he won't allow schoolboys across his land, ever since

the time he caught Mellish and Levison chasing his ducks."

"But we're nice good boys, and he ought to be pleased to see us."

Tom Merry laughed.

"He ought to be, but he won't be!"

"And we shall get through all right, and we can leave the pack to argue it out with Oates, or go round!" added Lowther.

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors dipped into a deep hollow of the moor, that hid them from the sight of the pack. Keeping under cover of the depression in the ground, they left the scent along the hollow, and then through deep thickets, till they came to the first field belonging to the extensive farm of Mr. Oates. It was very likely that they would get through Mr. Oates' land uncaught, but the pack would probably find trouble there. But that, as Monty Lowther observed, was their own business.

Unfortunately for their calculations, it was the hares that found the trouble.

As they came dashing across the field, leaving the scent in their wake, a good distance now ahead of the pack, a portly gentleman in gaiters, with a very ruddy face, stopped from the farmhouse in the distance and sighted them.

His ruddy face became ruddier at the sight of the three schoolboys tearing across his fields, and leaving the trail of torn paper. He waved a riding whip in the air, and shouted to them.

"Hi, there! Get off my land! Go back! D'you hear?"

The juniors apparently did not hear. They kept on. The stout farmer began running to intercept them.

"It's all right!" panted Tom Merry. "We shall get past before he can stop us. The pack can talk to him!"

The three juniors dashed on. The farmer failed to intercept them, but he came thundering in their wake, gasping for breath as he ran.

"Hi, Garge! Hi, Joe!" he roared.

Two stout countrymen appeared from a haystack, with pitchforks in their hands. They looked at the farmer, and they looked at the running juniors.

"Stop 'em!" roared Mr. Oates. "Stop 'em! D'you hear?"

The two yokels stood in the path of the Terrible Three, with the evident intention of stopping them.

"Bump 'em over!" said Tom Merry. "We can't stop now! I don't want to go back and talk to Oates!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

But it was not so easy to bump over the yokels. As the schoolboys bore down upon them, they put up their pitchforks in a defensive attitude, and the Terrible Three had to halt. They could not run on the prongs of the pitchforks. Garge and Joe grinned.

"Happen you'd better stop," said Garge.

"Let's get by, like good chaps!" said Tom Merry.

But Garge shook his head. Evidently he was not a good chap.

The Terrible Three looked back. Farmer Oates was lumbering on, and he had a big mastiff with him. The juniors did not like the look of the farmer, and they liked less still the look of the mastiff.

Tom Merry whistled softly.

"Looks to me as if we're in a fix!" he murmured.

"Dodge them across the field!" said Manners.

But the farmer shouted again.

"Stop, you young raskils! Fetch 'em, Cæsar! Fetch 'em!"

He came panting up.

"You try to run, and Cæsar'll stop

you fast enough!" he grunted. "Mark 'em, Cæsar!"

The mastiff showed his teeth and growled. Between the farmer and his men and the mastiff, the unfortunate hares had no chance. They had to stop.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, "we're doing no harm trotting over the field, Mr. Oates."

The farmer grunted.

"Some of you was chasing my ducks the other day!"

"That wasn't us! We wouldn't do it!"

"You're all the same," said Mr. Oates. "And ain't you seen the board: 'Trespassers will be prosecuted.—By order!'"

"Yes; we thought that was your little joke, you know," explained Monty Lowther.

Mr. Oates grunted.

"You'll find it ain't a joke!" he said. "You belong to St. Jim's, I s'pose?"

"Ahem!"

"I'll soon find out. I'm going to Rylcombe presently, and I'll take you in the car and drive you up to the school," said Mr. Oates. "I dare say your 'cadmaster will recognise you."

The juniors regarded one another in dismay. To be taken back to St. Jim's in Mr. Oates' car, and delivered up to the Head—it was not to be thought of. But there was no escape. Three men and a mastiff were more than a match for the three heroes of the Shell.

"I say, Mr. Oates—" began Tom Merry.

The farmer interrupted him.

"Don't you say nothing," he said. "Tain't for you to talk. Bring 'em along, Garge and Joe, and I'll lock 'em up in the stable till we're ready to take 'em to the school. Pass the word round to the other 'ands that there are a mob of schoolboys yonder to be kept off the land."

And the Terrible Three, five minutes later, were disposed of in Mr. Oates' stable, and a key was turned upon them.

## CHAPTER 6.

### ESCAPE!

"MY only sainted aunt!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"Oh dear!"

"Great pip!"

The Terrible Three bemoaned their fate.

The run that had started so cheerfully seemed likely to end in disaster.

They were locked up in Mr. Oates' stable, and they had to remain there till Mr. Oates took them to the Head. The juniors knew what the result would be. Dr. Holmes would have no choice but to punish them for trespassing on the farmer's land.

"What a rotten end of a run!" said Tom Merry.

"Disgusting!"

"Rotten!"

"The farmer's men will be keeping the pack off, though," said Tom Merry thoughtfully, after a pause. "They'll have to go round, and it's a good way. If we could get out of this we might get ahead of them still!"

"But we can't get out!"

"We'll try!"

Tom Merry tried the door of the stable. It was securely locked on the outside. There was a ladder into the loft over the stable, and he mounted into the loft. The loft doors were closed, but there was a little window, not made to open. Tom Merry looked



through the window. It commanded an extensive view of the country. Far in the distance he could see back the way they had come, and he caught sight of the pack. More than fifty fellows in St. Jim's colours had been stopped on the border of Mr. Oates' ground by a group of farm labourers, armed with pitchforks. The pack were arguing hotly with the farmer's men, who evidently refused to let them pass, and declined to listen to their reasonings.

"Well, Sister Anne, do you see anything?" demanded Lowther.

The chums of the Shell had followed Tom into the loft.

"They've stopped the pack," said Tom Merry.

"That's good!"  
 "And I fancy about all the farm hands are over there—nearly a quarter of a mile away—blocking the way." Tom Merry remarked. "If we could get out of this there wouldn't be anybody to stop us. The mastiff's over there, too. It's a case of all hands to repel boarders."

Monty Lowther looked from the little window.

"I can't see old Oates among them," he remarked.

"Well, we could handle Oates by himself, without his blessed mastiff and his Garges and Joes with their pitchforks."

"This window isn't made to open."

"We can change all that, though. A window can be made to open by shoving something through it. It's quite simple."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the only way, and the Terrible Three realised it. They did not want to do any damage to Mr. Oates' property, and if they could have opened the window without damaging it, they would willingly have done so. But it was evidently necessary to smash it, and the damage had to be risked.

Tom Merry looked round for a weapon. There was nothing but hay in the loft.

"You two fellows hold me up, and I'll push my foot through it," he said.

"That's the idea!"

Tom Merry mounted on the shoulders of his chums, and crashed his foot upon the little window. The frail sashes and the glass flew out together.

Crash, crash, crash!

There was a shivering of broken fragments of glass on the ground outside.

Tom Merry jumped down from his chums' shoulders.

"Buck up!" he said. "The farmer will have heard that. We've got to clear before he can call his men back."

"Quick's the word, then!"

Tom Merry, carefully avoiding the remaining fragments of glass, climbed through the little window, and hung on outside with his hands. There was a drop of ten feet to the ground, but that did not trouble him much. But just as he was ready to drop the stout farmer came tearing round the stable. He had heard the smashing of the glass.

Mr. Oates stood petrified for a moment as he saw the shivered glass on the ground, the broken window, and the junior hanging to the ledge.

Then he uttered an oath and strode towards Tom Merry, grasping his riding-whip.

Tom was hanging in a specially favourable position to be lashed with the whip, and Mr. Oates had no doubt

that after a lash or two the junior would be glad to scramble in at the broken window again.

But he did not know Tom Merry. As the portly farmer arrived beneath him Tom Merry let go, and he fell and landed fairly upon Mr. Oates' broad chest.

His fall was broken, and, by the terrific roar the farmer gave, it might have been supposed that he was broken, too.

Mr. Oates rolled over on to the ground, and Tom Merry rolled over him.

"Quick!" gasped Lowther.

He was out of the window in a twinkling, and he dropped and rolled on the farmer's gaitered legs. Manners came bounding down the next moment, and bumped into Mr. Oates' chest. The farmer gasped and roared.

"Ow, ow! Oh, Garge! Joe! Cæsar! Yow! Yah!"

The gasping juniors scrambled up. Tom Merry, with great presence of mind, picked up the farmer's whip, and tossed it upon the roof of the stable. Then the juniors ran.

The farmer staggered up.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Ow! Cæsar! Garge! Joe! Groogh!"

He cast a vain glance round for his whip, and then dashed after the juniors.

The farmer's wife came running out of the house as they dashed away, but they avoided a collision and ran round her, leaving the stout dame staring blankly after them as they sped across the fields.

"Make for the level-crossing!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

They ran fleetly on. After them came Mr. Oates, lumbering along like a run-away rhinoceros, and shouting to them to stop—a thing they were very unlikely to do in the circumstances.

Field after field was crossed at a terrific speed, and that speed told sooner upon the stout farmer than upon the little juniors. Mr. Oates dropped behind. At the end of the third field the juniors looked back, and saw the farmer at a standstill. Mr. Oates had halted at the last fence, and was shaking both fists after them in helpless rage.

The juniors halted, too. The terrific burst had almost winded them.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That was a run! We're well out of that!"

"He'll go up to the school and complain for a cert," said Manners. "He can't have liked our dropping on him!"

"Ha, ha, ha! No, come on! After all, he mayn't be able to identify us if he do' go to the Head. Sufficient for the run is the trouble thereof, anyway. Good-bye, Mr. Oates!"

Monty Lowther kissed his hand to the enraged farmer.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" he called out. "We'll meet you round the bandstand another time, ducky!"

Whereat Mr. Oates seemed more furious than ever. He began scrambling over the fence, as if to take up the pursuit again, and the juniors started to run once more, dropping the scent as they ran.

In a few minutes more they were past the border of Mr. Oates' land, and the farmer had disappeared from view. They ran on at a more moderate pace down towards the railway-line and the level-crossing.

(Continued on the next page.)



Make the Jester Smile and Win a MATCH FOOTBALL!

Send your Joke to The GEM Jester, 1, Tallis House, John Carpenter Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

**NOT A HIT!**

"Yes," said the actor, "I'm going to retire."

"You'll be missed when you leave the stage," said his friend.

"That's just it—I'm tired of being hit!"

A football has been awarded to G. Cordin, 107, Crown Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool.

**TOO POLITE.**

Customer: "Why is it that I never get what I ask for in this shop?"

Assistant: "Perhaps, madam, it is because we are too polite!"

A football has been awarded to P. Rowland, The Star Inn, Pangbourne, Berks.

**CROOKED.**

Two-Gun Carson was playing poker with some Kicking Mule punchers in the Red Dog Saloon, when he suddenly jumped up and drew his Colt threateningly.

"Boys," he drawled, "this game ain't been played on the level, I guess. Slippery Sam ain't playing the hand I dealt him!"

A special prize has been awarded to N. Harris, Kerno, North Auckland, North Island, New Zealand.

**SILLY GOOSE!**

The teacher had told the story of the goose that wanted to be a swan, and was mocked at for it.

"And now," he concluded, "what's the moral of it?"

"A person should be satisfied with being a goose!" answered the dunce of the class.

A football has been awarded to R. Keating, 5, Bath View Terrace, Mallow, Co. Cork, Ireland.

**NOT TO-DAY!**

Two Cockney friends met in hospital.

"Allo, Bert!"

"Allo, Bill!"

"Come in 'ere ter die?"

"Nah, yesterday!"

A football has been awarded to M. O'Donohoe, 54, Ellison Road, Streatham, London, S.W.16.

**TRIALS OF ANOTHER BORT.**

Old Gent: "I suppose you've had a lot of hard trials in your time?"

Tramp: "Yes, guv'nor, but only one sentence!"

A football has been awarded to H. Jones, 46, Fairholme Avenue, Gidea Park, Essex.

## CHAPTER 7.

## A Darling Rescue!

**T**HE Terrible Three chuckled as they ran.

They had escaped, and if there was to be trouble afterwards, they could meet that when it came. It was no use meeting trouble half-way. They were still well ahead of the pack. The pack would have to go round Mr. Oates' farm and pick up the trail again on the other side, and they were evidently not round yet, for the hares could see no sign of them.

The Terrible Three felt that they were entitled to take it a little easy.

Ahead of them was the railway track, with the level-crossing. Beyond that was the lane to Rylcombe and the run home. It looked as if the hares would get home easily ahead of the hounds. The level-crossing was approached by the stile on either side, and the railway line was marked off by a low fence.

There was a signal-box in the distance. As the juniors came running easily down the green slope towards the railway they caught sight of the signal and a train in the distance.

"That's the London express," said Manners. "Better wait for it to go by. It passes this level-crossing jolly quick!"

"Right-ho!"  
And the juniors slackened down to a walk; but suddenly, as they sauntered on towards the stile, Tom Merry gave a jump.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter?"

Tom Merry did not reply. His face had gone suddenly white. Without a word, he broke into a desperate run for the level-crossing.

There was a screech from the engine as the train came thundering along the line. For a moment Manners and Lowther believed that Tom Merry had taken leave of his senses. Then they saw what he had seen.

In the very centre of the railway track was a little girl of five or six, playing with a doll, and the high hedge hid her from the view of the man in the signal-box, and until he rounded the bend the engine-driver could not see her; and then, of course, it would be too late!

The unconscious child was in the path of the express, her innocent face bent over the doll in earnest interest, while a horrible death was rushing down upon her at lightning speed.

The juniors turned white as chalk.

They halted, petrified.

The train would be by in a few seconds, before they could reach their chum to drag him back from death, for they knew that Tom Merry meant to dash upon the railway track and drag the child to safety.

They felt sick.

"There's no time!" panted Lowther. "He'll be— Oh—"

He could not finish. They watched, their brains in a whirl of horror.

A shriek again from the engine!

The child, startled, looked round. Tom Merry did not climb the stile; he cleared it at a single bound.

Then he was upon the track.

The train was rushing down upon him. The engine-driver had seen all now, and his face was white. It was too late to stop the thundering express.

Tom Merry grasped the child.

He could almost feel the rushing

engine upon him. He made one desperate bound for safety, with the child in his arms.

He was rolling on the ground the next moment, and the train was roaring by with a thunder of wheels.

The express roared on, and Tom Merry staggered up dazedly.

The child was in his arms, unhurt. The junior gazed almost stupidly after the vanishing train. He had succeeded, but he had been so near to death that his brain was swimming with the reaction.

Not till the train had passed could Manners and Lowther see him again, and for those horrible seconds they did not know whether their chum was under the grinding wheels. But when the express had flashed by, they saw him standing on the farther side of the track, holding the little girl, who was crying with alarm.

"Tom!" yelled Manners and

Lowther.

"It—it's all right!" gasped Tom Merry.

A freckled, fresh-faced young woman came running from the adjoining field, shrieking hysterically. She clasped the little girl from Tom Merry's arm, weeping over her.

"It's all right now, miss," said Tom Merry. "She's not hurt!"

The girl could not reply. She could only sob. The juniors understood that the child was her sister, and the young woman had seen her on the railway track only when Tom Merry seized her to spring for safety.

She could not speak, but the child was speaking, chiefly worried by the loss of her doll, and far from realising the fearful danger she had escaped.

"It's all right now," said Tom Merry comfortingly. "Nothing to cry about now, you know."

"Oh, thank you—thank you! What would mother have said if—if—"

She could say no more.

"Jolly glad we came by in time!" said Tom Merry.

And the juniors nodded and walked on.

Manners and Lowther regarded their chum with somewhat peculiar looks. Tom Merry was silent. He had passed through the valley of death, and for the moment his sunny face was clouded.

"Well, Tom?" said Manners at last.

"Well?" said Tom Merry, coming out of his reverie with a start.

"You awful ass!"

"Eh?"

