

*Nellie Lathrop*  
THE MASTER WHO TRIED TO DISGRACE TOM MERRY!

THE  
**GEM**  
2<sup>D</sup>

*Schoolmaster  
and  
Schemer!*





# 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.

**Frank Gibbons, of Twerton Hill, Bath, writes:**

How is it fellows like Crooke are in the Shell and decent chaps like yourself are only in the Fourth? What are the Form captain's three chief duties? Does Martin Clifford have to have Frank Richards' permission to bring Greyfriars boys into St. Jim's stories?

**ANSWER:** *Thanks, indeed, for the compliment! Decency, however, is not one of the subjects in the school curriculum, though most St. Jim's fellows could obtain a "pass" in it, probably with credit. Crooke, being older than myself, is a Shellfish. Form captain's three chief duties are to lead without being "bossy," to encourage without being condescending, and to answer all questions relating to the Fourth, whether it's Mr. Latham wants to know or a reader like yourself. Oh, I forgot to mention that if anything goes wrong on the sports field or in class, the skipper automatically "takes the blame"! Martin Clifford and Frank Richards are great pals, and no permission is necessary for them to introduce each other's characters.*

**Clifford Daines, of Muswell Hill, N.10, writes:**

Can you give me a list of the Shell and their studies? Who is the chemistry master at St. Jim's? Do you learn shorthand? P.S.—Sorry my writing is not very good, as I am just recovering from an illness, and am very shaky.

**ANSWER:** *Shell list was published some while ago. The "stinks" master doesn't come into the stories at all; he's a retiring type. Yes, I am learning shorthand in commercial class—but at the present rate of progress it looks like taking a long time. Hope you are feeling better, old chap!*

**Edna Walford, of Brighton 7, writes:**

Where is St. Jim's situated? Could you tell me how to get there, as I would love to see the building? Are you boys just "phoneys," as I think you are?

**ANSWER:** *If you were I, and the Head disliked your school being too freely advertised, you would be as vague as I am when asked how to get to St. Jim's. We at St. Jim's try to be as "genuine" as possible.*

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**G. C. Holden, of Doncaster, Yorks, writes:**

Is there still a "Billy Bunter's Weekly"? Who are the prefects at St. Jim's? And how much does Baggy Trimble weigh?

**ANSWER:** *No; the struggle between Bunter's desire to be known as a journalist and his desire to devote his spare time to "stuffing" conflicted too sharply. Bunter is now internationally famous as a glutton, but as a journalist—he's "written off"! St. Jim's prefects: Kildare, Baker, Darrell, Dudley, Knox, Langton, North, Rushden (School House); Monteith, Gray, Webb (New House). Think of a number, add the number of letters in Baggy Trimble's name, put the date at the bottom, and take it away; the answer has nothing to do with Trimble's weight, which is what you might have expected, isn't it? He's actually just over fourteen stone, I believe.*

**M. S. D., of Ruislip, writes:**

Are you the brainiest member of the Fourth? If not, why are you Form captain?

**ANSWER:** *Is that nasty, or is it nasty? Pure undiluted brain-power is not the only requirement of a Form captain. A skipper has to have a certain amount of tact and initiative, and be able to tolerate duffers and encourage weak spirits to strike out for themselves. The Fourth seem content with me as leader, and so long as they don't "buck," I shall go on "ridin' high"!*

**Alastair McGregor, of Greenock, Scotland, writes:**

Here are two things I'd like to ask: 1. How many goldfish were imported into the Irish Free State in 1653? 2. Of what kind of wood is the Board of Trade made?

**ANSWER:** *Come to think of it, there are two things I'd like to tell you: 1. Sir Walter Raleigh brought the first goldfish back from the Yukon in 1652, not 1653, and parked it, if I remember rightly, in Buckingham Palace Yard. This was before Eire was a Free State. You had to pay to go in, and I think the clan chief was actually a Scot. 2. Spruce. Well, aren't you "sprucing"?*

WITH TREACHEROUS CUNNING THE NEW MASTER OF THE FOURTH LAYS HIS PLANS TO RUIN THE JUNIOR WHO STANDS BETWEEN HIM AND WEALTH—  
TOM MERRY!

