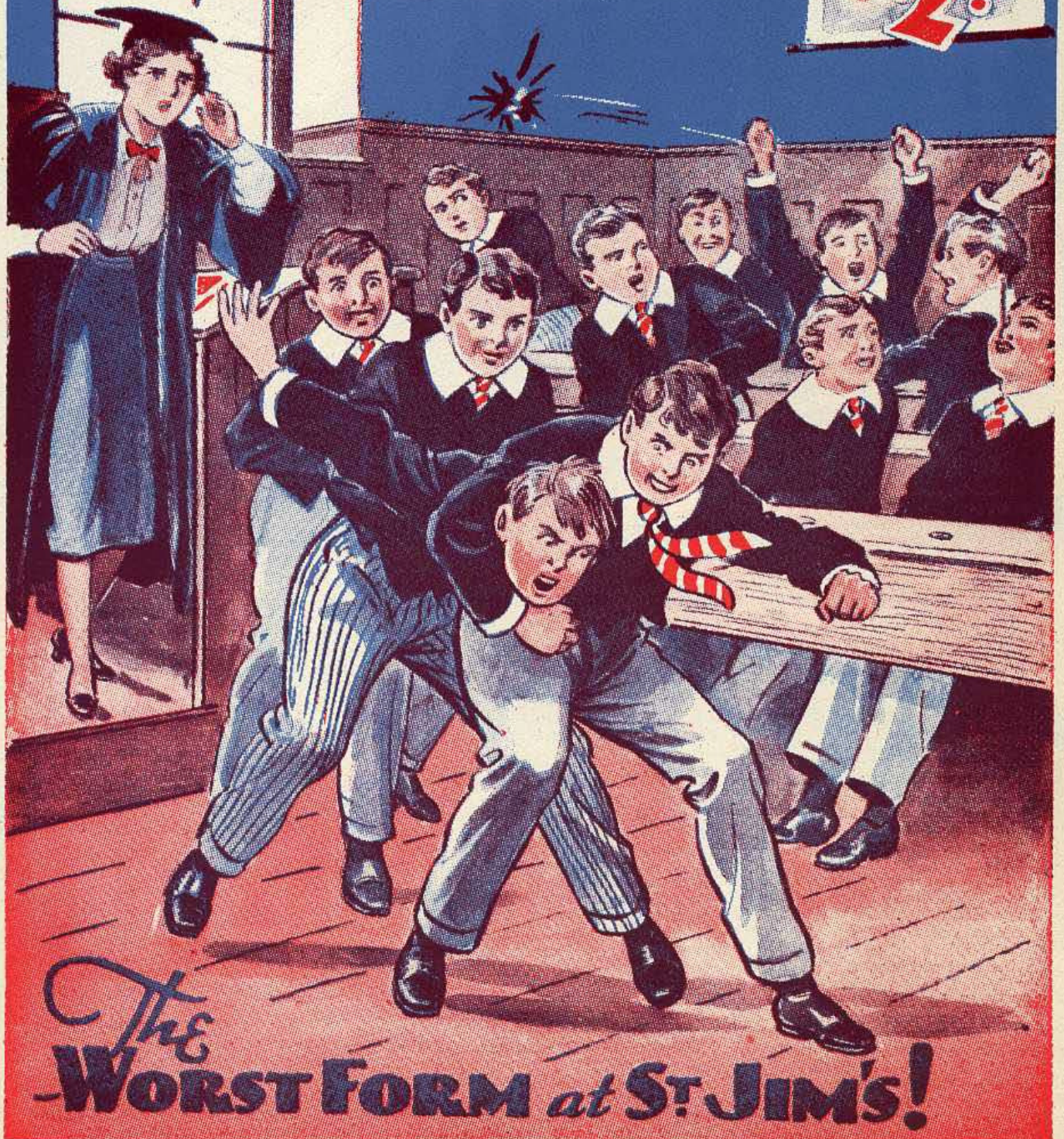


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The GEM

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The Worst Form at St. Jim's!

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The Worst Form



Wally clutched out wildly at his assailants, and brought down Hobbs and Hooley across the unfortunate Jameson, who howled with anguish. In the midst of the scrimmage the Form-room door opened, and the stately figure of the Head entered the room!

CHAPTER 1.

Gussy Cannot Tell!

"**W**HERE'S that young rascal?" Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, looked into Study No. 6, as he asked that question in a very gruff voice.

Study No. 6 were surprised. Jack Blake looked up from the football boots he was greasing. Herries and Digby stopped writing lines. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his famous eyeglass into his eye, and turned a stony glare upon the prefect.

"The what, Kildare?" he inquired, with chilly politeness.

"That young rascal!" said Kildare. "Weally, Kildare, I twust you do not expect to find any young wascal in this study. You have come to the w'ong study, deah boy. Twy the Sixth."

Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled. But Kildare did not smile. He was not in the best of tempers.

"Don't be a cheeky little ass, D'Arcy!" he said gruffly. "Are you hiding that young rascal in this study? If he isn't here, where is he? Mr. Selby wants him at once, and there will be trouble if he doesn't turn up."

Study No. 6 understood then. Mr. Selby was the master of the Third Form. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's younger brother, Wally, was in the Third. So it was clear that Master Wally was the young rascal alluded to.

"I twust my minah isn't in twouble again," said Arthur Augustus, in a distressed voice.

"Well, he is," said Kildare. "He was told to report himself in Mr. Selby's study for a licking. He hasn't turned up. It's an hour ago. He's hiding somewhere, the young scamp. I'm looking for him. Where is he?"

"Not here," said Blake.

"I thought he might have come here," growled Kildare. "I'll give him a licking myself when I find him for giving me all this trouble. I've got something better to do than to hunt for fags. Do you know where he is, D'Arcy? He's your minor."

"You can hardly expect me to betway the whereabouts of my minah, Kildare, in the circs," said Arthur Augustus stiffly.

"What!"

"I considah that vevy likely Mr. Selby was in the w'ong. He always seems to be goin' for my minah. I disapprove of it."

"Shurrup!" murmured Blake.

"I wufuse to shut up, Blake!"

"Where is that young scamp?" roared Kildare. "Tell me at once!"

"Weally, Kildare—"
"Don't you understand that I'm

looking for him, and I've no time to waste?" Kildare had an ashplant under his arm, and he let it slip down into his hand. "Now, then, you young ass, where is your scamp of a minor?"

"I cannot—"
"You can't tell me, what?" asked Kildare grimly.

"Certainly not. You see—"
"Then I'll help you," said Kildare, striding across the study and seizing the swell of St. Jim's by the collar.

"Now, then—"
"Wow! Leggo! You are wumplin' my collah!"

"Are you going to tell me where your minor is?"

"I cannot! I—yawooooh!"

The ashplant whistled through the air and descended upon Arthur Augustus' beautifully fitting bags. Arthur Augustus gave a wild yell of anguish.

"Oh cwumBs! Oh, you howwid bwute!"

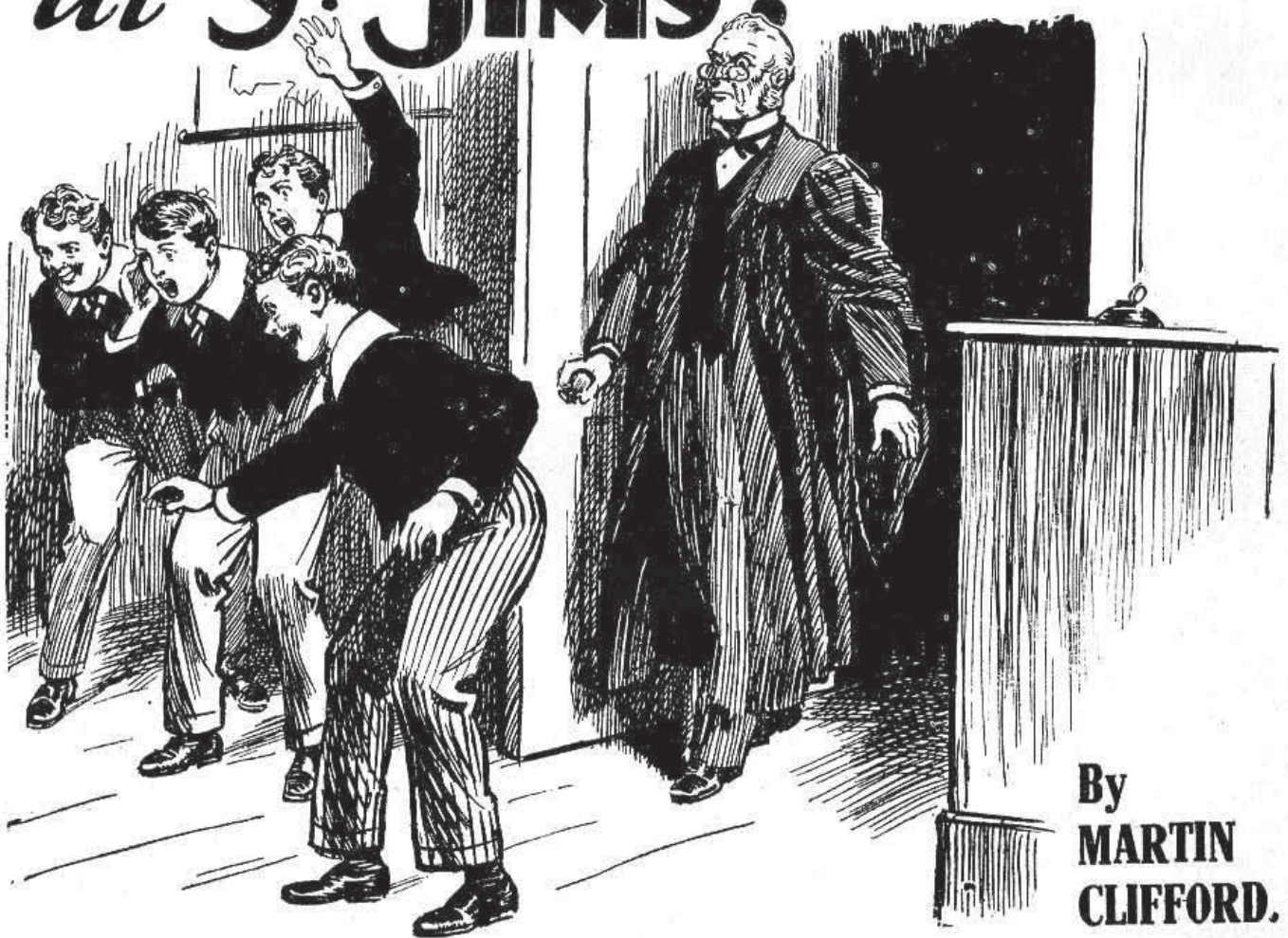
"Where is he?" roared Kildare. "Wats!"

"Yawoooh! Oh cwikey! Yah!"

"What on earth's the row?" exclaimed a voice in the passage; and four juniors who were coming along paused to look into Study No. 6. They were Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther and Talbot of the Shell.

YOU'LL LAUGH YOUR WAY THROUGH THIS LIVELY LONG YARN OF THE WILD ANTICS OF WALLY D'ARCY AND HIS INKY TRIBE OF THE THIRD!

at St. Jim's!



By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

The Shell fellows stared in surprise at the sight of D'Arcy wriggling in the grasp of Kildare. It was but very seldom that the good-natured captain of St. Jim's let himself go in this way.

"Now, then!" roared Kildare, as the ashplant whistled again. "I'm waiting, you cheeky young ass!"

"Wow-wow-wow!"
Whack!
"Yawooh! Kildare, I wegard you as a wottah! If you were not a pwefect, I should stwike you! Welease me, you howwid bwute! Welease me—wow!"

"Will you tell me where your minor is, you silly young sweep?" shouted Kildare, getting more and more exasperated.

"I cannot—"
Whack!

"Wow-ow-ow! I wefuse to be tweated in this bwutal mannah! If you stwike me again, Kildare, I shall hit you!"

"Will you tell me—"
"I wepeat that I cannot do anything of the sort."
Whack, whack, whack!
"Oh cwumbs! Wescue!"

Arthur Augustus struggled violently, but in the big Sixth Former's iron grasp he was little more than an infant. Kildare's knuckles were grinding into his neck, and he was helpless.

"I—I say," exclaimed Tom Merry, "draw it mild, Kildare, you know!"

"Shut up!" said Kildare angrily.

"Why don't you tell him, Gussy, you silly idiot?" howled Blake.

"I cannot—"
"You young ass!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Kildare has a right to ask you. Why don't you tell him?"

"He will tell me, or take the licking of his life!" said Kildare, in a tone of concentrated anger.

"Now, then, D'Arcy, I give you one more chance. Where is your minor?"

"It is quite imposs for me to tell you."

Whack!
"Yawooooop!"

"Tell him, you fathead!" yelled Digby.

"How can I tell him when I don't know?" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

The ashplant was coming down again; but Kildare stopped it in time.

"You don't know?" he exclaimed.

"Wow! No! Yow!"

"You said you did!" shouted Kildare.

"I did not say anythin' of the sort!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "I wemarked that you could not expect me to betway his whereabouts in the circs—even if I knew where he was, I meant."

~~~~~

*Wanted—a master who can manage the unruly, untamed Third Form of St. Jim's! Prefects refuse the task, and masters give it up as a bad job!*

~~~~~

"You—you silly young ass!"

"I wefuse to be called a silly young ass!"

"Then you don't know where he is?" demanded Kildare.

"Wow-wow! No, I don't, you awful bwute!"

The captain of St. Jim's released the wriggling junior, bursting into a laugh.

"You young fathead! You should have said so when I asked you."

"I wepeated lots of times that I could not tell you. Wow! Oh deah! I am feelin' vevy uncomfortable!"

Kildare, still laughing, quitted the study—to pursue further his search for the scamp of the Third. Arthur Augustus gazed round at his friends in the expectation of receiving sympathy.

He was disappointed. Blake, Herries, and Digby were yelling with laughter. The Terrible Three and Talbot seemed on the verge of hysterics.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "What are you cacklin' at? There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows staggered from the study doubled up with mirth.

And, in spite of Arthur Augustus' excited objurgations, Blake, Herries, and Digby persisted in regarding the matter as funny.

"You'll be the death of me, Gussy!"

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almost sobbed Blake. "I know you will—I've said it before! You are too funny to live!"

"I regard you as a thumpin' ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose I had better go and look for my minah, as he is in trouble again. And as for you, you uttah duffahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh wats!"

Arthur Augustus retired from Study No. 6, and closed the door after him with a terrific slam. For once his manners were lacking in that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 2. Wally in Hiding!

QUITE a number of individuals were looking for Wally of the Third as well as his justly indignant major.

The scamp of the Third was in trouble again.

Wally lived in an almost perpetual state of trouble. When he was not ragging with his chums, or rowing with the New House fags, he filled up time, as it were, by getting into trouble with his Form-master. Mr. Selby was too sharp-tempered and irritable a gentleman to appreciate Wally's over-abundant energy and high spirits.

The introduction of jumping crackers into the Form-room, and their accidental discharge in Wally's desk, did not appeal to his sense of humour in the least. He hadn't any sense of humour. On such occasions he would come down very heavy.

All the School House soon knew that Wally was in hot water once more. He had had two hundred lines, with strict injunction to bring them to Mr. Selby after tea, under penalty of a severe caning.

Wally had fully intended to do those lines, but he was booked for a four-handed mill in the box-room with some of the heroes of the Third, and the impot simply had to go. Then he received word that Mr. Selby was waiting for him in his study, and that the Form-master had been seen selecting a cane.

Then Wally had disappeared.

Mr. Selby waited for him in vain, and naturally his temper did not grow any better. He had intended to give Wally a really exemplary licking.

Mr. Selby's exemplary lickings were so painful to the recipients that it was not surprising that Wally was putting off the evil hour. His hands were still aching from the "pointer" in the afternoon. So he disappeared.

Whereupon Mr. Selby called on the prefects to find him. Hence Kildare's visit to Study No. 6, which had been so exceedingly unpleasant for D'Arcy major.

Wally was not to be found apparently. The prefects, in far from a good humour, sought him up and down the School House in vain.

Knox of the Sixth called upon the Terrible Three and Talbot to help in the search, as he met them in the passage. The Shell fellows could not very well decline the order of a prefect. So they looked about the passage very industriously, looking into every place where Wally was certain not to be found, till Knox was out of sight, and then they went into their studies.

It was tea-time, and they did not want to be bothered with doing Knox's work for him. The Terrible Three had kippers to cook, and that was much more important than looking for Wally. And tea was ready for Talbot in his study.

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Gore and Skimpole, his studymates, had already started.

"That young ass found?" asked Gore as Talbot came into the study.

"Not yet."

"The young duffer! He'll only get it worse in the long run," said Gore. "I saw Selby as I came up; he was on the warpath."

"Mr. Selby is an exceedingly irritable gentleman," said Skimpole, in his solemn way. "He pushed me very rudely when I passed him. I simply remarked to him that it was delightful weather for the time of the year, and he pushed me. I should have remonstrated with him, but—"

"But I yanked you away before you could ask for a licking, you chump!" said Gore. "Pass the jam, and keep your silly feet out of the way. Do you want all the floor?"

"My dear Gore"—Skimpole blinked at Gore through his big spectacles—"I trust my feet are not in your way. I did not notice you collide with me."

"Well, I banged my foot against something!" growled Gore. "If it was your hoof, Talbot, you can keep 'em over your own side."

"But it wasn't my hoof!" said Talbot, laughing.

The study door opened, and Knox of the Sixth looked in. Knox was looking very exasperated. Hunting for a recalcitrant fag was an occupation that did not please Knox in the least.

"Have you seen anything of that little villain?" he demanded.

"Nothing," said Talbot.

"I'll give the little sweep a licking when I get my hands on him!" exclaimed Knox angrily. "Making me waste my time hunting for him!"

"My dear Knox, there is no occasion to lose your temper," remonstrated Skimpole. "As you possess the privileges of a prefect, it is scarcely just to complain of the duties—"

"Take fifty lines, Skimpole!"

"Eh? What for?"

"For being a silly idiot!" said Knox. "Are you sure that little beast isn't hiding in here? He sneaked into one of the studies somewhere."

"Better search," said Talbot.

Knox scowled and quitted the study.

"There'll be a row when the silly young ass is nailed," said Gore. "Shouldn't like to be in his shoes when he sees Selby again. He must turn up by bed-time, anyway. Skimpole, you thumping idiot, will you keep your enormous hoof out of the way, or won't you?"

"My dear Gore—"

"If I collide with your skinny props again I'll kick 'em!" growled Gore.

"But I assure you—"

"Oh, cheese it and pass the toast!" Gore stretched his legs under the table and uttered an exasperated howl.

"Why, there you are again! Take that!" Gore kicked out under the table.

"Yow!"

There was a yell of anguish, but it did not proceed from Skimpole. It came from under the table.

The three Shell fellows started to their feet.

"My hat!" exclaimed Talbot. "There's somebody under the table!"

Gore stooped and jerked up the tablecloth. Under the table a dusty fag was sitting, nursing his leg and mumbling furiously.

"You silly ass!" he shouted.

"My hat, it's that fag!"

"Wally!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Don't yell!" snorted Wally. "That cad Knox may be looking in here any minute again."

"So you've been hiding there!" exclaimed Gore.

"What do you think I've been doing, you owl?"

"Well, I'm not going to have rotten fags hiding in my study!" growled Gore. "Get out!"

"Shan't!"

"Then I'll—"

"Hold on, Gore!" said Talbot quietly. "Leave him alone!"

"Look here—" began the bully of the Shell warmly.

"He's going to get enough from Selby without your starting on him."

"Well, that's so," said Gore, calming down. "Selby will simply skin him. Serve him right, too, the cheeky young sweep!"

"Wally," said Talbot kindly, "you'd better clear, and go to Selby at once. It's bound to come, and it will be all the worse the longer you put it off."

"Rats!" said Wally.

"But you'll have to turn up, you know."

"I won't!" said Wally determinedly. "I've been caned this afternoon already. I've had enough. I'm going to keep out of sight."

"It'll come to the Head."

"All the better. I'd rather deal with the Head than with Selby. Look at my paws; they're swollen now. Selby laid it on too thick. Why, it hurt me like anything when I biffed Jameson on the nose in the box-room afterwards! I've had enough, and Selby can go and eat coke!"

"But you can't stay there all the evening, kid!" exclaimed Talbot.

"I'm waiting till the coast is clear to slip out of the House," said Wally. "I'm going to hide somewhere."

"You'd better—"

"Oh rats!" Wally was evidently determined.

"I was going to say you'd better have some tea," said Talbot, with a smile.

"Now you're talking," said Wally. "You can pass me something under the table if you like. I'm not coming out, thanks!"

"Look out!" said Gore, as a footstep stopped outside the study.

The tablecloth dropped back into place. Wally, with his mouth full of cake, held his breath under the table. The door opened. It was Tom Merry who came in.

"There's a regular hullabaloo," said the captain of the Shell. "All the studies are going to be searched for that young duffer. Selby has called the Housemaster into it, and Railton is waxy. I wonder where he can be?"

"Shut the door!" said Talbot hastily, as Gore burst into a chuckle.

"Why, what—"

Tom Merry jumped as Wally's tousled head was projected from under the table.

"Going to search the studies, are they?" grunted Wally. "The beasts! I shall have to clear."

"So there you are, you young ass!"

"Yes, here I am, you old ass!"

"Knox is in the passage," said Tom Merry. "The best thing you can do, Wally, is to give yourself up at once."

"Any more good advice going?" snorted Wally. "Bow-wow!"

"Where are you going?" exclaimed Talbot, as the scamp of the Third made a dive for the open study window.

"Out!" said Wally concisely.

"Stop! You'll break your neck!" yelled Tom Merry.

The Shell fellows rushed forward to collar the reckless fag; but Wally had swung himself out of the window before they could touch him. He hung to the



"Better ring off," said a voice. "It's against my principles to listen to a private conversation." Talbot and Marie started and looked round. The grinning face of Wally D'Arcy rose from behind the rustic seat in the summer-house.

window-sill and grinned coolly at them. "Keep your whiskers on!" he said. "You think I can't climb down a drain-pipe, you duffers? Keep that door shut while I'm gone—and your heads, too!"

Wally slithered down the drain-pipe beside the window at a speed that made the juniors gasp. But he was as active as a monkey, and he reached the ground in safety.

There was a shout from several fellows in the quadrangle as he was sighted. Wally took to his heels like a startled rabbit and vanished.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Talbot.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"The reckless young ass! Hallo, here they come!"