"You frabjous fathead!" said Manners, in measured tones. "Do you know when you started to run for that kid there simply wasn't a dog's chance for you?"

Tom Merry smiled faintly.

"I'm afraid I didn't stop to think," he replied.

"Just like you, wasn't it?" said Lowther.

"I suppose so," said Tom.

"And we both think you're an ass and the best silly idiot in the world!" exclaimed Manners.

"Cheese it!" said Tom Merry.

"You—you don't know what we felt like when we had to wait for the train to go by before we could see you," said Manners. "Oh, Tom, you fathead!"

"It's all serene, anyhow!" said Tom Merry. "But not a word about this at the school."

"Why not?" demanded Lowther.

"He's afraid of being made a giddy

hero!" grinned Manners. "Why, I was thinking out a splendid descriptive article for the 'Weekly'—"

"Look here—"

"And I'm going to do a poem on the subject for the 'Weekly,'" said Lowther. "Something in the form of a limerick—like this:

"There's a champion duffer named Merry,

Who's a very soft idiot—very—

"That's all right for the beginning, isn't it? Very descriptive, and—"

"Oh, dry up, Monty! Look here, don't jaw about this at the school, or it will come out that we're the three chaps who were on Mr. Oates' land, and jumped on him from his own window. We don't want to give ourselves away." "Something in that," said Lowther, with a nod. "But you are entitled to march home with musical honours—'See the Conquering Hero Comes,' you know—"

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry.

But it was agreed that the adventure should not be mentioned. The story would infallibly lead to the identification of the Terrible Three as the juniors who had handled Mr. Oates so roughly. The hares arrived at the school, and they changed out of their running clothes, and they were cheerfully sitting down to tea in the study when the pack, tired and exasperated, came straggling in.

## CHAPTER 8.

## Facial Disguise!

"**B**AI Jove! Here the boundahs are!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark as he looked into Tom Merry's study.

The passage was crowded with tired and muddy hounds.

The Terrible Three grinned at them serenely.

"Got home?" asked Lowther, in surprise. "Didn't expect you yet."

"Look rather a muddy crowd, don't they?" remarked Manners. "You want a wash, Gusey."

"Yaas, wathah! I think I do," said D'Arcy. "I have had a tussle with a wuff farmah man. He wanted to pwevent me fwom followin' the twack, you know, and, of course, I insisted upon passin'. And the wuff beast dwopped me into a ditch, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to laugh at, deah boys. It was wotten."

"We had to go round Oates' land, and picked up the trail at the level-crossing," said Blake. "Of course, we should have caught you if it hadn't been for old Oates."

"Rats!"

"We understood from the farmer's men that they had locked you up in a stable," said Herries. "How did you get away?"

"Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage," said Monty Lowther. "We hopped it. Go and wash yourself. I told you we should be having tea when you came back—so we are. Scat!"

And the muddy pack scattered.

"Beaten those kids!" said Monty Lowther, cracking a fourth egg, with great satisfaction. "Of course, they didn't have a look in!"

"Of course not!" said his chums, in hearty agreement.

"But I jolly well hope old Oates won't be along here to-morrow morning with a



giddy complaint," said Lowther. "He looked very waxy when we left him."  
 "I don't suppose he'll be able to pick us out," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "If he complains that three fellows have

trespassed on his land, he'll have to identify them. We shall look a bit different in Etons, you know. He saw us in running-things. And we might make ourselves look a bit different, too."

"Good egg! We'll disguise ourselves if he comes to identify us!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "I can squint when I like. You can pull your faces a different way, you know, and look different. Let's do some practice after tea."

"Good egg! We'll disguise ourselves if he comes along to lodge a complaint." And when tea was over the Terrible Three did some practice before the glass, and pulled the most horrible faces.

Blake looked into the study later, and he gave quite a start as he saw Monty Lowther squinting horribly, and Manners with his mouth twisted up one side, and Tom Merry wrinkling his brows in a dreadful frown.

Blake stared at them blankly.

"Gone dotty?" he asked.

Lowther squinted at him, and Blake backed out in alarm.

The Terrible Three burst into a roar. "Ha, ha, ha! It's all right, Blake."

"What on earth—"

"We're practising disguising our chivvies in case Oates comes along to-morrow," Monty Lowther explained. "Do you think he'll know me with that squint?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I fancy not! It makes you look horribly ugly," said Blake. "But it's a different kind from your natural looks—"

"What!"

"Why not try to make-up as a good-looking chap?" suggested Blake. "Then

there wouldn't be the slightest risk of identification—"

A volume of Virgil hurtled through the air, and Blake retreated, chuckling, into the passage, and slammed the door just in time.

That the incensed Mr. Oates would come up to the school to complain was certain. As had happened once before on a somewhat similar occasion, the Head would order the boys to be assembled, and the farmer would have to identify the culprits. And if he succeeded in identifying them, there would be a painful interview with the Head afterwards.

The scheme of altering their faces so as to escape identification seemed an excellent one to the juniors, and they did a considerable amount of practice.

When they came down to the Common-room, after finishing their preparation that evening, they had on what Lowther called their new faces.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass upon them as they came in. "Gweat Scott! What's the mattah with your eyes, Lowthah?"

"Ass!" said Lowther.

"Weally, deah boy—"

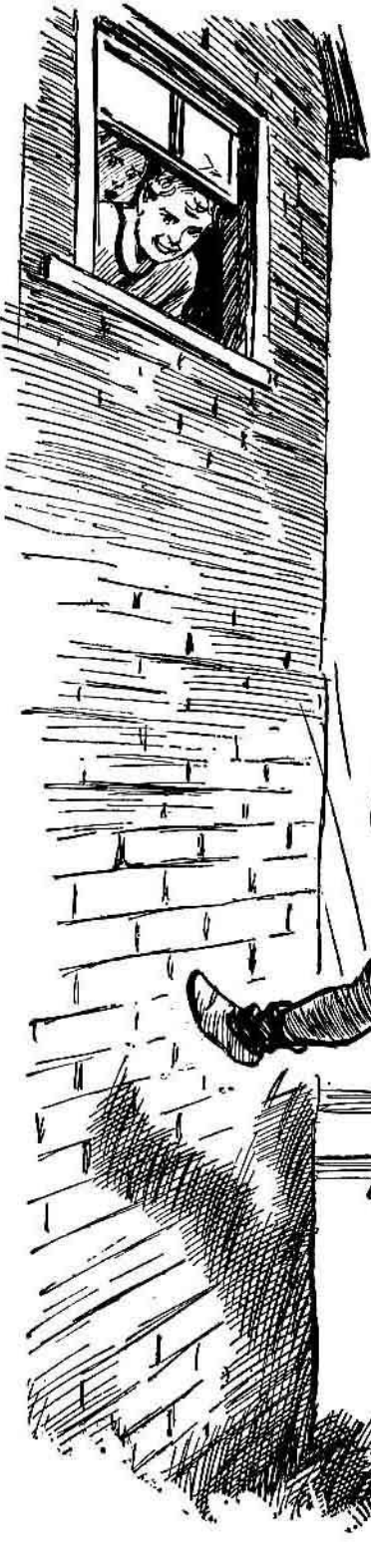
Lowther squinted at him.

"Do you recognise me?" he demanded.

"Yaas, you ass!"

"Well, Oates doesn't know me so well as you do. The squint will do for him. He'll remember seeing a nice-looking chap, and he won't know me if I squint."

"Bai Jove! That's wathah a good ideah!" said the swell of St. Jim's thoughtfully. "The old boundah is sure to come and complain. But why



As the portly farmer arrived beneath the stable window, Tom Merry let go. The junior landed upon Mr. Oates' broad chest, and his fall was broken. And by the terrific roar the farmer gave it might have been supposed that he was broken, too!

not disguise yourselves pwpopally, deah boys? You could put on false moustaches—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any cause for laughtah in that remark. There is nothin' like a false moustache for a weally good disguise."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I think I can see Railton's face when he finds three kids in Hall with moustaches on!"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins of the New House looked in. Lowther squinted at him, and Figgins stared.

"Got a pain anywhere, Lowther?" he asked.

"Oh, you ass!" said Lowther crossly. "Do you recognise me, too?"

"Know that face anywhere!" said Figgins cheerfully. "You don't often see a face like yours, Lowther, excepting on some old-fashioned gargoyles—"

"Look here, you New House bounder—"

"What's the news, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry. "Have you come over to tell us something? Is Ratty on the warpath again?"

Figgins grinned.

"Yes. He's as mad as a hatter. He says somebody has been larking with the telephone. We were able to prove an alibi, so it's all right for us."

"Telephone?" said Monty Lowther innocently. "Anything gone wrong with Mr. Ratcliff's telephone?"

"No; it seems that Snorks, the butcher, has rung him up to ask him whether he must have the legs of mutton and pork chops at a quarter to eleven, as his man usually goes on his rounds a little earlier. Ratty was astounded. It seems that somebody has telephoned to Snorks to deliver legs of mutton and pork chops to Ratty to-morrow morning at a quarter to eleven, and Snorks says he was phoned from here. Ratty had us all up and questioned us; but the only phone in the New House is in his own study, so he couldn't make out that any of us had done it. Queer, isn't it?"

"Awfully queer," said Manners.

"Has he countermanded the order for the pork chops and legs of mutton?" asked Lowther.

"Of course, they won't be delivered now," said Figgins. "I wondered if you fellows knew anything about it."

"Us!" said Tom Merry. "Why, what should we know about it?"

Figgins chuckled.

"Well, I thought you might," he said. "I shouldn't be surprised if some other tradesmen have had orders on the telephone," Monty Lowther remarked dreamily. "These things do happen, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then it was you, you bounder!" said Figgins. "Well, I don't mind; he's our Housemaster, but we don't own him. He's a rank outsider!"

"Figgy, old man, you're talking sense. Come and have some of these chestnuts," said Blake affectionately.

And Figgins did; and the rivals of St. Jim's parted on the best of terms.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Prompt Delivery!

**M**R. RATCLIFF was looking a little sourer than usual as he went into the Fifth Form Room the next morning.

Mr. Ratcliff was Form-master of the

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Fifth, and the Fifth were not proud of him. Being a senior Form, they were exempt from caning, otherwise there would have been some smarting palms in the Fifth Form Room that morning. "Looks ratty, doesn't he?" murmured Lefevre of the Fifth, as Mr. Ratcliff came in. "What's been upsetting his nibs, Cutts?"

Cutts shook his head.

"Blessed if I know. I know we're going to have a rotten morning."

"Somebody'd been rotting him on the telephone yesterday," said Bray. "I heard in the New House somebody had phoned for legs of mutton and things to be delivered to Ratty this morning, and Ratty can't get on to who did it. It wasn't anybody in the New House, I know that. He can't prove it was a St. Jim's chap at all. Anybody might have used the telephone anywhere."

"Silence here, please," said Mr. Ratcliff, looking round sourly. "Kindly remember that you are in the Form-room. This is not a junior Form, kindly remember, and I decline to allow chattering and whispering."

The Fifth Formers looked daggers at their Form-master. It was evident that Ratty was more ratty than ever that morning.

Lessons had hardly started in the Fifth Form Room, however, before they were interrupted.

There was a tap at the door, and Taggles, the school porter, put his head in.

Mr. Ratcliff looked round angrily.

"You should not come here when lessons are on, Taggles," he said sharply. "You should know better, my man. Go away at once!"

"Wery well, sir," said Taggles sulkily, "but wot—"

"Kindly go!"

"Yes, sir; but wot am I to do with the footballs?"

Mr. Ratcliff stared at him.

"Are you intoxicated, Taggles?" he rasped out.

"No, I ain't, sir," said Taggles very gruffly, "and I don't take it kindly, sir, that you should insinuate that I am, sir. The 'Ead, sir, is puffically satisfied with my conduct; an' if you ain't satisfied, sir—"

"If you are not intoxicated, what do you mean by coming here with a ridiculous question? I know nothing about footballs. I take no interest in such frivolous things, as you should know."

"Mr. Rutter's man says as 'ow 'e was hinstucted to wait for the money, sir."

"What! The money for what?"

"The footballs, sir, and the football jerseys wot you hordered."

Mr. Ratcliff seemed rooted to the floor.

"Footballs! Football jerseys! Ordered by me!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, they've come."

"I did not order them."

"Which Mr. Rutter's man says as 'ow 'e was specially hinstucted to deliver them at 'arf-past nine this mornin' to you personally, sir."

"It is some idiotic mistake. Tell the man I have not ordered anything of the kind and have had no communication with Mr. Rutter. They may be for Mr. Railton. I have no use for such nonsense. Tell the man to go away."

"Wery well, sir."

Taggles retired, shutting the door with more force than was really necessary, and Mr. Ratcliff, very much ruffled, went on with the Fifth.

The Fifth were grinning. They suspected a jape, and they were not sorry.

Five minutes later Taggles was back again. He knocked at the Form-room

door and opened it, and looked in with a decidedly surly expression.

The Fifth Form master glared at him as if he would eat him.

"Well, what is it?" he snapped.

"The man says as 'ow there's no mistake, sir. The footballs and things were hordered by you over the telephone yesterday afternoon."

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard. He began to understand. He remembered the misunderstanding with Mr. Snorks, the butcher.

"Tell the man I did not order them," he said. "It was a joke of somebody—somebody I do not as yet know. And don't come back here again. I refuse to hear anything further on the subject. Go away at once!"

Taggles grunted and went. Mr. Ratcliff swept his Form with a furious glance.

"There is no occasion for merriment in this ridiculous occurrence," he said. "The next boy who laughs will be reported to the Head for impertinence."

And the Fifth Formers tried not to laugh. The lessons went on, Mr. Ratcliff ragging the seniors with all his great powers in that line. He was just making Lefevre feel that life was not worth living in a world where there were such poets as Horace, and such Form-masters as Mr. Ratcliff, when Taggles looked in again.

Lefevre, who would have welcomed an earthquake at that moment, was glad to see him. But Mr. Ratcliff was not. He had succeeded in confusing Lefevre to such a point that the Fifth Former was in a state of utter misery, and naturally the master did not like to be interrupted.

He gave Taggles a savage glare.

"I told you not to return to me about those footballs, Taggles. How dare you disobey my orders! I refuse to hear anything more about the matter! Mr. Rutter may take what measures he pleases. I will not hear a word about the matter. I—"

"Tain't that matter, sir," said Taggles surlily. "It's the armchair."

"What!"

"The armchair's come."

"Are you mad?" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "What armchair?"

"From Robinson's, sir."

"Robinson's. Who is Robinson?"

"Furniture dealer in Wayland, sir. They've sent a man over with it special, as you wanted it at a quarter to ten this morning without fail. The man says he's brought the bill by your special instructions, sir, and 'e's waitin' to be paid."

"I know nothing about an armchair!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I have never heard of Robinson's, and I have not ordered an armchair. Tell the man so. Don't come back to tell me what he says. I refuse to know what he says. Tell him to take the chair away, and don't come back here."

Taggles breathed hard and retired. Taggles was getting into a bad temper himself by this time. He met Tohy, the page, in the passage, and confided to him that Mr. Ratcliff was either mad or drunk, he didn't know which; but the odds were on the madness.

In the Fifth Form Room only Mr. Ratcliff's fierce eyes kept the fellows from bursting into a roar of laughter. It was evidently a "rag" and a rag of unusual richness. The Fifth Form master was so agitated that he began to make mistakes himself, instead of catching his pupils in mistakes, and unfortunately at that moment he was tackling Cutts.

Cutts was as cool as an iceberg, and

(Continued at foot of next page.)



# Champions of Speed and Sport!

Pen portraits of the subjects of this week's Free Gifts that will add a new interest to the pictures.

