

"A BULLY AT THE HELM!" Great St. Jim's Yarn INSIDE.

The GEM 2^d



**BOWING DOWN TO
THE NEW CAPTAIN!**

TOM MERRY & CO. ARE BOOKED FOR A STORMY PASSAGE WITH—

A BULLY AT THE HELM!



Upon Cutts' back as he strode across the quad was attached a sheet of cardboard, and on it showed in large letters—"COMIC CUTTS." Blake jerked his thumb towards the notice. "Worth a whack in the ear—what?" he laughed. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared his chums.

CHAPTER 1.

"Britons Never—Never—"

"PRETTY kettle of fish!" growled Monty Lowther.

"Very pretty!" groaned Manners.

And Tom Merry grunted in sympathetic disgust.

The Terrible Three, the heroes of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, were evidently in a misanthropic mood.

They were sitting at the table in their study, in the Shell passage in the School House, with a volume of Virgil propped up against the inkstand.

They had whole sheaves of imput paper before them, which they were laboriously covering with more or less legible calligraphy.

There was no doubt, of course, that Virgil was a very great poet, and that it was a very great advantage to have a close and thorough acquaintance with his works. But the Terrible Three of St. Jim's were of opinion—an opinion widely shared by other fellows—that it was possible to have too much of a good thing. In fact, there were times—not infrequent—when they regarded the pious *Aeneas* as a terrible bore, and

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sincerely wished that he had actually been drowned in that famous storm in the First Book of *Aeneid*.

It is possible to get "fed-up" on the great poets, especially poets who persist in the bad habit of composing their works in a dead language. The Terrible Three considered that Virgil's language, being dead, ought also to be buried, especially on a sunny half-holiday in winter.

But they were planted in the study, with a volume of Virgil, sheaves of imput paper, extremely bad tempers, and five hundred lines each, to be written out and handed in before tea-time to Cutts of the Fifth! For Cutts, the old enemy of Tom Merry & Co., had become captain of St. Jim's, and one of his first steps, as captain of the school, was to make his new power felt by the juniors he disliked.

The fact that Tom Merry & Co. had strenuously opposed his election made Cutts all the more bitter. The fact that Tom Merry himself had actually been for a few days captain of the school, till he resigned that lofty position under pressure from the Head, made Cutts all the more determined to give the Terrible Three the time of their lives.

And he was doing it.

It was in the power of the captain of the school to inflict canings and impositions, and never had that privilege been so freely used as during the few days that had elapsed since Cutts of the Fifth became captain.

The "chums" of the Shell were the special objects of his wrath.

And Cutts was very clever—too clever for them, as the juniors ruefully confessed. He did not impose punishments without reasons. There was always a good reason that could be explained plausibly to the Head or the House-master, if the juniors had chosen to carry an appeal to those high quarters.

The trouble was that Tom Merry & Co., being human and schoolboys, were by no means perfect, and their manners and customs left much to be desired, from the point of view of the powers that were.

Not that there was any harm in them. But they broke all sorts of rules in moments of thoughtlessness, and thus gave Cutts his opportunity. And Cutts never allowed an opportunity to pass unimproved. He understudied the little busy bee in improving every shining hour, so far as finding fault with the Terrible Three was concerned.

BUT READ HOW THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S, IN THEIR TURN, MAKE THINGS HUM FOR CUTTS, THE TYRANT CAPTAIN!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Five hundred lines!" said Lowther, with a deep groan, as he jammed his pen into the ink with such force that the nib cracked. "Oh, blow the pen!"

"It's rotten!" growled Manners. "Kildare never used to give us whacking imposts. Five hundred lines keeps a chap going all the afternoon!"

"That's what the beast's done it for!" grunted Tom.

"And such a ripping afternoon!" sighed Monty Lowther. He groped in the table drawer for a new pen-nib, and rose and walked to the window as he fitted the nib to his pen and looked out into the quadrangle.

The sun was shining there, glimmering on the green fields and on the old leafless elms.

In the distance he could see the playing fields, with a football match going on on Big Side, with a crowd of fellows rounds the ropes, shouting.

Cutts was playing for the first eleven, taking the captaincy of the first eleven along with the captaincy of St. Jim's.

And he was playing well. Cutts, gambler and smoker and blackguard generally as he was, could play a good game of footer when he chose, and he chose now. Cutts knew that he needed to consolidate his position as captain of the school, and he was trying by every means to make himself popular, to ingratiate himself with the Sixth.

The Sixth Form, of course, were not overpleased at having him for captain. But Cutts was very diplomatic and tactful, and in football matters, at least, he was winning golden opinions from all sorts of people. It was only his old enemies who felt the weight of his hand, but they found it very heavy.

A shout from the football ground came faintly to Lowther's ears as he stood at the open window.

"Goal—goal!"

"Good shot!"

"Bravo, Cutts!"

Lowther turned away from the window with a snort.

"That beast Cutts has just scored a goal against the Grammarians!" he said.

Two separate and disgusted snorts answered him.

"Just like him!" said Tom Merry.

"The rotter!" said Manners.

Monty Lowther sat down to the table again and ground out more lines. He had done a hundred so far, and four hundred remained to be done. Monty Lowther felt that he would have liked to tie up Virgil, Æneas, and Cutts of the Fifth in a bundle and drop them over the bridge into the Rhyl.

"It's sickening!" said Tom Merry, pausing in his labours. "Five hundred lines! And what did we do?"

"Simply put blacking in Herr Schneider's silk topper!" said Lowther.

"Why, anybody might have done it if he'd thought of it! And it was Schneider's own fault. What did he mean by sticking his beastly, irregular German verbs on us?"

"He did look a picture, didn't he, when the blacking oozed out!" said Tom, his face breaking into a smile. "It was worth a hundred lines or so."

"But not five hundred lines!" groaned Manners.

"No fear! Cutts didn't care twopence if we drowned Schneider in blacking!" said Monty Lowther. "It was simply a chance at us, and he jumped at it."

"Schneider's a beast, too! If he'd complained to Mr. Railton we should have been caned, and had done with it. He knew Cutts would be harder on us than Railton."

"Of course he did! That's why he went to Cutts."

"We've got to stand it. We can't appeal to Railton and explain to him that we blacked the inside of Schneider's topper."

"Ha, ha, ha! No!"

There was another distant shout, and the Terrible Three listened to it.

"Cutts is going strong," Tom Merry remarked. "He plays a good game of footer. Of course, we want St. Jim's to win, whether Cutts is captain or not."

"Oh, of course!" growled Lowther, quite without enthusiasm.

"And that's the match we were going to play!" said Tom meditatively. "If I had remained captain of the school we should have played them, you know."

"With a first eleven composed of juniors!" grinned Lowther. "Cutts has more sense than you had, Tommy. He isn't trying to shove the Fifth Form into the first eleven. He's got nine of the Sixth in the team."

"Oh, he's as deep as a well, of course! He always was too clever for us," said Tom Merry, in despair.

"And here we are, shut up on a fine half-holiday, grinding out beastly

lines!" said Manners. "It's sickening! And missing a football match! Look here, are we going to stand it?"

"We've got to!"

Manners laid down his pen. Manners was generally a very quiet fellow, but he could get his back up occasionally; and it was very much up now. "I'm fed up!"

"So are we, but—"

"It's a half-holiday quite done in if we do these blessed lines! We could do them just as well in the evening, but Cutts has fixed tea-time for them to be handed in, just to muck up the half-holiday."

"Of course he has! But—"

"Oh, I don't want to watch Cutts' performances!" said Monty Lowther. "I'd as soon be here as watching that cad showing off his footer."

"And Study No. 6 have gone out on the randan," pursued Manners.

"They have," sighed Tom Merry.

"Cousin Ethel is staying with the Glys, you know, and they are going cycling with her. What a ripping afternoon for a spin!"

"And we're penned up here!" snorted Manners.

"And our impositions are penned up here," added Monty Lowther, who never could resist the temptation to make a pun, good or bad—generally bad.

"Oh, don't be funny! That's the last

straw!" said Manners, exasperated. "Look here, you fellows, Britons never shall be slaves!"

"Hear, hear!"

"What price clearing out, then?" demanded Manners.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, jumping up as he came to a sudden resolution. "That's the idea. Cutts can go and eat coke!"

"There will be trouble!" said Lowther dubiously.

"Well, that won't be anything new."

"Juniors at school are born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," said Manners solemnly. "Let's chance it!"

"We can slip round the back for our bikes, and get after Blake & Co.," said Tom Merry. "They haven't started long. We can overtake them before they get to Glyn House, very likely."

The temptation was too strong.

Outside, the sunny weather seemed to call the chums of the Shell with a call that was not to be resisted.

Monty Lowther took Virgil from the table and punted it across the study, and the long and graphic accounts of the adventures of the pious Æneas crashed into the grate.

"There goes Virgil!" said Lowther.

"And here go us!" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three bolted out of the study.

CHAPTER 2.

Broken Bounds!

"HERE we are, deah gal!" Thus exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Four juniors jumped off their bikes in the avenue that led to Glyn House, on the outskirts of the village of Rylcombe. They were Blake, Digby, Herries, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the owners of that famous apartment, Study No. 6, in the School House at St. Jim's.

Cousin Ethel was standing near the gate, with a smile on her face, her bicycle leaning against an old oak. Bernard Glyn of the Shell was with her, holding his bicycle.

Glyn's people lived near St. Jim's, and his sister Edith was a great chum of Cousin Ethel's, and when Ethel came down to visit Edith Glyn, Glyn of the Shell always made it a point to ask her Cousin Arthur and his friends over to tea. Needless to say, that invitation was never neglected. The Terrible Three had been unable to come, owing to Cutts' kind attention in the matter of lines. But Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy had turned up cheerfully.

"Here we are!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Weady for the wide, deah gal?"

Cousin Ethel nodded.

"Quite ready, Arthur. Isn't Tom Merry with you?"

"Sowwy! He's detained."

"I'm sorry!" said Ethel.

"Yaas, it's wathah wotten," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "You see, things are gettin' into a weally wotten state at St. Jim's. The old school is goin' to the beastly bow-wows, you know, and I, for one, don't weally see how it's goin' to be stopped."

And Arthur Augustus looked properly solemn over the dreadful prospect that was opening out before St. Jim's.

"Dear me!" said Ethel. "What has happened?"

"You know old Kildare has cleared

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off," said D'Arcy. "He was our skippah, you know. He's got an uncle ill somewhere, and he has had to cleah, and we've got a new captain. We elected Tom Mewwy, but the Head pussed him to wesign, you know, because he is a juniah—which I wegard as wiculous. We were givin' the seniahs a high old time, I can tell you."

Cousin Ethel laughed. "Perhaps the Head did not approve of giving the seniors a high old time?" she suggested.

"Pewwaps not," assented Arthur Augustus. "You nevah know how to take these blessed headmastahs. They don't look at things as we do. But the result is that Cutts is captain of the school, and he's goin' to wemain captain unless old Kildare comes back. And we all wegard it as wotten."

"Rotten!" agreed Blake.

"Beastly!" said Herries.

"The limit!" growled Digby.

"Simply unspcakable!" said Bernard Glyn. "Cutts is a waster, and he's down on us!"

"Yaas, there's the wub," said Arthur Augustus seriously. "He's down on us—us, you know! What's the mattah with us?"

"Nothing, I am sure," smiled Cousin Ethel.

"Nothin'. Quite wight. But Cutts doesn't like us. There's no accountin' for tastes, you know."

"And the long and the short of it is that he's playing the giddy tyrant, and he's detained Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther," said Blake.

"Sheer beastly tyranny," said Digby. Cousin Ethel looked quite concerned.

"And didn't they do anything to be detained for?" she asked.

"Well, practically nothing."

"Weally nothin', deah girl. They simply put some blackin' undah the leathah inside Herr Schneider's silk toppah. Of course, he looked wathah odd when the blackin' wan down his face. He has a vewy wed face, you know, and stwaks of black on it had a wathah stwikin' effect. But, of course, they didn't mean any harm, you know. It was simply a little joke, and some cad must have told Cutts who did it—they didn't tell him themselves."

"Levison or Mellish!" growled Herries. "Pair of rotten sneaks! Cutts makes them report to him things that go on in the Lower School."

"I suppose Herr Schneider was angry?" Ethel suggested.

"Yaas; he was extremely watty. But a few licks with the cane would have been enough. There was no need to detain thwew unfortunate pwactical jockahs for a whole half-holiday. But that is Cutts all ovah."

"Well, we won't bore Cousin Ethel with Cutts and his iniquities," said Bernard Glyn. "Let's get off. We've got to get back to tea. Edith's going to have a ripping spread ready for us. We'll stop at the Feathers Inn for some ginger-beer. We can ride as far as that."

"Good egg!"

And Cousin Ethel and the juniors mounted their machines.

As they rode down the avenue into the Rylcombe Road there was a sudden ringing of bicycle bells, and three riders came into sight. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Here the boundahs are!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Hip, hip!" exclaimed Blake, as the Terrible Three, raising their caps to Cousin Ethel, circled round and joined the party. "Has Cutts let you off?"

"No fear!" said Tom Merry. "We've hooked it."

"But the impot—"

"We'll do that later."

"Hurrah! Britons never shall be slaves!"

Cousin Ethel looked thoughtful.

"But won't Cutts be very angry?" she asked.

"Shouldn't wonder," said Tom Merry. "I don't care if he doubles the impot. I'd rather do a thousand lines this evening than five hundred in the afternoon."

Cousin Ethel said no more. She was a little anxious for Tom Merry & Co.; but they were there now, and it was too late to consider the wisdom—or otherwise—of their action in bolting and leaving the imposition undone.

And the Terrible Three meant to enjoy the afternoon while they could, and leave all considerations of consequences till later, in the happy-go-lucky manner peculiar to schoolboys.

They rode down the avenue together, and turned into the Rylcombe Road in a merry party. Two juniors in St. Jim's caps were walking down the road towards Rylcombe, and they stopped and stared at the Terrible Three and the rest of the cyclists. The chums of St. Jim's recognised Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, the two juniors who were more than suspected of acting the spy for Cutts in the School House.

"Hallo!" called out Levison. "You three fellows are detained, aren't you?"

"Mind your own business!" rapped out Manners as he passed.

"If Cutts gets after you—"

"Go and eat coke!"

And the cyclists swept on, Lowther playfully catching Levison's cap as he passed, and tossing it over the hedge.

The wheelers disappeared round a bend, and Levison, gritting his teeth, scrambled through the hedge for his cap.

He came back into the road scowling.

"They've broken bounds," he said.

"They were detained for the afternoon, Percy."

Mellish nodded.

"They've got an excursion on," he said. "I heard some of them talking about it. They're going down the river to the Feathers."

"Well, this is where we can put a spoke in their wheel," said Levison.

"Are you sure they are going to the Feathers?"

"I heard them saying so this morning."

"Good! Cutts will be glad to know of that. The match will be over by the time we get back to the school. Come on!"

Percy Mellish looked uneasy.

"I—I say, if Cutts gets after them they'll know we sneaked," he muttered.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care if they do. Cutts will look after us, if we stand by him. And he'll be glad of a chance of making those rotters sing small in the presence of Miss Cleveland."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, come on!"

And Levison and Mellish walked away towards St. Jim's, Levison grinning, and his companion still looking a little uneasy.

CHAPTER 3.

The Heavy Hand!

TOM MERRY & CO. enjoyed that spin in the bright weather. They reached the towing-path, and then the route lay along the gleaming Rhyll, the shining river on one side and woods and meadows on the other.

It was a pleasant ride, and it was no wonder that the Terrible Three forgot all about Gerald Cutts and all his works.

The Feathers was a riverside inn, with a long, pleasant garden extending down to the towing-path.

It was a fine afternoon for the time of the year, and the sun was shining brightly in the old garden when the cyclists dismounted at the gate.

"We'll have the ginger-beer in the garden," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

They wheeled their machines into the garden, and sat down in a happy crowd on the old benches at the table.

George, the old waiter, who looked almost as ancient as the lattice-windowed, red-tiled building itself, came out to supply their wants.

"Gingah-beer, deah boy, and some of your wippin' little cakes," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yessir!" said George.

"Wathah a pity we didn't think of askin' Figgins & Co. to hop along," Arthur Augustus remarked, as the waiter disappeared. "Fatty Wynn would have liked those cakes."

"Never thought of it," said Blake. "I think they're out on their bikes, too. I saw Kerr mending a puncture just after dinner."

"You know, we're on topping terms with the New House bounders now," Tom Merry explained to Cousin Ethel.

"They are up against Cutts as much as we are. He's awfully down on Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, because they won't stand his nonsense."

"Yaas," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Old Figgy called him an ass yesterday and got a hundred lines. It was worth a hundred lines."

There was a sound of fellows jumping off bicycles at the gate, and three juniors came into the garden, with faces flushed and rosy from their ride.

"Talk of angels!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Here come those New House bounders!"

Arthur Augustus extracted his eyeglass from his waistcoat-pocket, and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed Figgins & Co. with something like disfavour. He had mentioned them in a casual way, without the slightest suspicion that they were near at hand.

Arthur Augustus had often confided to Blake that Figgins of the New House seemed to regard Cousin Ethel rather as his cousin, than as Arthur Augustus' cousin. And, unsuspecting as the swell of St. Jim's was, he could not help thinking it a little curious that the New House Co. should have "happened" along at that particular moment, on that particular afternoon.

It really seemed as if Figgins had arrived there with malice aforethought, with the knowledge that he would find Cousin Ethel there. But if Figgins had been guilty of any deep and crafty calculations like that, his face did not betray the facts as he came up the garden path with his chums.

In fact, an expression of great astonishment came over Figgins' ruddy, good-humoured face as he spotted the School House fellows.

"Fancy meeting you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, what a surprise!" said Kerr blandly.

"Just imagine finding you fellows here!" said Fatty Wynn.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There's room here for some more," he said. "You happened along quite by chance, of course!"

Figgins coloured a little.

"Well, I—I said to Kerr that it was a ripping afternoon for a ride, didn't I,

Kerr?" he said, appealing to his Scottish chum.

"You did!" said Kerr solemnly. "And—and I said we'd ride down to the Feathers and sample their ginger-beer and cakes," said Figgins. "I—I was really thinking of Fatty. Fatty is so fond of the cakes here."

"They're spiffing!" said Fatty Wynn seriously. "They're much better than the cakes we get at the school shop, or at Mrs. Murphy's. You see—"

"So we came along," said Figgins. "That's it," said Kerr.

"Here come the cakes and the ginger-beer," said Tom Merry. "Sit down!"

Figgins & Co. sat down. Figgins, somehow, found himself sitting beside Cousin Ethel. He generally did. He appeared to be quite unconscious of the fact that Arthur Augustus' eyeglass was turned upon him with a gleam that ought to have bored a hole in him.

"I suppose you'll be coming to St. Jim's while you're staying at Glyn House, Miss Cleveland?" Figgins remarked. "You really must come to tea in the study, you know."

"My cousin is comin' to tea in Study No. 6, in the School House, Figgins," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"Quite so," agreed Figgins heartily. "We'll all come over, Gussy."

"Weally, Figgins—"
"You can rely on us, Gussy," said Kerr affectionately. "We won't leave you in the lurch on an occasion like this."

"Weally, Kerr—"
"Certainly!" said Fatty Wynn. "We'll come over, especially if there's a good tea. But we know you'll do us all right."

"Weally, Wynn—"
"Not another word!" said Figgins. "Depend on us. We'll make a special note of it. What day did you say it was?"

"I did not say any day."
"We're at your service any day for an occasion like that," said Figgins. "We'll put off any other engagement."

"Most certainly," said Kerr. "Pass the cakes, Fatty, and don't scoff the lot."

Arthur Augustus' face was a study. Cousin Ethel concealed a smile behind a chunk of cake. The juniors piled into the cakes and ginger-beer with great heartiness. A substantial tea was awaiting them at Glyn House. But after the ride back they would be ready for that. But the pleasant afternoon was not destined to end so pleasantly.

There was a buzz of cheery talk in the old garden, and the juniors did not notice the sound of the gate opening.

They had been an hour or more in the garden of the inn, and they were thinking of anything but Cutts of the Fifth, when the form of the captain of St. Jim's came striding down the path towards them.

Monty Lowther was the first to catch sight of him, and he uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"My hat! Cutts!"
Cutts halted at the table. He raised his cap slightly to Cousin Ethel. He had come there especially to humiliate Tom Merry & Co. in the presence of their girl chum; but, so far as Ethel was concerned, his manners were polite enough.

After that salute to Ethel, however, he took no further notice of the girl, but turned his whole attention to the juniors.

"So I've caught you!" he said curtly. The Terrible Three rose to their feet. At the first sight of Cutts, of course, they knew that there was going to be trouble.

"So it seems," said Tom Merry quietly. "I suppose Levison has sneaked to you. I'll see Levison about that."

"You were detained for the afternoon," said Cutts.

"Quite so."
"Have you done your lines?"

"No."
"You have broken bounds against my express orders."

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Cutts, old man, do you ever read Shakespeare?"

Cutts stared at him, surprised by the unexpected question.

"Eh? What do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"Do you remember the lines, jolly good lines," said Lowther blandly,

this moment in order to humiliate them, and their blood was up.

After that quick exchange of glances, Tom Merry deliberately sat down again. And Manners and Lowther, taking their cue from their leader, followed his example, and sat down with equal deliberation. There was a pause.

CHAPTER 4.
War!

CUTTS of the Fifth stood with his hand raised, pointing to the gate.

It was a dramatic attitude, and if the three Shell fellows had obeyed his command it would have been a score for Cutts.