Knox and Rushden of the Sixth came into the study. All the junior studies were being searched for Wally, but they had come too late. The bird had flown!

CHAPTER 3.

Mr. Selby Takes a Header!

TALBOT of the Shell quitted the School House after tea, and sauntered away towards the Head's garden.

"Kindest regards from me!" called out Monty Lowther, as he went.

Talbot smiled, but did not turn his head.

He entered the garden by the little gate from the quad, and sauntered down the path towards the summer-house. There was a sound in the summer-house as the Shell fellow came up to it.

"Marie!" said Talbot.

He looked round him in surprise as he entered. The summer-house was empty. Talbot looked puzzled. He was almost certain that he had heard someone move there.

He had come there for a chat with his girl chum, Marie Rivers, the "Little Sister of the Poor," who had a permanent post now in the school sanatorium—with little to do now, as a matter of fact. There was a light step on the garden path, and the girl came in as Talbot stood looking round.

Marie's face was bright and smiling.

"You are here first, Toff!" Marie always called Talbot by his old nickname, by which she had known him in the days long gone by, before either of them had seen St. Jim's. "Miss Pinch has given me an hour off this evening."

"Good!" said Talbot. "Any news from your father, Marie?"

Marie's face clouded a little, as she thought of her father, the one-time cracksman known as the Professor, who had recently tried to rob St. Jim's, but had been caught.

In consideration of a signed confession clearing Talbot, who had been suspected of a previous burglary, the Head had allowed John Rivers to go free. The cracksman had declared that he would keep straight in future, and he had gone abroad.

"I have had a letter from him," said Marie. "He is in South America, and has hopes of getting a job. When I think what he was—"

"Better ring off!" said a voice. "It's against my principles to listen to a private conversation."

Talbot and Marie started, and looked round them.

"That's Wally's voice!" exclaimed Talbot.

"Wally!" said Marie. "Where is he?"

"The young rascal! He's hiding away from his Form-master, who has a licking ready for him. Where are you, you young duffer?" called out Talbot.

A grinning face rose from behind the massive rustic seat in the summer-house.

"Sorry to interrupt!" said Wally. "But I had to tell you I was here, as you were going to jaw."

Talbot laughed.

"You are hiding here!" exclaimed Marie.

"You bet!" said Wally. "Good-afternoon, Miss Marie! I know you won't give me away. Old Selby is looking for my scalp, and I came here because I thought it was a quiet spot. I'm going to dodge the beast as long as I can."

"You should not speak of your Form-master like that, Wally," said Marie gravely.

"Well, he shouldn't be such a beast, should he?" argued Wally. "Look at my paws! Do they look fit for another licking?"

Marie uttered an exclamation as Wally held out his hands for inspection. They were very grubby, and they showed the traces of a recent severe caning.

"It is wicked to cane a little boy so hard!" exclaimed Marie, with a flash in her eyes. "I am sure the Head would not allow it if he knew."

"Not so much of your little boy, please," said Wally with a grimace; "I'm not such a blessed little boy as all that!"

"You are a very bad little boy, I should think," said Marie, with a smile. "You must have made Mr. Selby very angry."

"How could I help the fireworks going off in my desk? I didn't do it on purpose. I was just putting a match to 'em under the lid, as a joke on old Frayne—to make him jump—and then they caught—"

"And then you were caught, I suppose?" said Talbot.

"Ow! Yes," said Wally. "Selby is quite athletic when it comes to laying on the pointer. And a pointer hurts more than the cane—it's harder. And he piled on lines, too. Now, how could I do my lines by tea-time when I had to meet Jameson, Frayne, and Curly for a mill in the box-room?"

"You could have put off that important engagement," suggested Talbot.

"Well, I didn't think of that in time," said Wally. "I chanced it. But it's no good chancing things with old Selby. He—"

Wally broke off as a footstep ground the gravel on the garden path. The grin vanished from his face as, through the open doorway, he caught sight of the master of the Third.

Mr. Selby had strolled into the garden to soothe his irritated nerves, not in the least expecting to find Wally there—fags not being allowed in those sacred precincts. But just as Wally sighted him in the path he spotted Wally in the summer-house.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally.

He jumped out from behind the seat, and darted out of the door at the other side of the summer-house.

Mr. Selby was after him in a twinkling.

"D'Arcy minor! Stop! Stop at once, I command you!" shouted Mr. Selby, breaking into a run in pursuit of the junior.

"Poor Wally!" murmured Marie.

Wally was speeding away down the path. He did not make for the gate in the quad—there were too many enemies in that direction. He rushed down the garden towards the sheet of ornamental water. As he was much more active than Mr. Selby, he hoped to be able to dodge the master round that pond.

But Mr. Selby was in deadly earnest. He put on a really creditable speed, considering his age and condition, and the fag heard the heavy footsteps crunching behind him, and an outstretched hand just missed his shoulder as he reached the edge of the pond.

Wally acted then on instinct, without stopping to think. He threw himself down on his hands and knees, and the pursuer, rushing on, unable to stop, plunged headlong over him.

Splash!

There was a choking yell from Mr. Selby as he disappeared headlong into the water.

Wally started up—gasping. He had done it now. Mr. Selby was floundering in three feet of water, his hat was floating away, and his red and furious face was puffing wildly above the surface of the pond.

"My only Aunt Jane!" stuttered Wally. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Owch! Oooch! Help! Oh!"

Wally cut off at top speed in a new direction. He was anxious to get out of the garden before Mr. Selby got out of the pond. He made a wild spring over the gate into the quad, and ran—

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and was suddenly stopped by a grip on the shoulder. He had almost run into Kildare's arms.

"Got you, you young sweep!" said the captain of St. Jim's grimly.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"You'll come with me!" said Kildare.

He marched Wally away towards the School House. The unfortunate fag had to go. There was no escape from Kildare's powerful grasp.

Meanwhile, Talbot had run down to the pond to help Mr. Selby out.

Shallow as the water was, the Form-master seemed unable to get out without aid. He splashed and spluttered and yelled for help, causing quite a sea of bubbles and foam round him in the peaceful pond.

"This way, sir!" called out Talbot.

Mr. Selby plunged towards him, and Talbot grasped him by the shoulder, and dragged him out. He landed Mr. Selby on the bank, drenched and streaming and gasping like a fish. Mr. Selby lay in a pool of water pumping in breath.

"Oh dear! I have been almost drowned! Ow! Oh! Where is that—that young criminal? Where is he?"

"Gone, sir!" said Talbot cheerfully. "Hadn't you better change your clothes, sir? You'll catch cold."

"Yes, yes; you are right—certainly! Oh dear!"

Mr. Selby squelched away to the School House, and the fellows who saw him coming in smiled loudly. With his hair plastered down on his head, his hat gone, his clothes limp and dripping, his gown a clinging rag, and water squelching out of his boots, the master of the Third looked a most deplorable object.

"Mr. Selby, what ever has happened?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, meeting the Third Form master in the hall.

"I have fallen into the pond!" gasped Mr. Selby. "I was tripped—tripped up by D'Arcy minor—actually!"

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Kildare has just brought the boy in, Mr. Selby. He shall be severely punished for the trouble he has given. You may safely leave him in my hands. I recommend you to lose no time in drying yourself."

Mr. Selby nodded, and hurried up the stairs, leaving a trail of water behind. He was sorry to leave Wally's punishment in other hands—which he suspected might deal more lightly with the delinquent—but it was evidently necessary for him to get dried.

He bolted into his room, and fellows who passed near his door could hear him spluttering and sneezing as he rubbed himself down. And Mr. Selby was so extremely unpopular that few were sorry to hear those sounds of suffering.

Meanwhile, Wally had been marched into the Housemaster's study, with Kildare's hand on his collar. Kildare waited there with him till the Housemaster came in. He did not mean to give the scamp of the Third another chance of bolting.

Mr. Railton rustled into the study and fixed a stern frown upon Wally. Kildare retired, leaving the fag to his fate.

"How dare you give us all this trouble, and throw the House into an uproar in this way, D'Arcy minor!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

Wally did not reply.

"And Mr. Selby informs me that you tripped him up, and caused him to fall in the pond," Mr. Railton went on. "I am afraid that a caning will

not meet this case, D'Arcy minor. I must report you to the Head for a flogging."

"I didn't trip him up," said Wally sulkily. "He fell over me."

"Mr. Selby's impression is that you tripped him."

"Well, I didn't. I forgot all about the water being there, and he tumbled over me, and fell in."

"Ahem! That alters the case a little," said Mr. Railton. "You have, however, refused to go to your master's study when ordered, and have given the prefects a great deal of trouble in finding you. Why have you done this?"

"I have been licked enough for one day," said the fag sullenly.

"That is entirely in your Form-master's hands," said the Housemaster severely.

"What about my hands?" said Wally.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Look at 'em, sir!" said Wally indignantly. "Do they look as if I wanted any more lickings?"

Mr. Railton stared at the grubby paws that were held out for his inspection. The plain traces of an unusually severe caning could be seen, and the Housemaster's face showed that he was shocked. Mr. Railton was a very good-natured master, and seldom used the cane himself, and never to that extent.

"Ahem!" he said. "Ahem! Certainly they appear to have been severely—ahem!—very severely caned, D'Arcy minor. In the—ahem!—circumstances, I shall not cane you now. You will take a hundred lines. You may go. I shall mention to Mr. Selby that the matter is—ahem!—closed."

Wally's eyes danced. He could scarcely believe in his good luck. Only a hundred lines, after his escapade, and after Mr. Selby's ducking. True, that ducking had been an accident, but it was a very happy accident—from Wally's point of view.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Wally.

Mr. Railton waved his hand to the door, and D'Arcy minor promptly departed. He did not want to give the Housemaster time to change his mind. Mr. Railton shook his head very seriously when the fag was gone. The master of the Third had overstepped the limit, and Mr. Railton intended to speak to him very plainly.

But, as it happened, Mr. Selby was not seen downstairs again that day. The news spread through the School House that the Third Form master was keeping to his room with a bad cold, and the young rascals of the Third showed their sympathy by executing a triumphant dance in the Form-room when they heard the news.

CHAPTER 4.

A Third Form Celebration!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked into the Third Form Room that evening. There were rejoicings going on in that apartment, and the Terrible Three were interested.

At half-past seven the Third Form always collected there for evening preparation, under the cold, steely eye of Mr. Selby. But on this particular evening Mr. Selby was in bed, with a hot-water bottle at his feet, a muffer round his neck; and his cold, steely eyes were watery, and his nose was inflamed, and he was generally in that state of mingled misery and fury that accompanies a bad cold in its early stages.

Hence the unaccustomed freedom and rejoicing in the Form-room. The heroes of the Third concluded that there wouldn't be any prep that evening, and they rejoiced accordingly.

A strong smell of scorching herrings greeted the Terrible Three as they looked in. Wally was on his knees before the Form-room fire which was piled up and blazing. He was cooking herrings.

Joe Frayne was helping him. Curly Gibson was opening a pot of jam. Hobbs was making toast, dodging Wally and Joe at the fire. Jameson was slicing up a big loaf on a desk.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

Wally looked round with a shining face.

"Hallo!" he answered. "What do you kids want?"

"We want to know how you got on with the Housemaster, you young bouncer," said Monty Lowther. "Your major has been anxious about you."

"Oh, that was all right! Railton's a brick! Only a hundred lines!" said Wally. "Pretty cheap, when old Selby's had the ducking of his life—and he's caught a bad cold. Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the Third with one voice.

"Weally, Wally!" said Arthur Augustus, who had followed the Terrible Three in. "It is wathah unfeelin' of you to wejoice in the unhappy condish of your mastah."

"Go hon!" said Wally.

"I heah that Mr. Selby is in a weally shockin' state. Nurse Pinch has been lookin' aftah him, and she was lookin' wathah crosso. I feah that the old gentleman is in wathah a bad tempah."

"Let him rip!" said Wally. "He's got a cold. Hurrah! There won't be any prep to-night—no prep and no Selby!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're going to have a feed instead of prep," said Wally. "You kids can stay if you like—"

"I wefuse to be called a kid by my minah."

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! We've got herrings—heaps of 'em," said Wally.

"I've cooked nearly the lot now. Old Selby always makes a fuss about a smell of cooking in the Form-room. He won't be able to make a fuss to-night; he's laid up—laid right up!" trilled Wally joyously.

"Might turn to pneumonia," said Curly Gibson hopefully; "you never know."

"Bai Jove!"

"Or measles, or something," said Jameson. "Lots of things start with a cold."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or housemaid's knee," suggested Monty Lowther humorously.

"Well, whatever it turns to, I hope it'll be a long illness," said Wally. "Fancy old Selby in the sanatorium for the rest of the term."

"Oh, ripping!" said Jameson ecstatically.

"No more prep and no more lessons!"

"Hurrah!"

"I wefuse to allow you to discuss your Form-mastah in this unfeelin' way, Wally," said Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Bow-wow!"

"You diswepful young wascal!"

"Oh, give him a herring and shut him up!" said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to have a hewwin', and I wefuse to shut up!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have had a vewy painful

ST. JIM'S JINGLES. No. 5.



GEORGE KERR.

*WITH what delight we blazon forth
The manifold attractions
Of this young scholar from the North,
So shrewd in all his actions!
His manly courage and resource
Have won him stout supporters,
And made him quite a fighting force
Within the New House quarters.*

*He joined the famed and fearless band
With Figgins in the centre,
Which always strives to stay the hand
Of tyrant and tormentor.
They share alike in fights and feeds,
And even men like "Ratty"
Have learned to fear the daring deeds
Of Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty.*

*A talent few possess at school
In Kerr is made apparent
And helps him to repress the rule
Of rolters mean and arrant.
The Scots boy seldom fails to be
His comrades' benefactor;
The secret of it is, that he
Is such a splendid actor!*

*His cool and calculating mind,
And powers of imitation,
Have oft effectively combined
To save the situation.
While all his enterprise and thought,
And neatly-planned disguises,
On friends and foes alike have wrought
A series of surprises.*

*The primest joke he ever played,
Was an amusing antic
On Ratty, the sedate and staid,
Who fumed and grew quite frantic.
Arrayed in feminine attire—
The most divine of misses—
The Scots boy seized the irate sire
And smothered him with kisses!*

*The wretched master's soul did yearn
For solace in his study;
His furious countenance in turn
Went pallid, pink, and ruddy.
If safe ensconced behind his door,
He would have given dollars;
But, oh, to be embraced before
A group of grinning scholars!*

*Long life to you, my bonnie Scot!
And may each boy or master
Who acts unfairly catch it hot,
And meet with dire disaster!
We all revere your noble name
And actions good and clever—
Your doughty deeds a place shall claim
Within our hearts for ever.*

Next Week: HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

dispute with Kildare ovah you, you young sweep! I disappwove entirely of your goings on!"

"You are burning those herrings, Wally!" roared Frayne. "What do you want to jaw to your silly major for when you're cooking herrings?"

"It's Gussy's fault," said Wally. "Now there's a herring spoiled. Do shut up, Gussy! You're like a sheep's head, you know—nearly all jaw!"

"Turn that Fourth Form boulder out!" said Jameson.

"Yes, chuck him out!" said Wally.

"It's bother enough to have a major, without having him bothering every minute!"

"Why, you young wascal, I'll—"

"Come on, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, slipping his arm through that of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I wefuse to come on, Tom Mewwy! I'm goin' to thwash that young wascal."

"This way!" said Monty Lowther, taking D'Arcy's other arm. "Help him behind, Manners!"

"Certainly!" said Manners.

"Bai Jove! You wuff duffahs! Wefuse me at once! Do you heah? I wefuse to wetiah a step frowm the woom until—Ow-w-ow! Leave off, Mannahs, you wottah!"

The Terrible Three walked away, taking Arthur Augustus with them. His voice could be heard in indignant expostulation all the way down the passage as the Third Form fags went on busily with their preparations for the feed in celebration of Mr. Selby's cold in the head.

All the Third were there—New House and School House. They had assembled for prep as usual, when they received the news that Mr. Selby was confined to his room. Then the feed had been inaugurated instead of preparation.

It appeared to the heroes of the Third to be a change ever so much for the better.

The strong scent of the herrings—especially of the burning of them—filled the Form-room from end to end, but there was no danger from Mr. Selby that evening. The Third were monarchs of all they surveyed.

"This is a bit of all right," announced Wally, when the herrings were done. "Have you got all the crocks you can find?"

"Heaps of 'em," said Jameson. "Not enough to go round, of course. Still, what's the matter with exercise-books if there ain't enough plates?"

"Nothing," said Wally. "Trot out your exercise-books. You'll have to take it in turns with those cups. How's the coffee going on, young Frayne?"

"Orlright," said Joe Frayne, who had never quite lost the original pronunciation of Angel Alley, where his early years had been spent. "It'll be prime, Wally. I can mike corfee."

"Don't spread that toast on the floor, Jameson, you New House duffer!"

"Who's spreading it on the floor, you School House dummy?" demanded Jameson, as he picked up a couple of fallen rounds.

"Well, it looks as if you are," said Wally. "I don't want any of your New House gas!"

"And I don't want any of your School House swank!"

"If you want a herring in your chivvy—"

"If you want a dot in the eye—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" said Joe Frayne. "This 'ere is a feed, not a dorg-fight."

"Well, then, let that New House boulder keep his head shut!"

"Let that School House burler stop talking out of his neck!"

"You're an ungrateful cad, Jameson!" said Wally wrathfully. "It's all through me that Selby's laid up with a cold. You might be decently thankful!"

"Bow-wow!" said Jameson.

"If you say 'bow-wow' to me, I'll bang a herring at you!" roared Wally. "Bow-wow!" said Jameson independently.

Whiz!

Wally thoughtfully selected the most overdone herring. It was not much good for eating purposes, but it made an excellent retort to Jameson. The New House fag gave a yell of wrath as he caught it with his neck.

He promptly rushed on Wally, and they hugged one another in an affectionate embrace, each trying to get the other's head into chancery. It was quite frequently that Third Form celebrations ended in this disastrous manner.

"Yow! You New House waster!"

"Booh! You School House burler!"

Crash!

The combatants bumped on the desk where the dish, piled with herrings, reposed. The impact of the dish on the floor divided it into a score of pieces, and the herrings were scattered far and wide.

"Look what you've done!" yelled Joe Frayne.

"Groogh, take that!"

"Yow! You take that!"

"Bump 'em over, the pair of 'em!" howled Hobbs. "Shove the herrings down their necks!"

"Ear, 'ear!"

"Oh crumbs! Stoppit!" shrieked Wally.

Jameson was down now, and Wally was sitting astride of his chest, manfully bumping his head on the floor, when Frayne, Hobbs and Hooley collared him, and jammed spoiled herrings down his neck, as a punishment for "mucking up" the feed.

Wally clutched out wildly at his assailants, and brought down Hobbs and Hooley across the unfortunate

Jameson, who howled with anguish. In the midst of the scrimmage the Form-room door opened, and a stately figure in cap and gown looked into the room.

The excited fags did not even notice him. They were crowded round the combatants, yelling and cheering.

"Boys!"

Joe Frayne gave a sort of yelp.

"Oh my 'at! The 'Ead!"

"The Head! Great pip!"

The struggling figures separated instantly. They made a wild effort to look unconcerned, as if a rag in the Form-room was the last thing they had been thinking of.

Wally, however, could not resist trying to extract half a herring from the inside of his collar. It felt very uncomfortable there.

Dr. Holmes regarded the dismayed fags with a stern glance.

"What does this mean?" he inquired.

The Third Form were silent. They really thought the Head ought to know what it meant, but they did not feel equal to explaining.

"And what is this dreadful smell of burnt fish?" said the Head, puzzled.

"F-i-i-ish!" said Jameson. "Any—any of you fellows be-e-en bringing fish in here?"

None of the fellows replied. The herrings were scattered almost at the Head's feet; in fact, he was treading on one of them. He perceived it, and bent down, and turned his glasses curiously upon the slimy object.

"Bless my soul! It is a fish—undoubtedly a fish of some sort," said the Head, in surprise. "What is that, D'Arcy minor?"

"It—it's a Yarmouth warrior, sir," stammered Wally.

"A what?"

"I—I mean a kipper, sir."

"A kipper!" said the Head. "There is no fish of that name, D'Arcy minor. It appears to me to be a variety of herring."

"Yes, sir," groaned Wally.

He was astounded at the ignorance of his headmaster. Here was a scholarly gentleman who knew Latin and Greek

and all sorts of weird things, and didn't know what a kipper was.

"Collect up that disgusting rubbish, and remove it from the Form-room at once," said the Head.

"Ye-es, sir."

"And then take your places. Mr. Selby will not be able to take you to-night in preparation—"

"No, sir—good—I—I mean— We're sorry, sir."

"So I shall take the Third Form this evening instead of Mr. Selby."

"Oh, my only Aunt Janel!"

"What did you say, D'Arcy minor?"

"I—I—I said—ahem, sir."

"You may remove that rubbish, and go and put yourself into a somewhat cleaner condition, D'Arcy minor. You appear to be reeking—yes, reeking with grease, and you have a smell of fish about you that is unpleasant—decidedly unpleasant. I am shocked at the conduct of this Form. The rest of you, kindly take your places at once."

The Third Form kindly took their places, in the lowest spirits. There was to be prep after all. And as Wally mournfully carried away the relics of the feed that had not come off, the Third settled themselves down to work. They could not grin, but they had to bear it.

CHAPTER 5.

Nice For Mossoo!

THE next day the Third Form at St. Jim's were in a state of subdued excitement.

Mr. Selby was worse. He had been taken to the school sanatorium, where Miss Pinch was looking after him. He was the only patient there. But Miss Pinch had her hands full with the irritable, irascible master of the Third.

Mr. Selby was never very fit—he was dyspeptic, and never took enough exercise—and the result was that the cold quite knocked him over. He was on the sick list now, and it has been seen how much the Form sympathised with him.

The Third wondered what was going to happen. Some very sanguine youths hoped that there would be no more lessons till Selby was on his pins again. But that was not at all probable. One of the other masters, or the Head, would doubtless take them at evening preparation. But who was going to take the regular lessons in the Form-room?

"Some rotten prefect very likely," said Wally, with a grunt. "The Head won't bother about getting a man in Selby's place, just for a few days. Well, if they put a prefect in charge of us, we'll give him a high old time!"

"We will, rather!" said Jameson. "Especially if it's one of your rotten School House prefects!"

Wally glared at his chum.