**W. R. HAMMOND.**—Holder of the record for the biggest score in international cricket, "Wally" Hammond, Gloucestershire and England all-rounder, has been in "big" cricket for fifteen years, and he is still young enough to have many more seasons ahead of him. His batting record was 336 not out (ten 6's and 33 4's!) against New Zealand, in 1933. At fielding, he created another record by catching ten Surrey batsmen in one match. He is generally considered the finest living slip-fielder—and as a change bowler he is worth his place in any side.

**ERNST HENNE.**—What Sir Malcolm Campbell has been doing in the motor-racing world for the past few years, Ernst Henne, Germany's champion motor-cycle speed-king, has been doing on his two-wheelers. His streamlined B.M.W. two-wheelers have now held the world's motor-cycle record, on and off, for the past seven years. In the summer of 1935, he reached 164 m.p.h., and now his super-speediron is being tuned-up for an attempt to reach three miles a minute! Henne also holds the sidecar record, at 129 m.p.h.

**H. L. BROOK.**—Twelve months after he learned to fly, this world-famous airman broke the most coveted long-distance solo record in aviation—the Australia-England record. Seven days 19 hours, and 50 minutes after taking off from Darwin, Australia, in his Miles Falcon cabin monoplane, he reached

Lympne, England, beating the previous best time for the flight by several hours. Brook has been called the "hard luck" airman, so often have his record-attempts been ruined by misfortune. But this plucky Yorkshireman showed the world by his Australia-England flight that a stout heart and a fast British plane can beat the bad-luck bogey in the long run!

**H.M.S. CODRINGTON.**—Destroyers are sometimes called the "greyhounds of the sea," and H.M.S. Codrington, fastest destroyer in the British Navy, certainly deserves that title. On her trials, in rough water, she averaged 39 knots for four sea-miles, which works out at well over forty miles an hour in terms of land-speed. You imagine a 332 feet long warship cleaving the water at that speed, and you'll get some idea just what it means. The Codrington was built in 1930, carries a crew of 185, and has engines of 39,000 horse-power.

**MAX GROSSKREUTZ.**—Never ask Max what his full Christian names are—he's a bit touchy on that point. Between you and me, though, they're Maximilian Octavius—still, stick to plain "Max"! This great speed-champion first sprang to fame in 1923, when he won the Australian Speedway Championship. Since then he has ridden on practically every track in Britain and "down under," and holds the remarkable record of being the only Australian to have ridden in every Test match since 1930. He is amazingly strong, and has survived accidents that

he avenged the sufferings of his Form-fellows upon Mr. Ratcliff by catching the master, and showing him up, and making him admit that he was wrong.

Mr. Ratcliff was by this time in a state of mind bordering on homicidal mania. Then came another tap at the door, and Taggles presented himself.

There was a suspicion of a grin on Taggles' rugged face.

"Please, sir, the stuff's come from Mr. Bunn's."

"What!"

"The jam-tarts and cakes, sir."

"This—this is a plot!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff, as the Fifth burst into an irrepressible chuckle. "It is a vile plot. Do you mean to say, Taggles, that Mr. Bunn has delivered goods here in the belief that they were ordered by me?"

"Yes, sir. Two 'undred jam-tarts, sir, and one 'undred pound-cakes, sir."

"I refuse to accept the goods! Jam-tarts! Good heavens! Mr. Bunn must be mad! What can he suppose I want with two hundred jam-tarts?" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "Tell the man to take them back. Tell him to tell his master that he is a fool. Go away at once."

"Yes, sir."

"Lefevre, you were laughing. Take a hundred lines! Cutts, how dare you laugh? Take five hundred lines! Take five hundred lines, Prye!"

And the Fifth did not laugh any more. Mr. Ratcliff was raging. He could hardly control himself sufficiently to go on with the lesson. But by the time he had settled down another interruption

was due. The School porter put his head into the Form-room.

"If you please, sir—"

Mr. Ratcliff turned round with almost a yell.

"How dare you come here again, Taggles? Go away instantly!"

"But the clothes have come, sir."

"The—what?"

"The ready-made clothes from Mr. Wiggs, sir. Fifty 'on, sir. The man 'as the bill, sir; one hundred guineas, sir."

"It's a wicked plot. I did not order them. Taggles, if anything more is delivered at the school for me, refuse to take it in. I have ordered nothing. Now go away, and don't come back. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Taggles.

Mr. Ratcliff mopped his perspiring brow.

"I—I shall leave you for a short time," he rapped out. "I feel too disturbed to continue the lesson, Lefevre, I leave you in charge here. If there is any neglect of your work, you will answer for it to me."

And Mr. Ratcliff strode out of the Form-room and slammed the door behind him.

The Fifth Formers burst into a yell of laughter as soon as he had gone. In the passage Mr. Ratcliff came suddenly upon Taggles talking to Toby.

"E's mad," said Taggles—"mad as a 'atter! Hordered things right and left by telephone, and now 'e won't take 'em! Shouldn't wonder if they sun-monses 'im—"

"Taggles!"

would have put most other riders out of the speed game for life. As a matter of fact, he's been reported killed no less than three times, yet has still bobbed up smiling!

**CAPT. R. B. IRVING.**—You've probably never heard of this great seaman in your life; that's because he's just about the most modest famous man in the world. His job is captaining the *Majestic*, the biggest British liner afloat, which is a mighty big job. He has to look after a 56,621 ton liner travelling at 25 knots, a crew of 700, a passenger complement of over 3,600, and a set of engines totalling 64,000 horse-power. To do all that at one time, even with able assistance, is a job for which super-seamen only need apply!

**GRAF ZEPPELIN.**—This giant German airship has already flown over a million miles—and she's still going strong! Her job is to carry mails and passengers from Europe to Pampambuco, South America—and she does it at 80 m.p.h.! The first Transatlantic flight was made in 1929, since when she has made over a hundred similar voyages. It's a great tribute to this giant gasbag—and to her designer-commander, Dr. Hugo Eckener—that in all the many miles she has flown, she has never met with a serious accident. The Graf Zeppelin is, in fact, the only completely successful giant airship ever built.

**VICKERS VICTORIA TROOP-CARRYING PLANE.**—One of the latest ideas in military tactics is to carry troops into action areas by means of specially-designed planes known as troop-carriers. The Vickers Victoria machine which we show, is the fastest plane of this type in the R.A.F. Carrying 22 men, with full equipment, she rushes them into action at 110 m.p.h. Alternatively, she can be used for transporting ammunition and guns.

"Ho! I—I didn't see you, sir! You moves so quiet!" said Taggles.

"You were speaking of me, Taggles."

"Ho, no, sir! I was a-talkin' about the weather, sir," said Taggles. "Looks to me like more rain to-day, sir—don't you think?"

Mr. Ratcliff did not state what he thought on that subject. Taggles retired, to send away Mr. Wiggs' man with the fifty two-guinea suits. Mr. Ratcliff took a turn in the quadrangle to calm himself. He realised that he was the victim of a joke, and he had an uneasy suspicion that there was more to come. His suspicion was well-founded.

A few minutes later he caught sight of the chemist's boy from Mr. Pilbury's in the village, with a parcel, outside Taggles' lodge, arguing hotly with Taggles.

Mr. Ratcliff swept down upon them. "What is it—what is it?" he demanded.

"Please, sir, I've brought the cod-liver oil, sir, and Mr. Taggles says it ain't ordered, sir," said Mr. Pilbury's boy.

"Cod-liver oil!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Yes, sir. Twenty large-sized bottles. Ordered by telephone yesterday."

"Take it away!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "I did not order it!"

"But I took down the order myself, sir, when you was talking to Mr. Pilbury over the telephone, sir."

"I did not order it, I tell you! It is an infamous plot! Take it away!"

The chemist's boy picked up his big parcel.



"Very well, sir. 'Ere's the bill."

"Take it away!"

"Will you pay now, sir?"

"Go!"

The chemist's boy cast an alarmed look at Taggles, and Taggles, taking advantage of the fact that Mr. Ratcliff's back was turned to him, tapped his forehead significantly. The chemist's boy whistled softly, understanding what that meant.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ratcliff turned round just in time to catch Taggles in the act. He gave the school porter a thunderous look.

"Taggles, what do you mean? What are you doing?"

"Scratchin' my 'ead, sir," said Taggles innocently. "No 'arm in that, sir, I 'ope?"

Mr. Ratcliff strode away without replying. He was almost at boiling-point. The chemist's boy shouldered his parcel and retreated, with the firm conviction that Mr. Ratcliff was mad, and he left Taggles with the same conviction.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Cheap Coal!

"HERE we are again!" said Monty Lowther genially.

At eleven o'clock the juniors were allowed out of the class-room for a quarter of an hour. They came trooping out into the sunny quadrangle in great spirits. The Fifth were out, too, and the talk of the Fifth was very interesting to the juniors. It showed them that the jape upon the Fifth Form master had worked quite satisfactorily.

"The coal hasn't been delivered yet," Tom Merry remarked, with a glance at the clock tower. "It's just eleven."

"I wanted that to be delivered under my personal supervision," remarked Lowther. "I told them that on the telephone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Ratty's in a state of lunacy," said Figgins, joining the chums of the School House. "He's just gone into the New House, looking as if he wanted to commit nine or ten murders all at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any of you young rascals been telephoning to tradesmen?" asked Cutts, stopping to inquire of the juniors.

"Us!" said Tom Merry. "My dear Cutts, how can you ask such a thing?"

"Yaas, wathah, Cutts! I wegard you as a suspicious boast, you know!"

Cutts laughed and walked away. He was pretty sure of the matter, but it was no business of his. He enjoyed the ragging of Mr. Ratcliff as much as anyone.

Tom Merry & Co. waited for the arrival of the coal. They gathered round the side entrance, where the vans would arrive, and it was Blake who first caught sight of them, and shouted to his comrades.

"Here they come!"

"Hurrah!"

A line of coal-vans were coming along, with grimy men upon them, and big dray horses pulling along that huge consignment of coal for Mr. Ratcliff.

The juniors simply yelled at the sight. The joke had spread among the juniors now, and nearly all the fellows who saw the coal-vans knew that their arrival was due to Monty Lowther's humorous activity with the telephone.

The vans drew up at the tradesmen's gate.

A huge, broad-shouldered, dusty giant

descended from the foremost van and rang the bell. He looked in surprise at the yelling juniors. To the coalman there was nothing surprising or comic in the delivery of fifty tons of good house coal at forty-five shillings a ton. But to the St. Jim's juniors it seemed very funny indeed.

It was Toby, the page, who came down to the gate. Toby looked at the coalman and at the coal-vans, and seemed surprised.

"I didn't know there was any coal hordered," said Toby. "It ain't for the School 'Ouse, I'm sure of that."

The coalman consulted his bill.

"Mr. Ratcliff, New 'Ouse," he said.

Toby jumped. He had heard of the various articles that had arrived for the New House master that morning, and he thought he could guess what the arrival of the coal meant.

"Ow much is there?" asked Toby faintly.

"Fifty tons of 'ouse coal," said the coalman.

"Fifty tons! My word!"

"Where am I to deliver it?" asked the man. "Didn't you know it was ordered?"

"That I didn't," said Toby, with a chuckle; "and I dare say Mr. Ratcliff didn't either. My word! I'd better tell 'im afore you take it in. Wait 'ere."

"Wot am I to wait for?"

demanding the coalman.

"I think there's a mistake."

"There's no mistake.

Fifty tons of 'ouse coal—

an' 'ere's the hinvoice!"

"You wait 'ere!" said

Toby.

And Toby scuttled off. The coalman grunted. His mates, who had descended from their vans, grunted, too. They didn't see why they should have to wait. The juniors didn't see it, either, and they were willing to give advice.

"Better get the coal in,"

said Monty Lowther. "I'll

show you the way, if you

like. You come this way to

the back of the New House,

and shoot it into the cellar.

Quite simple!"

"Thank you, sir!" said

the coalman. "It'll take us

a tidy time to empty that

lot, and we've got other

jobs for this afternoon."

"Draw it mild, Monty!"

murmured Tom Merry.

Lowther looked at him in

surprise.

"My dear Tom, surely

you don't want this good

man to waste his time. He's

got plenty to do to deliver

fifty tons of coal at a sack a time, and

get back to his dinner. It would be a

shame if he were kept waiting for his

dinner."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"This way," said Monty Lowther.

"I'll show you where the New House

coal-shoot is, and you can do the rest."

"Thank you kindly, sir!"

"Not at all! This way!"

And Monty Lowther started off to

show the way, followed by a long line

of coalmen, each bending under the

weight of a sack of good house coal.

The juniors looked on with great

enjoyment.

"The New House hasn't got accom-

modation for fifty ton of coal at once,"

murmured Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say they'll find room some-

where," grinned Blake. "If the cellars

won't hold it, they can pile it in the

garden."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, Toby was looking for Mr.

Ratcliff. He found the New House

master in his study in the New House,

where he had retired for a nerve rest.

He glared at Toby as the cheerful youth

in buttons presented himself. Mr. Rat-

cliff would have glared at any visitor

he had received at that moment.

"Well, what is it?" he snapped.

"If you please, sir, the coal's come!"

"What coal?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.



"Man! Stop!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, as the burly

to deliver that coal!" Crash! went the coal, and

"Fifty tons of 'ouse coal, sir, for the

New 'Ouse."

"I did not order it! Tell the men to

take it back! I refuse to take it! I

refuse to bandy words on the subject!

Tell the men to take it back! Do you

hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Toby.

"Go at once! Not a word more!

Go!"

Toby went. He hurried back to the

gates, and to his dismay, found that

consignment of house coal in the full

process of delivery. A long line of coal-

men followed one another to the New

House, delivering coals. An obliging

junior had slipped into the House and



opened the coal-shoot, and the sackfuls were descending into it one after another.

Toby gasped at the sight. "Look 'ere!" he exclaimed. "You're not to deliver that coal. Mr. Ratcliff says as 'ow it wasn't hordered, an' you're to take it back!"

The coal foreman grunted. "It was hordered, and my horders was to deliver it," he said. "An' we've put in three tons already!"

"Oh crikey!" "Git on with it, mates! It's a tidy lot, and it'll take some time!"



Coalman was shooting in another sack. "Don't you dare cloud of dust arose, smothering the New House master."

"You'd better keep the rest back—" "Keep back nothin'," said the coalman. "I'm hordered to deliver this 'ere coal, and I'm a-doin' of it!"

And the coaly procession went on, and clouds of black dust rose from the recesses under the New House, as sack after sack was shot into the opening.

Toby, at his wits' end what to do, rushed round the House again, and hurried to Mr. Ratcliff's study.

The New House master received him with an angry frown.

"Well, what is it now?" he snapped.

"The coalman, sir—"

"Don't say another word to me about the coalmen!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I

refuse to hear a word on the subject. Go!"

"But, sir—" "Go! Leave this room!"

Toby had no choice but to go. He had done his best, and if Mr. Ratcliff refused to hear him he could do no more. He went.

Mr. Ratcliff sat down again, fuming. He was getting into a homicidal temper. But his repose was soon disturbed again. This time it was the New House housekeeper who came. She knocked at the door, and opened it without waiting to be told to do so, and flounced in.

Mrs. Kenwigg was a portly dame, and, as a rule, extremely dignified. But there is no denying the fact that her movements, as she entered the study, could only be described as flouncing. She was indignant, and she was annoyed.

"Mr. Ratcliff, sir—" "My good woman, what is the matter?" said Mr. Ratcliff peevishly. "I trust you have not come to trouble me with household matters now? I am in no humour for it."

"The coal, sir—" "Oh dear! I have ordered them to take it back!"

"But they are delivering it!" shrieked Mrs. Kenwigg.

"What!" Mr. Ratcliff jumped up. "Delivering it?"

"Yes, sir! And we've got the coal in for the winter, and the cellars are nearly full. You ordered this coal without consulting me, your housekeeper, sir, and never gave me a word of warning that it was coming to-day, or—"

"I did not order it!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "It is a wicked, infamous plot, and—"

"It is being delivered. They are shooting it into the cellar, and the cellar is overflowing!"