Cutts, breathless and furious and struggling wildly in the grasp of the juniors, was rushed along and tossed bodily out upon the towing-path. The bullying Fifth Former was not prospering in his new position as captain of St. Jim's!

"about, let me see, 'Man, vain man, dressed in a little brief authority, plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven as make the angels weep'? Are you trying to make the angels weep, Cutts?"

There was a chuckle from the juniors, and a smile broke out on Cousin Ethel's face. Cutts grew crimson with wrath.

He raised his hand and pointed to the gates.

"Go, at once!" he said.
"What!"

"I order you to return to the school immediately!" said Cutts harshly.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther exchanged glances. Were they to obey that harsh order, to be ordered like dogs out of the presence of Cousin Ethel? If the girl had not been present, probably they would have obeyed. But—

There was a big but. They knew perfectly clearly that Cutts had chosen

But as they did not obey, and showed no intention whatever of obeying, Cutts' dramatic attitude became a little ridiculous.

"Do you hear me?" he asked, his arm drooping to his side.

"Yes," said Tom Merry calmly
"Do you intend to obey me?"

"No."

There wasn't any doubt or hesitation about that answer; it came short and sharp—straight from the shoulder, as it were.

It was war now and open rebellion. Cutts stared at the Terrible Three, his face crimson, a little nonplussed. He had taken up an attitude of lordly command from which he could scarcely retreat without looking absurd. But if the Shell fellows did not choose to obey him, what was to be done? To report them at St. Jim's, and cause them

severe punishment, was easy. But that would come afterwards. For the moment it looked as if Gerald Cutts had the worst of it.

Arthur Augustus broke the painful pause. He generally was ready with a remark or two.

"Pewwaps you had bettah wetiah, Cutts," he suggested gently. "You are weally superfluous here, you know. You have intewupted a vewy agweeable conversation."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lowther.

Cutts breathed hard.

"Will you obey me?" he repeated.

"No!"

Cutts clenched his hands hard.

"If you make me use force—" he began.

"If you use force, Cutts, you'll have to use it on the three of us at once," said Manners calmly.

"On the whole cwowd of us, you mean!" corrected Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, slipping his eyeglass into his pocket, to be ready for business as it were. "It would be quite impos for me to stand by while my fwieds are bein' tweated with violence."

"What-ho!" said Figgins heartily. "You'll have to deal with the whole family, Cutts. You'd better hop it."

"Yaas, watah!"

"Go!" shouted Cutts.

Monty Lowther shook his head with irritating solemnity.

"No go!" he remarked.

And there was a laugh.

The laugh finished Cutts' patience, which was already at an end. His wrath boiled over, and he made a jump at the Terrible Three. He collared Tom Merry, who was nearest to him, and dragged him violently away from the table. Tom Merry resisted forcibly, and there was a crash as the table rocked and half a dozen ginger-beer bottles went to the ground.

Tom Merry returned grasp for grasp and fought fiercely; but it would have gone hard with him in the grip of the

athletic senior if his chums had not come to the rescue.

But Manners and Lowther were upon Cutts in the twinkling of an eye.

And as the Shell fellows seized him, the Fourth Formers rushed to their aid.

Cutts struggled for a few moments in the midst of the horde of juniors, and then went down and disappeared from sight beneath a sprawling heap of them.

"Sock it to him!" roared Blake.

"Sit on him, Fatty!"

"Wipe up the ground with him!"

"Bwavo! We'll give the awful wottah a lesson in mannaahs, you know, for makin' a beastly wow in the pwesence of a lady!"

Every fellow there was lending a hand, and as there were eleven fellows there was undoubtedly a sufficient number of hands. Cutts might as well have been in the tentacles of a particularly powerful octopus for all the use his struggling was to him.

He was stretched on his back on the turf, and Fatty Wynn sat upon his chest. Fatty's weight was no light matter. With Fatty Wynn sitting on his chest, Hercules himself might have given up the tussle in despair.

Cousin Ethel was on her feet now, looking pale and alarmed. It seemed to her as if Cutts was in the process of being really slaughtered.

"Don't hurt him!" she called out. "Figgins—Tom Merry—don't hurt him!"

"We're not hurting him, bless him!" said Blake cheerfully. "Only a little bump or two for the good of his health!"

"Groogh!" came in gurgling tones from Cutts of the Fifth.

"Stick to him, Fatty!" panted Tom Merry. "You asked for this, Cutts, and now you've got it!"

"Groogh! Gerrim off! He's squashing me!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook an admonitory forefinger at Cutts of the Fifth, as his crimson face and blazing eyes glared up from the ground.

"You have bwrought this upon yourself, Cutts," he said severely. "You have only yourself to thank, for being such a beastly bully, you know."

"Gerroff!"

"I twust you will have the gwace to apologise to Miss Cleveland for makin' this disgwaceful scene in her pwesence!"

"We'll bump him if he doesn't!" said Bernard Glyn. "In for a penny, in for a pound, you know. There will be trouble, anyway!"

"I'll report this direct to the Head!" said Cutts, in a choking voice. "Each of you young scoundrels will be flogged!"

"So you're going to report us?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, confound you!"

"And get us the hardest licking you can—what?"

"Yes," said Cutts, between his teeth.

"Then you may as well have some more, if you're going to do your worst, anyway," said Tom calmly. "Bump him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you dare—" yelled Cutts.

Bumping a senior was almost unheard of—and bumping the captain of the school was incredible, unthinkable, undreamed of. But bumped the captain of St. Jim's was, and bumped hard, too.

The juniors were in a mood to bump anybody just then. They were fed-up with Gerald Cutts and his tyranny.

Bump!

"Yow!" roared Cutts.

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooh! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yah! Help! Oh! Stop it! Yaroooh!"

"Oh, please don't!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel, in great distress.

"The wishes of a lady are commands, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus gracefully. "Besides, pewwaps the wottah has had enough."

"He seems to think so," grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him off with that," said Tom Merry generously. "Chuck him out on the towing-path, and have done with him."

"Good!"

Cutts, breathless and furious, and struggling wildly, was rushed along the path to the gate, and tossed bodily out upon the towing-path. He rolled in the grass there, panting for breath, and sat up, ruffled and wild-eyed.

"Oh, I'll make you pay for this!" he gasped.

"Clear off!" commanded Tom Merry. "We give you half a minute to clear. If you're not gone by then, we'll duck you in the river."

"Good egg!" chorused the juniors.

"Hurrah! Duck him, anyway!"

Cutts required less than half a minute to clear off. The hornets'-nest he had brought about his ears was a little too lively for him, and he did not want to be ducked after being bumped.

He made a jump for his bicycle, and threw himself upon it, and pedalled away down the towing-path—hatless, and the split back of his jacket flying in the wind. Never, certainly, had a captain of St. Jim's been guilty of so ignominious a flight.

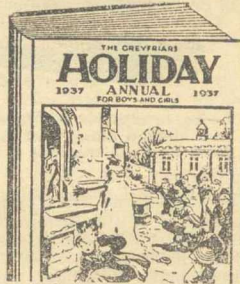
The juniors sent a yell of laughter after him.

"Bai Jove! Cutts has had to climb down this time, and no ewwah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked, as they turned back into the garden.

"There's going to be awful trouble over this at St. Jim's," said Digby solemnly.

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"Nevah mind—we have done our duty, deah boy. We couldn't possibly allow Cutts to kick up a wov in the pwesence of a lady."

But the juniors were not in such a merry humour as they mounted their machines and rode back to Glyn House with Cousin Ethel. They knew that a storm awaited them when they returned to St. Jim's; and, in spite of themselves, it weighed upon their minds a little. Cousin Ethel was also disquieted and distressed with thinking of what would happen to her friends.

During tea at Glyn House the juniors made heroic attempts to appear cheerful, and succeeded so far that the clouds passed from Cousin Ethel's face. But when they left and rode back to St. Jim's, their cheerfulness left them. They did not want Cousin Ethel to be worried, but they could not help being worried themselves.

"I'm sorry we've dragged you fellows into our row with Cutts," said Tom Merry ruefully, as they rode up to the School House.

"Oh, rot!" said Blake. "We should stand by you, of course, anyway."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a bit rough on the New House chaps, though," Lowther remarked.

"Rot!" said Figgins, in his turn. "We're as much up against Cutts as you are. And it was bound to come. Cutts has been looking for trouble ever since he became captain, and we couldn't have fended him off much longer. My belief is that he's been watching for a chance to get up a really good case against us, to go to the Head."

"And we've played into his hands," said Manners.

"H'm! I suppose we have," said Tom Merry. "Well, it can't be helped. We've got to grin and bear it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors wheeled their machines in and put them up. And then, mustering up all their courage, they made their way to the School House—to face the music.

CHAPTER 5.

Paying the Piper!

DARRELL of the Sixth met the juniors as they came towards the School House. Darrell was looking very grim.

"You kids are wanted," he said.

"Yaas, wathah! We expected it, Dawwell, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Is there goin' to be trouble?"

"Yes; I should say so, considering what you have done. All of you are to go to the Head's study—you New House chaps as well."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. They went into the House, and made their way to the Head's study.

They found Dr. Holmes looking decidedly stern. He had a cane lying on the table before him as if in thoughtful anticipation of their arrival.

He ran his stern eyes over the juniors, and they faced him in silence. They knew that they had no excuse to offer that would have satisfied their headmaster. Cutts, too, had had the advantage of telling his story first.

"Well?" said the Head grimly. "You are aware, of course, that I have received a report of your conduct from Cutts."

"I suppose so, sir," said Tom Merry. "Have you any excuse to offer?"

"Yes, sir," said the Head, taking up the cane.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!"



"I am prepared to hear it," said Dr. Holmes. "You three—Merry, Manners and Lowther—are the chief offenders. Cutts informs me that you were detained this afternoon to do lines, for an outrageous practical joke upon the German master. Instead of doing your lines, you broke bounds. You do not deny it, I presume?"

"Well, no, sir." "You did not do your impositions?" "Not yet, sir. We're going to do them."

"You were directed to have them done by tea-time. Is that not so?"

"Yes," confessed Tom Merry. "And you disobeyed the order?" "Ye-es."

"You do not, I presume, deny that the punishment was justly imposed—that it was you who placed the blacking in Herr Schneider's hat?"

"We did it, sir."

"Then your punishment was not in the slightest degree too severe," said the Head. "I should have caned you most severely if the matter had been brought to my notice. Cutts was not in the least too hard upon you. Yet you broke bounds, and when he found you, and ordered you to return to the school, you refused to obey him."

"I—I— We—" "Is that the case, or is it not?" the Head demanded sharply.

"Well, yes, sir." "Then you assaulted Cutts—" "He started it, sir," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! He acted in a weally outwageous mannah—in the pwesence of a lady."

"You see, sir—" "Cutts tells me that as you refused to obey him, he intended to take you back to the school by force, as he was fully justified in doing. You resisted him, and then all of you assaulted him together."

The juniors were silent. Put like that the matter did indeed look serious—much more serious than they had supposed. They realised despairingly that Gerald Cutts was much too clever for them. He knew how to play the bully and tyrant without placing himself in the wrong.

"That is so, is it not?" demanded Dr. Holmes.

"I suppose so, sir." "Cutts acted in a wotten mannah,

sir, makin' a wov in the pwesence of my cousin, Miss Cleveland."

"It does not appear to me to be Cutts who made the row, as you call it," said the Head. "He was acting with full authority in ordering Merry, Manners, and Lowther back to the school. The disturbance was made by the juniors, who refused to obey the order of their captain."

"Yaas; but—" "It appears that you have no excuse whatever to offer. And, indeed, I can imagine none," said the Head.

"In the circs, sir—" "If you have any excuse to make, D'Arcy, I am willing to hear it; but you must not waste time."

"As a mattah of fact, sir, we wegard our pwoceedings as bein' quite justifiable. Cutts is a wottah, and a wank outsidah, and we do not wegard him as weally being a pwopah captain of the school. We considah—" "That is enough, D'Arcy!"

"We weally considah, sir—" "Silence!"

"Yaas; but— Leggo my arm, Blake! I am goin' to explain the mattah fully to the Head."

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Blake. "You're only making matters worse!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I shall cane you all," said the Head. "I have considered whether I should flog you all for this outrageous offence against all the laws of the school. Upon the whole, I think that a severe caning will meet the case; but I warn you that if anything of the kind occurs again, you will be flogged publicly."

"Oh, bai Jove!" "I shall begin with you, Merry. Hold out your hand!"

Tom Merry held out his hand in silence.

There was no help for it; the juniors had to face the music, and they had to bear their punishment with as much fortitude as they could muster. Cutts had them on the hip this time, and they had no defence. Tom Merry received his caning without a sound or a word—six cuts; each of them extremely hard—but his face was quite pale when the infliction was finished.

Each of the juniors underwent the same punishment in turn—the Head's stern face never relaxing for a moment as he dealt out the canings.

When the infliction was finished he dismissed them with a gesture, and the juniors made their way out of the study.

In the passage they paused, and regarded one another with glum looks.

"Well, this is a ripping end to a half-holiday—I don't think!" groaned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his hands painfully together. "I have always wegard the Head as an old sport, but I feah that I shall have to weconsidah my opinion."

"The Head's down on us now," said Tom Merry gloomily. "After this, he will take Cutts' side, whatever happens. We've put ourselves in the wrong."

"And played into that rotter's hands!" groaned Lowther.

"I suppose we've been silly asses!" said Manners. "But Cutts isn't going to get off scot-free after this. We're going for the best!"

The juniors looked doubtful. "Going for" the captain of the school, when he was backed up by the

overwhelming authority of the Head, was a big order.

"We'll think over it," said Blake, with a rueful grin. "I'm not looking out for any more whackings just yet, thanks. My hands feel as if they'd been boiled in oil!"

They made their way slowly and sadly down the passage. At the end of the passage they met Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts was spick-and-span now, and showed no sign of his unfortunate adventure at the Feathers.

He glanced over the juniors with a mocking, cynical grin. They knew he had come there to gloat over them as they came away after their punishment, and they gave him black looks.

"You've had your lesson this time!" said Cutts.

"Oh, shut up!" growled Blake.

Cutts raised his hand.

"Take a hundred lines, Blake!"

"What?" said Blake sulphurously.

"I will put down the impertinence of you juniors, or I'll know the reason why!" said Cutts grimly. "Now I'm captain of the school, I'm going to keep you in order. You won't have the time you did when Kildare was here. I never approved of Kildare's easy-going ways with you young fags!"

"You rotter!" burst out Tom Merry. "Old Kildare was worth a thousand of you!"

"Take a hundred lines, Merry—in addition to those you already have to do!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands hard. He did not say anything more. It was useless to argue with a fellow who had all the power in his hands.

"Now clear off!" said Cutts, in his most unpleasant way. "And don't let me have any more of your cheek, that's all!"

This time Cutts' order was obeyed. The juniors would cheerfully have given worlds, or whole solar systems, for the pleasure of bumping Cutts on the floor of the passage. But their punishment was too recent for them to think of doing that. Bumping Cutts was a pleasure that had to be paid for too dearly. The juniors walked on in silence.

Cutts of the Fifth looked after them with a smile. It was the hour of his triumph, and he had his old enemies just where he wanted them—under his thumb.

CHAPTER 6.

Very Good!

THAT evening was not a happy one for the Terrible Three.

They had lines to occupy every spare moment. And it was a long time before their unfortunate palms recovered from the castigation they had received in the Head's study.

But they did not think of leaving the lines undone. They had been told to take them to Cutts before bed-time and they knew that they had to do it.

"There's no blessed end to it!" said Tom Merry, as he laid down his pen, after wearily writing the last line of six hundred. "The rotter will go on from bad to worse."

"Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind!" said Lowther tragically.

"Oh, don't blow Shakespeare at us now!" said Manners irritably. "I'm feeling inclined to slaughter Cutts!"

"And scalp him!" said Tom Merry meditatively.

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"And boil him in oil!" said Lowther, with a sigh.

"You see, this isn't the end," said Tom. "Cutts means to rain lines on us. It means all our time taken up—half-holidays booked ahead—regular hard work!"

"Blessed slavery!" said Lowther.

"And he will always have some jolly good excuse, so that we can't appeal to the Housemaster!"

"Trust him for that!" sniffed Manners.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"There's only one thing to be done," he announced.

His chums looked at him inquiringly. "If you've got any idea, get it off your chest," said Monty Lowther. "I'm blessed and blowed if I see what's to be done!"

"We've got to be good," said Tom.

"Good?" echoed Manners and Lowther.

"Good's the word," said Tom firmly.

"Cutts gets at us like this, you know, because we give him chances. We're always doing something or other—no harm in it—but something that gives him the pull over us. Well, we've got to stop it. We've got to be good—keep first-rate order—never break a rule—say 'Please, sir,' and 'Yes, sir,' and 'Oh, sir,' and 'No, sir,' like good little Georgie in the story-book."

Monty Lowther gave a deep groan.

"I'd rather be caned every day," he said.

"We can do it, when we get used to it," said Tom Merry, with heroic determination. "We're going to be good—thoroughly and utterly good—and never give Cutts a chance to get at us. If he starts punishing us without excuse, we'll appeal to the Housemaster on the spot, and get him squashed. Railton is just, you know. He'd be down on Cutts like a ton of bricks if he found him out in rotten bullying!"

"Yes; but—"

"Any chap can be a model of all the virtues if he tries hard enough," Tom Merry declared.

"What an awful beast and prig such a chap would be."

"Well, a chap can't have everything. We've got to crawl out from under Cutts' thumb, and the only way we can do it is by being awfully good."

"Oh dear!"

"No more larks!" said Tom Merry resolutely. "We are going to be so good that Cutts will be simply exasperated."

Monty Lowther's humorous face broke into a grin.

"Well, there's something in that," he remarked. "If Cutts doesn't get a chance at us he will be awfully wild."

"One way of getting our own back on him," said Manners, brightening up. "After all, it's not a bad idea."

"We'll begin by turning over a new leaf this very evening," said Tom.

"We've got to take these lines in to Cutts. We're going to be meek and respectful—so meek and respectful that Cutts will be ready to bite us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Somehow cheered up by the prospects of ragging Cutts in a way which would not give him a possible chance of getting back on them, the Terrible Three collected up their lines and left the study.

They made their way to the Fifth Form passage sedately, walking in a solemn row. Tom Merry gave a discreet tap at Gerald Cutts' door.

"Come in!" rapped out Cutts.

They entered.

Cutts of the Fifth had Gilmore and Knox of the Sixth with him. There was

a scent of cigarettes in the study, but no cigarettes were to be seen. Monty Lowther coughed, in order to let Cutts know that he had observed the scent of tobacco.

"Well, what do you want?" said Cutts, eyeing them.

"Our lines, please, Cutts," said Tom Merry meekly.

Cutts stared at him. He had expected their severe punishment to have some effect on the Shell fellows, but he had hardly expected this meekness. Meekness was not exactly an attribute of the Terrible Three. Cutts cast a triumphant glance at Knox and Gilmore. His glance said as plainly as words could have done that he had succeeded in bringing the three most rebellious juniors in the School House to heel at last.

"Put them on the table," said Cutts.

"Yes, please, Cutts!"

"Thank you, Cutts!" said Manners.

"Thank you, so much!" said Monty Lowther meekly.

Cutts began to look a little puzzled. Meekness was all very well, but there was such a thing as overdoing it. He frowned as he looked over the lines.

"Do you call this writing?" he asked unpleasantly.

"Yes, please, Cutts!"

"Well, I don't! If you think this kind of scrawl will do for an imposition you're making a mistake."

"Thank you, Cutts!"

"You'll do a hundred each over again, and let it be a bit more civilised next time," said the captain of St. Jim's.

"Yes, Cutts. Anything else?"

"Look here, what little game are you playing?" demanded Cutts, with a black look. "Not so much of your 'Yes, please' and 'Thank you, Cutts.' Do you hear?"

"Oh, certainly, Cutts!"

"Thank you very much, Cutts!" said Lowther. "You've only got to give your orders and we shall obey them—if we can't anticipate your wishes. Of course, whenever we can anticipate your wishes, we shall do so."

Gilmore chuckled and Knox grinned. Cutts' dark brow became darker.

"I suppose you fags think this sort of thing funny!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"What sort of thing?" he asked.

"You are trying to pull my leg, you young hound, and you know it!"

"Oh, Cutts! As if I would pull the leg of the captain of St. Jim's—a person in authority over me!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in a shocked tone. "I'd rather pull the leg of—the Emperor of Japan—I would really!"

"If you are asking for a licking," said Cutts, breathing hard.

"No, thank you, Cutts!"

"You're awfully kind, Cutts, but we won't bother you."

"Not at all, Cutts dear!"

Gilmore and Knox broke into a cackle again. Cutts flushed with rage and jumped up and seized a cane.

"Hold out your hand, Merry!" he exclaimed.

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.

"What for?" he asked.

"I am going to cane you for your cheek!"

"Very well. And when you have caned me I shall go straight to Mr. Railton and tell him every word I have said, and ask whether I ought to be caned for it," said Tom calmly. "There you are!"

And he held out his hand.

Cutts gripped the cane hard, but he did not lash at the extended hand. It was outstretched invitingly before him,

and he longed to bring the cane down upon it with a sounding swish, but he did not. He lowered the cane.

"Get out of my study!" he said.

"Yes, Cutts."

"And bring me the hundred lines each to-morrow."

"Thank you, Cutts!"

"Good-night, Cutts!"

"So good of you, Cutts!"

And the Terrible Three bowed gracefully to Cutts and walked out of the study, closing the door with meek gentleness.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gilmore and Knox in chorus.