"If it's a School House prefect, you'll jolly well behave yourself, young Jameson. There's nothing the matter with old Kildare, or Rushden, or Darrell. I was thinking it might be some New House worm, like Monteith or Sefton."

"We'll jolly well pull his leg, whoever it is!" said Curly Gibson confidently. "A prefect can't handle us. It's up to us to show him that he can't. Never mind which House he belongs to, we'll scrag him!"

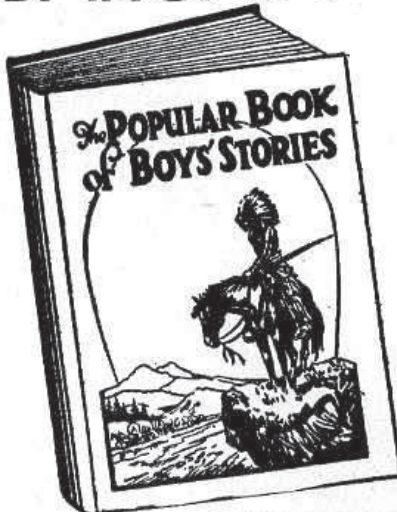
And this worthy sentiment was generally applauded by the heroes of the Third.

But, as a matter of fact, none of the prefects showed any eagerness for the task.

Perhaps they remembered the time

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when Knox had taken the Fourth, during an absence of Mr. Lathom. Knox had had the time of his life. And the Third were more trouble than the Fourth. Neither School House nor New House prefects jumped at the chance of distinguishing themselves.

Perhaps their obvious reluctance prevented the Head from assigning the duty to one of them.

The Third, in fact, were not in great demand.

As no announcement had been made, the fags were beginning to hope that there would be no lessons that morning. But when the bell went, they trooped into the Form-room, as usual, prepared to spend the morning in playing leap-frog if a master did not turn up.

But the master did turn up.

Monsieur Morny, the French master, came in. He was not looking happy. He had had experience enough of the Third in the French class, not to anticipate a happy time in taking charge of them entirely.

"Bon jour, mes infants!" said Monsieur Morny.

"Bong joor, Mossoo," said D'Arcy minor. "It isn't French this morning, sir."

Monsieur Morny smiled benignantly. "Zat is quite correct, as it is not French zis morning," he agreed. "But ze Head have request me to take charge of ze Form, owing zat Mr. Selby have ze lamentable illness."

Whereat the Third glared.

Their vague hopes of "no lessons" vanished at once. And they were indignant. It wasn't French that morning; and all schoolboys are conservative. A change in the established order of things did not recommend itself to them.

Mossoo was, as Wally admitted, a good little ass. But there ought to have been no French lessons that morning, and so the Third were rebellious. And Mossoo was such a kind and gentle little man that it was a safe pastime to pull his leg.

He was very different from Mr. Selby, who had the lamentable illness.

"I hope zat ve go on viz ourselves most pleasant viz vun anoizzer," said Monsieur Morny. "I am sure zat you all try to be verry good while zat your Form-master shall have ze illness, n'est-ce-pas?"

"We're always good, sir," said Wally demurely. "Sometimes a little misunderstood, sir."

Monsieur Morny coughed.

"Oui, oui, zat is so. Ve vill now commence viz us."

First lesson passed off in an orderly manner; the Third were pulling themselves together, as it were. Monsieur Morny affected not to notice the incessant whispering from form to form.

Mossoo's patience was wasted on the hardy young rascals. The fags were not given to deep thinking. All they noted was the sign of weakness in the master, which was an encouragement to disorder. And they were held down so firmly under the thumb of Mr. Selby that they really felt themselves entitled to a little relaxation when the pressure was relaxed.

Second lesson was English history—a subject in which Mossoo might have been a little better posted than he was. He had Mr. Selby's books to guide him; but, as a matter of fact, he was very hazy about the past happenings in Angletterre. The Third spotted that at once. They prepared to enjoy themselves. This was ever so much better than Selby.



"Don't stop me, warder—I'm walking in my sleep!"
Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Cattle, 2, Acworth Street, Falegrave, Scarborough.

"Vat is zat next lesson?" was Mossoo's first inquiry.

"English history, sir," said Wally.

"Verry good. I find zat book in vun instance. Vat is ze period zat you shall take?"

"Anyone you like, sir," said Wally liberally.

"I mean, where did you leave off viz Monsieur Selby?"

"We were doing the reign of King Cole, sir," said D'Arcy minor.

"Zank you, my boy!"

The Third Form nearly exploded. Monsieur Morny began to search through a historical volume for that celebrated monarch, King Cole. He was so sublimely ignorant of Angletterre that he was unacquainted with the fact that such a monarch had never reigned in Merry England, even in the most remote times.

He consulted the index without result. He could find Charles among the kings, and Caroline and Charlotte among the queens, but Cole was not to be found.

"You're not used to our books, sir," said Wally. "We have just started the reign of King Cole, sir. Of course, you know all about King Cole?"

"Parfaitement!" stammered Mossoo, who knew that it would be an end of all authority if he confessed ignorance.

"One of our national ballads is written about him, sir," said Wally, with an owl-like gravity. "You may have heard it, sir. It goes:

"Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he, he, he!
He called for his pipe, and he called
for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers
three-e-e!"

"Zat is a verry pretty ballad, mon garcon," said poor Mossoo. "But you must not sing in ze Form-room. Vat time did zis King Cole reign, D'Arcy?"

"Just after King Herbert, sir."

"Verry good!" said Mossoo, giving up the volume in despair, and trusting

for guidance to the information he gleaned from the Third as he went along. "You answer, Jameson. Vas King Cole the son of King Herbert?"
"His grandson, sir," said Jameson.
"Verry good."

Now you, Gibson, you will tell me in which year King Cole he shall reign viz himself."

"One nought one central!" said Curly Gibson.

Monsieur Morny looked hard at Curly Gibson; but that youth's innocent face looked almost angelic in its simplicity.

"Vat vas ze name of ze wife of King Cole, Hobbs?"

"Sally, sir," said Hobbs.

"There is one of our national ballads about her, sir," said D'Arcy minor. "It's called 'Sally.' Shall I sing it, sir?"

"Non, non, non! How many leetle infants vas zero to King Cole and to Queen Sally, Frayne?"

"Twenty-four, sir," said Frayne.

"Vat?"

"Twenty-four, sir."

"I zink zat you must be mistaken, Frayne. Zat is a verry large family."

"They had large families in those days," said D'Arcy minor.

Some of the Third giggled, and Monsieur Morny looked a little suspicious. He went on hastily.

"What king came after zis King Cole?" he inquired. "You answer me, Hooley."

"King Charles the Tenth, sir," said Hooley.

"Vat was the principal happenings of ze reign of King Charles the Tenth, Hacker?"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Hacker.

"Vat shall you say, Hacker?"

Wally put up his hand.

"Please, shall I tell Hacker, sir?"

"Parfaitement. You may go on, D'Arcy minor."

"The reign of Charles the Tenth was celebrated for the great earthquake at Blackpool," said D'Arcy minor, in a sing-song voice, as if he were reciting a lesson. "There was also the battle between the Bermondsey Chicken and the Limehouse Slogger, and the civil war between Lancashire and New York, called the Wars of the Noses."

Monsieur Morny looked so hard at D'Arcy minor that the young rascal had the grace to lower his eyes. Mossoo took up his book again.

"I zink zat ve take anoizzer period," he said. "I vill ask you for ze dates of some of ze famous battles. You shall tell me of a battle in ze Middle Ages."

"Crecy, sir," said Wally at once, "when we beat the French."

"Ahem! Ve vill take a later period—ze eighteenth century."

"Malplaquet, sir," said Jameson, "when we beat the French."

"Hem! Tell me anoizzer battle zat vas later zan zat."

"Quebec, sir," yelled Hobbs, "where we beat the French."

"Ciel!" murmured Monsieur Morny. "I do not like zis, boys. I zink zat ve vill devote our attention to ze nineteenth century. You, Frayne—"

"Waterloo, sir," howled Frayne, "where we beat the French."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monsieur Morny closed his book with a snap.

"You shall not laugh like zat in class!" he exclaimed. "Moreover, zero

(Continued on the next page.)

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is nozzing at vvhich for to laugh. Speak, zen, of ze battles on ze sea. You, Hobbs."

"Trafalgar, sir, where we beat the French."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on Monsieur Morny's face was too much for the Third, and they gave a howl of laughter.

"Taisez-vous!" shouted Mossoo Morny. "Silence viz you, unruly boys! I no like zose manners. Every boy vill take vun hundred lines of ze Henriade!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"My only Aunt Jane!"

"I zink zat I keep order, and zat you not for to laugh for nozzing in zis class!" said Mossoo.

The Third exchanged furious glances. Matters had been going very nicely from their point of view, and they were enjoying themselves, and it was too bad for Mossoo to come down like this.

As Wally murmured wrathfully, it was as bad as having Selby back again. The Third Form were wrathful, and they proceeded to make that fact known. From words they proceeded to actions.

Monsieur Morny felt a sudden sting on his cheek during the next lesson. He spun round, clapping his hand to his cheek, and then something caught him on the ear.

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Mossoo, clapping his ear. "I zink zat zere is a vasp, isn't it? It is verry late in ze year for ze vasp to come vis himself. Ciel! Zere it is vunce more, and I am stung anouzzer time! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! It vas not a vasp at all! Some vicked boy in zis class, he have a vicked catapult! Zat boy stand out!"

Nobody moved. The owner of the catapult had slipped it into his pocket, and sat looking as innocent as he could.

"No takers!" murmured Wally.

"You shall all be vicked boys," said poor Mossoo. "I vish not to stick you—I mean, to cane you viz stick—but zis is not zat I shall stand. Ze next boy that goes to laugh I cane him viz stick!"

Monsieur Morny turned to the desk for Mr. Selby's cane. Then he fairly jumped off the floor as a little ball, made of blotting-paper and ink, caught him in the neck. Mossoo clutched and rummaged inside his collar, gasping. He raved in French for several whole minutes, and then pointed a furious finger at the door.

"Go out viz you! I take you no more! Avay viz you—avay! You are dismissed!"

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Wally.

The Third, only too happy to find that they were dismissed, scooted for the door without giving Monsieur Morny time to think twice. The Form-room was cleared almost in a twinkling.

Monsieur Morny dabbed at the ink on his neck, breathing fury. He rushed away to change his inky collar, and came down again with a spotless collar, but his temper still in the same staté.

As the Head came out of the Sixth Form Room Mossoo rushed up to him.

Dr. Holmes regarded the excited Frenchman in astonishment.

"Monsieur Holmes—"

"My dear Monsieur Morny, what ever is the matter?" asked the Head.

"I take zem no more."

"What!"

"You have request me zat I take zem, and I do my best, monsieur. But I take zem no more. Now zat I zink, I believe not zat zere vas a King Cole in Angleterre—pas de tout. Is it zat zere vas a King Cole?"

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"A—a—an entirely fictitious personage," stammered the Head. "Surely it—"

"Is it zat he shall have twenty-four children?"

"Bless my soul!"

"Zen zey pull ze feet, as you say in English—zey have pull me ze foot. I take zem no more, viz zeyr catapults and zeyr inky zings."

The Head's brow grew very stern.

"You mean that the Third have been disrespectful, Monsieur Morny? I will punish the whole Form most severely if—"

"Non, non!" exclaimed Mossoo, who was as kind-hearted as he was excitable. "I vish not zat! I beg of you not to do zat. But I vish zat you excuse zat I take zem no more."

To which the Head assented at once; it was only too evident that Mossoo had not had success with the Third. Wally & Co. were pretty certain that Mossoo would not take them in the afternoon, and they rejoiced in their success. And the great question in the Third Form at St. Jim's now was: "Who'll be the next?"

CHAPTER 6.

Herr Schneider Takes Charge!

TOM MERRY & CO. found the heroes of the Third in the quadrangle when they came out after morning lessons.

Wally & Co. were evidently in great spirits, from which the Shell fellows could guess that the temporary master of the Third had not had a good time.

"What have you been doing this morning?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mossoo," said Wally cheerfully; "that blessed little Froggy had the cheek to take us! As if he could handle the Third! Why, we pull his leg in the French class sometimes. And to think he can handle us for a whole morning! Poof! I fancy he won't bother us again this afternoon!"

"You young sweep!" said Talbot. "Mossoo is a jolly good sort, and you ought to go easy with him."

"Well, it was like his cheek to take the Third," said Wally.

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Hobbs. "I'm up against anybody who takes the Third! We're entitled to a holiday till old Selby comes round. That's how I look at it. We shall have to knuckle under then; but we're not standing anybody else. Down with 'em!"

"Why, you ferocious little tomtit!" said Tom Merry.

"Down with 'em!" repeated Hobbs truculently. "Let 'em put a prefect over us, that's all. We'll give him a high old time."

"Hear, hear!" said the fags unani- mously.

"I've been telling Miss Marie about it," said Wally. "She was in the quad when we came out. Made her laugh like anything. She said that, if she were our Form-master, she'd box our ears. Like to see a Form-master boxing my ears!"

"Let's give the inky little scoundrels a licking for Mossoo!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"That's rather a good idea!" said Talbot, laughing.

"Oh, come off!" said Wally disdainfully. "You go and look through back numbers of 'Funny Bits,' Lowther, for your comic column in the 'Weekly.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I never do!" roared Lowther wrathfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You do!" yelled Wally, as he beat

a strategic retreat. "I've seen you! They're all out of 'Funny Bits'—all the good ones, anyway! Yah!"

And Wally fled.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at in that kid's cheek!" said Lowther crossly, as his chums grinned. "I tell you I never—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My column in the 'Weekly' is better than 'Funny Bits'; and if there's a slight resemblance between some of the jokes—why—why—"

"These things will happen," agreed Tom Merry. "These blessed coincidences are always occurring. Great minds run in grooves!"

"Oh rats!" said Lowther morosely. "That inky young villain wants a licking. I don't think Selby gives him enough. I jolly well hope they'll get old Schneider this afternoon instead of Mossoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That would be a sell for the Third!"

Such a dreadful possibility had not even occurred to Wally & Co. It did not occur to them till the afternoon when they went in for lessons, wondering who was going to "take" them.

If it was a prefect, they were perfectly ready to prove to any prefect at St. Jim's that he wasn't equal to handling the Third Form. Their faces fell at the sight of Herr Schneider sitting at the master's desk.

Herr Schneider looked at them grimly. The fags filed into their places with dispirited looks. Herr Schneider was evidently there to take them for the afternoon, and Herr Schneider was very different from Monsieur Morny.

They knew that well enough from their experiences with him in the German class. Herr Schneider had to drive the elements of German into the heads of the Third, and his idea seemed to be that knowledge had to be driven in like a nail—with blows repeated ad lib till it was driven home.

"Goot-afternoon to you, my poys!" said Herr Schneider.

"It—it isn't German this afternoon, sir," said Wally feebly.

"Tat is vere you are mistaken, D'Arcy minor. I have hear tat you have trouble mit Monsieur Morny dis morning. I have hear about King Cole tat neffer vas. Ja, ja! I tink tat dere vill be vun change in dis room dis afternoon. I tink tat if dere is trouble I make somebody ferry sorry for tat. Dis afternoon ve does Cherman, and notting but Cherman!"

The Third Form simply gasped. Herr Schneider was too cautious to trust himself among the quicksands of the usual lessons, as poor little Mossoo had done. The whole afternoon was to be devoted to German.

And, as German was the best-hated lesson the Third ever underwent, and Herr Schneider the best-hated master after Mr. Selby, their feelings may be imagined.

Herr Schneider began with a heavy hand. He was not averse to showing that he could handle the unruly fags better than Monsieur Morny. He kept a pointer in his hand, and he used it on the slightest provocation, or sometimes without any provocation at all.

Before an hour had elapsed, there was not a set of knuckles in the Third Form that was not smarting.

But the class was very orderly. The slightest sign of disorder brought the pointer into play, and it hurt.

But, though they were orderly, the Third were boiling with rage. This was worse than Selby. Their dreams of licence and liberty during the absence of their Form-master were over.

If Herr Schneider kept them at German until Mr. Selby was well, there would soon not be a fag in the Third who would not be yearning for Mr. Selby's recovery.

After an hour their heads were aching with German verbs, and their knuckles with the German master's pointer.

And the lesson dragged on. Another hour of it, and Wally felt that German verbs and substantives, conjugations and declensions were buzzing in his head like bees in a hive.

He murmured to Jameson that if the herr didn't cheese it soon, he would let fly at him with the inkpot. And the moment he had delivered himself of that whisper, Herr Schneider's voice rapped out:

"D'Arcy minor, is it not tat I have tell you tat you speak not in class?"

"Ow! Yes, sir," mumbled Wally.

"But you speak to Shameson, isn't it?"

"No, sir."

"Vat! I see you speak! You tell me vun big lie, D'Arcy minor!"

"I've told you the truth, sir," said Wally stubbornly. "I don't know anybody named Shameson."

"Vat? Tat poy next to you is Shameson!"

Wally shook his head.

"His name's Jameson, sir. I spoke to him, but I didn't speak to any Shameson."

"Dry up, you fathead!" murmured Jameson. "You'll get scalped!"

"I don't care!" growled Wally.

"What is the beast doing in our Form-room, anyway? 'Tain't German today."

"Vat you say, D'Arcy minor?"

"N-nothing, sir."

"I order you to tell me at vunce vat it is tat you have said to Shameson."

"I—I'd rather not, sir!" stammered Wally.

"I order you, dummkopf!"

"Oh, very well, sir! I said: 'What is the beast doing in our Form-room?'" said Wally resignedly.

Herr Schneider turned almost green. The fags chuckled; they could not help it. The chuckle died away suddenly as Herr Schneider's furious glance swept over the class.

The fat herr strode towards Wally, clutching the pointer. He looked so dangerous that Wally jumped up and backed away. He was quite alarmed.

"Gum here!" roared Herr Schneider.

Wally did not "gum." He backed away as far as he could, and the German master, who had quite lost his temper, leaned over the desk and swiped at him with the pointer.

Wally dodged, and unfortunately caught the pointer with his head. He gave a terrific howl, and fell on the floor.

There was a gasp from the Third. The pointer had sounded on Wally's head with a loud crack. It had not hit him fair and square, or he would have been very much hurt indeed. It had slid off the side of his head, and Wally's head was remarkably hard. But he lay on the floor without sound or motion.

Herr Schneider staggered back a pace, breathing stertorously. All his rage had gone now. What had he done?

Jameson gazed down at his chum, extended on the floor, in horror. The Third Form were silent and awe-stricken. Wally lay on the floor like a log.

"Wally!" muttered Jameson, bending down over the scamp of the Third. "Wally, old man!" Jameson's voice was husky.

To his astonishment, as he bent over Wally, one of Wally's eyes opened, and then half-closed in a peculiar way. Jameson jumped.

The hapless youth, who was apparently extended senseless on the floor, was winking at him. It was an instantaneous wink, and when Wally's eyes were closed again, and he lay seemingly insensible, Jameson "caught on" at once. He leaped up excitedly.

"You've killed him!" he shouted.

CHAPTER 7.

Completely Dished!

HERR SCHNEIDER trembled.

The fat German master was as white as chalk, shaking like a jelly.

Jameson's horrified words rang through the Form-room, and there was a murmur from the fags. Only Jameson had seen that hurried wink.

"You've killed him!" wailed Jameson. "Boo-hoo! Wally's killed! Boo-hoo-hoo!"



Wally threw himself down on his hands and knees, and Mr. Selby, unable to stop, plunged headlong over him. Splash! There was a choking yell from the Third Form master as he disappeared head-first into the Head's ornamental pond!

"Nonsense!" panted Herr Schneider. "Hold to tongue mit you, Shameson! To poy have fallen down mit himself. Let me tat I gum dere."

"Boo-hoo!"
The fags crowded away from the form, and Herr Schneider bent over Wally, and lifted him up and carried him out before the desks.

Wally lay as stiff as a poker in the fat arms of the German master. Herr Schneider laid him on the floor and blinked at him through his spectacles.

There was a slight trickle of red under Wally's thick hair, where the pointer had barked the skin, and a bruise was forming. At the sight of that crimson trickle, Otto Schneider almost fainted.

"Ach! Mein Gott!" he gasped. "Mein Gott! Dis is dreadful! I tink tat tat poy he knock his head on te desk ven tat he fall, isn't it?"

"You've fractured his skull with the pointer!" wailed Jameson. "Poor old Wally! He's killed! Boo-hoo!"

"Mein poy, vake up!" muttered Herr Schneider, bending over the motionless fag. "I did not mean to strike you on te kopf—I mean te head. Tat vas an accident. I say notting about your sheek. I not punish you. Vake up, like a goot poy!"

Dead silence from Wally. But now there burst out a chorus of lamentation from Curly Gibson and Joe Frayne and Hobbs, who had probably received some sign from Jameson.

The four young rascals "Boo-hoo'd" in chorus, till Herr Schneider trembled with the apprehension that some master might be attracted into the Form-room and behold D'Arcy minor lying there like one dead.

"Silence mit you!" gasped Herr Schneider. "Hear me? I forbid you tat you make tat dreadful noise."

"Boo-hoo!"
"He's killed!"
"Let's go te the Head," said Hobbs. "The Head ought to know. There'll have te be an inquest."

Herr Schneider shuddered. Bitterly he repented him of having struck that hasty, savage blow.

"I forbid you te leave te Form-room!" he exclaimed. "Stop vere you vas, all mit you!"

"Boo-hoo!"
"He's murdered him!" sobbed Jameson. "Boo-hoo!"
"Silence, Shameson!"

"I'm going te the 'Ead!" exclaimed Joe Frayne. "The perlice ought te be sent for. Let's call in te perlice!"

"Vill you hold te tongue?" gasped Herr Schneider. "Dere is notting for te police here. Tat poy he is simply stunned."

"He's dead—murdered!" groaned Jameson. "Peer old Wally! Boo-hoo!"
"Call the Head!"
"Shout for help!"

"Help—help!" yelled Hooley.

Herr Schneider was almost at his wits' end. If the Head should come in, and see Wally stretched there, the inquiry into what had happened would most assuredly cost the German master his post at St. Jim's. And posts like that are not easy te obtain afresh.

Herr Schneider's concern was for himself. He shouted te the fags te be silent. But he was not obeyed. And even Herr Schneider was not inclined te use the pointer again.

He dropped on his fat knees beside Wally, and felt the fag's heart with a trembling hand.

"Silence mit, you! He is only stunned," said Herr Schneider. "I tink

tat he knocked his head ven he fall down."