"Good heavens! I will soon put a stop to that!"

And Mr. Ratcliff rushed out of the study.

CHAPTER 11.

Mr. Ratcliff Is Very Ratty!

"CAVE!" "Ware rats!" "Here he comes!"

The word passed among the juniors in a whisper as Mr. Ratcliff appeared in sight. The New House master looked excited. His scholarly cap was on a little aslant, and his gown was flying in the wind. His face was red, and his eyes were gleaming.

"Man! Stop! Don't you dare to deliver that coal!" he exclaimed, as a burly coalman was shooting in a fresh sack.

Crash! went the coal, and a cloud of dust arose. The Housemaster coughed and jumped back. The coalman looked at him stolidly.

"Tain't my business, sir!" he said. "You'd better speak to my boss!"

"Your—your what? Oh, your foreman, I presume you mean. Where is the man? Stop delivering that coal at once! Cannot you see that the cellar is full?"

"That ain't my business, sir!" "Are you a fool?" roared Mr. Ratcliff.

"No, I ain't!" said the grimy man surlily. "And I don't allow no one to call me one, sir! So don't you do it, that's all!"

"Where is the man in charge here? I insist upon seeing him! Where is he?"

"Allo! Wot's wanted?" "Are you in charge of these men?"

"Yes, I ham!" said the coal foreman, not at all pleased by Mr. Ratcliff's bullying manner. "Wot's the trouble?"

"I did not order that coal. I forbid you to deliver it!"

"You Mr. Ratcliff, New 'Ouse?" "I am!"

"Then you're the gent as the coal's assigned to!"

"I tell you I did not order it! If you do not immediately go away, I will telephone for the police, and have you arrested!"

The coalman looked dangerous.

"Look 'ere!" he said. "I was hordered to deliver that there coal 'ere. If you want me to take it back, say so, and I'll take it back. That's all! You houghter 'ave said so afore any of it was delivered. Wot's been delivered you'll 'ave to pay for!"

"I refuse to pay a penny. It is an infamous joke. I did not order the coal. I order you to take it back at once!"

"Don't deliver any more, mates," said the coal foreman. "The gentleman 'as altered 'is mind. Get back to the vans."

The procession turned round, and the sacks were taken back.

"Now remove the coal you have already placed in my cellars!" commanded Mr. Ratcliff.

"Don't you talk silly!" said the coalman.

"What! What!"

"'Ow can we git coal up outer the cellars?" demanded the coalman. "Wot's there will 'ave to stay there, an' you'll be charged for it!"

"Take it back at once!"

"'Ow can I?" roared the coalman, losing his temper. "Do you think I can go down on my 'ands and knees in your bloomin' cellar pickin' up bits of coal?"

"I do not care how you do it, so long as you leave none of your coal here. I did not order it, and I refuse to take it. I shall not pay a penny!"

"You can settle that with my boss," said the coalman.

"Will you take that coal away?"

"Don't be a hass!" said the coalman.

"You—you ruffian! You—you dare to address me—me—in that manner? I—I will have you arrested! I will—"

The coalman turned his back on Mr. Ratcliff, and strode away.

Outside the gate the men were loading up the vans again with the sacks of coal that had been taken down, and with the empty sacks that had been delivered. The foreman checked them off.

"You sign this 'ere paper?" he said to Mr. Ratcliff.

"What?"

"You sign for receiving three tons of 'ouse coal."

"I will not sign it! I will not receive the coal!"

"It's delivered," said the coalman, "and you've got to sign for it, sir. I can't go back without it being signed for."

"I refuse to sign the paper! You



are a fool—you're an idiot! I did not order the coal! Go!"

And Mr. Ratcliff stamped furiously away. The coalman stared after him in a slow, stolid way, evidently under the impression that he had to deal with a lunatic.

"It's a shame!" said Monty Lowther sympathetically. "I should appeal to the headmaster, if I were you."

"Ain't that dotty gent the 'eadmaster?" asked the coalman.

"Certainly not!" said Blake. "He's only a Housemaster. The best thing you can do is to see the Head."

"Thank you kindly!" said the coalman. "I should get 'auled over the coals, I tell you, if I went back without that paper signed. But I s'pose it will be all right if the 'eadmaster signs it?"

"Right as rain!" said Lowther. "This way! Hi, Toby!"

"Yes, Master Lowther," said Toby. "Show this gentleman in to the Head," said Lowther. "Dr. Holmes has got to sign his paper."

Toby glanced hesitatingly at the dusty, grimy coalman, wondering what the Head would say when he showed him into the study. The coalman appeared to understand the page's reflections, and he dropped a heavy and grimy hand on Toby's shoulder.

"You show me to the 'eadmaster, young feller-me-lad!" he said.

"Ourlight," said Toby. "Don't you 'old me—you're making my tunic black. Foller me!"

The coalman followed. Toby led the way to the Head's study. Dr. Holmes started up in amazement at the sight of the grimy man from the coal yards.

"What—what—" he began.

"I want this 'ere paper signed, please, sir," said the coalman. "Coals hordered by Mr. Ratcliff, and 'e's changed 'is mind. Can't take back the three tons wot is delivered. The gentleman won't sign for the three tons, sir. I can't go back without my paper signed, sir."

"I—I—I do not understand!" gasped the Head. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Ratcliff has ordered coal and now refuses to take them in—?"

"That's it, sir! Three tons was delivered by the time he changed 'is mind. Somebody 'ave got to sign this 'ere paper."

"This is—is extraordinary. I fail to understand it. My good man, surely there is some mistake!" said the Head helplessly. "Toby, request Mr. Ratcliff to step over here!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Wait a few moments, my good man. I have no doubt Mr. Ratcliff will be able to explain."

The New House master entered the study a few moments later. He was still flaming with wrath, and he stared in surprise at the sight of the coalman in the Head's study.

"What does this mean?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "Man, have you dared to come here—?"

"I want this 'ere paper signed!" said the coalman stolidly.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Ratcliff?" the Head asked, with asperity. "It is a most extraordinary occurrence—most extraordinary, and unpleasant!"

"It is a plot, sir—an infamous plot! Someone has been impersonating me on the telephone—ordering all kinds of things to be delivered to me by the tradesmen in Rylcombe and Wayland.

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I did not order this coal! It is infamous!"

"Three tons of 'ouse coal is delivered, sir," said the coalman. "The gentleman didn't tell me not to deliver it till after I'd delivered three ton!"

"I—I—I did not know the man was delivering it. I—"

"The man is not to blame, evidently," said Dr. Holmes. "You had better sign the paper for the amount delivered, Mr. Ratcliff. After all, it will do no harm to purchase three extra tons of coal at this time. Please do as the man wishes."

There was evidently no other way of getting rid of the coalman, and Mr. Ratcliff realised it. He signed the paper with an exceedingly bad grace. Satisfied as soon as the paper was signed, the coalman departed.

"This is an extraordinary thing, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head, when the grimy gentleman from the coal yards was gone. "Who could have impersonated you on the telephone? Do you think it was someone at this school?"

"I think it must have been, sir. It is outrageous—unheard of! But it was not a boy in my own House. I have inquired strictly, and none of them have access to my telephone. I am sure that it was a School House boy—and I think I could name half a dozen among whom the culprit could be found."

"It was evidently a foolish practical joke," said the Head. "But we cannot proceed on suspicion, Mr. Ratcliff. Unless you have a definite idea who the culprit is, I think it would be better to mention no name. Of course, you will make inquiries, and I will ask Mr. Railton to do so."

And Mr. Ratcliff had to be satisfied with that. He returned to his own House in a whirlwind of rage, and boxed the ears of several juniors whom he met on the way. There were a good many inquiries made on the subject of that mysterious ordering of goods for Mr. Ratcliff without his knowledge. But no discovery was made. Mr. Ratcliff suspected that either Tom Merry or Blake could have told something if they had chosen, but he could not be sure—and, of course, the telephone might have been used by anyone anywhere.

Mr. Ratcliff, burning with rage and hatred, was compelled to let the matter drop. But he still nursed a hope that the culprit might be discovered, and he gave the matter a great deal of thought.

He would not have been left in any doubt on the subject if he could have looked into Tom Merry's study after the coalman had gone. The study was crowded with fellows who had retired there to laugh in safety. And they were laughing.

"Poor old Ratty!" said Figgins, wiping his eyes. "Poor old Ratty! He's got it in the neck this time, and no mistake!"

"Nice for the Fifth this afternoon!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if he loses his little temper and licks Cutts, all the better—Cutts wants it!" said Blake. "Poor old Ratty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the juniors were still grinning gleefully when the dinner-bell rang, and they went down.

Kildare met them in the passage. The juniors ceased to grin, and looked properly innocent and serious as they caught Kildare's eye.

"I suppose you don't know anything

about that telephone business, you three?" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Us!" exclaimed the Terrible Three, in astonishment. "Oh, Kildare!"

Kildare laughed, and did not ask any more questions.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Not a Success!

"SISTER ANNE, Sister Anne, spot-test thou anybody coming?"

It was Monty Lowther who asked the question.

Figgins of the New House had kindly consented to keep watch for Mr. Oates if he should appear in sight. For if Mr. Oates came, the Terrible Three had to carry out their new and first-class idea of disguising themselves from recognition by contorting their features. It was Figgins whom Monty Lowther playfully addressed as Sister Anne.

Afternoon lessons were over, and the farmer had not come—though the Terrible Three had sat through lessons in the momentary anticipation of hearing his voice. That Mr. Oates would forgive them for the damage they had done—though quite against their will—was not to be hoped for, and it was only a question what time he would arrive to draw down the wrath of the Head upon them.

"Sister Anne—Sister Anne—"

Figgins grinned.

"Look out, you chaps!" he said.

"Can you see him?" asked the Terrible Three in chorus.

"Yes; I've just spotted him in his old car. He's coming here."

"Oh crumbs!"

Monty Lowther peered cautiously round a corner of the gateway. There was Farmer Oates, driving in his car towards the school, red and ruddy as ever. He did not look bad-tempered, certainly, but there could not be any doubt about what he was coming to St. Jim's for. The Terrible Three groaned.

"All because three innocent children trotted over his beastly land!" said Monty Lowther. "What on earth was land made for?"

"Get out of sight," said Figgins.

"He'll spot you as soon as he gets in here. Go and bury yourselves, and don't show up unless the school is called together."

"What-ho!"

And the Terrible Three promptly disappeared. Figgins took off his cap very respectfully to Farmer Oates as he drove in. The stout farmer stopped his car. He recognised Figgins as one of the pack that had been kept off his land and prevented from following the hares the day before.

"Hallo! You were one of the young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins. "I suppose you haven't come here to complain about yourself for keeping me off your land, have you?"

The farmer laughed.

"Haw, haw, haw! No, you young rascal!"

Then he drove on, leaving Figgins in a state of great astonishment. The New House junior could not understand the farmer's good temper. Certainly Farmer Oates looked the best-tempered man that ever came to get a junior caned.

Mr. Ratcliff encountered Farmer Oates as the latter got out of his car. The New House master was looking very sour. All inquiries on the subject of the telephone jape had been fruitless so far. Mr. Ratcliff was just coming away after speaking to the Head on the

(Continued on page 13.)





Let the Editor be your pal. Write to him to-day, addressing your letters :  
The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**H**ALLO, Chums! Next Wednesday's number of the GEM will contain two more great yarns—another masterpiece from the pen of Martin Clifford, and the concluding story of Owen Conquest's gripping mystery series of Rookwood. In addition, of course, there will be eight more coloured pictures to add to your collection. These will complete the splendid set of 32. See that you don't miss them.

#### "A COCKNEY AT ST. JIM'S!"

This is the title of the next St. Jim's yarn, in which Martin Clifford introduces an amazing and amusing character to the school. 'Arry 'Orace 'Ammond, he calls himself, but what he lacks in aspirates he makes up for in coolness, keenness, and a ready wit. 'Arry is a character you will take to on the spot. He's a cheery London Cockney, whose father has made a fortune and sent his hopeful son to St. Jim's to become a gentleman. 'Arry's mode of speech and manners and customs make him the object of ridicule, but the Cockney takes it all in good part. Nevertheless, he finds himself in plenty of trouble, but, backed up by a cheery nature and two hard fists, he comes up smiling every time!

Look out for this ripping yarn. It's one that you won't want to put down once you start reading it.

#### "THE MYSTERY MAN UNMASKED!"

Owen Conquest winds up his grand mystery series of Jimmy Silver & Co. with as thrilling a story as you could wish for. The unknown ragger of Rookwood is at last bowled out! Who he is, and how he is at last caught, I will leave you to find out when you read the yarn. But when his identity is revealed, it causes a big shock at Rookwood.

By the way, have you had a shot at winning one of our fine match footballs? Send a joke along to-day. The Jester has plenty of footballs to award

—and jolly fine ones they are! Only the best British-made match balls are good enough for GEM readers—at least, that is my view.

#### LUCKY TO BE ALIVE.

Diving to earth, the plane crashed with such force that the machine was completely wrecked, the engine being smashed adrift from the cowling. The odds against a pilot escaping alive from such a crash must be a thousand to one; so Bryan Walker, an Australian Air Force pilot, must consider himself one of the luckiest men alive after surviving such a smash.

With other pilots, he was engaged in flying manoeuvres, during the course of which each man had to put his machine into a nose-dive as near the ground as possible. Walker miscalculated and dived too low, and couldn't pull his plane out of the dive in time to prevent a crash. At terrific speed, his machine struck the ground and bounced along for over a hundred yards, before coming to rest, a heap of mangled wreckage, with the engine lying some distance away. If Walker had stayed in the cockpit he would certainly have been killed, but as the plane bounced along he was thrown out of it! When he was picked up afterwards, he was suffering from shock and head injuries. But he must be thanking his lucky stars that he's alive to-day!

#### FROM JAZZ TO LESSONS!

The clanging of the old school bell will soon be heard no more in elementary and secondary schools in Czechoslovakia. A more modern method of calling boys and girls to school is to be tried out. A wireless signal will be sent out each morning

at eight o'clock, and, appropriately enough, it will be followed by a marching song, after this style: "Pack up your books in your old schoolbag, and march, march, march!" Arriving at school the children will then start the day's work by listening to an interesting radio talk. This will be followed by a recital of classical music and then some jazz. And so, with the strains of some favourite dance tune ringing in their ears, and inspiring them to work, the boys and girls will begin lessons.

It remains to be seen what new excuses will be offered for arriving late at school!

Life should certainly be more cheery for Czechoslovakian boys and girls, but the same cannot be said of the young people living in Bulgaria. Laws in that country are very strict. If you are under nineteen you mustn't go out after seven o'clock in winter and eight o'clock in summer unless you have your mother or father with you. So if you want to go to the pictures with a pal you must take a parent with you—even if you are eighteen! And if a boy is caught by a policeman out of doors, and he is not wearing his school uniform, he can be arrested and fined! Queer, the customs of some countries!

#### PLAYING SUBSTITUTES.

Substitutes for injured or tired players in football matches are permitted in some countries, J. Jackson, of Derby. In Germany, for instance, if a man is crooked or tired out, another player may come on and take his place. In this country, however, the authorities have always frowned on this practice. But there is at least one occasion on record when a substitute was allowed to play in place of another man.

This happened in the International match between Wales and England in 1908. Dick Roose, the Welsh goalkeeper, was badly injured and couldn't resume. Permission was granted to Wales to play another man. But where could a first-class goalie, qualified to play for Wales, be found at a moment's notice? A board was sent round the ground, informing any goalkeeper, born in Wales, to report at the office. Luckily, Dai Davies, Bolton Wanderers goalie, was watching the match, and he took the place of the injured Roose. He played in the second half of the match, but he was unable to save his country from defeat, England winning 7-1.

#### TAILPIECE.

Mistress: "When you wait at the table to-night, Jane, be careful you do not spill anything."

Maid: "Don't worry, ma'am—I'll keep my mouth shut!"

