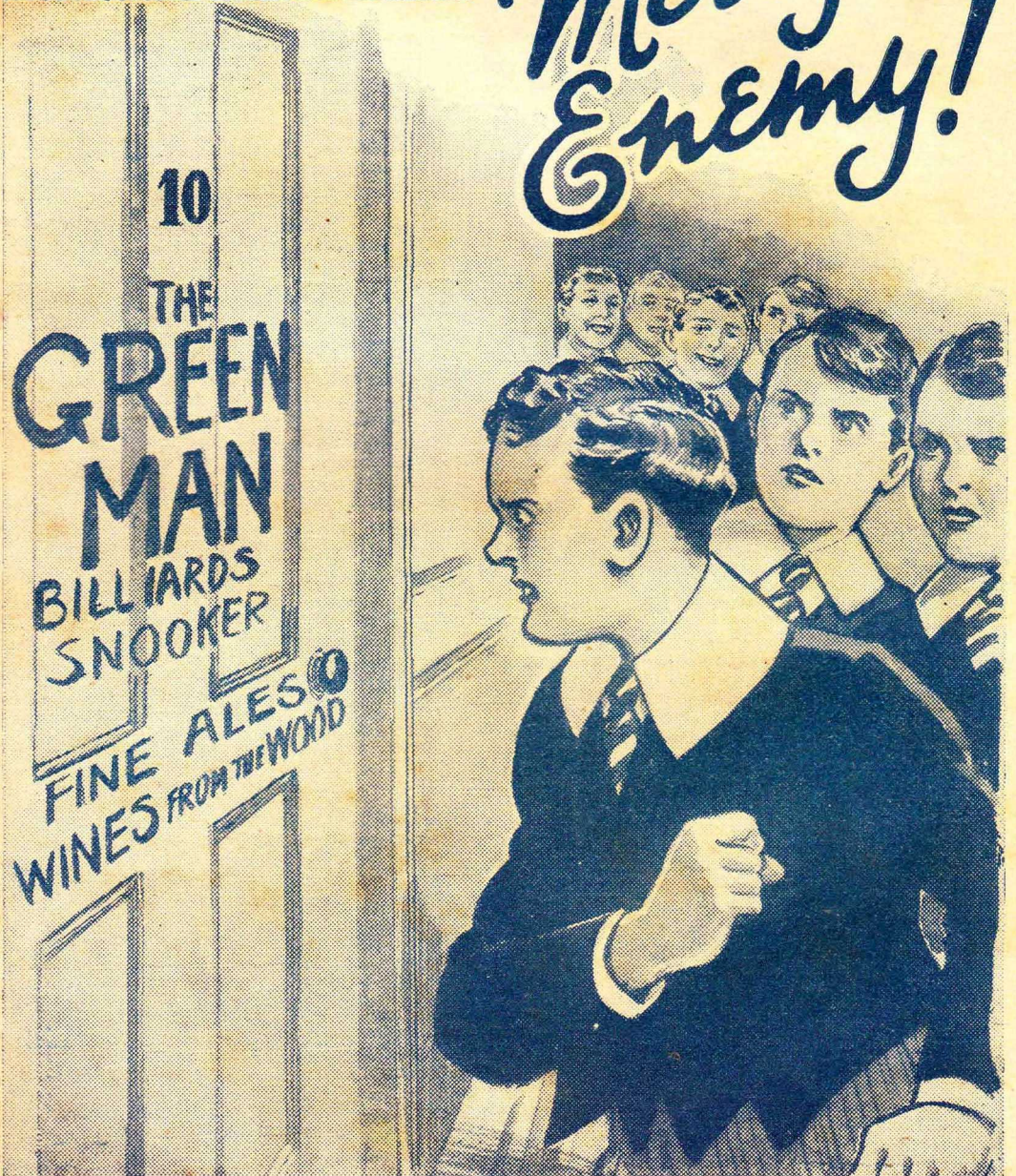


DON'T FORGET YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" ^{JUST} OUT 5/-!

THE **GEM** 2P

*Tom
Merry's
Enemy!*





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.

R. J. Walker, of Weston-super-Mare, writes:

If a hen and a half laid an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs will the hen and a half lay in a week and a half?

ANSWER: *Half as many again as twice the total divided by two, adding twenty-eight, and subtracting twelve, then sixteen, and boiling the answer steadily for three-quarters of an hour over a slow fire. Next, please!*

Michael Martin, of Kensington, W.14, writes:

For many years a staunch supporter of the GEM, I find it as good as ever. My question, from one author to another, is: How on earth do Frank Richards and Martin Clifford manage to turn out so much consistently amusing material? I confess I cannot approach a fraction of their output. Anyway, good luck, and thanks to them—and to you!

ANSWER: *Messrs. Richards and Clifford are certainly marvels! However, "marvelling" alone won't make you famous. I hope you'll find a "type" of thing that will make your name; so type away, and may the "keys" open the "door" of success to you!*

C. Clapper, of P.O. Box 4481, Johannesburg, South Africa, writes:

Are the people who write to you real people, or aren't they, because they seem jolly rummy! P.S.—Are YOU real?

ANSWER: *Really, to doubt the reality of my readers is ripely ridiculous! Roundly refuting the suggestion that they are "rummy," may I reiterate that I am really here, ready to reply to readers. I say, is there an "r" in the month, or something? Seems like it to me.*

J. Weinstein, of Hendon, N.W.4, writes:

What are Racke's good points, if any? Who is the most popular fellow in (a) the School House, (b) New House? What are the two best junior football teams? Why does D'Arcy speak with "w's" instead of "r's"? Who wins most House matches—School or New? Who wins most Form matches?

ANSWER: *Replies in order: None visible to the naked eye. (a) Tom Merry or Talbot, probably; (b) Figgins. Junior Eleven against Rookwood: Wynn, Figgins, Kerr; Redfern, Noble, Lowther; Talbot, Levison, Merry, Blake, D'Arcy. Second Eleven: Hammond; Reilly, Gore; Lawrence, Herries, Owen; Durrance, Dane, Roylance, Digby, Julian. Gussy has an impediment in his*
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speech. House matches last season: School, 3 victories; New, 2 victories; 1 match drawn. The Shell usually win most Form matches.

"Just Plurals," of South Africa (Mid-Afrika postmark), writes:

Don't faint:

1. Give plurals of (a) haustorium, (b) beau, (c) hoase, (d) lira, (e) terminus, (f) if the plural of serum is sera, what is the plural of sera?
2. Who is master of the Fifth at St. Jim's?
3. Please give the name of the House dame's cat (School House).
4. Does No. 2 sing on the tiles at night? Don't hesitate—Yes or No.

By the way, tell Grundy he is a born idiot. In case of accidents, I'm omitting my name and address!

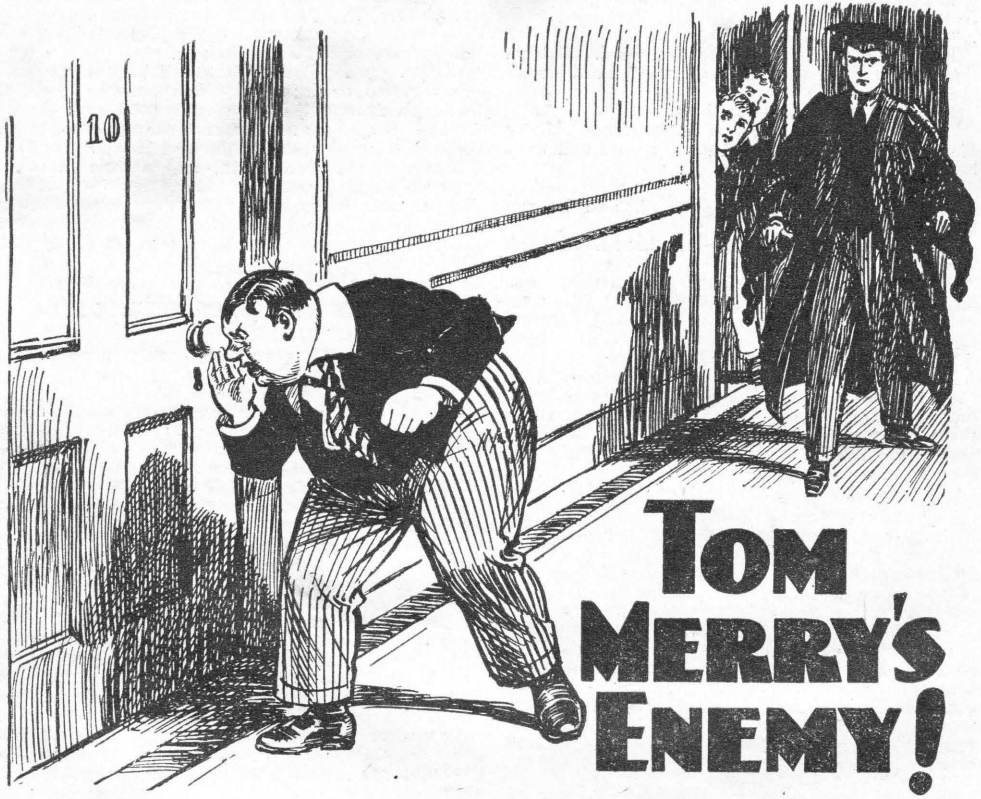
ANSWER: *I don't pose as a Latin scholar, but I should think haustorii would fit. Beaux is the plural of beau. Hoase I've never heard of. It isn't in my dictionary; but the plural is probably hoases. Liras is the plural of lira. Terminus becomes termini. Plural of serum is sera, yes. Why not leave it at that? Mr. Ratcliff is the master of the Fifth. I believe the House dame's cat answers to the name of "Tiddles"—when he's in the mood; but No. 2 does NOT sing on the tiles. Did you think I'd think you meant the cat, and say, "Yes, he certainly does?" Gerch! I didn't tell Grundy. Maybe he is a bit of an ass, but I always think it is best not to repeat insults. Good luck to you—in the plural, if you know the plural of "Good luck"!*

Molly, of Guildford, Surrey, writes:

I disagree with June and Violet. Monty Lowther's jokes and puns are good! Have you any red heads in the Fourth? Who are Kildare's pals? Isn't it time Gussy had another love affair?

ANSWER: *Monty says he lifts his hat to you, madam; your praise "caps" everything! Reilly's locks are of a sunset hue, but don't whisper it abroad. Reilly's a rattling good fellow, but rather touchy. Kildare's best friend is Darrell. Gussy won't be long; he has an "affair of the heart" with "heartly" regularity!*

WHY DID THE NEW MASTER OF THE FOURTH FORM WANT TO BRING DISGRACE ON TOM MERRY? READ THIS GREAT NEW YARN OF THE ST. JIM'S CHUMS.



TOM MERRY'S ENEMY!

"Yah! Pub-crawling rotters!" yelled Baggy. "Like me to tell your beak that I saw you at the Green Man, Tom Merry?" James Silverson gave a start as he heard that.

QUICK WORK!

"OH!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Look!"

"What—"

Tom Merry and Manners looked round.

The Terrible Three of the St. Jim's Shell were crossing a field-path, heading for a stile in Rylcombe Lane.

They had been walking and talking in quite a leisurely manner till Monty Lowther uttered that sudden, startled exclamation.

A dozen times, if not a score of times, the juniors had crossed that field—a large meadow, enclosed on three sides by hedges, on the fourth by the high wooden fence of the Green Man Inn.

Now they were crossing it again, never dreaming of danger. Certainly the farmer to whom that field belonged had a right to turn his bull into it if he liked. But so far they had never encountered a bull there.

Now they did!

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Hook it!" gasped Manners.

At a short distance—a terribly short distance—a fearsome figure had risen from the grass. Two red eyes were fixed on the St. Jim's juniors, and a tail lashed ominously. Even as the startled juniors stared at it, the bull began to lumber towards them.

"Run for it!" panted Lowther.

Tom Merry caught his arm as he started for the distant stile.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.

"You ass, he'll get us—come on!"

"Hold on, I tell you—you'd never reach the stile! Make for the fence!" panted Tom.

The stile was a good three hundred yards ahead. The gate by which the juniors had entered was still farther away. But less than half that distance, to their right, was the high wooden fence of the Green Man. That was their only chance—as Tom Merry saw instantly.

"This way!" breathed Tom.

"Right! Go it!"

The three juniors ran, heading for the fence. It was a solid wooden fence, six feet high. Once they reached it, they could

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

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jump and climb—but as they started there was a loud bellow behind them and a trampling of rapid feet.

"Put it on!" panted Tom.

The three ran almost like the wind. Behind them came Farmer Oak's bull, with head down, charging!

They ran for their very lives.

"Oh!" came a sudden gasp from Harry Manners. He caught his foot in a root and went headlong.

Tom Merry spun round.

"Keep on, Monty!" he shouted, and he ran back for Manners.

"Rot!" gasped Lowther, and he rushed back after Tom.

Manners, breathless from the crash, was scrambling up on his hands and knees. His comrades grabbed him by either arm and dragged him to his feet.

"Come on!" panted Tom Merry.

Manners stumbled, gasping, between them as they tore on again. The delay had been brief, but it had given the bull almost time to reach them. It seemed to the juniors as they flew that they could feel its hot breath behind them. But they reached the fence.

They jumped together and caught the top.

In another moment, Tom Merry and Lowther had hooked themselves up, and were astride. Manners, gasping, slipped back. He was winded by his fall, and only his fingers grasped the top of the fence, and he hung, unable to pull himself up.

"Quick!" shrieked Lowther.

Tom Merry dropped to the ground again. How near the bull was he hardly knew, but he knew that the rushing brute was very near. But he grasped Manners and heaved at him with all his strength, and Manners got his chest over the fence. Then with an effort he dragged himself over.

"Tom!" yelled Lowther.

Tom Merry made a frantic leap. He caught the fence and scrambled up—and as he did so, something thudded against the fence under him with a force that made it quiver.

There was a loud bellow from the bull. It backed from the fence and glared up at the two juniors on top of it—Manners had tumbled down inside.

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

He jumped down beside Manners, inside the fence, and Lowther followed. Outside, Farmer Oak's bull bellowed, and the St. Jim's juniors were thankful for the fence between.

Tom Merry leaned on the fence, panting for breath. His heart was thumping. Manners picked himself up dizzily.

"Oh crumbs!" he said. "We're well out of that!"

"We is—we are!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Listen to the band!"

On the other side of the fence the bull bellowed and bellowed till at last it tramped away.

"He would have had me, Tom," said Manners, "if you hadn't—"

"He nearly had all of us!" said Tom, with a shiver. "Come on, let's get out of this—we're out of bounds here."

"By gum, we are!" said Monty Lowther. "There wasn't much time to think about that—but if we are seen here—"

"The sooner we get out, the better."

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Inside the fence was a path that ran beside the Green Man to Rylcombe Lane. Breathless as they were, the Terrible Three lost no time. The Green Man was an unsavoury place, strictly out of bounds for St. Jim's fellows.

Certainly a fellow with a bull behind him had no time to think about school bounds. Still, it was judicious to get clear as soon as possible.

The three juniors hurried along the path, which led past the side door of the Green Man. That side door was open, and a man in shirt-sleeves stood there. He stared curiously at the three, and seemed about to speak—but they hurried on, leaving him staring, passed the inn, and emerged into the lane that led to the school.

BAGGY DOES NOT BELIEVE!

BAGGY TRIMBLE jumped.

His little gooseberry-eyes popped in his podgy face.

"Oh jiminy!" exclaimed Baggy.

At the end of the path beside the public-house was a gate that opened on the lane. Baggy Trimble was passing that gate when the three Shell fellows pushed it open and came through.

Baggy Trimble, of the St. Jim's Fourth, stared at them. He blinked at them. He goggled at them in his surprise.

"You lot!" exclaimed Baggy. "Oh jiminy! I say, suppose Linton came along and spotted you! Suppose a prefect did! You'd get into an awful row."

Tom Merry cast a quick glance up and down the lane. He would not have been pleased to see Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, just then—or a Sixth Form prefect. True, the Terrible Three had entered those insalubrious precincts involuntarily and without having any choice in the matter. But that did not alter the fact that any St. Jim's fellow seen in such a place was certain to be taken to his Housemaster and severely questioned.

"It's all right!" grinned Baggy. "There ain't any prefects about. And I'm not going to give you away—he, he!"

"You fat ass," said Tom, "there's nothing to give away! We got over a fence away from a bull—"

"He, he!" chortled Baggy. "That's what Racke said when he was caught here by Kildare of the Sixth! He, he!"

"What?" gasped Tom.

"I'd try a new one," said Baggy. "No good telling Racke's yarn over again. I mean, it's stale, you know."

The Terrible Three glared at Baggy Trimble. Evidently the fat and fatheaded Baggy did not believe in that bull.

Baggy had no doubt that he had spotted the chums of the Shell coming out of the Green Man after breaking bounds. And really that was what it looked like.

Any fellow could have told a tale of getting away from a bull. Aubrey Racke of the Shell had told that very tale, as the Terrible Three remembered now that Baggy mentioned it. They remembered, too, that they had not believed Racke, and that nobody else had believed him, though his Housemaster had given him the benefit of the doubt—such doubt as there was.

But to be classed with Aubrey Racke, the bad hat of the School House, was altogether too unpleasant to Tom Merry & Co. They did not like even Baggy Trimble to suppose that they were

following in the footsteps of the festive Aubrey. "You gurgling gargoyle!" said Monty Lowther. "We were coming across Farmer Oak's meadow, and the bull——"

"I've never seen a bull in that meadow!" grinned Baggy. "I've been across it lots of times."

"Go across it now!" snapped Manners.

"Well, I would," said Baggy, "only I ain't going that way. I'll jolly well eat all the bulls there are in that field!"

"He got after us!" roared Manners.

"He, he!"

"And he jolly nearly had us, you fat chump!" said Tom. "We just got over the fence in time."

"Pile it on!" said Baggy. "But I don't see the use of telling me this—I'm not a prefect. I'm not going to report you to Railton or the Head. He, he! I'll tell you what, you fellows—if you get spotted for this, you're fools if you tell the same yarn as Racke over again."

"You blithering fathead, it's true!" roared Tom.

"He, he! Perhaps it was true when Racke said so," grinned Baggy. "I remember hearing Lowther say that it was one of Racke's biggest!"

"There wasn't a bull in the field the day Racke spun that yarn!" snapped Lowther.

"Is there now?" chortled Baggy.

"Yes!" roared Tom.

"He, he! Well, if you won't take good advice you won't!" said Trimble. "But if I were you, I'd think of something else. You haven't much sense! Look here, if you get spotted, I can tell you something better than that. Say a Grammar School chap chucked your cap over the fence, and you went after it. That might go down."

"Oh, kick him!" growled Manners.

"I mean, it's thin, but not so thin as that yarn about a bull," said Baggy, shaking his head. "Think Racke would tell the same yarn twice? He's too jolly artful! Have a little sense, you know."

"You boneheaded bandersnatch!" yelled Monty Lowther. "We got into that place over the fence to get away from a bull."

"He, he!" chortled Baggy Trimble derisively.

That chortle was too much for the patience of the Terrible Three. They grasped the fat Baggy and sat him down in the lane with a heavy bump.

Baggy's fat chortle changed into a roar.

"Ow! Leggo! I ain't going to give you away, you pub-haunting ticks! I ain't going to say I saw you coming out of that pub! I won't mention it. I won't say a word! Leggo!"

"Give him another!" said Manners.

Bump!

"Oh jiminy!" roared Trimble, wriggling frantically. "Will you leggo? 'Tain't my fault I spotted you pub-haunting, is it? If you walk out of a pub right under a fellow's nose, how can a fellow help seeing you? If you don't leggo, I'll jolly well go to Railton and say—Oh jiminy! Stoppit!"

Bump!

"Now do you believe that we were getting away from a bull?" roared Monty Lowther.