# SCHOOLMASTER *and* SCHEMER!



Mr. Silverson pushed the incriminating sporting paper under the cupboard door—little knowing that Figgins was a prisoner inside!

## A CAPTURE FROM THE ENEMY!

“TOM MEWWY—”

Tom Merry, if he heard, did not heed the voice of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy.

Tom was rather strenuously occupied.

In the old quad of St. Jim’s, Tom Merry was in the middle of a melee, which was rather like a Rugby scrum and rather like a dog-fight.

Figgins & Co. of the New House had been punting a footer before morning school. Tom Merry & Co. of the School House, having spotted that footer, had charged Figgins & Co. to take possession of the same.

George Figgins and his loyal followers naturally put up a stout resistance. The tussle raged with great vigour on both sides. Lowther and Manners of the School House were on their

backs. Kerr and Wynn of the New House were sprawling over them. Figgy had the ball—when Blake, Herries, and Digby charged him all together, and Figgy flew. Tom Merry pounced on the disputed football.

With affairs at that stage nobody was likely to heed the voice of Arthur Augustus D’Arcy when he came out of the School House and called to Tom Merry.

Tom had the ball, and was about to send it whizzing towards his own House; but Kerr and Wynn, bouncing up together, rushed him, and Tom landed on the football on his face, his nose smiting the ball with a resounding bang.

Tom Merry spluttered breathlessly.

Kerr punted the ball off towards the New House. Blake, just in time,

**Starring the Chums of  
St. Jim’s in Drama and  
Excitement at St. Jim’s**

by

**MARTIN CLIFFORD**

headed it back. Talbot of the Shell kicked it towards the School House; Fatty Wynn intercepted it and lifted it fairly over the heads of the crowd towards his own House. There was a wild rush after it of the whole mob.

"Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

But he was still unheeded.

"On the ball!" roared Tom.

"Back up!" yelled Figgins.

"Tom Mewwy," shrieked Arthur Augustus, "your Form-mastah wants you in his study! Mr. Linton is waitin' for you, Tom Mewwy!"

But Tom was on the ball again, and he neither heard nor heeded.

The footer had rolled almost to the doorway of the New House. More than a dozen fellows were chasing it. Tom reached it first.

He had only a moment before he was rushed down.

In that moment he kicked hard. The footer flew, whizzing over many heads, towards the School House—and so tremendous was the kick that it might almost have reached that House had not something stopped it in transit.

But something did.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face!

Bang!

"Yawwooop!" roared Arthur Augustus.

He went backwards as if that football had been a cannon-ball!

Arthur Augustus dropped on the quad. The ball dropped at his feet.

"Well stopped!" shouted Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd rushed at the ball. Arthur Augustus sat up and roared unheeded. Figgins was first on the ball. But a School House charge sent Figgy stumbling headlong over it. Jack Blake kicked, sending the ball spinning on towards the School House.

"Oh ewikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the mob of excited juniors rushed past him after the ball. "Oh ewumbs! My nose! Oh ewikey!"

He pressed a hand to his nose; it felt damaged. Then he tottered to his feet, jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gazed at the rival juniors struggling round the football.

"Tom Mewwy," he shouted, "you uttah ass, your beak wants you in his study! Oh, my nose! Ow! Tom Mewwy, you duffah—"

"Back up!" roared Tom Merry.

On the School House side of the quad more and more School House fellows gathered round. Figgins & Co. were swept away by numbers. A kick from Tom Merry landed the ball at the School House steps.

There Monty Lowther picked it up and put it under his arm. He stood on the House steps with the footer under his arm and grinned at the enraged and exasperated New House juniors.