Cutts glared at them savagely.

"What are you cackling at?" he demanded.

They cackled again.

"Why didn't you cane them, Cutts, old boy?" asked Gilmore.

"And get hauled over the coals by Raitlon!" said Cutts savagely. "No thanks! I'm not going to put myself in the wrong. Those young scoundrels have the laugh of me for once, but it won't last long. You'll see. And stop cackling, you silly fatheads, or else get out of my study, confound you!"

In the passage the Terrible Three were chuckling as they made their way to the Junior Common-room. They had succeeded at last in pulling the leg of the redoubtable Cutts, without any ill-consequences to themselves. And there was solace in that, and it cheered them upon their unaccustomed path to goodness.

CHAPTER 7.

Levison Asks For It!

"HERE they are!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cheerfully, as the chums of the Shell came into the Common-room.

"We've been waiting for you," said Blake.

"Something's on, you know," remarked Digby mysteriously.

"Levison," explained Herries.

The four chums of Study No. 6 had been conversing together in low tones, with a considerable degree of animation. There was evidently something "on."

"What's the little game?" asked Tom Merry. "Nothing against the rules of the House, I hope, young fellows?"

"Whom are you calling young fellows?" demanded Blake warmly.

"Ahem! Don't raise your voice, Blake," said Tom chidingly.

"What? Why shouldn't I raise my voice if I want to, I'd like to know?"

"We don't talk to chaps who raise their voices," Monty Lowther explained.

"Raised voices might disturb the serenity of the noble Cutts!"

"Wh-a-a-at?"

"We have sworn to honour and obey Cutts of the Fifth, and we can't take part in anything that would worry him, you know."

"Gone off your silly dot?" asked the mystified Blake. "Look here, we've been discussing about dealing with Levison."

"You know Cutts gets all sorts of information about things that go on in the Lower School," said Digby. "It's pretty plain that Levison tells him. Levison or Mellish, or both, must have sneaked to Cutts this afternoon, and brought him to the Feathers after you, and caused all the trouble."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Most likely," said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"Well, I suppose we are not going to

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let the cad sneak about us and not warn him?" said Blake indignantly.

"No fear!" said Herries, with great emphasis.

"We are goin' to make Levison sowwy for himself, deah boys, and, of course, you will want to take a hand."

Tom Merry shook his head gravely.

"That depends on what you're going to do," he replied. "Are you thinking of taking Levison by the hand and talking to him sweetly, like a Dutch uncle?"

"Talk to your grandmother!" growled Blake. "I'm going to take him by the neck, and talk to him like a coke-hammer, if you want to know!"

"And bump him—hard!" said Herries.

"And slaughter him!" said Digby.

"And wag him bald-headed, you know, deah boys! I weally considah that the time has come to make an example of Levison!"

"Then I'm afraid we can't have a hand in it," said Tom Merry regretfully. "We have just sworn to be good."

"Oh, come off!" said Blake.

"Honest Injun! No larks! No rags! No nothing!" said Tom Merry categorically. "We're going to be good—awfully good—rippingly good! Too good to be true, in fact."

"If you're trying to be funny—"

began Blake.

"Serious as a bench of giddy judges. The fact is, we're not going to give Cutts another chance at us," explained Tom. "By being good we shall disarm him. The soft answer turneth away wrath, you know."

"Not Cutts' wrath," said Digby sagely. "Cutts' wrath can't stand any number of soft answers. They only make him more ratty."

"That's one of our objects," said Tom blandly. "The rattier we make him, the better, so long as we don't give him any excuse to go for us."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Jack Blake nodded his head thoughtfully.

"I see," he said slowly. "I admit there's something in that. Only we're bound to rag Levison for sneaking, you know. He can't be allowed to go on!"

"Mustn't do anything for him to sneak about," said Tom, with a shake of the head. "That's the best plan. Think how wild Cutts will be if he can't find a single excuse for a whole week for giving us lines."

"Bai Jove, there's somethin' in that, you know," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "Only it's wathah wuff on us to have to let that wottah Levison off!"

"Forgive him, and hope that he'll turn over a new leaf," advised Monty Lowther.

"Oh crumbs! He won't turn over any new leaves—they're not in his line. I believe the beast sneaked about Lumley-Lumley to-day. Cutts found out, somehow, that he had been down to the village to see old Grimes without permission."

"Here the wottah comes!" said D'Arcy.

Levison of the Fourth came swaggering into the Common-room with Mellish. As a rule, he was not a very important member of the Fourth Form, and he was quite in the shade in the School House. Tom Merry & Co., the leaders of the House, took very little notice of his existence. Levison repaid their contempt with a bitter dislike, and of late he had had several opportunities of gratifying that amiable feeling.

The fact that Levison was a favourite with the captain of the school, and that anyone who offended Levison soon found himself in trouble with Cutts, made the cad of the Fourth a much more important fellow than he had hitherto been. Fellows who would not have stood any "cheek" from him formerly, now treated him with marked civility, and Levison had already assumed bullying airs towards some of the smaller boys.

By reason of his influence with Cutts, he hoped to be able to assume the upper hand over the Terrible Three, though that was not an easy task.

Levison glanced at the group of juniors with a sneering smile as he came towards the fire, near which they were standing. He sat down in an arm-chair, purposely knocking his boot against Monty Lowther's leg.

Formerly, Lowther would have told Levison what he thought of him in choice language; but he didn't now. He drew his leg away, and carefully dusted the mark of Levison's boot from his trousers, and said nothing.

Levison drew a deep breath.

It was his first tentative essay, as it were, in making himself unpleasant to the chums of the Shell. It seemed to promise well. He wondered how much they would stand. He determined to put that to the test at once.

"Don't jabber so near me, you fellows," he said, as Lowther began blandly to talk about the football match of the afternoon. "You bother me!"

"Certainly not, Levison," he said politely.

"Stand farther off, can't you!" snapped Levison. "You're taking the fire away from me."

"How far off shall we stand?" asked Manners suavely.

"Get to the other side of the table, confound you!" said Levison, in aggressive and domineering tones.

The Terrible Three moved quietly to the other side of the table.

Levison's loud and unpleasant voice had been heard by every fellow in the

Common-room, and when the Terrible Three were seen to obey his order there was a buzz of amazement. Some of the juniors stared at Tom Merry & Co. as if wondering whether they were dreaming. For the champion fighting-men of the School House to allow the biggest rotter in the House to bully them was an astonishing thing.

"Faith and phwat does it mean intirely?" muttered Reilly of the Fourth in wonder.

"Gone off your dot, Tom Merry?" demanded Kangaroo bluntly.

"Hush!" said Tom.

The Cornstalk looked perplexed. "Hush! What for?" he asked, looking round.

"You'll disturb Levison."

"D-d-disturb Levison!" gasped Noble, almost staggering with surprise. "What do you mean? What does it matter if I disturb Levison?"

"Hush!"

"Look here——"

"Levison wants to be quiet," Tom Merry explained calmly. "We mustn't disturb him. He would be angry with us."

"Angry!" yelled Kangaroo. "And what the dickens does it matter whether Levison is angry or not, you howling duffer?"

"Hush!"

"Sure, and it's mad ye are intirely," said Reilly, with a shake of the head.

"I guess they're pulling Levison's esteemed leg," murmured Lumley-Lumley. "Look how the silly ass is sucking it all in! He really thinks they are afraid of him."

Levison certainly did. He seemed almost to expand with satisfaction. He had hardly dared to hope that such a state of things would come to pass; but he could not doubt his ears. He was a person to be feared, even by the Terrible Three, who feared nobody else. He—Levison—was going to be cock of the walk in the School House for the future—at least, so long as Cutts of the Fifth was captain.

"Not so much talk there!" he called out.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Kangaroo.

But Monty Lowther replied sweetly: "Just as you like, Levison."

"Fetch me that footstool, Manners," ordered Levison.

"Oh, certainly, Levison!"

Manners fetched the footstool and placed it for Levison's feet carefully. The whole Common-room watched him with dumb amazement. The Terrible Three were singing small with a vengeance now, and before Levison, of all fellows! It took the whole crowd's breath away to watch it.

"Now bring me a cushion for my head!" snapped Levison.

"Yes, immediately."

Manners brought the cushion, and adjusted it behind Levison's head in the armchair. Levison, almost intoxicated by triumph by this time, went a little further—further than he would have gone if he had retained his habitual caution.

"Clumsy ass!" he growled. "Don't knock it against my head!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said Manners.

"Get away, you fool!" said Levison, and he gave Manners a rough push that made him stagger.

Manners bumped against the table.

It was unfortunate, after all the trouble the Terrible Three had taken to be very good. But Manners lost his temper at that moment, and did not

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stop to think. He caught Levison's collar with his left hand, and the cushion with his right, and in a second Levison was yanked out of the chair, and Manners was belabouring him frantically with the cushion.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Take that, you cad! Take that, you sneak! Take that, you rotter!"

Whack, whack, whack!

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

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry.

"Manners, hold on! You're spoiling the whole show! Ha, ha, ha! Hold on!"

But Manners didn't hold on, excepting to Levison, and the cushion rose and fell with terrific force and speed, and the yells of Levison of the Fourth rang through the School House

CHAPTER 8.

No Good!

"CAVE!"

It was a sudden warning from a fellow near the door.

But it came too late.

The cushion was still rising and falling, and Levison was still struggling and yelling like a lunatic, as Cutts of the Fifth strode into the room, a cane in his hand, and a frown upon his brow.

Tom Merry groaned under his breath.

"Oh, my hat! Here we are again!"

"Yaas, wathah! This is what comes of being too good, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It was wathah too sudden a change, you know."

"Manners!" shouted Cutts. "Release Levison at once!"

Manners released Levison as if he had suddenly become red hot. Too late he remembered his heroic resolve to be good.

"Yes, Cutts!" he said meekly.

Levison staggered away from the Shell fellow, his hair ruffled, his face flushed, and panting with pain and rage.

"Now, what's the cause of this?" demanded Cutts in his magisterial manner. "Manners, you have attacked Levison, and made a disturbance that's been heard over the whole House."

"So sorry!" murmured Manners.

"He—he came for me like a wild beast!" half-sobbed Levison. "He whacked me with the cushion! Ow! You saw him? Ow—ow!"

"Hold out your hand, Manners!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Levison pushed Manners first—shoved him against the table! You know you did, Levison!"

"You can cane us both if you cane either," said Manners, almost reconciled to a caning if Levison was to have one as well.

Cutts hesitated for a moment. To punish his staunch supporter in the Lower School was not in accordance with his plans at all. But it was necessary for him to keep up an appearance of administering justice.

"Did you push Manners, Levison?" he asked.

"Well, I gave him a bit of a shove," admitted Levison sullenly.

"Then you are to blame as well, though not to the same extent. Manners, you have committed what I can only call a savage assault upon Levison."

"Oh, crikey!" murmured Manners.

"I shall cane both of you. Hold out

your hand—now the other—now the other again—and the other!"

"Ow-ow-ow!" groaned Manners.

Cutts laid on each of the four cuts with terrific vim. Manners was almost doubled up by the time the last cut was administered. He backed away, gasping, and looking quite pale. Cutts turned to the cad of the Fourth.

"Now you, Levison!" he commanded.

Levison stared at him.

"You—you're going to cane me?" he gasped.

"Certainly! It's my duty, as captain of the school, to administer even-handed justice," said Cutts severely. "Hold out your hand at once!"

Levison, with his features set in a black scowl, held out his hand. His eyes were glittering with rage. But his scowl broke into a grin as the cane came down. Cutts did not lay it on Levison as he had laid it upon Manners. The cane scarcely flicked Levison's outstretched palm.

"Now the other!" said Cutts, as grave as a judge.

Levison smiled and held out the other hand. Again a flick.

"Now keep order here!" said Cutts, as he went towards the door. "If there's any more disturbance here, you'll hear from me, I warn you!"

And Cutts walked away.

The chums of the School House gazed at one another with feelings almost too deep for words. Gerald Cutts had done them again. If he had caned only Manners, when both Manners and Levison had been rowing, an appeal to the Housemaster would have been of some avail. But he hadn't. He had administered strict justice by caning both the delinquents—only he had caned Levison in a way that would hardly have hurt a fly.

It was made abundantly clear to all the fellows there that Levison was a privileged person, who was not to be really punished for anything, and yet in a way that made it impossible for them to take any steps.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" groaned Blake. "Oh, Cutts is as deep as a well! There's no keeping one's end up against a fellow like Cutts!"

"No feah!" said Arthur Augustus dolefully. "Fortunately, Mannahs gave him an awful whackin' before the beast came in!"

"Yes, that was real luck, I guess!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Levison looked vauntingly at the juniors.

"You had better mind your p's and q's!" he remarked. "I'll make some of you sit up before I've done with you, if I have any of your rot, you mark my words!"

"I'll mark you chivvy if I have any of your gas!" said Kangaroo savagely.

Levison sneered and walked out of the Common-room.

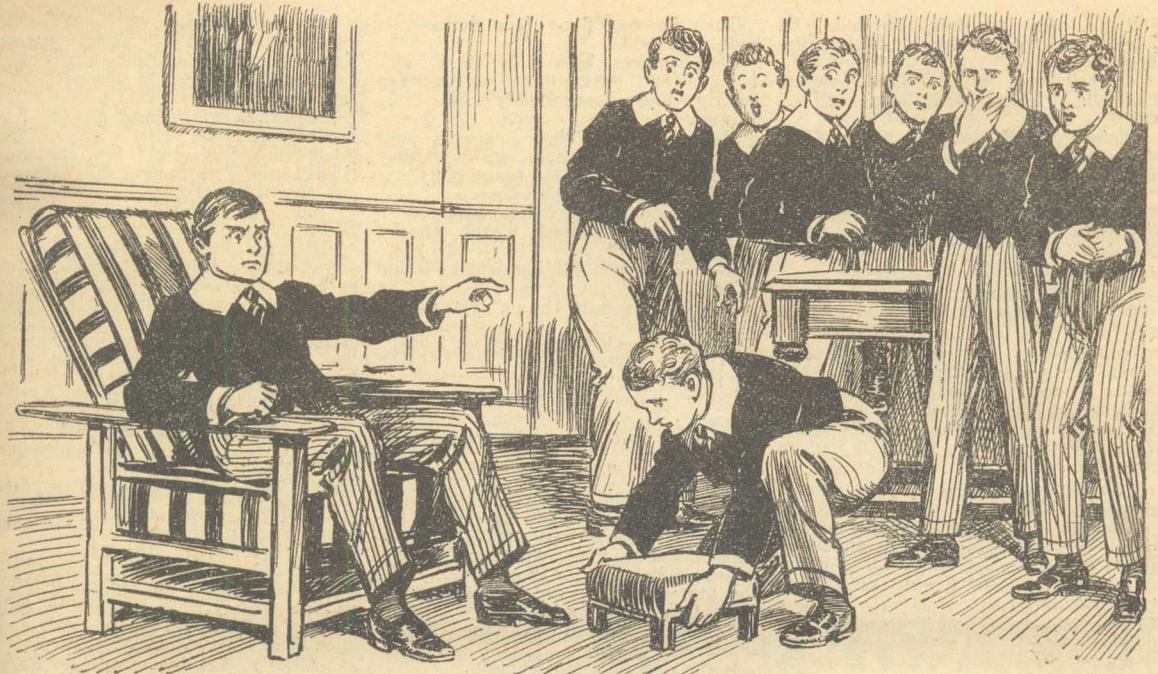
"This is a pretty state of things, and no mistake!" Clifton Dane remarked. "Cutts meant us to see that Levison's not to be touched."

"Oh, of course, he's bound to back up his special sneak," said Tom Merry bitterly. "But you were an ass, Manners!"

"I lost my temper," confessed Manners. "I couldn't let that cad shove me, could I? And I'm jolly glad I gave him a licking, anyway!"

"And he's going to jolly well have a dormitory ragging to-night for sneaking to Cutts this afternoon!" said Blake savagely.

But Blake's proposition, which would have been hailed with enthusiasm at



"Fetch me that footstool, Manners!" ordered Levison. "Oh, certainly, Levison!" Manners fetched the footstool and placed it carefully for Levison's feet. The whole Common-room watched in dumb amazement. It took the crowd's breath away to see Manners singing small to the cad of the Fourth!

any other time, was received in silence now.

"We shall have Cutts down on us," said Kerruish, after a pause.

"Blow Cutts!"

"Can't back up against the captain of the school," said the Manx junior, with a shake of his head. "Better let the cad alone."

Blake shook his head obstinately. But it was clear that most of the Fourth were of opinion that the best thing to do was to keep clear of Cutts. They felt that they would never be able to catch their tyrant in the wrong; and a row in the dormitory at night would give Cutts another opportunity of coming down upon them heavily.

"Are we going on being good?" asked Lowther, as the Terrible Three left the Common-room a little later.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, old chap! Let's give it a good trial. It's the only way to keep our end up with Cutts!"

"Oh, all right!" groaned Lowther. "We'll try it. But depend on it the beast will find some way of getting at us, all the same!"

"Well, you cads, what are you plotting now?" asked Levison's voice at their elbow.

And Tom Merry, without stopping to think, let out a back-hander that sent Levison staggering along the passage, to fall in a heap four or five yards away. Cutts—the Fifth Former seemed to have the gift of ubiquity—was on the scene in a twinkling.

"Merry!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"I saw what you did—a cowardly——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry, his eyes flashing, losing his temper in the same unfortunate way as Manners had done. "Cheese that rot, Cutts!"

"What!"

"Levison's a beastly, sneaking cad, and you're another for backing him up!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in a voice that rang the length of the passage.

"That's what we think of you, and now you know it!"

Cutts raised his hand.

"Merry, you are gated for Saturday afternoon. You will stay in and write lines. Another word, and I'll cane you as well, on the spot!"

Tom Merry's lips were open, to utter a good many other words, but his chums grasped him and dragged him away. The Terrible Three reached their study, Tom Merry breathing fury.

"Gated for Saturday!" he gasped. "My hat! I—I——" Words failed him.

Lowther grinned feebly.

"Are we still going to be good?" he murmured.

"Blow being good!" said Tom Merry forcibly. "We're going to declare war on Cutts, and make him sit up, and we won't give the beast a minute's rest."

And Manners and Lowther, with deep feeling, said:

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Dormitory Ragging!

JACK BLAKE'S face wore a grim expression when he went into the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House that evening.

He was very quiet, however.

When Darrell of the Sixth saw lights-out in the dormitory, there was nothing to indicate that anything unusual was on the tapis.

Levison had cast an anxious look at his Form-fellows, but they were not looking at Levison.

The sneak of the Fourth was not feeling quite easy. He knew that he was suspected of sneaking to Cutts, and after what had happened that afternoon the juniors could hardly be in doubt about the fact that he had sneaked.

True, if they ragged him they would receive punishment afterwards at the hands of the captain of St. Jim's; but that would not undo the ragging, and Levison did not like being ragged.

The cad of the Fourth did not go to sleep after "lights out." He knew that some of the others were remaining awake also, and he wondered why—uneasily.

Footsteps were heard to pass the door about a quarter of an hour after Darrell had gone. Jack Blake grinned to himself in the darkness. He knew that Cutts was making his rounds, in the hope of hearing some disturbance.

The footsteps paused for a moment outside the door of the Fourth Form dormitory, and then passed on and died away.

Cutts was satisfied. But Blake did not move immediately. He allowed another quarter of an hour to pass. It was not till ten o'clock rang out from the old clock tower that Blake sat up in bed.

Then he called out softly:

"You fellows awake?"

"Yaas, wathah!" came from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's bed.

"I'm awake!" came Herries' deep voice.

"What-ho!" said Digby.

"Turn out, then!" said Blake.

He slipped out of bed and lighted a candle. Half the Fourth Formers sat up in bed in the flickering light.

Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby turned out, and after a pause Reilly and Kerruish followed suit. The rest remained in bed.

"Levison!" said Blake quietly.

Levison snored.

"Are you asleep, Levison?"

Snore.

"Yank him out by the ankles!" said Blake.

Levison suddenly woke up.

"Look here, what's the little game?" he asked.

"Not asleep after all?" said Blake pleasantly. "I thought not. Get up!"

"I don't want to get up."

"You see, it isn't a question of what you want, but of what you've got to do," explained Blake.

"I'm not going to get up."

Blake came towards the bed, and Levison sat up, his face full of apprehension.

"If you touch me, I'll shout!" he exclaimed. "Cutts will hear, and—Ow!"

Blake grasped him, and he came out of bed in a heap, and bumped on the floor.

"If you yell," said Blake calmly, "you'll get this slipper—well laid on. We don't want Cutts here. Cutts would be superfluous."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You are going to answer for your sins now, Levison," said Blake. "Stand up!"

He would have given a great deal to shout for Cutts; but the slipper in Blake's hand was ready, and the expression on the face of the Yorkshire junior was ruthless. Levison knew that Jack Blake was not to be trifled with at that moment.

"Gentlemen," said Jack Blake, glancing round at the wide-awake juniors in the flickering light of the candle—"gentlemen, are you all aware that Cutts, our new and respected captain, has mysterious ways of getting information about us? He has dropped on us for all sorts of things he knew nothing about. I accuse Levison of being a sneak and spying on us to report to Cutts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Do you deny it, Levison?"

"Yes, I do!" growled Levison.

"Faith, and we all know it's true intirely," said Reilly.

"Did you tell Cutts to-day that Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were going with us to the Feathers?" demanded Blake.

"No."

"Then how did he know they were there?"

"How should I know?"

"Why did Cutts pretend to cane you in the Common-room instead of giving you the real article?"