"It was the pointer!" howled Jameson. "Boo-hoo!"

"Ach! Mein gootness! Dere, he moves!"

A deep groan came from Wally. Herr Schneider was more delighted te hear it than if it had been the sweetest strains of music from one of his beloved German bands. He simply panted with relief. The junior was coming round.

Groan!
"He lives!" exclaimed Jameson dramatically, in excellent imitation of an exclamation he had heard at Wayland Theatre Royal.

Groan!
"Mein dear poy, vake up!" murmured Herr Schneider. "It is not tat you are mooch hurt; it vas only a tap on te head. I am sorry tat I did tap you like tat."

Wally's eyes opened, and he gave a deep and hair-raising groan that thrilled the fags of the Third, and thrilled Herr Schneider still more deeply. If anybody should pass the door and hear that dreadful groan—

"I—I am dying!" said Wally faintly. "I forgive you, Herr Schneider."

"Mein poy, you are not dying—"
"I forgive you!" said Wally, who



"Weeks ago I warned Bill that he ought to reduce for his health!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Stonier, 38, Smart Street, Longsight, Manchester.

seemed determined te forgive Herr Schneider whether the German master liked it or not. "I forgive you. I know you can't help being a beast!"

"Mein gootness! I—"
"I forgive you! I hope the hangman won't get hold of you!" said Wally nobly. "Good-bye, Joe! I'm going!"

"Boo-hoo!" wailed Frayne. "P-poor old Wally! Boo-hoo!"

Wally's eyes closed again. Herr Schneider, almost in despair, shook him, and Wally's eyes came open again quite suddenly. It was not exactly the orthodox way te restore a dying fag, but it seemed te be effective in Wally's case.

"Leggo!" exclaimed Wally involuntarily. "Oh! Help! Fetch the police! Help!"

"Silence, D'Arcy minor! Hold te tongue mit you! You are not mooch hurt!"

"Let him go!" exclaimed Jameson indignantly. "Let him die in peace!"
"Boo-hoo!"

"I tells you tat he is not tying!" shrieked Herr Schneider. "Get me some vater mit you, and I vill pring him round faster tan never vas!"

Herr Schneider looked round desperately for some water te restore Wally. There vas no water te be seen, and in his desperation he seized a bottle of ink te use for the purpose. But the dying youth had one eye on him, and he sat up as Herr Schneider rushed back with the ink.

"I—I feel better now," said Wally faintly. "Some of you fellows help me up!"

They helped him up, and Wally clung heavily te Jameson and Joe Frayne. His legs did not seem te be able te support him.

"Help me te the Head!" murmured Wally. "The Head must know about this. We're not safe with Herr Schneider."

The German master suppressed a strong German word. He was in the hands of the scamp of the Third now, and he knew it.

Wally had only te walk into Dr. Holmes' study, and show that cut on his head, backed up by the evidence of the fags about what had happened. Herr Schneider simply squirmed at the thought of his interview with the Head afterwards.

"D'Arcy minor, stop where you are, poy!"

"I don't feel safe here, sir!"

"I order you! I am sorry tat I strike you on te head; tat vas an accident. Mein gootness! I dismiss te class. You go and bathe your head at vunce, D'Arcy minor, and your friends may go mit you. I vill nefer, nefer, take dis Form again! Nefer! Ach! I rarder have Mr. Selby's cold dan take dis Form. Mein gootness!"

Wally closed one eye—the eye that vas farthest from Herr Schneider.

"Very well, sir; I don't want te say anything more about it," he said.

"You may go, poy," said the German master.

The fags marched out of the Form-room. Herr Schneider was anxious for Wally te get out of sight before the other Forms came out.

Wally proceeded upstairs, manfully supported on either side by Jameson and Frayne. They proceeded te the Third Form dormitory, followed by the rest of the fags, all of whom by this time had tumbled te the fact that Herr Schneider's leg had been pulled.

Herr Schneider left the Form-room after them, breathing hard. He sought the Head in his study, and respectfully but firmly declined te take charge of the Third Form any longer. He had no "gomplaint" te make, but he declined.

At the dormitory Wally staggered in weakly, but as soon as the door was closed he had a sudden and remarkable recovery. He jerked himself away from Jameson and Frayne, who were grinning now, and proceeded te do a horn-pipe among the beds.

"Poiled, diddled, dished, and done!" trilled Wally. "Ha, ha, ha! Ow! My head aches! But didn't I dish him a treat, what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Blessed if I didn't think you were brained, until you winked at me!" gasped Jameson.

"Oh, what a jape—what a thumping jape! Schneider was in a blue funk! He was thinking about policemen and handcuffs and hangmen—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We've clipped the wings of the Schneider bird!" chortled Wally. "He's not going te take the Third any more! Hurrah for us! I wonder who'll be the next?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
There vas no doubt whatever that the scamps of the Third had clipped

the wings of the "Schneider-bird." And it was a very interesting question—who would be next? The heroes of the Third were very far from guessing.

CHAPTER 8.
What Larks!

TALBOT of the Shell came into Tom Merry's study, where the Terrible Three were busy with their preparation.

There was a peculiar expression upon Talbot's face, which attracted the attention of his chums at once.

"What's the news?" asked Tom Merry. "The Third on the warpath again? I hear that Schneider is fed-up with them, and has chucked it."

"No wonder," said Talbot, laughing. "I've heard the story. I've just seen Miss Marie. Wally told her the story, the cheeky little sweep. He said he thought it would amuse her. I think it did, too. But that isn't the news. The Third have got a new master, and I don't think you'll guess who it is."

"One of the prefects?" asked Tom. "No. They haven't been keen to come forward."

"Shows their sense," remarked Monty Lowther. "Whoever takes the Third will have his hands full—especially now they've been running wild. I'm beginning to think that Selby was a bit justified in giving them the mailed fist, after all. They need it."

"But who's the master?" asked Manners. "Not the Head? He wouldn't have time to take the Third."

"Not the Head," said Talbot, laughing. "Quite a young person."

"Blessed if I can guess who it is, if it isn't one of the prefects, then," said Tom Merry, puzzled. "Surely not one of the Fifth? Not Cutts?"

"Younger than Cutts?" "What—not a junior?" exclaimed the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"Not a junior," laughed Talbot. "Who, then? This is getting interesting."

"Miss Marie." "Eh?"

"What!" "Which!"

"It's a fact," said Talbot. "Miss Marie takes the Third!"

gasp'd Tom Merry. "Gammon!" "Oh, what larks!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"I was surprised," grinned Talbot. "You see, Marie knew that the Head was bothered about it, as Selby shows no sign of mending just yet, and she's doing nothing just at present. There are no invalids excepting Selby, and Miss Pinch is looking after him. So she thought she would make herself useful, and get the Head out of the difficulty. She has had experience with a class of kids long ago in Angel Alley. She's a good teacher, though, of course, the Angel Alley kids were a bit different from the Third Form at St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose so. Well, this takes the cake. And the Head agreed—"

"He jumped at it," said Talbot. "He was going to ask Kildare—to put it to him on the grounds of duty, and so forth, it seems—and Kildare couldn't have refused. But Marie's offer has got him out of the fix. He was surprised at first; but he put Marie through a viva voce exam, and found that she knew quite enough to deal with the Third—except Latin, of course. Lathom is going to have the pleasure of driving the classics into their heads,

LAUGH THESE OFF!



—with Monty Lowther.

Hallo, Everybody!

"There is an opening," states a manufacturer, "for a new winter drink." Yes, just above the chin!

"Is there any reason why a full-back should not score a goal?" demands Gore. Eleven reasons, old chap—the opposing side.

Mr. Ratcliff states that he is definitely in favour of getting rid of coinage. May I suggest half an hour on the pier with a slot machine, sir?

"Farr's Future Secure," runs a headline. A Farr-sighted heavy-weight.

A variety artiste was knocked down by a furniture van. Not the only actor to be hit by the "movies."

During the summer, Tom Merry hit a century against Rookwood in 35 minutes. We understand the scorer is just getting over the attack of writer's cramp.

Young Hobbs of the Third is a bit simple sometimes. He sat without touching his dinner for some time the other day. "What are you waiting for, Hobbs?" asked Mr. Selby at last. "I'm waiting for the mustard to cool, sir," replied Hobbs.

"I am thinking of taking singing lessons abroad," says Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. How considerate of you, Gussy!

As the steward said during his first storm at sea: "My hat! And they told me this was a nice steady job!"

Nother: Mr. Selby came upon Pigott at the pantry. "How is it I am always catching you, Pigott?" demanded Mr. Selby. "Well, sir," replied Pigott, "I think it must be those soft slippers of yours!"

Man jumped into a railway carriage, and lodged a huge case precariously on the rack overhead. His fellow passenger gazed up at it somewhat apprehensively. "Do you think that will be safe?" he asked. "Oh, perfectly," came the reply. "I've locked it!"

Oh, yes, the whitest man I know is a baker's assistant.

After reading a psychic treatise, Jameson of the Third said he felt he was possessed of strange powers. One of them is adding up two and two and making the answer five!

Chin, chin, till next week.

and take them in prep in the evening. Marie is going to be Form-master for the rest."

"Oh, my hat!" "And—and the Head likes the idea?" ejaculated Manners.

"So he told Miss Marie." Tom Merry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"They've scragged Mossoo, and they've scragged Schneider," he said. "How is a girl going to keep them in order?"

"I think the Head has an idea that chivalry will come into it, you know—sort of feel on their honour not to give trouble."

"Precious little chivalry in the Third Form," said Lowther, with a shake of the Head. "More cheek than chivalry, I think. Why, it will be a regular beano for them! Miss Marie will be too good-natured to report the young beggars, and they'll do exactly as they like."

Talbot nodded. "Well, as a matter of fact, I thought something of the sort," he admitted.

"Miss Marie seems to think that she can manage them. It may work. I don't know. When she had a class in Angel Alley, in connection with the Little Sisters' Mission, she managed the grubby little rascals first rate. One of her present pupils was among them—that was before your uncle sent Frayne to St. Jim's, Tom."

"And how did she get on with Frayne?" asked Tom Merry.

"Topping!" she says. "And she expects Joe to back her up in the Third Form Room. He's a loyal little beggar, so I dare say he will. Wally has chummed up with Marie, so I dare say he will be as civilised as a Third Form kid can be. But the rest—"

"It will be a regular beano." "A regular pandemonium," grinned Manners. "I can see Miss Marie fleeing in tears to the Head, to say she can't keep it up."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I shouldn't like a front seat in the Third Form to-morrow!" chuckled Lowther. "They ought to give us a holiday to look on."

"Bet you Miss Marie doesn't keep it up after to-morrow morning," said Tom Merry. "There'll be a new master wanted in the afternoon."

"I was thinking," said Talbot. "Suppose we got some of those young rascals, and talked to them like Dutch uncles. We could explain that it was up to them to be chivalrous, and make things easy for a lady teacher. I dare say they wouldn't think of it for themselves."

"Good idea," said Tom Merry. "When we've done our prep we'll go and see Wally."

The Terrible Three hurried through their work. They were anxious to see what effect the news would have on the Third Form.

It was very interesting to see how Wally & Co. took it.

The worst of it was that, after dealing so successfully with Monsieur Morny and Herr Schneider, the heroes of the Third felt that it was up to them to keep on the way they had started.

They had escaped all punishments for their unruly proceedings, so far. That had encouraged them, of course.

Mossoo had been too tender-hearted to punish them; and Herr Schneider had been too anxious to keep that incident of Wally's injury strictly dark.

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So the Third had come off scot-free—and their success and impunity excited them to fresh endeavours. Indeed, it was quite probable that when Mr. Selby recovered and returned to his duties he would find his Form very considerably out of hand.

Prep finished, the Terrible Three accompanied Talbot to the Third Form Room. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had taken the Third in preparation—and had found them very noisy and troublesome.

Little Mr. Lathom was very glad to get out of the Form-room when his irksome duties were finished. He had caned one or two of the fags, but the young rascals were hardened to that; Mr. Lathom's caning was simply nothing in comparison with what Mr. Selby had accustomed them to.

After the Fourth Form master was gone they chuckled and grinned gleefully, and Wally smacked his palms together to show how little his tough skin had been hurt.

There was plenty of noise in the Third Form Room when the Shell fellows arrived there. As they opened the door they heard the Third roaring a chorus, apparently of their own composition:

"Old Selby's got a cold!
Old Selby's got a cold!
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!
Old Selby's got a cold!"

"Topping!" said Tom Merry. "I didn't know there were poets in the Third. Is there any more at home like that?"

"There's a second verse," said Wally, with a sniff. "Go it, ye cripples!"

"Mossoo has slung his hook!
Mossoo has slung his hook!
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!
Mossoo has slung his hook!"

"You'd better let the Head hear that," said Monty Lowther. "I'm sure he will enjoy it. Or Selby! Go and sing it under the sanatorium windows and give him a treat!"

"We're not going to stand much more from Selby," said Wally disdainfully. "I can tell you, we've made up our minds about that. When Selby comes back we're going to make him understand quite plainly that we don't want any of his old buck."

"And we're going to make everybody sit up who takes charge of us!" announced Hobbs proudly. "I expect it will be a prefect next. Well, I'm sorry for that prefect, that's all!"

"That's what we've come to tell you," said Talbot, laughing. "I thought you'd like to know the news at once."

"You know who it's going to be?" asked Wally eagerly. "Get it off your chest, then. Is it Kildare, Monteith, Darrell?"

"It's Miss Marie!"

"What!"

The Third Form simply gasped.

"Gammon!" shouted Wally.

"Honest Injun!" said Talbot.

Wally stared at him incredulously. But when Talbot said "Honest Injun" it was "Honest Injun." Wally had to believe it. And when it fully dawned upon his mind he went off into a yell.

"Miss Marie! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my only Aunt Jane! What larks!"

"Oh, what giddy larks!" yelled Curly Gibson.

The Shell fellows looked at one another dubiously. The reception the

fags had given the news seemed to indicate what kind of reception they were likely to give their new Form-mistress.

"Oh, this is too good to be true!" gasped Jameson. "Why, we'll do just what we like. We won't do any lessons, I know that!"

"Not a giddy lesson!" said Wally. "We'll have leapfrog in the morning; and I'll bring in some herrings to cook."

"We can make some toffee on the Form-room fire," said Hobbs. "Ever so much better than lessons."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you young bounders," said Talbot seriously, "as you're going to have a lady in charge of you, it's up to you to play up, you know!"

"Well, we're going to play up!" said Wally, with a chuckle. "Oh, what larks!"

"Chivalry, you know," urged Tom Merry. "It's your plain duty to make everything go as — as smoothly as possible, and not worry Miss Marie more than you can help."

"Let me catch anybody worrying her!" said Wally truculently. "Miss Marie is a jolly good sort. Any fellow worrying her will get a thick ear!"

"Then you're going to behave yourselves?"

"Don't we always behave ourselves?" demanded Wally.

"Ahem! Yes. But a little better than usual."

"Certainly! Every chap will be on his best behaviour; I'll see to that! Nice and polite, of course," said Wally.

"And you'll do your work—same as for Selby?"

"No jolly fear!"

"But Miss Marie is coming here to teach you," urged Talbot.

"I'll teach Miss Marie how to make toffee; that will be more interesting," said Wally. "What does she care about silly old kings and queens that have been dead for thousands of years? What does she care for vulgar fractions? Rot! We shall be quite a happy family here to-morrow. Of course, we shan't do any work!"

"Ear, 'ear!" said Frayne.

"Miss Marie depends on you, Frayne, as an old friend," said Talbot.

"Well, I'm going to be good, ain't I?" said Frayne. "I'm going to do exactly wot Wally does!"

"Then you'll be awfully good!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "Good beyond the dreams of Little Eric."

"Oh, don't you be funny here!" said Wally. "Keep that for the comic column in the 'Weekly.' You can put your own little jokes in there, when you forget to buy 'Funny Bits.'"

"You cheeky little beast—"

"Here, shove those Shellfish outside!" said Wally. "What are they doing in a respectable Form-room, anyway?"

"Hear, hear! Chuck 'em out!"

The fags advanced upon the Shell

fellows in truculent array, and Tom Merry & Co. hastily retired from the Form-room. They had not come there for a dust-up with a horde of inky little rascals.

"Looks a jolly prospect for Miss Marie to-morrow!" grinned Monty Lowther. "She is going to enjoy herself—perhaps!"

"Well, if they don't behave themselves, suppose we give 'em an awful wallop all round after lessons?" suggested Tom Merry.

"Good idea!" said Talbot, laughing. "But perhaps it will be all right."

Judging by the looks and the remarks



Wally gave a terrific howl as Herr Schneider's pointer caught or motion. Jameson gazed down at his chum in horror. The master staggered back a pe

of the Third Formers, it was not probable that it would be all right.

"Miss Marie!" said Wally, when the Shell fellows were gone. "A girl in charge of the Third Form! Oh erikey! What larks!"

And Wally's loyal and inky army echoed ecstatically:

"What larks!"

CHAPTER 9.

Marie Takes a Hand!

"GOOD-MORNING, Miss Marie!" A crowd of fellows raised their caps as Miss Marie came up to the School House in the morning sunshine.

Early chapel was over, and morning

lessons were about to begin; and the new mistress of the Third was punctual.

Marie nodded and smiled as she passed into the House.

Wally squeezed Jameson's arm gleefully.

"What larks!" he murmured.

"Oh, my hat!" said Jameson.

Tom Merry & Co. overheard those remarks, and they turned their severest glances upon the scamps of the Third.

"Now, remember, Wally—" began Tom Merry.

"No larks!" said Talbot.

"Bow-wow!" said Wally independently. "Think we don't know how to

also there, but probably only to be used in connection with the blackboard.

The idea of Miss Marie using the pointer as a knuckle rapper, in Mr. Selby's style, made the fags grin. They were not expecting anything of that sort. Everything was going to be nice and friendly.

Wally dashed out of the School House breathlessly, and almost ran into his major, who was on his way to the Fourth. Arthur Augustus caught him by the shoulder and stopped him so suddenly, that Wally, who was going at full tilt, spun round his major and sat down in the quad.

"You ass!" shouted Wally.

"Where are you going?" demanded Arthur Augustus sternly. "The bell has rung for classes, and Miss Mawie it takin' you this mornin'. I wefuse to allow you to play twuant this mornin', you young boundah!"

"Come on, Gussy!" shouted Blake from the House.

"I am attendin' to my minah, Blake."

"Lathom will attend to you if you don't buck up, fathead!"

Wally scrambled up as Jack Blake disappeared in the direction of the Fourth Form Room. Arthur Augustus promptly collared him.

"Leggo, you ass!" howled Wally. "I shall be late!"

"I wefuse to allow you to be late, Wally. I'm goin' to take you in myself!"

"You thumping chump, I—"

"Come on, you young wascal—"

"You silly ass, you'll be late yourself!"

"That does not mattah, so long as I pwevent you fwom actin' diswepctfully towards your Form-mistwess, you cheeky young wottah! I am surprisid at you!"

"Look here—"

"Wats! Come on!"

"I won't, you fathead! I—"

"Wubbish!"

Arthur Augustus exerted himself, and rushed Wally towards the School House. They had the quad to themselves now; all the other fellows were in their Form-rooms. The scamp of the

Third struggled desperately; but his major was too much for him, and they staggered into the School House in a brotherly embrace.

"Now will you go quietly?" panted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You—you—you image!" gasped Wally. "I am going to get a bouquet for Miss Marie, you blithering jabberwock!"

"Bai Jove! Why didn't you tell me that before, you young ass? I quite approve of that, Wally. Your mannahs are impwovin'."

"Fat lot I care whether you approve or not, you burbling jabberwock!" growled Wally, as he jerked himself away and bolted from the School House once more.

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus hesitated, not quite

decided whether to go to his Form-room, or to pursue Wally and give him a fearful thrashing. Fortunately he decided in favour of the Form-room, and trotted off there, to receive an imposition for being late.

Meanwhile, Miss Marie had commenced her duties with the Third. They all bade her good-morning in the most affectionate manner, and Hobbs proceeded to remark that it was ever so much better than having an old rotter like Selby there. To Hobbs' surprise, Miss Marie's pretty brow contracted in a frown at that very natural remark.

"Hobbs—your name is Hobbs?" said Miss Marie.

"Yes, Miss Marie."

"Well, Hobbs, you must not speak disrespectfully of your Form-master, especially to me. I will not give you lines, this time—"

"Lines!" ejaculated the astounded Hobbs.

He had never thought of lines in connection with Miss Marie.

"Not this time," said Miss Marie; "but if you speak of Mr. Selby in that manner again, I shall have to punish you."

"P-punish me!"

"Certainly!"

"But he is an old rotter!" exclaimed Hobbs indignantly. "Why, you know he is, Miss Marie! You must have noticed it," argued Hobbs.

"Shut up, 'Obbs!" said Joe Frayne. "Shan't!" said Hobbs.

"Look 'ere—"

"Oh, rats! Go and look for your h's!" said Hobbs.

"Why, you cheeky little 'orror—"

"Fathead!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Miss Marie, rapping the desk with the pointer. "Don't you understand that you must not quarrel here?"

"Which I ain't quarrelling, Miss Marie," said Joe Frayne; "I'm only telling that cheeky little cove—"

"I'm only telling this silly chump to—" began Hobbs.

"Go to your places at once!"

"Oh, all right!"

"You must not say that to me," said Miss Marie, trying not to smile. "You must not say 'Oh, all right!' to your Form-master!"

"Well, I can't say 'Yes, sir!' to you, you know," said Hobbs; "you ain't a sir."

"You may say 'Yes, Miss Marie'!"

"Yes, Miss Marie!"

"Now go to your places."

"Oh, all right!" said the incorrigible Hobbs.

The Third Form went to their places, smiling cheerfully. Miss Marie had noticed the absence of Wally. He had not come in yet, owing to the delay his major had caused him.

"D'Arcy minor is not here," said Miss Marie, frowning again.

"He 'ooked it all of a sudden, Miss Marie," said Frayne. "He'll come 'oppin in in 'arf a mo'!"

"Don't say 'arf a mo,'" said Miss Marie, gently. "Try to pronounce the aspirate, Joe."

"Them haspirates is a bloomin' noosance!" said Joe.

"He can't do it, Miss Marie," said Curly Gibson; "we always let Joe drop 'em. We give him his head—I mean his 'ead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must not laugh in class."

"Certainly not, ma'am!" said Hobbs.