The School House men crowded round him—packing their goal, as it were. Figgins & Co. made a desperate rush, but they were hurled back.

"Our ball!" trilled Monty Lowther.

"Hurrah!"

"You School House swabs!" roared Figgins.

"Give us our ball!"

"Come and fetch it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, New House!" shouted Figgins, and again he led a desperate charge; but that charge was stopped, and the New House fellows hurled back.

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There was no recapturing that captured footer. It was a capture from the enemy, and the School House men were sticking to it. It was a prize of war—a symbol that School House was Cock House of St. Jim's. Figgins & Co., raging, were driven back to their own side of the quad—minus the football.

"Our win!" said Tom Merry breathlessly.

"What-ho!" chuckled Blake.

"We'll keep this footer in our study—and those New House swabs can come and fetch it if they like!" said Monty Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

"Tom Mewwy!" Arthur Augustus tottered to the crowd at the School House steps. "Tom Mewwy, you ass—"

"Hallo, Gussy!" The captain of the Shell became aware of Gussy's existence at last. "Where did you pick up that nose?"

"You uttah ass, you cwashed that footer on it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was thwown into quite a fluttah! I shall have a wed nose, you fwrightful ass!"

"Never mind, old bean—we've whopped the New House!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Bothah the New House!" said Arthur Augustus, rubbing his noble nose, which had rather a pain in it. "Mr. Linton will be gettin' watty—"

"Eh? Anything biting Linton?" asked Tom.

"He is waitin' for you in his studay, you ass! He sent me to tell you to come at once ten minutes ago—"

"Oh, my hat! Why didn't you tell me?"

"You fwrightful chup!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I was woahin' at you all the time, and then you knocked me ovah with that beastly footah—"

"I'd better go," said Tom. "Take care of that footer, Monty!"

"You bet!" grinned Monty.

Tom Merry hurried in to his Form-master's study. If Mr. Linton had sent for him ten minutes ago there was evidently no more time to be lost. Beaks did not like to be kept waiting—even for so important a matter as bagging a footer from the New House enemy.

Figgins & Co., having gathered more forces from the New House, were returning to the charge. But it was too late. Monty Lowther had disappeared into the School House with the captured footer.

A couple of minutes later he was seen at the window of Study No. 10 in the Shell. At that window he held up a football and smiled down at upturned New House faces.

A forest of New House fists were shaken up at him; but that was all that Figgins & Co. could do now. That ball was captured, and safe in the enemy's stronghold—not to be recovered, unless by strategy. Figgins & Co. raged—but they raged in vain.

### JUST LIKE JAMES.

MR. JAMES SILVERSON, the master of the Fourth, stopped—just in time.

The new master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's had come out of his study, and was going down the corridor, when a breathless junior came cutting round the corner into that corridor at a run.

There was very nearly a collision. But James Silverson stopped and Tom Merry stopped—in time.

"Merry!" rapped Mr. Silverson.

Tom was passing on again; he was in a hurry

to get to Mr. Linton's study. But he paused as the new master of the Fourth addressed him.

"Yes, sir?" he answered.

"How dare you rush about Masters' Studies in this disorderly manner!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. "I'm in a hurry, sir—"

"You will not be allowed to disregard the rules of the House in this flagrant manner, Merry!" rapped Mr. Silverson. "If you were in my Form I should cane you for your disorderly and disgraceful and slovenly appearance!"

Tom Merry coloured.

It was true that he was not looking very tidy at the moment. Generally, Tom was rather careful in such things, but scrapping for a football did not make for neatness and tidiness. His collar was rumpled, his tie was half round his neck, his trousers were dusty. He was not, in truth, in a very presentable state to enter his Form-master's presence, but having kept Mr. Linton waiting ten minutes already, he did not want to keep him waiting even another minute if he could help it. So he had rushed off just as he was.

"I—" began Tom.