"Ow! No——"

Bump!

"I mean, yes!" shrieked Baggy. "Yes. Of course. Anything you like. Leggo! Oh jiminy! Wow!"

"Sure you believe it?" asked Monty. "If you're not convinced yet, we'll go on till you are!"

"Ow! Yes! Leggo! Oh crikey! Yes! Wow!"

Baggy sat on Sussex and roared. And the Terrible Three, leaving him roaring, started up the lane towards St. Jim's.

Trimble of the Fourth tottered to his feet. His podgy face was crimson, and he gurgled for breath. He glared after the three Shell fellows as they went and howled:

"Yah! Pub-haunting swabs! I jolly well hope you'll get spotted and sacked!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther turned round in the lane. That was enough for Baggy; he turned round also and flew.

"By gum!" said Monty Lowther. "I'll boot that fat boulder all over St. Jim's! I'll——"

"Bother the fat ass!" grunted Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the Shell fellows went on to the school, and the fat Baggy was dismissed from mind.

THE NEW BEAK!

"WHAT do you want?"

"Nothin', sir! But——"

"Go away at once!"

"But, sir——"

"If you do not go away instantly, D'Arcy, I shall cane you!"

And still Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's did not go away.

The expression on the hard, clear-cut face of Mr. Silverson, the new master of the Fourth at St. Jim's, boded trouble. But Arthur Augustus seemed blind to danger-signals.

He only raised his noble eyebrows slightly.

Arthur Augustus had tapped at the door of the study and looked in. Mr. Silverson was there—sitting at the telephone.

He was not telephoning. Apparently he was waiting for a call, and was eager to snap the receiver off the hooks as soon as the bell rang.

He stared, or rather glared round at the swell of St. Jim's as the most elegant figure in the School House appeared in his doorway.

Obviously he was angry at the interruption.

Arthur Augustus did not think much of Mr. Silverson. The new master had been only a few days in the school, taking the place of Mr. Lathom, who was on the sick list. But in those few days the Fourth Form had decided that they did not like their new beak.

Silverson had a sharp temper. He often let it rip. He rapped knuckles in the Form-room—which old Mr. Lathom never had done. He had even rapped the noble knuckles of Arthur Augustus. Arthur Augustus had told his friends in Study No. 6 that Silverson was not pukkah. He was, Gussy thought, a bit of a boulder. Blake and Herries and Dig thought that he was more than a bit of a boulder. Form-masters—in Gussy's opinion at last—should not let their tempers rip. Silverson often did.

He was letting it rip at the present moment. Perhaps he was anxious about that telephone-call he was expecting. Anyhow, he did not want to be bothered by a member of his Form coming to the study. He yapped at Arthur Augustus.

"Shut the door!" he added, with a snap.

"But, sir——" persisted Arthur Augustus.

"Shut the door!" almost roared the new master of the Fourth. "Will you do as you are told, or not, D'Arcy?"

"Oh certainly, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

He stepped into the study and shut the door.

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Mr. Silverson's face, already angry, became positively thunderous. He had, of course, meant that Gussy was to shut that door with himself on the outer side of it. It seemed that Gussy misunderstood.

The new master of the Fourth jumped to his feet.

He made a stride to the study table and grasped a cane.

Arthur Augustus viewed that proceeding in mingled amazement and alarm.

"You stupid and disobedient boy!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. "Bend over that chair, at once."

"But weally, sir—" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I have done what you told me, sir. I have shut the door—"

"I told you to go away!" thundered Mr. Silverson.

"But I am bound to delivah the Head's message, sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Dr. Holmes would be vewy watty if I did not delivah his message."

"Oh!" Mr. Silverson lowered the cane. "You stupid blockhead—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Why did you not tell me that you had a message from the headmaster?" snapped Mr. Silverson.

"You interupted me, sir."

"Fool!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep. Never since he had been at St. Jim's had he heard a Form-master use such expressions before. The man was not merely not pukkah, he was a rank outsider.

"Give me the message at once!" snapped Mr. Silverson.

"Certainly, sir. Dr. Holmes wequests you to step to his study," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "He wequested me to come and tell you so."

Mr. Silverson gave a sound like a snort.

A request from the Head amounted to a command. If Dr. Holmes wanted to see the temporary master of the Fourth in his study, Silverson had to proceed to his study—whether he was anxiously awaiting a telephone-call or not.

But it was plain that he was extremely annoyed and irritated. He did not take the trouble to conceal those feelings under the eyes of a junior of his Form. Indeed, Arthur Augustus could see that it was only with difficulty that he repressed an angry exclamation.

He gave a glance at the telephone; then he snapped at Arthur Augustus:

"Leave my study at once!"

"Vewy well, sir."

Arthur Augustus turned to the door again to open it. He moved, naturally, in the leisurely manner to which he was accustomed. The fact that his Form-master was angry and annoyed did not cause Arthur Augustus to forget the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

But Mr. Silverson had no use for aristocratic leisureliness. No doubt he hoped that the telephone-bell would ring, and that, by keeping the Head waiting a minute or two, he could take his call before going. Probably he did not want a junior of his Form to hear him on the phone. Anyhow, as Gussy moved with stately leisure to the door Mr. Silverson strode at him.

He grasped Gussy's collar with his right hand, and threw the door open with his left. Before Arthur Augustus knew what was happening he was spinning through the doorway.

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"Oh cwikey!" gasped the astonished swell of St. Jim's.

He spun across the passage and brought up against the opposite wall. He leaned on that wall in a state of great astonishment and indignation.

Slam!

Silverson's door closed again.

"Oh cwumps!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Of all the unmannahly wottahs—of all the wuffians— Oh cwikey!"

In a breathless and indignant state the swell of St. Jim's leaned on that wall, really finding it quite difficult to believe that his new beak had actually grasped him by the collar and spun him out of the study.

He put his hand up to his collar; it was crumpled. He put his hand to his necktie; it was all over the shop. He groped for his eyeglass, which had fallen as he spun out of the study and streamed at the end of its cord. With deep feelings Arthur Augustus adjusted that eyeglass in his noble eye.

Silverson's door flew open again.

His hope that the telephone-bell would ring had proved unfounded, and he could not keep the Head waiting longer when his chief had specially sent for him. He came out of his study, slamming the door after him, and strode away down the passage, taking no notice of the junior there. His gown rustled away round a corner and he was gone.

"Cheeky wot'ah!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! If he was not a beak I would punch his cheeky nose! Slingin' a fellow about like a sack of coke! Bai Jove! Absolutely wank outsidah!"

Burr-burr-burr!

It was the telephone-bell from the study.

That call for which Silverson had been so anxiously waiting had come only a minute after he had gone out of hearing of the bell.

Burr-burr!

Arthur Augustus was about to walk away down the passage, but he paused.

The telephone-bell was ringing in Silverson's study. There was no one there to take the call. Silverson's conduct, unseemly as it was, made Arthur Augustus realise that it must be an urgent call.

He paused and turned back to the study door. Silverson was gone, and it was only obliging to tell the caller so. Arthur Augustus was deeply offended with Silverson, but he was always obliging. He re-entered Mr. Silverson's study and crossed to the telephone.

He lifted the receiver.

"That Wayland one double two?" came a rather husky voice.

"Yaas."

"O.K.! Couldn't get through before, sir; there's a bit of a rush on the phone here. Sorry to tell you Jackey Jinks never came in."

"I was goin' to say—"

"I couldn't get through earlier. Good-bye, sir!"

"But—"

Arthur Augustus did not continue; he realised that the unknown caller on the telephone had cut off.

Apparently the man at the other end was pressed for time.

No doubt, getting Mr. Silverson's telephone number, he had taken it for granted that Silverson was taking the call; perhaps he knew that

James Silverson would be waiting to take it. Anyhow, having handed out his news, he cut off—and Arthur Augustus, without having had the least chance to explain how the matter stood, was left blinking at the telephone.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He put up the receiver; then he went to the study door and looked out.

As far as Arthur Augustus could see, there was nothing of an urgent nature about that telephone message. He had never heard of Jackey Jinks, and had not the faintest idea who Mr. Jinks might be; but it seemed that he had been expected somewhere, and had not come in.

But, unimportant as such a piece of information appeared to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, he was aware that Mr. Silverson had been very keen on that telephone call, so he was glad that he had taken the message for him and could pass it on to his Form-master.

He looked along the passage. There was no sign of Mr. Silverson coming back.

But Arthur Augustus felt that he was bound to wait and pass on that message. Important or unimportant, Silverson had been waiting for it, and evidently wanted it.

Arthur Augustus stepped out of the study and shut the door, then he waited. Silverson, after all, was not likely to be long with the Head. Anyhow, Gussy felt bound to wait, and he waited in the passage for Silverson's return.

He did not have to wait long. In less than five minutes a mortar-board and a rustling gown whisked round the corner from the direction of the headmaster's study, and Mr. Silverson came hurrying back.

He was walking very quickly—much more quickly than members of the staff generally walked about the House—indeed, almost running. Only too clearly he was anxious to get back to his study for that call.

He glared at Arthur Augustus as he came up.

"What are you doing here?" he snapped. "I told you to go away! Boys are not allowed to hang about masters' studies, as you know very well! Go!"

"I was waitin'—" began Arthur Augustus with calm dignity.

Smack!

Calm dignity deserted Arthur Augustus on the spot as Mr. Silverson smacked his noble head. He fairly bounded.

"Oh cwikey! Look heah—" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Go!"

"But—"

"Upon my word!" The new beak made a stride at him with uplifted hand. Another angry smack was coming.

Arthur Augustus did not wait for it; he scudded. He could not hand out a message to a man who smacked his head before he could utter it.

Mr. Silverson cast an angry stare after him, threw open the door, and stamped into the study, slamming the door when he had entered. Then he sat by the telephone again to wait for that call.

BOOT FOR BAGGY!

"HERE he is!" said Tom Merry. "Trot in, Gussy—you're late!"

Six fellows were in Study No. 10 in the Shell when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy arrived there. Tea had already started when Arthur

Augustus blew in. But tea stopped as the six gazed at the flushed, wrathful face of the swell of St. Jim's. Something, it seemed, had happened to rouse Gussy's deep ire.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus. "That man is the limit!"

"Which?" asked Monty Lowther.

"That wottah Silvahson!" breathed Arthur Augustus. "Would you fellows believe that that cheeky wat actually had the neck to smack a fellow's head?"

"What on earth did he smack your head for?" exclaimed Blake. "Luckily, there's nothing in it to damage. But what did he do it for?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"That's rather the limit," remarked Manners. "Fellows' heads aren't smacked at St. Jim's. That man is an outsider!"

"Yaas, wathah! I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy, to speak in such a stwain of a wvlation of yours, but that man Silvahson is the outside edge!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Only a very distant relation, Gussy," he answered. "And you can't think less of him than I do. But why—"

Arthur Augustus, in tones thrilling with indignation, explained.

"And I wasn't able to give him the message fvwon the man on the phone, aftah all!" he said. "The sillay ass would not let me speak a word. He thought I was hangin' about the place, and smacked my head—"

"Then he never knew you'd taken the call at all?" exclaimed Lowther.

"No; he nevah gave me a chance to speak. I couldn't talk to a man smackin' my head all the time."

"Cheeky ass!" said Herries. "Serve him right not to get his message at all."

"I shall have to give him the message, I suppose!" said Arthur Augustus. "If the sillay ass had as much sense as a bunny wabbit, he would have guessed that I had heard the bell wvng and taken the call for him—but he was in such a wotten tempah—"

"Nothing important, I expect!" said Digby.

"Oh, no! Somebody wvng him up to tell him about a man named Jinks," said Arthur Augustus. "But I suppose he wants to know, as he seems to have been waitin' for the call. But, bai Jove, I shall wait till the bwute is in a bettah tempah before I go neah him again. It will serve him wvght to wait before he heahs about Jinks, whv-evah Jinks is."

Arthur Augustus sat down to tea with the party in Tom Merry's study.

He frowned over the tea-table. His noble temper was ruffled.

Seven fellows, seated round the tea-table, agreed that James Silverson was the limit—the outside edge, and a little over. They agreed, too, that they hoped that Mr. Lathom would soon get off the sick list and resume his post—after which the temporary master would depart and would be seen no more at St. Jim's. Tom Merry, who was distantly related to him, was more anxious than any other fellow to see the last of him.

Tea was going on when the door was pushed open and a podgy face looked into Study No. 10.

"Oh, you're here, old chap!" said Baggy Trimble, with a nod at Tom Merry. "I thought I'd look in."

"Look out again!" suggested Tom.

Baggy Trimble did not look out again. He looked at the study table. That table was graced

by a large, handsome cake, among other things. Baggy's eyes dwelt longingly on that cake.

"I see you've got visitors!" said Baggy breezily. "Room for one more?"

"Not at all!"

"Look here, you know——"

"Waddle off!" said Monty Lowther, staring at the fat Baggy. "What the thump are you barging in here for, Trimble?"

"I thought you fellows might like to ask a fellow to tea," said Baggy.

"What on earth put that idea into your head?" asked Manners.

"If you don't want me, Manners——"

"Does anybody ever?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I'm not going to let anything out," said Baggy. "You needn't be afraid of that. I'm mum, you know—mum as an oyster."

And Baggy bestowed a fat wink on the Terrible Three.

Then he insinuated himself a little farther into the study.

The Terrible Three stared at him. Blake & Co. regarded him in astonishment. Tom Merry knitted his brows.

"You fat chump, travel!" he said. "Do you think——"

"He, he!" chortled Baggy. "I bet these fellows don't know! I'm not going to tell them, of course. Not a word! I can keep secrets. Rely on me, old fellow. I say, got a chair for a chap?"

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

Baggy's mysterious remarks mystified Blake & Co. But they did not mystify Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. Baggy knew—or fancied he knew—a dark secret, and on the strength of the same he had invited himself to tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell. It was worth a spread, Baggy considered, to keep a fellow quiet about what a fellow knew!

Tom Merry pointed to the door.

"Travel!" he said curtly.

"Perhaps you'd like me to tell these chaps——" grinned Baggy.

"I'd like you to get out of the study!" said Tom. "You blithering octopus, you can tell anybody anything you like! Travel!"

"I fancy Racke would be glad to hear about it!" chuckled Baggy. "You make out that you look down on Racke and Crooke and their set for smoking and haunting pubs! That would be pie to them!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "What is that howlin' ass talkin' about, you fellows?"

"Potty?" asked Blake, in wonder.

"He, he! I ain't going to tell you," said Baggy. "You won't get a word out of me! I haven't told anybody, so far, Tom Merry—don't you worry! I know how to keep my mouth shut! He, he!"

"You can tell all St. Jim's if you like!" roared Tom Merry; and he grabbed the fat Baggy by a fat neck and spun him round to the door. "Tell them at the same time that I booted you—like that!"

"Yaroo!" roared Baggy as a boot thudded. "Oh jiminy! I say——"

"And like that!"

"Oh! Ow! Stoppit!" shrieked Baggy. "I ain't going to tell about you and your pals going to pubs!"

"And like that!"

"Wow! If you don't stoppit, I'll tell the whole

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House that I saw you coming out of the Green Man!" yelled Baggy.

"And like that!"

"Yow-woooooop!"

Baggy Trimble shot out of the doorway, roaring. Tom Merry banged the door after him, and returned to the tea-table with a flushed face.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, looked at him very curiously. The guests in Study No. 10 were considerably surprised.

"What on earth did that flabby foozler mean?" asked Blake. "You fellows haven't been cavorting round the Green Man, have you?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I twust that you thoughtless youngstahs have not been gettin' into a sewape."

"Fathead!" said Tom Merry. "Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Well, what did Trimble mean?" asked Herries. "He says that he saw you lot out of bounds at that horrid pub."

"We got over the fence to get away from Farmer Oak's bull!" grunted Tom.

"Oh!"

"That footling ass saw us coming out of the gate, and fancied that we had been pub-haunting in Racke's style!" growled Manners.

"Oh!"

There was a rattle at the door-handle. Seven fellows looked round at the door. An infuriated voice howled through the keyhole.

"Yah! Pub-crawlers! Who goes sneaking in at the back door of the Green Man? Yah! Who goes crawling round pubs? Yah!"

"By gum!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in exasperation. And he jumped to his feet and fairly bounded to the door.

PIE FOR JAMES.

MR. JAMES SILVERSON rose to his feet, in Mr. Lathom's old study, with a knitted brow.

That call had not come through.

James Silverson had been expecting that call about half-past five. It was now nearly six! And it had not come.

But Mr. Silverson had been doing a spot of thinking while he sat at the telephone, waiting. It was James' agreeable way to let his bad temper rip and reflect afterwards.

He had wondered whether that call had come through during his brief absence with the Head. Now he felt sure that it had; and it dawned upon him, too, why that irritating junior, D'Arcy, had been waiting outside his study.

If that junior in the passage had heard the telephone-bell ring, knowing that his Form-master had gone to the Head, might he not have stepped in to tell the caller that Mr. Silverson had been called away? And was that why he had waited there?

"The little fool!" muttered James.

He realised that that, very probably, was the case, and that he had smacked that junior's head for doing him a service. James did not regret the smack—but he did regret not having given D'Arcy a chance to speak.

He crossed the study to the door, and hurried out.

If, as seemed probable now, D'Arcy had taken that call for him, he wanted to know. Also, he was a little uneasy about what might have been said over the wires. There were certain affairs of Mr. Silverson's which he did not want known in the school.

He hurried up to the Fourth Form passage, and threw open the door of Study No. 6. It was tea-time, and he had no doubt that D'Arcy was there.

D'Arcy, however, was not there! Study No. 6 was empty! James Silverson breathed hard, and glanced round the passage.

"Kerruish!" he snapped. The Manx junior was in the doorway of Study No. 5.

"Yes, sir!" answered Kerruish.

"Have you seen D'Arcy? Do you know where he is?"

"I think he's in Tom Merry's study in the Shell, sir."

James Silverson's eyes glinted at the mention of Tom Merry's name. James' feelings towards that distant relative of his were deep—and not friendly.

He turned away without another word, and hurried to the Shell passage.

In that passage he found three or four fellows standing about and five or six more looking out of their study doorways.

Something seemed to be going on in the Shell quarters.

"What's that fat ass up to?" He heard the voice of Talbot of the Shell as he entered the passage.

"He's just come out of Study No. 10 on his neck," said Grundy.

"Trimble, you ass!" called out Gore.

Mr. Silverson's sharp, greenish eyes fell on Baggy Trimble. He was as surprised as the Shell fellows by the fat Baggy's antics.

Baggy was stooping at the doorway of Study No. 10, and bawling through the keyhole. Baggy's voice resounded down the passage.

"Yah! Pub-crawling rotters! Like me to tell your beak that I saw you at the Green Man, Tom Merry?"

James Silverson gave a violent start as he heard that.

James was very anxious about that telephone message, but he quite forgot it as he heard those extraordinary words from Trimble of his Form.

The next moment the door of Study No. 10 flew open.

Tom Merry came out with a red face and gleaming eyes. Baggy Trimble made a backward bound, but not in time. Tom had him by a fat neck before he could escape.

Bang!

Baggy's head tapped on the passage wall. Baggy's yell, as his head tapped, rang far and wide.

Bang!

"Ow!" roared Baggy. "Leggo, you rotter, or I'll go to your beak and— Whoop!"

Bang!

James Silverson strode up the passage.

"Look out, Tom!" called out Talbot of the Shell, as he caught sight of the Fourth Form master.

"Merry," thundered Mr. Silverson, "what are you doing? Release that boy of my Form instantly!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

Baggy had been about to get another bang, but at the voice of authority Tom Merry let go the fat neck. Baggy tottered away, bellowing.

"How dare you bully that Fourth Form boy, Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson.

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"I was not bullying him!" he snapped. "If he were a fellow who had a spot of pluck, and could put up his hands, I'd thrash him till he couldn't stand!"

