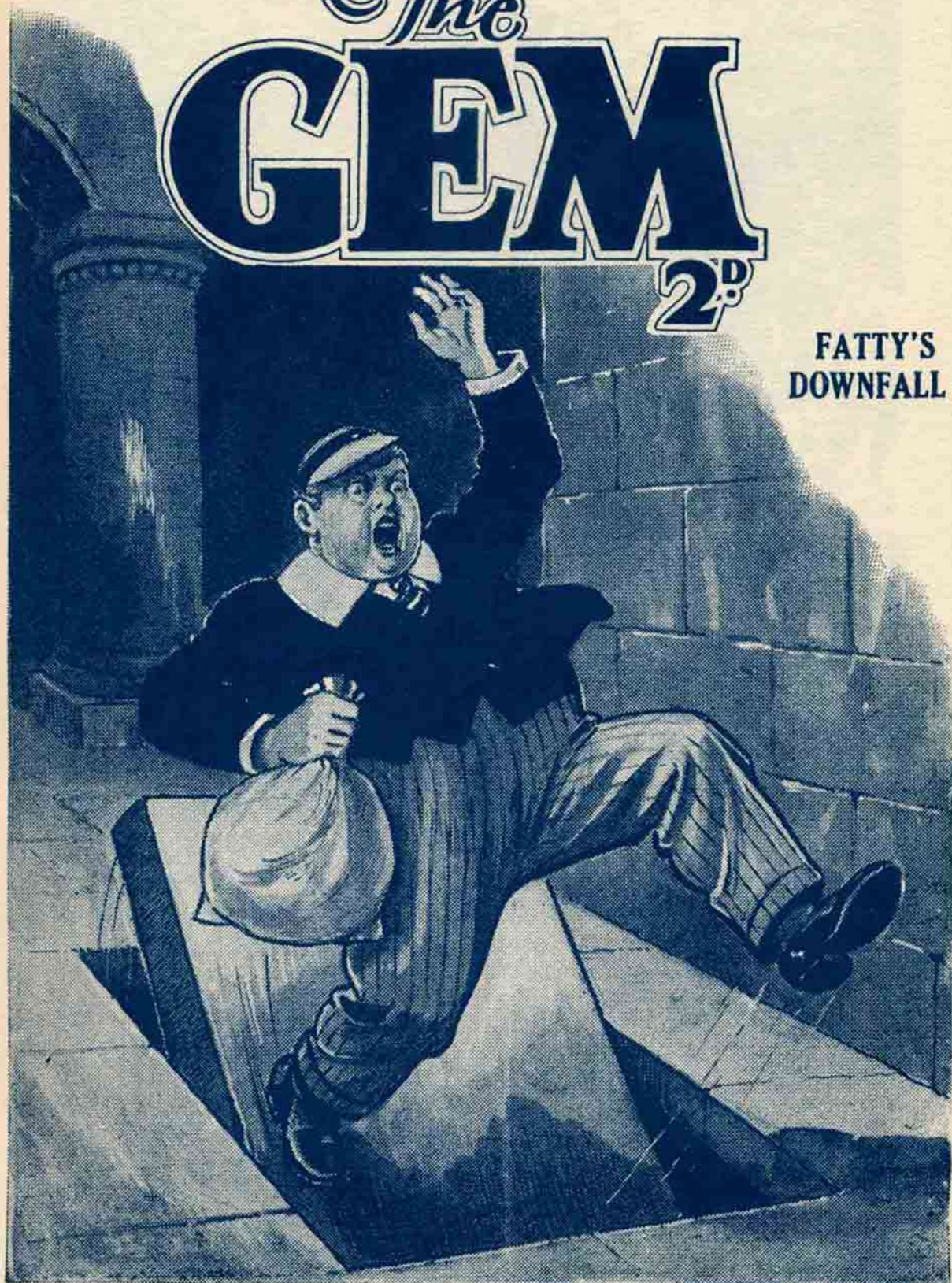


**"THE SECRET PASSAGE!"** LIVELY NEW YARN of RAGGING  
AND RIVALRY AT ST. JIM'S.

# *The* **GEM** 2<sup>D</sup>

**FATTY'S  
DOWNFALL!**





# Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

"The Black Shadow," of Middlesex, writes:

Get ready! If Tom Merry is 16, why is he not in the Fifth? Is he the best footballer in the Fourth? Best boxer? Best cricketer? Or is it Talbot? Best at athletics? How tall? Talbot used to be the most popular fellow in the Fourth. Why is it Tom Merry now? How old, how tall, is Kildare? Ditto Dr. Holmes? Try and solve this cold—I mean code:

XI I XIII XXII V XVIII XXV  
VII XV XV IV I XX XIX XVI XV  
XVIII XX.

I've given it to the Home Office. I am the greatest code inventor of all time.

P.S.—I'm going to Winchester College shortly.

ANSWER: "I AM VERY GOOD AT SPORT." Right? Watch your arithmetic. "I," your first letter, is the ninth letter of the alphabet, not the eleventh. It might give the Home Office a "chill," but I didn't "catch cold" over your "code." Re your umpty-eight questions about Tom Merry. Credit as he would be to any Form, Tom Merry is NOT in the Fourth. He is in the Shell, 'twixt Fifth and Fourth. Best footballer, yes. Boxer, yes. Level with Talbot at cricket. Merry is a crack athlete. Height 5 ft. 5½ ins. Both he and Talbot enjoy plenty of popularity, and are great friends. Kildare, 17 years 8 months, just over 6 ft. I thought of knocking on Dr. Holmes' door and demanding details, but thought better of it. The Head looks 5 ft. 10 ins.

P.S.—Polish up your arithmetic before you go to Winchester, won't you? What, there already? Too bad!

B. D., of Manor Park, writes:

For the first time in the history of your column you are about to be stumped. And if you were not such a "good little Georgie" I'd bet you two to one in quids you don't answer the last two questions:

1. When shall we get yarns about Glyn, Kerr, and Talbot?

2. How many "William" books have there been?

3. Where does Richmal Crompton live?

P.S. You won't print this because you are scared of being made out a dunce!

ANSWER: It would be a shame to take your money! Up to the time of writing twenty "William" books have been published. The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,635.

author Richmal Crompton lives in Bromley, Kent. Now, whose face is red?

Kerr figures prominently in the present new series. Glyn and Talbot will have their turn soon.

P.S. Scared, huh! Try again!

"Very Brainy," of Essex, writes:

Blake, old son, ask Kerr to solve this:

7	19	22	8	7	12	9	18	22	8	
12	21	7	19	22	8	26	18	13	7	8
26	9	22	5	22	9	2	20	12	12	23

Meanwhile, I'll work it out myself

ANSWER: Owing perhaps to your clear figures—or possibly to his deductive faculties—"Detective" Kerr took exactly 10½ secs. over this message. It reads: "THE STORIES OF THE SALVTS ARE VERY GOOD." How done? Well, 22 occurring five times suggested it must be "E." Highest number in your code is 26—number of letters in the alphabet. If E was 22, letters had to be numbered 1 to 26, A to Z. It worked out nicely that way.

"Keen Cricketer," of Durban, South Africa, writes:

1. What sort of ball do you bowl?
2. Can you bowl a "googly"?
3. Who are the two opening bowlers for St. Jim's Junior Eleven?
4. Who is the St. Jim's Junior Eleven's wicket-keeper?
5. Who is St. Jim's most stylish bat?
6. Who are the first six most popular chaps at St. Jim's?

ANSWER: 1. A round one. 2. Sometimes. 3. Kangaroo and self. 4. Kerr. 5. Tom Merry or Talbot, take your choice. 6. I should say Kildare, Tom Merry, Talbot, D'Arcy, Figgins, and one other. No; I don't mean myself this time!

## BRIEF REPLIES.

G. Miles, of Andover, Hants.—Yes, we have a cross-country race, and I compete. I was third last time. No cinema at Rylcombe, but they show latest films at Wayland Empire. John Wright, of Holloway.—Gordon Gay & Co. will pop up again. Fees are fairly high at St. Jim's. Frank Levison is thirteen.



"Oh crumbs!" breathed Fatty as he peered out by the secret door. He was looking into the Fourth Form passage in the School House, and he had a back view of Baggy Trimble standing in the open doorway of Study No. 6. The secret passage had led him into rival territory!

**CHAPTER 1.**  
**A Hot Chase!**

"**S**TAND and deliver!"

Monty Lowther of the Shell at St. Jim's gave that command. He levelled a fountain-pen at Fatty Wynn, in playful imitation of a highwayman's pistol.

Fatty Wynn of the New House stood—but he did not deliver!

He had to stand, because Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were lined up in his way. But he was not going to deliver if he could help it!

The Falstaff of the New House had emerged from the school shop, with a cheery grin on his plump face, and a large bag in his hand.

That cheery grin on Fatty's plump face told of the happy anticipation of a spread! The good things required for the same were packed in the bag. Fatty was starting towards the New House,

when the three School House juniors barred the way, and he was called upon to stand and deliver.

"Look here——" began Fatty.

He backed a step or two, his plump fingers closing tighter on the handle of the bag.

Tom Merry & Co. advanced as he retreated.

They were smiling cheerily. But they were going to capture that convoy. Since the new term had started, Figgins & Co. of the New House had had rather the better of the "war" between the two Houses at St. Jim's. This was a chance of getting level. Tom Merry & Co. were not losing it.

"Hand it over, old fat tulip!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Prize of war, you know! Perhaps we'll let you have a bun out of the bag——"

"Might ask Figgins & Co. to the spread!" suggested Lowther.

"Good egg! If they can stand the spread, we'll ask them to it!" chuckled Manners. "Chuck over

*Venturing into rival territory without risk, ragging School House fellows with impunity, Figgins & Co. take full advantage of Fatty Wynn's amazing discovery—a hidden entrance into the School House!*

by

**MARTIN CLIFFORD**

that bag, Fatty, and run off and tell Figgins and Kerr they can come to the feast, if they wash their necks for the first time this term, and put on clean collars!"

Fatty Wynn gave a backward jump, as the three Shell fellows pushed on. But they followed him up, grinning.

He was cut off from the New House! The farther he retreated, the farther he was from home. Figgins and Kerr were not to be seen. They were in the study in the New House, preparing for a happy gathering—while Fatty got in the supplies. He did not look like getting them in now! All sorts of scrumptious things were packed in that big bag. It was going to be a feast of the gods—but, apparently, in the School House instead of the New House!

Fatty gave another backward hop.

Then the three rushed.

Fatty, in deperation, swung the bag round his head! Fatty was plump, and he was stocky, but he was strong almost as a horse; and the bag, heavy as it was, was nothing to him. He swung it round as the Shell fellows rushed—and it crashed on Manners, spinning him over against Lowther. Both of them, with a simultaneous howl, rolled on the earth, bumping against Tom Merry's legs, and sending the captain of the Shell staggering.

Fatty Wynn turned and shot away.

"Oh!" gasped Manners.

"Oooh!" spluttered Lowther.

Tom Merry recovered himself, and shot in pursuit of Fatty. Manners and Lowther scrambled breathlessly up. They followed their leader, gasping for breath.

Fatty had a start. But Tom Merry was close behind. Fatty had a wild hope of circling round and getting to his House by an indirect route. But there was no chance of that.

"Stop that porpoise, Gussy!" shouted Tom Merry, as he sighted the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth ahead.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was leaning on a little gate, which gave access to the precincts of the old tower—a spot that was out of bounds for juniors. There was a meditative expression on the noble countenance of the swell of St. Jim's. Perhaps he was thinking out a new waistcoat, or a new pair of trousers.

But at Tom Merry's shout, Arthur Augustus forgot waistcoats and trousers. As a School House man, he was ready to join in a House row.

"Yaas, wathah!" he chuckled.

And leaving the gate, Arthur Augustus shot like an arrow into Fatty Wynn's path.

Fatty did not pause.

With Arthur Augustus in front, and Tom Merry close behind, he had no time to pause. It was a moment for action—prompt action!

He sped on—swinging the bag round as he sped.

It caught Arthur Augustus in his noble ribs, and fairly knocked him off his aristocratic feet.

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus as he flew.

He flew, and crashed!

Leaving him for dead, as it were, Fatty tore on, with Tom Merry hardly a yard behind. The next moment, Fatty tossed the bag over the little gate on which D'Arcy had been leaning, put his hand on the top, and vaulted over. Tom Merry's grab just missed him as he went.

"Oh!" gasped Tom. He was going too fast to stop suddenly, and he bumped on the gate.

As he did so, a fat face looked over it, and a fat fist came punching.

"Oh!" gasped Tom again, as a set of fat knuckles landed.

He sat down suddenly.

Fatty Wynn grabbed up the bag again and ran on. He was out of bounds now; and the rule on that subject was strict, for the remains of the ancient tower were in a ruined state, and far from safe for explorers. But Fatty recked nothing of bounds, and nothing of danger—Fatty had to save that bag of tuck if he could, and nothing else mattered. It was possible to dodge pursuit in the ruins of the old tower, and that was all David Llewellyn Wynn cared about.

He darted into an opening of the dismantled walls, where once a great oak hall-door had stood, and disappeared.

Tom Merry picked himself up, gasping. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy struggled to his feet, groping for his eyeglass. Manners and Lowther came panting up. After them came Blake, Herries, and Digby, of the Fourth, who had spotted the chase from a distance.

"Oh cwikey!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh cwumbs! I am all dustay—bai Jove!"

"After him!" panted Lowther.

"Out of bounds over that gate!" said Manners.

"Blow bounds—"

"No beaks about," said Tom Merry. "We're not going to be beaten by the New House! Come on!"

He scrambled over the gate. Manners and Lowther followed; Blake and Herries and Dig brought up the rear. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head. He was already fearfully dusty, and scrambling over a gate was too rough on a fellow's trousers. Arthur Augustus trickled away to the School House in search of a clothes-brush, which mattered more at the moment than the capture of whole cargoes of New House tuck!

But there were six School House men on the trail of Fatty Wynn. They came up to the ancient portal of the old tower, with a rush and a whoop.

Within, a dim light reigned, the ancient windows being more like loopholes than windows. In that dim light a fat figure was spotted—Fatty Wynn, getting his breath, standing beside the opening of the stair that led down into the crypt under the old tower.

Fatty was not keen on plunging into those dark, damp recesses. But he was ready to do it if it was necessary to save the bag of tuck!

"There he is!" roared Blake.

"Collar him!"

"Stand and deliver, you New House sweep!"

"Bag him!"

Tom Merry & Co. rushed in. Fatty Wynn slipped into the ancient stairway, bag in hand, and vanished in the darkness below.

"Come out of it, you fat frog!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Rats!" came floating up from the gloom. "School House swabs! You come down here, and I'll wallop the lot of you."

"By gum!" exclaimed Blake. "Hear that? Come on."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You'll never find him in the dark—it's black as a hat in the crypt! Anybody got a torch?"

"Oh, yes," said Blake sarcastically. "Likely to carry a torch around on a half-holiday in summer!"

"Well, you can't see in the dark—you're not a cat, you know, but an ass——"

"You cheeky Shell fathead——"

"Somebody cut in and get a torch!" said Tom. "The rest of us will watch for him here! There's no other way out—he can't dodge."

"I'll go!" said Dig. "I'll be back in two shakes!" And Robert Arthur Digby cut off to get a pocket-torch.

Round the top of the old stairway five fellows stood on the watch. There was, as Tom had said, no other way out of the crypt, and they had only to wait for Dig to return with the torch to root Fatty out of his lair. It looked as if that magnificent supply of tuck was going, after all, to adorn a tea-table in the School House—while Figgins and Kerr, over in the New House, waited in vain for the return of the wanderer!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Fatty Wynn Makes a Discovery!

"**B**LOW!" murmured Fatty Wynn.

Fatty stood at the foot of the stone stair—the precious bag gripped in his plump hand. It was as black as a hat in the ancient crypt, and Fatty did not want to move from the faint glimmer of light that came from above if he could help it.

The old flagged floor was far from safe. There were loose and broken flagstones—there were pitfalls; in fact, there was ample reason for Dr. Holmes having placed the old tower strictly out of bounds.

But as Fatty heard the voices of the School House fellows from above, he knew that he had to shift.

If they trailed him in the dark, he could dodge easily enough. If they trailed him with a pocket-torch, his game was up. And that was what they were going to do.

Fatty groped in his pocket for a matchbox, struck a match, and moved away from the stair.

He tested every flag before he trod on it. He moved slowly. His only chance now was to find some recess where he could lie low, in the hope that the enemy would get tired of the hunt and give it up. Which was possible—for the dark, damp crypt was far from an attractive spot on a sunny afternoon in June.

The match went out, and he struck another. He groped to the wall of solid, grimy, damp stone. He moved along that wall, feeling it with one hand as he went.

Suddenly, that groping hand missed the blocks of stone and sawed empty space. There was an opening of some sort in the wall at a distance from the stairway.

Fatty came to a halt and struck another match.

It looked, in the flicker, like the opening of a passage, hardly more than two feet wide. But it extended only five or six feet, as he could see by the light of the match.

Why the ancient builders, long centuries ago, had formed that deep alcove in the wall of the vaulted crypt, Fatty did not know, and did not bother to consider. It looked like a chance to dodge the School House enemy.

In that narrow recess he would be out of sight, unless a fellow flashed a light right into it. And if he were cornered there, only one fellow could get at him at a time, and Fatty Wynn was

prepared to put up a stout defence. This, really, was just what Fatty Wynn wanted.

He stepped into the recess. The match went out, but he did not need its light now; he had only to grope.

He groped on.

"Ooooooco!" gasped Fatty all of a sudden.

The solid earth seemed to give way under his feet.

It had looked firm enough in the glimmer of the match; solid blocks of stone, like the rest of the ancient flooring. But as he reached the end of the recess, the flagstone on which he stood seemed to vanish all of a sudden, and let him down.

He had no time to think of saving himself. He did not know what was happening. In the twinkling of an eye, he was falling into black darkness.

Bump!

"Ooogh!" gasped Fatty again.

He sat and spluttered.

He had not fallen far. He had, in fact, fallen hardly more than three feet. But it was a nasty jar!

For a long minute Fatty sat spluttering, too startled to move. Then he scrambled to his feet.

"Ow!" he roared the next moment, as his head banged on solid stone above him. "Oh crikey! Ow!"

He ducked quickly.

How there could be anything over his head when he had fallen through an opening caused by the flagstone giving way was quite a mystery to him. Certainly he had not expected it.

He sat and rubbed his head ruefully.

Before rising again, he struck a match and stared up. His eyes popped as he stared.

Over him was a solid roof of stone.

Fatty fairly blinked at it.

He had fallen through. That was self-evident, for there he was! But the stone over him was unbroken.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed the amazed Falstaff of the New House.

The match went out. Getting on his knees—careful to keep his head low this time—he struck another.

He was in a small square space, walled by stone. In front of him was an opening—evidently an underground passage, the roof so low that a fellow could only have passed along it bent double.

Fatty did not think of exploring that dark passage by the light of matches. He gave his attention to the roof over his head.

He groped over it with a plump hand.

It stirred under his touch.

One end of a long wide stone tilted up, the other end down, as he groped.

Then Fatty understood.