"Shut up your heads, you kids! Don't you know better than that? I'll keep



his head, and fell to the floor. He lay there without sound & Third Form were silent and awe-stricken. The German: What had he done?

treat a lady? What do you take us for?"

"There's the bell," said Curly Gibson. "Don't waste time talking to those Shell bounders. Mustn't be late with a lady taking the class."

And the Third marched off cheerfully to their Form-room. They never looked particularly cheerful when they were going in to Mr. Selby. Evidently they regarded the change as one for the better.

But just as they reached the Form-room, a sudden idea seemed to occur to D'Arcy minor, and he quitted his companions, and ran off without a word.

The rest of the Form marched in. Miss Marie was seated at the master's desk, looking quite businesslike. She had Mr. Selby's books before her, and was looking at them. The pointer was

'em in order, Miss Marie. Shall I take the pointer?"

Miss Marie declined that kind offer of Hobbs'; what time sulphurous threats were whispered on all sides of Hobbs; as to what would happen to him if he did take the pointer.

Then the Form-room door opened, and Wally appeared. Miss Marie gave him a severe look.

"You are late for lessons, D'Arcy minor."

"Yes; a few minutes," said Wally carelessly. "I've brought you something. Look here!"

Wally, with the air of a fellow who knew that he had done a ripping thing, triumphantly laid the bouquet on the Form-master's desk. He had raided the Head's garden remorselessly for that bouquet, and had apparently not spared the hothouses. He had not delayed to "fix" it very elegantly, and Miss Marie looked in some surprise at the disorderly heap of various blossoms that he laid on her desk.

"What is that?" she asked. "Is it botany this morning?"

"Botany!" said Wally. "We don't do botany!"

"Then what are those flowers for?"

"They're a booky," said Wally, a little indignantly.

"A what? Oh, a bouquet!"

"For you!" said Wally impressively.

"Bravo, Wally!" sang out the Third, much impressed by that grandisonian politeness on the part of their leader.

Wally was looking very pleased with himself. He felt it wasn't every fag at St. Jim's who would have thought of that delicate act of courtesy. It was really quite nice and refined, just like a girls' school.

"Thank you very much!" said Miss Marie.

"Shall I put 'em in water?" asked Wally eagerly.

"H'm! There isn't anything here to put them in!"

"That's all right! I'll get a jam-jar—"

"No—no—you must not go—"

"I won't be a tick," assured Wally; and, before Miss Marie could make any rejoinder, he had bolted from the Form-room.

Miss Marie pursed her lips a little. If the Third Form had been rebellious, they would have been easy to deal with. This excessive friendliness made it very difficult to establish order.

Wally was more than a "tick," but he was back very quickly with a jam-jar. The inside of the jam-jar was still very sticky with its late contents. Wally had filled it with water, and it had been full to overflowing, but on his way to the Form-room he had slopped a considerable quantity of water over his trousers. That was a trifle the fag cared nothing about—a little jammy water would not hurt his "bags," in addition to the ink and toffee already adhering to them.

"Here you are!" said Wally, planting the jam-jar on the desk, and beginning to stick the flowers into it. "There! That looks a treat, doesn't it? I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss Marie—I'll stick some foreign stamps outside that jam-jar, all round, and turn it into a handsome ornamental vase."

"Thank you, Wally. But—"

"It won't be any trouble. Besides, we'd take no end of trouble for you, wouldn't we, you chaps?"

"Yes, rather, Miss Marie!" said all the Third with one voice.

"We'll do it this morning instead of lessons," said Wally. "All you fellows

cut off and get all your old stamps—and you can get some gum, Joe—"

"Stop! Stop!" exclaimed Miss Marie, as the fags rose at once. "Keep your places. D'Arcy minor, please go to your place at once!"

"But what about the jar?"

"Never mind that! We are here to do lessons."

"Lessons!" said Wally, in astonishment. "Lessons!" It seemed that lessons were the very last thing Wally had been thinking of for occupying that morning.

"Yes, certainly! I have taken Mr. Selby's place, and everything must go on just the same as if Mr. Selby were here."

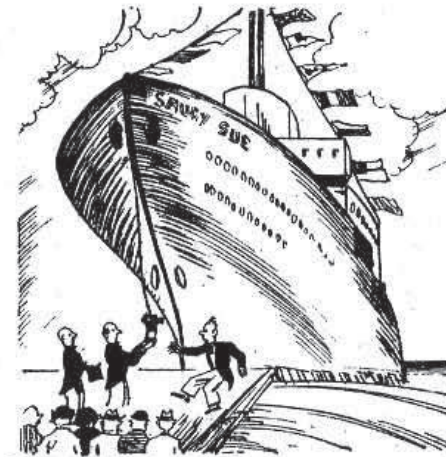
"Oh, my only Aunt Jane!"

"Please go to your desk, Wally."

"I—I say, Miss Marie, you aren't going to be a beast!" remonstrated Wally.

Marie laughed. She could not help it. Wally grinned, encouraged, and all the Third laughed, too. They were getting on quite nicely.

"That's right!" said Wally. "I knew



"Before you launch it, did you take the price tag off?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Tatham, Spring Cottage, Owlsmoor, Camberley, Surrey.

you wouldn't be a beast, Miss Marie. We have enough lessons with old Selby. Now, about those stamps—"

"You must go to your place at once, Wally. I am waiting to begin lessons."

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Wally.

"You must not speak like that!"

"Why not?" asked Wally, in surprise.

"And you must not ask me questions. You must do as you are told, or I shall have to cane you!" said Miss Marie, as severely as she could.

"C-cane me!" stammered Wally. "Why I'd—I'd—ahem!—no, I wouldn't! I say, this isn't playing the game, you know. I can't punch a girl's head."

"Go to your place, D'Arcy!" said Miss Marie, quite sharply, rapping a pointer on the desk.

And Wally, with an indignant grunt, went to his place, and his first lesson commenced.

CHAPTER 10.

English History!

FIRST lesson passed off quietly. The Third, realising that Miss Marie expected them to work, were astonished at first, but decided to take it as a joke.

So, with that humorous intention, they adopted an attitude of almost preternatural gravity, and addressed Miss Marie as "sir," just as if they had been speaking to Mr. Selby.

Miss Marie, however, was determined not to see the joke. Her manner was quite grave, and by the time the lesson ended the fags were getting restive. They were willing to keep the joke up for half an hour, but not longer.

For second lesson, however, Mr. Lathom came in to take the Form, and that lesson was gone through in the usual way, the Third bottling up their exuberant spirits till the Form-master was gone.

Mr. Lathom's departure was the signal for a general movement. Wally rose and stretched his arms, and Joe Frayne yawned loudly. Hobbs and Hooley strolled away to the fire and warmed their toes. Curly Gibson sat on his desk, showing his admiring Form-fellows how he could balance a pen on his nose.

Miss Marie rapped on the desk.

"Take your places!"

"Oh, I say, I'm tired!" said Wally. "Lathom's an awful bother! I say, couldn't you ask the Head to let you take us all the time?"

"I cannot teach you Latin," said Miss Marie.

"That's all right; we don't mind," said Wally.

"Not a bit!" said Jameson. "We'll let it slide. What's the good of it, anyway? I always said it was rot."

"Awful rot!" said Hooley.

"Silence in the class!" said Miss Marie. "Take your places at once!"

"I'm warming my feet," said Hobbs rebelliously.

"If you do not go to your place at once, Hobbs, I shall give you fifty lines."

Hobbs stared.

"Me! Fifty lines!"

"Yes."

"I jolly well shouldn't do them," said Hobbs.

"Shut up, Hobbs!" shouted Wally. "Haven't I told you not to check Miss Marie? Do you want a thick ear?"

"Yes, if you can give me one!" retorted Hobbs.

"I'll jolly soon show you!"

Wally streaked across the Form-room in the direction of Hobbs. Miss Marie was almost in despair, between her champion and the rebel. Hobbs' head was in chancery in a twinkling, and his roars rang through the Form-room. The Third crowded out of their places and made a ring round them; cheering them on delightedly.

"Oh dear!" murmured Marie. "Oh dear!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

"Take that, you cheeky worm! I'll teach you to cheek Miss Marie."

"Ow-ow-ow!" roared Hobbs.

"Will you behave yourself?" asked Wally.

"Yow! No! Yaroo! Yes! All right!" gasped the anguished Hobbs, as Wally started again like a steam-hammer. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my eye! Groogh!"

Wally released his victim, panting with triumph. Hobbs sat on the floor and roared.

"All right now, Miss Marie!" chuckled Wally. "I'll keep 'em in order! You leave it to me. I'll back you up!"

"D'Arcy minor, take a hundred lines for fighting in the Form-room."

Wally jumped.

"Me?" he gasped.

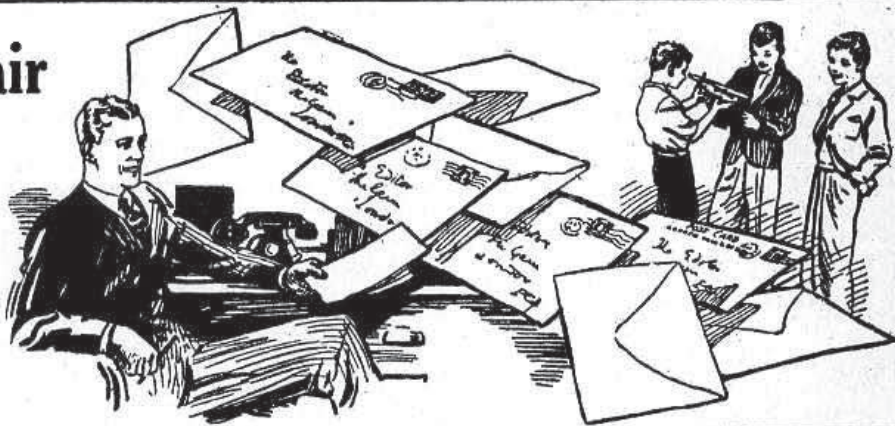
"Yes. Take your places, all of you!"

"But I was backing you up!" hooted the aggrieved Wally.

(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, Farring-
don Street, London, E.C.4.



HALLO, Chums! It seems a long time since I last expressed that cheery greeting. There's been such a big demand on space in the last few numbers of the GEM that I just couldn't get a word in edgeways. However, here we are again, with all the details of next week's grand number. The cover shows a very humorous scene, with the one and only Gussy as the central figure. But perhaps you may not recognise him. You see, he's been "made up" by his chums, draped in a hearth-rug, and tied in a chair! He looks a rare sight—which is very unfortunate for Gussy, because the girl of his dreams appears at that awkward moment!

No doubt you will gather that

"GUSSY'S IN LOVE AGAIN!"

He is—head over heels! Arthur Augustus has had many affairs of the heart—he's very susceptible to the charms of the fair sex. Last time it was the girl in the tobacconist's shop. Now it's the pretty girl messenger of a big store in Wayland. And there's no accounting for his actions when once he's "smitten." He starts composing poetry, and ordering goods frequently from the Wayland store, so that he might see his latest "charmer." His chums do their best to cure him, but without avail, until—well, I won't spoil your appetite for this grand story. Enjoy a good laugh next week at Gussy's expense.

"RIVAL ENTERTAINERS!"

There are also laughs galore in this sparkling Greyfriars yarn, the opening chapters of which appear in this issue. Bulstrode & Co. are determined to spoil the latest production of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society, and with the help of Bunter they secretly plot to "rag" the last rehearsal of Harry Wharton & Co.'s variety show. Needless to say, there is not a little excitement at the rehearsal, with Bulstrode & Co. figuring in a painful programme! Don't miss the show.

POPULAR FEATURES.

I have received many letters praising the St. Jim's Jingles, and expressing pleasure at the return of Monty Lowther's fun column. Next week both features will be well up to the standard again. Lowther has some good jokes and wisecracks for you to laugh off with him, and the portrait and jingle star the genius of the Shell, Herbert Skimpole. Together with the four illustrated jokes, the next GEM can truly be described as an all-laughter number. Don't forget, chums, order your GEM early.

PEN PALS.

M. Druker, 67, Buxton Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, S. Africa; age 15-16; photography, postcards; Australia; New Zealand, Hungary, N. East Indies.

Leslie Heathfield, 40b, Lombard Street, Bloemfontein, O.F.S., S. Africa; age 17-19; stamps and sport; Canada, Australia.

W. Crofton, 2, Dunston House, Kingsland, London, E.8; age 11-12; hockey, swimming, cricket, football; America, Canada, South Africa.

Miss I. Harris, 50, Colonial Road, Bordesley Green, Birmingham 9; girl correspondents; age 16-20; skating, swimming, cycling, rowing, films; overseas; all letters answered.

Jack Gillies, 99, Brookdale Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; cycling and travel; Switzerland or British Empire.

Kenneth J. Thomson, 2, The Lindens, Prospect Hill, London, E.17; interested in old GEMS prior to April 1936, and "Magnets" prior to January, 1934.

B. Morrison, 20, Brown Street, Dunedin C2, Otago, New Zealand; pen pals; age 15-17; stamps and sports.

J. D. Ashton, 45, Ritchie House, Hayellville Road, Hornsey Rise, London, N.19; pen pals; age 18-20; all letters answered.

T. L. Healy, 278a, Umbilo Road, Durban, Natal, S. Africa; age 12-16; stamps and sports.

Miss Doris G. Trelliving, 21, Kingscourt Street, Belfast; girl correspondents; films, snaps, travel, etc.; California, Australia, Tanganyika, Colorado, or any part of Canada.

L. Smith, 92, Hartley Avenue, Welf Lane, Leeds 6, Yorkshire; pen pals; age 15-16; cricket, physical culture.

Miss M. Chapman, 89, Victoria Street, Newark, Nottingham; girl correspondents; age 14-15; film stars, dance music, radio; America, Canada, Africa.

PEN PALS COUPON

13-11-37

THE EDITOR.

No Good as Captain!

Having taken over the reins as junior captain of Rookwood, Valentine Mornington proceeds to enjoy himself in his position of authority. But, lazy and careless, Morny is soon made to realise that the juniors have no time for a slacker, and that he's no good as captain! Look out for this great story.



Grand Book-Length
School Tale for 4d!

No. 317 of

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

Now on sale at all Newsagents and Bookstalls 4d

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,552.

"You must not do anything of the sort."

"Well, isn't that just like a girl?" said Wally, appealing indignantly to his Form-fellows. "There's no pleasing 'em, whatever you do."

Rap, rap!

"Will you take your places?" exclaimed Miss Marie.

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Wally, sitting down again. "But I say, you were joking about those lines, weren't you, Miss Marie?"

"Certainly not!"

"I've got to do 'em?"

"Yes."

"Well, I call that rotten! Blessed if I will!" said Wally.

"Yah!" roared Hobbs. "Do your lines, you cad! I'm going to do mine!"

"That's different," said Wally. "You're a disrespectful little beast!"

"Ear, 'ear!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the distressed Form-mistress. "The next boy who speaks will be caned!"

"Oh!"

At that dreadful threat the Third relapsed into amazed silence. They began to perceive that Miss Marie was really going to do the Form-master's work, and their indignation knew no bounds. After all their friendliness and politeness this was their reward. They concluded that it was just like a girl. It was not to be a case of "what larks!" after all.

Silence and something like order having been restored, Miss Marie proceeded to the next lesson, which was English history—not dealing with the reign of the famous King Cole, however.

Hobbs sat dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. His punishment had been severe, and he was inwardly rejoicing over Wally's hundred lines. Wally was burning with indignation. After that handsome bouquet—after the gift of the jam-jar, and his generous offer to stick foreign stamps round it and turn it into a handsome vase—after the way he had backed up authority by punching Hobbs—he was the recipient of a hundred lines. And they were going to work.

It was a state of affairs that was hardly to be borne by the enterprising youth who had succeeded in "snuffing out" Monsieur Morny and Herr Schneider in turn. It looked as if Miss Marie would have to be snuffed out, too.

"Where did you leave off at last lesson?" inquired Miss Marie.

There was no reply from the Third. They looked grim and held their tongues. Miss Marie looked at them.

"Do you hear me?"

Silence!

"D'Arcy minor, answer me at once!"

Wally did not speak.

"D'Arcy minor, will you answer me?"

"Certainly!" said Wally at once. "We're only obeying orders."

"What!"

"You said that the next boy who spoke would be caned," said Wally.

The Third Formers grinned. Miss Marie looked vexed for a moment. The young rascals had caught her.

"That did not refer to the lesson, of course," she said. "You understand that very well, D'Arcy minor."

"Please, we like to do just as we're told," said Wally meekly.

"Now answer my question," said Miss Marie, changing the subject. "Where did you leave off, please?"

"Last time?" asked Wally.

"Yes, yes."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,552.

"Last time was when Mossoo was taking us. We did the reign of King Cole," said Wally.

"What! Really, Wally—"

"Well, you asked me," said Wally.

"I'm trying to be exact."

"Where did you leave off with Mr. Selby?"

"Oh, that's a different matter! Reign of Charles II," said Wally. "Just got past him."

"Very well. Who came after Charles II?"

"Cromwell."

"What!"

"Cromwell," repeated Wally firmly. "Otherwise called the Lord Protector. He came after Charles II. It was at the Battle of Worcester. He came after Charles II, but couldn't catch him."

"You must not make absurd jokes in class, D'Arcy minor. Hobbs, you will tell me which king reigned after Charles II."

"George VI," said Hobbs.

"Nonsense! Think before you answer."

"Well, he did, and does," said Hobbs. "You mean to say that George VI reigned before Charles II? Why, he's still doing it!"

"Quite right, Hobby!" said Jameson.

"I mean, which king succeeded Charles II?" said Miss Marie, with a worried look.

"Ah, that's better! That's how Selby puts it," said Wally approvingly.

"You need not make remarks, D'Arcy minor. You answer my question, Jameson."

Jameson rubbed his nose thoughtfully. He was not a diligent scholar, and history was one of his weak points. He had many weak points.

"Come, come," said Miss Marie encouragingly.

"King Alfred!" hazarded Jameson.

"The chap who let the cakes burn, you know, and when they rounded on him, he said, 'Kiss me, Hardy! England expects every man to do his duty.'"

Jameson felt quite pleased with that reply, which was really circumstantial, and contained quite a lot of information. Miss Marie did not seem so pleased.

"You are an absurd boy, Jameson," she said. "It was Nelson who said, 'Kiss me, Hardy! Thank Heaven I have done my duty!'"

"Well, I knew it was somebody," agreed Jameson. "I was sure of that."

"Now, think again!"

"Wasn't it King Alfred?"

"Certainly not!"

Jameson rubbed his nose harder, and made another effort.

"King William, otherwise called Rufus, from his red hair," he announced.

"It was he who made the celebrated remark that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of St. Jim's."

"Dear me!" said Miss Marie. "You must think once more, Jameson."

"King Henry VIII," said Jameson, who was evidently trying monarch after monarch till he came to one who would do.

"He dissolved the monasteries, and after the dissolution of the monasteries, he was known as the dissolute monarch."

"You will write out twenty times, Jameson, that Charles II was succeeded by his brother, James II."

"Sure?" asked Jameson doubtfully.

Miss Marie did not answer that remark; which, apparently, she did not hear.

"How long did James II reign, Hooley?"

"Twenty years," said Hooley.

"Nonsense! James II ascended the

throne in 1685 and abdicated in 1688. Now, how long is that?"

"Wait a minute while I work it out," said Hooley. And he extracted a stump of pencil from his pocket, and started calculating on his exercise-book. In a minute he triumphantly announced the result.

"Three thousand three hundred and seventy-three years."

"What!" shrieked Miss Marie.

"That's right," said Hooley, consulting his figures again. "I've done it as a sum, and proved it. Three thousand three hundred and seventy-three years, please!"

"You ridiculous boy! How could a king reign three thousand years and more?" said Miss Marie distressfully.

"It does seem an awful time," admitted Hooley. "Wait a minute! I've added 1685 to 1688 instead of subtracting it. My mistake! It was only three years."

"Quite a big difference," murmured Wally.

And the Third Formers chuckled.

Miss Marie looked suspiciously at Hooley. She was not quite sure whether Hooley had really made that absurd mistake.

"Did the reign of James the Second end before his death, Frayne?"

"Yes, please," said Frayne. "He 'ooked it!"

"What!"

"He did a slide," explained Frayne.

"He abdicated," said Miss Marie.

"Yes; I mean he habdicated," assented Joe. "I couldn't remember the word. But who's dropping h's now, Miss Marie?"

"What!"

"You said abdicated."

"There is no 'h' in that word," said Miss Marie.

"Ain't there?" said Joe, in surprise.

"Certainly not! Now, what else can you tell me about the reign of James the Second, Brown minor?"

"There was a civil war," said Brown minor. "The Duke of Monmouth landed somewhere—"

"Yes; go on."

"And King James was deserted by all his pals—"

"His what?"

"His friends, who went over and joined the enemy."

"That was when William of Orange landed. You are confusing the two. Gibson, can you tell me what happened to the Duke of Monmouth?"

"He never smiled again," said Curly Gibson at once. "William Rufus shot him dead with an arrow in the New Forest, and he never smiled again."

"You will write out twenty times, Gibson, that the Duke of Monmouth was executed by order of his uncle, James the Second."

"Well, there's an uncle for you!" said Curly Gibson. "That's not what I call an affectionate uncle. I call it unfeeling."