"Ow!" roared Baggy. "Ow! My napper! Wow!"

"I shall not permit you, a Shell boy, to bully boys of my Form," said Mr. Silverson. "You will tell me at once why you were ill-using Trimble."

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" retorted Tom Merry.

"What?"

"You are not my Form-master," said Tom. "If Mr. Linton asks me, I will answer him. You have no right to ask me questions, and I shall not answer you."

"Hear, hear!" came from Study No. 10.

Manners and Lowther, at the sound of Silverson's rasping voice, appeared in the doorway.

"I order you to answer me, Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson.

"You have no right to give me orders," answered Tom coolly. "I am under Mr. Linton's orders, not yours."

"Right on the wicket!" said Monty Lowther.

Blake & Co., in Study No. 10, looked at one another. They were under Mr. Silverson's authority if Tom Merry was not. They looked at one another expressively, and remained silent.

James Silverson compressed his lips in a hard, tight line. There was rather a hush in the Shell passage. Tom Merry was in the right. The Fourth Form master had no authority over him. Still, a beak was a beak!

"I shall report this conduct to your House-master, Merry," said James Silverson at last.

"You can please yourself about that, of course, sir," answered Tom. "I shall explain to Mr. Railton, if he cares to ask me."

"Trimble!"

"Ow! Wow! Yes, sir!" mumbled Baggy. "Ow! Wow!"

"I heard what you were calling in at this Shell boy's door."

"Oh, did you, sir?" gasped Baggy.

"I heard you say that you had seen Merry at a disreputable public-house, which is out of bounds for all boys belonging to this school."

"Oh, jiminy!" gasped Trimble.

Baggy, of course, had not had the remotest idea that Silverson was coming up. He had never intended his words to reach official ears. Baggy had his faults—their name was legion—but he would not willingly have sneaked. But he had done it now.

"Was your statement true, Trimble?"

"Oh! Yes! No!" stammered the wretched Baggy. "I—I—I mean—that is, I—I didn't mean—oh, jiminy! I—I—I was only jook-jook-jook—"

"What?"

"Only jook-jook-joking, sir!" stuttered Baggy. "Of course, I—I—I never meant anything, sir—nothing at all!"

James Silverson's eyes fixed on Baggy.

"If you were making a false statement, Trimble—"

"Oh, no! I—I mean—"

"Either your statement was true, or it was false!" said Mr. Silverson grimly. "If it was false, Trimble, I shall take you at once to your headmaster, and report you to him for making such a statement."

Baggy's fat knees knocked together. Baggy did not want to sneak. Still less did he want to go to his headmaster.

"I—I—I—" he stammered. "I—look here, Tom Merry, you jolly well know it's true, and I ain't going to the Head!"

"You fat chump!" answered Tom.

"Answer me, Trimble!" snapped Mr. Silverson. "Did you, or did you not, see this Shell boy at the Green Man?"

"Yes, I jolly well did!" gasped Baggy. "I'm jolly well not going to the Head, Tom Merry, so don't you think it! You jolly well shouldn't go to pubs if you don't want to be found out."

"You piffing idiot!"

"Do you admit, Merry, that you were seen at that disreputable public-house?" demanded Mr. Silverson.

Tom looked at him steadily. This, as he was well aware, was "pie" to James Silverson. James had got his teeth into this like a dog with a bone.

"I shall not answer you, sir," he said quietly. "I've said that you've no right to question me."

"That is an admission, I think," said James.

"You can think what you like, Mr. Silverson!" said Tom. And with that he turned his back, went into Study No. 10, and shut the door.

THE HEAVY HAND!

"**B**AI Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. There were serious faces in Study No. 10.

Tom's was flushed and angry; Manners' and Lowther's grim.

The Fourth Form fellows were dismayed.

A beak was a beak, and defying a beak was not a light matter. And it was only too clear that James Silverson was going to the Housemaster with that Green Man story.

"That ass Trimble!" muttered Blake.

"Well, that fathead couldn't know that Silverson was sneaking up into our passage!" said Lowther. "Baggy never meant him to hear, and he ought not to have heard."

"The cur!" said Tom. "He knows—at least, he ought to know—that it's all bunk! But he wants it to be true, the cur!"

The door of Study No. 10 opened, and Mr. Silverson appeared in the doorway. Evidently he had caught Tom's last word.

The juniors stared at him, Blake & Co. hastily rising to their feet. Mr. Silverson's eyes glinted at Tom.

"I heard what you said, Merry," he said, in a choking voice.

"Did you?" said Tom indifferently.

"You applied a name to me."

Tom's lip curled.

"You supposed that I was speaking of you because I used the word 'cur'?" he asked, very distinctly.

Manners and Lowther grinned. Blake & Co. looked at the floor. Silverson breathed very hard. Tom had mentioned no name, and really Mr. Silverson had no right to assume that the word "cur" referred to himself, unless he thought it applicable.

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Silverson looked as if he would stride across the study and lay hands on the captain of the Shell. But he restrained his rage and turned to Arthur Augustus.

"I came here for you, D'Arcy," he said.

"Yaas, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Tell me at once whether you took a telephone call for me while I was absent from my study," said Mr. Silverson harshly.

"Yaas, sir! I was goin' to tell you. That was why I waited for you to come back, but you

wefused to listen!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I—"

"Never mind that! I presume that you informed the caller that I was absent?" snapped Mr. Silverson, eyeing the swell of St. Jim's sharply.

"I was goin' to do so, sir, but the man, whoever he was, gave me no time to speak!" explained Arthur Augustus. "But I should have repeated his message to you if you had not—"

"What was the message?"

"He said he was sowwy that Jackey Jinks had not come in, sir."

"What!"

All the juniors in Study No. 10 stared. The statement that Jackey Jinks had not come in, utterly trivial as it seemed to Arthur Augustus, was evidently far from trivial to Mr. Silverson.

The colour wavered in his face. He panted for breath. Whatever that message meant, it was plain that it was a knock for James Silverson.

"Are you sure—are you quite sure that that was what he said?" exclaimed Mr. Silverson, his eyes burning at Arthur Augustus. He seemed to have forgotten that other fellows were in the study at all.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" answered D'Arcy. "He did not say who Mr. Jinks was—"

"What?"

"Or where he hadn't come in, or anything—he just wapped it out and wang off," said Arthur Augustus.

"Fool!"

"Weally, sir—"

"Repeat his exact words to me, you stupid young idiot!"

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath. He wished that Dr. Holmes, or Mr. Railton, could have been present to hear that rank outsider talk to a fellow like this!

"I will wepeat his exact words, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's icily. "He said: 'Couldn't get through befoah—there's a wush on the phone heah! Sowwy to tell you Jackey Jinks nevah came in.'"

"Oh!" breathed Mr. Silverson. "You are sure of that?"

"Quite suah!"

The man stood silent for a moment or two. He could not conceal the fact that that queer message was a blow to him.

But he realised that a whole crowd of curious eyes were upon him, and he turned to the doorway.

He turned back at once, however.

"What are you Fourth Form boys doing in this study?" he rasped.

"We're teaing with Tom Merry, sir," answered Blake.

"Leave the study at once!"

"Weally, sir—we haven't finished tea—"

"Take a hundred lines, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Leave this study!" Mr. Silverson stood aside from the doorway to allow the four to pass. "You are forbidden to enter this study again! This study is no fit place for you. I have no authority over the Shell, but I will not allow boys in the Form over which I have authority to associate with Merry and his friends."

Tom Merry's cheeks burned.

"Do your hear me?" rapped Mr. Silverson harshly. "Leave the study this instant, and do not return here."

Blake, Herries, and Dig looked at the Terrible Three. They had no choice but to obey their

Form-master. In silence, they passed him and went out of the study.

Arthur Augustus had no choice, either. Nevertheless, he did not follow his friends.

"Pway allow me to speak, sir!" said Arthur Augustus. "That sillay ass Twimble——"
"That will do!"

"Was only talkin' out of his hat, sir! Tom Mewwy is a fellow respected by the whole House——"

"Leave this study!"
"As you are a relative of Tom Mewwy's, sir, you should certainly know him too well to take any notice of Twimble's nonsense——"

"Will you obey me, D'Arcy?"
"I am bound to obey your ordahs, sir, but I should like to point out that you are makin' a wiculous mistake——"

Arthur Augustus did not finish that sentence. Mr. Silverson grabbed him by the shoulder and spun him out of the study.

"Oh ewikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus as he bumped into Blake, Herries, and Dig in the passage.

"Go!" thundered Mr. Silverson.
"I pwotest——"
"Come on, ass!" grunted Blake, and he

grabbed Arthur Augustus' arm and walked him away down the passage, followed by Herries and Dig.

Mr. Silverson brought up the rear. Manners stepped to the door of Study No. 10 and shut it. Then the Terrible Three looked at one another. Tom's face was almost white with rage.

"The cur!" he muttered thickly. "He knows——"

"He doesn't!" said Manners. "He's a rotter all through! He believes that rot because he wants to believe it. He'd like you to be a bad egg. It would help on his game."

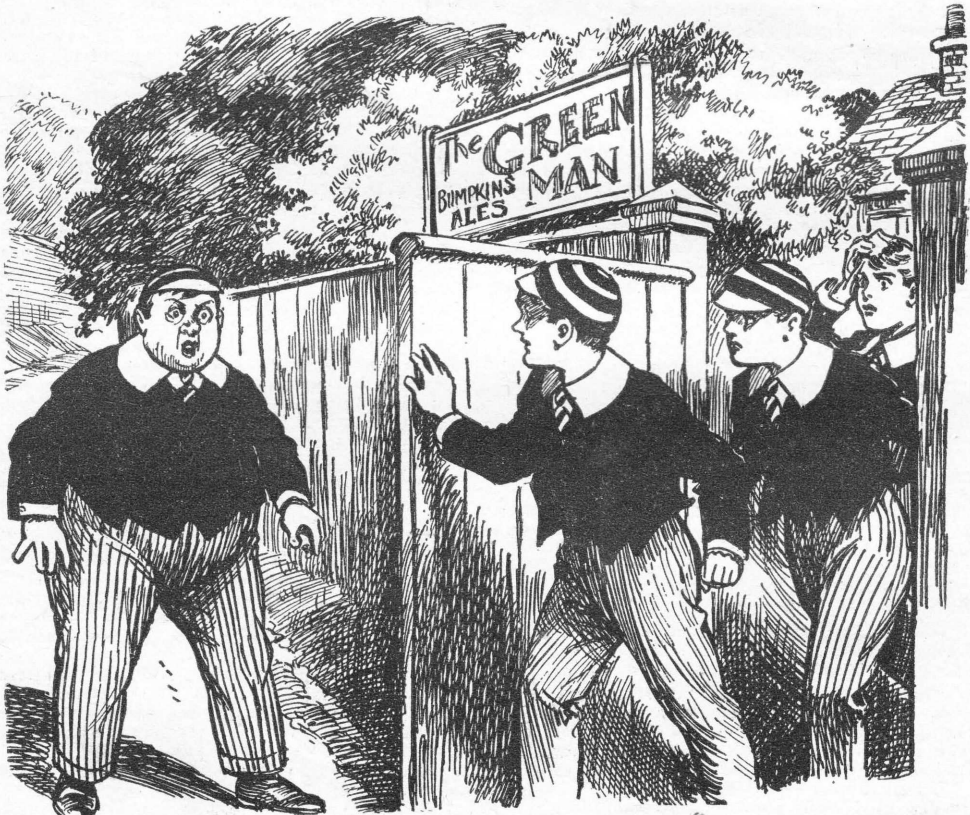
"His game?" repeated Tom.

"Yes, his game," said Manners quietly. "What he did when we were at Laurel Villa shows plainly enough what his game is! He's after old Miss Fawcett's money, and he wants to disgrace you with her. He tried it on in her house—and he's come to St. Jim's to try it on here."

"The cur!" said Tom.

"That's it," said Lowther, with a nod. "The rat will make the most of this. Lucky for Tommy it's all moonshine."

"He would believe this kind of thing easily enough of any fellow," said Manners, with bitter



"Oh, jiminy!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble. He goggled at Tom Merry & Co. in surprise as they came out of the side gate of the Green Man.

contempt. "Tom's his relation—and he may think that it runs in the family. You see, that's the sort of tick he is himself!"

"You don't think—"

"No," said Manners, "I don't—I know! Where's that newspaper—the one I got for the photographic article—"

"Oh, blow the photographic article!" grunted Lowther.

"Don't be an ass! Where's that newspaper? There's something in it I want to see!"

Tom Merry picked a newspaper from the shelf and tossed it across to Manners. Manners had it for the article on photography; but now he opened it at the racing page, much to his friends' surprise.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Lowther.

"Wait a minute," said Manners. "You heard that message that Gussy got for him on the phone—"

"Bother his silly message! Nothing about Jinks, whoever Jinks is, in that newspaper, I suppose?" said Tom.

"I fancy there is!"

"Wha-at?"

"Look!" said Manners. He laid the newspaper on a corner of the table, and ran his finger down a list of horses, his friends following that finger with their eyes in great astonishment. "Welsham Stakes—five o'clock! Look!"

His finger stopped at the name of a horse in the list. The name was "Jackey Jinks."

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"A—a—a racehorse!" exclaimed Lowther.

Manners nodded.

"I guessed that one as soon as I heard Gussy repeat the message," he said. "If we had an evening paper, you'd see that Jackey Jinks hasn't won that race."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom and Monty together.

"Some book-making pal rang him up after the race to tell him the result!" said Manners, his lip curling. "That precious swab has backed Jackey Jinks—you saw how he was knocked over when he heard that he hadn't come in. That message meant that he's lost the money he put on Jackey Jinks for the Welsham Stakes."

"Oh!" gasped the two juniors again.

It was clear enough now.

"And that rotter—that rotten, horse-racing swab—" muttered Tom. "Why, if the Head knew this, he would be kicked out of the school on the spot."

"All the Head knows of him is that he came from the agents' as a temporary master in Lathom's place," said Manners, "and he's had a recommendation of the brute from poor old Miss Priscilla—that's all the Head knows, and all he will know if Silverson can help it."

"And that's the man who's told those Fourth Form chaps that I'm not a fellow to be associated with!" said Tom between his teeth.

"That's the man," said Manners, "and this study is going to give him back as good as he hands out, and a little over."

There was a tap at the door, and Toby, the School House page, looked in.

"Master Merry—"

"Yes, kid!" said Tom, looking round.

"You're wanted in Mr. Railton's study, sir."

"He's lost no time!" said Manners sarcastically.

"Anybody with Railton, Toby?"

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"Yes, sir; Mr. Silverson and Mr. Linton."

"The fool!" said Tom; and he went down to obey the summons, followed by his friends.

BEFORE THE HOUSEMASTER!

"MERRY," said Mr. Railton, "come in!"
Tom Merry entered his Housemaster's study.

There were three masters in that study. Mr. Silverson had evidently lost no time in making his report to the School House master. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, had been called in as the Form-master concerned.

Mr. Railton looked a little impatient. He had no choice but to go into the matter, but his look indicated clearly enough that he did not believe for a moment that there was anything serious to go into.

Mr. Linton sat with a very severe expression on his rather thin, scholarly face. He was icily angry—but his anger was not directed against the accused junior. He was deeply and intensely annoyed by another master's interference in his Form—and he, like Railton, had not the slightest doubt that there was nothing in it.

Silverson was in a rather uncongenial atmosphere in the School House master's study.

Tom Merry stepped in, followed by Manners and Lowther. Mr. Railton raised his eyebrows at the sight of the three when he had expected only one.

"I sent for you only, Merry," he said.

"My friends were with me this afternoon, sir," said Tom. "They thought they had better come as they were with me."

"You mentioned only Merry, Mr. Silverson."

"Only Merry's name was given me, sir, by the boy who saw him out of bounds in a disreputable public-house," answered Mr. Silverson.

"Then there are three boys in my Form who are accused of having disgraced themselves and their school," said Mr. Linton, in his dry, sarcastic tones. "If this is well-founded, we must be thankful that Mr. Silverson came to the school. Nothing of the kind was suspected before Mr. Silverson came here to open our eyes to the fact."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"I have little doubt, sir, that these boys will be able to explain," he said.

"I have no doubt of it at all," said Mr. Linton.

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom. "You may be sure, sir, that we have done nothing to be ashamed of."

"I am quite assured on that point, Merry!" said Mr. Linton. "I am in no need whatever of instruction from another member of the staff."

James Silverson compressed his lips. Mr. Railton coughed again. The matter had to be gone into, annoying as it was to the master of the Shell.

"It appears, then, that you three juniors were all concerned in this matter," said the Housemaster. "Merry, answer me directly; did a Fourth Form boy see you coming out of the Green Man public-house to-day, or not?"

"Trimble saw all three of us coming out of the gate beside the Green Man, sir," answered Tom.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, taken aback. "You admit, then, that you were in the place?"

"I think, sir, that you will not blame us when we tell you the reason."

"I am waiting to hear it," said Mr. Railton sternly.

"We came across Farmer Oak's meadow, sir, and his bull got after us, and we had to get out the quickest way," said Tom. "If we had made for the lane, he would have got us. We hardly got over that fence in time as it was."

Mr. Railton gave him a penetrating look. It was easy to read in his face that he remembered a similar story told by Aubrey Racke. Mr. Linton's look, too, seemed to sharpen.

"If that is correct, Merry, you are not to blame, and I am very glad that you escaped," said Mr. Railton slowly. "But—I have crossed that meadow many times, Merry, and have never seen a bull in it."

"Neither had we till to-day, sir," said Tom. "We shall be careful not to go that way again—but we never knew—"

"A palpable invention!" said Mr. Silverson coldly.

Tom did not look at him, or heed him. He was ignoring the man's presence in the study so far as he could.

"Indeed!" snapped Mr. Linton, with a glance at the Fourth Form master. "Is not Mr. Oak entitled to turn his cattle into his own meadows, Mr. Silverson? The fact that that meadow has not been grazed by a bull before is no evidence that Mr. Oak is not using it for that purpose now."

Silverson shrugged his shoulders. It was clear that he, at all events, did not believe a word of Tom Merry's statement.

"We had to jump over the fence, sir!" said Tom. "We left the place as quickly as we could. That is all, sir."

"I passed that meadow this morning," said Mr. Silverson, "and there was certainly no bull there."

"Is that any reason why the farmer should not have turned the bull in this afternoon, sir?" snapped Mr. Linton.

James Silverson gave another shrug.

"If you choose to believe palpable inventions, sir, I have no more to say," he retorted. "I have done my duty in placing this matter before Mr. Railton. It does not concern me further."

Mr. Railton drummed on the table. He was puzzled and worried. Tom Merry's admission that he had been within the precincts of the Green Man staggered him. The reason he gave was precisely the reason that Aubrey Racke had given on a similar occasion. He had not believed Racke. He did believe Tom—but there was a disagreeable element of doubt.

"May I speak, sir?" asked Manners in his silkiest tones.

"What have you to say, Manners?"

"Oak Farm is on the telephone, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton. "And what—"

"Mr. Oak, I suppose, knows whether he turned a bull into that field this afternoon, sir," said Manners. "If you asked him—"

"Oh!" said the Housemaster.

Mr. Linton smiled. That suggestion from one of the accused was sufficient to prove what he believed already—that it was all moonshine.

"A very useful suggestion, Manners," said the master of the Shell. "Why not ring up Mr. Oak, sir, and set the matter at rest in the simplest way?"

"I shall certainly do so," said Mr. Railton, rising.

He stepped to the telephone, and all eyes followed him. The three Shell fellows smiled;

Mr. Linton smiled; James Silverson knitted his brows. The Housemaster was through to Oak Farm in a few moments.

"May I ask Mr. Oak whether a bull has been turned into the meadow next to the Green Man?" asked the Housemaster. "I am speaking from St. Jim's."