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS COUPON  
25-1-36



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal, post your notice, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

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subject, and the Head had shown some slight signs of being bored with it. Mr. Ratcliff knew the farmer by sight, and as the portly gentleman naturally had no business at the school, the House-master guessed at once that he had come to lodge some complaint. That was a matter after Mr. Ratcliff's own heart, and he saluted the farmer very politely.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Oates!"  
 "Afternoon, sir!" said Mr. Oates. "I've dropped in to see Dr. Holmes!"  
 "I trust none of the boys have been trespassing upon your land again?" said Mr. Ratcliff, not quite stating the facts. As a matter of fact, he trusted that they had.

"That's it, sir!" said Mr. Oates. "Three young rascals, sir."  
 "You know their names?"  
 "That's jest what I've come to find out."

"Ah! Doubtless you could identify them?"

"Quite sure of that, sir."  
 "Pray come in. I will take you to the Head at once. Dr. Holmes will do everything he can, I am sure, to see justice done."

Mr. Ratcliff graciously showed him the way to the Head's study. Dr. Holmes concealed a yawn at the sight of the New House master; but Mr. Ratcliff had not come back to talk about the telephone outrage again. He presented Mr. Oates.

"Mr. Oates has called to complain of some of the juniors trespassing on his land yesterday, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I have taken the liberty of bringing him to you at once."

And Mr. Ratcliff retired, in the comfortable conviction that there was trouble brewing for somebody, and probably for the boys he specially disliked.

Ten minutes later the word went forth for the Junior Forms to assemble in Hall.

Jack Blake brought the news to Tom Merry's study, where the Terrible Three were lying low. Monty Lowther met him with a horrible squint, and he recoiled.

"My hat! Don't spring that too suddenly on Oates, or he'll have apoplexy," he said. "You're wanted. All Junior Forms to assemble in Hall. The prefects have been instructed to see that all the juniors are there."

"Oh rats!"  
 And the Terrible Three came disconsolately downstairs. After the feast comes the reckoning, and the hour of retribution had evidently arrived.

The Junior Forms—the Shell, the Fourth, the Third, and the Second—were assembled in Hall. The First—the babes, as they were called—were not wanted. The prefects called out the names to ascertain that all were there; then the Head entered the Hall by the upper door, accompanied by the stout and ruddy farmer.

Dr. Holmes glanced over the assembly.

"My boys," he said, "I understand that there was a Junior paper-chase yesterday, in which most of the Junior boys took part. There were three hares, and they crossed the land belonging to Mr. Oates, in spite of prohibition. These three boys are wanted. Let them come forward."

There was no movement.  
 The Terrible Three looked as unconscious as they could. Kildare glanced at them, and Monty Lowther had the nudacity to half-close one eye and wink at the captain of St. Jim's. Kildare almost burst into a laugh, but he turned it into a cough just in time.

"If the three boys do not come forward, Mr. Oates will pick them out," said the Head.

Silence.  
 "Pray pick out the boys, Mr. Oates."  
 "Certainly, sir!" said Mr. Oates.

And the stout farmer descended from the dais and came along the assembled juniors. He scanned all the boys carefully as he passed.

He recognised many members of the pack, but he had nothing to do with them; they had not entered his land.

He paused as he came opposite the Terrible Three.

Monty Lowther was squinting atrociously:

Manners had a big chunk of toffee in his cheek, giving him an appearance of bad toothache; and Tom Merry had twisted his mouth sideways in a really alarming manner.

Thus they faced the inspection of the farmer.

In Etons and broad collars they looked, of course, very different from their appearance in running clothes, and that, added to the contortions of their features, should have saved them from recognition.

The farmer, in fact, did not recognise them; but he was struck by Lowther's squint, and he stopped and stared at him as if fascinated.

"Good 'evens!" he murmured.  
 He was about to pass on, when Mr. Ratcliff's rasping voice rapped out.

Mr. Ratcliff really had no business there at all, but Mr. Ratcliff was a gentleman who had a finger in as many pies as he could. Mr. Ratcliff was on the spot to lend any assistance possible in identifying the culprits. And Mr. Ratcliff spotted at once the facial contortions of the Terrible Three.

"Merry!" he rapped out.  
 "Yes, sir?" said Tom, speaking with some difficulty, as he did not want to twist his mouth while the farmer's eyes were upon him.

"Why are you twisting your mouth in that ridiculous manner?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff.

"Eh, sir?"  
 "Is it to prevent recognition, Merry?"

"Oh, sir!"  
 "Lowther, this is the first time I have seen you afflicted with a squint! Is it natural, Lowther, or is it assumed?"

"Oh!" murmured Lowther.  
 "Manners, take that out of your mouth, whatever it is!"  
 "Oh!"

"And kindly resume your normal appearance," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly. "I fear you are attempting to deceive Mr. Oates."

The Terrible Three looked at Mr. Ratcliff as if they could eat him. The game was up now; and Lowther's squint and Manners' swelling in the face and Tom Merry's twisted mouth disappeared all together.

Mr. Oates uttered an exclamation.

"They are the three!"  
 "I thought so!" said Mr. Ratcliff grimly. "Kindly step out here, Merry, Manners, and Lowther!"

The chums of the Shell, with feelings too deep for words, stepped out.

"Ere they are, sir!" said Mr. Oates.  
 The Terrible Three followed him to the Head. Dr. Holmes looked at them over his gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"Merry! Manners! Lowther! You were the hares in the paper-chase yesterday afternoon?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry resignedly.

"Why did you not come forward?"  
 "We—we didn't want to be licked, sir."

The Head coughed.  
 "They were attempting to avoid recognition, Dr. Holmes, by contorting their features," said Mr. Ratcliff spitefully.

Dr. Holmes smiled.  
 "As these boys admit the fact, the matter is now settled," he said.

"Not quite, sir," said Mr. Oates. "I've got a question to put to these young gentlemen, with your permission, sir."

"Certainly, Mr. Oates."  
 "If—if you please, Mr. Oates," said Lowther mockingly, "we're awfully sorry for what happened."

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"I want to ask you young gentlemen a question," said Mr. Oates. "You dropped on my 'ead from my window, and you run off. You got off my land afore I could reach you, and you went over the level-crossing?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, in surprise, wondering what was coming.

"Now," said Mr. Oates impressively, "which of you was it that took my little girl off the railway line just as the express was coming by?"

The Terrible Three jumped. A bomb-shell dropping into the old Hall could hardly have astonished them more than that unexpected question from Mr. Oates.

CHAPTER 13.

Tom Merry—Hero!

THERE was a buzz among the juniors crowding the Hall. The Head was smiling.

Mr. Ratcliff bit his lip. He began to see that the farmer's visit had not exactly the object he had supposed and wished.

"My hat!" murmured Jack Blake. "This is the first time I've heard of this. What is the old boy getting at?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three were silent. Mr. Oates was regarding them seriously. He turned to the crowded, eager fellows looking on.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "I dessay you thought I've come 'ere to have a lad punished for trespassing on my land. Well, I was coming here for that—specially arter they broke my window and dropped on my 'ead—but after that I 'eard somethin', which I 'ave told your 'eadmaster. My eldest girl was out with my little Alice, and the kid had wandered away and got on the railway line. She was right under the express when one of these boys pulled her out, and nearly got hisself killed in doing it.

"When my girl came in, crying and in hysterics, I knew that it must have been one of them, 'cause it happened at the level-crossing only five minutes arter they got out of my stable. If they 'adn't got out, my little girl would 'ave been cut to pieces by the train." The stout farmer's voice shook. "The boy that did that was one of the best! I've come 'ere to give 'im a father's thanks, and to tell 'is schoolmates to be proud of 'im. It was the bravest thing I've ever come across. And now I want to know which of you young gentlemen it was?" added the farmer, turning to the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry's face was scarlet. Manners and Lowther, delighted at the turn the affair had taken, pushed him forward.

"Here's the giddy hero, sir!" said Lowther.

"That's the chap!" said Manners. "He wanted to hide his light under a bushel, but murder will out. Here he is!"

"Shurrup!" murmured Tom Merry.

There was a yell from the juniors in the Hall.

"Good old Tom Merry! Bravo!"

"So it was you, young gentleman?" said Mr. Oates.

"I—I didn't know it was your little girl, of course!" stammered Tom Merry.

The farmer grinned.

"You wouldn't have left her there if you'd knowed that, I suppose?" he said.

"No, I didn't mean that. But—but it was nothing, you know, I couldn't have let the kid be run over, could I?"

"Yes, you could," said the farmer. "You could 'ave thought of your own danger."

"I didn't stop to think," confessed Tom Merry.

"That's just it!" said the farmer. "If you'd stopped to think whether you'd risk it, my little girl would have been killed. I'd like to shake hands with you," said Mr. Oates, holding out a big red hand. "I had been rough on you, and you saved my little girl from death, and you might have been killed yourself.

"I'm glad you came to no harm, and I'm sorry I stopped you coming on my land; and I'm glad you broke my window and dropped on my 'ead, and it would 'ave served me right if you'd dropped 'arder. And if you ever want to come on my land again, you're to do just as you like; it's free to you and all your friends; and when you feel inclined to drop into the farmhouse to tea, my missus will be more than glad to see you."

Tom Merry shook hands with Mr. Oates gladly enough. He was only too pleased to see the matter end that way.

"I am very glad that Mr. Oates has brought this matter to my notice," said Dr. Holmes. "Merry, I am proud of you. It was a very gallant action. You did wrong in trespassing upon Mr. Oates' property, but the result has been so happy that I'm sure Mr. Oates is glad that you went there."

"And will be glad every time Master Merry comes again, sir," said Mr. Oates. "He and all his friends will always be welcome to do what they like."

And the stout farmer shook hands with Tom Merry again, and nodded his head to Dr. Holmes, and retired.

"Three cheers for Tom Merry!" shouted Figgins.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"And thwee cheeahs for Mr. Oates!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The old Hall rang with it. And the Head smiled approval. As Dr. Holmes retired there was a rush of the fellows towards Tom Merry, and he was seized and hoisted on the shoulders of three or four juniors, and carried out of the Hall in triumph.

"Round the quad!" shouted Blake. Tom Merry struggled.

"Put me down, you asses! Leggo!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "We're pwoud of you, deah boy! You have done exactly what I should have done in the circus—"

"Than which there can be no higher praise!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"March him wound the quad, deah boys!"

"Let me go!" yelled Tom Merry. "You silly asses! You frabjous chumps! Stop it! Don't play the giddy goat!"

"True heroes are ever modest," grinned Blake; "but we're going to give you your proper allowance of glory!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry was rushed out into the quadrangle, high on the shoulders of his schoolfellows, amid a cheering throng.

Blake produced a mouth-organ, and placed himself at the head of the procession, buzzing out: "See the Conquering Hero Comes!" But Digby tapped him on the shoulder.

"Play something more appropriate, you ass!" said Digby.

Blake stopped his musical efforts for a moment to glare at Digby.

"Ass!" he said. "There isn't anything more appropriate than that."

"Blessed if I see it! Why not play 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'?" said Digby.

Blake glared.

"You fathead! That's what I was playing!"

"Oh!" said Dig. in astonishment. "Were you?"

Blake disdained to reply. He buzzed on again, and the procession marched. Right round the quadrangle they bore the crimson-faced and exasperated hero, amid thunderous cheers. There was only one glum face looking on—Mr. Ratcliff's.

Mr. Ratcliff would have stopped the demonstration if he had dared, but he knew that the Head was looking on from his study window with a smile of approval. The old headmaster was very pleased to see the St. Jim's fellows recognise so spontaneously the heroism of their schoolfellow.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Bwavo, Tom Mewwy!"

Right round the quadrangle and back to the School House, where the flustered hero was set down at last on the steps.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Speech!" shouted Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah! A few gwaceful words suitable to the occasion, deah boy."

Tom Merry snorted.

"All right!" he said. "I think you're a lot of asses! If you collar me again I shall hit out! That's all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush, and Tom Merry vanished into the School House. Manners and Lowther found him in the study, smoothing out his rumpled attire, and putting on a new collar.

"Tommy, we're proud of you," said Manners.

"Bravo!" chortled Lowther.

Tom Merry did not reply. He picked up a big cushion and rushed upon his faithful chums, and smote them hip and thigh, and drove them out of the study.

And after that there was peace for the hero of St. Jim's.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Lowther's Latest Jape!

"MERRY!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry, stopping.

"I wish to speak to you, Merry," said Mr. Ratcliff, with his thin lips looking very tight and spiteful.

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff had stopped Tom Merry in the quad the day after Mr. Oates' visit to the school. The Terrible Three had almost forgotten the telephone jape by that time; but Mr. Ratcliff had not forgotten it, as his next words showed.

"I've been making inquiries," said Mr. Ratcliff. "It appears that you were in the House at the time those orders were given by telephone to the tradesmen on Wednesday."

Tom Merry groaned inwardly. It was just like Ratty to be always raking up ancient history in this way.

"Was I, sir?" said Tom.

"Yes."

"We had a paper-chase that afternoon, sir," said Tom Merry innocently.

"But I have ascertained the times, and I find that you did not start on the paper-chase until after the tradesmen had received those orders."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I suspected all along," said Mr. Ratcliff, "that you were the author of that exceedingly foolish practical joke."

"Did you really, sir?"

"I did. Do you deny it?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"I have asked you a question, Merry?" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a glitter in his eyes.

"I can't answer it, sir," said Tom Merry.

"What!"

"It isn't fair to ask me," said Tom Merry respectfully, but firmly. "It's making use of me to find out who did it. It's not my business to give a fellow away, or to betray myself if I did it. The Head wouldn't think so."

"Are you aware, Merry, that you are speaking to a Housemaster, to whom you owe respect and obedience?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"You are not my Housemaster, sir," said Tom Merry. "If Mr. Railton questions me, I am bound to answer."

"Don't bandy words with me, Merry. I ask you if it was you that gave those orders to the tradesmen on the telephone."

"I have nothing to say, sir."

"I shall take your silence as a confession."

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"You may please yourself about that, of course, sir."

"Then I shall place the matter before the Head."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff paused. He knew that the Head would not approve of catechising the boys one after another, in the hope of catching one of them tripping. Mr. Ratcliff was proceeding on the blindest suspicion, for he had no evidence that those telephone calls had been made from the school at all. The Head had shown very plainly that he was tired of the whole matter, and that he would not call a boy up to be examined about it unless there was some real evidence against him. It was simply tempting a boy to tell falsehoods, the Head had told Mr. Ratcliff. And so Mr. Ratcliff's statement that he would place the matter before the Head, was, in fact, mere "gas," as Tom Merry suspected.

"You are insolent, Merry!" said the New House master, at last.

"I don't mean to be, sir. But I don't think it's right to ask me to give information about myself or any other fellow."

"Do you dare to criticise my methods?"

Tom Merry did not answer. He was determined that Mr. Ratcliff should not catch him tripping.

"I repeat, Merry, that I feel certain that it was you. If you choose to confess, you may be dealt with more leniently than otherwise."

Tom Merry almost smiled. He was not likely to take a bait like that, even if he had been the practical joker in question—which he was not.

"Have you anything to say, Merry?"

"No, sir."

"You are an impertinent boy!" said Mr. Ratcliff, and he suddenly reached over and boxed Tom Merry's ears.

Then he walked away.

Tom Merry staggered.

He was more astonished and indignant than hurt. Boxing ears was not a practice in favour at St. Jim's, and the Head would certainly have been angry if he had seen Mr. Ratcliff's action.

Tom Merry rubbed his ear, and stood simply simmering with fury.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Manners, coming out of the House with his camera under his arm.

Tom Merry glared.

"Ratty! He's smacked my napper!"

"My hat! What for?"

"Because he thinks I telephoned for those things the other day," said Tom Merry sulphurously. "The cowardly beast! To dare to lay his hands on me—a School House chap, too!"