"You will take fifty lines, Gibson! Now—"

"Please—"

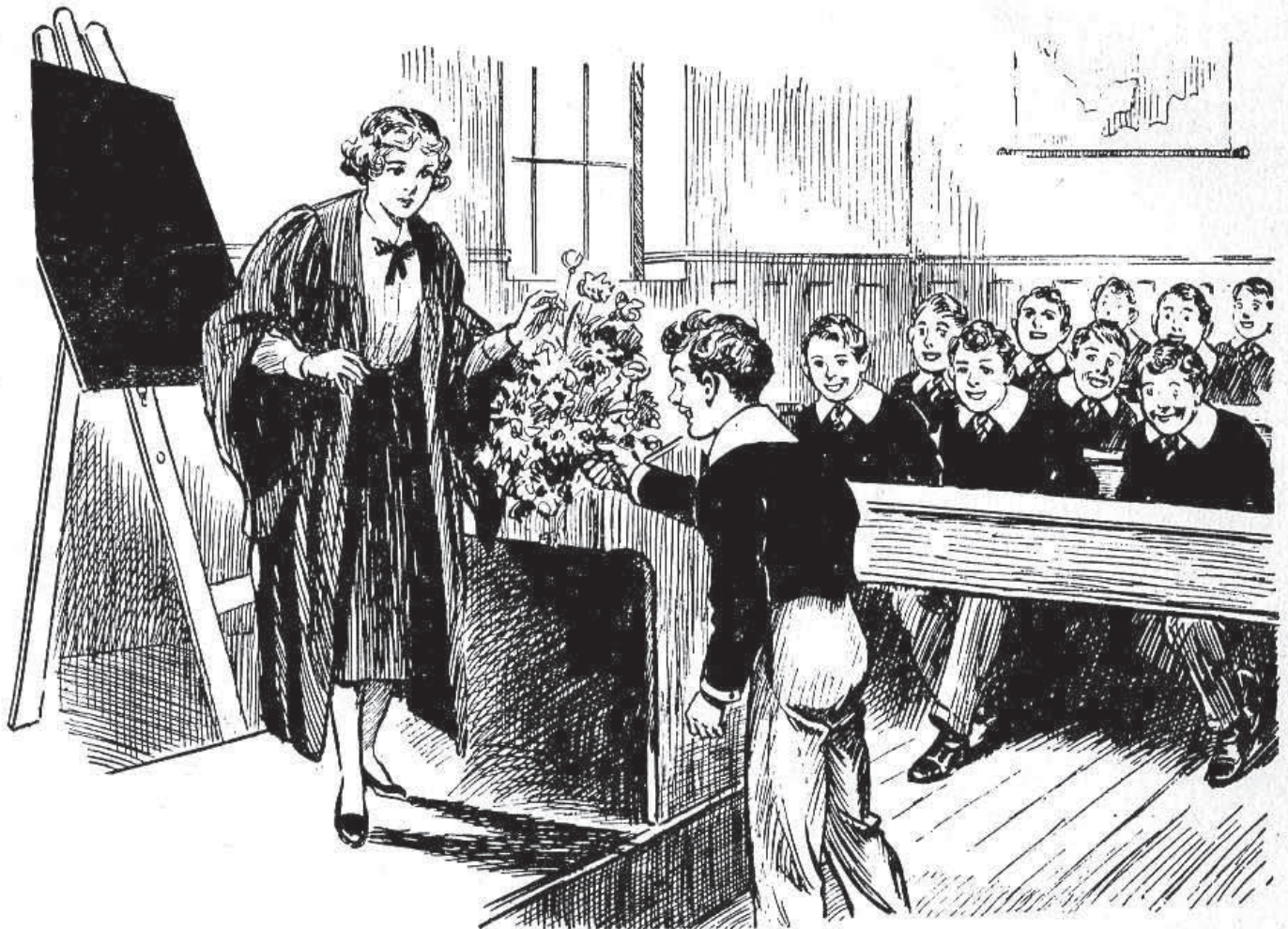
"What have you to say, D'Arcy minor?"

D'Arcy minor pointed eloquently to the clock. Miss Marie closed her book.

"Dismiss!" she said.

Morning lessons were over, and the Third Form marched out. Miss Marie sighed a little. Her first experience with the Third could not be called wholly a success.

As for the Third, they were far from satisfied, too. Instead of the "larks" so gleefully anticipated, they had been



"I've brought you something, Miss Marie," said Wally. "Look here!" With the air of a fellow who knew that he had done a ripping thing, Wally triumphantly laid the bouquet on the Form-master's desk. "They're a booky for you!" said D'Arcy minor impressively.

made to work—not very hard, certainly, but it was very nearly as bad as having "old Selby" back again.

In the quad Wally gloomily remarked that he had been mistaken in Miss Marie. Politeness and courtesy seemed to be wasted, and at this rate the Third would derive no benefit whatever from Mr. Selby's illness. Mr. Selby might just as well recover, in fact.

And the Third Form agreed, without a dissentient voice, that it would not do. It was unanimously decided that afternoon that they should make it quite clear to Miss Marie that they weren't going to stand it.

CHAPTER 11.

An Ovation That Did Not Come Off!

"LEND me a quid, Gussy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was laying down the law on the subject of football—Blake, Herries, and Dig being the victims—paused in his lucubrations on the great game, and turned his monocle upon his minor.

Wally had requested that staggering loan as he might have asked for two-pence.

"What did you say, Wally?" "Lend me a quid," said Wally. "Not getting deaf in your old age, are you?"

"Do you mean a pound?" "I mean a quid!" "I disapprove of the use of slang by small boys, Wally."

"Not so much of your small boys!" growled D'Arcy minor. "Will you lend me a quid, you ass, or won't you lend me a quid?"

"If you mean a pound——" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Well, a pound will do, if you'll lend me one," said Wally, yielding the point in the hope of getting the pound.

"I am sorry that I am unable to do so, Wally."

"You fathead!" roared Wally, exasperated. "Why couldn't you say at once that you were stony instead of talking out of your neck?"

"I refuse to have my remarks chawacterised as talkin' out of my neck! Pway what do you want a pound for? I might manage ten shillings."

Wally brightened up.

"Oh good! I could do it on half a quid. You see, it's rather special. We're going to give Miss Marie an ovation. We feel that it's up to us to show Miss Marie how we appreciate having a girl Form-master."

Arthur Augustus smiled benignantly. He was quite pleased with his minor.

"There you are, deah boy!"

"Thanks!" said Wally, clutching the ten shillings. "You can mention this in your next letter home, and ask the pater to settle. Ta-ta!"

Wally rushed off, and ran down the Terrible Three and Talbot in the gym. The four Shell fellows asked him at once how morning lessons had gone off.

"Oh, so-so!" said Wally. "We expect it to go a little better this afternoon. We're all going to do our very best, and we're going to give Miss Marie an ovation. You fellows like to help?"

"Oh, rather!" said Tom Merry.

"Lend me ten bob, then."

"Eh?"

"It will cost money; it takes the

form of a feed," said Wally in explanation. "No other help required. Lend me ten bob."

The chuns of the Shell exchanged smiles, and each handed out a half-crown into Wally's somewhat grubby palm. Wally looked very satisfied.

"Thanks! I'll settle this next week," he said. "If I don't get any tin, I'll squeeze it out of Gussy. Ta-ta!"

"Hold on!" said Talbot. "What about the ovation—I mean, the feed? Are you going to leave us out of it?"

Wally chuckled.

"You can come if you can get off," he said. "But you'll be at lessons, you know, this afternoon."

"Eh? You'll be at lessons all the time we're at lessons," said Tom Merry. "The Third haven't an extra half-holiday, have they?"

"N-no; but we've got a Form-master a bit different from yours. We're going to have the feed in lesson-time, you see."

"Why, you young scamp!"

"Look here, Wally——"

"You young villain!"

But Wally was scudding away at top speed. Having obtained the loan of ten shillings, he had finished with the Shell fellows, and he had no time to waste listening to their observations.

"Well, this puts the lid on," said Monty Lowther. "A feed in the Form-room in lesson-time! I wonder what Miss Marie will do?"

Talbot laughed.

"I think perhaps she will resign the Third after to-day," he remarked. "Those young scallavags would wear out any Form-master, I should think."

It's a wonder that Selby has stood them so long. I'm rather thinking his ratty temper has a certain amount of excuse."

A little later a happy crowd of fags might have been seen in the school shop making purchases. Wally & Co. were good customers there; but Dame Taggles was a little surprised when Wally produced a ten-shilling note, four half-crowns, and several sixpences and coppers. The sixpences and coppers had been contributed by the Third. The whole sum was laid out in tuck of the most tempting varieties.

It stood to reason, according to Wally, that Miss Marie's heart would be touched by this new move. If they showed that they forgave her for the happenings of the morning, and were prepared to be perfectly friendly, she could hardly resist, so Wally said.

He was firmly convinced that Miss Marie would not be able to resist that enticing array of tarts, cream-puffs, meringues, and bullseyes, and ginger-pop, even if she could resist the blandishments of the Third.

That afternoon everything was going to be nice and friendly, and happy. Instead of Miss Marie "playing the Form-master," she would join the Third in a handsome feed, like a sensible kid.

And the Third, instead of worrying about English grammar, with its boring and troublesome concomitants of cases and moods and tenses, would enjoy the spread—all the more because it was in lesson-time. The mere thought of what Mr. Selby would think if he could see it, would be enough to make them happy.

So the provisions for the feed were selected with great care, entirely from a point of view of what Miss Marie would like best.

"This will be better than the booky," averred Wally. "We'll get into the Form-room before bell, and have it all ready when she comes in."

"And when she sees those lovely meringues on her desk she won't think any more about beastly English grammar. It stands to reason."

"I wonder if she likes bullseyes?" said Jameson thoughtfully. "Better have some, in case. And some toffee, and some monkey nuts, and some Turkish delight. She must like Turkish delight, you know."

"And some of them sugary halmonds," said Frayne.

"Ear, 'ear!" said Hobbs sarcastically.

"Wot do you mean, 'Obbs?"

"Shut up, Hobbs!" said Wally sternly. "Joe can't help his h's any more than you can help your face!"

"What's the matter with my face?" demanded Hobbs warmly.

"Oh, don't ask me!" said Wally. "It's only a quarter of an hour to lessons, and I shouldn't have time to tell you."

"Ere, horder!" said Joe Frayne, shoving between the two fags just in time. "You'll upset the grub. Let's get horf with it."

Wally and Hobbs glared at one another, and the "grub" was carried off. The fags succeeded in smuggling it safely into the Form-room, and there they set it out in the most tempting manner.

A table was dragged out of the corner, and simply loaded with good things, close to the master's desk, which was also loaded. If Miss Marie was not pleased when she came in it would show that she was very hard to please, as Wally observed emphatically. He had no doubts himself.

The bell started, and Miss Marie came

in punctually. She greeted the Third with a pleasant smile.

"You are quite early," she remarked.

"We thort we'd please you by being hearly," said Frayne.

"Why, what—what is this?" exclaimed the girl, as she caught sight of the tremendous array of tuck.

"It's an ovation," said Wally.

"A—a what?"

"An ovation," said D'Arcy minor firmly. "We, the members of the Third Form at St. Jim's, feel called upon to show our appreciation of our new Form-master—I mean, Form-mistress. We have decided upon an ovation. This is it."

"This 'ere," said Joe Frayne, with a nod.

"And we hope that you will do the honours of the feed, and that everything will be nice and friendly," pursued Wally.

"Hear, hear!"

"But it's time for lessons," said Marie.

Wally gazed at the Form-mistress more in sorrow than in anger.

"Now, you're not beginning that again, Miss Marie, are you?" he asked, in a tone of patient remonstrance. "Look at those meringues. We got them specially because you like meringues. They're quite fresh," added Wally anxiously. "You needn't be afraid of 'em. And those bullseyes—look! Shall I open some ginger-beer for you, Miss Marie?"

With a great effort Marie resisted a strong inclination to laugh, and contrived to frown.

"Certainly not!" she said. "Put all those things away at once."

"We're going to," said Wally, deliberately misunderstanding "Put them away," and giving it a meaning current in the Third Form. "Hobbs is putting away the tarts as fast as he can already. Hobbs is a pig, you know. Here's your chair, Miss Marie."

"Put those things in the cupboard," said Miss Marie. "You may have them again after lessons."

"You don't care for meringues?" asked Wally, concluding that the choice of the feed was not so much to Miss Marie's taste as he had hoped.

"Yes," said Marie, "but not in lesson time."

"Suppose you try these tarts—real good jam—all twopenny ones," said Wally. "We've taken a lot of trouble with this, you know. We've tried to get the things you would like. I thought you were fond of meringues."

"If you do not put all those things into the cupboard immediately, D'Arcy minor, I shall call in the page to take them away to the dust-bin."

"Oh crumbs!"

The Third Formers gave one another helpless looks of indignation and disappointment. Miss Marie was evidently in earnest. That splendid wheeze of D'Arcy minor's was a ghastly, hopeless frost. The Form-mistress of the Third was clearly bent upon keeping up the joke of giving them lessons.

With sorrowful and indignant looks, the fags cleared away the good things into the cupboard. Wally cast reproachful glances at Miss Marie—glances that might have melted a stone statue—but the Form-mistress seemed quite impervious to them. The good things being stacked away out of sight, the Third Formers went grimly to their places. But there were very dark looks among the fags now.

They were exasperated. Wally declared in a furious whisper that he had done his best—they had all done their best. And if Miss Marie, out of feminine

obstinacy, was determined to "come the Form-master" over them, then it was up to them to show quite plainly that it couldn't be done.

It was their bounden duty now to prove in the clearest possible manner that Britons never should be slaves, and to cause Miss Marie to go the way Monsieur Morny and Herr Schneider had gone.

And in that promising humour the Third Form began afternoon lessons.

CHAPTER 12.

Victory!

MISS MARIE was kind but firm. The trouble was that the Third Form did not take her seriously as a Form-master.

How to induce them to do so without inflicting punishments was rather a puzzle. And that was a resource Miss Marie did not wish to resort to.

Already her popularity in the Third was at its lowest ebb. After such a display of black ingratitude over the feed, the Third felt that they had been mistaken in her. And if she was going to be as big a bother as Mossos or the Herr, it was only just that she should be treated like Mossos or the Herr.

The fags, therefore, were in the most intractable mood. Already there had been news that Mr. Selby was better. Their brief respite from their Form-master would be totally wasted unless Miss Marie could be brought to reason.

English grammar, therefore, proved a more trying experience than English history. Wally, asked how many cases there were, replied that there were twenty-seven. Jameson, asked to name the cases, named them thus—watch-case, pencil-case, letter-case, violin-case, and divorce case. Hobbs, called upon to distinguish upon the active and passive voices, declared that the active voice was when they were singing, and the passive voice was when they weren't.

Miss Marie understood that the young rascals were acting in concert in giving those ridiculous answers, and that it was a "rag," but she kept her sunny good temper. The Third were trying to tire her out—perhaps in the hope that the girl would see reason, and let the eatables be disinterred from the cupboard.

But this kind of thing could not go on. When Hooley was asked to define the moods of the verbs, and stated that there was an angry mood and a friendly mood, he was ordered to stand in the corner as a naughty boy. That, as Wally would have said, put the lid on. Kids in the Second might be called naughty boys, but the heroes of the Third jibbed at such a term. Hooley sat tight, speechless with indignation.

"Do you hear me, Hooley?" asked Miss Marie.

"Yes, sir," said Hooley.

"Then do as I tell you."

"Shan't!" said Hooley.

"Oh dear!" said Miss Marie.

"Shut up, Hooley!" exclaimed Wally.

"That isn't the way to speak to a lady."

"Do you think I'm going to be called a naughty boy?" shrieked Hooley.

"Shall I lick him, Miss Marie?" asked Wally obligingly.

"Yes, come on—do!" said Hooley.

Both fags would have been very pleased to turn English grammar into a rough-and-tumble on the floor.

"Certainly not!" said Miss Marie.

"Hooley, if you do not go into the corner at once I shall send you to the Head."

"Shan't go!" said Hooley.

"Oh, dror it mild!" said Joe Frayne.

"That isn't the way to speak to Miss Marie. You say that agin and I'll bash you in the heye!"

"Silence, Frayne!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Joe.

"Hooley, I shall call the Head here myself."

"Oh!" said Hooley. The threat was enough. The recalcitrant Hooley did not wish to interview the Head. He rose sulkily to his feet and went to the corner of the room.

Miss Marie proceeded with the moods. A loud chuckle from the Third caused her to look round towards Hooley. That cheerful youth was passing the idle moments by standing on his head.

"Hooley!" shrieked Miss Marie.

Hooley came to the floor with a crash, and sat up, blinking.

"Hallo!" he said.

"How dare you stand on your head!"

"I think better standing on my head, please!" said Hooley meekly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Hooley, I shall have to cane you. Come here!"

Miss Marie took the pointer from the master's desk with a very determined air.

Hooley approached her, grinning. He did not think that Miss Marie's caning would hurt very much. The Third looked on with deep interest.

"Hold out your hand," said Miss Marie.

"Which hand?" asked Hooley.

"The right hand."

"But which is the right one?" further inquired Hooley. "I don't want to hold out the wrong one by mistake."

"You are a very bad boy," said the distressed Form-mistress. "Hold out your hand at once!"

Hooley held out his hand. The pointer came down with a swipe, but it slowed down as it reached Hooley's grubby hand, and gave him a light tap which would not have hurt a fly. Hooley grinned cheerfully.

"Now you may go to your place and be a good boy," said Miss Marie.

Hooley tucked his hand under his arm and twisted himself almost double, as if in great agony, and limped to his place. The Third Form chuckled ecstatically.

English grammar finished at last, and Miss Marie was glad of it. The next lesson dragged through somehow, the fags vying with one another to give as much trouble as possible, assuming an impenetrable stupidity that was proof against the most lucid explanations.

Miss Marie gradually assumed a more and more worried look, which the Third Form watched with secret and growing satisfaction. They felt that it would not be long now before Miss Marie did the sensible thing, and ceased to "come the Form-master," and let them have their way, and then everything would be nice and friendly. They were prepared to be as nice as possible if Miss Marie would only do the sensible thing.

Arithmetic, seemingly, was a rock upon which the Third Form split hopelessly.

Wally made two and two, added together, reach the extraordinary total of three thousand two hundred and forty. Hobbs defined vulgar fractions as Bolsheviks that had been blown to bits. According to Jameson, dividend was the result achieved by adding up a column of figures and taking away the number you first thought of. And Hooley put the lid on by declaring that a divisor was a man who lived in Devizes.

"You are bad boys!" said Miss Marie almost tearfully. "I—I shall not try to teach you any more."



"Well, somebody's moved my stamps! Really, I need eyes in the back of my head in this house!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss G. Philip, "Belmount," E. Aberdour, Fifeshire.

"That's right," said Wally, in great relief. "That's right, Miss Marie. Shall I get out the grub?"

"You deserve that I should go to the Head and tell him how bad and disrespectful you are," said Marie.

"Oh, be a sport!" said Wally.

"I am very angry with you."

"Well, we don't mind," said Wally, after some thought.

Miss Marie was silent. - She felt that the Third were too much for her, and it was a disappointment. She had hoped to be able to take some of the trouble off the Head's hands during Mr. Selby's illness by relieving him of the Third, and to confess a hopeless failure after a single day's trial was very disappointing. Her look of distress touched Wally's heart at once.

"I—I say, Miss Marie—" he stammered.

The Third Form were silent as they saw that Miss Marie was upset.

It had been a harassing afternoon for her, and she was tired and worried, and that, with the addition of the disappointment and failure, was too much for her.

"Oh, I—I say," mumbled Wally, "d-don't be upset, you know! We—we didn't mean it."

Marie turned quickly to the door.

"I—I say, are we dismissed, sir?" stammered Jameson.

"Yes, you may go," said Marie. "I shall not take you any more."

And Marie hurried from the Form-room.

The Third Formers looked at one another in blank dismay. They had not foreseen anything like this. They were struck with dismay and remorse. Wally found a refuge from his own conscience in turning upon the faithful followers who had backed him up only too well.

"I hope you're satisfied now, young Hooley!" said Wally witheringly.

"Me?" gasped Hooley, in surprise and indignation. "Well, I like that!"

"Yes, you and the others. You satisfied, Jameson, making a girl upset?" said Wally, with bitter contempt.

"Why, it was you!" howled Jameson.

"Don't you try to put it on me!" said Wally angrily. "I'm not having that. Didn't I tell you to behave yourselves?"

"You've been the worst of the lot!" shouted Hobbs. "The very worst! I was surprised at you myself. I thought all the time that you ought to remember

that it—I mean she—was a girl, and stop it."

"I said so all along," chimed in Brown minor. "I said it was too thick. I said it was rotten—blackguardly, in fact. At least, I thought it. Now you've done it, Wally!"

"I've done it!" hooted Wally. "You've done it, you disrespectful, bad-mannered, rowdy young hooligan! Can't you remember how Miss Marie looked after you when you had the flu? And then to treat her like this! I'm ashamed of you!"

"You jolly well ought to be ashamed of yourself!" shrieked Hobbs. "You upset her!"

Wally did not deign to take any notice of that remark.

"I know what I'm going to do!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to tell Miss Marie I'm sorry, not that I've got anything to be sorry for. It was all you rotters!"

"It was all you!" bellowed Hobbs.

Wally strode to the door. Like one man the Third Form followed him. There was no more thought of a "rag." They were only anxious to set themselves right with Miss Marie now. The energy with which they hurled accusations at one another was a measure of their repentance.

They trooped out of the Form-room. It was nearly time for the whole school to be out, but the other classes were not quite over yet.

Wally marched into the quadrangle, disdainful to notice the fags who trooped at his heels. There he paused, wondering where Miss Marie was. If she had gone back to the Head's house it would be very awkward explaining to Mrs. Holmes what they wanted to see her for.

Wally decided on trying the garden first, and he marched away to the gate, still with the repentant Third at his heels.

Wally uttered an exclamation of satisfaction as he caught sight of the figure in the little summer-house. Miss Marie had stopped there. She looked up in surprise as Wally appeared in the doorway with an army of dusty and untidy fags fresh from their dust-up in the Form-room behind him.

"Go away, please!" said Miss Marie.

"I—I say, lemme speak a word!" said Wally eagerly. "We're sorry—awfully sorry. We were only joking, really—I mean, those young cads were only joking; they—they didn't understand, you know. Thought they were dealing with old Schneider, I suppose," added Wally witheringly.

"It was all Wally!" shouted Hobbs. "We're awfully sorry, Miss Marie, and we won't do it any more; but it was D'Arcy minor all the time, and he knows it!"

"We won't do nothing of the kind no more," said Joe Frayne. "We give you our davy, Miss Marie. Give us another chance."

"If Miss Marie takes my advice, she'll report the whole gang of you to the Head!" said Wally.

"I shall not do that," said Marie, with a smile. "I'm glad that you are sorry; now you may go away."

"But—but you'll take us to-morrow?" said Wally. "You'll take us till old Selby—I mean Mr. Selby—is on his pins again?"

Marie shook her head.

"Oh, I see!" murmured Frayne. "You see what you've done, you young brutes!" said Wally bitterly.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,552.

BILLY BUNTER'S GRAND VENTRILOQUIAL ENTERTAINMENT DRAWS A LARGE CROWD TO STUDY No. 1—BUT NOT TO HEAR HIS SHOW!

RIVAL ENTERTAINERS!

Important Notices!

HARRY WHARTON came down the stairs at Greyfriars with a serious expression on his face, and a paper in his hand. He stopped before the notice-board in the Hall, and looked for a clear spot to pin up his paper.