Levison was silent. That incident had given him thoroughly away, and he knew it. He had no defence to make: all the fellows knew that he had sneaked.

"Gentlemen," said Blake, "is Levison guilty of this accusation?"

"Guilty!" said all the juniors at once.

"You hear that, Levison?"

"You'd better not rag me!" said Levison. "I'll let Cutts know all about it in the morning, if you do."

"And after that you've got the cheek to say you're not a sneak?" said Herries.

"Levison's guilt is quite demonstrated, deah boys. I pwopose that we give him a feahful waggin', as a lesson."

"Hear, hear!"

"Pile in!"

"Quiet!" chided Blake. "Don't wake the house. It would be just like Cutts to be spying on us. Levison having been found guilty, I hereby sentence him to be flogged, hung, drawn, and quartered, and boiled in oil, tarred and feathered, and whacked with a slipper. As the whole sentence cannot be carried out, we must be satisfied with simply whacking him with a slipper; but the whacks shall be well laid on."

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck him across his bed. If he tries to yell, jam a cake of soap into his mouth!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Levison, struggling fiercely as the Fourth Formers grasped him. "Let me go! Help! Cutts! I—groogh—yow!"

Levison's cries died away as a cake of soap was crammed into his mouth.

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Then he was flung face downwards across his bed.

Four juniors held him there, outspread; and Jack Blake got to work swiftly and energetically with the slipper.

He was afraid that Levison's yells might have been heard, swiftly as they had been checked by the soapy gag; and he did not mean to lose time.

The slipper rose and fell rapidly.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! "Groo-hooh!"

Levison made a wild, mumbling sound as Blake piled in with the slipper. The loud whacks echoed through the dormitory.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Groo-hoogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in, deah boy! Give the wottah beans!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, I can hear footsteps—"

"Cave!"

Blake brought down the slipper in a final tremendous whack as the dormitory door was thrown open. Levison succeeded in ejecting the soap from his mouth, and let out a fiendish yell. Mr. Railton strode into the dormitory, with Gerald Cutts at his heels.

"Blake!" rapped out the Housemaster.

Blake dropped the slipper.

He had expected Cutts, but not Mr. Railton. It was like Cutts to bring the Housemaster upon the scene to catch the juniors in the very act of ragging in the dormitory by night.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Blake.

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy in dismay. "There's goin' to be a wow now."

Arthur Augustus was right. The School House master was very much down upon dormitory raggings, and quite rightly so, as a rule. Mr. Railton's face was grim and stern as he strode towards the juniors, a cane tightly grasped in his hand.

"What are you attacking Levison for?" he demanded.

"Sneaking, sir," said Blake directly.

"I didn't!" howled Levison.

"You have no right to punish him for that, even if he did so, and he denies it," said Mr. Railton sternly. "I shall severely cane every junior who is out of bed, and I shall begin with you, Blake."

Mr. Railton began with Blake, and Blake felt that life wasn't worth living by the time he had finished with him. Never had the Housemaster laid it on so hard. The other juniors waited their turn quaking, and they went through it, one after another.

Cutts of the Fifth stood watching the scene with a quiet, grave face, not showing, in the presence of the Housemaster, any of the cynical satisfaction he was feeling. He did not intend to let Mr. Railton suspect that he was using him simply as an instrument for paying off old grudges against the juniors.

The caning finished, Mr. Railton ordered the juniors back to bed. They were glad to go, with many suppressed groans.

Mr. Railton glanced round the dormitory with a stern eye.

"If there are any further disturbances here, I shall come back," he said.

He left the dormitory, followed by Cutts, taking the candle with him. Cutts had not spoken a word.

In the darkness there were sounds of anguish from many beds.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Groogh!"

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

"My hat! Yow-ow!"

"Blake, you silly ass!" groaned Kerruish. "If you propose any more dormitory raggings, we'll—we'll suffocate you! Ow!"

There was a mocking chuckle from Levison.

"I fancy you've got it a bit worse than I did," he remarked. "How do you like it?"

"Shut up, you rotter!" growled Blake.

"Shut up yourself!" retorted Levison.

And Blake did not even hurl a pillow at him. For that night, at least, even the most warlike junior in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's felt that it was better to leave Levison severely alone.

CHAPTER 10.

The Inventive Genius!

TOM MERRY & CO. felt that it was the limit.

During the following few days they were made to feel the heavy hand of the new captain of St. Jim's more heavily than usual.

Cutts did not give them any rest.

He was paying off old, long scores, and he was paying them off with interest. And every time he came down upon Tom Merry & Co., he contrived it so skilfully that there was no chance for them. Somehow or another they were always in the wrong, or could be made to appear in the wrong.

Indeed, Cutts succeeded in impressing upon the minds of the Head and the Housemaster that the Co. were "up" against his captaincy, and were giving as much trouble as possible, which naturally brought upon Tom Merry and his chums the frowns of the powers that were.

Cutts had them, as it were, in a cleft stick, and there seemed no end to it.

For the more he punished them, the more he made them appear rebellious and insubordinate, and in need of correction.

On Saturday afternoon Tom Merry had the pleasure of sitting in his study and writing out lines while all the other fellows were out of doors.

Tom's mind was busy while he was mechanically grinding out lines.

He had told Manners and Lowther that the Co. were going to declare war on Cutts of the Fifth, but as yet the war had not prospered. Cutts seemed to have it all his own way from start to finish.

They were under his thumb, and he was keeping them there. But from day to day the Co. were growing more and more exasperated, and it was certain that sooner or later there would be an outbreak.

Tom Merry knew that; and he knew, too, that the outbreak, when it came, would probably have the result of placing them more firmly than ever under Cutts' thumb, and lowering them still further in the good graces of the Housemaster.

How was Cutts to be stopped and punished, without results altogether too painful to the juniors? That was the problem that Tom Merry had to solve, and it was a knotty one.

Tom thought it over while he was doing his lines. The lines were finished at last, and it was near tea-time. Tom rose from the table with a sigh; for a fellow of his tastes it was decidedly "rotten" to pass a whole afternoon indoors.

He walked along the Shell passage to the end study, which belonged to Noble, Dane, and Glyn. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane were out, but Bernard

Glyn was there. Glyn was one of the juniors whom Cutts had marked down to be punished, and that afternoon, he, as well as Tom Merry, had lines to do.

The excuse had been easy enough to find. Glyn was an inventive genius, and what he did not know about mechanics and "stinks" was not worth knowing. His experiments in chemistry—euphoniously termed stinks by the St. Jim's fellows—sometimes caused the Shell passage to be pervaded by weird smells, and fellows had often come along to the end study breathing fire and slaughter on that account.

Most of Cutts' punishments were unpopular; but even the juniors felt that he wasn't going too far in dropping on Glyn for making the passage "hum" with his deadly smells. Cutts had chosen his opportunity and descended on Glyn—confiscated a whole set of smelly materials, and detained him for the half-holiday as a penalty.

Bernard Glyn was not writing lines when Tom Merry looked in. He had scribbled through his imposition hastily and finished it, to have it ready for Cutts. He was occupying the remainder of his detention in his favourite pursuit. There was a strong odour in the study as Tom looked in, and he coughed. Bernard Glyn, in his shirt-sleeves, was busy at the table, and he turned his head as he heard the cough.

"Finished your impot?" asked Tom.

"Yes, that's done. Come in!"

"Ahem! I'd rather stand in the doorway, if you don't mind," said Tom, with a sniff. "What on earth is that terrible niff for?"

Glyn glanced with satisfaction at a queer-looking compound he was stirring in a metal bowl.

"It's my new invention," he explained.

Tom Merry sniffed again.

"Seems to me that every blessed invention that you make smells worse than the last," he remarked. "Is that the stuff Cutts was down on you for making?"

"That's it."

"And what's it for?"

"It's a jolly good invention," said Glyn, his eyes glistening. "It's for burglars, you know."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't suppose the most enterprising burglar would burgle any of that stuff," he remarked.

"Ass!" said Glyn politely. "It's to catch burglars. You know the ordinary idea of a burglar alarm—an electric bell rings, or something like that, and the burglar scoots off safe and sound. Well, my invention will enable the police to track him down. There is a concealed electric button, you see. The burglar presses it in trying the handle of the door—door of a room, or safe, or anything—a hidden spring works, there is a squirt, and a stream of this liquid is ejected over him."

"My hat!"

"The smell will cling to him for at least twenty-four hours. He can't possibly get rid of it," explained Glyn. "In twenty-four hours the police will be able to nose him out, if they've got any noses. See?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Glyn. "I think it's a jolly good invention, and will practically abolish burglary in the long run. I've used a lot of fearful things in making it, and I believe it's the very worst smell that ever has been invented."

"Well, it seems like it," confessed Tom Merry. "I think you've hit the mark there."

"Oh, this is mild compared with what it is at full force," said Glyn. "Wait till I let you smell the whole mixture."

"Thanks, I'd rather not!"

"It will simply make you stagger," said Glyn, with enthusiasm. "It's something like very old fish, and something like carbide of calcium, in its strongest state, and something like drains out of order, and something like—"

"Great Scott! It must be a regular ripper," said Tom Merry. "I wish we could give Cutts a good ducking in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's eyes suddenly glistened. He had spoken carelessly, but his own words suggested a new idea to him.

He came into the study, braving the deadly odour, and closed the door excitedly.

"I say, Glyn, old man, that's a wheeze."

"Eh? What's a wheeze?" asked Glyn, who was busy now pouring his fearful concoction into a brass saucepan.

"About Cutts!"

"Oh, blow Cutts!"

"He will want blowing, and airing, and lots of things, if we can work this wheeze on him,"

grinned Tom Merry. "Never mind the burglars—they haven't done anything to you, and I don't suppose it would be any good for that, anyway."

"Why, you silly ass—"

"Instead of using that stuff as a burglar-catcher, we shall use it as a Cutts-catcher."

"What?"

"Suppose we managed somehow to swamp some of it over Cutts?"

Bernard Glyn burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! We could do it. What a wheeze!"

"It would make him feel that life wasn't worth living, I should think, for twenty-four hours or so!" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By George, he would have to be isolated! Nobody would want to go near him," grinned the schoolboy inventor. "He'd have to keep out of the Form-room, and keep on his giddy lonesome till the niff wore off. He'd never be able to wear the same clothes again. But how are we going to do it?"

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought.

"What about chucking it over him when he's in bed?"

"He'd know at once where it came from," said Glyn,

with a shake of the head. "You see, he smelled it once before."

"H'm! Yes. It will have to be an accident, then."

"An accident?" said Glyn doubtfully.

"Yes. You've got a squirt here?"

"Lots. I use 'em for—"

"Blow what you use 'em for! Have you got a big squirt, which would hold about a pint of that awful stuff?"

"Yes; or a quart."

"Good egg! Could you rig it up mechanically, with some of your electric wires, and things, to go off by itself?"

"Of course I could, easy as falling off a form!"

"Then that's the game. Rig it up here. You've a right to do as you like in your own study, haven't you?"

"I suppose so."

"Then, somehow or other, we'll get Cutts to come spying here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The thing goes off, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ripping—and easy as winking, if we can get Cutts to come. I could arrange a wire, with an electric button, under the mat there at the door. Soon as anybody

(Continued on the next page.)

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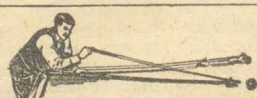
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treads on the mat the button is pressed, the squirt lets fly, and a regular rain of smell-stuff is dashed right at the chap coming in, swamping him from head to foot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But how shall we get Cutts here?"

"Easy enough. We'll drop a word before Levison about something going on here. He reports everything to Cutts. Cutts will come in to find out what it is, and he'll find out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in eager, suppressed tones the two Shell fellows discussed the details of the plot. Later on, in Study No. 6, the whole of the Co. were let into the secret, and the roars of laughter that came from Study No. 6 brought a fag with a message from Cutts, imposing fifty lines each all round for making such a noise. But the chums of the School House did not care for the lines. Their chance had come at last for getting back on Cutts, and they rejoiced, reckless and regardless of more lines.

CHAPTER 11.

Cutts Kindly Obliges!

LEVISON pricked up his ears. He had come along the passage with his usual quiet, almost stealthy footfalls, and he paused as whispering voices fell upon his ears.

The electric light was not yet on in the passage. In the dusk he saw four juniors standing near the big window. Their backs were to him, and they were talking in whispers; but Levison's quick ears could hear the whispered words.

Levison had no scruple whatever about eavesdropping. It was quite in his line—indeed, it was the chief means by which he obtained so much useful information for his friend Cutts.

He drew back quietly into the shadows and listened. Tom Merry was speaking:

"But suppose Cutts should spot it, Glyn?"

"He won't," Glyn whispered back. "He never comes to my study."

"And it will be out of the study to-morrow," said Kangaroo, in the same cautious tones. "Cutts can't spot it, unless he goes investigating this evening, and he won't do that. Why should he?"

"No; I suppose he won't," murmured Monty Lowther. "Only if he should find out—"

"Oh, he won't find out!" said Glyn. "And it will be all ready to-morrow, and we can get it away, you know."

"There'd be a row if Cutts—"

"But he can't find it out."

"I hope not. I— Hallo! Did you hear anything?"

"There's nobody in the passage, is there?" said Kangaroo, glancing round in the dusk.

Levison crouched closer back in the shadow of a doorway.

"Can't be too careful," said Tom Merry. "Come away!"

The juniors went downstairs.

Levison came out of the doorway, his eyes glistening in the darkness. He had made a discovery.

Like many cunning persons accustomed to deceiving others, Levison seldom suspected that he could be taken in himself. That the chums had known he was coming along the passage, and that the whispered conversation was wholly for his benefit, was a thought that never crossed his mind.

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Levison waited until the coast was clear, and then hurried away to Cutts' study. He found Cutts there reading a sporting paper, and smoking a cigarette. Levison came in, and cautiously closed the door behind him.

"Hallo! What's on now?" asked Cutts.

"There's something on," said Levison.

"Tom Merry & Co. again?"

"Yes."

"Good!" said Cutts. "By Jove, I'm going to make those young beggars feel that life isn't worth living in this school. Tom Merry led me a pretty dance while he was captain of the school for a few days. One good turn deserves another—what?"

"He's led me a pretty dance for a long time," said Levison, with a scowl. "He's made all the fellows look on me as a sneak."

Cutts laughed.

"Well, what the deuce are you?" he asked.

Levison set his teeth.

"If you don't want to hear what I've got to tell you, Cutts—"

"But I do," said Cutts. "Get on!"

"I've a jolly good mind to—"

"Oh, cheese that, and get on!" said Cutts.

"Well there's something going on in Glyn's study," said Levison sullenly. "They've got something there—I don't know what it is—one of Glyn's precious inventions, perhaps. But it's something up against you. Whatever it is, it's going to be taken out of the study to-morrow, and they think there's no chance of your dropping in this evening and finding it out."

"Well, that's right enough. I never thought of dropping in there this evening," said Cutts.

"But now you know—"

"Now I know," grinned Cutts. "I shall make it a point to drop in there—rather! You don't know what the thing is?"

"No. They shut up before I heard about that," said Levison. "It's something or other they're making a big secret about, and after this evening it won't be in the study. That's all I know."

Cutts rose to his feet.

"Then I'll jolly soon know what it is!" he said. "They're planning some trick on me. I'm pretty certain of that. I remember Glyn made a mechanical dog once that he played tricks with. Lemme see! I've got to have a reason for going there, though."

"Glyn had some lines—"

"He brought me his lines," said Cutts, with a nod towards a sheaf of impot paper on the table. "I'm getting quite a collection. Has anybody been complaining lately about smells in the Shell passage?"

"I heard Gore grumbling about it to-day."

"Good! That will do. I'll drop in and explain to Glyn that he really can't do these things if he's there. If he isn't there, I can have a look round the study, and find out what they're up to," said Cutts.



There came a faint click from inside the dark study, the door opened, and as a stream of liquid caught him full in the face. He j

Levison nodded and left the study. He grinned as he walked away. The chums of the School House were booked for trouble again, and that was a cheery and pleasant thought to Levison's mind.

And two or three juniors who watched him over the banisters grinned, too, as they saw him grin. The grin was really on the side of Tom Merry & Co. this time.

Cutts did not lose any time. He was really very curious to know what was going on in the end study, which the juniors were so very careful to keep concealed from him.

He made his way to the Shell passage. The Terrible Three were chatting in the doorway of their study with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. They glanced at Cutts, and he gave them a frown and walked on.

The chums of the Shell smiled at one another.

Cutts was evidently on the track.

"Now look out for the circus!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And the juniors, with difficulty, suppressed their chuckles.

Cutts reached the door of the end study and turned the handle without knocking. Cutts never wasted any politeness of that kind on the juniors.

He threw open the door.

The study was in darkness. Bernard Glyn evidently was not at home. Cutts glanced into the dark study, and advanced to switch on the light in order to make his investigation.

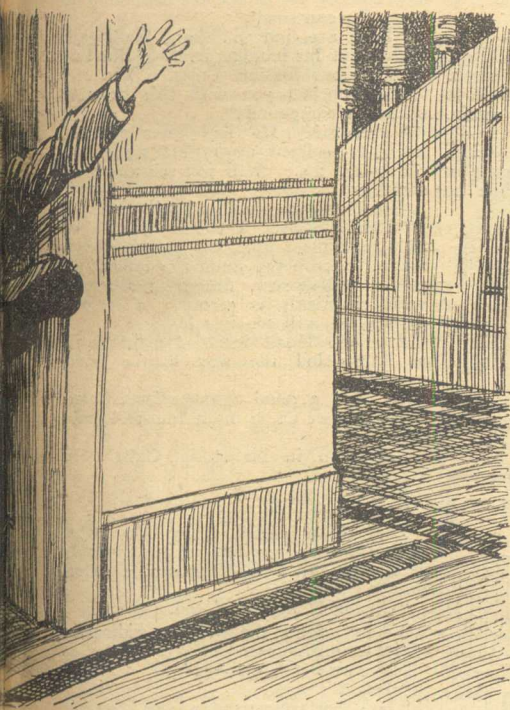
But as his boot pressed upon the rug inside the door, there was a faint click from the direction of the table.

Then—

Swoosh!

Splash!

Cutts uttered a yell, and staggered back as a stream of liquid caught him full upon the face and chest. It was as if a hose had been suddenly turned upon him.



woosh! Splash! Cutts uttered a yell and staggered back splashed all over and the smell of the liquid was simply

Cutts threw up his hands wildly to his face. He was splashed all over, and the smell of the liquid with which he was splashed was simply terrific.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"
Cutts staggered into the passage, snorting wildly.

"Groogh! Groogh! Groooooogh!"
From the direction of Tom Merry's study came a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 12.

Making Things Hum!

"Ow! Ow! Yaroooh! Help! Gerrugh!"

Cutts' frantic yells rang along the passage.

Doors opened all along the Shell passage, and amazed fellows hurried out to see what was the matter. They stared at the staggering, snorting Cutts, whose face had been turned to a queer, purplish tinge by the liquid that had spurted and splashed over it. Cutts was reeking with the perfume—his skin, his hair, his clothes were drenched in it, and the smell of it pervaded the passage, and made the fellows cough as they came out of their studies.

"Great Scott!"
"What's the matter?"
"It's Cutts!"
"Bai Jove!"
"What a niff!"

Cutts rushed towards the Terrible Three. He brought an overpowering scent along with him.

"You young scoundrels!" he roared.
"You did this on purpose!"
"Did what?" asked Lowther blandly.
"Here, get away!" exclaimed Manners. "You don't smell nice, Cutts!"

"Clear off, for goodness' sake!"
"Go and get a bath!"
"Or a disinfectant!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove! You don't smell vewy nice, Cutts! Have you been woll-in' in bad eggs, deah boy?"

Bad eggs would have been a joke to the awful scent that hung round Cutts of the Fifth, and wrapped him, as it were, in a mantle.

The fellows scattered on all sides from Cutts. They simply could not stand it. The unfortunate Cutts had to stand it.

He was almost raving as he went down the passage. At the head of the stairs Levison met him, in amazement.

"Why, what the—"
"You young villain!" roared Cutts. "You're in this!"

"In what? Groogh! Keep off! You make me ill! Ow, ow, ow!"

The enraged Cutts seized the sneak of the Fourth and boxed his ears right and left. Levison yelled with anguish as he jumped out of the grasp of the captain of St. Jim's. Cutts had imparted some of the liquid and a considerable quantity of the smell to Levison before the Fourth Former got away.

The captain of St. Jim's went stamping down the stairs. His intention was to rush to Mr. Railton at once, and let him see what had happened, and bring the Housemaster on the scene.

Yells of laughter from the juniors followed him. They knew where he was going, and they did not care. They were not afraid of the Housemaster this time.

Glyn dashed along the passage to the end study. The smell there was terrific; but Glyn was inured to smells from his long and arduous experiments in "stinks." He ran into the study, turned on the lights, and threw the window open. Then he whipped up a wire from under the rug, and whisked the squirt off the table and jammed it into a chest, with the apparatus attached to it. It did not take him many minutes to get rid of all the evidence that a trap had been deliberately laid for Cutts.

Then he came out of the study. The passage was almost clear of fellows now—they did not like the smell. Some of them had shut themselves up in their studies, and others had cleared off downstairs.

Cutts, leaving a lingering smell behind him wherever he passed, dashed down the stairs and ran along the passage to the Housemaster's study. He passed Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, and that gentleman gave a loud gasp.

"Cutts, what is the matter? That dreadful smell—"

But he did not wait for information—he walked away quickly.

Cutts knocked hastily at Mr. Railton's door, opened it, and rushed in.