That stone moved on a pivot in the centre. One end dipped if trodden on, and shot the fellow who trod through the opening, and then the stone resumed its former position.

"By gum!" said Fatty, and his eyes gleamed.

The more ancient parts of the old buildings of St. Jim's had many secrets. Fatty quite inadvertently had stumbled on one that had never been discovered.

Probably that dark recess in the wall of the old crypt had never been entered for hundreds of years. Nobody could have had any reason for

entering it. So that secret of ancient times had remained undiscovered.

This, it was clear, was the entrance of a secret underground passage, probably connected with the School House, portions of which dated back to early Norman and even Saxon times. The New House was quite modern—hardly a couple of hundred years old!

Fatty was quite interested in that unexpected discovery. But he was still more interested in eluding the School House enemy, and getting safe to the New House with that bag of tuck.

Tilting up one end of the moving stone, he put his head through the aperture, able to stand upright now.

A flash of light in the vault caught his eye. Evidently Tom Merry & Co. had the torch, and had descended into the crypt to hunt for him.

"Where's that New House tick?"

"Can't be far away!"

"You stick at the stair, Herries—in case he doubles back. Collar him if he shows up there!"

"I'll collar-him all right!"

"We're bound to get him!"

"Where are you, you human balloon?" shouted Monty Lowther. "We've got you all right—you may as well show up!"

Fatty Wynn grinned. But for that unexpected discovery, they would probably have got him; but they hadn't got him now!

He let the stone slip back into place, ducking under it as the light approached the alcove.

They were not likely to enter that alcove; it was sufficient to flash the light into it to ascertain that he was not hiding there.

Fatty waited a few minutes, grinning in the dark.

Then he cautiously tilted the moving stone again. There was darkness above, and he pushed it up and put his head out.

Voices floated to his ears once more.

"Where on earth is he?"

"We've rooted through the whole show!"

"He jolly well came down here—we saw him! Where is he?"

"O where and O where can he be?" sang Monty Lowther.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Jack Blake. "Blessed if I see how he can have dodged us, when we've got the light!"

"There's an alcove in the wall there——"

"I've looked into that—he's not there!"

"Then where is he?"

"Echo answers where!"

Tom Merry & Co. were quite puzzled. Fatty heard the captain of the Shell call to Herries at the stair.

"You haven't let him pass you, Herries?"

"No fear!"

"Then I'm blessed if I make it out!"

"Must be here somewhere!" said Manners. "Sure you looked into that hole in the wall, Blake?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, show the light there again, and let me look."

Fatty Wynn promptly ducked, and pushed the stone shut. In another moment or two, Blake was flashing the light of the torch into the deep alcove. But only bare, damp stone met the eyes of the School House juniors.

Fatty waited a few minutes; then he was peering out again.

His eyes gleamed.

Jack Blake was standing with his back to the

alcove in the wall, flashing the light across the vault. The other fellows were rooting round the crypt.

Fatty suppressed a chuckle.

Without a sound he clambered up through the opening, the stone shutting after him noiselessly. He tiptoed along the recess towards Blake.

Jack Blake, naturally, had not the faintest idea that anybody was behind him. A fat hand suddenly grabbed from behind at the torch in his hand, and grabbed it away.

Shutting off the torch with his right hand, and plunging the vault into darkness, Fatty gave Blake a shove between the shoulders with his left, sending the School House junior staggering forward.

Blake gave a yell of amazement as he went, falling on his hands and knees on the flagstones.

Fatty Wynn cut back into the alcove. The moving stone dipped under his feet and shot him through. The Falstaff of the New House vanished like a ghost at cock-crow, leaving Blake sprawling and yelling, and the other School House fellows groping and shouting in the dark.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Way Out!

"WHAT the thump——"

"Where's the light?"

"Blake, you ass——"

"Turn on the light, you duffer!"

"Ow, ow! My hat! Yow-ow!" roared Blake.

"Who pushed me over? That New House tick got behind me! Oh crikey! I've banged my nose!"

"Blow your nose! Where is he?"

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

"Where's the light?" roared Digby. "Why don't you turn on the light? What have you turned it off for?"

"Ow! Wow!"

"Blake, you ass! Where's the torch?" shouted Manners.

"How should I know?" roared Blake. "That New House swab snatched it away. He got behind me, I tell you! Shoved me over!"

"Well, you ass!"

"You fathead!"

"How could I help it when he got behind me?" roared Blake. "It must have been that New House tick. I suppose it wasn't one of you pushed me over?"

"Is the torch gone?"

"Haven't I told you so, fathead?"

Fatty Wynn, with the moving stone tilted, listened, and grinned. The blackest darkness reigned in the crypt under the old tower. Tom Merry & Co. had little chance of rooting him out now.

"Well, that tears it," said Monty Lowther. "If Blake's made that New House sweep a present of the torch——"

"You blithering Shellfish, I tell you he got behind me and snatched it!" bawled Blake. "Think I've got eyes in the back of my head?"

"You've got nothing in your head at all, old bean—nothing in the way of brains, at any rate. If you've given him the torch——"

"If you can't talk sense, Monty Lowther, shut up, or I'll jolly well punch your head!" roared Blake.

It sounded as if Blake of the Fourth was getting rather excited.



With Arthur Augustus in front and Tom Merry close behind, Fatty Wynn had no time to pause. It was a moment for prompt action and Fatty swung the bag round as he sped. It caught Gussy in his noble ribs and fairly knocked him off his feet. "Yawooh!" he roared.

"Well, what did you give that fat tick the torch for?" inquired Monty.

"That does it!" hissed Blake, and he groped in the direction of the voice, and punched.

"Yaroo!" came a sudden yell from Digby. "Who's that hitting me in the eye?"

"Oh crikey! Is that you, Dig?" gasped Blake. "I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! You've bunged up my eye—"

"Sorry, old chap! Where's that idiot Lowther?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wow! My eye—"

"Let's get out of this!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We can't do anything here in the dark. Yaroo! What's that—"

"Oh crumbs, is that you? Where's Lowther?" gasped Blake.

"You howling ass!" howled Tom Merry. "If you're so jolly fond of punching in the dark, take that!"

"Yurrooop!" came a roar from Manners. "You blithering idiot, what are you hitting me for?"

"Oh crikey! I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For goodness' sake, let's get out of this! Stop playing the goat, and let's get out! We can't find that New House swab now. Let's wait for him at the top!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Good egg! He will have to come out sooner or later."

"Come on!"

"By gum, we'll jolly well get him, if we have to sit in the old tower till calling-over!" panted Blake. "I dare say he can hear us all the time. Do you hear that, Wynn, you Welsh rabbit?"

"We're going to wait for you, Wynn!" shouted Manners. "You may as well come up, you barrel!"

"Oh crumbs, where's the stair?" snorted Dig.

"This way!" called out Herries, from the stone stair.

"Where the dickens—"

"Don't barge into me!"

"Oh scissors! I shan't be sorry to get out of this!"

The School House crowd groped and stumbled in the dark, seeking their way back to the stone stair. All of them were glad enough to clamber out of the crypt. They were as determined as ever to get Fatty Wynn—in fact, more determined than ever! But they were fed-up with exploring dark and dismal vaults.

Fatty Wynn chuckled as stumbling footsteps and disgruntled voices died away up the stair.

He had beaten the School House to it, so far. He was safe, and the bag of tuck—the prize of war—was safe, also.

But his escape was cut off. Emerging from the crypt by way of the stair was emerging into the clutching hands of the enemy.

But now that he was provided with a torch, Fatty had other resources.

That underground passage must lead somewhere. Obviously, it could not have been built for nothing, and it had to have an outlet at the other end. Fatty Wynn, now that he had a light, was going to look for that outlet.

Fatty chuckled at the thought of Tom Merry & Co. sitting round the stairway of the crypt, waiting for him to come up, when he was not coming up at all.

He flashed on the torch, took the bag in his left hand, and, ducking his head, started along the stone passage.

The roof slanted upward, and, after covering a few yards, he was able to walk upright.

The passage was narrow—hardly a couple of feet wide—the roof only a few inches over his head. Where it led he had no idea, for he could not calculate the direction, but it had to lead somewhere.

Step by step, flashing the light before him, he advanced till, after he had covered a considerable distance, his way was stopped by a spiral stone stair.

That, it was clear, was the way out.

Up the stair went Fatty—up and up till the constant winding made his head almost giddy. But he reached the top at last.

He flashed the light round a small stone-walled room. In one spot there was a narrow opening in the stone, closed by dark ancient oak. Plainly it was a door.

Fatty shone the light on it. He could discover no sign of a lock of any kind. He pushed on the door, but it remained fast.

"Blow!" murmured Fatty.

He groped along the edge of the door. There was a sudden, faint click; he had pressed some hidden spring.

He pushed, and the oak moved. He shut off the torch at once as a glimmer of daylight came to his eyes.

It was obvious that he was within a building, and little doubt that that building was the School House. Fatty carefully pushed open the oak door a few inches, to peer out before he ventured to step out. After his narrow escape at one end of the secret passage, he did not want to fall into hostile hands at the other end.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Fatty, as he peered.

He was looking out into a passage. He spotted a row of doors, and Fatty knew them at a glance. The secret passage had led him into rival territory.

The Fourth Form passage in the School House was one of the oldest parts of the ancient building. Some of the studies were ancient rooms, unchanged for centuries—some of them were newer. Walls of enormous thickness separated some of the old rooms, which were panelled in old oak, black with age, as was nearly all the passage—all of it, in fact, except where modern alterations had been made.

The oak door which Fatty had partly opened was a panel in the passage wall. There was a step down from it of one or two feet.

Fatty grinned at the sight of a fat figure in an open doorway—that of Study No. 6.

He had a back view of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth Form.

Baggy was speaking to some fellow in Study No. 6. His squeaky voice reached the New House junior's ears.

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"But I say, Gussy, old chap——"

"Pway do not address me as Gussy, Twimble!" came a voice from the study. "I object to it vewy stwongly."

"I'll give you a brush down, if you like, D'Arcy! Where did you pick up all that dust?"

"I was knocked ovah by a New House boundah, Twimble! I weally wish you would go away, Twimble! I am wathah busy."

Fatty Wynn put his head out and glanced up and down the passage. No one else was in sight; few fellows were indoors on a half-holiday in June. Trimble's back was turned. Fatty resolved to risk it. He stepped silently through the aperture in the wall and shut the oak door after him.

Once shut, it looked exactly like the adjoining panels, and no one would have dreamed of guessing that a secret door was there.

"I say, D'Arcy, old chap——" Baggy was going on.

"Pway wun away, Twimble!"

"The fact is, Gussy, I was going to ask you something! I've lent my last half-crown to Talbot of the Shell——"

"Wats!"

"If you won't lend me half-a-crown till Talbot squares——"

"I do not believe that Talbot would honah you by bowwowing half-a-crown fwom you, Twimble! Pway shut up and wun away!"

Fatty Wynn, stepping silently along the passage, swung round his bag. It landed suddenly in the middle of Trimble's podgy back!

Bang!

"Yoooooop!" roared Trimble.

He flew headlong into Study No. 6. There was another yell as he landed there. He had apparently landed on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy! "Yawooh! Twimble, you ass—oh cwikey!"

"Ow! Wow!" roared Trimble. "Somebody banged me in the back——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

He looked in at the study doorway. Arthur Augustus was sitting on the floor, gasping for breath. Baggy Trimble was rolling, spluttering.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he stared at the New House junior in the doorway. "Is that Wynn? Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped up and rushed. The bag swung as he rushed, and met him in the waistcoat! Arthur Augustus went over backwards as if a cannon-ball had struck him. He stumbled over Trimble and landed on the fat Baggy with a crash.

There was a gasping howl from D'Arcy. From Baggy came an expiring squeak as all the wind was driven out of his fat circumference.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Fatty. And he ran for the stairs.

"What's the row?" Kerruish of the Fourth came out of his study. "What— Oh, my hat! Who—hooooop!"

The Manx junior flew as the bag whirled and crashed. Fatty Wynn flew past him, reached the stairs, and went down three at a time.

At the foot of the staircase a dozen fellows stared at him. But masters and prefects were about in that region, and "House rows" impracticable. Fatty Wynn, breathless but grinning, walked coolly out of the School House and cut across the quad to his own House.



CHAPTER 4.

The Weary Waiters!

"ANYBODY getting fed-up?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Just a few!" grunted Manners.

"We're sticking it out!" declared Tom Merry.

"I'm going to wait here," said Jack Blake, "till call-over, if that fat grampus doesn't crawl out before then! I'm going to have that bag off him if I have to wait for hours, and hours, and hours."

"Worse for him than for us!" remarked Digby.

"Blessed if I know how he's sticking it all this time!" said Herries. "Must be simply putrid down there in the dark."

"Well, I suppose he knows we're waiting!" said Tom. "But we'll jolly well wait!"

"Yes, rather!"

Six School House fellows were getting fed-up—fed right to the chin! But they were determined.

They had waited half an hour for Fatty Wynn to emerge from the crypt. He had not emerged.

Not for a moment supposing, or dreaming, that Fatty had found another way out, they were going to wait till he came up.

That there was another way out of the old crypt, none of them knew, or had ever suspected. Out of bounds as it was, it had been explored many a time, and no such discovery had been made, or thought of.

So it did not occur to any of the impatient watchers that Fatty Wynn had escaped by unknown ways.

But it did occur to them that perhaps he had dodged out in the dark after Blake had lost the torch.

Herries had been on guard at the steps. Herries declared that the New House junior had not passed him there. He pointed out that though he was no cat, to see in the dark, the fat blighter couldn't have passed him on the narrow stair without touching him; and no one had brushed by him. Therefore, Fatty was still in the vault.

But when half an hour had passed, the other fellows began to feel a little doubtful on that point.

They found it tiresome enough to wait in the old tower, watching the stair for Fatty to come up—and Fatty, below in the damp darkness, must have found it absolutely beastly.

Moreover, they had shouted to him more than once to come up and get it over, and there had been no answer. They might have expected, at least, a catcall from the New House man below.

Still, Herries was positive on the point that no one had passed him while he was guarding the stair. So they still waited and watched, getting more and more fed-up every minute.

How long they might have waited cannot be said, but at length an elegant figure appeared in the doorway of the old tower and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's eyeglass gleamed at them.

"Bai Jove! I wondahed if you fellows were still heah!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I've been lookin' for you. What did you let that New House boundah get away for?"

"We haven't let him get away, ass!" grunted Jack Blake. "We're waiting for him now, fat-head! And we're going to grab him when he comes up, dummy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, what about getting another torch and going down after him?" exclaimed Herries. "I'm jolly well fed-up with this!"

"Go'in' down aftah whom, Hewwies?"

"That New House bladder of lard, ass!" grunted Herries.

"Bai Jove! Do you fellows think that Wynn is down there?" asked Arthur Augustus, in astonishment.

"We know he is, fathead!"

"But what makes you think so, Hewwies?"

"Fathead!" roared Blake. "We chased him down there, and he never came up, so he's down there now."

"But he isn't, deah boy! How could he be down there in the cwrypt when I saw him in the House a quartah of an hour ago?"

"What?" roared all the six.

"Dreaming?" hooted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"What do you mean?" demanded Tom Merry. "We've been watching that hole like cats watching for a mouse for over half an hour—"

"Then Wynn must have got out somehow, deah boy! He was in the School House a quartah of an hour ago, and he knocked Twimble into my stoday and barged me ovah with a bag—"

"You saw him?" yelled Manners.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You saw Fatty Wynn in the House a quarter of an hour ago?" gasped Blake.

"Yaas, he was there all wight!" Arthur Augustus chuckled. "Have you fellows been watchin' for him heah while he was gone? Ha, ha, ha!"

Five fellows turned concentrated glares on George Herries.

If Fatty Wynn had been in the School House, obviously he had been out of the crypt! There was only one explanation, so far as Tom Merry & Co. could see—he must have passed Herries in the dark!



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"Herries, you ass—"  
 "Herries, you chump—"  
 "You let him pass you!" roared Blake.  
 "I didn't!" roared back Herries. "He never passed me! Wasn't I sticking on that stair to see that he didn't? He never came up—"  
 "Then how did he get out, fathead?" roared Manners.  
 "Blessed if I know! He never passed me!" declared Herries positively. "You see, he couldn't have without my knowing."  
 "Ass!"  
 "Fathead!"  
 "Chump!"  
 "I tell you he never passed me on that stair!" roared Herries indignantly. "Gussy's dreaming—he just dreamed that he saw him in the House—"  
 "Bai Jove! I tell you he knocked me ovah—"  
 "He couldn't have—"  
 "But he did, Hewwies!"  
 "Rot! He's still down in that crypt—you see, he must be, because he never passed me coming up—"

"Bump him!" hooted Blake.  
 "Look here!" yelled Herries. "I tell you—"  
 "And I tell you that he must have passed you, and you never saw him, and we've been waiting here half an hour for nothing!" roared Blake. "And that New House tick chortling at us all the time! I dare say half the New House know that we're waiting here for him and killing themselves with laughing—"  
 "I tell you—"  
 "Bump him!"  
 Five exasperated juniors collared George Herries. They had had that long, weary, exasperating wait for nothing—and Fatty Wynn, back in his own House, chuckling over it. It was really too much. They collared Herries right and left, and bumped him on the old stone flags.

Bump!  
 "Oh! Ow!" roared the hapless Herries. "I tell you he never passed me—"

Bump!  
 "Wow! I tell you he's still there—"  
 Bump!

"Yoo-hoop! I tell you—"  
 Bump!  
 "Ow! Wow! Ow! Oh, my hat! Ow!"  
 Tom Merry & Co. streamed out of the old tower. George Herries was left sitting on the flags, gasping for breath.

It was some minutes before Herries tottered away after his friends. And he was still convinced that Fatty Wynn was in the crypt below—because he was quite sure that Fatty hadn't passed him on the stair in the dark—as, indeed, Fatty hadn't!

## CHAPTER 5.

### Knocks From Knox!

"KEEP it dark!" said Figgins.  
 "Yes, rather!" agreed Kerr.  
 "Eh! Why?" asked Fatty Wynn.

Figgins & Co. were taking a stroll in the quad after tea.

The spread in the New House had been duly disposed of. That cargo of tuck, after its many adventures and narrow escapes, had, after all, safely reached its destination, and Figgins & Co.

and a large party of New House juniors had done it justice.

During that spread Fatty Wynn had been too busily occupied for conversation. But after it was over, and he walked out with his chums, Fatty gave them an account of his strange adventures in the old tower.

"By gum!" said Figgins. "What a catch! Keep it dark, old fat fruit—keep it fearfully dark!"

"I don't see—" said Fatty.  
 "You wouldn't!" agreed Figgins. "You don't see anything unless you can eat it—you haven't time to notice anything else. Why, you plump old grampus, can't you see that this is the catch of the season?"

"No end of a catch!" grinned Kerr. "Why, if Fatty's got it right, we can drop in at the School House whenever we like—"

"And nobody the wiser!" chuckled Figgins. "What larks!"

"Oh!" said Fatty. "By gum, so we can! Why, we could walk in and walk off tuck from their studies—"

"Trust you to think of that!" said Figgins. "Never mind the tuck in their studies, you fat old octopus! We can give them beans all along the line. We can make that mouldy old House sit up and howl, and they'll never know how we did it!"