"He's an awful beast!" said Manners sympathetically. "The rotter ought to be brought to his senses somehow."

"I should jolly well think so!" chimed in Monty Lowther, coming up. "He's asking fellows questions all the time, trying to get them to give themselves away. Something has got to be done. I've got an idea—"

Tom Merry grinned.

"You go and bury your ideas, Monty! We shall never hear the end of your telephone wheeze as it is!"

"My dear chap, Ratty can't box School House chaps and then go on as if nothing had happened," said Monty Lowther severely. "I'm surprised at you! It's an insult to our study, and to the whole House. Ratty has got to be made to realise that the way of the transgressor is hard, and I've got an idea. I had it before he pawed your napper, as a matter of fact, and that's

an additional reason for making him sit up. It's a brilliant idea, and only requires a length of insulated wire, and I have borrowed some from Glyn's study. He's gone out."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, I'm on," he said. "He's not going to box my ears for nothing. It's an insult, and it hurts, too."

"I've been helping Bernard Glyn with some of his experiments," Lowther explained. "He had the things we want and I've borrowed them. I suppose you know how an electric bell is worked? When you press the button, it—"

"Rings!" said Manners.

"Yes, fathead! But when you press the button, it brings the two terminals into contact, and that sets up a current, which causes the bell to ring."

"Yes; I believe I know that," yawned Manners. "Do you make any charge for these lessons in the elements of electricity?"

"Ass! My idea is this: Old Ratty is busy on exam papers now. He spends a lot of time on them, trying to make up regular twisters that the fellows can't get through. He gets frightfully ratty at being interrupted when he's doing them. I've planned a regular series of interruptions for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All that's wanted is for his study-bell to keep on ringing, so that the housemaids will keep on going to see what he wants."

"I suppose he won't ring his study-bell unless he wants to, will he?" demanded Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther nodded calmly.

"Yes, he will. That's where the joke comes in. He's going to ring his study-bell whenever he sits down in his chair to work."

"But he won't!" roared Tom.

"Yes, he will, because I'm going to attach an extra wire to it, and put a button under his cushion on the chair," Lowther explained. "He can't sit down then without pressing the button."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you'll have to get into his study—"

"Easy enough. He's in the School House now, asking the prefects questions. He's guessed somehow that it was the telephone in the prefects' room that was used the other day, and he thinks some of the seniors may have seen a chap hanging about there. He'll be some time, and I shan't be long. You fellows can hang round under his window, and whistle as he's coming, and I'll slip out and hide in Figgys' study."

"Good egg! Got the wire?"

"Yes; in my pocket."

"Come on, then."

The Terrible Three strolled over to the New House. Figgins & Co. met them there, and were somewhat inclined to give them a hostile reception. But a few whispered words put Figgins & Co. on the best of terms with the School House fellows.

Monty Lowther sauntered into the House, leaving his chums on the watch outside. Two minutes later he was in Mr. Ratcliff's study with the door closed.

Monty Lowther set to work quickly. Electricity had not been thought of in the days when the New House was built, and when it was installed there the wires had been placed outside the walls, not under the surface as in modern houses.

Mr. Ratcliff's bell was beside the fireplace, and the wire ran from it down the wall, very carefully and neatly



disposed of in the angle beside the stone square pillar at the side of the grate. There it disappeared under the floor.

Monty Lowther turned back the edge of the carpet, and scraped the wire on a level with the floor until the covering was scraped away and the two wires inside were revealed to view.

Carefully keeping the two wires separate, he attached the two ends of his insulated wire to them, and then replaced the binding as well as he could.

He pulled his own wire along under the carpet, and jabbed a hole in the carpet under Mr. Ratcliff's swivel-chair, for the wire to emerge.

He wound his wire round the centre

His chums met him outside with a glance of inquiry.

"My infants," said Lowther, "this is where we bunk! Upon the whole, I don't think Ratty had better see us here when he comes home. He might suspect that some naughty boys had been in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three departed.

CHAPTER 15.

Many Interruptions!

MR. RATCLIFF retired to the New House in a decidedly bad temper. The School House prefects had been unable to give him any information. They had been out of the House at the

He settled down to work.

A minute later there was a tap at the door, and Sarah, the housemaid, appeared.

Mr. Ratcliff stared at her.

"Yes, sir?" said Sarah.

"What do you want?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "If there is anything wrong below stairs go to Mrs. Kenwigg. Do not bother me."

"You rang, sir!"

"I did not ring."

"I thought I heard your bell, sir."

"You were mistaken."

Sarah retired. Mr. Ratcliff grunted and settled down to work again. But he was not left in peace. In a minute, or less, there was a tap again at the door, and Sarah put a surprised face into the room.



Mr. Ratcliff paused outside Tom Merry's study, his whole attitude that of a spy. "Old Ratty will never let my little joke on him rest," came Monty Lowther's voice. "But I fancy he won't bowl me out!" The master's eyes glistened; he had heard enough. But he didn't know that Manners had photographed him eavesdropping!

leg of the swivel-chair, and brought it up the back of the chair and through an interstice in the ornamental back. To the end of the wire he attached a fat bell-push. He raised the cushion from the chair, placed the bell-push there, and laid the cushion lightly down again.

The weight of the cushion was not sufficient to depress the bell. But as soon as anyone sat in the chair, the cushion would be pressed down hard, of course, and then the push would be depressed.

Monty Lowther worked quickly, and in five minutes all was done.

He left the study in a mood of serene satisfaction.

time when the Housemaster guessed that the telephone had been used, and Mr. Ratcliff more than suspected that they were very much tickled with the jape and not disposed to help him in his search for the practical joker.

Hence the dark frown upon Mr. Ratcliff's face as he came into his study. He had only one consolation—it was his task to prepare the examination-papers for a forthcoming exam, and he could make them, as Lowther expressed it, "regular twisters."

The New House master closed his door, and growled to himself, and sat down in his comfortable chair at the table, and drew his papers and pen and ink towards him.

"Do you want anything?"

"No, I do not! Please do not come here unless I ring."

"But you rang, sir!"

"What?"

"You rang, sir!" said Sarah firmly.

Mr. Ratcliff rose to his feet and surveyed the maid with a stony glare.

"What nonsense is this, Sarah? I repeat to you that I did not ring. How dare you tell me I rang, when I tell you I did not ring! It was probably some other bell. Go and see."

"It was your bell, sir. The cook said so, too!"

"The cook is as stupid as you are, Sarah. Kindly go away."

Sarah retired, or rather founced, away. Mr. Ratcliff, very much annoyed, sat down to his work again, quite unconsciously ringing the bell by doing so. In two minutes there was a sharp knock at his door, and Mrs. Kenwigg, the New House housekeeper, came in, with a very red face. Mr. Ratcliff jumped up irritably.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Kenwigg! Cannot I be left in peace for a few moments together?" he exclaimed. "How am I to work with these endless interruptions? What is it now?"

"You rang, sir!"

"What?"

"Sarah has been up twice, sir, when you rang," said Mrs. Kenwigg. "Now I have come myself. I cannot understand your playing a joke upon a housemaid in this way, Mr. Ratcliff, and it is my duty to tell you so."

Mr. Ratcliff almost choked.

"Joke," he roared—"joke! Mrs. Kenwigg, am I in the habit of playing jokes on servants? Are you out of your senses?"

"I am not, sir," said Mrs. Kenwigg sharply; "but I think you must be, sir. First ordering fifty tons of coal just after coal was laid in, and now ringing the bell and telling the maid you do not want her when she comes—"

"I did not ring the bell!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, almost in a frenzy. "I tell you, Mrs. Kenwigg, that I have not touched the bell since I entered this room!"

"The bell rang, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped up.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "It must be a trick of some sort—"

"The bell's stopped ringing now!" came Sarah's voice from the distance.

A gleam of suspicion came into Mr. Ratcliff's eyes as he heard the housemaid's voice. As soon as he had risen the bell stopped ringing. He immediately suspected a trick.

He dragged the cushion from his seat.

He almost staggered at the sight of the bell-push there, with the wire curling down the back of the chair to the floor.

He grabbed up the bell-push, and dragged up the wire.

"It is a trick!" he yelled. "Someone has attached this wire and bell-push to my bell, so that it rang whenever I sat down. It is infamous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The housekeeper could not control her amusement.

Mr. Ratcliff glared at Mrs. Kenwigg. "I do not see anything to laugh at. It is infamous. Someone shall be most severely punished for this!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.

And he caught up a cane, and rushed from the study.

## CHAPTER 16.

### Mr. Ratcliff Climbs Down!

"HA, ha, ha!"

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther roared.

It was an hour since that peculiar scene in Mr. Ratcliff's study, and the chums of the Shell had received an account of the disturbance in the New House from the grinning Figgins.

Tom Merry and Lowther were in the study. Manners was out somewhere with his camera, as usual, but the other two were quite adequately occupied in chuckling over the discomfiture of Ratty.

"If I could only have been there,"

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sighed Lowther. "That's the worst of a little joke on Ratty—chap can't see his face."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, we saw him when the coal came," grinned Lowther.

"Poor old Ratty! He isn't up to our weight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Shell, as they roared with laughter, did not hear a faint creak in the passage. The door was open slightly, as Manners had left it. They did not know that Mr. Ratcliff was coming along the passage, and that he had heard their laughter, and their careless words, and stopped to listen.

That was quite Mr. Ratcliff's way.

He had a custom of going about very quietly, and hearing things never intended for his ears, and using them against the speakers. That was one reason why Mr. Ratcliff was so unpopular in his own House, as well as in the School House, or perhaps more so there.

The Housemaster paused outside the door, and bent his head to listen, his whole attitude that of a spy. There was no one else in the passage, and, if he had heard a footstep, Mr. Ratcliff would have been on his guard at once, and would have changed his attitude promptly. Quite unconscious of the eavesdropper just outside their study door, Tom Merry and Lowther ran on.

"Old Ratty will never let this rest," grinned Lowther. "But I fancy he won't bowl me out—what?"

"No fear!"

"He hasn't got on to the telephone japer yet. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glinted; he had heard enough. In his excitement at making the conclusive discovery, he had not heard three short, sharp clicks along the passage. He burst into the study.

"So I have discovered you!" he thundered.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther started up in dismay. They knew at once that the Housemaster had been listening.

Tom Merry faced him, his eyes gleaming with scorn.

"You have discovered what, sir?" he asked coldly.

"The author of the outrage with the telephone, and the more recent outrage in my study!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "You are condemned out of your own mouths! I have heard you discussing your wickedness. Follow me to the Head!"

Manners entered the study. He had his camera in his hand, and a genial smile upon his face.

"Follow me to the Head!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "You had better come, too, Manners. I am sure that you were in this plot as well."

"Would you mind waiting till I develop my photographs, sir?" asked Manners, with deadly politeness. "I've got some that will interest the Head very much. I took three snapshots just now in the Shell passage, six—three really good interiors. I snapped the door of the study, and I had the good luck to snap it just when you were there."

Mr. Ratcliff turned white.

Tom Merry and Lowther gasped. They understood.

Manners had come upstairs to return to the study just as Mr. Ratcliff was playing the eavesdropper outside the door of the study, and the amateur photographer of St. Jim's had had the

great presence of mind to snap Mr. Ratcliff in the very act of playing the spy.

"You—you have photographed me, Manners?" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir; close to the door—very close, in fact, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff breathed painfully. He was quite satisfied for his own part with his own methods of getting information. But to be photographed in the act of playing the spy; to be shown up to all the school as an eavesdropper; to be branded in the public gaze—his head seemed to swim at the thought.

"Give me that camera, please, Manners!" he said at last, in a husky voice.

Manners put his camera behind him.

"It's my camera, sir," he said.

"Do you dare to disobey me?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"It's my camera and my films," said Manners.

There was a long pause.

"You—you are quite mistaken in thinking that—that I was listening at the door!" said Mr. Ratcliff at last, thickly.

"Then the photographs won't do any harm, sir," said Manners demurely.

"The—the photographs might lead to misapprehensions," muttered Mr. Ratcliff. "I prefer to—to destroy them. I ask you, as a favour, to give me the negatives, Manners. In the circumstances, I will overlook your conduct, and nothing more shall be said about the affair of the telephone or about what happened in my study this afternoon."

"You promise, sir?"

"Yes, I promise you that."

Manners exchanged a glance with his comrades. Mr. Ratcliff had been brought fairly to his knees, and the juniors could feel almost sorry for him.

Tom Merry and Lowther nodded assent to Manners' unspoken query, and the amateur photographer of St. Jim's opened the camera, took out the roll of films, and handed it to the Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff gripped it in his hand, and left the study without another word.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Manners, old man, you've saved the situation! It was great!"

Mr. Ratcliff's footsteps died away. He was seen to go; and a few moments later the chums of Study No. 6 looked into Tom Merry's study to learn what Ratty had wanted.

They were surprised to see the Terrible Three executing a wild waltz dance round the table.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the Shell fellows in astonishment. "G'weat Scott! What the—"

"We've caught Ratty!" sobbed Monty Lowther. "This is the cat that killed the rat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They explained breathlessly. And then there was a yell of laughter from the chums of Study No. 6.

Mr. Ratcliff kept his word. Probably his love for the Terrible Three was not increased by what had happened. But that was a trifle that did not trouble in the least the serenity of the juniors who had got even with Ratty!

THE END.

(Next Wednesday: "A COCKNEY AT ST. JIM'S!" An amazing and amusing newcomer arrives at St. Jim's in the next sparkling story of Tom Merry & Co. Don't miss the adventures of 'Arry 'Orace 'Ammond!)



ANOTHER GREAT YARN OF THE AMAZING ROOKWOOD MYSTERY.

# The SUSPECTED STUDY!



Dudley Vane placed the packet in the box-seat, and then stacked a quantity of lumber over it. The new junior thought the study was empty, but behind the armchair Tubby Muffin was concealed—a fact which was to have an important bearing on the Rookwood mystery!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Lovell, As Usual!

"NOT after lights out!" said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head.

Arthur Edward Lovell looked at him.

"Fathcad!" he said politely.

"What I mean is—" began Jimmy.

"Never mind what you mean, old chap," interrupted Lovell. "I've told you what I mean. If you've got cold feet you can stand out on them. See?"

Jimmy shook his head again.

"Uncle James" of Rookwood was not likely to be suffering from "cold feet." Lovell, as usual, required the brake to be put on.

"A dormitory raid is all very well," explained Jimmy, "and I dare say it would be a lark to roll Smythe of the Shell out of bed. I've no objection to a pillow fight, if it comes to that. But—er—"

For the third time Uncle James of Rookwood shook his head.

"But what?" demanded Raby. "No harm in a lark."

"And that ass, Smythe, wants ragging!" said Newcome.

"And we're jolly well going to do it!" bawled Lovell, in tones that rang far beyond the end study and echoed down the Classical Fourth passage.

"Listen to your Uncle James!" said Jimmy Silver severely. "You know what happened to Mornington a week or two ago. He was out of House bounds when that mysterious beast, whoever he is, hammered Tommy Dodd in the dark. Morny was nearly sacked on suspicion—he just asked for it. Until the mystery man of Rookwood is found out and bunked we'd better mind our step."

"Rot!" remarked Lovell.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Suppose something happened while a fellow was out of his dorm?"

He would be under suspicion at once, just as Morny was that time."

Raby and Newcome nodded assent to that. Dudley Vane, the new junior, who was sitting on the corner of the study table, listening to the discussion, nodded, too. But Arthur Edward Lovell only snorted. Arthur Edward had many gifts and qualities, but sweet reasonableness was not included among them. Opposition only made Lovell more determined.

"Rubbish!" he said. "For one thing, that blessed mystery man hasn't been heard of for a week—not since Carthew of the Sixth was cracked on the head with a ruler in his study. My

*Can a member of Jimmy Silver & Co. be the unknown ragger of Rookwood? It is to their study that the trail of the "mystery man" leads his trackers!*

belief is that he's got frightened at what he's done, and chucked his potty games."