"This is disgraceful!" said Mr. Silverson. "You are a distant relative of mine, Merry, and you might have some regard for the fact, and not disgrace me by uncleanness and slovenliness."

Tom's eyes gleamed at him.

But he checked the angry reply that rose to his lips.

Silverson was only at the school temporarily while Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, was laid up. He had—or should have had—nothing whatever to do with Shell boys. But he had given one Shell boy very particular attention ever since he had been at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry knew that this man, distantly related to him, was his enemy; and he knew the cause—rivalry for old Miss Priscilla Fawcett's moneybags!

Not that Tom had ever given those moneybags a single thought. But James Silverson had—quite a lot of concentrated thought!

"Will you let me pass, sir?" said Tom as quietly as he could. "I am in a hurry, as I have said."

Mr. Silverson was standing directly in his way.

"You will remain where you are, Merry, until I have finished speaking to you," said James Silverson calmly; "and if you are insolent you will be punished for your insolence."

"I tell you—"

"That will do! As you are not in my Form I cannot deal with you for your disgraceful slovenliness and your disorderly conduct, but I shall report you to your Form-master. You will come with me at once to Mr. Linton's study."

Tom Merry laughed.

As he had been heading as fast as he could for Mr. Linton's study when James stopped him this was rather amusing.

James, of course, did not know that. He had caught a junior breaking the rules of the Houses, and that was enough for him. Fellows were not allowed to rush about the House, especially in the sacred quarters of the beaks. Linton, the severe master of the Shell, was the last man to allow anything of the kind. James was going to score.

James Silverson was a very sharp man, and a very unscrupulous man; there was a good deal of the rogue in James. But, like all rogues, he had a spot of obtuseness in him. Every rogue is more or less of a fool, and James, with all his sharpness, all his cunning, was continually putting

his foot in it. Now he was putting his foot in it again!

"Very well, sir; please take me to my Form-master!" said Tom, and James, with a glare at him, turned to Mr. Linton's door and tapped thereon.

"Come in!" said a rather acid voice.

It sounded as if Linton was annoyed. No doubt he was, having sent for Tom Merry nearly a quarter of an hour ago, and having had to wait for his arrival in the study.

"Follow me, Merry!" said Mr. Silverson.

"Oh, certainly!" said Tom.

James marched into the study, with Tom at his heels.

"Oh, Merry!" said Mr. Linton, "you— What is it, Mr. Silverson?"

He glanced at James with polite impatience.

"I should be glad, sir, if you would instruct this boy of your Form not to rush about the Masters' Studies as if he were on the football field," said Mr. Silverson. "He very nearly collided with me. I presume that the rules of the House are not to be broken with impunity by boys of your Form."

"Certainly not!" snapped Mr. Linton. "Merry, why—"

"I explained to Mr. Silverson that I was in a hurry, sir," said Tom. "I had only just heard that you wished to see me, and I thought I had better come as quickly as possible."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Linton. "I sent D'Arcy nearly a quarter of an hour ago to tell you I wished to see you, Merry."

"He wasn't able to tell me, sir; but I came as soon as he found me and told me—and in the circumstances, sir, I thought I had better make haste."

"Most assuredly!" said Mr. Linton. "Really, Mr. Silverson, it is somewhat extraordinary that you should raise objections to a junior hurrying when the boy was aware that his Form-master was waiting for him."

James bit his lip hard.

"But perhaps it is your opinion, sir, that my time is of no value!" added Mr. Linton acidly.

"I was unaware that you had sent for Merry, sir," stammered James. "I—I had no idea that he was coming to your study—"

"It would have been quite simple to ask him, I should imagine," said Mr. Linton.

And Mr. Silverson, with an inarticulate mumble, faded out of the study.

"Kindly shut the door, Merry!" rapped Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir!"

Tom stepped to the door. As he closed it he smiled at a black and bitter face in the corridor. James scowled like a demon in a pantomime, and Tom Merry, smiling, shut the door in his scowling face.