"Who, yes, sir," came back a deep voice, heard by all in the study. "You'd better tell your boys to keep clear of that medder, sir. I'm having a board put up at the gate, 'Beware of the bull,' but it ain't up yet."

"Thank you, Mr. Oak!" The Housemaster put up the receiver.

"I think," said Mr. Railton quietly, "that that clears up the matter. You agree with me, Mr. Linton?"

"Entirely, sir!"

"I recommend you, Mr. Silverson, to speak severely to the Fourth Form boy who so foolishly misjudged his schoolfellows," said Mr. Railton. "Merry, Manners, Lowther, you may go!"

And the Terrible Three went—smiling.

RACKE'S RAG.

"WHAT'S on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the next day, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were coming up to their study after a spot of football practice which had followed class.

A good many fellows were in the Shell passage—Fourth as well as Shell. And they were all laughing.

Some joke evidently was on. And as the laughter redoubled at sight of the Terrible Three, they guessed that the joke, whatever it was, was up against them. When they came up the passage they saw what it was.

Somebody had been busy on the door of Study No. 10—somebody who had gone to the expense of a can of green paint.

A brush dipped in paint had traced an inscription on the study door.

"THE GREEN MAN.
BILLIARDS AND SNOOKER!
FINE ALES!
WINES FROM THE WOOD!"

The Terrible Three gazed at that inscription. This was the joke. Some too-humorous person had labelled Study No. 10 as a "pub."

Tom Merry looked round at the fellows in the passage. If this was a joke it was not the sort that he could appreciate.

Racke and Crooke were lounging in their study doorway, grinning. Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn grinned from another door. Mellish and Trimble, in the passage, giggled. Other fellows were gathered about, laughing.

"Who did this?" asked Tom, very quietly.

No answer, except a fat giggle from Baggy Trimble.

"Do you know, Talbot?" Talbot of the Shell was looking out of Study No. 9 with a frowning brow. He shook his head.

"No, I've only just seen it," he answered.

"Do you know, Racke?"

Aubrey Racke raised his eyebrows.

"How should I know?" he drawled.

"It's the kind of rotten trick you would play!" said Tom.

"Thanks! Is it a rotten trick?" asked Racke.
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"Yes, and just your style!"

"Dear me!" yawned Racke.

"Do you know, Crooke?"

George Gerald Crooke chuckled.

"No more than Racke," he answered. "Don't you like it? My dear chap, if you go to pubs you must expect to be reminded of it now and then. You talk pretty freely about other fellows who kick a loose leg at times."

"If the rotter who did this is afraid to say so, I'm going to find out," said Tom Merry. "Not you, I suppose, Trimble?"

"No fear!" gasped Baggy in alarm.

"Might have been any man in the School House," said Mellish. "Everybody's heard about your little games now, you know."

"Hush!" said Racke. "Tom Merry doesn't know anything about little games at pubs. When he goes to a pub it's to get away from a bull, or a sheep, or something in a field. Was it a bull or a sheep, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fellows in the passage.

"It was a bull," said Tom very quietly.

"Queer coincidence," said Aubrey. "The very same thing happened to me not long ago. I thought Railton rather doubted it when I told him. Did he doubt it when you told him?"

"No," said Tom, "he did not."

"Some fellows have all the luck," sighed Aubrey. "Trimble says he advised you to spin a different yarn. Still, if you got away with it, it's all right. Gratters!"

"Well, I was only giving him a tip out of sheer good nature," said Baggy. "Bit fatheaded, I thought, to spin the same yarn. My system is to tell a different one every time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat ass!" said Tom, half-laughing. "Can't you get it into your silly head that I was telling the truth?"

Trimble winked.

"You can't stuff me, you know," he remarked. "I'm no fool! Railton must be an awful ass to swallow it! I can jolly well tell you that Silver-son didn't! He jolly well knows!"

"Oh, dry up, you chump! Racke, I want to know who painted that silly rot on my door?" said Tom. "I think you did."

"You can think what you like, as you told Silver-son yesterday," said Aubrey. "Of course, I know absolutely nothing about it. No good askin' me."

"No good asking you for the truth, I know!" said Tom contemptuously. "But whoever did it has got a pot of green paint and a brush somewhere about. Anything of that kind in your study?"

"Not at all!"

"Then you don't mind if I look?"

Aubrey started a little.

"I don't mind—but I'm not havin' fellows rootin' about my study," he answered. "You're not welcome in my study, Tom Merry, any more than I am in yours."

"Welcome or not, I'm going to look!" said Tom Merry, stepping towards the doorway of Study No. 7 in the Shell, in which Racke and Crooke were lounging. "Will you let me pass?"

"No," said Racke, between his teeth, "I won't! And if you try to shove yourself into my study I'll call up a prefect to stop you."

"You won't," said Tom Merry coolly. "You

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fellows see that neither of those cads gets away, will you?"

"Will we?" grinned Lowther.

"Just a few!" remarked Manners.

Racke and Crooke blocked the doorway of Study No. 7. Both of them, it was clear, were alarmed at Tom's idea of looking through the study—which was more than enough to convince the captain of the Shell that he was on the right track.

"Let me pass, please!" said Tom.

Racke and Crooke blocked the doorway. Tom Merry shoved forward without ceremony, and both of them staggered into the study.

"You cheeky rotter!" panted Racke.

"Look here——" shouted Crooke.

"That's enough!" said Tom. "Shut up! See that they don't clear out of the study till I'm through, you fellows."

"What-ho!"

Aubrey Racke made a fierce stride to the door. Manners and Lowther stood in the doorway and pushed him back. They pushed him with vigour, and Aubrey sat on his expensive study carpet with a bump.

"You're sitting this one out, old bean!" said Monty Lowther cheerily, and there was a chuckle in the passage. All the fellows there gathered round to see the result of the search.

Racke staggered to his feet. He made no further attempt to get out of the study—he had no chance of calling up a prefect. He had to abide by the result of the search—and he wished from the bottom of his heart that he had not kept that can of paint and that brush for another performance of the same kind later. But he had never dreamed of measures like this.

The search did not take long. From behind several other articles in the study cupboard Tom Merry turned out a can of green paint, smeared outside from recent use, and a paint-brush wrapped in an oily rag.

He held them up, one in either hand.

"Yours, Racke?" he asked.

"Find out!" snarled Aubrey.

"Yours, Crooke?"

"No!" grunted Crooke. "I had nothing to do with it, except to look on!"

"I guessed that," said Tom, with a nod. "I know the pair of you pretty well. It's up to you, Racke! Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander—and you've asked for it!"

And Tom Merry prised the lid off the paint-can and dipped the brush into the green paint, Aubrey Racke watching him very uneasily the while.

THE GREEN MAN OF ST. JIM'S!

"SIT down!" said Tom.

He pointed to Racke's handsome arm-chair with the paint-brush. Paint dripped from the brush unregarded. Racke had used up almost half that can of paint on Tom Merry's study door. He could not complain if some of the remainder was spilled about his own study.

"What do you mean, you fool?" snapped Aubrey. "I'm not going to sit down! I'm waiting for you to get out of my study!"

"You'll have to wait a little while! Manners, Lowther, take that rat by the arms and stick him in his chair!" said Tom.

Manners and Lowther came into the study and pinned Aubrey's arms. Crooke sidled towards the door.

Racke was plumped into his armchair. Manners and Lowther held him there. Tom Merry stood in front of him, paint-brush in hand.

"You've labelled our study the Green Man!" he said. "Now I'm going to make a green man of you! You like this sort of joke, Racke—you can laugh this one off!"

"Yurrrgh!" spluttered Aubrey as the brush, heavily laden with paint, dabbed at his face.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the passage. The crowd of juniors crammed the doorway to watch.

"You rotter!" shrieked Racke. "Stoppit!"

Tom Merry gave another dab.

"Get a prefect here, Crooke!" shrieked Racke.

"Stop that cad leaving the study, Talbot, will you?" called Tom Merry over his shoulder. "We don't want any prefects here at present."

"He won't pass me!" answered Talbot in the doorway.

Tom Merry dipped the brush in the can again and gave another dab at Racke's red, furious face.

Aubrey struggled and spluttered, but he struggled in vain. Manners and Lowther, grinning, kept him pinned in the armchair. Tom Merry painted away industriously.

Where Racke's face was not green it was crimson with fury. It was for some minutes a study in red and green. But the green soon predominated. Thicker and thicker Tom Merry laid it on with the brush.

The fellows at the doorway fairly shrieked.

Racke's aspect was growing quite weird and extraordinary. The Shell fellows of St. Jim's had never seen a green man before. Now they were seeing one—and the sight of him made them yell. Even Racke's own sympathisers, Mellish and Trimble and Scrope, yelled as loudly as the rest—even Crooke in the study grinned. Racke's green face might have made a stone image smile.

"Urrgh!" gasped Racke. "Will you stop it? Yurrrgh!" He gurgled horribly as a dab of paint went into his mouth.

"Better keep your mouth shut!" advised Monty Lowther. "You open it a good deal too much and too often, Racke—"

"Urrrrrrgh!"

"He, he!" chortled Baggy Trimble. "I say, look at him! Green as grass! He, he!"

"Will you—gurrgh!—stoppit? Wurrgh!" spluttered Racke. "I—I'll go straight to Railton about this! Yurrrgh!"

"You can go where you like after I've finished!" said Tom. "You won't stir till you've had the last of your own paint!"

He painted away with a steady hand.

Racke's face was completely green now. Some of the paint still remained, and Tom proceeded to paint his ears.

There was still some left after Aubrey's ears had been painted a brilliant green. The remainder was painted round his neck. A good deal smeared over his collar and tie. That could not be helped. Drips ran down his waistcoat; blobs lodged on his trousers. Racke reeked with paint. It was his own paint, and he had it all to the last spot.

"That's the lot," said Tom. "You won't use any more of this paint on study doors, Racke."

"Gurrrrrgh!"

"Hold his collar, Monty. He can have his brush now that I've done with it."

Monty Lowther, chortling, jerked back Racke's

collar, and the reeking brush was shoved down the back of his neck. Racke wriggled as it went down.

Tom Merry pitched the empty can into the fireplace.

Racke was released, and he staggered to his feet. He gave the Terrible Three a green glare.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a shriek from the mob of fellows in the passage. The crowd had increased considerably by that time, and the Shell passage swarmed with fellows howling with laughter.

Racke looked at his reflection in the glass. He gave a bellow of rage as he looked at it.

His aspect made every other fellow roar with laughter; but it was not with laughter that Aubrey Racke roared.

The amount of hot water and soap and rubbing and scrubbing that was required to bring Aubrey back to normal was likely to be immense. Racke had the happy prospect of rubbing and scrubbing till prep, and even then it was probable there would still be some green paint sticking to him.

Aubrey would have given a handful of his ample pocket-money not to have evolved that great joke of labelling Tom Merry's study "The Green Man." He was now a green man himself, and he required a great deal more cleaning than the study door did.

"Oh!" he gasped. "You rotters! Look at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll go to Railton like this!" shrieked Racke.

"Do!" said Tom. "I'll come with you, and we'll tell him about it together, shall we?"

"Don't be a fool, Racke!" said Crooke hastily.

"What do you think Railton would say about your rag on Study No. 10? Don't be an ass!"

"Bai Jove!" An eyeglass gleamed through the crowd at the door. "What's goin' on heah, you fellows? You seem to be laughin' like anythin'. Gweat Scott! What's that?"

Arthur Augustus jumped at the sight of the green man in Study No. 7.

"The Green Man of St. Jim's!" said Monty Lowther. "Now on view—no charge!"

"Oh cwumbs! Who is it?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Is that Wacke? Bai Jove, what have you painted yourself like that for, Wacke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a vevy extwaordinawy ideah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in astonishment. "You are in a feahful state, Wacke! Whatevah did you do it for?"

"You fool!"

"Weally, Wacke—"

"Now we want something to rub down our study door," said Tom. "Those cushions will do."

"Leave my cushions alone!" yelled Racke. "You're not going to muck up my cushions!"

"Leave my study door alone, my pippin! Come on, you fellows, let's get out of this. This study smells too painty for me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three left Racke's study, each of them carrying one of Aubrey's expensive cushions. With those cushions they started rubbing the painted inscription off the door of Study No. 10.

Racke, who was loaded with money, gave quite a lot for his study furnishings. Those cushions had cost a good deal. They were not worth very much by the time Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had finished rubbing down the door of Study No. 10. That was Aubrey's look-out! He had painted the door, and it had to be rubbed clean.

But Racke was not bothering about his cushions, expensive as they were. Racke headed for a bath-room.

On second thoughts he decided not to go to the Housemaster. A visit from a green man would certainly have caused a sensation in Railton's study, and Railton would undoubtedly have taken the matter up at once. But as that would have led him to Aubrey's rag on Study No. 10, Aubrey sagely decided to leave Railton out of it. Aubrey had, in fact, asked for this, and now that he had got it he had to make the best of it.

The Terrible Three had cleaned down their study door long before Aubrey had got rid of half the paint.

In a steaming atmosphere of hot water and soap, Aubrey rubbed and scrubbed and scraped, and scraped and rubbed and scrubbed, till he was too tired and breathless to rub and scrub and scrape any more. And when Aubrey was seen again he was still greenish about the ears and the neck.

TRIMBLE, TOO!

"GOING out?"

"Yes."

"Well, look here—"

"You look here, Trimble," said Tom Merry. "I don't want to kick you, but keep out of reach of my boot! That's a tip!"

Baggy Trimble backed away a little. Why the fat Baggy had intercepted them in the quad, the Terrible Three did not know; but they knew that they did not want Baggy in the offing.

For two or three days now the chums of the Shell had had a rather unpleasant time, owing to Baggy's tattling. That unfortunate encounter with Baggy at the gate of the Green Man had caused no end of trouble.

Most of the fellows knew perfectly well how the matter stood, especially as Mr. Railton had inquired into the matter and given judgment.

But there were a good many who judged that there was no smoke without fire, and there were malicious fellows who jumped at this chance, and made the very most of it.

Racke, after having been transformed into a green man himself, refrained from further action, but his tongue was very busy. His friends backed him up in keeping the topic alive.

But, worst of all, and most serious of all, was the attitude of Mr. Silverson in the matter.

Silverson was a beak, and was known to be related distantly to Tom Merry. And Silverson had ordered Fourth Form fellows out of Tom Merry's study, and forbidden them to visit that study again.

If the master of the Fourth took the view that Tom Merry was a fellow with whom the boys of his Form ought not to associate, plenty of fellows could not help thinking that there must be something in it.

True, Silverson was only a temporary beak; nobody knew anything about him at St. Jim's, and he was not liked in his Form. Still, he was a beak.

The whole thing was due to the fat and fat-headed Baggy. Silverson had fastened on this like a dog on a bone, but it was Baggy's tattling that had given him something to fasten upon.

So the Terrible Three glared at Baggy as he intercepted them on their way to the gates a day or two after the row in Racke's study.

"But look here, you know," persisted Baggy,

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keeping at a safe distance from a boot, "if you're going down to the Green Man—"

"What?" howled the Terrible Three.

Baggy favoured them with a fat wink.

"I jolly well know!" he said. "Look here, I don't think you ought to be shirty because I let it out to Silverson. I never meant to give you away, and you jolly well know it. Besides, you got off all right. You stuffed Railton a treat!"

"Boot him!" said Louther.

It was useless to explain to Baggy that they hadn't "stuffed" Railton. Baggy was not to be taken in so easily as all that.

"Oh, don't play the goat!" said Baggy. "I'm not down on you, am I? Some of the fellows are turning up their noses at you, and you can't be surprised at it—I mean, look how you've always made out that you were down on Racke for the same game. Fellows don't like humbug."

"I'm going to boot him across the quad!" said Manners.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom. "The fat chump can't help being a fool. Fools are born, not made."

And the Shell fellows walked round Baggy and went on towards the gates. Baggy ambled after them.

"I say, it's rather particular," he said. "I wish you'd listen to a fellow. I keep on telling you that I'm not down on you. I like a spot of sport myself at times. Look here, I'll come!"

"You'll come?" repeated Tom, staring at him.

"Why not?" said Baggy breezily. "I'm a bit of a goer, too."

"What do you mean, you fat ass? We're going to walk to Wayland," said Tom Merry.

"He, he!" chortled Baggy. "Tell Railton that if he asks you. Tell Silverson. There he is, standing at the gate. He's got an eye on you."

Baggy evidently had no doubt that the three "bad hats" were going to the Green Man, and Baggy was prepared to join up for a festive time.

"No good telling me!" grinned Baggy. "I know your game! And look here, I'll give any of you fifty in a hundred—"

"Fifty in a hundred!" repeated Tom.

"I can play billiards," said Baggy. "Dab at it. You put ten bob on the game, and I'll give you fifty. I can't say fairer than that."

The Terrible Three looked at Baggy. He gave them another wink. Upon which, they grasped him together and sat him down in the quad with a heavy bump.

"Ow!" roared Baggy.

Then the Shell fellows walked on to the gates. Mr. Silverson was standing near the gates, talking to old Taggles at the door of his lodge.

He did not seem to observe Tom Merry & Co., but they were well aware that the corner of his eye was on them as they came along.

Possibly, like Trimble, he suspected that the three were going on the "razzle." What Baggy believed from fatheadedness, James Silverson believed from malice. He wanted it to be true, and convinced himself that it was true, the wish being father to the thought.

James, who was interested in such matters as "Jackey Jinks" and the five o'clock at Welsham, had no doubt that his schoolboy relative was also interested in such things. James, like many people, did not believe in others being better than himself.

The three juniors passed him, and, as they went out, Baggy Trimble came trotting on behind. Baggy was breathless, and he was peeved. He did not like being bumped down in

the quad just for offering to join up with a sportive party going on the "razzle."

"I say, Tom Merry!" he squealed, as he followed the three out of gates. "I say, look out!"

Tom glanced round.

"Look out for what, you fat chump?" he asked. "Kildare's in Rylcombe," said Trimble. "I saw him walk out with Darrell after class. If a prefect cops you, your number will be up! You won't be able to stuff Railton again if a prefect cops you."

"Collar him!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Stick him in the ditch!" exclaimed Manners.

"Oh jiminy!"

Baggy Trimble bolted back into the gateway. The Terrible Three, frowning, walked on their way; and, having turned their backs, missed the view of a collision at the gates.

Mr. Silverson was stepping out as Baggy rushed headlong in. Baggy banged headlong on his Form-master's waistcoat.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Silverson, staggering back.

"Oooh!" spluttered Baggy.

"You senseless young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson, grabbing Baggy by the collar. "How dare you rush into me like that!"

"Ow! Leggo! They're after me!" gasped Baggy. "I—I say, I ain't going to be stuck in the ditch! I say—"

Mr. Silverson glanced out of the gates. He had a view of three backs fading away down the lane. Nobody, evidently was after Baggy.

"You stupid boy!" said Silverson. He released Baggy's collar. "Do you know where those Shell boys are going, Trimble?"

"Oh!" gasped Baggy. "No! I—I don't think they're going to the Green Man, sir! Oh! No!"

Mr. Silverson looked at him and smiled. Baggy evidently did think so—and Mr. Silverson had no doubt that he was right.

"You may go, Trimble," he said; and Baggy went, much relieved. He had expected lines, at least, for crashing into his Form-master.

Mr. Silverson stepped out of the gateway, and walked in the direction taken by the Terrible Three.

CAUGHT!

"DON'T look round!" said Monty Lowther. "Eh?"

"The Worm's wriggling after us."

"Oh!"

Tom Merry and Manners did not look back. Both of them frowned. Monty Lowther was smiling.

"I've just spotted him!" he murmured. "Think it's a coincidence that the Worm started just after we did, and came the same way?"

"Rot!" grunted Manners. "Spying!"