Two or three juniors immediately gathered round. Harry Wharton was captain of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars—and any notice he pinned up on the board naturally possessed interest for members of his Form.

"Hallo! Anything on?" said two or three voices.

"You'll see in a minute."

Harry was looking for a clear spot on the board, holding the paper in his hand. There were a good many notices on the board already. Wharton found room, however, and stuck up his notice with a couple of pins.

Then he stepped back and surveyed it critically. The number of fellows before the notice-board increased.

Hazeldene read the paper aloud for the benefit of those who could not get near enough to see:

"NOTICE!

"To members of the Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society.

"A meeting of the above society is called for seven o'clock precisely, in Study No. 1, to discuss some important matters in connection with same.

"(Signed)

"HARRY WHARTON (President),

"ROBERT CHERRY,

"FRANK NUGENT,

"HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH

"(Vice-Presidents)."

"My hat!" said Skinner. "There must be a lot of vice in that society to need so many presidents to look after it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton, isn't anybody but a member of the operatic society admitted to the meeting?" asked Stott.

"No. It's a business meeting, you see."

"Oh, that's rot!" said Bulstrode.

"I don't see why we shouldn't all come. We're all interested in the operatic society. We have to listen to the performances."

"I don't see how you would all get into the study," said Harry Wharton. "It will be a close fit for the members of the society."

And he walked away.

"Rot, I call it!" said Bulstrode, who opposed everything Harry Wharton said and did on principle. "I suppose this means that the operatic society is going on the warpath again? You remember some time back they gave an opera in French, and a nice muck they made of it."

"We did our best," said Hazeldene, who was a member of the W.O.D.S., and naturally felt called upon to stand up for the operatic society.

"Jolly good best, too!" said Bulstrode. "If you're going to start something like that again, all I say is—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,552.

By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

"Piffle!" said Micky Desmond. "Faith, and ye're right, Bulstrode darling! All ye say is howlin' piffle intirely!"

And Desmond walked away with Hazeldene. Some of the Removites giggled, and Bulstrode scowled, and looked inclined to follow the Irish junior with warlike intent. But just then a fat junior in a large pair of spectacles came along the passage from the Junior Common-room, and proceeded to select a spot on the board to stick up a paper.

"Hallo! More notices!" said Skinner. "We shall be getting fed-up with notices soon. What is your rot about, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter turned his head and blinked at Skinner through the large glasses which had earned him the nickname of the Owl in the Lower Fourth. "You're quite mistaken, Skinner.

Bulstrode & Co. are not slow to seize the chance of ragging the Wharton Operatic Society. But much to their annoyance, the W.O.S. proves one too many for them!

This isn't rot. It's an awfully interesting matter. You'll see."

And he pinned up the notice, his paper overlapping Harry Wharton's, and then stepped back to admire it.

There was a general giggle among the crowd of juniors as they read the notice, written out in the sprawling hand of Billy Bunter:

"NOTICE!

"A grand ventriloquial entertainment will be given in Study No. 1 in the Remove at a quarter past seven this evening. Admission free to members of the Remove, also to members of other Forms.

"William George Bunter, Esquire, the famous Greyfriars ventriloquist, will give a series of imitations in his well-known style.

"(Signed)

"WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that notice!" said Bunter. "You all know that I've been practising ventiloquism for a long time, and it's about time I gave a show, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've kept up the ventriloquial drone till I'm perfect, and I've prac-

tised throwing my voice till I can throw it about like—like a cricket ball," said Bunter. "This entertainment will be a ripper, I can tell you."

"What about the other fellows in the study?" grinned Skinner. "Are they going to let you do it?"

"I haven't asked them. I suppose I can do as I like in my own study?"

"Ha, ha! Of course!"

"We shall have finished tea, and prep can be left till afterwards, if they don't do it before seven," said Bunter. "They usually get done before seven, now the evenings are drawing in so much. I suppose they will stay to the entertainment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What the dickens are you cackling about?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bulstrode, wiping his eyes. "Only we'll come to the entertainment, Bunter. You can rely on that."

"Yes, rather," said Skinner. "If a fellow can't give a ventriloquial show in his own study, whose study can he give it in?"

"Exactly!"

"We'll all come."

"Very good," said Bunter modestly. "It's worth it, I can tell you that. It's not often you get a chance to go to a really first-class ventriloquial entertainment for nothing."

"Right-ho! We'll come."

"There's no charge for admission, but if you fellows like to stand me a feed afterwards, there would be no objection."

"No need to tell us that, Bunty."

"What I mean is, if you have a jolly good entertainment for nothing, it's up to you to stand a good feed for the performer," said Bunter. "It's taken me a long time to master the principles of ventriloquism, I can tell you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sorry the study won't hold the whole Form," said Bunter. "Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do! If you all want to come, I'll ask Quelch to let me have the use of the Form-room for an hour."

"Not a bit of it," said Bulstrode. "We want to come and hear you in the study."

"That's it," said Skinner. "That's the cream of the joke—I mean, that's the greatest attraction—the fact that it's given in Study No. 1."

"Blessed if I can see why!" said Bunter, blinking in a puzzled way at the grinning Removites. "It's roomy for a study, but it won't hold many fellows, and some of you aren't on good terms with Wharton, too. It would be better to have the Form-room."

"Stuff! All who can't get into the study can stand in the passage."

"Yes, certainly, but—"

"Mind, if it's not given in the study, nobody will come," said Bulstrode.

"That's the great point."

"Right-ho, then, if you prefer it! But—"

"That's settled, then. I can answer for the Remove rolling up in thousands," said Bulstrode. "Ha, ha, ha!"

ANOTHER FULL-OF-FUN STORY OF THE EARLY SCHOOLDAYS OF YOUR OLD FAVOURITES OF GREYFRIARS.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove. Billy Bunter blinked at them in perplexity.

"You fellows look as if you had a joke on," he said; "but I'm blessed if I can see it!"

"That's all right, Bunter. Don't bother. We'll come."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind you're ready sharp on time," said Bulstrode. "We shall be there."

"Oh, certainly!"

And Billy Bunter, very pleased with the enthusiastic reception his announcement had met with, but a little puzzled by the merriment of the Removites, toddled away. The juniors went off into a fresh yell of laughter.

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Bulstrode. "This will be rich. Bunter hasn't the faintest idea that Wharton is holding a meeting of the dramatic society in the study at the same time this evening."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was drawing up his precious notice in the Common-room while Wharton was writing his upstairs," grinned Skinner.

"We're going!" said Bulstrode. "We've a right to accept Billy Bunter's invitation if we like—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

"If it interferes with the harmony of the operatic society that's not our fault."

"Certainly not! Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll all go, and those who can't get in can stand in the passage and yell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites yelled again over the idea. It was pretty certain that the meeting of the Wharton Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society would be subject to interruptions that evening.

Cross-purposes!

BILLY BUNTER entered Study No. 1, the room he shared with the Famous Four—Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Singh. The four chums of the Remove were there, busy with preparation. Billy Bunter looked at them and then at the fire, which was nearly out.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't interrupt, Bunter—we're busy."

"But I say, you fellows, what about tea?"

"Go and eat coke!" said Nugent.

"Yes, but—"

"Look here," said Harry Wharton, "we've got to get our prep done before tea, so we shall have to mug it up as quickly as possible. Tea's going to be over by seven so as to have the study clear for the fellows to come."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Bunter, looking very pleased. As he was ignorant of the fact that a meeting of the operatic society had been called for that evening in the study, he could only imagine that Wharton was referring to the forthcoming ventriloquial entertainment. "I'm glad to see you're taking an interest in the matter."

Wharton stared at him.

"Eh, what?"

"I say I'm glad to see you're taking an interest in the matter."

"Off your rocker?" said Harry pleasantly. "I suppose I should take as much interest in the matter as anybody else? What are you driving at?"



There was a general giggle among the juniors as Billy Bunter pinned up his notice on the board. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at in that notice!" said Bunter indignantly. "The entertainment will be a ripper!"

"Oh, keep your wool on, Wharton, and don't take me up so sharply!" said Bunter. "You never took so much interest in the matter before."

"Oh, he's dotty!" said Nugent. "Don't jaw, old chap; I want to get through."

"The jawfulness of the honourable Bunter is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The shutupfulness would be the boonful blessing!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Quiet!" roared Bob Cherry. "Another word and I'll brain you with a ruler!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry jumped up and grasped an ebony ruler. Billy Bunter dodged round the table.

"I say, you fellows, I was only going to say that I've done my prep, and I'll get tea while you're finishing yours, if you like."

"Oh, then I won't brain you!" said Bob Cherry, sitting down. "It's a good idea, but mind you don't jaw!"

"Oh, really—"

"Not a word!" roared Bob Cherry. "Dry up, you gasbag!"

And Billy Bunter dried up at last. He proceeded to get tea, making up the fire and jamming the kettle down on it, warming the teapot, and cleaning out the frying-pan with the flyleaf of a Latin grammar. Then he produced the provisions from the cupboard and eyed them rather doubtfully.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!"

"But, I say, this is rather important, you know. There's only a few sausages here, and one gammon rasher, and

that's not much between five fellows—"

"Go and eat coke, then, and leave only four!"

"Don't be a beast, Cherry! I'm not thinking about myself. The gammon rasher and three of the sausages will be enough for me. But that will leave only two sausages for you fellows, and you'll be hungry."

"Are you going to shut up while we get our work done?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm only speaking for your sakes. If you like I'll ruh down to the tuckshop now and get in some more grub. There's plenty of time!"

"Shut up!"

"Yes, but—"

Bob Cherry felt for the ruler, and Billy Bunter hastily backed away.

"Oh, all right—it's just as you like. I was only thinking of you fellows. I'll cook these, and we'll make 'em do. But you'll be hungry! Don't say I didn't warn you!"

And Bunter jammed the frying-pan on the fire with a righteous air.

The smell of cooking bacon soon filled the study, and a very appetising smell it was to the chums of the Remove, who were very hungry. They had put off the usual tea-time to get their preparation finished first. The work was finished about the same time as the cooking, and the Famous Four put their books away.

"Well, that niffs all right," said Nugent. "Nearly ready, Bunter?"

"Yes, it's quite done," said Bunter.

"But I warned you that there wasn't enough to go round, you fellows."

"We'll make it do! Inky doesn't eat bacon or pork sausages."

"There's nothing for Inky but bread and jam—"

"The jamfulness is excellent," said Hurree Jainsset Ram Singh, "and the esteemed bread is the most excellent of profugfulness."

"Glad you like it," said Bunter. "I like something solid myself. I'm not greedy, but I do like a lot. There you are, you fellows—it's done, and precious little it is! When I've had my whack there won't be much for you."

"Only we're going to have our whack first," chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Serve it up, you young cannibal! Why, where are the rest of the sausages? There were five, and now there are only three."

Billy Bunter assumed an injured expression.

"I suppose I was entitled to have a snack as I was doing the cooking?" he said. "I have to keep up my strength. I've got a delicate constitution, and any sort of labour wears me down unless I'm kept up by nourishing food. It's a fortunate thing I like sausages."

"You young cormorant! What are you doing now?"

"Serving myself first. I don't mean to be rude, but in a case like this, where there isn't enough to go round, a fellow has to be careful. You see, if I don't get enough I may break down to-night."

And Billy Bunter served the whole of the bacon and one of the sausages on his plate, and left two sausages for the three hungry juniors. Hurree Singh was already starting on bread-and-jam. The others glared at Billy Bunter. Bob Cherry jerked his plate away just as he was going to start.

"Oh, I say, Cherry—"

Bob Cherry calmly removed the greater part of the provisions from the plate and pushed it back to Bunter with a quarter of a sausage and a fragment of bacon on it.

Bunter blinked at it in dismay and indignation.

"There you are, you young cannibal!" said Bob Cherry. "You've had your whack already!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Another word and I'll clear the lot off!" roared Bob.

Bunter relapsed into indignant silence. Bob Cherry served round the recovered provisions, and with the aid of bread the chums of the Remove made a fairly good meal. There was some bread-and-jam to follow, and the indignant Bunter came out pretty strong in that direction.

"Well, that was not so bad," said Bob Cherry, as he set down his cup.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Getting near time to clear up," said Nugent.

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry."

"Go and eat tinnacks, then!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Time's up!" said Bob Cherry. "You needn't mind leaving a ghost of a smell of a strawberry in the jampot, Bunter. It will keep till to-morrow. Get the table cleared, and let's get the room tidy."

"There's still time to cut down to the tuckshop and get something."

"Well, who's preventing you? Cut off!"

"I want some money. I've been disappointed about a postal order, and I'm out of cash."

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"Then you'll be disappointed about a gorge, too. Take that teapot away!"

"Look here! You wouldn't like me to break down to-night, I suppose?"

"Can't see that it would matter much. You won't have much to do with the show, anyway."

Bunter blinked in indignant amazement at the speaker.

"What do you mean? I shall be the central figure, I suppose?"

"Then you suppose a jolly lot; and it will end in supposition," said Bob Cherry. "Seems to me you're getting a bigger ass than ever lately, Bunt."

"If I were to break down owing to the physical exhaustion brought on by hunger, the results might be serious. I might have a fit—"

"If you start having fits in this study, you'll go out on your neck, I warn you of that in advance. Now shut up, and lend a hand in clearing up the place."

"Come on, there's no time to lose," said Harry Wharton. "I'll open the window, too—can't have a meeting-room niffing of sausages and bacon."

"Good!" said Bunter. "I'm glad—very glad—to see you fellows taking such an interest in the matter. It shows that you are improving in intelligence."

"Blessed if I know what he's driving at," remarked Nugent. "It doesn't matter, anyway. Now the place looks a bit more tidy."

The tea-things had been cleared away into the cupboard, and all signs of the feed put out of sight. The open window let a cool draught of November air into the room. The table was pushed back to the wall, and Bob Cherry industriously swept up the crumbs, and dropped the handbroom into the corner. Then he glanced round the study with considerable satisfaction.

"All right now, Wharton?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry, glancing at his watch. "And it's time for them to come."

"Not quite," said Bunter, looking at his watch. "Another quarter of an hour yet, Wharton."

"Stuff! I put seven on the notice."

"Did you?" said Bunter, staring.

"Like your jolly cheek, I must say."

"Eh—what?"

"I put a quarter-past seven."

Wharton stared at the fat junior in amazement.

"Do you mean to say that you put a quarter-past seven on the notice calling the meeting?" he demanded.

"Certainly!"

"You cheeky young beggar—"

"I thought it would give ample time to get tea over, you see. I didn't know there was going to be such a measly tea," said Bunter disparagingly.

Wharton looked greatly inclined to take the fat junior by his fat ear. But just then there came a thump at the door.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The door opened, and the ruddy face of Micky Desmond presented itself, with Hazeldene just behind. They came into the study, and two or three other fellows followed.

A Slight Misunderstanding!

HARRY WHARTON gave the Removites a cheery nod. Billy Bunter stared at them in astonishment.

"You're on time," said Wharton. "Come in, all of you!"

"I say, you fellows, you're early!" exclaimed Billy Bunter.

"Faith, and it's seven!" said Desmond.

"One minute past," remarked Hazeldene.

"Yes; but the notice said a quarter-past—"

"Rats! The notice said seven o'clock."

"Faith, and it did intirely!"

"Seven o'clock was on the notice," said Morgan, "plain as your face."

"Oh, that's rot, you know! I'm not ready yet."

"Not ready?" said Hazeldene.

"Not ready?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"What the dickens do you mean, you fat ass? You're taking a back seat in this show."

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't see how you can make that out! I suppose my services could hardly be dispensed with this evening, could they?"

"I don't see why not."

"Well, it would be a case of Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out, I rather think. An entertainment without the entertainer—"

"But this isn't going to be an entertainment," said Harry Wharton, in perplexity. "What are you driving at?"

"Oh, you can have your own opinion about that!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity. "You may not consider it in the light of an entertainment. Other fellows do."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Anyway, just wait till it's fairly going before you pass opinions about it," said Billy Bunter. "I'm only asking for a fair show—a fair field and no favour."

"Off his rocker, I suppose!" remarked Hazeldene. "Is he often taken like that?"

"The effect of overfeeding, perhaps," suggested Elliott. "You know he had to be put in the sanatorium last Saturday as the result of overfeeding."

"It wasn't!" yelled Bunter. "I had a cold—a fearful cold—and I couldn't feed it in time. If I had been able to feed my cold, it would have been all right."

"I heard that it was overfeeding," said Elliott, with a shake of the head.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, this is where you take a back seat, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry. "Do shut up, old chap! We ought to be getting to business. Here come some more of the chaps."

Trevor and Gaunt entered the study.

"Now we're all here—" began Harry Wharton.

"Nothing of the sort!" said Billy Bunter. "There's a lot more to come, and all who can't come into the study can stand in the passage. I wish they hadn't come before time, though. I meant to borrow some chairs and shove them in here. Now all the audience will have to stand."

"The—the audience!" said Harry Wharton, looking at Bunter.

"Yes. It would have been better to rig up seats. That's why I allowed a little more time. But it can't be helped now; and perhaps, after all, there will be more room standing. Stand close there, you fellows, in rows, and leave the door clear for the rest to come in."

The Removites exchanged glances. Billy Bunter had some funny ways, but it did really seem to them that he was off his rocker at last. Ignorant of the announcement he had put up of the forthcoming ventriloquial entertainment, the chums of the Remove naturally had

not the faintest idea what he was driving at. They could only stare at him in blank wonder.

"Is this a little joke?" asked Gaunt. "If not, what does it mean?"

"Oh, Billy Bunter's gone right off at last, that's all!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Then what do you mean, you young Owl?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean, Cherry. Get closer, you chaps, and stand in a row, and leave the door free."

"Faith, and why should we stand in a row?"

"To take up less room, of course!"
"And phwat for would we be taking up less room?"

"To give the other chaps a chance. Some of them will have to stand in the passage, but we must make room for as many as possible in the study."

"You had better go and sit down, Bunter," said Harry Wharton gently. "There are no other fellows to come."

"Yes, there are. Bulstrode told me he was coming, and Skinner, Stott, and Russell, and I think, Snoop. Most of the Form will be here."

"But Bulstrode and his lot won't come. They don't belong to the operatic society."

"What about that? I'm not talking about the operatic society. We're going to fill the study as full as it will hold, and the rest can stand in the passage."

"We're going to do nothing of the sort! Look here, Bunter—"

"Now, look here, Wharton—"
"I tell you—"

"I tell you I must be allowed to run my own show my own way," said Bunter firmly. "I'm very glad of any assistance from you fellows, but I can't have you interfering. I want that understood once and for all."

Wharton could only stare. Bob Cherry tapped his forehead significantly.

"Fairly off his onion!" murmured Nugent.

"The off-fulness of his onion is terrific!"

"Ah, here they come!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, as footsteps were heard in the passage. "It's nearly a quarter-past. Now, make room, you fellows!"

Bulstrode looked in at the open door. Behind him were Skinner, Snoop, Stott, Russell, and a crowd of the Remove, all grinning.

"Come in!" said Billy Bunter. "Crowd up there, you fellows! I say, make room. I'm not quite ready, Bulstrode, but you won't mind waiting a bit?"

"Certainly not!" said Bulstrode. "Pleased!" grinned Skinner.

"Look here," exclaimed Harry Wharton sharply, "you fellows can't come in here! There's no room, for one thing, and it's a private meeting, for another."

"Oh, really, Wharton, it's nothing of the sort!"

"Hold your tongue, Bunter, you ass!"

"I'm not going to hold my tongue. I know there's a lot of jealousy in this study, but I'm not going to be influenced by that."

"Clean off!" murmured Nugent. "Quite right!" grinned Bulstrode.

"It's a case of jealousy, and my advice to Bunter is go ahead."

"That's what I'm going to do, Bulstrode. Blessed if I can see why Wharton wants to keep fellows away from my entertainment—"

"Are you absolutely dotty, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"
"You can't come in here, Bulstrode," said Wharton. "This is a private meeting of the operatic society, and I've warned you that only members were admitted."

"Blow your old operatic society!" said Bulstrode. "We haven't come to your meeting. We've come to Bunter's ventriloquial entertainment."

"To—to what?"
"Bunter's ventriloquial entertainment. Come in, you fellows!"

And the chuckling Removites crowded in. The occupants of the study were too amazed to make a movement to stop them.

"Bunter, do you mean to say that you are giving a ventriloquial entertainment?"

"Oh, I say, Wharton, don't pretend you don't know! Haven't you fellows been helping me to clear up the study ready for the show?"

"My—my only hat!" gasped Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. Bunter blinked at the chums of the Remove in amazement.

"What the dickens are you cackling at now? Nothing surprising in my giving a ventriloquial entertainment, is there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
And the Famous Four, unable to restrain their merriment at the utter absurdity of the situation, yelled with laughter.

Bunter's Turn!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round him in surprise and indignation. He could see nothing to laugh at himself.

"Are you fellows off your silly rockers?" he inquired.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, you'll be the death of me!" sobbed Bob Cherry.