## A MYSTERY!

"NOW, Merry—"

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Linton's face had set very severely—indeed, grimly. Tom, looking at him in some wonder, could see that something serious was the matter.

He could not, for the life of him, imagine what it was. So far as he knew, he had done nothing to bring out that grim look on his Form-master's face.

Mr. Linton stretched out his hand to a pile of

letters on the study table. Tom glanced at them. He knew what they were; letters addressed to boys in the Shell. Such correspondence always passed under a master's eye before it was handed out.

Generally, of course, letters for the boys were from parents or relatives, and were passed with only a glance at the superscription.

Occasionally there might be some communication from an undesirable quarter, which had to be stopped in transit.

In that heap of letters Tom noticed one addressed to Manners, and another to Lowther, and another to Talbot. But it was one addressed to himself that Mr. Linton picked from the heap.

"Look at that, Merry!" said the master of the Shell.

Tom looked at it in blank amazement.

It was addressed to him in a rugged, scrawling hand. It bore the local postmark of Wayland. Its distinctive characteristic was a strong smell of tobacco, and there were stains on the envelope that looked remarkably like stains of beer.

It was not surprising that Mr. Linton's attention had fallen very particularly on that letter.

Tom understood now why his Form-master had sent for him. He was to be questioned about that letter. But he understood no more than that. The letter itself was a mystery to him.

So far as he knew, there was nobody at Wayland who had any reason for writing to him—and certainly not anyone whose letters were liable to be scented with tobacco and beer.

"This," said Mr. Linton, "is very singular—very extraordinary, Merry! I must ask you to open that letter in my presence."

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom. "I've no objection. I can't imagine who it's from."

"You are acquainted with the handwriting, I presume, as the person writes to you," said Mr. Linton dryly.

"I've never seen it before, sir."

"Indeed! Well, open the letter."

Tom Merry slit the envelope and drew out the letter within. He unfolded it and looked at it. Then his eyes looked as if they would pop from his face.

Mr. Linton's gaze was fixed on him.

"Merry!" he said, in a deep voice.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Tom.

"Have you any objection to your Form-master inspecting that letter?"

"None at all, sir," answered Tom. "I can't understand a word of it—unless it's some silly joke."

He laid the letter on the table before his Form-master. Mr. Linton adjusted his glasses and read it. The expression that came over his face as he did so was extraordinary.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the master of the Shell.

It seemed that Mr. Linton doubted the evidence of his eyes—or his glasses. He read the letter through again from end to end, with astonishment and anger deepening in his face.

It was, indeed, a very extraordinary letter to be received by a junior at St. Jim's. It ran:

"The Black Bull,  
Wayland.

"Dear Tom,—You're on. I got your letter just in time to put it through.

"I aint saying that Blue Bag is the 'orse I should have picked for the three-thirty on  
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Thursday. But every man to his fancy, and perhaps you got a tip from somebody what knows. Aynhow, you're on. O.K.

"J. MULLIGAN."

Thunder gathered in the brow of the master of the Shell. He gazed at that letter, and he gazed at Tom Merry.

That letter, as it stood, was sufficient to cause a fellow to be expelled from St. Jim's. It was safe to say that a St. Jim's fellow who backed horses with some racing man at the Black Bull in Wayland was booked for the "long jump" the moment the fact came to his headmaster's knowledge.

True, there were fellows at St. Jim's who did such things—fellows like Racke of the Shell and Cutts of the Fifth. But they were very cautious and careful about it.

There was a long silence in Mr. Linton's study. The master of the Shell looked thunderous. Tom looked bewildered.

Mr. Linton spoke at last.

"This has come to my knowledge. I had no suspicion, no doubt! Merry, you have deceived me grossly!"

Tom's cheeks burned.

"I have not deceived you, sir," he said. "I have deceived nobody. I don't know what that letter means any more than you do, sir."