"He thinks there's something to spy on!" said Tom Merry, his eyes glinting. "By gum, I've a good mind to walk back and ask him what he's after!"

"Let's!" said Manners.

"Don't play the goat!" said Monty. "You can't cheek a beak! Silverson can walk down Rylcombe Lane if he likes!"

"The fool!" said Tom. "He fancies—"

"He may have caught something from Trimble as we came out," said Manners. "But he's got it fixed in his silly head, anyhow! He's a rogue—and all rogues are fools!"

"We'll make sure he's after us," said Monty, "and then—"

"Then tell him to mind his own business, and go and eat coke!" said Tom.

"You can't tell beads that, old man! Whenever Silverson drags us off to our respected Housemaster, we want to be in the right, not in the wrong!" said Lowther. "Much more amusing to take him for a walk."

Tom Merry laughed.

"All right, then!" he said.

"Follow your leader!" said Monty. He turned from the lane into a footpath in Wayland Wood, which bordered Rylcombe Lane for some distance.

His friends followed him. They had intended to walk over to Wayland—but they were quite prepared to delay that walk, or postpone it indefinitely to deal with the new master upon whom Monty had bestowed the nickname of the "Worm."

When they had followed the footpath for some distance, Monty Lowther dropped his handkerchief.

Stooping to pick it up, he glanced back under his arm and was rewarded by the sight of a figure far in the rear.

"Still on the track!" smiled Lowther.

He led onward, and by another footpath the juniors got back to Rylcombe Lane, and continued on towards the village.

A few minutes later Monty Lowther stumbled. That stumble enabled him to take another surreptitious backward glance.

Mr. Silverson, in the rear, was coming out of the wood into the lane.

"Dear man!" said Lowther.

"Still after us?" asked Manners.

"Yes! Clear enough now," said Monty. "If he was walking to Rylcombe he wouldn't wander

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round through the wood on the way. He's on our trail, my beloved 'carers—and now he's going to track us right up to the Green Man. We don't know he's after us, of course."

Tom and Manners chuckled.

"Well, what's the programme?" asked Tom. "I'd like to turn round and tell him what I think of him."

"Of course you would," agreed Monty, "and you'd like to get six from Railton for cheeking a beak! I wouldn't! Leave it to your Uncle Montague. See that bend in the lane just ahead of us?"

"Yes, ass!"

"When we get round it, Silverson won't see us! Then run like billy-o!"

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors walked on to the curve in the winding lane. When the turn hid them from the sharp eyes behind, they broke into a rapid run.

They were now quite near the village, on the outskirts of which stood that salubrious resort, the Green Man. They stopped rather breathless near the side-gate, where Baggy had so unluckily spotted them a few days ago. Near that gate stood a massive old beech-tree at the side of the lane.

"Quick!" breathed Lowther.

He scrambled up into the beech.

His chums followed him fast.

In a few moments they were out of sight in thick foliage. Parting a mass of leaves, Monty Lowther looked back along the lane. Silverson was not yet in sight. That rapid run had dropped him for the time.

"Well——" began Tom.

"We stay here for a bit," drawled Lowther.

"We can sit in this tree like our remote ancestors! It will be amusing to watch Silverson when he comes up. Where do you think he'll fancy we've disappeared to?"

There was a chuckle in the beech. It was obvious what Silverson would think when he found that the three juniors had suddenly vanished from the lane in the close proximity of the Green Man!

They waited, grinning.

A minute later, Silverson appeared round the bend in the lane. They saw him break into a rapid walk, almost a run, as he saw that the lane ahead of him was vacant.

In a few moments he was passing under the wide-spreading branches of the beech; and, peering through the thick branches, they saw him stop at the side-gate of the Green Man.

He stared over that gate. Then he stared up the lane into the village street. Then he stared across the lane into a meadow on the other side. In no direction did he glimpse any sign of the three Shell fellows.

There was only one possible conclusion that Mr. Silverson could draw—the one he wanted to draw! The three young scamps had gone in at that gate, and were now within the forbidden precincts of the Green Man! What else was he to think?

Certainly he never thought of looking upward for them!

He stood at the gate, looking over it. The three juniors, through the interstices of the foliage, watched his face—and saw the look of malicious satisfaction that overspread it. Then they heard a mutter:

"Caught!"

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Mr. Silverson stood at the gate of the Green Man, convinced that the Form master never thought of it.

Monty Lowther closed an eye at his chums, and Tom and Manners with difficulty repressed a chuckle, which would have reached Silverson's ears and put him wise. Silent, and with great entertainment, they watched James Silverson, wondering what his next step would be.

THREE IN A TREE.

JAMES SILVERSON stood for some minutes looking over that gate. Then, perhaps, it occurred to him that he might be spotted by the young rascals out of bounds in the precincts of the Green Man, for the juniors saw him back away from the gate, and cross the lane to the other side.

On that side was a meadow, bordered by willows. Mr. Silverson disappeared through the willows.

But he was not seen in the meadow beyond. He had stayed among the willows!

There he was out of sight, but could easily keep watch on the gate of the Green Man. Evidently he had posted himself to watch.

"I wonder how long he's going to keep that up!" murmured Manners.

"That's an easy one," answered Monty Lowther. "It's lock-up in an hour. Bad boys out of bounds will have to show up in less than



ed that Tom Merry & Co. had gone inside. The Fourth looking up in the tree for them!

that to get back to the school before old Taggles locks 'em out! He's going to wait till we come out of that gate."

"The silly owl!" grunted Tom.

"And we're going to wait here!" continued Lowther. "Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth are in the village, and they have to come back this way. We're going to drop down in the presence of Sixth Form prefects—jolly good witnesses that we never went where Silverson fancies we are at this blessed minute. Think his face will be worth watching when we plump down like ripe apples?"

"Let's wait," agreed Tom. "We shan't get to Wayland to-day."

"Never mind Wayland."

"I was going to get some new films for my camera," said Manners.

"Blow your camera!"

"Fathead!"

"We can keep up this game as long as Silverson does!" said Monty. "His face will be worth a guinea a box when we drop down!"

And the juniors, making themselves comfortable in forked branches in the big beech, waited. They saw nothing more of James Silverson as they waited. He remained out of sight in the willows, doubtless with a sharp eye on the gate

across the lane. James could be patient! So could Tom Merry & Co. They all waited.

It was nearly half an hour later that two athletic figures appeared from the village street. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and Darrell of the Sixth were coming back towards the school.

As they appeared, there was a rustling in the willows, and Mr. Silverson reappeared in view.

The Terrible Three exchanged a joyous grin.

They were waiting for the two prefects to show up to have irrefragable witnesses that they had not been inside the Green Man. James, it seemed, liked the idea of having witnesses, too.

It was quite an astute move on James' part. As master of the Fourth, he had no concern with Shell fellows; and he certainly did not want Mr. Railton to guess that he was specially on Tom Merry's track for personal reasons. But it was the duty of Sixth Form prefects to take up such a matter. It was quite astute on James' part to have them caught by Sixth Form prefects instead of by himself.

He stood near the willows for the two Sixth Form men to come up. They glanced at him as they came, and capped him politely.

"Stay a moment, please!" said Mr. Silverson. "I am glad to see you here, Kildare; this is a matter that you had better take in hand. Some School House boys are out of bounds in that public-house."

Kildare and Darrell came to an immediate halt.

"The young sweeps!" said the St. Jim's captain. "But are you sure, sir?"

"Quite!" said Mr. Silverson.

"You actually saw them?" asked Darrell.

James paused for an imperceptible moment.

Unless he had seen the young sweeps go in, it was difficult to explain how he knew they were there. Certainly he did not feel disposed to explain that he had surreptitiously followed three fellows from the school, spying on them.

"Yes, I happened to see them as I came up the lane," he explained. "Three juniors in St. Jim's caps. They went in at that gate."

The three in the tree looked at one another.

James, absolutely certain that the three were, at that very moment, inside the Green Man, felt it quite safe to risk that statement. But that statement was, of course, utterly untrue, as he certainly had not seen the three enter at that gate—as they had not entered at all.

"Racke, I suppose," grunted Kildare. "He's been caught here before."

"No, not Racke," said Mr. Silverson. "Three of Mr. Linton's boys—their names, I think, are Merry, Manners, and Lowther."

"What!" exclaimed Kildare and Darrell together.

"I am not very well acquainted with Mr. Linton's boys, but those, I think, are their names," said Mr. Silverson.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Darrell.

"Well, I'm not so sure," said Kildare slowly.

"There's been talk about those three coming to this den—though Railton was satisfied about it. Still, it's rather a surprise."

"Can't be those three," said Darrell. "Perhaps you made a mistake, sir, seeing them from a distance."

"I made no mistake!" said Mr. Silverson icily. "The three boys who went into that public-house under my eyes were Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of Mr. Linton's Form."

As these boys are not in my Form, I leave the matter in your hands, as prefects."

The two prefects looked over the gate. They could see up the path by the side door of the Green Man. It was shut. But if the three young rascals were there, it must soon open to let them out, if they were going to get back in time for lock-up and calling-over.

"We can't go into that putrid den after them," said Kildare. "I suppose we'd better wait and nail them as they come out."

"Nothing else to be done, I suppose," grunted Darrell. "But I can't believe it of those three—they're decent kids enough."

"If Mr. Silverson saw them go in, that settles it!" said Kildare. "You are quite sure there's no mistake, sir?"

"I am perfectly certain of that," said Mr. Silverson, "and I leave the matter in your hands."

"Very well, sir; we will wait here," said Kildare. "We shall not have to wait long—they have to get back for calling-over."

"I'll bet you," said Darrell, "that it won't turn out to be that three! There's some mistake—Tom Merry's as decent a kid as any at St. Jim's."

"Thank you, Darrell!" said an unexpected voice.

Kildare, Darrell, and James Silverson all jumped together as if electrified. That unexpected voice was quite near at hand, and it came from above.

"Wha-a-t!" stuttered Kildare. "Who—"

"What the dickens!" exclaimed Darrell.

James Silverson stared round like a man in a dream.

For a moment that voice from the upper regions was a bewildering mystery. But the mystery was soon explained by a slithering sound in the branches of the beech, and by three St. Jim's juniors dropping, one after another, into the lane, within six feet of the astounded group. James Silverson fairly staggered.

He could hardly believe his eyes when Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stood before him—only too evidently not inside the Green Man!

"Tut-tut—Tom Merry!" stuttered Kildare.

"They were up that tree!" gasped Darrell.

James could only stare.

"You young rascals!" exclaimed Kildare angrily. "What's the meaning of this? What the deuce were you doing up that tree?"

"Pulling Mr. Silverson's leg!" said Monty Lowther blandly.

"What!"

"Waiting to see how long he'd watch that gate!" explained Monty. "He hasn't mentioned that he'd been on the watch for half an hour before you blew up. And he seems to have forgotten that he followed us from the school, watching us. But he's told you that he saw us go in at that gate!"

"Wonderful eyesight!" said Manners.

"You must try again, Mr. Silverson," said Tom Merry, looking straight in the dismayed and enraged face of his enemy.

Kildare and Darrell stared at the three juniors and at Mr. Silverson.

That Silverson had not, as he stated, seen the juniors go into the Green Man was obvious, as they were yards outside the gate. The Worm was fairly caught out!

"I fancied there was some mistake," said Darrell dryly.

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"But I don't understand!" exclaimed Kildare. "Mr. Silverson, you told us that you actually saw those juniors enter that public-house. You said twice that you were certain that there was no mistake. I can't understand this."

James gasped for breath.

He was so utterly amazed, and so utterly taken aback by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the Terrible Three—outside the Green Man!—that it was difficult for him to recover from the shock.

For some moments he could only gape; but he tried to pull himself together.

"I—I certainly thought—" he stammered.

"You thought you saw three fellows go in at that gate who never went in at that gate at all?" asked Darrell.

"I—I—I was—was—mistaken, as—as it now appears!" stammered Mr. Silverson. "I—I certainly thought—"

"That's right," assented Lowther. "He thought so. He watched us all the way here, and we dodged him for a couple of minutes while we got into the tree. You see, we were pulling his leg all the time."

"If you dare to be insolent—" breathed Mr. Silverson.

"You can report us to our Housemaster, if you like, Mr. Silverson," said Tom Merry contemptuously. "I should like to hear what Mr. Railton would say of a master shadowing fellows who are not in his Form. We are quite ready to go to our Housemaster."

"Quite!" said Manners.

"That will do," said Kildare hastily. "You kids had better cut off."

"If Mr. Silverson is quite satisfied that we're not, at the present moment, inside that pub yonder—" said Monty Lowther.

Kildare laughed.

"Cut off, you young sweep!" he said.

And the Terrible Three walked up the lane to the school, leaving Mr. Silverson standing with a crimson face of discomfort under the stares of the two prefects.

Kildare and Darrell looked at him, exchanged glances, and then, without another word, walked on after the juniors. Mr. Silverson was left alone, with an expression on his face that, as Monty Lowther had predicted, was worth at least a guinea a box!

GUSSY REFUSES!

"I WEFUSE!"

"What?"

"I twust I make my meanin' cleah, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

There was rather a sensation in the St. Jim's quad.

No fellow at St. Jim's had ever been heard to speak to a master like that before. Arthur Augustus was making history.

Mr. Silverson stared at the swell of St. Jim's. He glared at him.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked uneasy. Silverson, after all, was their beak. A fellow could not talk to a beak like this.

Arthur Augustus, apparently, supposed that he could.

Anyhow, he did!

There were plenty of fellows in the old quad just then. It was near lock-up, and fellows were coming in. Fifty fellows, at least, heard Arthur

Augustus' clear, distinct voice as he addressed the new master of the Fourth.

Silverson had just come in at the gates—not in a good temper.

His experience at the Green Man had not made him happy. The three in the tree had exasperated the Worm to the very limit. And the most irritating part of the affair was that he could do nothing—absolutely nothing!

The Terrible Three were as innocent as doves in the matter. They had not gone out of bounds. They had climbed a tree in Rylcombe Lane—merely that, and nothing more.

Certainly they had pulled Silverson's leg, and told him so. But James could say nothing about that without admitting that he had shadowed and spied on them—a circumstance upon which he did not want to dwell, apart from that awkward statement he had made to the two prefects about seeing them go in at the gate they had never entered.

So James Silverson walked into the quad in a boiling state, and the first thing that met his eyes was a group of seven juniors—The Terrible Three and Study No. 6—all laughing!

James did not need telling that the Shell fellows were relating that episode of three in a tree at the Green Man. He could guess that one.

Several other juniors stood round the group, listening in and grinning. Quite a lot of fellows seemed to be enjoying life when James blew in.

Mr. Silverson strode up to the group with a knitted brow and a glinting eye.

There was, at all events, one thing that he could do—he could not touch the Shell fellows, but he could give orders to boys in his own Form.

He could carry on the good work of making Tom Merry an object of doubt and suspicion by forbidding boys of his Form to associate with a fellow whom he chose to regard as a bad character. That, at least, he could do, and that he was going to do.

He came up grimly and rapped out an order to the Fourth Form juniors. He made his meaning clear to at least two score of hearers.

"Boys of my Form are forbidden to associate with Merry," said Mr. Silverson. "Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, I have told you this before. I tell you now for the last time. If I find you in the company of Merry of the Shell again you will be severely punished. Leave him this instant!"

A brief hush followed those words.

Then Arthur Augustus answered.

He faced Mr. Silverson, fixed his eyeglass on that gentleman's face, and answered with calm dignity that he refused.

Silverson's words had caused rather a sensation. Gussy's caused a much greater one. Fellows caught their breath at hearing the swell of St. Jim's talk to his Form-master in that style.

Mr. Silverson stood as if dumbfounded, glaring at Arthur Augustus. He seemed hardly able to believe his ears.

"Gussy, old man—" murmured Blake uneasily.

"It's all wight, Blake," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Mr. Silvahson has no wight to give such an ordah, and I am bound to point out to him that I shall disweward it with uttah contempt."

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Monty Lowther. "Good old Gussy!" murmured Cardew. "Ajax defyin' the jolly old lightnin' wasn't in it with Gussy!"

"He's right," said Levison.

"Oh, quite! But I fancy there's stormy weather comin'."

"D'Arcy"—Mr. Silverson found his voice—"I shall punish you with the greatest severity for this impertinence."

"I twust," said Arthur Augustus, "that I should nevah be guilty of impertinence. I weward it as vewy bad form. It is your own fault, sir, if a fellow is dwiven to twear you without wespsect."

"What?" roared Mr. Silverson.

"Tom Mewwy is a fellow wespsected by the whole House and the whole school," said Arthur Augustus, while fifty fellows gazed at him. "I weward it as an honah to share the fwiefndship of Tom Mewwy."

"Hear, hear!" gasped Monty Lowther.

"Gussy—" breathed Tom.

"I shall certainly decline to dwop Tom Mewwy's acquaintance," went on Arthur Augustus. "I shall continue to associate with Tom Mewwy, pwecisely the same as befoah, and I twust that my fwiefnds will do the same. I shall not take the slightest notice of your ordah, Mr. Silvahson."

"Go into the House at once, D'Arcy!" Silverson's voice trembled with rage. "Go to my study! I shall cane you! Go instantly!"

Arthur Augustus turned and walked off towards the House. Mr. Silverson followed in his track, his hard-set lips showing only too clearly what awaited the swell of St. Jim's in his study. The whole crowd of juniors followed Blake & Co. in great dismay.

"Gussy's for it now!" muttered Blake.

"That cur!" breathed Tom.

"That rotter!" muttered Manners.

"That worm!" said Monty Lowther.

"He's our beak," said Herries. "Blow him, he's our beak! Gussy will get his skin taken off for talking to him like that!"

Tom Merry clenched his hands. It was like Gussy to stand up for a friend, but he had to take the consequences, and Tom could not help him.

But the thought of Arthur Augustus bending under a lashing cane in Silverson's study was dismaying and enraging.

Only Arthur Augustus seemed unperturbed.

He walked into the House with his head erect, and his noble nose in the air. The whole crowd followed in.

"D'Arcy," rapped Mr. Silverson, "I said my study. Go at once!"

Arthur Augustus stopped at the door of Mr. Railton's study.

He did not heed his Form-master. He tapped at the door of Railton's study, and then turned the door-handle.

Mr. Silverson made a grab at him. There was a buzz in the crowd of juniors behind. Gussy had been ordered into his Form-master's study. He was going to his Housemaster.

And, calmly eluding Mr. Silverson's angry grab at his shoulder, he walked into Mr. Railton's study; and James Silverson, breathing rage, stopped at the doorway.

CLIMBING DOWN!

MR. RAILTON rose to his feet. He was busy on a pile of Greek papers for the "Sixth." But Greek papers were dismissed from his mind in his astonishment at this invasion of his study.

He stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marching in with head erect and lofty indignation in his aristocratic visage. He glanced at Mr. Silverson, who was trying hard to compose his features in the doorway and conceal the bitter rage that almost overmastered him. His glance fell on the excited, eager mob of School House juniors behind the master of the Fourth.

"D'Arcy, what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Why have you come here? Why have all these boys come here?"

"I am sorry to intewwupt you, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "But Mr. Silverson has given me an ordah that I cannot possibly obey, and I have no choice but to wefere the mattah to you, sir, as my Housemastah."

There was a suppressed giggle in the passage.

The matter was serious—awfully serious—but the swell of St. Jim's on the high horse was too much for the gravity of his friends.

"Doesn't he talk like a giddy picture-book?" murmured Cardew. "Gents, it dawns on me that Silverson isn't goin' to get the best of this."

"D'Arcy!" Mr. Railton's voice resembled the rumble of thunder. "Have you the audacity to come here and tell me that you have ventured to disobey an order of your Form-master?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Railton blankly.

"If Mr. Silverson will wepeat his ordah in your pwesence, sir, and you diwect me to obey it, I shall do so immediately," said Arthur Augustus.