"Got that torch, Fatty?" asked Kerr.

"Yes; I've got it in my pocket."

"Then let's go and explore!"

"Come on!" said Figgins gleefully.

The New House trio headed for the old tower, Fatty's chums keen and eager to explore the secret passage under the quad.

They went warily, not forgetting that the old tower was out of bounds. But it was a good deal farther from the New House than from the School House, and there were no New House prefects about.

Cautiously they strolled in a casual sort of way to the little gate in the corner of the quad, and paused for a few moments to make sure that the coast was clear.

Then quickly they whipped over the gate. The next moment all three gasped together:

"Oh!"

Within the wall a Sixth Form man was leaning. It was Knox of the Sixth, a School House prefect. And swiftly as Knox of the Sixth dropped his cigarette, and put his foot on it, all three of them had seen it before it vanished.

Knox jumped.

In that quiet, retired, secluded spot, out of bounds for juniors, the bad hat of the Sixth had felt quite secure in putting on a smoke. It was quite an unpleasant surprise to Gerald Knox to see three juniors suddenly appear in the offing.

It was an equally unpleasant surprise to Figgins & Co.

Knox was a House prefect, not a School prefect, and had, therefore, nothing to do with New House men. Still, he was a prefect, and they were out of bounds. And he was evidently annoyed at the interruption of his smoke, and by the fact that juniors had seen him with a cigarette.

"You young sweeps, what are you doing here?" exclaimed Knox, keeping his foot on the cigarette.

"Oh! We—we just jumped over the gate,

Knox!" stammered Figgins. "All right—we'll jump back at once!"

"I shall report this to your Housemaster!" snapped Knox.

"Oh lor'!" said Fatty Wynn.

A report to Mr. Ratcliff was far from a pleasant prospect. Ratty had a heavy hand with a cane.

"Look here, Knox," said Figgins warmly, "it's nothing to do with you—you're a House prefect in the other House—not a School prefect!"

"Nothing to do with me, isn't it?" asked Knox unpleasantly. "Well, I'll let you know about that, you cheeky young rascal! And Ratcliff will let you know whether you can go out of bounds."

Kerr set his lips.

"You're going to Ratcliff, Knox?" he asked.

"Yes, you young rascal!" snapped Knox. "I've got my duty to do."

"Are you going to mention to him that you were smoking here?"

"Wha-a-t!"

"If you're such a whale on duty, it's your duty to report yourself for smoking!" pointed out Kerr.

Figgins gave an involuntary chuckle at the idea of a Sixth Former reporting himself for smoking. Fatty Wynn blinked at his Scottish chum. What Kerr said was true enough, no doubt; but it was hardly a judicious way of talking to the bully of the Sixth.

"By gad!" said Knox. His eyes glinted at Kerr.

"Better let it drop," said Kerr. "You can leave the New House alone, Knox. We've got prefects of our own, you know."

"I shall report you to your Housemaster!"

"Oh, all right! As you're such a whale on duty, I'll follow your example!" said Kerr. "Mind if I report you to your Housemaster for smoking? Railton will let you know whether you can smoke cigarettes or not!"

Knox of the Sixth breathed hard and deep.

The fact was that his own offence was more serious than that of the juniors. They had jumped a gate out of bounds—Knox was smoking cigarettes, which was very strictly forbidden—and prefects were expected to set good, not bad, examples to the smaller fry.

"Get out of it!" muttered Knox. "I may not go to Ratcliff—get out of it at once, you young ticks!"

Figgins & Co. were ready enough to get out of it! Exploring the secret passage had to be left till the coast was clear.

They clambered over the gate, satisfied that Knox—on second thoughts—was not going to report them to Ratty.

Knox had his official ashplant under his arm. He slipped it into his hand and stepped behind them as they climbed the gate. He was not going to report them to Ratty—but he had something else for them!

Swipe!

"Yaroo!" roared Figgins as the ash landed on his trousers.

Swipe!

"Whooop!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

Swipe!

Kerr gave a yell.

Those three swipes were delivered with lightning swiftness. The next moment Figgins & Co. were over the gate; but they had had one each, and every one was one of the best!

"Ow! Oh! Ow!" spluttered Fatty.

"Wow!" gasped Figgins.

"You cheeky bully!" roared Kerr.

Knox grinned over the gate at them.

"Now out," he said, "or I'll come and give you a few more!"

Figgins & Co. cut—with deep feelings. A House prefect of the School House had no right whatever to whop men of the other House. Knox had assumed that right. Anyhow, they had had the whops. They wriggled as they retreated from the spot.

"Never mind!" said Figgins, breathing hard. "We'll make that School House swab sorry for this!"

"Wow!" said Fatty Wynn. "Can't handle a prefect—ow! Wow!"

"Something might happen to him to-night!" said Figgins darkly.

"Eh? How?"

"Guess, fathead!" grunted Figgins.

"Good egg!" said Kerr. "We'll come back and explore that passage after that rotter is gone—and to-night—"

"After dorm," said Figgins.

"But we shall be asleep in bed after dorm!" said Fatty Wynn. "I jolly well know I shall be, at any rate!"

"That's all right," said Figgins. "You won't be asleep after we lug you out of bed by your ears!"

"Oh, I see!" said Fatty.

"Fancy you seeing anything you can't eat!" grunted Figgins. "Let that School House swab wait—we'll give him whops!"

An hour later, when Knox of the Sixth had been long gone, Figgins & Co. revisited the forbidden spot and explored the secret passage. And that evening, over prep, deep plots were laid in Figgy's study.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Trimble Causes Trouble!

"WHAT—" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He gave quite a start.

It was prep, and the Terrible Three had arrived at their study, Study No. 10 in the Shell. It was dark in the study, and Tom uttered that ejaculation and gave that start as he put his hand to the switch to turn on the light as he entered.

"What's up?" asked Manners.

"Seen a ghost?" yawned Lowther.

Tom was staring round the study.

"Nobody here!" he said.

"Expect anybody here?" asked Manners, staring.

"No. But I thought I heard somebody move."

"Getting nervy in your old age?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Fathead!"

Tom threw the door shut, and the three Shell fellows sorted out their books for prep. They sat down round the table.

"Want all the floor?" asked Manners, as he put his feet under the table. "Might give a fellow a spot of room!"

"Well, you want a lot with those feet!" agreed Lowther. "But I'm not in your way, fathead!"

"If that's your hoof, Manners, shift it!" said Tom. "You don't want it over this side of the table!"

"It isn't, ass!"

"If it's yours, Lowther, collect it, and pack it away somewhere!"

"It isn't, chump!"

"Well, it's gone now!" Tom stretched his legs. "All right!" The chums of the Shell started on prep.

Manners looked up after a few minutes.

"I suppose you can't help being a funny ass, Monty," he said in rather acid tones. "But prep's prep! Stop it!"

"Stop prep?" asked Monty.

"No; stop larking! I don't want a row in Form with Linton in the morning if you do!"

"Who's larking, ass?"

"You are! I suppose it's your idea of a lark to bang a fellow's knees and make him drop blots!" grunted Manners.

"Who banged your silly knees?" demanded Lowther.

"You did!" grunted Manners. "If you didn't, Tom did! Chuck it!"

"But I didn't, old bean!" said Tom Merry mildly. "I'm trying to wangle rotten Latin verbs—"

"Why, there it is again!" exclaimed the exasperated Manners. "Look here, if you fellows can't stop larking in prep—"

"Who's larking, you silly ass?" demanded Lowther.

"Oh, perhaps I only fancied that you keep on bumping me!" yapped Manners. "I'll kick out next time, and then you'll fancy it, too!"

There was a sound of hurried shifting under the table in Study No. 10. Somebody evidently was taking warning by Manners' remark.

"That's better," said Manners. "Now chuck it!"

"I tell you—" exclaimed Lowther.

"And I tell you—" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, chuck it, anyhow!" said Manners, and he settled down to work again.

"Well, you chuck it!" exclaimed Lowther warmly. "Which of you silly idiots is shoving my foot?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Manners.

"Good advice!" said Tom. "Don't!"

Monty Lowther glared at the pair of them. Somebody undoubtedly had shoved his foot. Monty drew that foot back and kicked out with it. That was an easy way of settling who was the shover!

The result was unexpected.

"Yaroooh!" came a sudden anguished roar.

The Shell fellows fairly bounded. That roar came from under the table.

"What the thump—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Who the dickens—" stuttered Manners.

"It's somebody under the table!" gasped Monty Lowther. The mystery was elucidated at last. "Who—"

"Ow! Oh crikey! Ow! Stop kicking, you swab!" came a yell from under the table. "Oh crikey! Oh jiminy! Wow!"

"Trimble!" yelled the three together.

"I ain't here!" gasped Baggy Trimble. "I mean, it was only a lark! Don't you kick me again, you swab! Wow!"

The three Shell fellows stopped and stared under the table.

A podgy figure was huddled there.

It had been huddled in hiding. But there was not a lot of space under a study table for a fat Fourth Former and three pairs of legs. Contact had been bound to be established.

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"You fat fozzler!" roared Tom Merry. "What are you doing there?"

"Oh, nothing!" gasped Trimble.

"It was you I heard when I came in—"

"Hoof him out!" growled Manners.

"I—I—I say, I—I—"

"What have you been up to in this study?" demanded Lowther.

"Nothing, old chap! I—I just dodged in here to get away from Cutts of the Fifth!" gasped Trimble. "He was after me!"

"Whose jam have you been scoffing?"

"Eh?" Trimble passed a podgy paw over his mouth, on which the signs of guilt were plainly visible. "Oh! I—I haven't been eating jam! I've hardly tasted jam this term!"

Manners stepped to the study cupboard. He looked into it. Just within stood a jar of jam nearly empty—with a tablespoon sticking in it.

It was obvious that Trimble had been busy in the dark, when the sudden arrival of the owners of the study startled him, and caused him to hunt for the nearest cover.

"Boot him!" said Manners.

"Look here, you know!" gasped Trimble, still under the table. "Look here, I—I haven't touched your jam! I—I say—whoo-hoop!"

Monty Lowther introduced his boot under the table. It jammed into Baggy's fat ribs, and Baggy rolled out on the other side.

There Tom Merry's foot met him, and rolled him over towards the door.

"Ow! Will you stop kicking me, you cads?" roared Trimble, as he scrambled up. "I tell you I didn't—yarooooooop!"

"Don't kick him out yet!" exclaimed Manners. "I'll let him have the rest of the jam, down his neck!"

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Trimble.

He made a wild bound at the door. He dragged that door open and bounded through. Jam down the inside of his fat neck was one thing; jam down the outside was quite another. Evidently Baggy did not like it outside!

He bounded into the passage, and careered away at top speed for the Fourth Form quarters. Tom Merry and Monty Lowther rushed after him; Manners was too late with the jam.

Two boots reached Baggy Trimble as he reached the corner of the passage. They landed together, answered by a terrific roar from Baggy. He shot round the corner.

Baggy could not, of course, see round corners. And he was in too great a hurry to look before he leaped. Knox of the Sixth was walking up the Fourth Form passage—Knox being on duty in prep that evening. He met Baggy in full career.

Knox went over like a ninepin. Over him rolled Baggy, roaring.

Tom Merry and Lowther sped round the corner the next moment, naturally not expecting to find a heap of humanity in their way. They stumbled over Knox and Baggy, and added themselves to the heap.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh scissors!"

Gerald Knox, with three juniors rolling over him, sprawled and spluttered. He hardly knew what was happening. It seemed rather like the impact of a runaway lorry! Knox spluttered and gurgled.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Baggy.

He wriggled off Knox, picked himself up, and shot on. Knox sat up, grabbing at gasping juniors. He captured an ear and a neck. It

was Tom Merry's ear and Monty Lowther's neck! They roared in unison!

"Oh!" gasped Knox! He staggered up, still grasping the ear and the neck. He was not letting his prisoners escape! "Who— Oh! Merry—Lowther! Larking in the passages in prep, what?"

Knox glared round. There had been a third party on the scene, he knew, but that party—a fat party—had already vanished into a Fourth Form study. However, he had two of them!

He released the ear and the neck and grasped his ash.

"Bend over!" gasped Knox. "Touch your toes!"

"Look here——" panted Tom Merry. "We never saw you——"

"You see——" gasped Lowther.

"Yes, I see," agreed Knox. "You fancy you can lark in the passages in prep and knock a prefect spinning! I'll give you something to cure all that! Are you going to bend over, or do you want to go to Railton?"

Tom Merry and Lowther exchanged a glance. Then they bent and touched their toes.

There was no help for it. Knox was a House prefect with "whopping privs," and it was not only his right, but his duty, to administer "toco" to juniors who left their studies in prep to lark in the passages. Baggy's jammy exploits in Study No. 10 were no excuse—even if the Shell fellows had been disposed to mention Baggy.

Swipe, swipe!

That was for Tom.

Swipe, swipe!

That was for Lowther.

"Now go back to your study," said Knox, "and if you come out again in prep, look out for squalls."

Tom and Monty walked back to Study No. 10—wriggling. Manners, pot of jam in hand, met them at the doorway.

"Haven't you got him?" he asked.

"Ow! No! Knox got us!" gasped Tom.

"Ow! Wow!" moaned Lowther. "I shall have to stand to prep! I'll slaughter that podgy porker to-morrow—wow!"

And prep was resumed in Study No. 10 in the Shell, interrupted occasionally by gasps and squeaks from two members of the study.



Knox shouted in the hope of awakening another Sixth Former and getting a light on the scene. It was his misfortune that he opened his mouth to shout as the ink arrived. "Gurrrrrgh!" gurgled Knox. "Ooooooh! Woooooh!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins & Co.

## CHAPTER 7.

## In the Stilly Night!

GEORGE FIGGINS sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory in the New House at St. Jim's and peered round him in the darkness.

All was silent and still now that the last stroke of midnight had died away. Only the regular breathing of many sleepers came to Figgy's ears.

"You fellows awake?" whispered Figgins.

"Sort of!" came back a whisper from Kerr.

"Fatty isn't! I say, Fatty!"

No answer from Fatty Wynn. Fatty was deep in the land of dreams—dreaming, probably, of that day's magnificent spread in the study.

"I'll soon wake him!" murmured Kerr.

Figgins and Kerr turned out. Neither was fearfully keen on turning out of bed at the "witching time of night." But plans had been laid, and those plans were going to be carried out.

"Urrgh!" murmured Fatty Wynn, as his plump shoulder was shaken. "Ooogh! I'll have another tart!"

Figgins chuckled.

"Guess what he's dreaming of?" he murmured.

Kerr chuckled, too, and gave the fat youth another shake. Fatty Wynn came out of the land of dreams and blinked in the dark.

"Ooogh! Wharrer marrer?" he murmured sleepily. "Why, 'tain't light yet! Wharrer you waking me up for, I'd like to know?"

"Time!" said Figgins. "Just turned twelve!"

"Oh!" Fatty Wynn remembered the plots laid in the study in prep. At the time Fatty had been keen, indeed enthusiastic. Now, however, his keenness and his enthusiasm seemed to have done rather a fade-out.

"Oh!" he repeated. "I—I say, wait a minute! Look here, you fellows, it's a topping idea to rag those School House swabs, but—now I come to think of it, another night—"

"To-night's the night!" said Kerr.

"I mean, another night would be just as good, in fact, better!" argued Fatty Wynn. "What I mean is—"

"You mean you don't want to turn out of bed?"

"Yes—I—I mean, no! I'm fearfully keen, of course—keen as mustard! But—I mean to say—ragging a prefect is a bit thick. Of course, Knox is only a School House pre, and a swab and a bully; but—but, after all, he's a pre, and I really think—"

"You really think you'd like me to tip this jug of water over you?"

"Eh! Oh, no!"

Fatty sat up quite suddenly.

"Out you come!" said Figgins.

"Just a minute!" gasped Fatty. "Only a tick! What I really mean is this—it's putrid, damp, and dark, and spidery in that secret passage—cold and chilly, and—and all that—and I'm afraid you fellows might catch cold! I—I never thought of it when we were talking in the study, but now—"

"We'll chance it!"

"Well, I shouldn't like you chaps to be laid up with a cold, with the cricket coming along, and all that—"

"You're more likely to be laid up with a cold than we are!" said Kerr. "You see, I'm going to tip this jug of water over you—"

"Keep off, you ass! Look here, come to think

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of it, two's company and three's a crowd!" said Fatty. "I really think you fellows would get through better without me. What I'm afraid of is getting in the way!"

Drip!

"Ooogh!" gasped Fatty, as a trickle of cold water ran down his back. "I say, stoppit! I'm coming, of course! But—"

Drip!

"Look here, Kerr, you Scotch chump—"

"Have the rest?" asked Kerr.

"Oh, no! Stoppit! Look here, you fellows, what I really meant to say is—gerroooogh! Oooooogh! Ooooch!"

Drip, drip, drip!

Fatty Wynn turned out.

Bed was warm and comfortable, and dark, secret passages at midnight far from attractive. But cold water dripping down his back settled the point. His loyal chums were not leaving David Llewellyn Wynn out of this adventure. Raiding the rival House at midnight, by unknown and unsuspected ways, was too tremendous a lark for old Fatty to be left out of it—and that was that!

But Fatty was sleepy. He groped for his trousers, but instead of putting them on, he peered at his chums in the gloom.

"I say, if we get copped going down—" he mumbled. "I mean to say, it's fearfully risky breaking out at night—"

"And you a giddy Welshman!" said Figgins. "Think of the men of Harlech! The men of Harlech roused from slumber without having cold water dripped down their necks! Think the men of Harlech would have cared for a spot of risk?"

"Oh, no! But—'tain't the risk, really!" mumbled Fatty. "But—"

"Give him the rest of the jug, Kerr!"

"Oh, it's all right—I'm coming!" said Fatty hastily.

And he plunged into his trousers.

The three dressed quietly in the dark. They left the Fourth Form dormitory on tiptoes. Once wide awake, and fairly committed to the adventure, Fatty recovered his keenness.

There was a certain back window that Figgins & Co. knew—and by that window they dropped one by one out of the House.

It was a fine June night, with a starry sky. No lights were to be seen in any windows—all St. Jim's was deep in slumber at that hour—save the adventurous three. But they kept carefully in the shadows as they cut away to the old tower.

Not till they were in the ancient doorway of the tower did Kerr flash on a light. They descended the stair into the crypt.

Damp and dark and dismal looked that ancient recess in the glimmer of the torch. But Figgins & Co. were not nervy.

One by one they dropped through the aperture of the moving stone, and ducked their heads in the subterranean passage.

In single file they trod on by the hidden way to the spiral stair that gave access to the interior of the School House—the enemy's stronghold.

In quite a short time they were at the summit of that stair, and the panel-door was opened, and they looked out into the study passage.

It was black as a hat!

Sixth Form studies, on the ground floor, were bed-rooms also; but all the junior Forms slept in dormitories, far from the studies. Nobody was

likely to be anywhere near at hand at that hour of the night.

"Here we are!" grinned Figgins, as he stepped through the doorway.

"What-ho!" chuckled Kerr.

Fatty Wynn followed them out.

Kerr, with the light glimmering, led the way towards the stairs. But Fatty paused outside Study No. 6.