"Last week," said Mr. Linton, "there was a disagreeable episode. You were seen in the precincts of the Green Man at Rylcombe. You explained that you had jumped a fence to escape from a bull. I believed you. Your Housemaster believed you. I was extremely annoyed when Mr. Silverson refused to believe you. And now—"

"I told the truth then, sir, and I am telling the truth now," said Tom Merry steadily. "I know nothing of that letter, and it must have been addressed to me by mistake."

"That is impossible!"

Tom paused.

He realised that it was indeed impossible. There could be no mistake in the matter. That letter had been addressed to him intentionally. But that only made the mystery more perplexing.

"Who is this man Mulligan who has written to you?" asked Mr. Linton.

"I don't know, sir."

"What?"

"I have never heard the name before," said Tom.

"Take care, Merry!" said the master of the Shell icily. "This man has written to you from a low resort in the neighbouring town. He addressed you as 'Dear Tom,' which implies an intimate acquaintance. He has placed a bet for you on a horse called Blue Bag for a race to be run on Thursday."

"He has done nothing of the kind," said Tom.

"He states that he has done so in accordance with your letter to him. Yet you tell me that you have never heard of a man who writes in answer to a letter he has received from you!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"He has received no letter from me, sir," answered Tom. "I can't make it out, unless it's some fool's silly joke. I have never even heard of a man named Mulligan. I have never been near the Black Bull in Wayland. I have never written to the man. I know nothing whatever about a horse called Blue Bag, or a race on Thursday. I have never made a bet in my life,

and I never shall. I have always thought that gambling is very little better than swindling, and I still think so. If you do not believe me, sir, I cannot help it; but I know nothing of anything mentioned in that letter."

Tom stood with a flushed face, but he stood erect, and his eyes did not falter under his Form-master's searching gaze.

There was another long pause.

"What you state, Merry, is practically impossible," said Mr. Linton, at length. "You are asking me to believe that a man you do not know, and have never seen, has written to you in a style of intimate acquaintance—"

"I know nothing of him, sir."

"That he has backed a horse on your instructions, when you have given him no instructions—"

"Certainly not!"

"Then kindly suggest why this man, a perfect stranger to you, should have written to you at all," said Mr. Linton grimly.

Tom was silent.

"You say that he is unknown to you. You cannot be unknown to him, as he writes to you here. How can he have made your acquaintance without your having made his, Merry?"

"I—I can't understand it, sir! I don't know what it means. All I know is that I've told you the truth—that I know nothing whatever about the man, and if he has heard of me, I haven't heard of him."

Mr. Linton compressed his lips in a tight line.

"Your character has always been so good, Merry, and I have hitherto had such faith in you that you shall certainly have every chance," he said "I shall keep this letter and consult your Housemaster. Mr. Railton will decide whether to place the matter before the Head. Unless you have a confession to make—"

"I have no confession to make, sir!" said Tom, his lips trembling a little. "I have done nothing wrong, and have nothing to confess."

"Very well, Merry, you may go."

Tom Merry left the study, feeling rather like a fellow in a dream. He almost tottered away down the corridor.

**THE HAND OF AN ENEMY.**

**M**ANNERS and Lowther, in the Shell Form Room that morning, gave Tom Merry several puzzled and uneasy glances.

The bell for classes had rung soon after he had left Mr. Linton, and he had said nothing to them so far.

But they could see easily enough that there was something amiss with their chum.

Other fellows noticed it, too. Tom did not look much like the light-hearted schoolboy who had bagged a football from Figgins & Co. that morning. There was quite a startling change in him.

His face was clouded, his brows knitted, and there was trouble mingled with perplexity in his face.

Talbot of the Shell gave him a glance or two of concern. Racke and Croke looked at him and grinned at one another. They knew that his Form-master had sent for him, and wondered whether that Green Man story had cropped up again.

Fellows noticed that Mr. Linton's eyes lingered on Tom a good many times during class. That something or other was up, all the Form knew before the Shell was dismissed for break.