"I scarcely understand this," said the School House master. "You will certainly obey any order given you by Mr. Silverson, D'Arcy, or the consequences will be very serious for you."

"Will you heah the ordah, sir?"

"That is not necessary. Leave my study at once and carry out your Form-master's instructions!" snapped Mr. Railton.

"I wequest you, sir, to heah Mr. Silverson wepeat his ordah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I have a wight, as a membah of this House, to appeal to my Housemastah. If you wefuse to heah me I shall go to my headmastah, but I am bound to come to you first, sir."

"If you will order that boy of my Form to leave your study, sir—" said Mr. Silverson, struggling to suppress his rage and speak calmly.

"I wefuse to leave this study until my Housemastah has judged between us!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wequest you to wepeat your ordah in his pwesence if you dare to do so."

"D'Arcy!" gasped Mr. Railton.

There was a moment's pause.

"Kindly repeat your order to this boy in my presence, Mr. Silverson," said the Housemaster at last.

James breathed hard.

"It is merely a matter of discipline in my Form, sir, and there is no occasion for wasting your time—"

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Silverson," said the Housemaster quietly. "If you will kindly repeat your order—"

"This boy has no right to come here, sir. He has entered your study in direct defiance of my command."

Mr. Railton's lips set.

"D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, sir?"

"Repeat to me the order Mr. Silverson has given you."

"He has ordahed me, and my fwiends as well, not to associate with Tom Mewwy, sir!" said

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Arthur Augustus. "I have wefused to wegard that ordah, and I wely upon you, sir, to back me up—I mean, to uphold me."

James Silverson looked at Arthur Augustus as if he could have bitten him. The expression that was gathering on the Housemaster's face told what he thought of that precious order.

"This is extraordinary!" said Mr. Railton. "I must ask you, Mr. Silverson, to acquaint me at once with your reason for giving such an order to boys of the Fourth Form."

"I am not satisfied with Merry's character, sir, as a fit associate for boys of my Form," said Mr. Silverson. "I regard him as being under suspicion of bad conduct."

"You are referring, I presume, to the episode at the Green Man a few days ago?" said Mr. Railton quietly. "You were present, Mr. Silverson, when that matter came before me for judgment. Merry and his friends were adjudged perfectly innocent in that matter. His Form-master was satisfied. I was satisfied. Am I to understand that you were not satisfied?"

"You are, sir," muttered James.

"Indeed! D'Arcy, leave my study, but remain in the passage. Mr. Silverson, please step in. D'Arcy, close the door."

Mr. Silverson stepped in; D'Arcy stepped out, and the door was closed. The new master stood with compressed lips. Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon him with a grim expression.

"Mr. Silverson," he said, "you have given an order to your Form in disregard and defiance of my decision in Merry's favour."

"The Fourth Form is under my authority, sir," muttered Silverson.

"Quite so," said Mr. Railton; "and if you desire it to remain so you will immediately rescind the order you have given. I can only conclude that you have some personal prejudice or dislike directed towards Tom Merry."

"Nothing of the kind! I—"

"You will rescind that order, sir, immediately the study door is opened, or I shall proceed at once to Dr. Holmes and inform him that in my opinion you are not a fit man to take charge of a Form in this school," said Mr. Railton coldly. "You may take your choice, Mr. Silverson."

James stood quite silent for a moment or two. His feelings were deep.

Certainly he would never have given that order had he guessed, had he even dreamed, that Arthur Augustus would take the matter before his Housemaster.

He was not long in making his choice. He had to toe the line or leave St. Jim's. That was his choice. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but the Worm had to get it down—and climb down!

"If, sir, in your judgment, I have made a mistake—" he stammered at last.

"There is no doubt on that point."

"I—I—I shall, of course, submit myself to your judgment." Silverson could hardly get the words out, but he got them out. "I am new here. I may be in error. I will rescind the order if—I for you, as Housemaster, require me to do so—"

"I have said so."

"Very well!" James almost choked. "I—I will—will speak to—to D'Arcy at—at once."

"Thank you, Mr. Silverson," said the Housemaster politely.

He opened the study door.

"D'Arcy!"

(Continued on page 36.)

HUNGRY AND ALMOST FOODLESS, THE REBELS OF THE BACKWOODS SCHOOL ARE
IN DESPERATE STRAITS DURING—

THE SIEGE AT CEDAR CREEK!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

STILL HOLDING OUT.

“MISS MEADOWS!”

“By gum!”

There was a buzz of excited voices in the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek. Miss Meadows, the Canadian schoolmistress, had dismounted from her pony at the gates, and, with the rein over her arm, she walked towards the schoolhouse.

Frank Richards & Co. crowded at the windows. Miss Meadows' face was very grave. It was evident that she knew of the peculiar state of affairs ruling at Cedar Creek.

Frank Richards glanced rather dubiously at his chums—Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc.

The lumber school was “on strike” as a protest against the dismissal of Miss Meadows, but it was very doubtful whether the Canadian girl would approve of her cause being championed in that way. In fact, it was pretty certain that she would not. Certainly her expression indicated as much.

“I say, this is too bad!” said Bob Lawless, with a comical expression of dismay. “We’re standing up for Miss Meadows, and she looks as if she’s come to rag us!”

“I guess it’s going to be a jaw!” remarked Chunky Todgers.

Miss Meadows caught sight of Frank Richards & Co. at the window nearest the barricaded door of the schoolhouse, and she stopped under the window. The schoolboys greeted her politely.

“Good-morning, Miss Meadows!”

“So glad to see you again, ma’am!”

“Very kind of you to give us a look-in, Miss Meadows!”

Apparently the schoolboys of Cedar Creek were trying the efficacy of the “soft answer” in turning away wrath. But the schoolmistress' face did not relax. She eyed the rebels of Cedar Creek sternly.

“Richards!”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“What does all this mean?”

“Ahem!”

“It appears that the whole school is in revolt!” exclaimed Miss Meadows. “Mr. Gunten, the chairman of the board of trustees, has been driven away—”

“Ahem!”

“Mr. Peckover, the new headmaster appointed by the board, has been turned out and refused admittance to the school.”

“Ahem!”

“And all this has been done in my name, Mr. Gunten tells me!” exclaimed Miss Meadows.

“Ahem!”

“Richards, Lawless, I hope this will cease at once!” said the Canadian schoolmistress.

“The—fact is, ma’am—” began Frank Richards. “The fact is, we’re on strike at Cedar Creek.”

“Absurd!”

“It’s on your account, ma’am.”

“That is very wrong of you.”

“Oh!”

“The fact is, we mean business!” said Bob Lawless resolutely. “Old man Gunten had no right to dismiss our schoolmistress to put in a friend of his own, especially a pesky coyote like that galoot Peckover!”

Miss Meadows coloured a little. Her sudden and unjust dismissal from her post at Cedar Creek had been a bitter blow to the schoolmistress.

“My dismissal, Lawless, is my affair, not yours,” she said.

“Ours, too, ma’am,” said Bob. “We don’t want to lose you, you know. And it wasn’t fair play. And we can stand up for fair play at Cedar Creek.”

“Hear, hear!”

“We won’t have the new man Peckover at any price,” said Bob quietly. “We won’t let old man Gunten run the school on his own. We’re keeping up the strike till our schoolmistress comes back. If you’ve come now to take your place here as headmistress, Miss Meadows, you’ve only to say the word, and the strike’s over this minute.”

“I—I have not. It is not that,” said Miss Meadows hastily. “But Mr. Gunten called on me and asked me to use my influence to restore order here.”

“Cheeky old rascal!” exclaimed Frank Richards indignantly.

“Richards!”

“Well, so he is, ma’am! He has no right to ask you to interfere after dismissing you. It’s like his nerve!”

“I should jolly well think so!” exclaimed Beauclerc warmly. “Let his new headmaster restore order if he can!”

“I guess he can’t work the oracle!” grinned Eben Hacke.

“No takee any!” remarked Yen Chin.

“I am very grateful to you for the interest you appear to take in my affairs,” said Miss Meadows. “But I cannot allow this. You must not act lawlessly in my name.”

“But we’re not, ma’am,” said Frank Richards. “We’re acting in our own name. We won’t allow our schoolmistress to be sent away. That’s the point.”

“But this state of affairs cannot continue,” said Miss Meadows. “Please cease these proceedings at once and admit Mr. Peckover to authority here.”

“Do you tell us as our schoolmistress, ma’am?” asked Frank.

“I cannot do that as I am no longer your schoolmistress, Richards.”

“Then we’re not bound to obey you, ma’am; and it can’t be done. But there’s an easy way of settling the matter. Tell Mr. Gunten that if you come back as headmistress of Cedar Creek order will be restored at once, and there won’t be any more trouble.”

Miss Meadows smiled slightly.

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"I cannot give Mr. Gunten that message, Richards."

"Very well, ma'am—the strike goes on."

"But you are laying up for yourselves severe punishment!" said the schoolmistress.

"I guess not!" said Bob confidently. "We've been here some days now, and we've got the best of it so far. Old man Gunten put the sheriff on to us, but the sheriff didn't cut any ice with us, ma'am. Then the old fox—"

"Lawless!"

"I mean, the old galoot brought the Red Dog gang along from Thompson, and they tried it on," said Bob. "Fancy that for a school trustee! They tried to smoke us out like badgers; but the cowboys came along from my father's ranch, and the Red Dog gang were glad to light out. I guess they won't come back, either. Now old man Gunten is at the end of his tether, and he's asked you to chip in. Like his cheek!"

"I guess it shows he's weakening," remarked Chunky Todgers. "He's afraid of the authorities hearing what's on here, and inquiring into the matter. He wouldn't stay on the board of trustees long if they knew about his setting the Red Dog crowd on us."

"I guess not," said Bob.

"But—but—" said Miss Meadows. "Your parents—"

"There's the rub," said Bob. "We started here twenty strong, but some of the chaps' fathers have humped along and called off some of us. But there's still a dozen here, and we'll hold Cedar Creek against all comers."

"Your father, Lawless—"

"My popper won't interfere, Miss Meadows. Old man Gunten started the trouble, and he's leaving it to old man Gunten to end it."

"Then you will not cease this?" asked Miss Meadows.

"Can't be done, ma'am, till old man Gunten sees reason."

"Then I have wasted my time coming here," said Miss Meadows.

"Sorry, ma'am!" said Frank Richards respectfully. "But we feel that we're in the right, and we're bound to hold out."

Miss Meadows said no more. With a clouded face she turned away and mounted her pony, and rode out of the gates of Cedar Creek.

CHUNKY IS TOO HUNGRY.

FRANK RICHARDS wrinkled his brows a little as he looked after the graceful form of the Canadian schoolmistress disappearing on the Thompson trail.

"All serene, Franky!" said Bob Lawless. "It was a thundering cheek of old Gunten to ask Miss Meadows to chip in after sacking her for nothing. I wonder she consented."

"That old galoot's mean enough for anything," said Chunky Todgers. "We're not giving in!"

"It shows he's at the end of his tether," said Beauclerc. "He simply must come round in the long run. He can't touch us here."

"And the authorities will be down on him sooner or later," said Hacke. "This can't go on much longer without a lot of talk."

"But when the authorities get wind of it they may be down on us instead of on old man

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Gunten," remarked Frank Richards, with a smile.

"Well, let 'em! If they send a superintendent along, and he cuts up rusty, we'll give him what we gave old Peckover."

"Hear, hear!"

"Dinner-time!" remarked Chunky Todgers, and he led the way to the dining-room.

The rebels of Cedar Creek were cheery enough as they assembled for dinner. They had had an exciting time, but, so far, they had succeeded in holding the fort, and they did not doubt their ability to continue to do so.

For two or three days now the rebels had been left alone, Mr. Gunten perhaps hoping that they would get tired of the adventure, and disperse of their own accord. But they were not getting tired of it by any means.

Chunky Todgers, indeed, averred that striking was ever so much better than lessons, and really there was something to be said from that point of view. There was one cloud on the horizon, however.

As many of the Cedar Creek scholars took their midday meal at the school there was a good supply of provisions on hand, which had been very fortunate for the schoolboy rebels; but feeding the garrison all day long had made a very serious inroad upon the supply.

And Chunky Todgers, whose appetite was of gargantuan proportions, had made some terrific raids upon the supplies, till a severe application of Bob's trail-rope had warned him off.

The schoolboys turned out after dinner to take exercise in the playground. Doors and windows of the schoolhouse were still securely barred, but one window was left open for egress and ingress. A sentry was posted at the gate to give warning in case of the approach of the enemy, in which case the rebels were to retreat into their stronghold at once.

Chunky Todgers did not leave by the window, however. He waited till the rest of the garrison were out of doors, and then scudded into the kitchen where the provisions were kept. Chunky did not mean to "play it low down" on his comrades by any means; he really did not stop to think. All he thought of was that he was still hungry, and that there were some eatables within his reach.

That was enough for Chunky, and, throwing all other considerations to the winds, he proceeded to scoff the supplies in the larder.

Fortunately, Bob Lawless had his suspicions. Chunky was devouring stale bread, the last of the butter, and making huge inroads upon the final cheese, when Bob Lawless came back with a trail-rope in his hand. He did not stop to speak. The coiled rope descended on Chunky's fat person with a terrific swish, and Chunky jumped with a wild yell:

"Yah! Grooogh! Groooh!"

In the sudden shock the cheese had gone the wrong way, Chunky's mouth being a little too full.

Swish, swish!

"You greedy gopher!" roared Bob Lawless, as he laid on the trail-rope. "Take that, and that, and that!"

"Gerroogh!" spluttered Chunky. "Yoooch! Stoppit! I'm chook-chook-choking! Yaauuch!"

Swish, swish!

"Grooogh-hooh! Yoogh!"

Spluttering wildly, Chunky Todgers bolted for

his life, with Bob behind, still making rapid play with the rope.

Chunky went head-first out of the open window, and landed on his fat hands and knees, roaring.

"Hallo! What's the row?" called out Frank Richards.

"Scoffing the grub!" shouted Bob. "Collar him! I want to give him some more!"

He clambered out of the window, but Chunky was up before he could be collared and streaking across the playground.

"After him!"

"Rope him!" yelled Eben Hacke.

Chunky ran like a hare, in spite of the weight he had to carry, with all the garrison of the lumber school whooping in pursuit. The unfortunate glutton dodged round the outbuildings and the woodpile, and then round the school-house, with the chase close at his heels. At last he clambered on the roof of Mr. Slimmey's cabin, where he was allowed to rest, palpitating.

Bob Lawless shook a wrathful fist up at him.

"I—I say, Bob——" spluttered Chunky.

"You come down again, and I'll make an example of you!" roared Bob.

"I—I say——"

"Rats!"

And Chunky remained there, and it was not till dusk that he ventured back into the school-house, when the garrison were all indoors again. And that evening Chunky Todgers had no supper, as a warning to him, and his sufferings, as he watched the other fellows at supper, were so acute that he almost resolved to "light out" for home, at the risk of having to work on the farm while the school remained shut.

CAUGHT!

"SOMETHING'S got to be done," remarked Bob Lawless.

It was after supper, and most of the fellows were playing leapfrog by lamplight in the school-room.

Chunky Todgers sat on a form, with a lugubrious look that might have melted a heart of stone. Chunky was not feeling inclined to join in the game. He had eaten enough for only two or three that day, and consequently he was feeling famished. Missing supper was the last straw.

But his comrades were inexorable, and Chunky Todgers was in the depths of woe. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and could not be comforted—not that anybody wanted to comfort him.

Frank Richards & Co. were discussing the situation, which was their business as leaders; and Frank and Beauclerc agreed with Bob that something had to be done.

"I guess old man Gunten knows that the grub must give out, and very likely he's counting on that," went on Bob. "The fact is, we can't carry on without grub. I've got a good appetite myself."

"Same here!" said Frank, laughing.

"If Chunky gets at the grub again we'll boot him out!" said Bob decidedly. "But that won't undo what he's done already, the fat jay! But apart from Chunky spreading himself, it wouldn't have lasted much longer."

"Well, what's the programme?" asked Frank Richards.

"When a fortress is running out of provisions it has to be provisioned," said Bob oracularly.



"Look out, Cherub!" exclaimed Bob, as burly, shadowy figures loomed up through the trees.

"We've got some dust, anyway. The question is—how to spend it on grub, and get the grub here?"

Frank whistled.

"What's the answer to that question, old chap?" he asked.

"It's got to be did," said Bob. "Look here, we're free to come and go as we like. Suppose two of us clear off now it's dark, and try it on?"

"We couldn't go to Thompson," said Beauclerc. "Old man Gunten would very likely spot us, and we might be collared. He lives there."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"Thompson isn't the only town in the valley," he answered. "Of course, we shall have to hoof it, as our horses are not here now. We had to send them home to the ranch to be fed. But we can hoof it. A few miles won't hurt us. We can get down to Cedar Camp, buy the grub, and carry it back here before dawn."

"I don't see why not," said Frank Richards thoughtfully. "It's risky, but—well, something's got to be done, or we shall be starved out in the long run."

"That's the point."

"We three had better go."

"Nope," said Bob. "One of us will have to stay here in command. The Cherub will come with me, Franky, and you can stay here."

"All serene!" said Frank. "I—I suppose it's not likely that old man Gunten will be up to such a move."

"We've got to chance that, I guess."

Bob Lawless and Beauclerc proceeded to make their preparations for the expedition. There was a collection of cash, to be expended in the store at Cedar Camp, and then the chums dropped quietly from the window to the play-

ground. The night was fine and clear, with a myriad stars spangling the deep blue of the sky.

Frank Richards went with them to the gates. Outside the gates the rough trail to Thompson lay shadowy under the trees, and no sound was to be heard from the timber. Frank had had a lurking suspicion that a watch might be kept on the school. He could not quite believe that old man Gunten was taking the present state of affairs "lying down."

He looked up and down the trail suspiciously and listened; but there was no sign of danger.

"All O.K., Franky!" said Bob reassuringly. "We'll mosey off now, and you get back to the schoolhouse and keep watch for us to-night."

"Right-ho!" answered Frank.

Bob Lawless and Beauclerc disappeared into the shadows of the trail, Frank standing at the gates to watch them till the last glimpse of his friends was lost.

For a dozen yards or so the two schoolboys went along the trail towards Thompson, where they had to turn off to take a shorter cut through the forest in the direction of Cedar Camp. It was dark under the trees, and they slowed down where the trail forked, looking well about them.

A rustle in the thickets startled Bob Lawless, and he stopped suddenly. As he did so, there was a rush of feet.

"Look out, Cherub!" exclaimed Bob.

But there was little time to look out. Three burly, shadowy figures loomed up in the darkness under the trees, and the two schoolboys were seized by as many pairs of hands. They struggled fiercely with their half-seen assailants.

"I guess we've got this lot, anyway!" It was the hoarse, husky voice of Four Kings, the leader of the Red Dog gang. "Show a glim, Dick!"

Euchre Dick turned on a dark lantern. It revealed the two breathless schoolboys in the powerful grasp of Four Kings and Dave Dunn. There was no one else to be seen. Apparently, the three members of the Red Dog crowd were without their comrades.

"That kid Lawless!" grinned Four Kings. "I know you, my buck! And young Beauclerc, the remittance man's son! Well, you're roped in!"

"Let us go!" panted Bob.

Four Kings chuckled.

"I guess not!" he answered. "I reckon old man Gunten's paying us for this hyer job, and he'll be dancing when he sees we've got you, the ringleaders of the crowd! Any more of you out, hey?"

Bob gritted his teeth. The two schoolboys were helpless in the powerful hands of the ruffians, and Bob dreaded that Frank Richards, alone at the gates, might be caught defenceless.

"You hear me yaup?" growled Four Kings, shaking the rancher's son roughly. "Aire there any more of you out?"

Bob's reply was a yell of warning to Frank Richards, who, as he guessed, was still at the gates, a dozen yards away.