"Hold on, you men!" he whispered.

"What's up?" Figgins gave a start. "Heard anything—"

"Oh, no! I say, this is D'Arcy's study!"

"Blow D'Arcy's study! That can wait! We're after Knox's scalp first!"

"Yes; but, I say, what about raiding the study cupboard first? Ten to one there's something in it! And, to tell you the truth, I'm hungry!"

"Kill him!" said Figgins.

"I mean, I always get hungry if I'm woke up at night," urged Fatty. "If there's a cake or anything—"

"Come on!"

"What I mean is, it's no end of a lark on them. I'm not exactly thinking of the cake, but of the lark. You blithering chump, what are you barging your silly hoof at me for?"

"To help you along! Get going!"

"I tell you it would be a lark on them. I'm thinking of the cark, not of the lake—I mean, of the lake—that is the cake—I mean, the lark, not the cake. And I say— Stoppit, you mad ass!"

Fatty Wynn rolled on.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Inky!

**G**ERALD KNOX awoke suddenly. Knox had sat up rather late in his study before he turned in. He had not been burning the midnight oil for studious reasons; he had been smoking cigarettes, and consulting a sporting paper on the chances of Bonny Barney winning the Wayland Handicap. But at midnight, Knox of the Sixth was fast asleep in bed, and if he was dreaming, he was probably dreaming of the chance—if any—of bagging a win on Bonny Barney. Certainly he did not dream that the three New House juniors he had swiped that afternoon were anywhere at hand.

What woke him was a quite surprising happening. The bedclothes were suddenly whipped off his bed.

Knox sat up in quite a dizzy state of astonishment.

It was black as a hat in his study with the blinds drawn. He could see nothing but blackness.

It seemed to him that he must be dreaming this.

Bedclothes might slip off, or roll off. But for the whole outfit to whisk off at one fell swoop was really remarkable.

"What the dooce—" gasped Knox.

He groped round him.

The bedclothes were gone. He sat in his pyjamas, with not the ghost of a sheet, or the spectre of a blanket anywhere near him. It was absolutely amazing. Even his pillow was gone. A pillow really couldn't slip off, or roll off, with a fellow's head on it. But it was gone. It had whisked away from under his head with the rest of the outfit.

Knox sat groping and blinking, and as he did so the pillow suddenly came home again. It came with a whiz!

Plop!

The pillow plopped on Knox's face, and folded itself round his head before it dropped on his knees.

"Gurrrrrgh!" gasped Knox.

It seemed to him that he glimpsed a moving shadow in the gloom. The pillow was whisked away again.

Whiz! Plop!

It returned—on Knox's features. He dropped on his back, the back of his head tapping on the bed-head. Knox gave a roar.

It was answered by a subdued chuckle from the darkness.

Then Knox at last understood. Somebody was in the room, and that somebody was a ragging junior.

Knox had been ragged many a time and oft. He was rather given to bullying, and he had a heavy hand with an ash—exercising his "whopping privs" to the full, and often a little over. Only that evening he had given Tom Merry and Manners a couple of swipes each, instead of the admonitory flick that old Kildare or Darrell would have given them. So if a chance came any fellow's way of ragging Knox, Knox generally got the benefit of it.

But this was very unusual—invading a prefect's room in the middle of the night, yanking off his bedclothes, and pelting him with his own pillow. This was the limit, and a little over.

Knox breathed rage as he clambered off the bed.

He was going to switch on the light without the loss of a second, and identify that ragger before he could bolt. And that ragger was going to be marched in to his headmaster in the morning for a flogging. And, on the spot, he was going to have the biggest hiding Knox could give him to go on with!

The lighting switch was by the door, and the enraged prefect groped to the door and switched it on.

But no light came.

He heard the click of the switch. It should have been followed by the light in the lamp, but it wasn't. The reason was simple. The lamp had been extracted from its socket before the ragers started operations. It did not suit Figgins & Co. to have light on the subject.

"You young rascal!" hissed Knox, in helpless rage. "Is that you, Tom Merry?"

There was a chuckle.

Knox made a fierce plunge in the direction of that chuckle. He could not see the chuckler. He could see nothing, not even a chair that was in his way. He stumbled over the chair, barked his shins, and gave a howl!

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad!" gasped Knox.

He rubbed damaged shins, and glared.

Three separate chortles reached his ears from three different directions, and he knew that there was not, as he had supposed, one ragger on the scene, but three ragers.

He groped round the study.

In his trousers pocket was a box of matches. Knox always carried matches; he needed them for his smokes. But he had to find his trousers in the dark. He groped and groped, and caught,

not trousers, but a head of hair! One of the ragers was in his clutches.

"Yooo-hoop!" came a deafening roar from the rager, as Knox clutched his hair, tightening his grasp as he realised that he had made a capture.

"Got you!" hissed Knox.

He could not see whom he had got. But he had got him, whoever he was, and had little doubt that it was Tom Merry or Manners or Lowther. Anyhow, he had got him.

The next moment, however, Knox himself was "got." As the captured one roared in Knox's grasp, his comrades, guided by the sound, closed in. Invisible hands grabbed at Gerald Knox. One caught his nose, another caught his ear. Both tugged.

Knox gave a roar that the ancient Bull of Bashan might have envied, celebrated as he was for his roaring.

He let go his prisoner, and lashed out frantically on all sides. His fist hit something, answered by a wild yell. It was apparently a nose, and that whop in the dark tapped the claret.

Figgins & Co. were there to rag Knox; but they seemed to be getting a fair share of the ragging themselves. Figgy certainly had not anticipated that jolt on the nose.

Three fellows backed away from Knox towards the door. Knox heard that hurried retreat and charged after them.

The door was open. Three fellows were bunched in the doorway. Knox crashed into the three.

He had them now, or, rather, they had him. He grabbed, and they grabbed. Three pairs of grabbing hands were more efficacious than one grabbing pair. Knox went down on the floor, bumping.

"The ink—quick!" He heard a hurried whisper.

He squirmed wildly to get away. He did not want the ink. Wanted, or unwanted, it arrived—a stream, splashing over the sprawling prefect!

Knox shouted, in the hope of awakening another man along the passage, and getting a light on the scene. It was his misfortune, and not his fault, that his mouth opened to shout as the ink arrived.

Knox's intended shout changed into a horrid gurgle.

His mouth was rather large; but there was plenty of ink in the ink-bottle, and it filled his mouth to capacity.

What there was no room for in his mouth went over his face.

"Gurrgh!" gurgled Knox. "Oooch! Wooch! Grooogh! Ooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gerroooogh! Woo-gooogh!"

"Cut!" whispered a voice. "Somebody's coming!"

Three grinning young rascals backed out of Knox's study. A door opened along the passage Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked out. The uproar in Knox's study had startled him out of slumber.

But Figgins & Co. were swift.

Kildare of the Sixth had a momentary back view of three figures vanishing round a corner. It was dark in the passage, save for the glimmer from his own doorway. They were gone in a twinkling.

He stared along towards Knox's doorway, from which horrid sounds floated.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,635.

"Gurrgh! Woooooch! Oooooch! Ooooo!"  
"What on earth—" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain.

He switched on the passage light and hurried along to Knox's study. He jumped as he saw the strange and startling figure that sat up in a sea of ink! A face as black as a Hottentot's—or blacker—glared at him, spluttering ink.

"What—who—" gasped Kildare. "Is that you, Knox?"

"Groooooogh!"

"What's the matter?"

"Gurrgh!"

"Why the dickens don't you answer me?"

"Wooooch! Grooogh! My mum-mum-mouth's full of—grooogh!—ink!" gurgled Knox. "Wooooch! I'm chook-chook-choking—urrgh! Those young rascals—urrgh! Those young—gurrgh!"

"Oh, it's a rag!" said Kildare. "This is pretty serious—ragging in the middle of the night! Did you see who they were?"

"Ooogh! Three of the Shell, I think—gooogh! Tom Merry—ooogh!—and the other young—gurrgh!—rotters—urrgh!"

"I'll go up and give their dorm the once-over! I don't see how you spotted them in the dark, though."

"Oooooogh—I never spotted them—grooogh—but I whopped them for larking in the—grooogh—passages this evening, and I think—ooooogh! I heard one of them speak, too, and I think—woooooogh!"

"I'll go up, anyhow!"

Kildare went, leaving Gerald Knox still arguing with the ink. Kildare made a round of the junior dormitories in the School House, but he found them all silent and slumbering. It did not occur to him to explore the Fourth Form study passage; but had it occurred to him it would have been too late—Figgins & Co. were already on their way home by the secret passage—Figgy holding a handkerchief to his nose as he went!

## CHAPTER 9.

### Not Guilty!

"TOM MEWWY—"

"Yes, old image!"

"You are a weckless ass, Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

Tom stared.

"What's biting you, old bean?" he inquired.

"Wandering in your mind—"

"If any!" added Monty Lowther.

"I am weferwin' to your weckless wagging last night, Tom Mewwy! Wasn't it you who were wagging?"

"My dear chap, I'm not a dog's tail!" remonstrated Tom. "I wasn't wagging."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Tom Mewwy! When I say wagging I mean wagging, not wagging, as you know vewy well! You have been wagging Knox of the Sixth!"

"Not guilty, my lord!" answered Tom, laughing. "I'd be glad to—but I haven't."

"Bai Jove! Wasn't it you fellows?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in surprise. "I've heard that Knox says it was your crowd."

"It wasn't your lot?" asked Manners.

"No feah! I should certainly not allow Blake



or Hewwies or Dig to be so weckless! It's feahfully sewious to wag a Sixth Form pwefect—though, of course, ewevy man in the House would be vewy glad to wag Knox, as he is such a wotten outsidah!"

"More power to their elbow, whoever it was!" said Tom. "I thought it was Study No. 6 when I heard of it."

"Might have been Levison and his lot!" remarked Lowther. "Hallo, here's Levison! You been ragging the Knox-bird, Levison?"

Levison of the Fourth laughed.

"No; haven't you?"

"Absolutely innocent!" said Monty Lowther. "Wildrake, did you turn out last night to pay Knox a visit?"

"I guess not!" answered Wildrake.

"He, he!" from Baggy Trimble. "I jolly well know whom Knox whopped last evening! I fancy Knox knows who ragged him!"

"Was it you, Trimble?" asked Levison.

Baggy jumped.

"Me? No! Don't you go saying it was me! Knox wants somebody whopped for it, and he won't care much who it is, so long as somebody is. I can tell you Knox is awfully fierce this morning."

After breakfast crowds of School House fellows were discussing the startling happening of the night. Everybody had heard by that time that Knox of the Sixth had been ragged in his quarters—culprits unknown, but suspected.

Neither Knox nor anyone else surmised for a moment that the ragging had come from the New House. The Houses were locked at night, and even a professional cracksman would not have found it easy to enter after lock-up. Not a man thought of the New House in connection with the matter at all.

Many of the fellows had heard that Knox suspected the Terrible Three. It was rumoured that he had reported them to the Housemaster, and that Railton was going to take the matter up before class.

But as the three were absolutely innocent in the matter they had no special misgivings. Knox, as the fat Baggy remarked, might be keener on getting somebody whopped than on making sure of the right man. But a Housemaster could be depended on to see justice done.

Darrell of the Sixth came out of the House and glanced round shortly before the bell was due for class. He beckoned to the three Shell fellows.

Baggy gave a fat chuckle.

"Better pack, you fellows!" he advised. "This won't be just six; this will be a Head's flogging! Shove a few exercise books in your bags."

"You fat chump!" said Tom Merry. "We never touched Knox—"

"He, he!" chuckled Baggy.

"Never heard of it till this morning—" said Manners.

"He, he!"

"Can't you take a fellow's word, Baggy?" asked Lowther.

"He, he!"

Baggy's cackle seemed to indicate that he couldn't.

"Well, you can take a fellow's boot, at any rate!" remarked Monty—and Baggy took it, with a thud, his fat cackle changing suddenly into a terrific roar.

Then the three hurried over to Darrell.

"Housemaster's study!" said the prefect. And they went in.

Mr. Railton was found in his study, with a grim, stern brow. Knox was there, in so savage a temper that he could barely suppress it, even in his Housemaster's presence. His eyes gleamed at the three as they came in.

"Merry! Manners! Lowther!" rapped Mr. Railton. "Did you leave your dormitory after lights out last night?"

"No, sir."

"You did not come down to Knox's study?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Railton scanned their faces keenly. Knox glared at them.

Knox, in point of fact, was far from sure that the three were the guilty parties. He founded his suspicion chiefly on the fact that he had whopped two of them the evening before. But if that evidence was good enough for Knox it was not likely to be good enough for his Housemaster.

Knox had told his tale of woe, and the Housemaster was determined that such reckless culprits should be found and punished. But he was rather more particular than Knox about making sure first.

"I've no doubt, sir, that these were the three," said Knox.

"I think, Knox, that there is a very considerable doubt," said Mr. Railton dryly. "You have told me that in the struggle in your study you dealt a blow which landed on the face of one of the juniors in the dark. None of these three faces shows any signs of such blow."

"Oh!" said Knox.

He glared at the three. Knox had little doubt that there was at least one nose in the ragging party that would bear outward and visible signs of the combat in the dark. He had said so to the Housemaster, fully expecting that Tom Merry, Harry Manners, or Monty Lowther would show a damaged nose!

But all three noses were absolutely normal. Knox glared, and glared again, but he could not glare damage into a nose. Plainly, obviously, evidently, none of those three noses had lately had a knock.

"Oh!" said Knox at last.

"Certainly the boy who received your blow cannot be one of these three," said Mr. Railton. "Merry, I accept your statement that you did not leave your dormitory last night. You may go!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

The three left the study. Knox left a few moments later, and hurried after them. He overtook them as they went into the quad.

"Hold on, you young sweeps!" he snapped.

"Anything to oblige!" said Tom politely. And the three held on.

"You've managed to stuff Railton," said Knox.

"You can't stuff me. I fancy two of you were there. Who was the other who stopped my punch?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom. "We knew nothing about it till this morning. And if we knew anything we wouldn't tell you."

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"That's not the way to talk to a prefect, Merry!" he said. "I'll whop you for that!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom cheerfully. "Come on, you men—let's go back to Railton, and ask him whether we're to be whopped, and whether he thinks we stuffed him, as Knox says!"

Knox caught his breath. He gave the three a look, and turned quickly and walked away, leaving them grinning.

## CHAPTER 10.

## The Wrong Man!

"OW!" roared Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus was not accustomed to roar. The repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere was Gussy's long suit.

But circumstances alter cases! A fellow who stopped on a banana-skin, shot over, and landed suddenly on his nose on the cold, hard, unsympathetic earth might be excused for momentarily forgetting the manners and customs of the aristocracy, and adopting those of common mortals.

Anyway, Gussy roared.

Baggy Trimble had dropped the banana-skin about. That was just like Trimble. Arthur Augustus had stepped on it without noticing it. That was just like Gussy.

A moment ago, D'Arcy had been walking with elegant leisure. Now he was turning suddenly into a catherine-wheel.

He hardly knew what was happening. But he knew that his noble nose knocked on the solid globe. The globe was so solid that it left no doubt on the subject.

"Ow! Oh! Ooooh!" roared Arthur Augustus.

He scrambled up.

The knees of his trousers were dusty. That in itself was a catastrophe. But even that catastrophe paled into insignificance compared with the state of his nose. There was a pain in his nose! Gussy could bear pain like a Spartan. But there was a spurt of red. Gussy dabbed a handkerchief to his noble proboscis, and it came away red-spotted.

"Oh cwumbs!" breathed Arthur Augustus, overwhelmed with dismay.

This was fearful!

Evidently, he was going to have a decorative nose.

He dabbed and dabbed. The more he dabbed, the more spots appeared on the handkerchief. He took out his pocket-mirror, and surveyed his nose. It was red. It was slightly swollen already. It exuded crimson. It was not a thing of beauty, and far from being a joy for ever! The pain in it was a mere nothing in comparison with its appearance.

"Oh cwikey!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

He held his handkerchief to his nose as he walked off towards the House. He wanted to bathe that nose before the bell went. He was anxious to do his very best to restore that nose to normal before he went into class.

The sight of the swell of St. Jim's walking with a handkerchief to his nose naturally drew attention.

"Hurt your boko?" asked Levison.

"Yaas!"

"Knocked it on somebody's knuckles?" grinned Grundy of the Shell.

"No, I fell ovah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy. "Don't let Knox see it—he will guess where you fell over! He's asking all over the shop after a fellow with a damaged bezer."

"Bothah Knox!" answered Arthur Augustus, and he walked on.

He passed Knox of the Sixth a few minutes later, and Knox jumped as he saw him.

Knox was in eager search of some School House junior with a damaged nose. Having found a School House junior with a damaged nose, Knox had no doubt that he would have one of the

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rappers at least. And a junior passing Knox with his nose hidden under a handkerchief was really asking for it. Knox of the Sixth bore down on Arthur Augustus at once.

"Stop!" he rapped.

"I am in wathah a huwwy, Knox."

"Take that hanky away!" snapped Knox. "Let me see your nose!"

"Weally, Knox—"

"Take that hanky away at once!"

"But weally—"

Knox reached out and knocked the handkerchief aside. A red and damaged nose was re-



"Upend the table," said Figgins. "Hang the carpet over the legs!" "Ha, ha, ha!" The New House rappers grinned as they sat to work on Study No. 6. "Pity we can't stop to see the School House ticks enjoy their surprise!" went on Figgins. "I say," said Fatty Wynn, enjoying himself at the study cupboard, "these bananas are good!"

vealed! A dozen fellows gathering round stared at it.

"He, he!" cachinnated Baggy Trimble. "It's D'Arcy! I thought it was Tom Merry, but it's D'Arcy!"

"So I've spotted you, D'Arcy, have I?" said Knox grimly. "Come with me."

"I weally have no time now, Knox!" expostulated Arthur Augustus. "I want to bathe my nose befoah class."

"Your nose can wait till Railton's seen it!" grinned Knox.

"Bai Jove! I fail to see why Wailton should

be intewested in my nose, Knox!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

"Come along, you young rascal!"

"D'Arcy never had that nose this morning. Knox!" said Cardow of the Fourth.

"Didn't he?" sneered Knox. "We'll see what Railton says about that! Come with me at once, D'Arcy!"

"But weally, Knox—"

"Do you want me to take you by the collar?"

"I should wefuse to be taken by the collah, Knox!" answered Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"As you are a pwefect, I will follow you, but you

"I trust that this is not another mistake, Knox! Hardly half an hour ago you had no doubt that the offenders were in the Shell, and D'Arcy is a Fourth Form boy!" said Mr. Railton rather sharply.

"One of them, sir, was struck on the nose in the struggle, and I am sure bears the signs of it this morning," said Knox. "D'Arcy was deliberately hiding his nose with a handkerchief when I saw him in the quadrangle—"

"I was doin' nothin' of the kind, Knox!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was holdin' my hanky to my nose, because it was tapped—"

"I compelled him to let me see his nose, sir, much against his will, and found that it had been damaged by a blow," said Knox.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"Remove that handkerchief, D'Arcy!" he said. "Yaas, sir!"

"Upon my word!" Railton stared at the damaged proboscis. "You have certainly had a hard blow on the nose, D'Arcy! Have you been fighting?"