"You think so, Lovell?" asked Dudley Vane.

"Yes, I jolly well do! Anyhow, he's not likely to be up to his tricks to-night, just when we're raiding the Shell dormitory. And I don't care twopence if he is!" added Lovell. "I told Smythe I'd look in and bang him with a pillow for putting on swank. And if I don't look in on Smythe to-night, and bang him on the head with a pillow, you can use my head for a football, Jimmy Silver!"

"Thanks, but a wooden football

wouldn't be much use to me!" answered Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky ass!" roared Lovell. "I've a jolly good mind—"

"Use it, old fellow, if you've got one," urged Jimmy. "Looks to me as if you haven't!"

Lovell glared at him, while his comrades chuckled. Arthur Edward seemed at a loss for words for a moment. Taking advantage of the pause, Jimmy Silver went on:

"I don't believe the mystery man has chucked it. He's lying low for a bit, that's all. I know the beaks don't think he's chucked it. They're watching for him like cats, and I've a jolly strong suspicion that some of the prefects stay up at night to keep watch, to nail him if he prowls. Any fellow out of his dorm is liable to be nailed and taken up before the Head on suspicion of being that sportsman. Not good enough!"

"Rubbish!" roared Lovell.

And with that, Arthur Edward stamped out of the end study and shut the door after him with a slam.

Half an hour later Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was seeing lights out for his Form. Dicky Dalton's face, wont to be cheery and good-humoured, was very grave in expression.

The mystery of Rookwood School weighed on his mind. Weeks had passed since the first of the strange and mysterious series of outrages had been committed, and there was not the remotest clue to the perpetrator. The whole staff, from the Head down, was puzzled and perturbed, and wondering, too, when and how the mysterious ragger might break out again.

Twice the finger of suspicion had been  
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pointed—once at Lovell, once at Mornington. In each case it had proved to be a mistake. The mystery man was one of some hundreds of fellows, but whether senior or junior, or Classical or Modern, no one could say.

Certainly, it was no time for any fellow to be recklessly regardless of rules. All the fellows realised that—except Arthur Edward Lovell.

When Dicky Dalton had turned off the light, and had gone, Lovell sat up in bed.

"Better give him time to get clear!" he remarked.

"Better go to sleep, like a sensible chap!" said Jimmy.

"Who's coming with me to pillow that ass Smythe?" demanded Lovell, addressing the Fourth Formers.

"Rats!" came in unanimous response from nearly every fellow.

"Well, of all the rotten funks!" said Arthur Edward, in utter disgust. "All right, then. I'll go alone!"

Arthur Edward slipped out of bed and jammed on his trousers and a pair of slippers. He snorted scornfully as he did so. Jimmy Silver sat up in bed.

"You silly, obstinate, pig-headed bandersnatch—" he said.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Lovell. "Keep in bed and try to get your feet warm!"

Jimmy stepped out of bed. Having done his best to restrain his hot-headed and hare-brained chum, and having failed, Uncle James was not going to let him go alone. The end study always stood shoulder to shoulder. Raby and Newcome silently followed his example.

Lovell blinked at them in the glimmer of winter starlight from the high windows.

"Oh, you're coming!" he grunted.

"Yes," answered Jimmy; "and if we get snaffled by a beak or a prefect we'll jolly well scrag you when we get back."

"Leave it to me, and I'll see you through all right," said Lovell. "It won't take us five minutes to mop up Smythe and Tracey and Selwyn, and that gang in the Shell. Come on!"

And the Fistical Four quitted the dormitory and stepped out into the dark passage. It was a quarter of an hour since Richard Dalton had gone, and that was ample time for the beak to get clear. They had to go down the passage, and round a corner by the big landing to reach the door of the Shell dormitory. They tiptoed away silently.

Jimmy Silver gave a sudden start as they reached the landing. In the darkness there he caught a faint movement.

He stopped, his heart beating faster.

The thought of the mystery man, the unknown lawless prowler of Rookwood, came uncomfortably into his mind. It was not a pleasant thought, to run into the ruffianly rascal who had hammered Tommy Dodd senseless, and stunned Carthew of the Sixth with a ruler.

His three companions heard the sound at the same moment and stopped, too, with the same disturbing thought in their minds.

Someone was hidden in the darkness on the landing, and who could it be, skulking there in the dark, but the mysterious prowler?

The next moment a startled yell from Lovell broke the silence.

"Oh! He's got me! Oh!"

There was a fall, a bump, a scuffle, and then the sounds of a desperate struggle in the darkness.

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### A Lesson for Lovell!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL struggled wildly, almost frantically. He forgot all about the raid on Smythe & Co.—he forgot that he was outside his dorm after lights-out, a serious matter if discovered. He forgot everything but the startled horror of that sudden grasp in the black darkness. He yelled and howled incoherently as he rolled over, struggling madly in the strong hands that had gripped him.

Not for a moment did he doubt that he had run into the "mystery man" in the dark!

A horrified terror thrilled through all his veins. Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome peered and groped round them, striving to get to Lovell's help. Two struggling figures, rolling over, crashed against Jimmy's legs, and sent him spinning. He clutched hold of Raby and Newcome as he went, and dragged them over with him.

A light gleamed on the staircase.

Someone was hurrying up from the lower landing, with an electric torch gleaming in his hand.

"Have you got him, sir?"

It was the voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood.

"I think so, Bulkeley! Switch on the light!"

That answer came from the unseen one who was grasping Lovell. The voice made Jimmy Silver & Co. wonder whether they were dreaming—for it was the voice of their Form-master, Richard Dalton.

There was a sudden flood of illumination as Bulkeley switched on the landing light.

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome scrambled to their feet. Bulkeley stared at them blankly as he saw them in the light.

Mr. Dalton staggered up, with his prisoner still struggling in his powerful grasp. He, too, stared blankly at the three.

"Silver! Raby! Newcome!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing out of your dormitory? And this—Lovell!"

"Urrrggh!" gurgled Lovell breathlessly. "Urrrggh! Oh crikey! Ow!"

Mr. Dalton released him. Arthur Edward Lovell leaned on the wall, gasping for breath. His eyes almost popped from his head as the light revealed his Form-master.

Evidently there had been a mistake in the dark. It was not the mystery man—it was Mr. Dalton, on the watch for him! And it was clear that he had taken the junior he had seized for the mysterious prowler.

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips. He mentally resolved to kick Lovell as soon as they got out of this.

"So it is you!" said Mr. Dalton quietly. "Explain at once why you are out of your dormitory, Silver!"

"It—it—it was a— a lark, sir!" stammered Jimmy. "Only a lark on the Shell, sir! We were going to pillow Smythe—"

"And at such a time as this, when watch is being kept for an unknown lawless character in the school, you indulge in what you are pleased to call a lark, after lights-out!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton sternly.

Jimmy hung his head. Kicking Lovell afterwards was all very well. At the moment he had nothing to say.

"Lovell, how dared you resist when I seized you?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"I—I—I never dreamed it was you, sir!" faltered Lovell. "I—I thought you'd gone down to your study! I—I

—I thought it was that beast who had got hold of me in the dark—that mystery brute!"

Lovell shuddered. He was reassured now, but he was not likely to forget soon the thrill of horror that had gone through him when he was gripped in the dark by unseen hands!

"You deserve the fright you have had, you stupid boy!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "You are fortunate not to be suspected of being the rascal for whom I was on the watch. Go back to your dormitory. I shall come you all in the morning with the greatest severity."

In dismal silence the Fistical Four trooped back to the Fourth Form dormitory. In silence, they went in, and Jimmy Silver closed the door.

All the Classical Fourth were sitting up in bed. The uproar had reached every ear in the dormitory.

"Spotted?" asked Dudley Vane.

"Snaffled?" grinned Mornington.

Jimmy Silver breathed hard and deep.

"That idiot Lovell!" he said.

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Lovell warmly. "Was it my fault?"

"Whose fault was it, then?" howled Raby.

"Don't yell at me! How was I to know that Dicky Dalton was squatting there in the dark, keeping watch for the mystery man?" demanded Lovell.

"Oh, my hat! Was he?" howled Mornington. "And you walked into him! Ha, ha!"

"Nothing to snigger at!" growled Lovell. "He grabbed me in the dark, and thought I was the mystery man, and I thought he was—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, snigger!" snorted Lovell.

"Funny, isn't it? We're going to get whopped in the morning! That's funny, too, I suppose?"

"Well, you've jolly well asked for it!" chuckled Vane.

"Trust Lovell to put his foot in it!" chortled Peele.

"Oh, shut up!" snorted Lovell.

"We'd better turn in, you men, in case that ass Dicky gives us a look-in. Better give him plenty of time to clear now. I suggest waiting an hour before we go for Smythe."

Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome blinked at Lovell.

They had been considering whether to kick him from one end of the dormitory to the other, or to bang his head on a bedstead. Lovell, apparently quite unaware that he had excited his comrades' dire wrath, had not, it seemed, given up his idea of raiding the Shell and pillowing Smythe & Co.

After what had happened, Lovell was still thinking of that dorm raid! Undoubtedly Arthur Edward was a stickler!

"No good talking to him!" said Jimmy Silver. "Actions speak louder than words—and words are wasted on that fathead, anyhow! Collar him!"

"Look here—" roared Lovell.

Three pairs of hands fastened on him like one, and he roared as he was swept off his feet.

Bump!

"Whoop!"

Bump!

"Yoo-hooop!"

"Now are you going out of the dorm again?" hissed Jimmy Silver.

"Ow! Yes! I—"

Bang!

Arthur Edward Lovell's head smote a bedpost. His head was hard, but the bedpost was harder. The bed almost



rocked under the concussion. Lovell gave a frantic howl.

"Now are you going back to bed?"

"No! I— Yaroooh!"

Bang!

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a ripple along the rows of beds.

"Ow! Leggo! I—I—I'll chuck it, if you like!" gasped Lovell. "I—I—I'll go back to bed! Wow! My head aches! Ow!"

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome swung him up, and hurled him bodily on his bed. He landed there with a crash.

"Now," said Jimmy Silver, in concentrated tones, "you turn out again, you blithering idiot, and we'll tie you down to the bed with the sheets! Mind, I mean that!"

"Ow-ow! You silly ass—wow!"

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome went back to bed.

So did Lovell! He had more aches

The aspect of the Fistical Four was, perhaps, a little comic. They wriggled up the passage rather than walked. Arthur Edward Lovell seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. Evidently the four had been through it. Richard Dalton had dealt with them faithfully for their escapade overnight.

"Ow!" groaned Lovell. "Wow!" Lovell had had it hardest. Probably Dicky Dalton had guessed that the hot-headed Arthur Edward was the chief offender.

"Hurt?" asked Tubby Muffin.

Lovell gave him a glare.

"Oh, no!" he said, with ferocious sarcasm. "Enjoying it! I'm making this row to show how amused I am!"

"Hard luck!" said Mornington.

"But you really asked for it, you know. Dicky was bound to come down heavy."

"I don't see it," said Dudley Vane.

"Shurrup!" whispered Erroll, as Mr. Dalton stepped into the passage and came up to the Form-room door.

Vane coloured a little. It was fairly plain that Richard Dalton had overheard his remark, which had been spoken quite loudly and carelessly.

But the Fourth Form master took no notice of it. He opened the Form-room door, and the juniors went in and took their places.

Jimmy Silver & Co. sat rather uncomfortably through lessons that morning. Mr. Dalton passed them over lightly in "con." He was a kind master, as well as a severe one on just occasion.

There was no doubt that he was deeply annoyed by the happening of the night. All the fellows knew now that watch was kept for the "mystery man"—and among the rest, that mysterious individual knew. It placed him on his



**Bang! Bang! Bang!** The sudden roar of explosions caused Dicky Dalton to jump clear of the floor. Bulkeley leaped back with a yell. "Oh, crumbs! Look out—!" Something that seemed alive was hopping and fizzing about the floor. It was a bundle of jumping-crackers, thrown at them by the "mystery man."

and pains distributed over his person than he could have counted. Even Arthur Edward Lovell did not want any more.

Slumber descended on the Classical Fourth dormitory. Lovell was the last to sleep. It was quite a late hour before Arthur Edward forgot his aches and pains in balmy repose.

**Muffin is Mystified!**

"**H**ARD cheese!" said Dudley Vane sympathetically.

It was the following morning, and the Fourth had gathered at the door of their Form-room.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came up the passage to join the waiting Form.

Some of the Fourth smiled at them as they came. Tubby Muffin gave a fat chortle.

"No great harm in a dorm raid. That ass Dalton shouldn't have been up watching—it was his own fault the fellows barged into him. Beaks shouldn't prowl round o' nights."

"Well, I don't see how they're to nail the mystery man if they don't watch for him," said Jimmy Silver. Uncle James was wriggling, like his friends, but he kept his just balance of mind. "The fact is, we asked for what we got—at least, Lovell did! But it's all the fault of that dashed mystery brute. I'd like to spot him and punch his silly head!"

Dudley Vane laughed.

"That's not likely," he said. "Whoever the fellow is, he seems to know how to keep himself pretty dark. Dalton can sit up every night, with a wet towel round his head, if he likes—but he won't snaffle him! I rather think Dalton amuses him."

guard, and made it more difficult to catch him napping.

After morning school, the Fistical Four were feeling better. They joined the rest of the Form in punting about a footer in the frosty quad.

Few, if any, of the juniors noticed Mr. Dalton standing at his study window, gazing out into the wintry sunlight. His eyes were on the juniors—and he sighted Dudley Vane walking down to the gates.

Dicky Dalton's eyes followed the new junior till he disappeared. His brow was very thoughtful. Fellows were allowed to go out of gates between third school and dinner if they liked, and there was nothing surprising in Vane going for a walk on his own. But of late days, Dicky Dalton had been very keenly interested in the new fellow in his Form, and everything that Dudley Vane did had interest for him. He

turned from the window at last, and sat down to a pile of Form papers with a thoughtful shade on his brow.

It was near dinner-time when Vane came back.

He walked in, and sauntered across to the House, with his hands in his overcoat pockets. Some of the juniors were still punting the ball, among them the Fistical Four.

Vane went into the House, and ran quickly up the stairs, heading for the junior studies—generally deserted at that time of the day. As he went up the Fourth Form passage, Higgs of the Fourth looked out of the doorway of Study No. 2.

"Seen that fat, fozzling, fat-headed, piefaced, pinching, pilfering pig?" asked Higgs.

Vane laughed.

"If you mean Muffin, I haven't seen him."

"Well, if you see him, tell him I'm going to smash him into little bits!" said Higgs. "Tell him I know who had my apples, and I'm jolly well going to whop him black and blue, and then blue and black."

Higgs, snorting, turned back into Study No. 2. Vane, laughing, went on up the passage to the end study.

He stepped into that study and closed the door after him.

His study-mates were all in the quad; he had seen them all there as he came in. But he gave a quick look round the room as if to make sure that it was vacant.

Then he crossed to the window alcove, where there was a box-seat.

He pitched aside the cushions, and lifted the lid. Inside the rather roomy receptacle was all sorts of lumber—old exercise books, two or three football boots, a tennis racket in a bad state of

disrepair, some cardboard boxes, and some dog-eared volumes—the sort of lumber that accumulates in junior studies, and is shoved out of the way.

Taking a packet, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, from his overcoat pocket, the new junior thrust it down in the box, and carefully stacked a quantity of the lumber over it.

Then he closed the lid, replaced the cushions, and left the study. With a smile on his face, he went downstairs and out of the House, to join the fellows punting the ball.

As soon as Dudley Vane had left his study and closed the door after him, a fat face peered out from behind the armchair, which was backed into a corner.

It was the podgy countenance of Cecil Adolphus Reginald Muffin, alias Tubby. Tubby stared at the shut door.

Parked inside Tubby were the apples Higgs had missed from Study No. 2. Tubby, for the present, was keeping out of Alfred Higgs' sight. That was why he was in the end study.