The Housemaster rose quickly from his table, surprised by the sudden entrance of the Fifth Former. He stared at the excited, purple face of Cutts.

"Cutts, what—"
Then the smell struck him, almost like a blow.

He gasped.
"Why, what—what—"
"I've been the victim of a trick—a

horrible trick, sir!" panted Cutts. "You can smell this—"

"Indeed I can!" gasped Mr. Railton, jamming his handkerchief to his nose and speaking through it in a muffled voice. "How dare you come into my study smelling in such a horrible manner, Cutts!"

"It's a trick!"
"Leave my study at once!"
"But I tell you—"

"Go!" snorted Mr. Railton. "You can tell me about it afterwards. I refuse to have you in my room smelling in such a revolting manner! Go. I tell you!"

"B-b-but—"
"Go!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Cutts went—he had to. He simply raged down the passage. He came upon Darrell of the Sixth, and caught him by the arm.

"Darrell—"
Darrell jerked his arm loose and jumped away, going quite pale.

"Oh crumbs! What's the matter with you? Clear off, for goodness' sake!"

"I tell you, Darrell—"
But Darrell fled.

Cutts, breathing fury, went to his own study. Gilmore was there, smoking a cigarette. The cigarette dropped from Gilmore's fingers as Cutts raged in, and he stared at the captain of the school open-mouthed for a second. Then he shut his mouth hard, and put his finger and thumb to his nose.

"Groogh! Cutts, you horror, get out!"

"Gilmore, old man, I—"
"Get out!" shrieked Gilmore. "You smell horrid! Gerrout!"

"I—I—I'll—"
"I'll shove you out if you won't go!" yelled Gilmore. "I—no, I won't. You're too messy to touch! Let me pass, you horrible beast!"

And Gilmore rushed from the study, still with his fingers to his nose.

Cutts threw open the window and put his head out. He was badly in need of fresh air. But fresh air was hard for Cutts to obtain. He seemed to foul the air, as it were, with the terrific scent he carried about with him. He jerked his head in, and threw off his drenched jacket, and tore his collar off. The study was already reeking with the terrific smell.

"Oh, good heavens!" groaned Cutts. "I can't get rid of it! What is it? Some horrible chemical? They must have planted it on me on purpose. Oh dear! Yow-ow!"

The study was reeking, and he could not remain there. He dashed out again, and ran up to the Fifth Form dormitory. Every fellow he passed rushed away from him as if he carried the plague about him. In the dormitory he tore off all his clothes, and started operations with soap and water. He did not spare the soap and water. And now the scent began to abate a little.

Breathing fury, Cutts dressed himself again with a change of clothes, and left the dormitory. He left a lingering scent behind him there.

The worst of it was gone now; but it still clung to his hair, to his skin; it seemed to be wedded to his whole person.

"It's a trick!"
Wherever he appeared, yells of laughter and sudden flights marked his coming.

Nobody wanted to be near him. He caught sight of the Terrible Three and rushed towards them. In

his fury, he forgot his usual caution. There was no evidence whatever to connect the Shell fellows with what had happened to him, and a punishment without injury would have given them grounds for an appeal to the House-master—a resource he had hitherto deprived them of. But he was in too great a fury to think of caution now. He only wanted vengeance, reckless of results.

But the Terrible Three were not easily caught. They would not have been sorry for a "scrap" with Cutts, in circumstances that placed him in the wrong, but they did not want to have any of his terrible scent imparted to them. They fled, and Cutts chased them wildly.

"Run for it!" yelled Tom Merry. "Wun like anythin', deah boys!" chirruped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from the door of Study No. 6.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Cutts paused and charged the chums of the Fourth, who were standing in a yelling group in the doorway of the study. They whipped back into the study at once, and slammed the door and locked it. Cutts pounded in vain upon the door.

"Open this door!" he shrieked. "No fear!" came Blake's reply through the keyhole. "You smell too fearful, Cutts. We don't want to catch it, whatever it is!"

"Wathah not, Cutts, deah boy. I don't know what fwightful complaint you've got, but I feah it may be infectious, you know."

"Clear off!" howled Herries. "The scent's coming through the keyhole, Cutts. Clear off, and get yourself disinfected!"

Cutts bestowed a thundering kick upon the door. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came up the stairs three at a time. Mr. Linton did not like disturbances, and the disturbance now was really alarming.

"Cutts, what are you doing?" he rapped out.

"These young scoundrels—"
"Moderate your language, please, Cutts!" said Mr. Linton sharply. "You—why—what is that horrible odour? Is there anything the matter with you, Cutts?"

Mr. Linton's finger and thumb went to his nose.

"Matter!" yelled Cutts. "These young villains have—"

"G-g-goodness gracious! This is—unbearable! Please keep your distance, Cutts!"

And the master of the Shell fairly ran for it.

Cutts ground his teeth and went downstairs. The juniors in the passage below scattered towards the door on the quadrangle. They did not want to have the highly scented captain of St. Jim's near them just then.

"Merry! Lowther! Come here!" roared Cutts.

"No fear!" replied Tom Merry promptly. "You smell too sweet, Cutts! Why don't you go and take a bath in disinfectant?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts tore towards them, and the juniors instantly fled into the dusky quadrangle. The captain of St. Jim's paused, panting, in the doorway. He knew that he would never catch them there.

Yells of laughter came ringing in from the dusk. The juniors were thoroughly enjoying the discomfiture of the Fifth Former. They felt they were

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getting their own back on the bully at last.

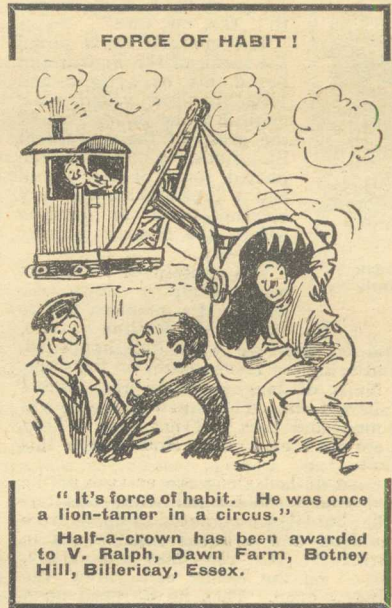
Cutts stood for some minutes, breathing hard, wondering what he should do. He had got rid of some of the smell, and the rest of it seemed impossible to get rid of. He ran to his study again, and drenched himself with eau-de-Cologne, which scented him very highly, but seemed to make no improvement in his general odoriferousness. Then he strode away to the Head's study.

CHAPTER 13.

Cutts Does Not Prosper!

DR. HOLMES sniffed as Cutts of the Fifth came into his study.

For the scent entered with Cutts of the Fifth, and it was powerful, and, added to the strong odour of eau-de-Cologne, it was decidedly peculiar and pungent.



"It's force of habit. He was once a lion-tamer in a circus."
Half-a-crown has been awarded to V. Ralph, Dawn Farm, Botney Hill, Billericay, Essex.

Dr. Holmes fixed a stern glance upon the captain of St. Jim's.

"If you please, sir—" began Cutts. Dr. Holmes raised his hand.

"Cutts, I must say I am surprised. I may say, disgusted. I do not approve of the foolish habit of using scent. You have apparently been using it in extraordinary quantities. Kindly leave my study, sir, and get rid of that extraordinary odour."

"I can't, sir."
"What! Why not?"

"It's a chemical, sir, and I've been drenched with it," panted Cutts. "I've put on the eau-de-Cologne to drown it as much as possible. It was much worse before."

The Head coughed.

"It was worse? Then it must have been very bad indeed!" he said gaspingly. "Dear me, Cutts, I must say that it is most unpleasant—overpowering, indeed. Really, Cutts, if you have been careless enough to spill evil-smelling chemicals upon your person, you should not come into my study immediately afterwards."

"I didn't spill it, sir. It has been thrown over me by the juniors. I report Glyn of the Shell to you, sir, for doing it. My clothes have been ruined. I shall never be able to wear them again. I have changed down to the skin, sir,

and already my things are beginning to hum—I mean smell."

"They are, indeed!" said the Head, taking out his handkerchief. "But this is a serious matter, Cutts. You say Glyn drenched you with this horrible chemical compound?"

"Yes, sir. He had some sort of booby-trap fixed up in his study, all ready for me. Will you see about it, sir?"

The Head rose, with a slight sigh. "Really, Cutts, I should like to be able to depend upon the captain of the school to keep the juniors in order," he said. "However, drenching a senior with chemicals is certainly a serious offence. I will see into it."

And the Head followed majestically as Cutts led the way to the Shell passage.

He kept a good distance from Cutts. Getting near Cutts made him feel quite faint.

"Is Glyn in his study, Cutts?" he asked.

"I think not, sir."
"I will send for him."

The Head called Toby, the page. Toby came up, and backed away quickly as he caught a whiff from the unfortunate Cutts.

"Oh lor'!" he ejaculated.

"Toby, don't make those ridiculous exclamations, please!"

"No, sir! Oh crikey!"

"Toby!"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir; but—there's a awful smell!" gasped Toby.

"Master Cutts, he do seem to 'ave a fearful hodour, sir!"

Cutts scowled furiously. He was only too painfully aware of that fearful odour.

"Go and find Master Glyn, Toby, and tell him to come to his study at once!" said the Head.

"Yessir!"

And Toby cut off, glad to escape from the neighbourhood of the captain of St. Jim's.

The Head's majestic march to the Shell passage was resumed. The scent had cleared off a little, and the juniors were returning to their quarters. Blake & Co. were outside their study, laughing and talking, but they became properly grave as the Head came along.

"Bai Jove! Cutts is bwingin' the Head on the scene!" murmured D'Arcy.

"On the scent, you mean!" grinned Blake.

And the Fourth Formers chuckled.

Dr. Holmes arrived in the end study. The smell there was very strong, for the carpet had received a good drenching as well as Cutts. But the Head bore it nobly. He entered the study, and, getting near the open window, looked round.

"I do not see any sign of the trap you mentioned, Cutts," he said.

"I suppose they've removed it, sir."
"I will question Glyn."

Glyn came into the study. His manner was very quiet, respectful, and demure.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked. "Toby told me—"

"Yes, Glyn. It appears that you have chemicals in your study."

"Certainly, sir! I'm in the chemistry class, you know, sir," said Bernard Glyn calmly. "I have Mr. Potts' permission to make experiments in my study, sir."

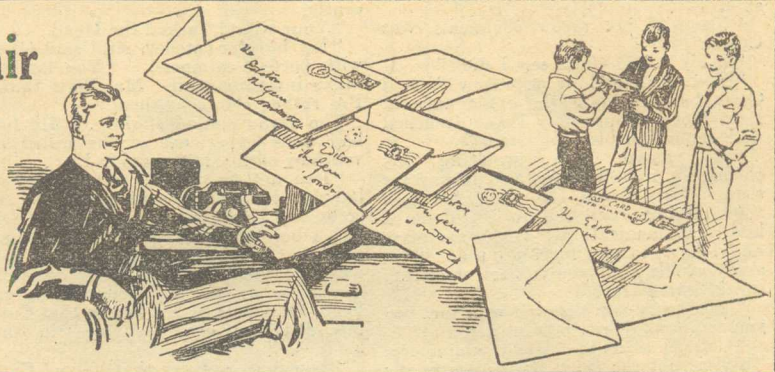
"Ahem! Quite so. But you have no permission, I presume, to throw chemicals over a senior?" said the Head sternly.

Glyn looked astonished.

(Continued on page 18.)

The Editor's Chair

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, Chums! Your Editor's in the chair again, ready and eager to tell you about our next grand programme. By the way, what do you think of our present "St. Jim's captaincy" series? I should like to hear the opinions of readers. Personally, I think it's one of the best series Martin Clifford has written, and I feel certain that readers are enjoying it just as much as yours truly.

Still, drop me a line on a postcard when you have an odd moment. All views are welcome, critical or commendatory. I'm sure the postman won't mind carrying to my office a few more thousand postcards—especially as Christmas-box time is drawing near!

However, to get back to next week's stories, the star item of the programme is, of course, the final yarn in our present series. It's called:

"SKIPPER AND SCHEMER!"

It is the best story of the series, telling of the stop-at-nothing efforts of Gerald Cutts to retain the captaincy of St. Jim's when he learns that popular old Kildare is returning.

Since he has been skipper of the school Cutts has made the most of his authority and liberty, and, in consequence, gambling and smoking among the "fast set" has flourished. Cutts

"skill" with the cards has proved very profitable to himself. In addition, he has won a certain amount of popularity, and the thought of losing everything is a bitter one to Cutts.

At all costs he is determined to prevent Kildare returning, and, with this end in view, he enlists the aid of a doubtful character in Rylcombe. Of the outcome of their plotting, and the thrills and adventures which result from it, I will leave Martin Clifford to tell you next week. Needless to say, Tom Merry & Co. play a big part in the story—too big a part for Cutts' peace of mind.

"HARRY WHARTON'S HOLIDAY PARTY!"

Breaking-up for the holidays is always an exciting time for schoolboys, and for the chums of Greyfriars it is particularly so. For a jolly party is off to Wharton Lodge, Harry Wharton's home, for the vacation. Billy Bunter's with them, and so are Hoffman and Meunier, the foreign juniors. Naturally, there is plenty of fun and laughter en route, and

readers will enjoy every moment of the holiday party's journey to Wharton Lodge. Make sure you join up with them. It's a treat too good to miss.

"CONTRABAND!"

That last remark also applies to the gripping new cover-to-cover yarn of the chums of Greyfriars which appears in our companion paper, the "Magnet."

I have had numerous letters from readers telling me that, since reading about Harry Wharton & Co. in the GEM, they have become "Magnet" readers, too, and now they realise what a topping school-story paper they have been missing!

If you want another school story to read when you have finished the GEM, take my tip and try the "Magnet." The number on sale now contains a great story of the adventures of a new boy in the Fifth Form—an idol in the eyes of his schoolfellows, and yet a smuggler!

TAILPIECE.

Customer: "Are you quite sure this is a pedigree dog?"

Dealer: "Sure! Why, if this dog could talk, he wouldn't speak to either of us!"

THE EDITOR.

PEN PALS

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

D. Harris, 34, Carlyle Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham; wants members for his correspondence club.

Lawrence Samuels, 6, Varna Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham; age 11-14; stamps, astronomy, languages.

Geo. Gaston, 4, Silverthorne Road, Clapham, London, S.W.8; telegraph and page boys; age 15-18.

G. Burt, Sunny Cottage, Preston, Weymouth; age 13-17; stamps, cigarette cards, entomology.

B. Locke, 71, Cromwell Road, S. Wimbledon, London, S.W.19; pen pals; age 16-22.

Ronald Boni, 10, Lochrin Buildings, Edinburgh 3; age 12-13; chemistry.

Kenneth V. Palmer, c/o Mrs. Brettells, Trilawne, Hillside, Slough, Bucks; age 11-13; "Magnets," GEMS.

John D. Harris, 454, Edge Lane, Droylsden, Manchester; pen pals in Wales; age 14-18.

Miss Verona Hayward, Pinchurst, Bransgrove, Hants; girl correspondents; age 12-13; any sport.

The Fireside Club, 167, All Souls Avenue, Willesden, London, N.W.10; railways, aeroplanes, stamps; Africa especially.

PEN PALS COUPON
28-11-36

B. Levitan, 71, Daly Avenue, Ottawa, Canada; stamps; Jubilee, air mail, etc.

Miss Barbara Gasson, Rycot, Dorset Place, Hastings; girl correspondents; Germany, France.

Miss O. White, 184, Shroffold Road, Bromley, Kent; girl correspondents.

Gordon Gough, 12, Pelham Terrace, Gravesend, Kent; stamps; age 7-9; overseas.

David Stocks, Abu Klea Street, Wilston, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; sports, stamps.

Miss Audrey Thorncroft, Race Course Road, Orange, N.S.W., Australia; girl correspondents; age 16-18; stamps, snaps.

Miss Marjorie Clarke, 26, Harvey Road, South Yardley, Birmingham; girl correspondents; age 14-17; Wales and overseas.

Eric McHugh, 33, Dawson Street, Croydon, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia; stamps.

John Garrett, Gayton, Lavernock, Penarth, Glamorganshire; age 10-12; dogs, stamps, cricket.

John Anderson, 48c, Lewis Flats, Liverpool Road, Islington, London, N.; overseas; stamps.

Maurice Swinger, 2, Sunny Bank Road, Quinton, Birmingham; age 14-17; stamps.

Cecil Harvey, 144, High Level Road, Sea Point, South Africa; age 15-17; Jubilee stamps, dance music.

Miss Wynne Harvey, 87, Ashbury Road, Battersea, London, S.W.11; girl correspondents; age 15-17; films, tennis.

Miss R. Jennings, 8, Hobmoor Road, Small Heath, Birmingham 10; girl correspondents; age 15-17; U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia.

D. J. Sale, 31, Viewfield Road, Southfields,

London, S.W.18; age 11-13; stamps; overseas.

Lawrence Sutton, 45, Hill Street, Peckham, London, S.E.15; amateur football; GEM story: "A Shadow Over St. Jim's."

Miss Phyllis Swaisland, Bienvem, 313, Brampton Road, Bexley Heath, Kent; girl correspondents; age 11-16; camping, sports, cycling.

Miss Betty T. R. Gilbert, 52, Plumstead Road, Kingsstanding, Erdington, Birmingham; girl correspondents; age 13-17; art, dancing, swimming, cricket.

E. S. Williams, Cross Foxes Hotel, Prestatyn, North Wales; age 12-14; stamps, swimming; Gold Coast, Kenya, Straits Settlements.

A. Chapman-Stewart, Tarsappie Farm, Perth, Scotland; age 15-17; Germany, Rhineland, Norway, and Sweden; public affairs, films, sports, camping.

M. Michaux, 25, Rue des Deportes, Saint Ghislain, Belgium; stamps.

William Holmes, 36, Thorney Lane, Midgley, Luddensfoot, Yorks; pen pals; age 16-18.

Miss Elsie Crooks, Vesper Gate Drive, Abbey Road, Kirkstall, Leeds 5; girl correspondents; age 16-18.

Miss Constance Bayrs, 51, Cantsfield Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool, 7; girl correspondents; overseas; films, photographs.

K. M. Matthew, 422, Sungai Besti Road, Pudu, Federated Malay States; age 13-18; stamps, postcards, match labels, snaps.

Horace Roads, 3, Portland Road, Queens-town, Port Adelaide, S. Australia; age 16-18; stamps, sports, tennis, cricket, swimming.

M. Taylor, 24 Havelock Road, Birchfields, Birmingham, is interested in old numbers of the GEM prior to June, 1896, and after July, 1931.

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"I've never done such a thing, sir," he said.

"You did not throw chemicals over Cutts?"

"I, sir? Did Cutts say I did?"

"You managed it somehow!" said Cutts, between his teeth. "The moment I set foot in your study I was drenched with some horrible compound."

"If you've been upsetting my chemicals, I shall expect you to pay for them, Cutts," said the Liverpool lad. "Dr. Holmes will see justice done, I know. Chemicals are very expensive, and I have to pay for all I use. This study smells as if you've been upsetting my latest mixture."

"You know you threw it over me, you young hound!" roared Cutts.

"Cutts," said the Head ominously, "that is not the language to use in the presence of your headmaster—or, indeed, at all!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir; but Glyn—"

"Was I in the study when you came here?" demanded Glyn. "I can prove, sir, that I was in Study No. 6 at the time. My friends were with me."

"Did you see Glyn here, Cutts?"

"There was nobody in the study, sir."

"Then how do you know—"

"It was a booby-trap of some sort. Glyn had it ready fixed up for me as soon as I entered the study!" said Cutts savagely.

"How could I know you were going to enter my study?" demanded Glyn.

"What did you come here for, anyway? Explain that!"

"I came to—to—" Cutts halted.

It dawned upon him that he could not explain why he had come to Glyn's study. That he had received secret information from a sneak in the Lower School was a thing he could not explain. Dr. Holmes would have been very much down on anything of that kind. He did not approve of encouraging tell-tales, and Cutts' methods would have brought upon him the vials of the Head's wrath if they had become known.

"Well," said Glyn, "what did you want here? How did you know I expected you here, if I did expect you? Why should you suppose I expected you?"

"I—I—I—"

For once Cutts of the Fifth was at a loss, and his usually ready cunning had deserted him.

Bernard Glyn calmly turned to the Head.

"Cutts says that I expected him in my study, and fixed up a booby-trap for him, sir," he said. "If Cutts can prove it I'm ready to be punished. But Cutts can't give the slightest reason why I should have expected him in my study. He isn't in the habit of paying visits to junior studies, I suppose. Besides, I wasn't here, and the study was all dark. What did Cutts want to come to my study for when it was dark and I wasn't here at all?"

"Well, Cutts," said the Head, "please give me your reason for supposing that Glyn was expecting your visit here."

"He must have been, sir!" said Cutts desperately. "He had the booby-trap fixed up all ready for me."

"Had you told Glyn you were coming?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Then I do not see how Glyn could have expected your visit and prepared for it," said the Head coldly.

"But he had the booby-trap fixed up all ready for me!"

"Is that the case, Glyn?"

"I suppose Cutts must have run into

my burglar-catcher," said Glyn innocently.

"Your what?" asked the Head.

"My burglar-catcher, sir," said Glyn, with perfect calmness. "You know I make inventions, sir. Mr. Potts thinks I'm rather clever at them."

The Head smiled slightly. He had had some experience of the weird inventions of the Liverpool lad.

"I've got an invention for catching burglars by swamping them with a kind of strong scent, sir," rattled on Glyn.