"Certainly not, sir."

Knox's eyes gleamed. If a fellow with a nose like that admitted that he had not been fighting, where had he got the nose? It was quite clear to Gerald Knox!

"D'Arcy! Were you one of the boys who entered Knox's study last night?" asked Mr. Railton sternly.

"Bai Jove! No, sir!"

"You have received a blow!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Tell me at once where you received that blow, D'Arcy."

"On my nose, sir!" answered Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Wh-a-t?"

"On my nose, sir!"

"I warn you not to trifle with me, D'Arcy!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him.

"I am not twiffin' with you, sir! I am answahin' your question! You asked me where I weceived a blow—"

Mr. Railton breathed hard.

"Did you receive that blow last night in Knox's study?" he rapped.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then in what place did you receive it?"

"In the quad, sir."

"You have said that you have not been fighting?"

"Not at all, sir."

"D'Arcy! You can scarcely expect me to believe that some boy struck you on the nose without cause—"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Tell me at once, D'Arcy, who caused that damage to your face!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I don't know, sir!"

"You do not know!" exclaimed the Housemaster blankly.

"I haven't the foggiest, sir! I was taken quite by surpwise. I should like to punch the uttah ass who was wesponsible, but I have not the least ideah who he was."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Railton, staring at him. "D'Arcy, if you cannot explain how you came by that injury, I can only conclude that it happened in Knox's study last night—"

"But I can explain all wight, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I don't know who caused the damage, as I did not see him dwop the banana-skin—"

"The—the what?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,635.

are wasting valuable time! I want to bathe my nose."

"Follow me, you young sweep!"

And Arthur Augustus followed the bully of the Sixth to his Housemaster's study. Mr. Railton, who was preparing to go to the Sixth Form Room, glanced round impatiently. He started a little at the sight of a junior with a handkerchief to his nose.

"What is it now, Knox?" he asked.

"I have brought D'Arcy here, sir, as I have no doubt that he was one of the rappers in my study last night," explained Knox.

"The banana-skin, sir!"  
 "Bless my soul! What has a banana-skin to do with it?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"A vewy gweat deal, sir, as I slipped on it, and—"

"You slipped on a banana-skin?"

"Yaas, sir, and banged my nose—"

"Oh! When did this occur, D'Arcy?"

"About ten minutes ago, sir! I was comin' in to bathe my nose when Knox gwabbed me. I pointed out to him that I was in wathah a huvwvy to bathe my nose, but he insisted upon bwingin' me heah. If you are done with me, sir, I should be vewy glad to go and bathe my nose."

"I—I do not believe a word of this, sir!" hooted Knox. "I—"

"Bai Jovè! You are an awful wottah, Knox!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir; but Knox is an awful wottah to expvess doubt upon my word! I am weally quite surprised that you allow him to wemain a pweffect!"

"Leave my study, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir! But I think—"

"I shall cane you if you say another word, D'Arcy! Leave my study at once!"

Arthur Augustus left—with his handkerchief to his noble nose again. He did not utter any more words, but he gave Knox a glance of lofty scorn as he went.

When he was gone, Mr. Railton fixed a rather grim look on Knox.

"This is the second time, Knox, that you have made a ridiculous mistake and an unfounded accusation!" he said. "Kindly make no more reports to me unless you can be certain of what you say."

"But—" stammered Knox.

"That will do!" rapped Mr. Railton. "You may go."

And Knox went—with feelings that he could not have expressed in words!

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Raiders!

"OH jiminy!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble, in alarm.

Baggy had cause for alarm.

After class that day most of the School House men had gone down to the nets. Hardly a fellow was up in the studies in the glorious June weather. In that deserted state of the junior quarters, Baggy Trimble naturally expected a clear field for certain investigations he had to make—not unconnected with possible supplies of tuck in the study cupboards.

Study No. 6 seemed to the fat Baggy absolutely safe. He had watched the four owners of that study, arrayed in flannels, with bats under their arms, fare forth for a spot of cricket. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, who were likely visitors to Study No. 6, had gone with them. So Baggy Trimble, when he sneaked surreptitiously into Study No. 6, did not for a moment expect to be interrupted.

But alas for Baggy!

Standing at the study cupboard, he had finished a cake, but had not had time to begin on the jam, when footsteps stopped at the study door.

There was no escape for Baggy. He had not even time to scramble under the table as he had done in Tom Merry's study. He had barely time

to cram himself into the lower half of the cupboard, among the lumber there, and draw the cupboard door shut when the study door opened.

He heard a chuckle.

"All clear!" came a voice that made the fat Baggy jump as he heard it. It was not a School House voice. It was the voice of George Figgins of the New House!

"Right as rain, Figgy!" It was Kerr's voice this time.

"They may miss us at cricket!" came Fatty Wynn's dulcet tones.

"Let them! They won't guess where we are!"

"Hardly!" chuckled Fatty.

Baggy Trimble almost wondered whether he was dreaming.

He realised that it was a House raid; Figgins & Co. were on the warpath. They, as well as the podgy Baggy, had calculated on the coast being clear. Still, it was very surprising for three of the enemy to penetrate into the House unnoticed.

"This is no end of a catch, you men!" went on Figgins. "So long as we keep the secret, we've got those School House swabs just where we want them."

Baggy wondered what the secret was.

"They'll get a bit of a surprise when they come in from the cricket," went on Figgins. "Mustn't stay too long—if anybody spotted us going, the game would be up."

"I wonder what they've got in the cupboard to—"

"Never mind the cupboard, you cormorant—"

"Well, we're here for a rag," said Fatty Wynn, "and they jolly nearly got our tuck yesterday! I'm going to look!"

Baggy Trimble suppressed his breathing as the fat Fourth Former of the New House came across to the cupboard.

Had it been the owners of the study who had arrived, they might not have had occasion to open the cupboard, and Baggy might have escaped detection. But Fatty Wynn's interest in study cupboards was almost as keen as Baggy's own!

The door flew open, and Fatty Wynn surveyed the interior of the upper cupboard. He did not look down, and Baggy still hoped!

"By gum! Here's a pot of jam!" exclaimed Fatty.

"Good! We'll ladle it out over the armchair!"

"We jolly well won't, Figgy! You can shove the ink on the armchair! You're not going to waste jam!" exclaimed Fatty warmly. "Look here, it will be no end of a jest on them to scoff their grub. You fellows get on with ragging the study while I scoff the grub—see? That's division of labour—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This looks good jam! I wonder where they keep their spoons! I— Oh, my hat! Great pip! What—" Fatty gave a startled yell.

"Don't roar, you ass—what's the matter?"

"There's somebody here!" gasped Fatty.

"Somebody in the cupboard? What rot!"

"Look!"

"Trimble!" howled Figgins.

"Oh! I—I say—" gasped Trimble. "I—I say, I—I— Leggo! Leggo my ear, Figgins, you New House swab! Leggo my neck, Wynn, you Welsh rabbit! Leggo my collar, Kerr, you Scotch blighter— Yaroooh!"

Three pairs of hands hooked Baggy Trimble out of the study cupboard like a fat winkle from a shell.

He roared.

"Shut him up!" exclaimed Kerr hastily. "He will bring half the House here at this rate!"

Figgins grabbed up a duster. Baggy's mouth was open, emitting a wild yell. Figgy crammed the duster into it, and the yell changed into a suffocated gurgle.

"Keep him quiet!" breathed Kerr.

"I've got him all right!"

Figgins knotted the duster behind Baggy's fat head. Baggy could only gurgle feebly. He was plunged into the study armchair, and a blind-cord secured his fat hands to the arms of the chair. Figgins & Co. were quick workers. They were quite surprised by Baggy's unexpected presence in the study. But they made very short work of Baggy!

"That's all right!" grinned Figgins. "Now sit there, Trimble, and watch! You get a front seat for nothing."

"Urrgh!" mumbled Baggy.

"Quiet!" breathed Kerr. "Somebody's coming! Somebody's heard that fat freak burbling."

Footsteps came up the passage to the study door. Evidently some fellow had heard the roar from Study No. 6.

Figgins made a hasty sign to his comrades. The game was up if the alarm was given while they were in the enemy's quarters. It was an unexpected danger—Baggy had rather disconcerted the plans of the New House raiders. But Figgins was equal to the emergency.

The three raiders backed swiftly behind the door, cramming themselves against the wall in a row, so that the door would hide them when it opened—unless the newcomer stepped in. In which case, they knew what was going to happen.

The door flew open. Tompkins of the Fourth looked in. Clarence York Tompkins had apparently been in his study when he heard the roar from Study No. 6, and he had come along to see what the matter was.

He stared in.

"Is anything the matter here?" he asked. "Why—what—what are you doing tied up like that, Trimble?"

Tompkins' eyes popped at the sight of the fat Baggy in the armchair. He stared at him. He blinked at him. He goggled at him.

Baggy strove to speak. But all he could utter was a suffocated gurgle.

"Ooooooogh!"

"Who tied you up like that, Trimble?" asked the astonished Tompkins.

"Urrrrgh!"

Tompkins stepped into the study. He was quite surprised at the sight of Baggy in his peculiar predicament. He was still more surprised when he stepped in. Two pairs of hands suddenly grasped him, and upended him, while a third fellow quickly shut the door.

"Oh!" spluttered Tompkins.

"Get a duster or something, quick!" panted Figgins. "I'll keep his face jammed in the carpet till you get it."

"Ooooooogh!" gurgled Tompkins.

"Buck up with that duster!"

"Ooooooogh!"

Another duster was rooted out. Clarence York Tompkins, in a state of bemused bewilderment, found it knotted over his mouth. Then his wrists were tied to the legs of a chair.

Figgins & Co. smiled down at him.

Tompkins blinked at them dizzily. Where three New House juniors had suddenly sprung from was a mystery to Tompkins.

"O.K.," chuckled Figgins. "Get on with it!"

Figgins & Co. got on with it—Fatty Wynn devoting himself to the study cupboard, no doubt on the principle of equal division of labour. Fatty found a tablespoon, and jam disappeared at a rapid rate.

"By gum, this is good jam!" said Fatty. "I suppose that fat tick Trimble was here after this jam. Greedy pig! That guzzling porker is always scoffing tuck—never saw such a fellow to eat. By gum, this is good jam!"

Fatty finished the jar.

"You fellows like bananas?" he asked.

"Blow the bananas!" answered Kerr, who was busy transferring the contents of a bottle of gum into the inkpot—Figgins having already streamed the ink impartially over the features of Baggy Trimble and Clarence York Tompkins.

"Well, I'll have them, if you like," said Fatty. "There's only seven!"

"Upend the table," said Figgins. "Hang the carpet over the legs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This will amuse those School House ticks when they come in! Pity we can't stop to see them enjoy the surprise!"

"I say, these bananas are good! You fellows like biscuits?"

"May as well hang the curtains over the carpet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"These biscuits are all right!" said Fatty Wynn. "If you fellows have finished, I'll put the rest in my pockets. Pity to waste them."

"Well, I think we've done enough!" remarked Figgins, surveying the dismantled study. "No real harm—just a gentle rag to show those fatheads they can't keep their end up with the New House. May as well leave them a message!"

Figgins dipped a finger in streaming ink, and proceeded to indite a message on the glass on the wall.

"SCHOOL HOUSE SWABS!  
THIS IS WHERE YOU LAUGH!"

Signed,  
Figgins & Co."

After which Figgins & Co.—after peering out cautiously into the passage—retired from the study, and shut the door on Baggy Trimble and Clarence York Tompkins. Those two unhappy youths were left to wriggle and mumble.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Quite Mysterious!

"**B**AI Jove!"  
"What—"  
"Who—"  
"How—"

Four fellows fairly stuttered. They blinked into Study No. 6 with almost unbelieving eyes. Arthur Augustus' eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord. Arthur Augustus could hardly believe his eye, or his eyeglass, at what he saw.

Never had Blake & Co. been so astounded.

They had come in to tea a little late, after a spot of cricket. Figgins & Co. had long been gone. Baggy Trimble and Tompkins were still there. They had no choice in the matter. Trimble and Tompkins blinked dolorously at the amazed quartet in the doorway. They had had

a long wait—which, in the circumstances, had seemed longer than it really was.

"Anything up?" asked Tom Merry, pausing with Manners and Lowther as he heard the gasping ejaculations of Blake & Co.

"Look!" gasped Blake.

"Oh, my hat!"

The Terrible Three looked—or rather, stared and blinked! The state of Study No. 6 startled them as much as it had startled Blake & Co.

"Who——" ejaculated Manners.

Monty Lowther pointed to the looking-glass.

"Figgins!" he said.

"Those New House swabs!" gasped Herries.

"Gooogh!" came gurgling from Baggy Trimble. Baggy was chiefly anxious to be released. "Ooogh!"

"Urrgh!" gurgled Tompkins.

Blake stepped in. He jerked away the dusters. Two hapless prisoners spluttered for breath.

"Urrgh!" gurgled Baggy. "Why didn't you come in before? Wurrgh! I've been here for hours and hours and—groogh——"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tompkins. "I say, get me loose, will you? I've been tied up here for more than half an hour."

"What did you let them do it for?" roared Blake.

"I couldn't help it, could I?" gasped Clarence York. "I heard a row in the study, and came to see what it was, and they got me——"

"Look here, you know, you get me loose!" howled Baggy. "I'm all inky! I'm cramped! I'm going to the Housemaster! Let me go, will you?"

Tompkins was released. He wriggled out of the study, gasping for breath. But the new arrivals did not seem in a hurry to release Baggy Trimble. They glared at him.

"You're going to the Housemaster, are you?" demanded Blake.

"Yes, I jolly well am!" roared Trimble. "Think I'm going to be tied up like a turkey, with a duster in my mouth! I'm jolly well going to Railton the minute I get loose! Now let me go."

Blake & Co. were in a state of towering rage at the sight of their dismantled study. They were boiling—almost boiling over! The Terrible Three shared their feelings to a great extent. But Baggy's ideas of reporting the raid to the Housemaster did not seem popular, all the same.

"You fat toad!" said Manners.

"Yah! Will you untie me?" yelled Baggy.

"No, stick there, you podgy piffler!"

"Yes, stick there!" agreed Blake. "You're going to the Housemaster, are you? Let me catch you going to the Housemaster, you fozzling fat freak! What were you doing in the study at all, I'd like to know?"

"I—I came to borrow a die!" gasped Trimble. "Fatty Wynn had the cake, as well as the jam and the biscuits and the bananas. He had the whole lot! He went off with his pockets full of biscuits. Will you let me loose, so that I can go down to Railton about this?"

"Any ink left in that pot, Dig?"

"Yes—no—it's gum in it!"

"Hand it over!"

"Keep that away from me!" yelled Trimble, as Blake inverted the inkpot over a fat face and the gum trickled out. "Ooogh! You rotter, keep that gum away—Ow! Woogh!"

"Still going to the Housemaster?" asked Blake.

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"Yes!" roared Trimble. "I jolly well am! I—urrrrgh!" He shut his mouth suddenly as the gum trickled in it. "Wooooh!"

"Blessed if I can make this out!" exclaimed Tom Merry in perplexity. "There weren't many fellows about, but somebody must have seen those New House ticks come in."

"How the thump did they get in and get out without anybody stopping them?" exclaimed Blake.

Bernard Glyn of the Shell looked in.

"Anything up here?" he asked. "Oh crikey! Yes—I see there is! Who did this?"

"Signature on the looking-glass!" said Lowther.

Glyn stared at the inky message.

"Well, that beats it!" he said. "How did they get here? They never passed me on the stairs! I've been sitting in the window-seat on the middle landing ever since class, working at maths—and no New House men came up."

"Do you do your maths with your eyes shut?" hooted Herries.

"I tell you no New House men came up!" roared Glyn. "I'd have stopped them fast enough!"

"Perhaps they came down the chimney!" grunted Herries.

"Must have got in at a window somewhere!" said Tom Merry. "But it's jolly queer! Anyhow, they've been here—and got clear! We shall have to make the New House sit up for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look at the study!" gasped Blake. "Look at it——"

"Urrgh!" gurgled Trimble. "Look at me! I'm all inky! Will you—gerrogh—let me loose—oogh——"

"Still going to the Housemaster?" hooted Blake.

"Yes, you dummy—let me loose——"

"Any water in that kettle, Dig?"

"Yes!"

"Pour it down his back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh jiminy!" Baggy Trimble wriggled wildly as the water streamed down his podgy back. "I say—ooogh! Stoppit! I—I ain't going to the Housemaster! Will you stoppit? Wooch!"

"Oh, let him have the lot in case he changes his mind!" said Blake.

Dig let Baggy Trimble have the lot!

Then the fat Baggy was at last released.

"Now boot him out!" said Blake. "And if you go anywhere near the Housemaster, Baggy, and if Railton hears a word of this, you're going to be scragged!"

"Scragged isn't the word," said Tom Merry. "You're going to be slaughtered, Baggy! Take that as a tip!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Baggy, yelling, was booted out of the study.

"We don't want any beaks in this," said Blake.

"We'll make those New House blighters sit up all right! Oh crumbs! Looks like tea in the study!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Come and tea in Study No. 10, and then we'll all lend a hand getting the study to rights," he said; and that suggestion was adopted.

And over tea seven School House juniors discussed ways and means of making Figgins & Co. sit up for their sins; though how Figgins & Co. had got away with that raid, unseen and unsuspected, remained a puzzling mystery.

## CHAPTER 13.

## Another Mystery!

"**W**HERE'S my trousers?"

"Who's got my socks?"

"What silly ass has been larking?"

"What thumping chump——"

"Who's got my bags?"

The rising-bell clanged in the dewy morn. In the Shell dormitory in the School House, Tom Merry & Co. turned out—to meet with a surprise.

Overnight, Tom had left his clothes neatly folded on a chair by his bed. There was nothing on that chair in the morning. The captain of the Shell stared at that chair, and inquired wrathfully for his clobber. From up and down the dormitory came similar inquiries, in every tone of wrath and excitement.

"Somebody's been ragging our clobber!" roared Gore.

"Who's got my bags?" yelled Kangaroo.

"Who's snaffled my shirt?" howled Monty Lowther.

"Who's snooped my socks?" bawled Racke.

"What the dickens has happened to our clothes?" exclaimed Talbot.

"Look here, if you've been larking, Lowther, you ass, cough up my clobber!" howled Crooke.

"You silly owl!" hooted Lowther. "My bags are gone!"

"Jolly nearly everything seems to be gone!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is this a dorm raid? Those Fourth Form fatheads——"

There was excitement and exasperation up and down the Shell dormitory. Obviously there had been a raid in the night.

While the Shell fellows slept, some person or persons unknown had crept into that dormitory, and made an extensive collection of clothes.

Some garments had been left—the raiders probably had been pressed for time. One fellow had his trousers, another had a shirt, another had a single sock; there were a few jackets, and some collars and ties. But there had been a fairly clean sweep.

"That ass Lowther!" hooted Racke.

Suspicion turned on the funny man of the Shell.

"I tell you my bags have been snooped!" roared Monty Lowther, "and my waistcoat and shirt, too! And my collar and tie!"

"Must be a dorm raid," said Manners.

"That's it," agreed Tom Merry. "Some of those Fourth Form goats have bagged our clobber."