"Look out, Franky! Don't come this way! Get back to the schoolhouse!"

Bob's voice rang sharply through the night. It reached the ears of Frank Richards.

Frank had been looking after his chums on the dark trail, still somewhat uneasy in his mind; but he had been about to turn back to the schoolhouse when he caught the glimmer of Euchre Dick's lantern under the tree. The sudden light startled him, and he ran out of the gates, and then Bob's yell of warning fell on his ears.

Beauclerc shouted, too:

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"Cut it, Frank—cut it!"

Four Kings rapped out an oath.

"That's another of them out!" he exclaimed.

"Mosy after him, Euchre Dick! Rope him in!"

Euchre Dick set down the lantern and ran up the trail to the school gates. If he could reach Frank Richards he had no doubt of adding him to the "bag" of prisoners.

Frank heard his footsteps, and ran back into the school enclosure. His first impulse had been to rush to the aid of his chums, but second thoughts were wiser. He dashed back to the lumber school at top speed.

After him came Euchre Dick, stumbling in the darkness and muttering oaths.

Frank reached the open window, where Hacke and Yen Chin and several other fellows were waiting for him.

"Quick!" he panted.

"What's the trouble?"

"They've got Bob and Beau, and there's one after me! Help—quick!"

Frank Richards had no time for more. Euchre Dick had reached him. He spun round as he felt the ruffian's grasp on his shoulder.

"Help!" he panted.

The next moment he was fighting fiercely with the ruffian. But out of the window with a jump came Eben Hacke, and he fastened on Euchre Dick at once; and after him came a crowd, all piling desperately on the ruffian.

Only one fellow remained in the schoolhouse. That was Chunky Todgers. He was no funk, and he felt the impulse to take his part in the fray. But another impulse was stronger still, and, instead of dashing after his comrades, the worthy Chunky dashed away to the kitchen. He was soon quite as busy indoors as Frank Richards & Co. were without.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

FOUR KINGS grinned at Bob Lawless and Beauclerc in the light of the lantern glimmering in the green, damp grass. The two schoolboys were securely held by the two ruffians, and Four Kings was fastening Bob's wrists with a rope, in spite of his resistance.

Bob was almost pale with rage. Frank Richards' misgivings had not been groundless, after all. Old man Gunten was not likely to haunt the vicinity of the lumber school himself—he was too busy elsewhere—but he had retained the services of Four Kings & Co. for that purpose.

It had not been difficult for him to foresee that sooner or later some of the garrison would venture outside the school fence, and the three ruffians had been posted to watch. Bob and Beauclerc had fairly walked into their hands. But it was too late to think of that now. They were prisoners.

"Take it smiling!" grinned Four Kings. "You was bound to get downed in the long run. I guess we're earning old man Gunten's dollars easy, as it turns out. By gosh, he will lay into you with a rope when we tote you along!"

Bob Lawless breathed hard.

"You'll be hided and sent off home!" grinned Four Kings. "I guess this is the end of the school strike for you, and I reckon the others will soon cave in without you. You was the head of it. Yank that other young rascal hyer, Dave, and I'll rope him to Lawless!"

Beauclerc resisted fiercely, but the ruffian was too strong for him, and he was tied to Bob Lawless.

When the two schoolboys were roped together Four Kings stepped out into the trail and stared towards the school.

"Time Euchre Dick was hyer with the other kid!" he muttered. "I reckon I'll see what he's doing. You keep an eye on those critters, Dave."

"You bet!"

Four Kings tramped up the trail towards the school.

Euchre Dick, as a matter of fact, had caught Frank Richards, but he had made the painful discovery that he had caught a tartar. The swarm of Cedar Creek fellows piling on him were too much for the ruffian, sinewy as he was. He rolled over on the ground, with Frank still in his grasp; but five or six fellows had hold of him, and he was soon helpless under their weight.

Frank dragged himself free.

"Hold him!" he panted.

"I guess we've got him!" gasped Eben Hacke.

"Me gottee!" chuckled Yen Chin. "You lendee me kniffee, and me killee!"

"Keep that heathen off!" roared Euchre Dick. "I give in! Let up!"

"Hold him, some of you!" gasped Frank. "The rest come with me! We've got to help Bob and Beau!"

"I'll sit on him," said Eben Hacke. "Hook it!"

Hacke and Yen Chin and another fellow planted themselves on Euchre Dick, pinning him to the ground. The rest followed Frank Richards.

Frank, full of anxiety for his chums, led the way at a run to the gates. If Bob and Cherub were placed in old man Gunten's hands he knew that a heavy punishment awaited them, and they would be prevented from rejoining the garrison of Cedar Creek. That was not to be, if Frank Richards could help it.

Frank was dashing to the gates in so great a hurry that he did not see a shadowy figure before him till he rushed into it at full speed in the gateway. There was a gasping howl from Four Kings:

"Euchre Dick, you jay—"

For a moment the ruffian supposed that it was his confederate who had rushed into him in the dark. He was soon undeceived.

"Back up!" panted Frank Richards.

He grasped the ruffian, and, in the sudden surprise of the attack, bore him backwards. Four Kings stumbled and almost fell. He recovered, however, and his fierce grasp closed on Frank, who would have fared badly but for the prompt assistance of his followers.

But the odds were on Frank's side, as Four Kings soon found. From the shadows five or six active fellows swarmed on the ruffian as he grasped Frank, and he was dragged to the ground with a crash. His head smote the ground with a heavy concussion, and he uttered a howl of anguish.

As he lay dazed, Frank's knee was planted on his chest.

"Pile on him!" panted Frank.

But his followers did not need telling. Four Kings was down, and they realised that it was judicious to keep him there, and they were swarming on him. Three or four knees were planted on the ruffian, and his wrists were grasped and firmly held.

Four Kings struggled in vain under the swarm.

Frank Richards rose breathless. He was thinking of his chums in the timber.

"Keep him safe!" he panted.
"We've got him!"

Frank tore off his belt and buckled it on the wrists of the ruffian securely, and Four Kings was a helpless prisoner.

Leaving him writhing on the ground, pouring out a string of oaths, Frank Richards dashed out of the gates with his comrades.

The lantern was glimmering in the wood, and from the distance they could see Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc tied together, with Dave Dunn keeping guard over them.

Dunn had stepped out into the trail, staring through the shadows towards the school, and wondering what was happening there.

Frank Richards & Co. came up with a rush. At the sight of six or seven shadowy forms rushing on him the ruffian sprang back in alarm.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" he gasped.

Crash!

Frank hurled himself at the ruffian, and Dunn went spinning.

"Good man!" roared Bob Lawless.

Frank ran to him, dragging out his knife as he did so. In a moment the sharp blade was sawing through the cords that fastened Vere Beauclerc and the rancher's son.

But there was nothing to fear from Dave Dunn. He had picked himself up and fled. Even for old man Gunten's dollars he was not prepared to deal with the whole Cedar Creek crowd. His heavy footsteps died away in the timber in the direction of the distant town of Thompson.

"Good man!" said Bob, as his hands came free. "I guessed we were gone coons, Frank!" Beauclerc picked up the lantern.

"Let's get back," he said. "We shan't get to Cedar Camp to-night, Bob."

"I guess not. Come on!"

The schoolboys ran back in a crowd towards the school gates. It was evident that the expedition had to be given up for that night at least, now that they knew a watch was being kept on the school.

A dim form loomed up in the trail—that of Four Kings, with his hands fastened in front of him by Frank Richards' belt.

Bob Lawless stopped.

"We'll give that critter a lesson!" he exclaimed. "We'll run him down to the creek and duck him!"

Four Kings made a desperate rush into the timber, and went tramping desperately through the thickets.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Well, he won't find it a nice walk home with his hands tied. Let him go."

The rebels of Cedar Creek hurried back to the school. It was possible that the enemy had reinforcements in the neighbourhood, and they were anxious to be inside their fortress again.

They reached the schoolhouse, where Eben Hacke and his companions were still sitting on Euchre Dick, keeping him prisoner. The ruffian was pleading to be released, and his position was far from comfortable, with Hacke's bony person planted on his stomach, another fellow standing on his legs and the Chinese sitting on his face.

"Hallo! You've got back, you jays!" exclaimed Hacke. "All O.K.! What are we going to do with this bulldozer?"

"Kick him out!" answered Frank Richards.

Euchre Dick was allowed to rise, and six or

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seven boots impressed upon him that it would be wise to depart at once; and he went off at a run.

Frank Richards & Co. clambered in at the window again, glad to find themselves safe within walls once more. Bob Lawless closed the shutter and barred it.

"All O.K. now!" he said. "I reckon old man Gunten came very near scoring this time. But a miss is as good as a mile."

"Thank goodness it's no worse!" said Richards. "If we three had been taken away—"

"I guess we could have run the show hyer without you," remarked Eben Hacke.

Frank smiled, but did not argue the point. But the Co. at least were of the opinion that if they had been taken, the resistance of the rest of the garrison would have petered out before long.

"Are we all here?" asked Beauclerc.

"I'll call the roll," said Bob.

The names were called over at once, and all answered except Chunky Todgers.

"My hat! Chunky's still outside!" exclaimed Frank in alarm.

"I guess I didn't see him," said Hacke. "More likely—"

Bob Lawless gave a yell.

"He's after the grub again!"

And he rushed away in great wrath to the kitchen. Chunky Todgers was there!

AWFUL FOR CHUNKY!

CHUNKY was enjoying himself. Never since the siege of Cedar Creek had started had Chunky Todgers revelled in such plenty. He was not thinking of any harm—in fact, he was not thinking at all; he was simply feeding. And his feed was a record one.

He had done wonders already, but, although the cargo he had taken aboard was extensive, he was still "going it," with a happy smile on his face, when his wrathful comrades burst into the kitchen.

Then Chunky ceased suddenly, and he remained transfixed, as it were, with his fork half-way to his mouth. He realised that after the feast came the reckoning.

"You—you—you—" stuttered Bob Lawless.

"I—I say, I—I was bound to have my supper, you know!" stammered Chunky. "Have—have you brought the grub, Bob, old chap?"

"No, you fat villain!"

"Hadn't—hadn't you better go for it at once?"

"I—I'll scalp you!" shrieked Bob. "Why, you've cleared out nearly everything we had left."

"Lynch him!" roared Eben Hacke.

"Squash him!"

Chunky jumped up in alarm.

"I—I say—" he stuttered. "I—I was hungry, you know. I—I— Hands off, you jays! Oh crumbs!"

The schoolboy rebels surrounded Chunky with grim looks. He had lost no time, and the diminished provisions of Cedar Creek had almost reached vanishing point.

"What are we going to do with him?" gasped Frank Richards.

"Lynch him!"

"Jump on him!"

"Killee fat Chunkee!"

Bob Lawless raised his hand.

"Hold on! There's only one thing that can be done. Chunky's scooped all the grub, or nearly all. We can't get in supplies, and we can't starve. I thought it would come to this, anyhow. Chunky's got to go!"

"Eh?"
 "He's fat," said Bob. "He will last us a week at least."
 "You—you rotter, I know you're only joking!" howled Chunky.

"But who's going to polish him off?" asked Frank Richards gravely, catching Bob's idea at once. "I don't care for the job."

"Me killee!"
 "Good! Yen Chin can do the trick," said Beauclerc.

"I—I say, you're joking, you beasts!" gasped Chunky, his fat face growing almost green. He gave a wild howl as Yen Chin picked up a carving knife with a bloodthirsty look. "Keep him off! Yaroooh!"

"Not yet, Yen Chin," said Bob. "We don't want him till to-morrow. You can have what's left of the grub if you like, Chunky. The fatter you are to-morrow the better."

"I—I—I'm not hungry!" wailed Chunky. "I say, old chaps—"

"I'm sorry!" said Bob. "It's your own fault, Chunky. It might have come to it, anyhow; but we'd have put it off as long as possible. Now you've driven us to it."

"Bob, old chap—I say, Franky—"

"You can go to bed, Chunky! Try to sleep, or you may get feverish, and that will make you tough."

"Yarooogh!"
 Chunky Todgers almost staggered to his mattress. He stole several glances at his school-fellows when they were turning in, but every face was grim and relentless. There was no sleep for Chunky Todgers that night.

In the middle of the night Chunky Todgers crept to the window, but he found Frank Richards on guard there and rolled back to his mattress with a groan. Chunky paid for all his sins that sleepless night.

When morning dawned on Cedar Creek School, and the rebels turned out, Chunky sought the faces of his comrades with agonised looks.

Yen Chin went into the kitchen, where he was soon heard sharpening a knife. The sound sent a chill of horror to Chunky's heart.

"Bob, old fellow—" he moaned.

"Ready, Chunky?"

"I—I know you're only joking!"

"Go into the kitchen, Chunky," said Frank sadly. "I don't want to see it done. You ready, Yen Chin?"

"Me leady! Killee velly quickee. Where Chunky?"

"Yarooogh! I—I say—"

"Let him have a trot round the playground first," said Bob considerably. "Keep an eye on him, though."

Chunky Todgers gasped. Once he was out in the playground he was not likely to be rounded up again. He could scarcely believe his good luck as he dropped from the window.

"Come back!" roared Bob Lawless, as Chunky streaked for the gates. But Chunky did not heed; he was running for his life.

"Bring me a gun, Franky!" roared Bob. "I can pot him from the window."

Chunky Todgers vanished out of the gates.

There was a roar of laughter in the lumber school, but Chunky, streaking for home, did not hear it. The garrison of Cedar Creek had lost one of its members, and while Frank Richards & Co. held the fort at Cedar Creek, Chunky was sadly at work on the Todgers farm.

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SURROUNDED BY FOES!

“WE’RE a precious set of asses!” growled Daubeny of the Shell. “We are—we is!” agreed Jack Drake.

“We’ve played the giddy ox, and no mistake,” remarked Dick Rodney. “What would you fellows give to be safe back on the Benbow?”

“Oh dear!” groaned Tuckey Toodles.

The sun was rising over the forests of the Orinoco, and it shone down upon the worn and haggard faces of the chums of the Benbow.

They had hardly closed their eyes during the night. It had been a night of constant anxiety and fear of alarm, though no alarm had come.

On the top of the mesa—the great flat rock by the side of the stream—the juniors stood, watching the sun climbing up beyond the great forest that shut them off from their friends.

Many a long league away across the forest was the Orinoco, and on the great river the school ship was anchored, with their friends, who had probably given them up for dead by this time.

The reckless expedition into the South American wilderness had reached its end; and the end seemed likely to be a tragic one.

The mesa was surrounded by the Arrowac Indians; in every direction, as the sun rose, they could see the gleaming paint and feathers of the savages.

Every now and then an arrow shot into the air, curved over the high table-rock, and dropped; but the branches of the great ceiba-tree were a covering that kept off most of the missiles.

The summit of the mesa was only a dozen feet or so from the plain, but the walls of it were too perpendicular for climbing—save in one spot, and at that spot Tin Tacks was on guard with his rifle.

But even if the copper-skinned savages could not get at the treasure-seekers, escape was cut off; the mesa was encircled by scores of the Arrowacs.

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DRAKE'S DARING!

By Owen Conquest.

Jack Drake's handsome face was clouded.

The night had passed without an attack; but it was pretty certain that the day would not be allowed to elapse without an attempt of the Arrowacs to get to closer quarters.

Tuckey Toodles was in such a palpitation of funk that he almost forgot to grouse. And Egan seemed to share Tuckey's state of mind. Torrence was very silent and subdued. Peg Slaney, the one-eyed seaman, broke his silence only to mutter a curse.

“We're in for it,” said Rodney quietly. “It's not much good complaining now. We're landed.”

“Oh dear!” groaned Tuckey Toodles. “You fellows oughtn't to have come, you know, and then I shouldn't have come. It's all your fault.”

“Dry up, Toodles!”

“I—I say, Drake, I—I've got an idea,” stut-tered Tuckey.

“Well?”

“S-s-suppose you fellows go down and sur-render to the Indians—”

“What?”

“I could hide up here in the bushes,” pursued Tuckey. “They don't know how many there are of us. See?”

“Eh?”

“They wouldn't find me, and that would save my life.”

“And what about our lives?” bawled Daubeny.

“Oh! I—I—” Tuckey Toodles did not seem to have thought about that trifling consideration. “Well, you see, it's all your fault we are here, you know, with your silly rot about a buried treasure on this beastly rock. I knew there wasn't any treasure all the time; I told you so, in fact.”

“Why, you fat owl, you were the greediest of all after it!” exclaimed Rodney. “You would come!”

“Look here—”

“Dry up, Toodles!” urged Drake. “No good being funky now; we've got to face the music.”

“I'm not funky, of course,” mumbled Toodles. “You fellows know that I'm as brave as—a—”

“As a rabbit?”

“As a lion, you beast! I was really thinking of you. If I escape, you see, I'll get back to the Benbow and—bring help—”

“Ring off!”

“I think it's a really good idea—”

“Shut up!” roared Drake.

Clink!

A little arrow dropped from the air, through an opening in the branches of the ceiba, and fell almost at Drake's feet.

He stooped and picked it up.

“That's a queer thing,” he remarked; and, indeed, the arrow looked odd enough. It was not more than a foot long, and there was a cotton ball at the end in place of feathers.

Tin Tacks gave a startled yell.

"Mass' Jack, no touch—poison!"

Drake dropped the little arrow as if it had suddenly become red-hot.

"My hat!"

"Dat am arrow from blowpipe," said Tin Tacks. "Berry bad poison on tip, Mass' Jack. Touch skin and scratch, and you dead as ole C'lumbus!"

Drake had noted that some of the Indians were armed with what looked like long poles, a dozen feet in length. He realised now that the poles were hollow, and were, in fact, the deadly blow-pipes, with which the Indians can project an arrow for a great distance.

"Keep under de tree," said Tin Tacks. "Safe dere. I guess dem Injuns no able to come up here, Mass' Jack."

Drake nodded, but his heart was heavy.

There was little food among the party cornered on top of the mesa, and death by famine was not much better than death by the poisoned arrows of the Arrowwacs.

He realised, too, that though the steep sides of the mesa were not practicable for a climber, it would be easy enough for the Indians to make ladders for the ascent, if the idea occurred to them.

"We're done for, old chap," said Dick Rodney, in a low voice. "All we can do now is to face the music without showing the white feather."

"That's all," said Drake.

"Dead and done for," muttered Peg Slaney, "and the treasure gone before we came. What luck! But I guess I'll spile the beauty of an Injun or two before they get me under!"

A sudden fearful yell rang from the plain, and it was followed by a shout from Tin Tacks.

"Dey coming!"

"Line up," said Jack, between his teeth. "We'll make them fight for it, anyhow."

And the chums of the Benbow grasped their weapons and rushed to face the attack.

FOR LIFE OR DEATH!

UP the steep, narrow path on the side of the rocky mesa came a painted savage, spear in hand. He was followed by a dozen more, clambering like monkeys.

Tin Tacks' rifle rang out sharply.

It was followed by Drake's, and Daubeny chimed in with his revolver. These were all the firearms in the party, but they sufficed to defend the path up the mesa.

The leading savage dropped back with three bullets in his body, and on the narrow path he crashed down on those who were following.

In a moment all the dozen Arrowwacs were rolling down on the plain again.

Fierce yells rang out below, but the savages regained their feet and came on again. At the same time a loud howl from Tuckey Toodles gave the alarm on the other side of the mesa.

On the opposite side another party of Arrowwacs were attacking, swarming over one another's shoulders, with the activity of monkeys, to reach the level of the top.

Three or four coppery faces rose into view, and dusky hands clutched at rocks and shrubs as the Indians began to drag themselves up.

"At them!" panted Drake.

He tore across the level top of the table-rock to meet the fresh attack, leaving the defence of the path to Tin Tacks.

Rodney and Daubeny were at his heels. Peg Slaney followed, with a pick in his hand.