"I've been experimenting on it, and I suppose Cutts must have got in its way when he came in. The study certainly smells as if the compound had got loose. Of course, if I'd known that Cutts intended to come spying in my study—"

"You must not say that, Glyn! Cutts had undoubtedly a good reason for coming here."

"He hasn't said what it was, sir, then."

"I—I came to speak to Glyn about—about the smells he has been making with his experiments, sir!" stammered Cutts.

"Rats!" said Bernard Glyn.

"Glyn!" said the Head warningly.

"Well, sir, if Cutts came to speak to me, why did he come in when he found I wasn't here, and the study was all in the dark? I suppose he wasn't going to sit down and wait for me to come home?" said Glyn sarcastically.

The Head gave Cutts a sharp glance. Cutts had succeeded very well in ingratiating himself with the Head, but Dr. Holmes' face wavered a little now. Certainly it looked as if Cutts had come secretly to the study to spy there, and decidedly that was not a proceeding worthy of a captain of St. Jim's.

"Show me this—invention of yours, Glyn," said the Head, as Cutts found nothing to say.

For once he was at a loss. He realised that he was losing ground with the Head, and it made him inwardly furious; but there was nothing to be said.

"Certainly, sir!" said Glyn cheerfully.

He opened the chest and produced the squirt with its wire attachment.

"You see, sir, this would be pointed at you if you happened to be a burglar coming into the room."

"Glyn!"

"And if you bumped into it, or got entangled in the wire, it would go off—like this!"

Squish!

There was still some of the liquid left in the big squirt, and Glyn ejected it, taking care, however, to miss the Head, and send the liquid over Cutts' trousers. Cutts gave a roar of wrath.

Dr. Holmes gasped.

"Good—good gracious! What a horrible odour! Glyn, I command you to destroy any of that horrible compound you may have left."

"But, sir—"

"Look at what he's done!" shrieked Cutts.

But the Head was already making for the door. The smell of the burglar-catcher was putting him to flight.

"Cutts, you had better—better go and change your things again." The Head was speaking from the passage now.

"And I may say that I do not approve of surprise visits to junior studies. It partakes of the nature of spying."

"I—I—"

"I have no doubt you meant well, Cutts; but I do not approve of it, and I direct you to cease from any such methods in the future. This matter will now be dropped. I have heard enough.

Glyn, I forbid you to make any such absurd and unpleasant experiments in the future. The matter is now ended."

And the Head walked quickly away, forgetting his usually calm and majestic method of progression in his hurry to escape from that deadly scent.

Cutts clenched his hands hard and started towards Bernard Glyn.

Glyn held up the squirt like a gun.

"There's still some left," he remarked calmly.

And Cutts, grinding his teeth, turned and strode from the study. He did not want any more.

And that evening there was wild rejoicing among the Co. For once they had got the better of their old enemy, Cutts of the Fifth, and Tom Merry & Co. gloated accordingly.

CHAPTER 14.

"Comic Cutts!"

CUTTS, during the next day or two, understudied the celebrated Brer Fox, and "lay low."

He had been worsted in that last encounter with the Co., and he knew it.

For two whole days the lingering remains of Glyn's terrible mixture hung about him, and made him obnoxious to his Form-fellows.

Gilmore refused to share the study with him for some days, preferring to "dig" with Lefevre along the passage till Cutts was wholesome again.

And in the Fifth Form Room there was noticeable a wide space on either side of Cutts during those two painful days.

Cutts' feelings towards the juniors was almost homicidal; but he lay low, waiting for his opportunity.

He realised that he had allowed his temper to get the better of him, and acted foolishly in bringing the Head into the matter, and that he had damaged his position by so doing. He had received sharp words of reprimand himself, and the juniors had gone on their way rejoicing. Cutts was saving up his wrath for them; but he did not mean to make a slip next time.

Meanwhile, relations between Cutts and Levison were very strained. Levison's part in the jape had been unintentional; but it had been effective, and he could not prove that he had acted in good faith.

Cutts believed that his factotum had turned against him on that occasion, and he made Levison smart for it. Most of Cutts' kindly attentions were reserved for Levison during these few days; and the cad of the Fourth found out what it was like to get canings, and heaps of lines, and he did not like the change at all.

To see Levison getting the sharp edge of Cutts' bitter temper was not at all displeasing to the juniors. But Levison found it very displeasing indeed, and he made desperate efforts to ingratiate himself with the captain of St. Jim's again. But that was not easy. Cutts no longer trusted the information Levison brought to him.

The juniors understood how matters were, and they chuckled over it. Now that Cutts was deprived of the services of his spy, he lost touch with what was going on in the Lower School, and punishments were far less frequent.

But the bully of the Fifth was only biding his time, and he had his eye always upon the Terrible Three.

"The noble Cutts seems quite tamed now, doesn't he?" Monty Lowther remarked, on Wednesday afternoon, when

the juniors came out of the School House. Cousin Ethel was visiting St. Jim's that afternoon, and the chums were in high feather, in expectation of her arrival.

"Biding his time," said Manners sententiously. "He'll be coming down on us heavier than ever, soon."

"We haven't had any impots since Saturday," said Tom Merry. "I always thought Glyn's inventions were rather asinine, but I think better of them now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake & Co. came out of the School House. Blake had his hand under his jacket, as if he were holding something concealed there. As a matter of fact, he was.

"Cutts come out yet?" asked Blake.

"Haven't seen him. What do you want Cutts for?"

"I've got something for him," said Blake. He opened his jacket a little, and showed a square of cardboard with two hooks attached.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Tom Merry, in surprise.

Blake chuckled.

"You'll see when Cutts comes out," he said.

"Here he comes, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the athletic form of the captain of St. Jim's appeared in the doorway of the School House.

Cutts scowled at the chums; he seldom saw them without scowling.

Tom Merry & Co. solemnly raised their caps to Cutts with exaggerated respect, which brought a gleam into his eyes. Arthur Augustus almost flourished his silk topper in his anxiety to show respect to Cutts.

The Fifth Former came down the steps, and then Blake suddenly ran down after him. He ran in such a hurry that he bumped into Cutts from behind, and caught hold of his shoulders to steady himself.

Cutts staggered, and turned round with a snarl, giving the junior a cuff that sent him reeling.

"Be more careful, you clumsy ass!" he exclaimed.

"Ow-ow!" said Blake.

Cutts swung away again, and Blake left off rubbing his ear, and grinned. And the group of juniors on the steps of the School House burst into a chuckle. They understood now why Blake had run into Cutts from behind. For upon Cutts' broad back was now attached the sheet of cardboard; and on the cardboard showed the large letters:

"COMIC CUTTS!"

Blake jerked his thumb towards the notice.

"Worth a whack in the ear—what?" he laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts turned round sharply as he heard the burst of laughter. He did not know why the juniors should laugh, but he knew they were laughing at him. His dark scowl grew blacker and more threatening.

"What's the matter with you young sweeps?" he demanded.

"Nothin', deah boy," said Arthur Augustus blandly. "I suppose we are free to laugh if we want to?"

"Sometimes a chap can't help laughing, you know," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "You know, you have such a cheery effect on people, Cutts."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Always feel inclined to laugh when I see you, Cutts," said Blake.

"Take fifty lines each!" rapped out Cutts.

"Bai Jove!"



"Cave!" came a warning. Blake brought the slipper down in a final tremendous whack as the door was thrown open, and Levison let out a fiendish yell. Then Mr. Railton strode into the dormitory, with Gerald Cutts at his heels.

Cutts strode away. The juniors chuckled. They did not mind the fifty lines each very much as the price of seeing Cutts strutting about the quadrangle with that absurd notice on his back.

"Not the least suspicion—what?" grinned Blake.

"Not a suspish!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, I wogard Cutts as a wathah innocent lamb, you know. Not at all up to our Form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fellows are spotting it now," chuckled Tom Merry.

Reilly, Kerruish, and Ray of the Fourth were chatting in the quad when Cutts passed them. They burst into a yell as they read the notice on his back. Again the captain of St. Jim's swung round. He was angry, and a little puzzled; but he did not see the slightest reason why his passing should cause the juniors to burst into sudden merriment.

"Well, what's the joke?" he demanded fiercely.

"Sure, and it's yerself, Cutts darling!" said Reilly.

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, howly mother of Moses!"

Cutts walked on. But from all sides, as he passed, came fresh gusts of laughter. It was a half-holiday, and the quadrangle was crowded with juniors. Cutts was going over to the New House to call for Sefton, to go out with him. He had to run the gauntlet of the whole crowd, and the card on his back did not escape a single eye.

"Comic Cutts!" chuckled Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha! Cutts is more comic than he knows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts strode on fiercely. He paused under the old elms and took a pocket-mirror out. Cutts was very much of a

dandy, and he always had a pocket-mirror with him. It occurred to him that there might be something unusual about him which had excited the laughter of the hilarious juniors. But he scanned his reflection in the little mirror without detecting anything out of the common. It did not reflect his back, of course.

"The young idiots!" muttered Cutts savagely, and very much puzzled. "What on earth are they cackling at? I suppose it's a rag."

He thrust the mirror back into his pocket, and strode on towards the New House.

Figgins & Co. were in the doorway, and they did not smile as Cutts came up. They looked grim. Feeling was very sore between Figgins & Co. and the new captain of St. Jim's. Cutts had been almost as heavy upon them as upon the Terrible Three of the School House.

But as Cutts passed them and went into the New House, Figgins & Co. caught sight of the card on his back, and there was the sound of a sudden chuckle.

Cutts' temper was almost at boiling point by this time, and he turned savagely upon the three juniors. He did not speak to them, but he caught Figgins and Kerr by their collars and knocked their heads together.

Crack!

"Ow!" roared Figgins.

"Yarooop!" shrieked Kerr.

Figgins & Co. were not the kind of fellows to take that kind of treatment tamely. Cutts might be captain of the school, but they weren't going to allow him to man-handle them just as he chose. As Cutts was bringing their

heads together for a second crack, harder than the first, Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn piled on him. They dragged him over, and there was a fearful bump as Cutts descended upon the floor.

"There, you rotter!" panted Figgins. "Now keep your beastly paws to yourself."

Cutts sprang up, looking like a demon. Monteith of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, hurried along the passage, looking very angry. There was no love lost between Monteith and Cutts. Monteith would have been captain of the school but for Cutts' trickery at the time of the election. And although the New House prefect dealt out cuffs galore himself, he wasn't at all disposed to see the School House senior assuming authority in his House.

"Hands off, Cutts!" he rapped out sharply.

Cutts glared at him, but he did not reply, and rushed upon Figgins & Co.

Monteith jumped between them, and pushed Cutts back, and he staggered against the wall. It was not exactly a blow, but it staggered Cutts, and he leaned on the wall, panting.

Monteith stood facing him, with gleaming eyes and ready hands.

"Now you can tell me what's the matter, if you like," he said. "I don't allow School House fellows to punish juniors of my House, Cutts."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Figgins & Co.

Cutts almost choked with rage.

"I'm captain of the school, you cad!" he shouted.

"Captain of the school or not, you've no authority in this House," said Monteith calmly. "If these fags have done anything, you can report them to me. That's the proper course, and you know it."

"They've laid hands on me——"

"I saw it all," said the prefect, cutting in. "You laid hands on them first. What did you do that for?"

"They cackled at me."

"You can't lick juniors for cackling," said Monteith coolly. "Not in this House, anyway. Why, what— Ha, ha, ha!"

He burst into a laugh as he caught sight of the card on Cutts' back, as the captain of St. Jim's moved away from the wall. Cutts scowled at him savagely.

"So you're cackling, too!" he exclaimed. "I'll——"

"Ha, ha, ha! What have you got that card on your back for?" roared Monteith.

"Card! What card?" stammered Cutts.

He groped round the back of his jacket, caught hold of the card and dragged it off. He looked at it, and his face was a study as he read the words:

"Comic Cutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the New House fellows. "Comic Cutts! Ha, ha, ha!"

"One of those young scoundrels fastened this on me!" screamed Cutts.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or—or somebody did!" stammered Cutts, remembering that the laughter had started before he entered the New House. "I'll find out who it was! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Words failed Cutts. He rushed out of the House to find out who had fastened that card upon his back, and a yell of laughter followed him from the doorway of the New House.

Tom Merry & Co. had disappeared, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,502.

and the enraged Cutts was forced once more to nurse his wrath for a more favourable opportunity.

CHAPTER 15.

The Appeal to the Housemaster!

COUSIN ETHEL came towards the School House with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walking by her side.

Arthur Augustus looked as proud as Punch as he escorted his charming cousin across the quadrangle and into the House.

Very few fellows, as D'Arcy sometimes remarked, had such an exceedingly ripping cousin to bring to the school.

Cousin Ethel nodded and smiled to her friends, whose name was legion. Tom Merry & Co. met her in the doorway, with their best smiles on, to say nothing of their cleanest collars and fidiest neckties.

"Tea's ready in the study," said Tom Merry.

"So jolly glad to see you again, Ethel."

Figgins & Co. walked in. It was understood that they were coming to tea. Arthur Augustus looked a little doubtfully at Figgins, but Figgy did not appear to notice it.

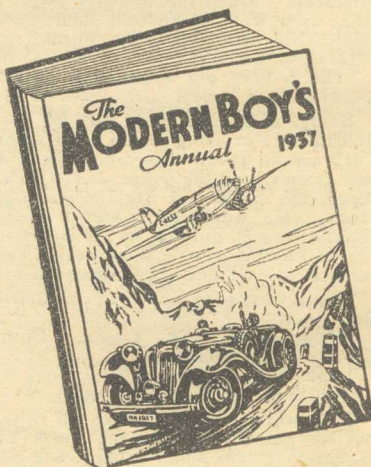
"Here we are!" announced Fatty Wynn. "Did you say tea was ready, Tommy?"

"Quite ready," said Tom, laughing.

"Then we may as well get a move on," Fatty Wynn suggested. "I never believe in letting a good feed spoil by waiting."

"No feed's likely to spoil by waiting if you're anywhere near it," agreed Jack Blake.

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"We're havin' it in Tom Mewwy's study," Arthur Augustus explained to his fair cousin, as he escorted her up the broad staircase. "It's largah than No. 6, you know, and we're havin' wathah a lot of fellows in. I suppose you don't mind those New House boundahs comin'?"

Cousin Ethel smiled brightly. "Not at all," she said.

"It makes wathah a crowd for a juniah study," said D'Arcy. "But the fellows seem to think we'd bettah have Figgy; I weally hardly know why. You are sure you don't mind Figgins bein' in the party, deah gal?"

"Not the least bit."

"He's a good sort, you know, though wathah an ass in some things," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "It's all wight, then."

And he escorted Cousin Ethel into the apartment of the Terrible Three in the Shell passage.

Great preparations had been made for the tea.

The Co. had pooled funds for the purpose, and the result was really gorgeous, and the sight of the well-spread table made Fatty Wynn smile with satisfaction.

"Jolly good!" he murmured.

Cousin Ethel took her seat at the table. It was rather a crowd, as D'Arcy had remarked, for besides the Terrible Three and Figgins & Co., all four of the chums of Study No. 6 were there, as well as Kangaroo of the Shell and Bernard Glyn. But plenty of room was found for Cousin Ethel.

As there wasn't enough chairs for all the others, some of them had to have tea standing up; but they did not mind. The tea was of the very best, and that was the important point, according to Fatty Wynn. And Cousin Ethel was there, and that was the important point, according to Figgins.

The fragrant odour of tea and toast pervaded the study. There was a cheery ripple of talk and laughter. For the time the juniors had forgotten their old enemy, Cutts, and the unpleasant fact that he was captain of St. Jim's and down on them.

It was Cousin Ethel who brought him to their minds. She wanted to know how they fared after their return from the Feathers on that eventful afternoon the week before.

"Oh, that was all right!" said Tom Merry. "Only a—ahem!—licking!"

"Yaas, wathah, that was all wight. And it's all ovah now, deah gal!"

"And how do you get on with Cutts?" asked Ethel.

"Better than ever," said Blake.

"Cutts is getting quite tame lately. I fancy he's beginning to learn that he bit off more than he could chew in tackling us."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And so—— Hallo! Who's that?"

The study door was flung open. Cutts of the Fifth strode in.

Silence fell upon the study. Cousin Ethel looked grave and troubled, and the Co. looked a little sheepish. After the way they had declared that Cutts of the Fifth was getting tamed, it was a little disconcerting for him to walk into the study evidently bent on war.

Cutts' brow were knitted in a black scowl.

"So you're here!" he said grimly, and without taking notice of the presence of Cousin Ethel.

"Yes, here we are," said Monty Lowther coolly. "How do you do, Cutts? Sorry we can't ask you to tea."

"Silence! I wish to know," said Cutts, breathing hard, "which of you fellows it was who pinned a card on my back this afternoon?"

Blake stared unconsciously at the ceiling. He had pinned the card upon the Fifth Former's back, but he had not the slightest intention of confessing the fact to Cutts.

There was silence in the study. The juniors were exchanging grim looks. Cutts had come there to spoil the tea-party while they were entertaining Cousin Ethel, and they would have given a great deal to fling him headlong out of the study.

"Are you going to answer me?" said Cutts.

"What answer do you want?" asked Monty Lowther. "If we give that to you, will you ask us another, Cutts?"

There was a chuckle. Cutts' scowl darkened; he was in such a rage that he could hardly keep it in check. The ridiculous figure he had made strutting across the quadrangle with the card on his back, amid the laughter of the juniors, rankled deeply in his mind. Somebody was going to suffer for it, and Cutts was not very particular as to whom that somebody was.

"I am waiting for an answer!" he said, between his teeth.

"Good!" said Lowther, growing more and more humorous. "I'll give you an answer with pleasure. Because one rode a horse and the other rhododendron."

"You young rascals!" shouted Cutts, completely losing his temper now. "If you don't tell me which of you played that trick on me, I'll cane you all round, every fellow in the study!"

"Go hon!"

Cutts had brought a cane with him. He swished it in the air now.

Tom Merry's eyes met Kangaroo's. The Cornstalk was nearest the door.

The longed-for moment had arrived. Cutts had lost his cunning caution for once, and was playing the bully without the shadow of a valid excuse. It was time for the remedy the juniors had yearned to employ—the appeal to the Housemaster. Kangaroo understood Tom Merry's significant look, and he slipped quietly out of the study and raced away down the passage.

"Now," said Cutts, between his teeth, "I'll give you one more chance to answer. Who stuck that card on my back this afternoon?"

Dead silence.

"Very well! Hold out your hand, Merry!"

"I protest against being punished for doing nothing!" said Tom Merry calmly.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered the captain of St. Jim's.

"Very well. Under protest!"

Tom held out his hand. The cane came down savagely, and Tom Merry winced, though he did not allow a cry to escape his lips.

Cousin Ethel drew a deep breath.

"Now then, Lowther!" said Cutts.

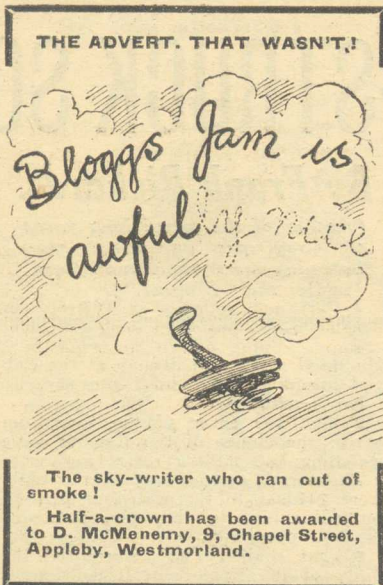
Lowther blandly held out his hand. He was quite willing to be caned in the circumstances. Already he could hear footsteps in the passage, and he knew that the Cornstalk was bringing the Housemaster upon the scene.

Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Lowther, at the top of his voice.

"Now you, Manners!"

"I've done nothing!" said Manners.



The sky-writer who ran out of smoke!
Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. McMenemy, 9, Chapel Street, Appleby, Westmorland.

"Hold out your hand, you young liar!"

"Liar yourself!" retorted Manners. "I'm not lying! And I won't be caned for nothing! I appeal to the Housemaster!"

Mr. Railton's stalwart form had appeared in the open doorway, with Kangaroo behind. It was an unlucky moment for Cutts. He had seized Manners by the collar, and was in the act of bringing the cane down across his shoulders when the Housemaster stepped into the study.

"Stop!" said Mr. Railton quietly, but in tones that seemed to ring through the study.

Cutts started back, and his hand fell to his side. Manners calmly rearranged his collar, disturbed by Cutts savage grip.

"I appeal to the Housemaster!" he repeated.

"You have every right to do so," Mr. Railton said. "I shall certainly hear your appeal, and see justice done. Cutts, I am informed that you have entered this study and are bullying the juniors here. If Noble has misinformed me he will be punished for saying such a thing of the captain of the school; but your present conduct seems to confirm his statements."

"I am administering punishment, sir, as I am empowered to do," Cutts replied. "One of these young devils—"

"What!" thundered Mr. Railton. "How dare you use such an expression in my presence, and in the presence of a young lady?"

Cutts bit his lip hard. His savage temper had run away with him again, and he had made a slip it was not easy to recover from. He choked back his fury.

"I beg your pardon, sir!"

"You will also beg Miss Cleveland's pardon."

"I—I beg her pardon, too!" muttered Cutts, his face almost livid with the effort he was making to suppress his rage. "I—I should not have said that. I—I meant to say, one of these juniors pinned a ridiculous card to my back this afternoon in the quadrangle, holding their captain up to ridicule. I came here to punish him."

"He has caned me," said Tom Merry. "And me," said Lowther.