"I'm not standing this!" howled Racke. "Look here, we can't go down in pyjamas, I suppose?"

"We jolly well can't!" snorted Crooke. "And I'm jolly well going to yell for a prefect!"

"You yell for a prefect, and I'll give you something to yell for!" said Grundy. "Let's go and mop up the Fourth, you men, and get our clobber back!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

Evidently the Shell could not present themselves in the regions below clad only in the light and airy garb of pyjamas. They had to have their clothes. And there was no time to lose. It was not a long interval between rising-bell and early prayers. Tom Merry threw open the dormitory door and led the way.

Obviously it was a raid, and equally obviously, as it seemed, it could only have come from the Fourth. The Third Form could hardly be suspected of having the neck to raid the Shell, and

the senior Forms did not indulge in dormitory raids. As for the New House, nobody thought for a moment of the New House—for how could New House men possibly have got into the School House after lights out?

An excited crowd in pyjamas arrived at the door of the Fourth Form dormitory. Tom Merry hurried that door wide open.

The School House Fourth were up, but not yet down. Blake stared round in astonishment at the crowd of excited visitors in the dormitory doorway.

"What——" he began.

"Go for them!" roared Grundy.

"Mop them up!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! What——" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The Shell rushed as one man.

Fourth Formers were barged right and left—taken quite by surprise by that sudden and unexpected attack, Blake & Co. simply had no chance.

"Now where's our clobber?" shouted Gore.

"Where's my trousers?" yelled Lowther.

"Cough it up before we scrag you, you Fourth Form fatheads!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Now then, Blake, where's our clobber? Bump him till he coughs it up!"

Fourth Formers were sprawling all over the dormitory. Jack Blake struggled frantically in the grasp of two or three Shell fellows.

"You mad asses!" he roared. "Wharrer you up to? Yaroooh!"

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Ow!"

"Where's our clobber?" roared Tom Merry.

"How should I know?"

Bump!

"Yoo-hoop! Leggo! Oh crikey!"

Bump!

"Bai Jove! Have you fellows all gone pottay?" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, scrambling to his feet. "Come on, deah boys! Wash the wottahs!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to the attack. Monty Lowther put a foot in the way, and Arthur Augustus nose-dived, with a fearful yell.

"Yawooop!"

"Now, then, where's our clobber?"

"Cough up my trousers, you fatheads!"

"You blithering chumps!" shrieked Blake.

"What do you think we know about your silly clobber?"

"Haven't you raided our dorm?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No, you ass! No, you fathead! No, you blitherer! No, you dangerous maniac!"

"Then who has?"

"How should I know, idiot? How should I know, lunatic? How should I know, dunder-head?"

"You uttah asses——"

"Rag them till they cough it up!" roared Grundy. "Somebody's got my trousers! Have you got my trousers, D'Arcy?"

"You fwightful ass, Gwunday——"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. He realised that the reprisals on the Fourth had been a little hasty. "Look here, Blake, our clobber's gone! We—we thought it was a dorm raid, of course——"

"You thundering idiot, wait till I get at you!" gasped Blake. "You potty, piffing, pie-faced chump——"

(Continued on page 36.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1.635.

# THE NORTH-WEST TRAIL!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

*Yen Chin, the wily Chinese of Cedar Creek, is determined to join Frank Richards' holiday party to the wild North-West, but his cunning means of achieving his object have the opposite effect!*

## Yen Chin, Too!

"LAST day at school," remarked Bob Lawless. "No more blessed work for weeks to come!" said Chunky Todgers, with great satisfaction.

Frank Richards laughed. He was looking forward to the summer holidays, but not exactly for the same reason as Chunky. He did not object to work.

"We're going to spread ourselves a bit these holidays," went on Bob Lawless. "A few days at home just to make our people happy—ahem!"

"Ha, ha!" "And then the North-West trail," said Bob, with glistening eyes. "Just our hosses and guns and ourselves, and all the North-West in front of us. Up the Cascade Mountains, perhaps right on through the Coast Range to the Pacific. As Chunky's coming with us, we'll make him do all the chores!"

"Oh, will you?" said Chunky Todgers warmly. "He'll be useful if not ornamental!" grinned Bob.

"Why, you jay!" exclaimed Chunky.

Chunky Todgers was far from believing that he was not ornamental, and he had no desire to be useful.

"It will be ripping!" said Vere Beauclerc.

"The time of our lives, Cherub!" said Bob.

"I suppose your popper won't mind you coming away for a few weeks?"

Beauclerc shook his head.

"No; father will be away himself, as it happens. I've told him I'm going on a holiday with you fellows, and he's glad!"

"Good!"

"I say, there's been a lot of strikes in the Cascade Mountains," remarked Chunky Todgers thoughtfully. "Suppose we find a gold-mine—"

"I'll bring home in my hat all the gold-mines you find, Chunky. Hallo, you lump of yellow wickedness, what do you want?"

Bob Lawless addressed that polite question to Yen Chin, the Chinese of Cedar Creek School.

The chums of Cedar Creek were standing in the gateway, chatting, while they waited for the bell for afternoon lessons—the last lessons they were to receive for many merry weeks. Yen Chin came wriggling up, with an agreeable grin on his yellow face.

"No mole schoolee aftel to-morrow," he said.

"Just found that out?"

"You chappee goee away," said Yen Chin.

"Me heal talky-talky. You goee on long journey North-West—oh, yes?"

"Correct!"

"Me comee North-West with handsome Bob," said Yen Chin. "You likee me comee?"

"Oh!"

"You likee me comee, Flanky?"

"Ahem!" murmured Frank Richards.

"You likee Chelub?"

Vere Beauclerc coughed. As a matter of fact, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,635.

the chums of Cedar Creek were not yearning for the company of the Chinese on their North-Western trip.

"You likee me comee, Todgee?" asked Yen Chin.

"No fear!" answered Chunky. "No heathens in this outfit!"

"Chinese velly nicee boy," said Yen Chin sorrowfully. "Me tinkee likee comee!"

"The fact is, four's company and five's a crowd," said Bob. "You wouldn't like it, Yen Chin!"

"No wantee nicee Chinese?" said Yen Chin. "Allee light! You go choppee chippee!"

The chums of Cedar Creek grinned as Yen Chin marched away with that remark.

"Hallo, there's the bell!" exclaimed Bob.

Frank Richards & Co. went into the school-house. There was a buzz of voices in Miss Meadows' class when the schoolmistress came in. That afternoon most of the boys and girls were thinking more of their coming holidays than of their last instruction at Miss Meadows' hands.

"Silence, please!" said Miss Meadows.

The lesson proceeded. The lesson happened to be geography, and it dealt with North-Western Canada, and so Frank Richards & Co. were more than usually interested in it. That was the region where they were to travel.

But the lesson was suddenly interrupted by a terrific yell from Bob Lawless.

"Yaroooop!"

Bob leaped to his feet as he yelled. Miss Meadows spun round towards him, almost petrified. All eyes were turned on Bob.

"Lawless!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Ow! Oh! I—I— Sorry, ma'am!" gasped Bob, with a crimson face. "S-s-something stung my leg!"

"What?"

"A—a—a mosquito, or something, ma'am!"

"There are no mosquitoes here, Lawless. Take your seat at once, and be more orderly, please!"

"Ye-es, ma'am!"

Bob Lawless sat down again, amid a grinning class. But he did not sit still for long. Five minutes later he interrupted Miss Meadows with a war-whoop worthy of a Red Indian, and leaped to his feet.

"Yow! Ow!"

"Lawless!" almost thundered the Canadian schoolmistress. "How dare you!"

"I—I—I was stung again!" gasped the unhappy Bob. "Somebody stuck a pin into my leg!"

In the form behind there were Chunky Todgers, Tom Lawrence, and Yen Chin. All three of them stared at Bob and grinned.

Miss Meadows came among the desks.

"Did one of you touch Lawless with a pin?" she exclaimed severely.

"Nunno, ma'am!"

"Certainly not, ma'am!"

"No touchee Bobbee," murmured Yen Chin. "No leachee—how can!"

"That is quite true. These boys could not reach you, Lawless, without leaving their seats," said Miss Meadows.

"All the same, somebody stuck something into me," said Bob. "It hurts like anything. Ow!"

"This is very extraordinary. You may change places with Richards, Lawless!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

Bob changed forms with his chum, and Frank Richards sat down in his place. Miss Meadows, with a very severe look, resumed the lesson.

But there was destined to be another interruption. It came from Frank Richards this time. He jumped up suddenly with a howl that rang through the class-room, and caused all the class to stare round.

"Yah! Yah! Oh! Oh, my hat! Ow!"

#### Four in Trouble!

"RICHARDS!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"How dare you interrupt the lessons, Richards!" exclaimed Miss Meadows angrily.

"Somebody stuck a pin in my leg, ma'am!" stammered Frank. "Somebody behind me! Ow, ow!"

"Lawrence! Todgers! Yen Chin! Did you touch Richards?"

"No, ma'am!"

"Richards, I am afraid you are deliberately wasting time!" said Miss Meadows sternly.

"This appears to me to be a joke concerted between you and Lawless!"

"Oh, no, ma'am! I—I—"

"Beauclerc, take Richards' place! Richards, you will take this seat under my eyes!" said the schoolmistress severely.

Frank Richards obeyed with scarlet cheeks. Vere Beauclerc, with a rather puzzled look at his chum, took the place he vacated.

Miss Meadows, good-tempered as she always was, looked angry now. She concluded that the exuberance of spirits, natural on the eve of the holidays, was leading some of her pupils to perpetrate a "rag" in class. For it really seemed impossible for anyone at that desk to be reached by a pin from behind without the action being seen by the whole class.

And certainly Lawrence, Todgers, and Yen Chin had not moved from their places, and, without moving, they could not get within reach of the fellow in front.

Beauclerc, who was a rather more serious-natured fellow than his two chums, was certainly the last member of the class likely to enter into a rag during lesson-time. But before ten minutes had elapsed Miss Meadows was interrupted by a sharp cry from him.

"Oh!"

The schoolmistress' eyes were fixed on him at once.

"Beauclerc!"

"I—I am sorry, Miss Meadows," stammered Beauclerc. "Someone ran a pin into my leg!"

"You must be well aware, Beauclerc, that you are stating an impossibility!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "No one could do so without stooping, and certainly no one has stooped. I am sorry to see that three boys whom I have regarded as my best pupils have entered into a



The chums shook their fists at the Celestial, who kissed his hand to them in response. They drew a little nearer and Yen Chin promptly set the horses in motion, keeping his distance. "Yen Chin," roared Bob Lawless, "bring back those horses!"



scheme to show disrespect to their schoolmistress on the last day of term."

"Miss Meadows, I——"

"That is enough!" rapped Miss Meadows. "Richards, Lawless, and Beauclerc, come out before the class!"

Frank Richards & Co. obeyed, with crimson faces. Miss Meadows pointed to the corner of the class-room, where Mr. Slimmey, the assistant-master, was busy with the youngest class.

"You will join Mr. Slimmey's class for the present," she said. "Mr. Slimmey, will you kindly take charge of these three unruly boys?"

"Certainly, Miss Meadows."

There was a general grin as the three blushing culprits went to Mr. Slimmey's class, where they were placed in a row of little girls of about eight or nine. Frank Richards & Co. were being ridiculed as a punishment for their supposed disrespect, and they felt it keenly. Their cheeks were burning, and they longed for that afternoon's lessons to be over.

It was about a quarter of an hour later when a sudden, terrific yell from Chunky Todgers rang through the school-room. He leaped up so suddenly that he nearly pitched Tom Lawrence off the form.

"Yaroooh! Yah! Yawp!"

Chunky Todgers fairly bellowed.

"Todgers!" shrieked Miss Meadows.

"Yah! Oh! Somebody's stabbed me!" yelled Chunky. "I've been stabbed in the leg! Yaroooh! Oh crumbs!"

"Come here, Todgers!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Come here, you bad boy!"

"Oh dear!" moaned Chunky, as he limped out before the class.

Swish!

"Now go and take your seat with the other unruly boys!" said Miss Meadows sternly. "If there is any further disorder, I will detain the whole class for an hour this evening!"

Chunky Todgers rolled away dismally to Mr. Slimmey's corner, and was there accommodated with a seat between two smiling little girls.

There was no more disorder in Miss Meadows' class. If it was a rag, the threat of detention had been sufficient to make an end of the little game.

When lessons were over at last, and Miss Meadows dismissed her class, she came towards Frank Richards & Co. with a stern brow.

"You have displeased me very much," she said quietly. "I am sorry to punish you on your last day at school. But you will be detained for one hour. I will set you a task."

"But, ma'am——"

"You need not speak!"

"But I assure you, Miss Meadows——" stammered Bob.

"Silence!"

There was nothing more to be said. While the rest of the school marched out Miss Meadows set the unhappy four their detention task, and they were left to it in the deserted school-room.

"It's too bad!" grunted Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows has got mad with us now, and she won't hear a word."

"And we weren't to blame!" groaned Chunky Todgers. "Somebody ran a pin into my leg; I know that!"

"Same here!" said Frank.

"And here!" smiled Beauclerc. "But I don't

quite see how it was done, either. There was nobody close to me."

"Miss Meadows doesn't believe it, anyway," said Bob. "Some beastly jay having a lark with us somehow. Hallo, you yellow imp! Vamoose the ranch!"

Yen Chin trod softly into the deserted school-room, and came up to the detained quartet with an expression of deep sympathy on his little yellow face.

"Pool old Flanky!" he said. "Me solly!"

"All serene, kid! No bones broken, you know."

"You likee goee 'way?" asked Yen Chin.

"Can't, duffer! We're detained, aren't we?" grunted Bob Lawless.

"Me askee Missy Meadee."

"Fathead!" said Frank. "You'll get detained, too, if you're cheeky to Miss Meadows."

"No cheeke; me askee. Me gettee you off, you askee me comee on holiday in North-West," said Yen Chin, and he toddled out of the school-room.

Frank Richards & Co. settled down to their detention task. They had no faith whatever in Yen Chin being able to beg them off. They did not quite know the facts yet.

### Ungrateful!

"COME in!" called out Miss Meadows as a tap came at her study door.

Yen Chin wriggled into the room. The schoolmistress gave him a smile. Yen Chin was a thorough little rascal in many respects, but he was a good fellow in some ways, and the queer little Celestial was rather liked in the lumber school.

"Well, what is it, Yen Chin?" she asked.

"Me solly."

"What?"

"Pool li'l' Chinee boy bad," said Yen Chin sorrowfully. "Wicked old heathen, you bet!"

"What have you done, my boy?" asked Miss Meadows, supposing that the Chinee had come to her to confess some little fault that troubled his tender conscience.

"Me stickee pinnee in pool old Flanky."

"What?" exclaimed Miss Meadows, with a start.

"Me plickee them with pinnee," said Yen Chin. "Chinee velly bad boy. No can say how solly. Must confess to Miss Meadee because pool old Flanky kept in. Oh, yes!"

Miss Meadows' look became very stern.

"Do you mean to say, Yen Chin, that Richards and the others were stating the truth all the time?" she asked.

"Collect! Lookee!"

The Celestial held up his boot. On the toe of his boot a large pin was fixed, point outwards.

Miss Meadows stared at him. She could see how Frank Richards and his chums had been jabbed with the pin without the young rascal getting near them. Yen Chin, while keeping his place on his form, had simply stretched out his leg under the desk to make his attack.

The Canadian schoolmistress was speechless for some moments.

"You wicked boy!" she exclaimed at last.

"Chinee awful solly."

"Why have you come and told me this, Yen Chin?"

"Pool old Flanky kept in. Bad conscience," said Yen Chin. "Feelee must tellee Miss Meadee."

"I am glad you have so much conscience," said Miss Meadows. "As you have confessed this of your own accord, Yen Chin, I cannot very well punish you. If it had come to my knowledge in any other way I should punish you severely."

"Me solly."

"I hope you are sorry. You have acted very badly. You may go!"

"Me tankee beautiful Miss Meadee."

And Yen Chin glided from the room with an expression of penitent remorse on his face. As soon as he was in the passage, however, that expression gave place to a wide grin, and he chuckled softly and silently as he glided out of the schoolhouse. Yen Chin's remorse was evidently only skin-deep.

Miss Meadows proceeded to the school-room, where she found four dismal youths buried in their task.

"My boys, you may go," she said kindly. "I am sorry that I misjudged you. It seemed so impossible that your statement could be correct that I concluded you were playing a foolish, practical joke. I find that was not the case."

Frank Richards & Co. rose to their feet, wondering how Miss Meadows had learned that much. But the schoolmistress explained at once.

"Yen Chin has confessed to me," she added.

"Yen Chin!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes; he had a pin fastened on his boot," said Miss Meadows.

"The young scallawag!" exclaimed Bob.

"I am sorry you have been detained for no fault," said Miss Meadows.

"It doesn't matter a bit, ma'am," said Frank cheerfully. "I'm glad you know now that we were not being disrespectful."

The four boys quitted the school-room with great satisfaction. As they crossed the playground towards the corral for their horses, they met Yen Chin. Four glares of wrath were turned at once on the Chinese.

"You pesky jay!" howled Chunky Todgers, shaking a fat fist at the youth from the Flowery Land.

"You young rotter!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"You—you pigtailed, pink-eyed, yellow-skinned son of a pesky heathen!" roared Bob Lawless.

"No savvy," said Yen Chin. "Chinese good boy. Me askee Miss Meadee lettee you off. Me good pal."

"It was you all the time, sticking a pin in us with your foot!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Yen Chin backed away.

"Miss Meadee talkee too muchee," he said. "No wantee Miss Meadee tellee you."

"Let's duck him in the creek!" exclaimed Todgers.

"No duckee poor li' Chinese. Me gettee you off!" urged Yen Chin. "Me good boy; velly fond of nicey old Flanky. Now me comee with you on holiday—oh, yes!"

Apparently Yen Chin thought he had a strong claim on the gratitude of Frank Richards & Co. for getting them off detention. But considering that he had been the cause of their detention in the first place, the chums did not see where the claim for gratitude came in.

At all events, if Yen Chin expected gratitude he was disappointed. It was quite something different that he received. The four exasperated fellows rushed up and collared him on all sides. Yen Chin was slammed over a bench, and

Chunky Todgers started operations on him with his satchel.

Whack, whack, whack!

As the satchel was full of books it was rather a formidable weapon, and Chunky laid it on with all the vigour of his podgy arm. Yen Chin roared and wriggled.

"You lettee up! Yoop! Poor li' Chinese solly! Oh clumbs! Ugly Chunkee stoppee! Ugly old Bob lettee go! Yah!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The final whack burst the satchel, and Chunky's books were scattered far and wide.

"Hold him!" panted Chunky. "I'll give him some more!"

"That will do," said Bob Lawless, laughing.

Yen Chin was released, and he bolted out through the gate.

Chunky collected up his books, and the schoolboys led their horses out of the corral. Then Frank Richards & Co. rode away through the timber for Lawless Ranch.

### Off For The Holidays!

CEDAR Creek School broke up the next day, and Frank Richards & Co. rejoiced thereat.

They had laid plans for an excursion of unusual magnitude and interest. Frank had not forgotten his brief trip into the wild North-West, and he was very keen to see more of that wide, half settled country.