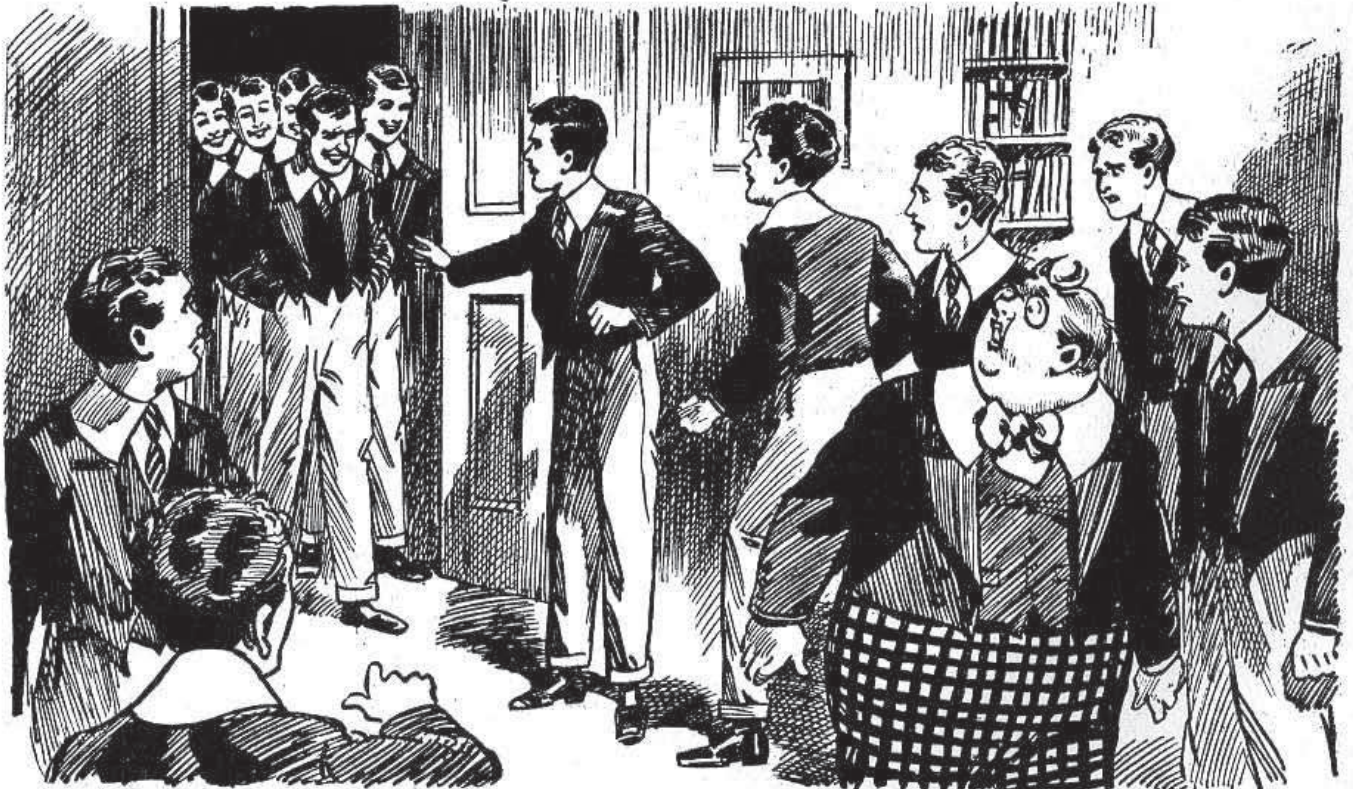
"The fact is, Bunter—ha, ha, ha!—the fact is," said Nugent—"ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. "The fact is, Bunter, that the Wharton Operatic Society is meeting in this study at seven—"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"
"And I put a notice on the board to that effect—"

"Well, I can't help that. I put a notice up to the effect that I was going to give a ventriloquial entertainment at a quarter past seven—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"You can't come in here, Bulstrode," said Wharton. "I've warned you that only members were admitted." "Blow your old operatic society!" exclaimed the Remove bully. "We've come to Bunter's ventriloquial entertainment!"
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"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your rotten old meeting is of no consequence! I'm going to give a really instructive and entertaining ventriloquial show. I'm going to give imitations and also make my voice appear to come from various quarters. Of course, you fellows will be willing to give up your meeting?"

"Yes, I don't think!" remarked Nugent.

"But I can't very well put off my ventriloquial entertainment," expostulated Billy Bunter. "Here's about half the Form come to hear it."

This statement was quite correct. The study was crammed, the passage outside was blocked, and fresh footsteps could be heard up and down the corridor. More than half the Remove were backing up Bulstrode & Co. in his joke at the expense of the Famous Four.

"I can't disappoint all these fellows now, can I?" said Billy Bunter. "You chaps will have to postpone your meeting."

"Oh, they can hold the meeting along with the ventriloquial entertainment," said Bulstrode, grinning.

"Good wheeze!" said Skinner heartily.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Anyway, we're not going to miss the show we've come to see."

"Not much!" roared twenty voices. "Get on with the entertainment!"

Harry Wharton looked angry. He knew perfectly well that not a single member of the Remove wanted to hear Billy Bunter ventriloquise and that they were only pulling the fat junior's leg.

"Look here, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "A joke's a joke, and you've had your fun. Now clear out and let us hold our meeting."

"I say, you fellows, don't go. I'm just going to begin."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"Now, look here, Wharton, don't you be so beastly selfish!" said the Owl of the Remove in a tone of patient remonstrance. "Here's half a Form come to hear me give an entertainment, and you want to spoil the whole show just for the sake of holding a rotten meeting. I must say I'm surprised at you, Wharton!"

"You young ass—"

"It's no good calling me names; that won't alter facts. Gentlemen of the Remove, I'm glad to see you in this study on the occasion of my first public performance as a ventriloquist—"

"Get out, you fellows!"

"Rats! Let Bunter go on! Carry on, Bunter!"

"Go it, Bunt!"

"On the bawl, porpoise!"

"Stick to it, Owl!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I will now proceed to make my voice come from the chimney—"

"You'll now proceed to shut up, or else you'll proceed out of this study on your neck, you young idiot!" said Bob Cherry, shaking the amateur ventriloquist by the shoulder.

"Leggo, Cherry! You might make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

"Are you going to shut up?"

"Certainly not! I'm sorry, Cherry, but in the circumstances I can't very well give in, with twenty fellows eagerly expecting my splendid entertainment."

Harry Wharton laughed. The Removites cheered Bunter. The members of the operatic society were half laughing, half angry. The meeting

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and the important discussion certainly could not proceed under present conditions. Neither could the ventriloquial entertainment; but nobody besides the ventriloquist wanted that to proceed.

"Go it, Bunter!" said Skinner encouragingly. "You were going to make your voice proceed up the chimney—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I said from the chimney, Skinner—"

"Bunter, you're interrupting the meeting—"

"Wharton, old chap, you're spoiling the show—"

"I'll tell you what," said Wharton. "Go and give the ventriloquial show in the Form-room. There's plenty of room there for the audience."

"Well, I don't mind—"

"But I do!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "We've come here and here we're going to stop. Bunter, we're waiting for you to begin."

"Faith, and sure we're waiting for him to leave off—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Go it, Owl!"

The Remove roared encouragement. Wharton began to look worried. There certainly wasn't much chance of the operatic meeting getting to business. The Remove were enjoying the rag too much to leave off.

"I will now proceed to make my voice come from—"

"The proceedfulness is terrific."

The Famous Four looked at one another. They were inclined to eject the intruders by main force, and the operatic society would willingly have backed them up. But half the Form or more were in it, and Bulstrode & Co. would have been glad of the chance to start wrecking the study. An idea flashed into Nugent's mind, and he whispered quickly to Wharton:

"Let Bunter go ahead—that will shift 'em!"

Wharton started. It was a simple plan—so simple that it had not occurred to him. It was certain that nothing short of wild horses would drag anybody in the Remove to a ventriloquial entertainment given by Billy Bunter. Bulstrode and his backers were only "rotting," and Wharton immediately realised that the quickest way to get rid of them was to give Bunter his head.

"Very well," said Harry Wharton quietly, "the meeting of the operatic society is postponed till after the ventriloquial entertainment."

"Oh, really, Wharton, that's jolly decent of you! Of course, your old meeting doesn't amount to much, compared with my entertainment, but I never expected you to see it in that light. Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I will now proceed with the ventriloquial entertainment. Wharton, if you care to act as chairman for the evening I shall be glad."

"Certainly!" said Harry, laughing. "I believe a chairman's duty is to introduce the performer. Gentlemen of the Remove, this fat animal is a fathead you know well—"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"At various times, when he is not eating—which is but seldom—he emits all sorts of curious grunts and wheezes from his throat, and these curious sounds he designates as ventriloquism—"

"I say, Wharton—"

"He is now about to proceed to make an ass of himself, as usual. Gentlemen are at liberty to laugh as much as they like, but they must not throw things. This is where you start, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, it's no good taking any notice of what chaps in this study say. They are actuated by jealousy of my wonderful abilities. I will now proceed to make my voice come from the window. The first item is to hold a conversation with a chap supposed to be outside the window. Now, then, I begin, and the supposed chap answers. Bill! I say, Bill, are you there?"

Bunter paused and then squeaked "Yes," which was supposed to be the reply of the supposed Bill outside the window. But as it was perfectly plain to everybody present that it was Bunter who squeaked, the experiment could not be called exactly a success.

"Having made the supposed person answer—"

"Well, why don't you?" asked Skinner.

"I have—I made him say 'Yes.'"

"But it was you who said 'Yes.'"

"Yes, I know I said 'Yes,' but I said it in a ventriloquial voice, and made it appear to come from outside the window."

"That you jolly well didn't!" said Stott. "It came from you plain enough."

"I say, Stott, old man, you oughtn't to be so stupid as that. Any reasonable chap will admit that the voice appeared to come from the window."

"It appeared to come from a fat porpoise," said Bulstrode. "I've had enough of this giddy entertainment."

"I say, Bulstrode, don't go yet. I—"

"Oh, rats!" said Bulstrode; and he left the study, followed by most of the others. Billy Bunter blinked round in dismay at his fast diminishing audience.

"Here, hold on, you fellows! I haven't started yet. I will now proceed to continue my conversation with the supposed person outside the window. Bill! I say, have you been there long?"

"I've been 'ere an hour!" squeaked the reply.

"There, I think that was pretty good," said Bunter. "The deception was splendid. Wouldn't you have sworn that the voice came from outside the window, Skinner?"

"Not much! I could see it was you squeaking!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! I say, Wharton, wouldn't you have sworn it was Bill speaking outside the window?"

"I hardly think so," said Harry, laughing.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, Cherry, wouldn't you have sworn—"

"Certainly not!" said Bob Cherry. "I've been brought up very carefully, and I never swear."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, where are you going? I haven't fairly started yet. Well I'm blessed, they've all gone! This is really too bad of you, Wharton!"

"Of me?" said Harry, staring.

"Yes, it was owing to the fuss you made that they haven't stayed to listen to my ventriloquial entertainment. It was really too bad."

"You young ass!" said Nugent. "Couldn't you see that they were only rotting, and they came here only to rag the operatic meeting?"

"Of course, that's all rot! It was Wharton's fault."

"Well, they're gone, anyway," said Harry Wharton, closing the door. "The ventriloquial entertainment is over and we can get to business."

"I say, hold on, Wharton! I regard you fellows as being more intellectual than the rest of the Remove, and really as forming a select audience, and upon

the whole I'd rather give you a ventriloquial entertainment by yourselves than with all that crowd."

"We couldn't think of troubling you, Bunter—"

"No trouble at all. I was prepared to ventriloquise for an hour, and it won't hurt me to go on. I will now proceed to make my voice come from— What are you picking up that inkpot for, Cherry?"

"It's to pour down your neck if you don't immediately shut up."

"But I'm going to give a ventriloquial—"

"No fear! Ventriloquism is off!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Are you going to shut up, or will you have the ink down the back of your silly neck?" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, if you put it like that, Cherry," said Billy Bunter, dodging away in alarm, "I don't mind putting the ventriloquism off till another occasion."

"You'd better!" grunted Bob Cherry. And the amateur operatic society at last got to business.

Looking Ahead!

"GENTLEMEN of the operatic society—"

"Hear, hear!" said the operatic society, glad to get to business at last.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up! Keep that inkpot ready, Bob, and pour it over Bunter if he speaks again."

"Certainly!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—ow—keep off—I'll shut up!"

"Gentlemen of the operatic society, you are called together to discuss a matter of some importance to the society and the school in general—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Christmas is approaching," said Harry Wharton. "It may be several weeks to Christmas yet, but what of that? It behoves the junior operatic society to be up and doing. The Sixth Form Dramatic Society is up and doing. They've got some rot they're going to act just before breaking-up for the Christmas holidays—"

"We know them," said Nugent. "Same old piffle! The seniors all go and see it done out of politeness, and the fags go in case they should be licked for not going."

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Still, the Sixth are up and doing," said Wharton. "It behoves the operatic society to be up and doing, too. What we want to give is something in the nature of a Christmas entertainment. It may be early yet to think of it, but there will be a lot of rehearsing wanted if we're to be ready to give the show before breaking up."

"Good! Nothing like being early birds," said Elliott. "I agree with you."

"Hear, hear!"

"That point being settled," said Wharton, "we've got to discuss the matter and decide what we're going to give. I think, for the present, we will leave grand opera alone."

"I don't know," said Nugent. "I was thinking that something in the Wagnerian line would be impressive. One of Wagner's simple operas—'Lohengrin,' or 'Tannhauser.'"

"Good!" exclaimed Trevor immediately. "I could do the 'Star of Eve' in 'Tannhauser' a treat. My aunt says—"

"It would have to be in German," said Nugent loftily. "No grand opera

in English for the Wharton Operatic Society."

"Oh, rot! We don't know enough German."

"You learn the parts by heart, fathead!"

"Well, then, the fellows don't know enough German to understand us."

"They don't understand the Greek play by the Sixth, as far as that goes."

"I suppose we want to be understood, though."

"I can't see that it's absolutely essential. Hazeldene's sister knows German, and she could take the part of Elizabeth. It would suit her, and I'm sure she'd come. Wouldn't she, Vaseline?"

"Oh, Marjorie would come!" said Hazeldene. "But I don't know about learning up a part in a German opera. That takes time."

"Oh, hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "I think we can agree to bar all opera in foreign tongues for the present. We'll leave that till later. We don't want the affair to end in a muck-up."

"Oh, very well!" said Nugent. "Perhaps it wouldn't be Christmasy. Only I can do the 'Grand March' in 'Tannhauser' on the mouth-organ, you know."

"Ha, ha! That's a jolly good reason for setting a lot of chaps learning up difficult German parts."

"Well, what's the next idea, then?"

"I want to receive suggestions from you chaps—"

"Well, then, I suggest a variety entertainment," said Trevor.

"Rats! No music-hall business here for—"

"I mean an entertainment with varied items."

"Oh, I see!"

"Faith, and there's a lot of difference between a variety entertainment and an entertainment with varied items, intirely!"

"Suppose each of us sings a song, or does a recitation, or an instrumental solo," went on Trevor. "I could do the 'Star of Eve,' from 'Tannhauser.' My aunt says I sing that sweetly."

"By Jove! And I'd do a recitation," said Gaunt. "There's a short piece from Shelley I know. I don't quite know what it all means, but it's very impressive done in the right tone of voice. It goes—"

"Never mind how it goes!"

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings,
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."

"I forget whether that's the beginning or the end," said Gaunt confidentially. "But I can look it up, you know, and get it off all right."

"What price a concerted piece?" suggested Harry Wharton. "We aren't quite up to giving grand opera. But what price an oratorio?"

"Ripping!" exclaimed Nugent.

"You see, giving an oratorio, it's not necessary to make up for the parts, and there's no acting; you just stand up and sing your little bit," said Wharton.

"And I must say that an oratorio is more suitable for Christmas-time."

"Ripping!" repeated Nugent. "We'll give Handel's 'Saul.' I can play the 'Dead March' on my mouth-organ."

"Mouth-organs will have to be barred in an oratorio," said Hazeldene. "I put it to the meeting. Is a mouth-organ a respectable thing to introduce into an oratorio?"

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You want some ink down your neck, I see!"

"Oh, really, Cherry, it's all right! I'll shut up, you beast!"

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings—"

"Oh, let Ozymandias rest in his grave!" said Morgan. "I think we ought to give a variety entertainment. I should then be able to sing a song in Welsh. 'The Bells of Aberdovey' in Welsh would go down well."

"Yes, but—"

"The more variety you work in the better," said Morgan; "and Welsh is the most musical language in the world—"

"Yes, but I was thinking of an oratorio—"

"I say, you fellows, I could suggest an idea—"

"Shut up!"

"Faith, and give him a chance! Out of the mouths of babes and silly duffers, you know. What is it, Bunter?"

"I'm glad to see that everybody here isn't jealous of my abilities," said Bunter. "I really have two very good ideas. The first is that, instead of the operatic society giving a show, I would give a ripping ventriloquial entertainment."

"Oh, ring off, Bunter!"

"Well, if you don't like that idea, I have another nearly as good. Suppose I gave a solo, with you fellows in chorus. We could pick out a thing with a long chorus, so as to give you a chance. With my fine baritone—"

"Ha, ha, ha! His fine baritone!"

"His froggy croak!"

"Oh, really, Vaseline! With my fine baritone, and my great abilities as an actor, it would go down well, and the audience would be willing to stand anything you did."

"Have you any more ripping ideas, Bunter?"

"Not just now, but I could soon think of some if I tried."

"Then think of some and be quiet. Now, to get to business again—"

"I say, Wharton, aren't you going to adopt either of my ideas?"

"Not this time," said Wharton. "Perhaps some other time; we'll think about it on November 31st."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Ring off! Now, gentlemen—"

"My name is Ozymandias—"

"Oh, hang Ozymandias! Gentlemen is it to be an oratorio, and if so, which?"

And the gentlemen put their heads together over the matter.

A Discussion—With Specimens!

HARRY WHARTON was very much in favour of the Christmas entertainment taking the form of an oratorio. As president of the operatic society, he naturally wished the thing to take on as high a tone as possible. Probably he had not fully counted the difficulties. Like many an operatic society, the Greyfriars fellows wanted to do something too ambitious, but did not like hard work. To study and mug over the parts every evening for weeks together was not exactly attractive.

Morgan, the Welsh junior, was the only one who seemed in favour of the idea at all. Like many a Welsh lad, he had sung sacred music since he was old enough to sing at all, and he would have been the mainstay of the operatic society in their difficult undertaking.

But even Morgan did not enthuse over it.

"Better have a variety entertainment," he remarked. "I'd give you the 'Bells of Aberdovey,' or the 'Ash Grove' in Welsh, and the audience would be bound to like them."

"I rather agree with Morgan that a variety entertainment would be nearer the mark," said Trevor. "I don't know about songs in Welsh, or any old recitations, but I could give you 'John Peel'—"

"Not now, old man."

"I don't see why I shouldn't give you a specimen. 'D'ye ken John Peel, with his coat so gay? D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day? D'ye ken John Peel'—"

"Yes, we ken John Peel. We ken him well enough. Hold on!"

"'D'ye ken John Peel when he's far, far away, with his hounds, and his horn—"

"Ring off!"

"With his hounds and his horn in the morning," concluded Trevor victoriously.

"That's not such a bad song, either," said Bob Cherry. "And I could give you 'Drinking,' you know. I like 'Drinking'—"

"Well, you guzzler!"

"Ass! I mean I like the song. I can give it to you in either English or German."

"You can't."

"In kuhlen Keller sitz ich hier,
Auf eincin Fass voll reben,
Bin gutep—"

"Oh, hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "This is a discussion of the programme, not a rehearsal! If we have everything at full length—"

"The lengthfulness would be terrific!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry. "I only wanted to be in the fashion."

"You don't like the idea of an oratorio, I see," said Wharton, quite good-humouredly. "I myself think that we ought to give something as good as possible, but it's for the meeting to decide. We'll consider oratorio barred."

"Well, I really think it would be a bit above our weight."

"Oratorio is barred, as being above the heads of the audience," said Wharton, "to say nothing of our own heads. The next serious proposal is an act from Shakespeare."

"Too much like work," murmured Bob Cherry.

"It seems, however, that the operatic society prefers a variety entertainment—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Right-ho, then!" said Harry Wharton. "I admit, I would rather have had an oratorio or Shakespeare, but the voice of the majority settles it."

We'll make it a variety entertainment, and there's no reason why it cannot be made instructive, amusing, and elevating."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!"

"Go on, Mr. President."

"But I say, you fellows, I've got an idea. If you're going to give a variety entertainment it would be a good wheeze to work in a ventriloquial turn and—"

"Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We ought to discuss the programme before we adjourn the meeting," said Bob Cherry.

"Certainly! We— My hat! What's the fearful row?"

A terrific din had become audible in the passage all of a sudden, quite close to the door of Study No. 1. It was a sound of tramping feet and loud voices, and the members of the operatic society could not hear themselves speak. They looked at one another in amazement.

"What on earth is that row?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton strode to the door and flung it open. A curious scene met his gaze.

(What's going on in the Remote passage? Don't miss the fun and excitement in next week's sparkling chapters.)

The Worst Form at St. Jim's!

(Continued from page 21.)

"What you've done!" shrieked Hobbs.

"I won't quarrel with you, young Hobbs—not in Miss Marie's presence," said Wally loftily. "I've got some manners, I hope. I can only say I'm ashamed of the lot of you, and I'm not surprised that Miss Marie won't have anything more to do with us. But—but, I say, Miss Marie, you might overlook it for this once; those kids don't really know any better. I'll jolly well keep 'em in order after this, if you'll keep on taking the Third."

"Will you keep in order yourself?" asked Miss Marie.

"I?" ejaculated Wally, somewhat taken aback. "I—I—well, I like that! I mean, yes, I will; I'll be as good as gold—gooder than I am with Selby—I mean, Mr. Selby."

"We'll all be as good as anything," said Joe Frayne distressfully. "Do overlook it just this 'ere once, and you'll see, Miss Marie!"

"Do!" chorused the Third.

"Very well," said Miss Marie. "I will try again to-morrow."

"Bravo!" roared Frayne.

"Come away!" said Wally loftily. "Don't bother Miss Marie, kicking up your fag rows here. Thank you, Miss Marie. I'll see that the young brutes play up after this. You can see they're ashamed of themselves, and—and," burst out Wally, in an outbreak of repentance, "and—and so am I!"

And Wally marched his dusty army out of the garden. They left Miss Marie smiling now.

The next day the Third Form at St. Jim's were a marvel to behold.

Tom Merry & Co., when they heard how beautifully things were going in the Third Form Room, could scarcely believe their ears. Miss Marie was happy and satisfied, and the fags were as good as gold.

Monty Lowther declared that he would write a special article on it for the next number of the "Weekly." Manners declared, in accents almost of awe, that he hadn't seen a single spoiled collar in the Third Form that day.

When the Third Form wore clean collars all at once on a weekday it was

evident that they were in an unusual state of exaltation.

Wally, it is true, had promised all the Third that if there were the slightest sign of a rag in the Form-room he would slaughter the ragger after lessons. Hobbs, on the other hand, had promised Wally that if he started any more of his tricks, he—Hobbs—would massacre him.

But inside the Form-room all was peace—beautiful peace—and lessons went off like clockwork. Having settled down to take their Form-mistress seriously, the Third made the discovery that a charming and sweet-tempered Form-mistress was much more agreeable than a crusty old Form-master, and they realised that they were in luck.

Indeed, as Wally remarked, there was only one cloud on the horizon. In the long run Mr. Selby was bound to get well, and then the Third Form would have to say good-bye to their Form-mistress. But, meanwhile, everything went on quite swimmingly with the worst Form at St. Jim's.

(Next Wednesday: "Gussy's in LOVE AGAIN!"—and he's funnier than ever in his latest love affair! Look out for this lively long yarn. Order your GEM early.)

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