"And he was caning me," said Manners. "We appeal to you, sir, whether juniors may be caned without having done anything to deserve it?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Railton. "Do you mean to tell me, Cutts, that you were caning these boys simply upon suspicion?"

"I know they did it," choked Cutts—"some of them, that is; I don't know which!"

"That is nonsense! You cannot know without proof of some kind," Manners, Merry, Lowther, answer me. Did you pin this card Cutts speaks of to his back?"

"No, sir!" chorused the Terrible Three.

"They are lying!" hooted Cutts.

"On the contrary, I am sure they are not lying," said Mr. Railton coldly. "I am sure they would tell me the truth."

"Then they know who did it!"

"Possibly! But you have no right to cane them on suspicion that they know who did it. If punishments were inflicted for such frivolous reasons, there would be no end of them. You have exceeded your powers, Cutts!"

"Sir!"

"You have acted wrongly, and in a tyrannical and bullying manner!" said the Housemaster sternly. "There has been much discontent and insubordination among the juniors since you have been captain of the school, Cutts, and now I am not surprised at it, if these are your methods, sir!"

Cutts had come there to humiliate and punish the juniors, and he was being humiliated himself more bitterly than he had dreamed possible. Hot words rose to his lips, but he had sense enough left to choke them back. To "slang" his Housemaster would be an end to all his power and his position in the School House. He stood with bowed head as the Housemaster's stern voice went on:

"Let there be no more of this, Cutts. You have exceeded your authority, and you have given me very grave reason to presume that you have exceeded it on other occasions. I do not approve of tyrannical methods, and I will never allow anything of the kind to be practised in this House. Kindly leave this study at once. And if there is any recurrence of this, you may depend upon it that I shall make such representations to the Head as will make it impossible for you to remain captain of the school!"

Cutts strode from the study, almost gasping.

Mr. Railton followed him.

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another as the door closed behind the athletic form of the Housemaster.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathab fancy our friend Cutts has got it in the neck this time!"

There was no doubt about it. Cutts had got it "in the neck" for once, and after that he would have to be very, very careful indeed. That little tea-party in Tom Merry's study was a very merry one, after all. Cousin Ethel's face was all smiles, and the juniors were in their cheeriest humour.

Gerald Cutts was still captain of St. Jim's, but they were no longer under his thumb.

(Next Wednesday: "SKIPPER AND SCHEMER!" Look out for the final thrilling yarn in this great series, telling how Cutts makes a desperate bid to retain the captaincy. Don't forget to order your GEM early.)

THE DRESS REHEARSAL THAT ENDED IN A FREE FIGHT!

THE STAGE-STRUCK SCHOOLBOYS

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

A wave of enthusiasm for amateur theatricals is passing over the Remove at Greyfriars, and after producing grand opera—with more or less success—Harry Wharton & Co. turn their attention to something a little easier.

A dramatic play, called "By Order of the Tyrant," is discussed for representation by the Wharton Dramatic Society. There is a heated argument over the casting of the characters, for they all want to be the hero, and eventually the meeting is postponed.

Meanwhile, Wharton has received an invitation from his uncle to spend a holiday with some of his chums at Wharton Lodge, and Harry has hopes of presenting the play during the vacation.

Later, Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, plays a silly and dangerous trick on Billy Bunter. He shuts him up in an underground vault which has been unearthed by workmen in excavating for the foundations of a new school adjoining Greyfriars.

Harry Wharton & Co., however, rescue Bunter. To give Bulstrode a lesson, they close up the vault, and fell a tree so that it blocks the opening. Then they hide and wait for Bulstrode to come and let Bunter out.

(Now read on.)

A Bully in a Funk!

BULSTRODE, with a grin on his face, came through the trees from the direction of the school.

He had little regard for the feelings of the victim of his practical joke, but he felt that it would not do to leave Bunter too long in the vault.

"My—my hat!"

The bully of the Remove gave a violent start at the sight of the tree stretched across the slab of stone which closed the vault. He broke into a run and arrived on the spot panting.

"Great—great Scott!"

He gasped out the words. By thrusting a pole through the iron ring, he could have raised the slab of stone to release Bunter. But he could not have shifted that huge trunk if he had had the strength of half the Remove.

He stood staring down at the trunk in dismay. Then he knelt beside it, and, with a stone, tapped on the slab in a part where it was not under the trunk. The slab gave a dull ring back to the blow.

"Bunter!"

Bulstrode called out the name in shaking tones:

"Bunter! Bunter!"

No sound came from below.

The bully bent his head to listen, and his face grew pale as the silence continued. He tapped again with the stone.

"Bunter! Bunter, are you there?"

Still no reply. Dead silence hung over the spot. Bulstrode rose with a frightened look. What was the matter with Bunter? Why did he not reply?

Had he fainted? Had he wandered away in an attempt to escape from his prison, and lost himself in an underground labyrinth of vaults?

The bully realised at last that his cruel jest might have its serious side.

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By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

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He stood staring in dismay at the slab and listening with painful intensity.

Not a sound!

Behind the cover of the thrown-up earth, the chums of the Remove were watching and stifling their laughter.

The terror and dismay of the bully were evident to the watching juniors, but not a hint did they give Bulstrode of their proximity.

"What shall I do?" murmured the bully of the Remove. "I can't move the tree. I shall have to get help. But then they'll know I shut him up there. But he must be let out. Oh heavens! I wish I hadn't done it! If he hadn't been such a fool, he wouldn't have gone into the vault at all! The young idiot might have guessed I was only fooling him!"

The words were audible to the hidden juniors. Billy Bunter looked indignant. Bulstrode's reference to him was not very complimentary.

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry clapped a hand over his mouth in time.

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When the Wharton Dramatic Society present a dress rehearsal of their new play, they put not a little "punch" into their efforts!

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"Shut up!" whispered Harry Wharton sharply.

Bunter gurgled and was silent. Fortunately, Bulstrode had heard nothing. He was still staring blankly at the slab and the tree that pinned it down.

The chums were curious to see what he would do. If he called for help, the tree might be moved and the slab raised. But then he would have to own up to having shut Bunter in the vault—a trick that might be regarded very seriously by the Head of Greyfriars. Yet it was impossible for him to leave Bunter in the vault.

Harry Wharton pressed Billy Bunter's arm.

"Keep out of sight!" he whispered.

"Don't you show yourself when we leave you, or we'll skin you presently!"

"All right, Wharton. I really—"

"You remain with him, Nugent, and bump his head against the stones if he utters a sound!"

"Right-ho!" said Nugent.

"You other chaps come along. We'll come on Bulstrode by surprise, and see what he has to say for himself."

"Good wheeze!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The wheezefulness is ripping!" purred the nabob.

"Mind he doesn't see you. Keep in cover," whispered Wharton, as he led the way from the place of concealment,

leaving Nugent mounting guard over Billy Bunter.

The juniors skirted the heaps of old masonry and earth turned up in the excavations, and entered the trees, and gained the rear of Bulstrode without being seen. Then they walked carelessly on, as if they had just come from the school.

Bulstrode was still standing at the slab, staring at it in dismay and indecision. He turned at the sound of footsteps, and gave a guilty start at the sight of the chums of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Anything wrong, Bulstrode?"

"Wrong? No!" muttered Bulstrode. "You're looking rather queer about the gills."

"Am I? What rot!"

"Haven't seen a ghost, have you?" asked Bob Cherry. "You look as if you had; or as if you had committed a murder and couldn't get rid of the body!"

Bulstrode gave a start.

"Don't talk rot!" he said savagely.

"Have you seen Billy Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton.

Bulstrode's lip trembled.

"No; not lately."

"He walked out of the gates with you a while back, that's all."

"Oh, yes! We separated then."

"I wonder where he is?" said Bob Cherry gravely. "I say, do you fellows see that there's a tree fallen over this slab? We shan't be able to explore the vault."

"The explorefulness will have to be postponed," said Hurree Singh. "I am afraid we shall not find our Bunterful friend here, my esteemed chums. Are you quite sureful that you had not beheld the august Bunter, Bulstrode?"

The bully of the Remove scowled savagely.

"Of course I am, confound you!"

"There is no cause to get out the ragfulness," said the nabob. "We do not suspect you of having murdered the esteemed Bunter!"

Bulstrode started again, and then gritted his teeth and walked away. He disappeared among the trees, and then Nugent and Billy Bunter came out of the place of concealment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Nugent. "If ever there was a chap in a blue funk, it's Bulstrode at this moment!"

"The bluefulness of the funk is terrific!"

"But he won't say a word about it at Greyfriars," grinned Bob Cherry.

"But when Bunter's missed at calling-over—"

"But I shan't be missed at calling-over, Cherry," said Bunter. "I shall have to show up then; in fact, before then, as I'm getting fearfully hungry!"

"We'd better not keep it up after calling-over," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "If Bunter doesn't answer the roll, there will be an inquiry, and we don't want to bring the matter before the masters. We've punished Bulstrode ourselves. But Bunter will have to lie low until roll-call, and then dodge into the hall without Bulstrode seeing him. It will give him a start when he hears Bunter answer his name, when he thinks the

# THE STAGE IS ALL SET FOR MORE FUN AND FROLIC FROM THE AMATEUR ACTORS OF THE REMOVE!



In a moment the dress rehearsal had developed into a free fight, and the audience were all on their feet, yelling with laughter and urging on the combatants. The uproar was terrific, and it was not long in bringing prefects on the scene.

young porker is in the vault all the time."

"Really, Wharton——"

"So you can hide yourself again, Bunter."

"I can't possibly do so until calling-over. It's more than an hour since I had anything to eat."

"You can lie low in——"

"I really can't. I'd do anything to oblige you, Wharton, but I can't risk wrecking my constitution, even for your sake. I really——"

"You can lie low in the school shop."

"Eh? What?"

"You can lie low in the tuckshop, and treat yourself to a feed there till calling-over," said Harry, laughing.

Bunter's expression changed at once. "Now you're talking!" he exclaimed emphatically.

"Ha, ha! Bunter will lie low in the tuckshop as long as you like!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"I always like to be obliging," said Billy Bunter. "As for the feed, I'll let you stand it, but I shall make it up to you when my postal order comes. I expect it to-morrow morning by the first post, if it isn't already waiting for me in the rack."

The Removites grinned. They knew all about Billy Bunter's postal order.

"We'll get in over the old wall, and through the Head's garden," said Harry Wharton. "Then we shall be sure to keep out of Bulstrode's way. Once in the tuckshop, Bunter will be safe. Bulstrode won't feel much like feeding in his present state of mind. Come on!"

The chums of the Remove were soon within the school walls, and they reached the shop kept by Mrs. Mimble, the gardener's wife, without seeing anything of Bulstrode. Billy Bunter was ensconced in the tuckshop with a plateful of provisions, and a pile more at his elbow, and the chums left him with his fat face wreathed in happy smiles.

## A Shock for Bulstrode!

THE juniors crowded into the Hall at Greyfriars for calling-over as the dusk grew thicker on the old Close. Bulstrode was about the last in of the Remove.

He came in with slow steps and a pale face. As yet he had not said a word of the mishap at the old vault. He dared not face the "music" if he owned up that he had shut Billy Bunter in the vault; and yet he was tormented in his mind as to what might have happened to Bunter in the dark and dreary recess.

Bulstrode took his place with the Remove. Mr. Quelch was taking the roll-call, rapping out the names in his usual quick, staccato manner.

"Bulstrode!"

"Adsum!" said Bulstrode.

"Bunter!"

"Adsum!"

Bulstrode gave a violent start, and looked along the ranks of the Remove. He could scarcely believe his eyes at what he saw.

There was Billy Bunter, in his usual place, his fat face looking a little more plump and well-fed than when the Remove bully had seen him last.

"Bunter!" gasped Bulstrode.

Hazeldene, who was standing next to the bully of the Remove, looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter with you, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"N-nothing. But did you see Bunter come in?"

"Yes. He came in a few minutes before you, with Wharton, Cherry, and the Indian."

"Wharton?" Bulstrode gritted his teeth. "I might have guessed that he was at the bottom of it!"

"At the bottom of what?"

"Nothing."

"But you said——"

"Never mind what I said. It's no

business of yours, Vaseline, anyway!" said Bulstrode.

"Silence in the Remove!"

Bulstrode was greatly relieved in his mind. He could not help guessing now that Billy Bunter had left the vault before the great tree had fallen on the slab.

After calling-over, he found the first opportunity he could of speaking to the Owl. He met Billy Bunter in the Hall, and grasped him by the shoulder.

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Wharton was within call, and Bunter felt safe, though the bully of the Remove had a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"So you have been playing a trick on me, you young idiot!" said Bulstrode, between his teeth.

"I didn't. You played a trick on me, Bulstrode. Wharton says it was a caddish trick, and I think it was."

"Why didn't you let me know you had got out of the vault?"

"Wharton thought he'd give you a lesson," chuckled Billy Bunter. "He, he! It was really a good joke, wasn't it, Bulstrode?"

The Remove bully shook him.

"You little, fat rotter, I've a mind to wipe you the floor with you!"

"No, you won't! Wharton won't let you," grinned Bunter. "I'm to tell Wharton if you bully me over this, and he has promised to give you a licking, if you do. Ow! Don't shake me like that; you'll make my glasses fall off. Wharton! I say, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton came quietly up.

"Let Bunter alone, Bulstrode!"

"Mind your own business!"

"This is my business. Bunter did as I told him. I thought you ought to have a lesson for being a cad and a brute. If you don't like it, come over to the gym, and I'll back up the lesson in a way you can understand. But you

are not going to bully Bunter. Let him alone!"

Bulstrode released Bunter.

"I will settle with you for this another time, Wharton!" he said thickly.

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

"Whenever you like."

Bulstrode muttered something, and strode away.

"The great man is angryful," murmured Hurree Singh, as Wharton rejoined him. "His terrible frownfulness is no longer terrific since he has received the lickfulness, but he will get used to it. Shall we go up to the study for a rehearsal, my worthy chums?"

"Just what I was thinking," said Bob Cherry.

The chums of the Remove were soon in the study. Harry Wharton, who was always methodical in his work, suggested getting prep done first, and done it was. Then, books being cleared away, the play so kindly sent by Bob Cherry's cousin in Manchester was produced, and the juniors read through it.

Bob Cherry pronounced the play absolutely ripping, but each of the other juniors kept to his own opinion that something else would have been better. Harry Wharton still favoured "Hamlet"; Nugent, "Peter Pan"; and the nabob a weird composition of which he had a manuscript, and which he averred was frequently performed in princes' palaces in India.

But there was no chance of the juniors agreeing in their opinions; and, as it was acknowledged that Bob Cherry's play was easier than the others, they came to a compromise, "By Order of the Tyrant" being adopted as the work that was to receive the attention of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society.

The next question was to form the cast.

Wharton had already been selected as Valentine, the hero; and Hazeldene was to take the part of Albert, the heroine's brother. Bob Cherry jibbed a little at the part of Colonel Koffdropski, the villain of the piece, but he preferred it to a minor character, so his name went down on the list as Colonel Koffdropski. Nugent was cast for Lieutenant Bunkoff, the colonel's factotum and secondary villain.

Billy Bunter blinked disapproval the whole time. He wanted the hero's part first of all. Then he would have compromised on the part of Gloxiana's brother. After that he was willing to take either of the villainous parts. When he was cast as a comic page, he sniffed.

"If the whole thing falls through, and we get grinned at, don't blame me," he said. "I could save it for you if you liked."

"We'd rather not be saved," said Bob Cherry. "You'll do rippingly as a comic page. You haven't much to say, and you only have to look funny; and, goodness knows, you look funny enough, without making up for the part."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Then there's Inky. What part is he going to take?"

"A spy, I suppose," said Wharton. The nabob nodded.

"I shall have terrific pleasure in playing the part of the spyful person," he said. "I hope I have a considerable amount of speakfulness."

Harry Wharton looked thoughtful.

"Well, I don't know, Inky. Popoff, the spy, has a lot to say, but I was thinking of cutting it."

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"Then where would my speakfulness come in, my worthy chum?"

"The fact is, the less you say on the stage the better, Inky, as you would give the thing away with your unique way of expressing yourself."

"You mean that my variety of the noble English language is not exactly samefully similar to the manner of your honourable style."

"Yes, that's it."

"But the little difficulty of the differentiation can be easily extirpated. I shall learn the lines heartfully in the memory, and speak them with exact thusness, and so there will not be any signfulness displayed of this slight differentiation."

"You might make a slip."

"I shall take the extreme care to avoid the pitfall of the slipfulness."

"Very well, we'll see," said Wharton. "Anyhow, you go down as the spy, Popoff. Young Desmond is to be the waiting-maid, Maria, and Hazeldene's sister, Gloxiana. That's the whole cast, excepting servants, soldiers and so on."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Now, let's see about going through the lines," said Wharton. "We shall have to rehearse carefully the great scene in the second act, where Hazeldene and I thrash Colonel Koffdropski and Lieutenant Bunkoff."

Bob Cherry and Nugent exchanged glances.

"Shall we?" said Bob. "I really think that scene ought to be cut out, Wharton."

"My dear chap, it's the most telling scene in the play."

"Yes, but—"

"Colonel Koffdropski insults Gloxiana—"

"Look here, I'm not going to insult Marjorie Hazeldene—"

"Ass! It's all in the play."

"It may be in the play. But I tell you I'm not going to be rude to a girl, whatever Colonel Koffdropski may have done."

"But if you don't insult Gloxiana, I can't rush on, seize you by the throat, and dash you to the ground."

"You'd better not do that, anyway, unless you want a thick ear."

"Now look here, Cherry—"

"I tell you I'm not going to speak rudely to a girl, play or no play. You can cut that part out."

"Might be done," said Hazeldene. "Instead of you rushing on when the colonel insults Gloxiana, you could rush on a little earlier, Wharton."

"It would spoil the effect."

"Stuff!" said Bob Cherry. "Suppose you come on a little earlier, as Vaseline suggests, and I'll quarrel with you on some other account. I'll insult you instead of Gloxiana."

Wharton rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Well, perhaps we can fix it," he said. "Let's get on to the scene. Gloxiana is standing under the tree when Colonel Koffdropski comes up with Bunkoff and insults her."

"And doesn't insult her."

"I mean, and doesn't insult her," amended Harry. "Then I rush on. But look here, if Koffdropski doesn't insult Gloxiana there's no reason why I should rush on. I might as well walk."

"Well, walk, then," said Bob Cherry.

"It's a good scene spoiled! Well, I walk on, then, and the colonel insults me. I go for him. Oh, I say, it's rotten! If he insulted Gloxiana, I could go for him all right, but an insult to me wouldn't be sufficient excuse for using violence before a lady. I should be acting like a ruffian."

"Perhaps you're right there," said

Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Perhaps I had better dot you on the nose instead."

"That's all right," said Nugent. "You'd have to hit back, and then the dust-up would proceed as per book."

"Well, yes, that might do. I thrash Colonel Koffdropski without mercy—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Do you want to spoil that scene, too, Cherry?"

"No, but I think I ought to have a look in somewhere. We might arrange it that we have a fearful fight and part on equal terms. The audience will be just as pleased. The fight is what they want and they don't care who wins."

"Impossible! Lieutenant Bunkoff has to rush to your aid as you're getting the worst of it, and I am attacked by the two of you."

"And then I dash in," said Hazeldene, "exclaiming: 'My friend! My sister!'"

"And we give the colonel and his myrmidon a fearful hiding," said Wharton.

Bob Cherry looked grim.

"I know that's in the play—"

"It will have to be in the representation, too. We can't have a good scene mucked up to save your feelings. We've already cut out your insulting remarks to Gloxiana. You'll want the whole play cut out next."

"Nugent agrees with me—"

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "I don't see why I should be bumped about the stage by Vaseline, a chap I could lick with one hand."

"Rats!" said Hazeldene.

"If you think I couldn't—"

"That's not the question," said Harry Wharton, interrupting. "This isn't a real fight, but a dramatic representation. I must say that I think you chaps are unreasonable. You will spoil the whole thing."

"How would you like to be licked with Marjorie Hazeldene looking on?"

"There's no alternative."

"Oh, let's get on!" said Bob Cherry. "This play isn't such a ripping one as I thought at first. Of course, I intended to be the hero, and then it would have worked out more satisfactory. But let's get on with the washing."

"I am waiting for the washfulness, my worthy chums."

"Right you are. Inky has some lines in the beginning of that scene as Popoff, the spy. He explains to Gloxiana, under the tree, that she is doomed to Siberia unless she consents to marry Colone Koffdropski."

"Then I suggest that he should hand her a note instead, supposed to contain all that explanation," said Bob Cherry. "He's bound to come out with some of his beautiful English in a moment of absentmindedness."

"I should declinefully refuse to hand the honourable note," said the nabob, shaking his head. "I am willing to heartfully learn the lines and deliver them rightfully by word of mouth, to insure their correctfulness."

"We'll give Inky a trial," said Wharton. "If he has the lines pat by the time we are ready for the final full-dress rehearsal, he shall speak. If not, he shall deliver a note to Gloxiana, who shall read it aloud, and so let the audience know what is going on."

"That is fairful."

"Then you'd better start learning your lines, Inky," said Bob Cherry.

"I will start at oncefully."

"A good idea is to copy them out and to carry the copy always with you," said Wharton. "Then you can whisk it out and have a look at any time."

"It's a wheezy good idea. I think that I shall soon have the lineful words



of the esteemed Popoff quite heartfully, my worthy chums."