The chums of Cedar Creek were to travel on their "lonesome," as Bob expressed it, looking after themselves, as they were quite capable of doing. Bob Lawless had all the cool, self-reliance of the young Canadian, and his father had no doubt of his ability to take care of himself.

The holiday trip meant a good deal of hard work, for the schoolboys had to camp out, to care for their horses, to hunt and fish for most of their food, and do everything for themselves. But hard work is one of the natural conditions of existence in the Canadian West, and even Chunky Todgers did not want to slack all the time.

Several days passed very cheerily in making preparations for the journey. Frank, Bob, Beauclerc, and Chunky were continually riding over to one another's homes to make arrangements about the "outfit."

When all was ready, and it was time to start, the "outfit" gathered at the Lawless Ranch.

Bright and early in the summer's morning the chums of Cedar Creek took the trail. Mounted upon their horses, and with a pack-mule led with baggage packed on its back, they started on the Western trail.

Three rifles and a shotgun and a hunting-knife and axe apiece were the armament of the party. Chunky Todgers had a desire to carry a revolver—a desire upon which his chums sat at once.

Mr. and Mrs. Lawless accompanied the quartet for a few miles on the way in the ranch buggy, to see them off as far as the ford of the Indian River.

"Take care of yourselves, my boys," said Mrs. Lawless, when they parted.

"You bet!" said Bob.

"You rely on me, ma'am," said Chunky Todgers. "I'm looking after them, you know."

"Good-bye, Bob! Good-bye, Frank!"

The riders plunged in at the ford. On the other side they stopped to wave their hands at

the rancher and his wife in the buggy, which then turned back towards the ranch.

Then the four trotted on across the green, rolling prairie. The sun rose higher upon a wide expanse of green, with dusky timber in the distance.

The chums of Cedar Creek were in great spirits.

"Off at last!" said Bob Lawless. "By the way, I rather expected to see that Chinese again. He hasn't shown up!"

Frank Richards laughed.

"This trip wouldn't have suited Yen Chin," he said. "Besides, I believe the young rascal is wanted in his pater's laundry during the holidays!"

"Well, my popper was in two minds about letting me go," remarked Chunky Todgers. "He said there was lots to be done on the farm. I've promised to work like thunder the last week of the vacation. I've promised mopper a big gold nugget if I hit on a bonanza in the Cascade Mountains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm going to keep my eyes peeled," said Chunky, with a sage nod of the head. "We may come back from this trip millionaires!"

At which Chunky's companions roared.

A good many miles glided under the pattering hoofs before the adventurers camped for the noon-day rest in a clump of timber beside a silvery spring. The horses were staked out, and Bob Lawless went into the wood with his gun to look for dinner.

Chunky Todgers cooked the dinner at a fire of pine chips, with great satisfaction to himself and his comrades.

After dinner the chums of Cedar Creek laid in the grass to rest and to give the horses a rest before taking the trail again. The four horses and the pack-mule were staked out with the trail-ropes on the edge of the stream at a little distance.

The faint sound of the crop-cropping of the animals came to the ears of the schoolboys as they rested in the rich, long grass. The sound ceased, but they did not notice it for some time. It occurred to Bob Lawless at last, however, and he sat up in the grass and looked about him. The next moment he bounded to his feet.

"Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed. "The hosses!"

"What's the matter with them?"

"Gone!" yelled Bob.

The campers were on their feet in a twinkling. They dashed along the stream to the spot where the horses had been roped. No sign of them was to be seen. Close at hand was the timber into which the animals had evidently vanished.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You couldn't have tied them safely, Bob!"

Bob Lawless snorted.

"Do you reckon I don't know how to stake out a horse?" he demanded. "They've been let loose, I guess!"

"There's nobody here but ourselves," said Chunky Todgers.

"You jay! There must be—some dashed horse-thief, I guess! Look at that rope!"

Bob Lawless held up the end of a trail-rope still attached to the peg. It had been cut through with a knife.

"Oh, my hat!" said Beauclero in dismay. "A horse-thief, right enough! Almost under our eyes, too!"

"Come on!" exclaimed Bob.

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The trail of the horses into the timber was plain enough in the grass. Bob had caught up his rifle as he ran from the camp, and he held it in readiness for use as he started for the timber with a grim look on his face.

The trail of the horses and the pack-mule was easily followed through the timber, and they came out on the plain beyond. Bob, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed out over the sunlit prairie.

"There they are!"

Far out on the plain a bunch of steeds came into view, with a single rider in their midst.

### No Luck for Yen Chin!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. stared hard after the stolen horses, and at the solitary figure of the rider. They were half a mile away, but even at that distance they could discern something familiar about the rider. His form was diminutive, and he was evidently a boy—a boy of small size at that.

"They've stopped," said Beauclero.

Bob Lawless breathed hard.

"Gimme the glasses, Franky!"

Frank Richards slipped his field glasses from the leather case slung over his shoulder, and handed them to his chum. Bob lifted the binoculars to his eyes, and then he uttered an angry exclamation.

"I thought so! It's the Chinese!"

"Yen Chin!" yelled Chunky Todgers.

"I guess so!"

Frank Richards drew a deep breath.

"Not a horse-thief, after all! We shall get the gees back."

"And I guess we'll make that heathen smart for this trick!" growled Bob Lawless.

The four schoolboys strode out on the plain, the grass rising thigh-deep around them. They hurried in the direction of the halted group of steeds, which was the direction in which they had come from home.

As they came closer Yen Chin was easily recognised. He was mounted upon a wiry-looking Indian pony, and he held the trail-ropes of the four horses and the pack-mule in one hand. The captured animals were cropping the grass, and Yen Chin sat motionless on his pony, regarding the chums of Cedar Creek with a grinning countenance.

Evidently he had observed them in pursuit, and was waiting for them to get nearer, though it was doubtful whether he would allow them to get near enough to recapture their mounts.

It was tiring work tramping over the rough prairie in the hot sun, and the tempers of Frank Richards & Co. were not improving as they tramped on. It was clear to them that Yen Chin had been watching them when they started, and had followed on their trail unnoticed, with the intention of playing this impish trick on them at their first halting-place.

If they got near enough to reach Yen Chin with a trail-rope, they intended to give him a severe lesson on practical jokes of this kind. But as soon as they were within hailing distance, Yen Chin held up his disengaged hand.

"Stoppee!" he called out.

The chums did not reply; they put on a spurt to get nearer. Immediately Yen Chin set his pony in motion, and started off, the led horses following him at the end of the trail-ropes. The

whole bunch trotted away, leaving the schoolboys hopelessly in the rear.

"By Jerusalem, I'll lambaste that heathen when I get near him!" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

Chunky Todgers gave a prolonged gasp. He had more fat to carry than his companions, and he was at the end of his tether.

"We c-c-can't get near him!" he gasped. "I say, I can't keep on!"

"Go back to the camp and look after our truck," said Bob Lawless. "We'll see about the hosses!"

"All right!" gasped Chunky.

And the fat youth limped away on the back-trail, quite content to leave to his comrades the difficult task of running down the elusive Yen Chin. How the Chinese was to be run down was a mystery, as a matter of fact. On foot the chums could not get near him unless he chose.

They halted at last, panting for breath. Bob Lawless put his hands to his mouth and shouted desperately.

"Yen Chin! Halt!"

The Chinese looked back over his shoulder, grinning. As soon as he saw that the pursuers had stopped, he stopped also, but evidently ready to trot off again at a moment's notice.

"Allee light!" he called back. "You stoppee, me stoppee—oh, yes!"

Bob breathed hard.

"Give us back our horses, you yellow scamp!" he exclaimed.

"You wantee hossee?"

"Yes, you young rascal!"

"Bob Lawless old lascal, velly ugly!"

"Will you bring back our horses?" shouted Frank Richards.

"Me blingee backee if wantee. You wantee me comee on holiday with nicee pals?" asked Yen Chin.

"No!" roared Bob, understanding now the reason for the little Celestial's trickery.

"Then me no blingee hossee."

"I'll scalp you!" roared Bob.

"You catchee me firstee!" said Yen Chin cheerfully. "Wantee long leggee to lun attee hossee, you old lascal!"

"Oh, by gum!" murmured Bob. "If I was only near enough to give him one right on the nose, the grinning little pagan!"

"Yen Chin, don't be a silly beast!" exclaimed Frank. "We're going to have the horses, if we follow you all the way home; and then you'll get the trail-rope!"

"No goee homee," answered Yen Chin. "Goee on holiday, takee hossee, you bet! Li'l Chinese velly deep old lascal—oh, yes!"

The chums shook their fists at the Celestial, who kissed his hand to them in response. They drew nearer, and Yen Chin promptly set the horses in motion, keeping his distance.

Bob Lawless suddenly brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"Yen Chin, bring back those hosses, or I'll wing you!" he roared.

Yen Chin looked back and grinned.

"No shootee pool li'l Chinese!" he called back. "Gleat sheliff Henderson comee along with lope and hang up on tlee—oh, yes!"

The threat was evidently useless. The wily little Oriental was quite well aware that Bob would not pull the trigger upon him. But Bob was not in a mood to be trifled with.

"I won't wing you, Yen Chin, but I'll jolly well drop your pony in its tracks!" he exclaimed. "Mind, I mean that! You take another step

away from us with those gees, and down goes your pony!"

"Good!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You can do that. It's your own fault if you lose your pony, Yen Chin!"

The Celestial's grin suddenly vanished. His pony presented an easy target to Bob's rifle. It needed but a slight pressure of Bob's finger to bring Yen Chin's pony rolling in the grass, and Yen Chin along with it.

"Go on, and take the hosses, you chaps!" said Bob. "I'll keep him covered. If he takes them only a yard farther away, I'll drop him in his tracks!"

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc strode on towards the group of horses.

Yen Chin hesitated. He did not want his pony shot. His father, the laundryman of Thompson, would certainly have had a very painful interview with him if he had come home and announced that his valuable pony was dead.

He was watching Bob's face to ascertain whether he really meant to carry out his threat. Bob's rifle never wavered for a moment. Yen Chin watched Frank and Beauclerc uneasily as they came nearer.

"You no wantee li'l Chinese comee?" he asked sorrowfully.

"No fear, you tricky little beast!"

"Me no likee you."

"You'll like us still less when we get near enough to boot you!" answered Frank.

"Flanky velly ugly!"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Chelub velly ugly old lascal!"

"Thanks!" said Beauclerc.

"Bob Lawless ugly old lascal, too," said Yen Chin. "Ugly old Bob! You no shootee, me leavee hossee!"

The little Chinese threw down the bunch of trail-ropes. Then, when Frank and Beauclerc were within a few yards, he clapped spurs to his pony and dashed off.

Bob Lawless lowered his rifle. Yen Chin did not mean to stay for the licking he had earned; but he had to be allowed to escape. Shooting his pony was a desperate resource, only to be used for recovering the horses, and they were recovered now.

Frank and Beauclerc gathered up the trail-ropes.

"I guess I've a good mind to run him down and lambaste him!" growled Bob, as he sprang on his horse.

But Yen Chin, who feared exactly that proceeding, was riding homeward as if for his life, and even the pleasure of lambasting the mischievous heathen was not worth an afternoon's riding.

Only too thankful to have recovered their horses, the chums mounted and rode back to the timber.

"Got 'em!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers, as they rode up to the camp. "Good! You galoots will have to keep a sharper eye open after this."

"I guess we've done with Yen Chin," said Bob.

"I wonder?" remarked Frank Richards thoughtfully. He was by no means so certain that the pertinacious little Chinese was done with. But nothing was to be seen of Yen Chin as the chums of Cedar Creek rode out of the timber in the sunny afternoon and resumed their journey towards the wild North-West.

*Next Week:* "YELLOW CUNNING!"

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Mr. Vavasour jumped up, tangling his head and shoulders in the mosquito net. "Bless my soul" he ejaculated. "Oh dear!" "If you please, sir—" began Jack Drake. "Leave my cabin, boy!" thundered the Form-master.

### A Very Kind Offer!

POYNINGS and Poole of the Fifth Form came along to Cabin No. 8 on the Benbow, and the first-named tapped at the door.

There was a buzz of merry voices within Jack Drake's study. Quite a number of the Benbow juniors seemed to be gathered there, and two or three voices were speaking at the same time, to an accompaniment of clinking teacups and saucers.

No doubt that was the reason why Poyning's tap was not heard.

"Seems to be some sort of meeting on," remarked Poole.

"Only a gang of fags having their tea," answered Poynings carelessly. "I'm going in!"

He did not tap again. He threw open the door and looked into Cabin No. 8.

The study was well-filled. Drake, Rodney, and Toodles, the owners of the study, were there. Daubeny of the Shell was there with Torrence, Sawyer major, Estcourt, Rawlings, and Conway of the Fourth were also there. There really did not seem much room for the Fifth Formers to come in at all!

But Jack Drake glanced up, with a cheery grin, and signed to them to enter—if they could.

"Trot in, old tops!" he said. "Have you come to tea?"

Poynings could not help giving a sniff at that. He had not come to tea. As a senior of the Fifth Form he wasn't likely to come to tea. He might have honoured a Shell study, but the Fourth was quite beyond the limit.

But the fact was that the Fifth were not of very

# RIVAL CRICKETERS!

By Owen Conquest.

much account on board the school ship. There was a crowd of Fourth and Shell on the Benbow, but only a few of the senior Form had come on the voyage. And although they firmly believed that they made up in importance what they lacked in numbers, they had that belief entirely to themselves. The juniors did not share it in the least.

"Sit down," continued Drake hospitably.

"Blessed if I know what they'll sit on!" remarked Tuckey Toodles.

"What's the matter with the deck?" inquired Sawyer major.

"Good! Move your feet, Sawyer, and make room for them to sit down!" exclaimed Rodney.

Poynings frowned.

"I'm not going to sit down," he said. "I came here to speak to you, Drake."

"Not to tea?" asked Drake.

"Certainly not!"

"Well, I thought you might have, you know—I hear you can't get any further tick from Mr. Capps in the canteen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be cheeky!" advised Poole. "Look

Jack Drake & Co. decline without thanks the Fifth Form offer to take over their cricket match against a West Indian eleven. But the rival cricketers of the Fifth are not to be denied—as the juniors of the Benbow discover!

here, some of you fags had better clear off. Can't talk with a gang of fags buzzing around."

"That's so," agreed Poynings. "There's enough mosquitoes, without so many fags!"

There was a buzz of wrath from the tea-party. The Benbow juniors did not like being compared to the mosquitoes which were visiting the Benbow in large numbers as the old ship lay at anchor in the Trinidad harbour.

"Do you want us to go, Drake?" bawled Sawyer major.

"No fear! Stay where you are!" answered Drake. "You two fellows had better be more civil, or you'll be the fellows to go—and on your necks! If you've got anything to say, Poynings, get it off your chest and travel. We're talking cricket. Most of these chaps are in the St. Winifred's eleven. And you're interrupting."

"That's what I've come here to speak about," said Poynings, a little more politely. "I hear

you fags have fixed up a cricket match with some fellows ashore, in Port of Spain."

"That's so."

"I hear they play pretty good cricket on this island," continued Poynings. "I saw a game yesterday, and the play was quite good."

"How do you know, Poynings?" asked Drake, in surprise.

"I watched them."

"But you don't know cricket when you see it, old top!"

There was a chortle from the tea-party. Cecil Poynings looked wrathful for a moment, but he calmed himself. He had not come there to quarrel with the captain of the Fourth, if he could help it.

"To come to the point," he said, "I understand that you're playing this Trinidad team to-morrow?"

"Oh! Yes!"

"Your master, Packe, has given you leave—"

"Exactly! You seem jolly interested in our proceedings all at once," said Drake.

"You've made up some sort of an eleven to play these Colonials, I suppose?"

"We couldn't play them without, could we?" asked Rodney.

"Well, to come to the point—" said Poynings again.

"You're a jolly long time coming to the point," remarked Drake. "But take your time; the night is young."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To come to the point," roared Poynings, "we've come here to tell you that we're taking a hand in the game."

"You!"

"Just so. You see, we'd like to get a little cricket," said Poynings condescendingly. "There's not enough of the Fifth on board the Benbow to make up a team, so it looks to me as if we shall have to play with the fags, or not play at all."

"Rotten!" said Poole. "But there you are."

"There we are, are we?" smiled Drake. "Not quite, I think. You see, your services are not required in the team."

"Don't be an ass," answered Poynings politely. "I'll take the captaincy myself for the occasion. I shall play Poole, Hamersley, Tomlinson of the Fifth. That's four—"

"But I tell you—"

"That's four. I shall have room for seven juniors. Give me the list you've made for the eleven, and I'll make selections from it."

"But—"

"Where's your list? I shall be guided, to some extent, by your selections, Drake, as I don't know much about your fag cricket."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Drake. "Here's the list, but you're not going to touch it, you cheeky chump! You're not playing in the match to-morrow! We don't want any Fifth! Understand that?"

"Don't be an ass, Drake!" said Poynings patiently. "I should think you'd be glad to play in a good team with us, instead of leading a scrubby gang of fags to a licking!"

"Well, I'm not!" grinned Drake. "Not at all. And I wouldn't be found dead in the same team with you, Poynings! Trot!"

"What?"

"Travel!"

And there was a chorus from the junior tea-party:

"Get out, Poynings!"

### Declined With Thanks!

JACK DRAKE had risen to his feet, and most of his guests had followed his example. The juniors looked wrathful, but Drake was smiling a little.

Since the cricket match had been arranged with Arthur Cazelet, the captain of Savannah Juniors, Drake had felt a good deal of the responsibility of cricket captain. Every junior on board the Benbow wanted to be included in the team—even Tuckey Toodles. Jack Drake had made his selections according to his own judgment, which seemed like unto the judgment of Solomon to those fellows whom he had chosen to play, and very like sheer imbecility to those fellows whom he hadn't! He had had many an argument with Fourth and Shell, but certainly he hadn't expected the Fifth to butt in in this way.

At home at St. Winifred's, Poynings would have smiled with lofty scorn at the bare idea of figuring in a junior cricket match. But here it was different. This was the first chance of cricket since the Benbow had shaken out her sails and left old England astern, and, as Poynings had remarked previously to Poole, beggars couldn't be choosers.

It did not seem to have occurred to Poynings that the juniors might raise objections. The honour he was doing them was immense. Even if he did not look for gratitude, he expected the fags to be pleased. But they weren't pleased; on that point there was no room for a shadow of doubt.

So far from being either pleased or grateful, the junior cricketers looked as if they were prepared to reward Poynings for his offer by hurling him bodily from the study.

"Get out, Poynings!"

"Travel off!"

"Kick 'em out!" hooted Tuckey Toodles.

"You cheeky young ruffians!" roared Poynings. "What do you mean by this? I tell you I'm taking the match into my hands—"

"Rats!"

"Come off!"

"Do you mean to say you don't want the Fifth in the match at all?" ejaculated Poynings, more in astonishment than in anger.

"Surprising as it may seem, we don't!" answered Jack Drake. "You see, it's our match, and we're playing it. Besides, you're rather a fumbler at cricket, you know."

"What?"

"And Poole rubs his fingers with butter before a match," said Sawyer major. "I judge by the way I've seen him dealing with easy catches."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So now you can walk," said Drake. "We've made our meaning clear, I hope?"