He had popped behind the armchair in the corner when Vane came in, under the impression that it was Higgs hunting for him.

He was still under that impression; for, keeping carefully out of the junior's sight, he had not seen him.

He crept cautiously out of the corner, nothing doubting that Alfred Higgs had looked into the study for him and failed to find him. He was safe now till the bell rang for dinner, at all events.

Tubby rolled across to the box-seat in the window.

Although he had not seen Vane, he had heard him. And he wondered what on earth business Higgs had with Jimmy Silver's box-seat. The fellow had been rumpling and rustling the things in the

box, as if hunting for something, or packing something away. Tubby was going to know what Higgs had been up to!

He raised the lid of the box and blinked in among the lumber. Nothing of an unusual nature met his eyes. The inquisitive Tubby proceeded to sort through the heap. He gave a squeak of surpriso as he sorted out a packet wrapped in brown paper and tied.

Tubby picked it up and stared at it.

That neatly wrapped and tied packet looked as if it had come fresh from a shop—as indeed it had. Tubby wondered whether it contained cigarettes. As he was Higgs' study-mate in Study No. 2, he knew that Alfred sometimes had cigarettes, which he kept carefully hidden from the eyes of authority.

"The awful rotter!" murmured Tubby.

Tubby saw it all—or fancied that he did. Higgs, he supposed, had taken the alarm, and hidden his cigarettes in a safe place—under the lumber in the box-seat of Jimmy Silver's study!

But he was going to make sure. He untied the string, and unfolded the brown paper.

Then he fairly squealed with astonishment.

The packet did not contain cigarettes. It contained a dozen jumping crackers such as were used on November 5th, but seldom or never seen at Rookwood at any other time of the year.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Tubby.

Higgs—he was firmly convinced that it was Higgs—had sneaked into Jimmy Silver's study, and hidden a packet of fireworks in the box-seat! It was utterly amazing to Cecil Adolphus Reginald Muffin. His eyes popped in astonishment at the bundle of crackers.

Finally, he tied the packet up again and replaced it and closed the lid of the box-seat. He rolled out of the end study.

The bell was ringing for dinner now, and Higgs or no Higgs, Tubby could not out tiffin. He rolled last into Hall, and Higgs, already at the table, gave him a glare—but under Mr. Dalton's eyes, he could not, fortunately for Tubby, give him anything more than a glare.

**Bang!**

MR. DALTON glanced at his study clock, and frowned. It was half-past ten.

The January wind howled round the ancient roofs and chimneys of Rookwood School. It was long past bedtime for all the boys, and most of the masters had turned in.

But Richard Dalton was not thinking of turning in. In normal circumstances, he was early to bed, and early to rise. But the circumstances at present were not normal. The "Mystery man" of Rookwood was still undiscovered, and Richard Dalton was determined that the discovery was going to be made.

All the masters, from the Head down to Monsieur Monceau, were keen enough, but Richard Dalton was keener of all. That was not only because he had been, more than once, the victim of the unknown prowler's enmity. There was a suspicion in his mind, growing to a conviction, that the mysterious prowler of the school was in his own Form. But the task of watching and waiting was a disagreeable and weary one, and it brought a frown to the young master's brow.

There was a light tap at his door, and Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in. Richard Dalton rose to his feet.

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"Half-past ten, sir!" said Bulkeley. "I'm ready, if you think it any use."

"What happened last night was very unfortunate, Bulkeley," said Mr. Dalton. "But we must not give in. I have no doubt whatever that, sooner or later, that irresponsible boy will break out again, and I almost dread to think what his next action may be."

He paused, his frown deepening.

"The attack on Carthew was a desperate act," he went on. "Carthew is still suffering from his injury. Difficult as the task is, Bulkeley, the discovery must be made."

"But the fellow will be put on his guard now, sir," said the Rookwood captain. "He's pretty sure to lie low—"

"I do not think so, Bulkeley. I think he is so irresponsible, and so much a slave to an uncontrolled temper, that the fact that he is being watched for, now that he knows it, may very likely excite him to perpetrate some daring act—some act, perhaps, more outrageous than anything that has happened so far."

Bulkeley's face was very grave.

"That looks as if the fellow is a bit cracked, sir," he said slowly.

"I should not be surprised to learn that his mind is partly unhinged," answered the Fourth Form master. "The effect of a shock, perhaps, or an illness. For the safety of all the other boys, he must be found—there is no telling upon whom his unreasonable enmity may turn at any moment. He has generally acted after dark—and he cannot do so without leaving his dormitory. I do not think that what happened last night will warn him to desist. Upon reflection, I think it is more probable that it will urge him to show his reckless contempt of what we can do, by some extraordinary freak."

"Very well, sir, I'm at your orders," said Bulkeley. "If he leaves his dormitory, whichever one it may be, we're fairly certain to spot him on the landing."

"I hope so, at least," said Mr. Dalton. He turned off the light in his study, and left it with the prefect.

The big landing, on which the dormitory passages opened, was in dense darkness. Bulkeley stopped at the turn of the staircase, and Mr. Dalton went up to the landing, stepping on tiptoe and groping his way.

As he stood on the landing, peering round him in the darkness, the Fourth Form master felt a sudden thrill. He could see nothing—but he knew, somehow, that he was not alone in the darkness.

He had intended to watch and listen there for some surreptitious prowler after lights out. Now it occurred to him that the prowler had been first in the field, and was already there.

His heart beat fast.

He felt in his pocket for his electric torch, and drew it out. Suddenly he flashed on the light.

Holding up the torch, he swept the beam of light round in a circle. There was an exclamation from Bulkeley, and he came running up to join the Form-master on the landing.

"You've seen—" he gasped.

"I think I heard something!" breathed Mr. Dalton. "I am sure—hark!"

There was a sound, from the black opening of the passage that led up to the door of the Classical Fourth dormitory. Someone was there!

Distinctly, in the silence, both of them heard the scratch of a match! It was

a startling sound to hear, for the last thing they would have expected the prowler to do was to strike a light.

But that was what he had done—the lighted match itself could not be seen, as it was round the corner of the passage, but a glow in the darkness told that it had been lighted.

"Quick!" breathed Mr. Dalton.

He rushed across the landing, Bulkeley at his heels. From the opening of the passage, a red spark sailed through the air, describing an arc and dropping fairly in Mr. Dalton's face.

Something struck him, and dropped at his feet.

Bang!

"What—"

Bang, bang, bang!

The sudden roar of the explosions caused Dicky Dalton to leap clear of the floor. It roared fairly under his feet. Bulkeley jumped back with a yell.

Bang, bang, bang!

The deafening detonations rang through the House, shattering the silence, awakening fellows in all the dormitories.

Bang, bang!

"Good heavens—what—"

"Oh, crumbs! Look out—"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

The roar of explosions was almost continuous. Something that seemed alive, was jumping about the landing. For several seconds the master and the

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**You'll Find Them in Next Week's**

**GEM**

prefect were too amazed and dazed to act—or think of acting. Then Mr. Dalton, heedless of the banging and fizzing round him, tore to the dormitory passage, and rushed into it.

But the unseen fellow who had thrown that bundle of jumping-crackers was gone. In the distance, up the passage, Mr. Dalton heard a door close. He knew that it was the door of the Classical Fourth dormitory.

He tore up the passage.

Bang, bang, bang! roared behind him. Bulkeley switched on the light, and tried desperately to stamp out the exploding fireworks. But it was not one—it was many. A bundle of crackers had been fastened together, the fuses in contact; and the force of the explosions hurled them apart, scattering them over the big landing. Some of them fell through the banisters to the stairs below. On all sides sounded the incessant, deafening roar of banging crackers.

Doors opened—voices called—lights flashed on. The whole House was alarmed. Scores of fellows were turning out of bed, shouting to know what was the matter. The roar of the crackers answered them. Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Needless of the uproar, Richard Dalton sped up the passage as if he

were on the cinder-path. He reached the door of the Classical Fourth dormitory—and as he reached it, it opened and lights gleamed out. Someone had switched on the light in the dormitory. Jimmy Silver, in his pyjamas, with a startled face, was rushing out, as his Form-master arrived.

"What's up, sir?" gasped Jimmy.

Mr. Dalton, without answering, pushed him aside, and strode in.

His swift glance swept up and down the dormitory. Nearly every fellow was already out of bed—even Tubby Muffin was wide awake, sitting up, and squealing with alarm. Only one other fellow was still in bed—and that was Dudley Vane, the new junior.

He was raised on one elbow, rubbing his eyes, and staring in the light. He looked as if he had just been startled out of slumber. Mr. Dalton's searching eyes fastened on him at once. Vane did not seem to notice it. He rubbed his eyes, without even seeming to observe his Form-master at all.

"What's happened, sir?" asked Mornington.

Bang, bang, bang, bang! came in a roar up the passage. Some of the crackers were still going strong.

"Fireworks!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, in wonder. "What silly ass is letting off fireworks in the middle of the night?"

"No need to ask that!" said Dudley Vane, laughing. "There's only one man at Rookwood capable of such a jape!"

"The mystery man!" exclaimed Lovell.

Bang, bang, bang, bang! The crackers seemed inexhaustible. The House echoed from end to end with the explosions.

Fellows from other dormitories were rushing out. Already there was a crowd on the landing, and a loud buzz of startled voices. Amid the buzzing of boyish voices, came the deep roar of Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, and the excited squeak of Monsieur Monceau. But no fellow left the Classical Fourth dormitory; Mr. Dalton had arrived in time to stop a general exodus.

"Silver!" rapped Mr. Dalton. "Who has been out of this dormitory?"

"Nobody, sir, that I know of!" answered Jimmy. "I was fast asleep when the banging woke me up—"

"Listen to me, all of you!" said Mr. Dalton sternly. "Someone threw a bundle of fireworks from this passage—and I heard this door close as I pursued him. It is an absolute certainty that the boy entered this dormitory! He entered, Silver, less than a minute before you reopened the door—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy. "I never saw him, sir. I switched on the light as I opened the door—it was dark till then—"

"The boy is in this dormitory now!" said Mr. Dalton. "There can be no further doubt that he is a member of the Classical Fourth! One of the boys here present is the boy who has committed a series of lawless outrages in the school, culminating in what has happened to-night. That boy must have had fireworks in his possession to-day. Does anyone here know of a boy in this Form who had fireworks in his possession?"

There was a gasp from Tubby Muffin. "Oh crikey!"

And all eyes in the dormitory turned on Cecil Adolphus Muffin.



**Under Suspicion!**

**"MUFFIN!"**  
"Oh crikey!" gasped Tubby.

He was blinking at Alfred Higgs with distended eyes. Higgs, like the rest, was staring at Muffin—everybody was staring at him. It was clear that Muffin knew something.

"It can't have been Muffin!" gasped Lovell. "Was it you, Muffin, you ass?"  
"Ow! No!" howled Tubby in alarm. "Don't you get making out it was me, you fathead! It wasn't me, sir! I-I wouldn't!"

Some of the fellows grinned. Certainly, it seemed wildly impossible that Tubby Muffin was the "mystery man." They would as soon have suspected the House dame's tabby cat.

"Muffin!" repeated Mr. Dalton. He strode towards Tubby's bed and fixed his eyes on the fat Classical's podgy face. "You know something of this matter. That is clear! Tell me at once what you know."

"Oh, lor! I-I-I—" stammered Tubby.

"Have you seen any boy in this Form in possession of fireworks?" demanded Mr. Dalton. He guessed at once that that was it.

"I-I-I—"

"Speak at once!"  
"Oh dear! I-I don't want to give a man away, sir!" gabbled the hapless Tubby. "He's a beastly brute, and he kicked me for eating an apple or two, but—"

Alfred Higgs gave a jump! He was the "beastly brute" who had kicked Tubby for eating an apple or two! A dozen fellows looked at Higgs. His face grew crimson.

"Muffin, you must speak out," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "In ordinary circumstances I should never ask a boy to give information, as I think my Form is well aware. But this is a terribly serious matter, perhaps involving the safety of every boy in the House! You must give me the name of the boy you saw in possession of fireworks."

"Speak out, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're bound to speak out—no fellow will call it sneaking."

"But—but I-I say, you won't let Higgs pitch into me?" gasped Tubby. "You know what a rotten bully he is—"

"Higgs!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. He swung round and fixed his eyes on the

crimson, alarmed face of the bully of the Fourth. "Higgs! What have you to say?"

Higgs spluttered. "Fancy Higgs!" breathed Lovell. "Just the chap when you come to think of it."

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "Higgs! Speak! Muffin states that you were in possession of fireworks to-day, and—"

"I wasn't!" bawled Higgs, stuttering with rage and terror. "I haven't touched a cracker since the Fifth of November last year." He glared fiercely at Tubby. "You mad young ass, what makes you fancy I had any fireworks?"

"I—I wasn't going to give you away, but—"

"You mad idiot, you can tell Mr. Dalton anything you like!" roared Higgs. "It's all lies!"

"Oh, is it?" exclaimed Tubby hotly. "Perhaps you'll deny that you came into Jimmy Silver's study and hid the fireworks in his box-seat?"

"In my study?" gasped Jimmy Silver. "I haven't been in Silver's study this term!" yelled Higgs. "Mr. Dalton, it's not true. Everybody knows that Muffin is a liar—"

"Calm yourself, my boy," said Mr. Dalton quietly. "It is quite clear that Muffin is not lying, but he may have made a mistake. Muffin, what were you doing in Silver's study?"

"It was about some apples, sir—" mumbled Tubby.

"Apples!" repeated Mr. Dalton, with a stare.

"Yes, sir. Higgs missed some apples, and made out that I'd had them, and—and I dodged into the end study to keep clear of him, as the fellows were out. Then I heard him coming, and hid behind the armchair in the corner, and he never saw me, and—"

"You saw him?" asked Dudley Vane.

"Silence, Vane! How dare you interrupt! Muffin—"

"I didn't see him," mumbled Tubby. "But I jolly well knew he was looking for me! I kept doggo! I heard him fumbling in the box-seat, and after he was gone I looked into it and found a packet. I looked in the packet—it was crackers! I left it there when I went down to dinner, and forgot about it afterwards—but—"

"I never—" shrieked Higgs.

"Muffin, you stupid boy!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "You heard someone enter

the end study, who concealed the fireworks in the box-seat. But you did not see him?"

"No, sir, but I jolly well knew it was Higgs."

"How could you have known, if you did not see him?"

"Because he was after me—"

"I wasn't after him!" yelled Higgs.

"I never looked into any study for him. I knew I'd get him at dinner, and—"

"Oh!" gasped Tubby. For the first time it dawned on Cecil Adolphus' powerful brain that the fellow who had entered the end study was not Alfred Higgs. He had taken that for granted. He realised now that he had taken a little too much for granted.

"Muffin, you are a stupid boy!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "There is no reason whatever to suppose that it was Higgs who entered the study while you were concealed there. It was much more likely to be a boy who belonged to the study!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged glances. It was not only likely, but fairly certain that a fellow who hid articles in the end study was a fellow who belonged to that study; though that fact was only beginning to dawn on Cecil Adolphus Muffin.

"There are five boys in the end study!" said Mr. Dalton, slowly and quietly. "Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome, Vane! Has anyone among you anything to confess to me?"

"No, sir!" said five voices in unison. There was a pause.

"Rot!" broke out Arthur Edward Lovell hotly. "I dare say it wasn't Higgs—I don't know who it was—but it was some rotter from outside who stuck those crackers in our study—if that fool Muffin didn't dream the whole thing! Not a Fourth Form chap at all, in my opinion."

"Thank you for your opinion, Lovell!" said Mr. Dalton dryly. "You will now be silent! Go back to bed, my boys."

The Classical Fourth turned in again, and Mr. Dalton put out the light and left them.

The next morning all Rookwood knew that the finger of suspicion was pointed at the end study. It was a dismaying state of affairs for the cheery chums of Rookwood.

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