**Inky Studies His Part!**

**T**HE Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Company had entered upon the play in good earnest, and they did not waste time. During the next few days little was heard in Study No. 1 save lines from "By Order of the Tyrant." In and out of season the juniors studied and spouted their lines, and gradually got their parts by heart, though it is safe to say that none was word perfect.

Colonel Wharton's kind invitation had been accepted, of course, and Harry had written a very grateful letter to his uncle. Arrangements were made for the dramatic company to accompany Harry on his holiday to Wharton Lodge. There was little difficulty about that, but about the destined heroine of the play there was more.

Harry wrote to the colonel, asking his counsel, and the result was a letter from Miss Wharton, the colonel's sister, to Marjorie Hazeldene. Miss Wharton was the aunt who had spoiled Harry in his earlier days, and she was as devoted to her favourite as ever. Her letter to Marjorie was so kind that the girl could have no hesitation in accepting her invitation to spend a holiday at Wharton Lodge. When the juniors heard that the matter had been arranged, they were jubilant.

"The difficulty is that Marjorie won't be able to come here for rehearsals," Hazeldene remarked. "But she has a gift for this sort of thing, you know, and she will pick up her part in next to no time. We shan't be giving the play the first day at the lodge, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!" said Wharton. "Miss Hazeldene will have a couple of days, at least, to rehearse with us, and, then, I've sent her a copy of the play already."

"Marjorie will be well up in it; better than most of us, I expect," Hazeldene said confidently.

"My chumful comrades," said Hurree Singh, coming up with a manuscript in his hand, "I have learned the greater portion of my part heartfully. Would you care to hear me say a few lines?"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Wharton. Hurree Singh twisted up his features into a really ferocious expression, and began:

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree—"

Bob Cherry looked alarmed. "What the dickens are you looking like that for, Inky?" he asked.

"Like what?" said the nabob, breaking off.

"Like a giddy burglar or a fearful assassin."

"I am putting on the honourable expression suitable to the esteemed Popoff. He is a spy, and chocked full with villainousness."

"I see. I thought perhaps you were having a fit or something."

"Not at all. I will continue the lineful declamation.

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree.

'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh,

And stern Koffdropski. Trembling English maid,

I tell you that unless you wed Koffdropski,

The drearyful plainfulness of Siberia will—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are interrupting my honourable declamation with your esteemed snigger, Bob Cherry," said the nabob reproachfully.

"You're off the line, Inky. I knew you'd drop into your own beautiful idiom sooner or later," grinned Bob. "Better leave out the drearyful plainfulness."

"That was only a little slipfulness."

"Well, I told you so."

"An asinine person can say 'I told you so,'" said the nabob. "I will continue with a more terrific carefulness."

"I tell you that unless you wed Koffdropski,  
The dreary plains of cold Siberia  
Will greet you ere the weekful time  
has passed—"

"Ha, ha! There he goes again!"

"It was only a little slipfulness."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You'll have to learn them up a bit more carefully, Inky," he remarked. "But there's plenty of time, and you only want to stick it."

"The stickfulness will be terrific."

And, to do Hurree Singh justice, he did stick at the task with untiring energy and determination.

Whenever the Indian junior was seen, he had that well-thumbed copy in his hand, and was studying his part. At intervals in the class-room, when the keen eye of Mr. Quelch was not upon him, Hurree Singh devoted his attention to the lines of Popoff, with curious results sometimes to his lessons.

His absent replies had more than once excited the suspicions of Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master was a very keen man in school hours, as Hurree Singh learned in time.

"Hurree Singh!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch suddenly, on Saturday morning. "You will go on from where Wharton left off."

Hurree Singh gave a start. Wharton had been construing the *Æneid*, and Hurree Singh had been studying a folded paper concealed in the palm of his hand.

The Indian lad looked up, hastily concealing the paper. The lines from "By Order of the Tyrant" were fresh enough in his memory, but the lesson might have been going on in Japan for all Hurree Singh had heard of it. He did not even know his place in the book.

"Hurree Singh!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You will go on construing."

"I—I have lost the place, honourable sahib."

"Show him the place, Nugent."

Nugent showed Hurree Singh the place. Hurree Singh stood up in a state of confusion. Mr. Quelch's eye was on him like a gimlet.

"Go on, Hurree Singh."

"Certainly, sir! I shall have great pleasurefulness in going on!"

"Then do so at once!" rapped out the Remove master.

"And *Æneas* began—" whispered Nugent, giving the nabob the clue.

"Nugent, you are speaking to Hurree Singh! You will take twenty lines."

"If you please, sir—"

"Silence! Go on, Hurree Singh. If you keep me waiting any longer I shall know that you were not paying attention to the lesson, and shall punish you accordingly."



"And *Æneas* began—aha!" exclaimed Hurree Singh, growing confused. "I see you now beneath the tree. 'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh, and stern Koffdropski—" "What?" shouted Mr. Quelch, amazed at hearing those lines construed from the *Æneid*. The class shrieked and rocked with laughter.

"Certainly, sir! I mean, certainly. And Æneas began—"

"Well, what did Æneas begin?"

"I—I—I—"

"Nothing of the sort," Mr. Quelch said sarcastically. "I don't think you will find that in the Æneid, Hurree Singh."

And the whole class giggled, as in duty bound when a Formmaster condescended to make a joke. Hurree Singh grew more confused.

"And Æneas began—aha!"

"What?"

"Aha! I see you now beneath the tree."

"Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh,  
And stern Koffdropski—"

"What?" shouted Mr. Quelch.

But the bewildered nabob was deaf to him now. He had quite lost his presence of mind. He went ploughing on, while the class shrieked and rocked with laughter.

"And stern Koffdropski. Trembling English maid,  
I tell you that unless you wed Koffdropski marryfully,

The drearyful plainfulness of Siberia  
Will greet you ere the honourable  
week has passed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

The class were in convulsions. Mr. Quelch's amazement was as funny as Hurree Singh's blundering. The Formmaster brought his hand down on his desk with a thump.

"Hurree Singh! Silence!"

The nabob broke off, because he had forgotten what came next. Mr. Quelch glared at him with an expression that a basilisk might have envied.

"Leave the class-room instantly!" he thundered. "I will deal with you presently, Hurree Singh."

Harry Wharton was on his feet in a moment.

"If you please, sir—"

"What have you to say, Wharton?" rapped out the incensed master.

"Hurree Singh did not mean to be cheek—impertinent, sir. He has been studying a part in a play, and it was absent-mindedness—"

Mr. Quelch's brow cleared a little.

"Indeed! Is that the case, Hurree Singh?"

"Certainly, sir," gasped the nabob. "I have terrific sorrowfulness at my great mistakefulness. I beg a thousand pardons of my honourable and esteemed instructor sahib, and I assure him—"

"So that is why you have been so inattentive in class of late?" said Mr. Quelch. "Well, as you are so fond of lines, you shall write out two hundred from the Æneid this afternoon. You will find them much superior to those you have been learning by heart. Now we will continue."

### The Dress Rehearsal!

**W**HAT time is the dress rehearsal, Wharton?"

"Seven precisely."

"In the Remove-room?"

"Yes."

"Anybody coming?"

"Anybody that likes."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"I fancy most of the Form will be there to see how we figure, Harry."

"Well, let them come," said Harry Wharton. "It will get us used to facing an audience, and that's an advantage."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "A

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Remove audience isn't the easiest in the world to face. Still, they can't do worse than throw things at us."

"Oh, that will be all right!" said Harry, laughing. "It won't be as bad as that. Anyway, this is only a rehearsal. Even if it isn't wholly a success, there's no reason why the show at Wharton Lodge shouldn't be a success."

"Well, we shall have a gentler audience there."

"Yes, and it will come as a bit of a rest, after facing the Remove."

Bob Cherry was right in thinking that most of the Remove would turn up for the dress rehearsal of "By Order of the Tyrant."

When the notice was put up on the board it was read with great interest by the Remove, and many fellows of the Upper Fourth, too.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth made up their minds to come and see the youngsters make asses of themselves, as Temple kindly expressed it.

During the afternoon, while Hurree Singh was working off the lines he had earned by inattention in class, Harry Wharton and the rest of the party paid a visit to the village of Friardale, and had a satisfactory interview with the costumier who had several times supplied their wants.

The clothes for "By Order of the Tyrant" were not at all unique, and they were easily obtained, and it was chiefly a question of fitting.

The difficulty was overcome, and the costumier promised that the goods should be delivered at the school without fail by half-past six.

Mindful of the raid of the Upper Fourth fellows on a previous occasion, the chums of the Remove were on the look-out when the carrier was due.

The bulky parcels were duly delivered and borne up in triumph to Study No. 1, where the Removes examined them with great satisfaction.

Harry Wharton looked very handsome as Valentine, the young British officer who was the hero of the play, when he donned the garb, and Hazeldene made a passable Albert.

Bob Cherry, in a Russian uniform, and wearing a moustache, looked villainous as Colonel Koffdropski; and Nugent was unrecognisable as Lieutenant Bunkoff.

Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh required most making up as Popoff, the spy, his dusky complexion requiring obliteration. But the grease-paint was not spared, and the make-up was a great success.

Billy Bunter gave a great deal of attention to his get-up as Snipski, the comic page. The page's garb had to be let out considerably to suit his ample proportions. Bob Cherry, in making him up, left a great deal of red on his nose, by way of a joke, which Bunter did not notice at the time.

"Sure, and we're ready now," said Micky Desmond, giving the final touches to his face, which glowed with the ruddy complexion of Maria, the waiting-maid. "It's a great pity yer sister can't come to the rehearsal, Vaseline."

"Can't be helped."

"No; but how are we going to work the scene without her in the second act? There must be somebody there for Colonel Koffdropski to insult!"

"The insults to Gloxiana have been cut out," said Bob Cherry.

"But there must be a heroine for Wharton to defend against the colonel spalpeen."

"She won't need defending."

"Anyway, there must be a girl in the scene," said Micky.

"That's all right," said Harry Wharton. "We can't have anybody to speak the lines; but, of course, one of the company is sometimes missing from a rehearsal. Fritz Hoffman is going on in a cloak, to stand under a tree and have the speeches made at him, and he won't say anything. We must have somebody there to be talked at, or the audience will think it's a soliloquy."

"If Hoffman begins to talk—"

"That's all right; he's agreed not to. Later, we can put him in the play without a speaking part, as I should like him to come down to the lodge. This evening he's Gloxiana in a cloak."

"Well, I'm about finished," said Bob Cherry. "It's pretty near time we were in the Remove-room, as we fixed seven o'clock."

"Better have a snack to eat first," said Bunter.

"Well, I'd really forgotten tea," said Harry. "But I think we had better have something to eat. Don't bother to make tea. Anything will do."

"I say, Wharton, that's not very sensible, you know. A chap acts so much better after a square meal."

"Well, you can stay here and have a square meal if you like, Bunter, while we get on with the rehearsal."

"Oh, no! Only I think—"

"Cold ham and brown bread," said Nugent, opening the cupboard. "What could be nicer? There's enough milk for a swig all round."

Curious enough looked the cast of "By Order of the Tyrant" in their various costumes, eating bread and ham, and drinking milk from teacups.

Billy Bunter started first, and left off last, and then he was far from satisfied. But he did not wish to be left out of the rehearsal, and so he accompanied the others when they left the study.

An interested and admiring crowd followed the amateur dramatists to the Remove-room, passing free and not wholly complimentary remarks upon their personal appearance.

"Did you ever see such guys?" Bulstrode asked Russell.

"Yes, old chap, I can see one now," said Russell, looking at him.

And Bulstrode growled.

"My hat!" said Skinner. "Inky has changed colour, and no mistake! What have you done with the ink, Hurree Jampot?"

"And Nugent, too. What a giddy moustache!" said Jameson. "Hallo! Where are you running to, young shaver?"

"I'm sorry!" said Bunter, who had taken off his glasses. "I didn't mean to run into you, Skinner. I didn't see you."

"It's not Skinner, ass! Where are your barnacles?"

"I have taken my spectacles off for the part, you see. Hallo! What is that?"

"You've trodden on my toe, you young villain!" howled Russell.

"I'm sorry! I didn't see you!"

"Here, come along!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, seizing Bunter by the arm. "You'll do some damage if you run loose!"

"Don't jerk me so much, Cherry!"

"Cheese it, and buck up!"

And Bunter was jerked into the Remove-room. That apartment was pretty well filled. A cheer, somewhat ironical in its tone, greeted the appearance of the amateur actors.

"Here they are!"

"My hat, what a sight!"

"More guys!"

Taking no notice of these comments,

which came chiefly from fellows belonging to the Upper Fourth Form, the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society marched up the room.

The raised dais at the end was to serve them as a stage, and a curtain had been put up to bar off the green-room. There was no scenery. That had to be understood. But, as Bob Cherry remarked, the acting was the thing. Give an audience good acting, and they don't care for anything else. And the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society resolved to give them good acting.

"Go, it!"  
The audience shouted encouragement. Harry Wharton had cautioned his company to take no notice of remarks from before the footlights, and, consequently, the juniors wore expressions of sublime indifference.

"Ach! I am here before you after, ain't it?"

It was Fritz Hoffman who spoke as the company passed behind the curtain into the green-room. The German junior had on the long cloak and shady hat he was to wear as Gloxiana.

Bob Cherry looked at him rather disparagingly.

"Don't let the audience see your feet if you can help it!" he said.

"I keeps to cloak over my feet, ain't it?" said Hoffman.

"And your face, too!"

"Ach! I keeps pack to te audience."

"Good! You may pass, so long as you don't open your mouth! Are you chaps ready?"

"Quite ready."

"Bunter's got a red patch on his nose," said Wharton.

"You rotter, Cherry!" breathed Bunter.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"By Jove! I meant to rub it off, and I forgot. Here goes!"

And Bob commenced to rub away with his handkerchief at Bunter's nose. Bunter wriggled.

"Ow! You'll have my nose off in a minute, Cherry!"

"There you are!" said Bob.

"Now we're all right," said Harry, with an anxious glance round. "They're calling to us to come on, and it's turned seven. Ready?"

"Rather!"

"Well, I'm just going on, as I open the play with a soliloquy."

"Go it, Harry!"

And Harry Wharton appeared on the stage, to be greeted by a mingled uproar of cheers and groans.

**Something Like A Row!**

**H**ARRY WHARTON had plenty of nerve, and any sign of hostility from an audience only made him obstinately determined to brave out their disapproval. He knew that Temple, Dabney & Co. wanted to "muck up" the dress rehearsal if they could, and he was resolved that they should not have a chance. He knew that he could depend upon the Remove to back him up against the rival Form.

Harry delivered his lines with perfect elocution and great spirit. The play was, of course, melodramatic stuff, but the audience was not artistically critical. The Remove applauded the soliloquy, and the Upper Fourth groaned at it, which was exactly what was to be expected.

Harry having broken the ice, the rest of the company felt more assured; and they, too, faced the audience with good composure as their cues came.

Hurree Singh had only a few lines to speak in the first act, and he managed

to leave out any of his peculiar English. Gloxiana, when she appeared, kept silent. The first act went pretty well, and the company retired behind the curtain for a brief and well-earned rest. "It's jolly good!" said Nugent. "We might as well have called it a performance as a dress rehearsal, as it's going down so well."

"The performfulness is excellent!" said Hurree Singh. "If we keep up to the sameful mark for the rest of the play, the successfulness will be terrific!"

"Yes; I really think we are doing well!" said Harry Wharton. "But, of course, the fighting scene in the second act is the piece de resistance. That is what will fetch the audience every time."

"Rather!" said Hazeldene. "The fellows will cheer when we lick the two Russian officers. We shall have to give them a knock or two to make the thing realistic."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "You'd better not! I say, they're calling us, so let's get on."

The second act commenced.

The scene was Gloxiana standing under a tree, waiting for her lover to appear. Fritz Hoffman stood there in the long cloak, his back to the audience. Enter, instead of Valentine, Popoff, the spy, alias Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree—" began Hurree Singh.

"Ja, I am here before!" said Hoffman.

The audience gave a yell. A fierce whisper came from the wings.

"Shut up, Hoffman, you ass!"

"Ach! I pegs your pardons! I forgot mit meimself!"

"Shut up!"

"I shuts up before!"

"Aha! I see you here beneath the tree."

'Tis now the hour when Bunkoff should be nigh, And stern Koffdropski. Trembling English maid, I tell you that unless you wedfully marry Koffdropski—"

"Ass!"

"I mean:

"Unless you wed Koffdropski, The dreary plainfulness of cold Siberia—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

"You go on, Bob!" muttered Harry. "I might have guessed he'd do it! Fortunately, it's only a rehearsal. But go on and stop him!"

And Bob Cherry entered as Colonel Koffdropski, followed by Nugent, his faithful Bunkoff.

"Ah, my good Popoff, you may leave me now,

And I will talk to this proud English maid."

Hurree Singh stared at him. "I have not yet concluded my speechfulness, my worthy chum," he remarked.

The audience shrieked.

"Get off, you villain!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Oh, very well! But I regardfully consider—"

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"Get off!"  
 And the nabob disappeared.  
 "Let him come back. Let him finish his speechfulness!" roared Temple.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Encore, Inky!"  
 But Harry Wharton was clutching Hurree Singh behind the curtain, and he could not reappear in answer to his call. Bob Cherry went on with his lines.

"My lovely Gloxiana, you are here, and I am here to talk awhile with you.  
 Your lover Valentine is far away, and I and Bunkoff only—"

"False Russian! 'Tis a lie, for I am here!" shouted Harry Wharton, rushing upon the stage. "Fear not, my Gloxiana. I am here!"  
 "Ah! I tinks—"

"This Russian traitor, sweet, shall harm thee not,  
 While I am here to die in your defence."

"Bunkoff, to me, and we will give this youth a stern chastisement before the lady's eyes!" exclaimed the villainous Koffdrowski.  
 "My noble master, I am at your call!" said Lieutenant Bunkoff.

And the colonel and the lieutenant attacked the English officer. Valentine gallantly faced the two, drawing his sword, and there was a clash and clang of steel. The audience were keenly enough interested now.

"Go it!"  
 "Chop him, Cough-drop!"  
 "Slice him, Wharton!"  
 "Hurrah!"  
 "My friend! My sister! My sister and my friend!" exclaimed Hazeldene, rushing upon the scene.  
 "Aid me, brave Albert, 'gainst these coward foes!" cried Harry.

The combat now grew really terrific. Sparks flew from the steel, and the juniors trampled to and fro over the stage, in great excitement.  
 "You—ass,—Cherry!" muttered Wharton. "It's time for you to be disarmed. Let your sword go, you howling ass!"  
 "That's all very well!"  
 "Play the game, idiot!"

Bob Cherry let his sword go, and it clanged to the floor. Then Lieutenant Bunkoff followed his example. The two Russians were disarmed, and at the mercy of the justly incensed champions of insulted beauty.

Then Harry Wharton delivered the most telling lines of the piece.

"Away with these unnecessary arms!" he cried, throwing down his sword. "Swords are not needed in this combat, friend! An Englishman needs but an English fist to bring the foreign foe man to his knees."

"What-ho!" shouted the Remove. And Albert and Valentine rushed upon Colonel Koffdrowski and his myrmidon Bunkoff.

The foreign foe should then have received a severe thrashing, but it did not work out like that, for Bob Cherry and Nugent were both getting excited.

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The Remove were shouting to them, too, urging them to put up a good fight, with utter disregard for the fact that the scene was supposed to be a dramatic representation.

"Go it, Nugent!"  
 "Go it, Cherry!"  
 "You're not half fighting!"  
 "Don't let them wipe you up like that!"  
 "Go it!"

And Colonel Koffdrowski and Lieutenant Bunkoff did go it. Nugent closed with Hazeldene, and got his head into chancery, and Hazeldene struggled and roared and hit out. Bob Cherry landed a right-hander on Harry's nose. Harry was getting excited, too, and he replied in kind, and the two juniors were soon at it hammer and tongs.

Hurree Singh rushed on the stage to separate them, and he received a drive

on the chest that sent him staggering. He bumped against Hoffman and knocked him over, and the German promptly retaliated with a thump on the chest. The blood of all the Nabobs of Bhanipur boiled up in wrath, and in a second more Hurree Singh and Hoffman were fighting desperately.

The dress rehearsal had developed into a free fight, and the audience were all on their feet, shrieking with laughter, and urging on the combatants.

Wingate and two or three other prefects rushed into the room with cries in their hands. The uproar was terrific, and it had not been long in bringing the prefects on the scene.

"Stop that row!" roared Wingate. And as no notice was taken by the excited combatants, he ran on the stage and brought the cane into play. They stopped then. Billy Bunter, who blundered into Wingate's way, received most of the punishment. The combatants, looking rather sheepish, separated.

"What the dickens are you up to, you young sweeps?" demanded Wingate angrily.

"It's only a rehearsal," said Harry. "A what? My hat! If that's how you rehearse, what would the play be like, I wonder? Clear out!"

And the Wharton Operatic Company had no choice in the matter. They cleared out. Dusty and dishevelled, they returned to their study, followed by roars of laughter from the Remove and the Upper Fourth.

"Of all the asses—" began Harry Wharton, looking at Bob Cherry.

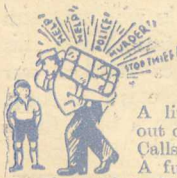
"Of all the asses—" said Bob Cherry, returning his look.

Harry burst into a laugh.  
 "Well, it's been a muck up and no mistake; but it's no good ragging one another. But one thing's settled. We shan't play 'By Order of the Tyrant.' It leads a little too much to ructions. When we play at Wharton Lodge in the holidays, we'll play 'Peter Pan.'"

And the rest of the company, as they rubbed their bruises, agreed that that was a good idea.

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