Poynings did not walk; he knitted his brows. "You refuse—" he began.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, in the circumstances I shall take no notice of that," said the Fifth Former. "I'm going to play in the match as skipper, and in case of any fag cheek on the subject, I shall hand out some lickings. Is that clear?"

"Quite!" grinned Drake. "And in case you don't travel off this minute, we're going to put you in the passage on your neck. Is that clear?"

Poynings did not answer the question. Doubtless he thought it was time to proceed from words to actions, and nip this insubordinate spirit in the bud.

He made a rush at Drake, knocking aside

Tuckey Toodles and trampling on Rawlings' feet as he rushed. There was a roar of wrath and protest in Cabin No. 8.

"Stop him!"

"Collar him!"

Five or six pairs of hands were upon Poynings of the Fifth before he could reach Drake. He came down on the deck with a bump.

Poole made a movement to help him, and was promptly collared and whirled forth into the passage, and the door slammed after him.

Poynings was struggling on the floor with three or four juniors kneeling on him, pinning him down.

"Lemme gerrup!" he roared. "I'll pulverise you! You cheezy fags, how dare— Grooooh! Leggo! Oh!"

"Hold him!" said Sawyer major. "I've got a pineapple for him!"

"Ha, ha! Go it, Sawyer!"

Poynings sprawled on his back, struggling in vain to throw off the grasp of his captors. His head was lifted, and Sawyer major squeezed the pineapple down the back of his neck. Pineapples are cheap in Trinidad, but even had this one been expensive the juniors would not have grudged it to Poynings of the Fifth.

"Go it, Sawyer!"

"Yurrrrgh!" spluttered the Fifth Former, as Sawyer major squeezed away industriously at the succulent fruit. "Oh, you cheezy young villain! Ooooooh! Leggo! You young rotter! Oooooop!"

"Now give him a mango!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooooh!"

"Kick him out now!" exclaimed Jack Drake, laughing.

"Open the door."

Rodney pulled the door open, and Poole, who was bumping on it outside, staggered into the cabin. He was met by Poynings as the latter was swung towards the doorway. The two Fifth Formers rolled into the passage together.

Bump, bump!

"Oh! Ah! You ass, keep your silly elbow out of my eye!" shrieked Poole.

"Ow! Don't jam your silly knee into my ribs, you dangerous idiot!" raved Poynings.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Golly!" It was the voice of Tin Tacks, the coloured gentleman, as he grinned along the passage. "What de matter, Mass' Jack?"

"Sweep up this rubbish, Tin Tacks," called out Jack Drake.

"Yes, sar."

Tin Tacks had a mop in his hand, which he had just been using, and he proceeded to sweep up the rubbish—otherwise, the Fifth Formers. Poynings and Poole yelled frantically as they were swept up, the juniors roaring with laughter.

The hapless Fifth Formers were considerably dishevelled and dusty when they escaped at last to the deck.

Jack Drake & Co. returned to Cabin No. 8 to finish their interrupted tea, and further to discuss the arrangements for the cricket match ashore on the morrow.

### Diplomatic!

"CHEEKY little rotters!"

"Ungrateful little cads!"

"What's St. Winifred's coming to, I wonder?"

"I wonder, by gad!"

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Poynings and Poole were communing on deck after having visited their quarters to refit after action, so to put it. It had taken them quite some time to refit, for they had been very severely handled in the Fourth Form quarters. And Poynings and his chum were by way of being dandies, and they prided themselves upon being natty and spotless. However, now they were newly arrayed in spotless attire, and they felt better.

But they felt wrathful and indignant. A kind, if somewhat lofty offer on their part had been refused with black ingratitude, which only made them the more determined that the Fourth Formers should be over-ruled. The dignity of the Fifth was at stake. Besides, they wanted to play in the cricket match. It was not probable that the Benbow fellows would get any cricket after the school ship left Trinidad and proceeded on her way up the Orinoco River.

"It's no good thrashing the little beasts, is it?" Poynings remarked doubtfully to his comrade. "If we had 'em at home at St. Winifred's, well and good. But on board ship—"

"Too many of 'em," agreed Poole.

"But we're going to play cricket."

"Yes, rather!"

"You'd think they'd be jolly glad to have a Fifth Form skipper for their fag team," said Poynings. "Naturally, I expected them to jump at the chance."

"Instead of which they jumped at you," said Poole.

Poynings frowned.

"Don't be funny," he said. "This isn't a joke. The question is, what's going to be done with the little cads? Hallo, what do you want, you cheezy fag?"

Cecil Poynings addressed that question to Egan of the Shell, who came sidling up as the Fifth Formers stood chatting under the after awnings. Egan had not been on the scene in Cabin No. 8; he had not "buried the hatchet" like Daubeny, and was still on warlike terms with Jack Drake & Co.

"I've heard about your jaw with Drake," he said. "I've had it from Daub. They won't let you into the cricket if they can help it."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Poynings.

"I'm going to give you a tip—"

"When I want tips from fags I'll mention the circumstance to them," said Poynings, with lofty contempt.

Egan did not heed. He saw an opportunity of scoring over Cabin No. 8, and that was enough for him.

"They won't take you into the eleven," he said. "They'll boot you out if you try to bully them. But I can tell you how to work it!"

Poynings shrugged his shoulders scornfully, but he paused to listen. As a matter of fact, determined as he was to captain the Benbow cricketers in the Savannah match, he did not see how it was to be worked. Nature, which had blessed Poynings with a remarkably good opinion of himself, had not endowed him with a brilliant intellect. And there was no doubt that Egan of the Shell was keenness itself.

"I know you've got your knife into Drake," said Poynings, with a curl of the lip. "You'd like to do him a bad turn!"

"Never mind that. If you want to work it, you'll have to get on the right side of Packe."

"Mr. Packe! How?"

"Packe's given Drake & Co. leave for to-morrow to play Cazalet's team outside Port of

Spain. Mr. Vavasour was asked, too, as senior master. They think it's just a cricket match, but—"

"Well, so it is, isn't it?"

"There have been plenty of rows between Fourth and Shell since the Benbow put to sea," remarked Egan.

"I don't want to hear about your fag rows!" said Poynings loftily.

"Talk sense!" snapped Egan. "Suppose you went to Mr. Vavasour, the Shell master? He's senior master, and what he says goes. Make him understand that there's a stunt on for a big rag between Fourth and Shell, when the cricketers are ashore to-morrow. Suggest that, for the sake of order and so on, you're willing to take a place in the team, and play with the juniors. You know old Vavasour—awful stickler for law and order, and he doesn't know or care anything about cricket!"

"Oh!" said Poynings slowly.

"Ten to one he'll think it a first-rate idea for some of the Fifth to take part in the match to look after the juniors," said Egan. "It's just what the old donkey would think. If you can get him to give an order to that effect, you're all right. Drake would have to knuckle under then!"

Poole whistled softly.

"By gad!" murmured Poynings.

It was quite a good scheme, and, knowing fussy old Mr. Vavasour as they did, neither of the Fifth Formers doubted that it would be successful. Only they had not thought of it.

Egan had thought of it for them, however.

"Well, what do you think?" asked the cad of the Shell, watching Cecil Poynings eagerly.

Poynings curled his lip again. He was glad of the suggestion Egan had made, but he despised the junior for making it.

"I may think about it, Egan," said the Fifth Former negligently. "I may do as you suggest. You can cut off now."

Egan walked away, not at all put out by the curt dismissal. He saw that he had gained his point, and that was all he wanted.

Poynings met his chum's glance.

"Cunning little beast!" he said. "Of course, it's a corker—just the thing. I'll drop in on Vavasour at once!"

"Good luck, old scout!" grinned Poole.

Cecil Poynings dropped in on Mr. Vavasour, the master of the Shell, without delay. He found that gentleman reading Cicero, under a mosquito-net in his state-room. Cicero was Mr. Vavasour's favourite author—a circumstance at which most of the Benbow fellows marvelled. From the porthole there was a view of the level city of Port of Spain, with masses of green on the hills beyond, bright in the tropical sunshine. But Mr. Vavasour had no eyes for tropical scenery; he was enjoying what Sawyer major had disrespectfully called "his old pal Tully." However, he laid Tully down when Poynings presented himself.

Poynings cunningly began by a remark concerning Cicero. This put Mr. Vavasour into an excellent humour, and he occupied the next twenty minutes with remarks of his own, "in Verram," to all of which Poynings listened with the keenest interest—outwardly, at least. When Mr. Vavasour tired of Verres, Poynings diplomatically brought the subject round to the day's leave the juniors had for to-morrow.

He hinted his fears of a glorious "rag"

between Fourth and Shell, out of sight of the masters, on the morrow.

"The fact is, Poynings," said Mr. Vavasour, "I was thinking of asking one of the Fifth to accompany the juniors, as I do not care for the excursion myself, and Mr. Packe will be busy."

Poynings smiled sweetly. This gave him a good opening, and he took advantage of it. He mentioned that the Fifth Formers on board the Benbow would be willing to play in the cricket match, and to undertake that law and order would be duly observed ashore.

"An excellent idea," said Mr. Vavasour.

"Only, if a rag is intended, the juniors may raise some frivolous objection," said Poynings.

"The juniors will not be allowed to raise frivolous objections," said Mr. Vavasour dryly. "I will give Drake instructions—I understand that he is the head of the junior cricket club. How many of the Fifth are willing to go?"

"There's only four of us, sir, and we're all willing—for the sake of seeing that nothing unpleasant occurs, of course!"

"I am very much obliged to you, Poynings. I realise that this is an act of self-sacrifice on your part."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Poynings deprecatingly. "Of—of course, it's rather infra dig for us to play cricket with juniors, but—but for the sake of law and order, and—and discipline—"

"Quite so; I appreciate your conduct. I am obliged to you for your thoughtful suggestion. I will instruct Drake to this effect. The cricketers will be placed under your charge!"

"Very good, sir!"

Poynings strolled out of the cabin, and winked at the greenish waters of the bay. And Mr. Vavasour turned to Cicero, very pleased to think that Poynings was such a thoughtful and self-sacrificing youth. He had never observed it before, which made him all the more pleased to observe it now.

### Up Against It!

"WHAT rot!"

"Hallo!"

"What thumping cheek!"

"We won't stand it!" roared Jack Drake in great wrath.

Dick Rodney and Tuckey Toodles regarded him with astonishment. Slaney, the steward's mate, had brought a note to the cabin, and Drake stood with the note in his hand after Peg Slaney had gone, staring at it. The contents of that note seemed to excite the captain of the Fourth.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Rodney. "Who's it from?"

"Mr. Vavasour. And he's potty!" Drake tossed the note upon the table. "Look at it!" he said.

The note was short, but not sweet—at least, to the three heroes of the Fourth. It ran:

"My dear Drake,—I think it will be advisable for some senior boys to accompany the cricket team to-morrow. Poynings, Poole, Tomlinson, and Hamersley of the Fifth Form will therefore be included, and the matter will be in the hands of Poynings, who will have full authority. Kindly see that these instructions are carried out in every particular. H. VAVASOUR."

Dick Rodney gave a howl of wrath.

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"Poynings has worked this somehow!" he exclaimed.

"Of course he has! And we're not going to stand it!"

"Go to Packe," said Tuckey Toodles. "Vavasour doesn't understand anything about games, but Packe does."

"Vavasour's senior master, though," said Rodney slowly. "The Head put him in charge over Packe."

Drake paused.

"Packe would sympathise," he said. "But—but we don't want to cause any dispute between two masters. Vavasour is an obstinate old bird, and Packe would have to give in. I think I'll go and see Vavasour myself and try to get him to see reason."

"We're not standing it, anyhow," said Rodney.

"No fear!"

Jack Drake left the study, calming his wrath as well as he could. He tapped at Mr. Vavasour's door, and a rather irritable voice bade him enter. Mr. Vavasour was still sitting under the mosquito-net with Cicero, but an enterprising mosquito had penetrated under the edge of the net, and was buzzing round Mr. Vavasour with deadly intent. Using the revered Cicero as a weapon, the Shell master made frantic swipes round at the mosquito, and only succeeded in knocking a hole in the net. In these circumstances a little irritation was pardonable, but it was rather an unlucky moment for the junior to arrive.

"Well, well, what is it?" snapped Mr. Vavasour, pausing in his exertions, and very red in the face.

"This note, sir——"

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"There is nothing to discuss in that, Drake. You may go."

"If you please, sir——"

Bash! Mr. Vavasour put in another swipe at the mosquito, and knocked another gash in the net. He breathed hard, and very nearly uttered a word that Form-masters are not supposed to utter.

"Go away, Drake!" he gasped.

"May I—I say just a word, sir?" said Drake hurriedly. "About the cricket match to-morrow, sir. It's a junior match——"

"I know—I know!"

"We don't want seniors in the team, sir——"

"Probably not—probably not! You prefer to be left to your own devices, and to cause a disturbance by some absurd dispute between the two Forms. I understand perfectly."

"B-b-but——"

"I cannot help thinking," said Mr. Vavasour sternly, "that you desire freedom for some absurd rag, as you call it. Understand me, Drake—you will carry out my instructions in this matter, or your leave from the ship to-morrow will be rescinded."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Drake.

"You may go!"

"B-b-but, sir——"

Smash! Mr. Vavasour got the mosquito at last. Cicero came down on him on Mr. Vavasour's knee with a crash. The mosquito vanished from the scheme of things. Unfortunately Mr. Vavasour's knee suffered nearly as much as the mosquito, and his own vigour caused the Form-master to utter a howl of pain. He jumped up, tangling his head and shoulders in the net.

"Bless my soul! Upon my word! Oh dear!" ejaculated the master of the Shell.

"If you please, sir——"

"Leave my cabin, boy!" thundered Mr. Vavasour, glaring through the swathes of the mosquito-net tangled round his head. "How dare you bandy words with me? Leave my cabin instantly, or I will cane you!"

"Oh!"

There was no argument possible after that; Mr. Vavasour was already glaring round for a cane.

Drake hurriedly quitted the cabin. He scudded back to the deck, where he nearly ran into Poynings and Poole of the Fifth. Those cheery youths grinned at him.

"What time were you going to start in the morning, Drake?" asked Cecil Poynings affably.

"Find out!" snapped Drake.

"Well, never mind—I'll fix the time," said Poynings coolly. "Be ready at nine o'clock, will you?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Any more cheek and I shall cut your name out of the list, Drake!" said the Fifth Former warningly.

"Cut it out, anyhow," suggested Poole.

"You silly asses——" began Drake.

Poynings held up a commanding hand.

"That's enough! You're scratched, Drake! I shan't play you to-morrow. I'm making up the list, which will be posted in the Common-room. Now cut off."

Drake, choking with wrath, tramped away to Cabin No. 8, leaving Poynings and Poole chortling.

Dick Rodney looked at him rather anxiously as he came in, red and wrathful.

"What luck?" he asked.



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Drake gave a snort.  
"Rotten! Vavasour is as obstinate as a mule. We've got to hand the match over to the Fifth, or not play at all."

"But if you explained—"  
"If I'd said another word I'd have got licked, and all leave stopped for to-morrow into the bargain!"

"Oh, my hat!"  
Jack Drake tramped up and down the study with knitted brows.

"Old Vavasour doesn't catch on, of course," he growled. "We've got to toe the line or scratch the game. And we can't disappoint Cazalet, when he's fixed up a date for us. Besides, we're going to play the match."

"Yes, rather!"  
"But we're not going to play as the tail-end of a Fifth Form team," said Drake. "We've got to deal with those cheeky bounders somehow. We shall have to let them come ashore in the party, I suppose, but—"

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"But," said Rodney, his face breaking into a grin, "there are ways and means—"  
"And we've got to think of them!" said Drake.

That evening Poynings of the Fifth was in high feather.

But in Cabin No. 8 there was a deep and secret discussion, in which Drake and Rodney and Daubeny and Sawyer major all took part. And when that discussion was over there was satisfaction in the faces of the juniors, which seemed to hint that they had devised a way out of the difficulty. And Poynings of the Fifth, who was looking forward very keenly to swinging a bat on the Savannah cricket ground, was very likely to be disappointed. In Cabin No. 8 a plot had been plotted, but how it would turn out, the morrow was to decide.

Next Week: "FOOLING THE FIETH!"  
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## THE SECRET PASSAGE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Somebody's got my bags!" roared Grundy. "Turn those Shell rotters out!" bawled Herries. "Back up, you men!"

Herries grabbed a water-jug. "Look here—" bawled Grundy. "I—Oooogh!"

A stream from the jug interrupted George Alfred Grundy, and he spluttered instead of bawling.

The Fourth Form were rallying now. Tom Merry & Co. backed to the door. They realised that the missing clobber was not, after all, in the Fourth Form dormitory. Where it was was a mystery; but it was not in the possession of Blake & Co.

"Come on!" said Tom hastily.

And the Shell retreated up the corridor. Only Grundy, drenched and raging, remained.

"Look here, I'm not going without my clobber!" roared Grundy "I'll jolly well—Yaroooop!"

There was a sortie from the Fourth Form dormitory. Grundy got the benefit of it. Blake & Co. collared Grundy, bumped him on the floor, and rolled him along the passage. By the time Grundy escaped, he rather wished that he had not lingered.

The exasperated Shell gathered in their dormitory again.

"Chapel bell soon—"

"Where's our clobber?"

"We've got to have our clobber—"

"Who the dickens—"

"Where the thump—"

"Oh, my hat! Here's Railton!"

The buzz died away as Mr. Railton's stern face looked in at the door.

"Merry," he rapped, "what does this mean? What do you mean by draping the banisters with your clothes?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Oh, gunn!"

"How dare you play such a foolish trick!" thundered the Housemaster. "The clothes belong to this dormitory—I have seen the names on some of the garments."

"We—we—we—" stuttered Tom Merry. "We—we missed our clothes, sir—"

"Have—have—have you seen them, sir?" stammered Manners.

"A large number of garments are on the banisters!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "If you did not place them there—"

"Oh, no!"

"We've been hunting for our clobber—"

"We—we've just been and—and asked the Fourth—"

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Go and take away your clothes at once! I shall inquire into this very strictly!"

The Housemaster strode away, frowning. "On the—the banisters!" gasped Tom Merry.

"But who—"

"Let's go and bag them!" said Manners.

The Shell proceeded down the corridor again. This time they passed the Fourth Form dormitory—greeted by cat-calls from within as they passed—and went to the landing.

There a surprising sight burst on their view. The curving banisters, down as far as the study landing, were adorned with all sorts of garments—jackets and waistcoats, trousers and shirts, collars and ties and socks! That uncommon sight had probably startled Mr. Railton. It made the Shell fellows breathe wrath!

"Well, here's the clobber, at any rate!" said Tom Merry.

And they scudded down the stairs, collecting clobber—which had to be sorted out when they got it back to the dormitory. It was rather a rush that morning for the School House Shell to get down before the chapel bell ceased to ring!

Railton, as he had promised, inquired strictly into that extraordinary episode. But he made no discovery. Neither did Tom Merry & Co. It remained a mystery—and was likely to remain one till they discovered Figgins & Co.'s secret.

*Next Wednesday: "THE NIGHT RAIDERS!"*

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