One of the savages had a knee already on the rock when they reached the spot.

Drake's clubbed rifle sent him crashing back.

Another barely dodged Slaney's pick, and fell to the plain, and the rest dropped out of sight, yelling with rage.

Almost a cloud of arrows flew into the air, dropping and pattering on the mesa, and the juniors rushed back to the shelter of the ceiba-tree.

Drake hurriedly reloaded his rifle.

The Arrowwacs were clambering up the path again, but the black seaman was equal to its defence. His rifle sent the leader whirling down again, and the savages were swept away by the falling body.

With fierce and furious yells the Arrowwacs drew off at last from the assault of the mesa.

"We've pulled through that," muttered Drake, breathing hard.

"P'raps we pull through all right, Mass' Jack," said Tin Tacks hopefully. "No dead yet!"

"We'll stick it out to the very last, anyhow."

"Are—are—are they gone?" stammered Tuckey Toodles.

"Yes, they're gone now."

"I say, I'm hungry!"

Drake chuckled.

"There's half a mango for you," he said.

"If you think you're going to starve me, Drake—" began Tuckey Toodles, forgetting even the Indians in his indignation.

"Fathead! We can't make the food last two days even on strict rations," answered Drake.

"We've got to make it last as long as possible."

"You fellows don't need so much food as I do—"

"Dry up!"

"Yah!"

"I—I say," muttered Torrence, "do you think there's even a faint chance of getting any help, Drake?"

Drake shook his head.

"Where's it to come from?" he said. "We left the school in a canoe. Mr. Packe wouldn't even know in what direction to look for us. We're dozens of miles from any white settlement. It's no good thinking of that."

"What fools we were to come!"

"Not much good thinking of that, either."

"And to think that the treasure was gone!" muttered Egan. "To think that it had been dug up and the hole filled in to spoof us when we came lookin' for it!"

"Well, the treasure wouldn't help us very much now if we had it," said Drake.

The besieged treasure-seekers breakfasted, a rather frugal breakfast, which drew loud complaints from Tuckey Toodles.

Fortunately there was no lack of water; they got it from the pool on the top of the mesa, and though it was brackish, it quenched their thirst.

While they ate they watched the Indians in the distance.

The Arrowwacs had camped out of effective range of the mesa, in groups surrounding it. Squaws could be seen issuing from the forest with grass-plaited panniers, evidently bringing provisions to the braves from the Indian village.

It was only too evident that the Arrowwacs, though they desisted from attack, had no intention of allowing the white intruders to escape.

"It's rotten," Drake said, after a long silence. "We don't want to do the poor wretches any

harm; if they only understood that, I dare say they would sheer off. But——"

"We can't even talk their lingo, even if they'd let us get near enough to speak," said Daubeny.

"Slaney can," said Dick Rodney. "I wonder if there's a chance?"

Drake remembered that Peg Slaney had acted as interpreter when an Arrowac Indian had come on board the Benbow when she was at anchor in the Gulf of Paria, by Trinidad.

He called to the one-eyed seaman, who was munching a coconut with a sullen, lowering face. "Slaney, you could talk to the Indians?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Suppose you explain to them that we're not enemies, and we only want to clear off in peace."

Slaney grunted.

"I guess they'd have me full of poisoned arrows before I could get near enough to chin-wag," he answered. "And they wouldn't let up on us, anyhow."

Drake nodded dismally.

"I suppose you're right; they don't look as if they'd be very willing to listen to reason."

"What about a white flag, though?" asked Daubeny.

Another grunt from Peg Slaney.

"They wouldn't take any notice of that."

"Hallo, there's something going on yonder!" said Torrence. "Looks as if they're getting ready for another rush."

The juniors watched. There was some excitement in the camp of the Arrowacs on the side nearest the path up the mesa. A fresh party of Indians had arrived from the forest, among them a tall chief, whose golden ornaments glittered in the sunshine. His coppery face was barred with streaks of black paint, which gave him a strangely wild and ferocious appearance. Drake stared at him across the distance intently. It seemed to him that there was something familiar in that powerful form, draped in a blanket of sewn jaguar skins.

"I believe I've seen that johnny before somewhere," he said.

"On the Orinoco, perhaps," said Rodney. "Lots of Indians come to trade with the ships. We may have bought souvenirs from some of these very brutes who are thirsting for our blood."

"My only hat!"

Jack Drake shaded his eyes with his hand, staring hard at the distant Arrowac chief.

"Taro Niom!" he exclaimed.

A FRIEND AMONG FOES!

"TARO NIOM!"

Rodney repeated the name.

Jack Drake's eyes were gleaming with excitement.

"Taro Niom! Don't you remember—the Indian we met in his canoe on the Gulf of Paria? We helped him when the shark nearly had him. He gave me his coral ear-rings to remember him by, and I gave him a knife. You remember, when he came on the Benbow, and Slaney interpreted——"

"I remember."

"Me know him," said Tin Tacks, with a nod.

"Him painted now, berry much painted for de warpath; but me know him. Him Taro Niom."

Rodney had a hopeful look.

"You saved him from the shark, Drake," he said. "I wonder—I wonder if——"

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He paused.

"It's a bare chance," said Daubeny. "If he remembers—and if he has influence over the others——"

"He's the chief!" said Torrence. "You can see that—they're all kow-towing round him——"

Drake drew a deep breath.

He remembered how grateful the Arrowac had been, and how he had said, through the interpreter, that if "Yak Dak" should come to his village he would show him hospitality, even to the extent of providing him with a choice selection of wives. Drake certainly had no intention of testing the Arrowac's gratitude to that extent. He smiled at the recollection.

"They're going to attack," said Peg Slaney, "now the chief's arrived. I suppose he's been away hunting—but now he's come, he'll bring them up to the scratch. I guess it will be the finish this time. Sooner's no worse than later, I guess."

"There's no time to lose," said Drake quietly. "I want a white flag——"

"Drake, you can't——"

"I'm going!" said Drake.

"But——"

"It's our only chance," said Drake resolutely. "I believe the Indian meant what he said when he talked to us on the Benbow, and he will know me again. He doesn't know I'm here now; he only knows a party of whites have been cornered here. If they make a real rush we're done for, so I'm not risking much. I'm going."

"Then I'll come with you."

Drake shook his head.

"No good. If they are treacherous you're better here; there's a ghost of a chance of pulling through, while you're alive. If Taro Niom plays the game it's all serene for me; if not, you're better here, old chap. I'll go alone."

"But—but——" panted Rodney.

"Mass' Jack!" muttered Tin Tacks.

"It's our only chance, old bean!"

"Me come with Mass' Jack!"

"No, I tell you! You're wanted here with your gun, Tin Tacks, if they cut up rusty."

Jack Drake had his way; it was, indeed, all that was to be done. The Redskins were evidently preparing for a grand attack, under the direction of Taro Niom, the Arrowac chief; and if they came on determinedly, on all sides at once, the chances of beating them off were slim. Drake ran little more risk by advancing to meet the Indians, though it was a test of nerve that required all his courage.

His sunburnt face was a little pale, but he was quite firm and cool.

If he succeeded in his mission, he would save the lives of the whole party on the mesa; and he believed that success was possible. All depended on whether Taro Niom remembered him, and remembered that Yak Dak, as the Indian had called him, had saved his life in the Gulf of Paria. And Drake believed that he would remember. Savage as Taro Niom was, Drake believed that he would play the game.

The rest of the party remained on guard, while Drake, with a handkerchief tied to the end of a stick, to serve as a white flag, descended the steep path to the plain.

Rodney's face was paler than his own as he went.

Drake's heart beat fast as he dropped from the rock and stepped out from the plain towards the Indians.

A yell from the savages announced that his movements had been observed.

Drake raised his white flag and advanced towards the Indians, his comrades watching him from the top of the mesa with throbbing hearts.

For some distance he was not within range of the Indians' arrows, but when he was near enough he saw several of the blowpipes raised. A sickening feeling came over him.

If the Redskins did not respect the white flag he might never get near enough for speech with Taro Niom, and he would perish, with the poison in his veins, without being able to put the Arrowac chief's faith to the test.

But he walked steadily on.

It was for life or death now, and he did not falter, though his heart was sick within him as the deadly blowpipes were raised.

The yelling of the Indians had died away, and they were all staring in silence at the schoolboy who was advancing so fearlessly towards them.

The voice of Taro Niom broke the silence, shouting in the Arrowac tongue.

Instantly every blowpipe was lowered.

Drake's heart throbbed.

From the crowd of Indians Taro Niom advanced to meet him, his black eyes scintillating at the junior.

It was evident, as he came closer, that he recognised the boy—his expression could be read through the thick bars of paint on his face.

Drake, holding the white flag with his left hand, felt in his pocket with the right.

From his pocket he drew the coral ear ornaments which Taro Niom had given him on the deck of the Benbow, long before.

He held them up for the Indian to see.

Taro Niom bowed his feathered head.

"Yak Dak!" he said.

Drake smiled.

"Taro Niom!" he answered.

The Indian spoke rapidly, in a tongue of which the junior understood not one word. But the expression of his grotesquely painted face was friendly now. He made Drake a sign to remain where he was and strode back to his people.

Drake stood still and watched him.

Taro Niom raised his hand commandingly and commenced a harangue in the Arrowac tongue, to which the Indians listened in silence.

The chief's harangue lasted a good ten minutes, during which the rest of the Arrowacs spoke no word.

When he ceased there was a shout, and immediately the Indians began streaming away towards the forest.

Drake's heart leaped.

The siege of the mesa was over, and the deadly shadow of peril had lifted from the chums of the Benbow.

THE RED MAN'S FAITH!

TARO NIOM turned and came back to Jack Drake as the Redskins began their retreat.

There was a smile on the coppery, painted face. He made a gesture towards the mesa, which Drake understood, and he started back, followed by the Indian.

As they reached the path up the side the faces of the defenders looked down at them over the edge, with great relief.

Taro Niom ascended the path, and Drake followed him to the top.

The Indian saluted the party with a grave inclination of the head, apparently forgetful of

the fact that a very short time before he had been about to lead a fierce attack, which not one of them would have survived.

Tuckey Toodles gave a howl at the sight of the stalwart Arrowac and dodged behind the ceiba. Some of the other members of the party eyed him with uneasiness. But it was clear enough that the Indian was friendly.

He smiled a little grimly at the sight of the excavation under the branches of the ceiba.

"Come and speak to him, Slaney!" said Drake.

The one-eyed seaman slouched forward.

"Tell him we're all friends, and that we're sorry there's been trouble with his tribe," said Drake.

Slaney interpreted.

Taro Niom nodded and pointed inquiringly to the excavation, where the treasure-hunters had sought in vain for the buried gold of the revolutionists.

Through the one-eyed interpreter, Drake explained, and Taro Niom smiled again. What would have happened if the treasure had been there it was not necessary to inquire, but Drake could not help feeling that it was very doubtful whether Taro Niom's good nature would have stood the strain of seeing it taken away by the explorers.

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### For Next Week

## "SCHOOLMASTER AND SCHEMER!"

Once again Tom Merry's enemy plots to bring disgrace on Tom!

## "THE REBELS SURRENDER!"

The schoolboy strikers of Cedar Creek surrender—only to discover that they have been tricked.

## "HOMEWARD BOUND!"

The school-ship Benbow sets sail for England, with exciting times ahead for Jack Drake and his chum at Greyfriars.

Order your GEM early!

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Fortunately, the question did not arise, as there was no treasure left by the earlier searcher who had forestalled the Benbow party.

Slaney was kept busy for some time, interpreting, while the position was explained to the Indian chief, who listened gravely and replied, through Slaney, that Yak Dak had saved his life, and that therefore Yak Dak and all his friends were welcome to his hospitality and aid. His suggestion that they should leave the mesa and travel with him to his village caused some uneasiness.

But Drake made up his mind at once.

"He means good faith," he said, "and we're in the hands of the Indians, anyhow. We can't get away unless they choose. Let's go with him to the village and make the best of it."

"Me tink so, too, Mass' Jack!" said Tin Tacks.

"I guess we can't do anything else," said Peg Slaney, "and I reckon the Injun means fair an' square. I've always found that Injuns is pizen, but—"

"Perhaps you never tried doing them a good turn?" suggested Rodney.

Slaney grinned.

"Ay, ay, p'raps that's it, sir. Anyhow, I

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believe this swab means well, and we can trust him. We've got to, anyhow."

"I'm not going to the Indian village!" howled Tuckey Toodles. "I'm jolly well not going to be scalped to please you, Drake!"

"All right, old bean, stay here."

"Look here, you beast—"

"We're going to get plenty of grub at Taro Niom's show, Tuckey," said Dick Rodney, laughing.

Tuckey's expression altered.

"After all, he's got rather a nice face," he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The prospect of plenty of grub reconciled Tuckey to the Indians. He was quite brisk as he joined in the preparations for quitting the mesa.

The adventurers had little to carry—not so much, in fact, as they had hoped when first they arrived at the mesa. In a short time all was ready, and they followed Taro Niom from the mesa and across the stream.

Taro Niom stalked on ahead by the beaten track through the forest, and Drake & Co. followed him. Near the Indian village they were soon surrounded by a crowd of Redskins and squaws and children; but the looks and howls of the Indians were friendly enough. Of the Indians who had fallen in the attack on the mesa there seemed to be no vindictive recollection. Life is cheap on the Orinoco.

That noontide the chums of the Benbow were resting comfortably in the bark jacals of the Arrowacs, in a cheerful mood.

Their narrow escape from death reconciled them, to some extent, to the loss of the mythical treasure they had come so far to seek. They were going to return to the Benbow with pockets

as empty as when they left. But they were going to return, and a few hours earlier that was the greatest boon they would have cared to ask for.

The remainder of the day they rested in Taro Niom's village, and Tuckey Toodles was able to feed to his heart's content. Indeed, the fat junior fed so well that he suggested passing a few more days with the Indians before setting out for the Benbow.

"You see, the Benbow can't leave the Orinoco till we go back," argued Tuckey. "They won't sail and leave us behind. And we're booked for a fearful row when we get back. So we may as well hang it out for a few days and get out of lessons a bit longer—what?"

"Rats!"

"Well, I think I shall stay, anyhow," announced Tuckey.

"I saw one of the Indians eyeing Tuckey in a rather hungry way," Dick Rodney remarked, closing one eye at his chum. "I wonder whether there's any cannibals among them?"

Toodles gave a jump.

"C-c-cannibals! I—I say, Drake, perhaps we'd better start for the Benbow this evening, instead of waiting till morning. We—we really ought to be getting back to our lessons, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Tuckey Toodles warmly. "Let's start to-night, you blessed slackers!"

"They won't eat you before morning, old top," said Jack Drake, chuckling. "If they did it wouldn't be any great loss."

Tuckey Toodles determined to remain awake that night, on the watch. He remained awake for about a minute and a half, when the juniors turned in, in the jacals, and then his eyes closed in slumber and did not open again till a boot clumped on his fat ribs in the morning.

"Yaroooh!" roared Toodles, coming out of dreamland with a jump. "Keep off, you cannibal beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Toodles sat up and blinked.

"Oh, is it you, Drake, you rotter? I say, what is there for breakfast?"

Breakfast was ample, though what it was composed of the juniors did not wholly know. Dick Rodney remarked that perhaps it was best not to inquire too closely—and doubtless he was right.

After breakfast Taro Niom presented himself, with a select party of his braves, who were, apparently, to act as escort.

They tramped down to the Rio Catalina that day, camping on the bank of the river for the night.

The next morning a dozen canoes were visible on the sluggish waters of the Rio Catalina when the juniors turned out.

The treasure-hunters embarked in their own canoe, and Taro Niom and his warriors in the others. A couple of Indians, entering the Benbow canoe, came to help Tin Tacks with the paddling.

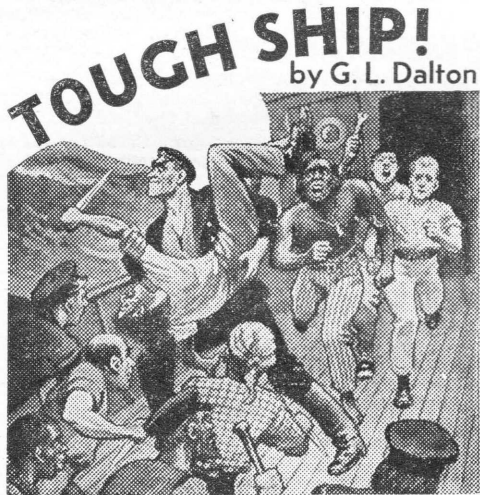
The return journey was more rapid than the voyage up the sluggish tributary of the Orinoco.

In two days the juniors were looking again upon the mighty river of Venezuela.

There they took leave of the Arrowacs.

Taro Niom's canoe pushed alongside Drake's and the Indian chief held out a brown hand to Drake and spoke in his own dialect. Peg Slaney translated his farewell and Drake shook hands

(Continued on page 36.)



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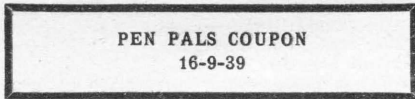
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TOM MERRY'S ENEMY!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Yaas, sir?"

"Your Form-master desires to speak to you."

"Vewy well, sir."

A sea of eyes fixed on Mr. Silverson. For a moment he seemed unable to speak; then he got it out.

"D'Arcy, I—I—I have consulted with your Housemaster and decided to cancel the order I gave you."

"Thank you vewy much, sir," said Arthur Augustus demurely. "Then I may continue to associate with Tom Mewwy, sir?"

"Yes!" gasped Mr. Silverson.

"And my fwriends may continue to associate with Tom Mewwy, sir?" Arthur Augustus, it seemed, wanted to get it clear.

"Yes—yes! You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

Arthur Augustus went, surrounded by a grinning crowd. Mr. Silverson left the Housemaster's study and turned towards his own. Arthur

Augustus' voice reached his ears as he went, very clear and very distinct.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

"Yes, old chap?" said Tom, laughing.

"Will you honah me by comin' to tea in my study?" asked Arthur Augustus. "Will you come and bwing your fwriends?"

Bang!

Silverson's door was heard to close forcibly.

"Gussy, old man, you're a giddy jewel!" said Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"I wathah think," he remarked, "that I have put paid to that worm. What do you fellows think?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Gussy!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

There was no doubt that Arthur Augustus had "put paid" to the Worm! But, as Monty Lowther remarked, the worm will turn. Tom Merry was not done with his enemy yet!

Next Wednesday: "SCHOOLMASTER and SCHEMER!"

DRAKE'S DARING

(Continued from page 34.)

warmly with the copper-skinned chief. He was sorry to see the last of Taro Niom.

Through the interpreter, he promised to visit Taro Niom's village if ever he came up the Orinoco again—a promise which he was not likely to be called upon to fulfil. Then the Arrowac canoes paddled back up the stream and the adventurers were left to cross the Orinoco to Las Tablas.

They were glad to look upon a white man's town again.

At Las Tablas Peg Slaney went ashore.

"I guess I ain't coming back to the Benbow," he said. "I reckon I only took a passage on the ship to get out here and look for the treasure. I've been done out of that. But I reckon I'll find some chances along the Orinoco sooner or

later, and you may see me rolling in my carriage in Park Lane yet."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Drake, smiling.

And he shook hands cordially enough with the one-eyed seaman before he went ashore.

At Las Tablas there was no news of the Benbow, and after a rest the canoe glided down the Orinoco to Barrancas, where the school ship had been left at anchor, little more than a week ago, though it seemed months to the adventurers returning from the heart of the wilds. It was probable that a warm reception awaited them on the school ship, but when they saw the tall masts and graceful spars of the old Benbow in the distance there was a cheer from the whole party.

"The Benbow! Hurrah!"

And a few minutes later they were clambering up the side of the school ship.

Next Week: "HOMEWARD BOUND!"

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