When they came out, Manners and Lowther

dropped in on either side of Tom and walked him out into the quad.

"Now, then, what is it?" they asked together.

"Oh," said Tom, "you've noticed something!"

"As you've got it written all over your face, old bean, yes," said Lowther. "Linton been ragging you?"

"What did he want?" asked Manners.

Tom hesitated before replying.

During class he had been thinking a great deal more of that mysterious letter from Wayland than of his lessons. The more he thought of it, the less he could understand it.

And he wondered, with a sinking at the heart, whether even his chums would, or could, believe that he knew nothing of a man who had written to him as if they were perfectly well acquainted. How could any fellow believe that a man he did not know, and had never seen, had written to him about a matter he had never heard of?

"Cough it up!" said Manners quietly. "I can see it's serious. Has the Worm been at his games again?"

The Worm was Mr. Silverson's nickname in the Lower School. It was a name that, in the general opinion, suited him admirably.

"Oh, no!" said Tom. "Silverson's got nothing to do with this. The rat keeps up that Green



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**"HOLIDAY ANNUAL"**

**Have You Got Yours Yet?**



Man story all he can, and he never loses a chance at me. But this hasn't anything to do with him."

"Well, give it a name," said Lowther.

"Look here," said Tom slowly, "suppose a letter came for me from a man I'd never heard of and never seen, written about a matter I'd never even dreamed of—what would you think?"

His chums could only blink at him.

"Pulling our legs?" asked Lowther blankly.

"That's what's happened," said Tom. "Believe it or not, as you like, that's what's happened."

"Don't be an ass, old chap!" said Lowther. "That couldn't happen."

"It has!"

"I give it up, then!" said Monty.

"Get it off your chest, Tom!" said Manners. "We're all in the dark so far. Cough it up from the beginning."

"Oh, all right!"

Tom proceeded to give a succinct account of the interview in his Form-master's study—repeating the letter from "J. Mulligan" word for word, so far as he could recall it.

Monty Lowther listened, with his eyes opening wider and wider till they almost resembled saucers! Manners listened, with a darker and darker shade growing on his brow.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked Tom when he had finished.

"You didn't go to sleep in Linton's study and dream it?" asked Lowther.

"No, ass!"

"Well, it's got me beat."

"So that mystifies you, Tom, does it?" asked Manners. "Tommy, old chap, you play a great game of football, you're no end of a big chief in handling Figgins & Co. and downing the New House—you can run or box with any man in the Lower School in either House—but when it comes to dealing with a rogue, you don't come into the picture at all. You just sit down and take it!"

Tom stared at him.

"Does that mean that you can make head or tail of it?" he asked. "If you can, I'd like to know what it means."

"That's an easy one!" said Manners.

"Blessed if I see it," said Lowther. "The man must be a lunatic to write such a letter to a chap he doesn't know—but how the dickens does some lunatic at Wayland know there's a chap named Tom Merry at this school?"

"The Worm's no lunatic!" answered Manners.

"Silverson's got nothing to do with this!" said Tom, staring.

"Ass!" said Manners.

"Well, how?" said Tom, bewildered.

"Look at the facts a minute," said Manners quietly. "When we saw that cur at Laurel Villa in the hols, he planted a racing paper in your coat pocket to drop out for old Miss Priscilla to see. When Baggy Trimble started that Green Man story, he seized on it like a dog on a bone. When we go for a walk down to the village, he walks in the same direction, to see if he can spot us dodging into the Green Man. Don't we know him, and his game?"

"Yes—but—"

"He's after your old guardian's money—and there's only one way of getting at it—cutting you out with old Miss Priscilla."

"He's a devil, that!" said Tom.

"Don't be too jolly sure! If you turned out a regular rotter, a slinking blackguard like Racke, I can jolly well tell you that the old lady would register a change!" said Manners. "She would be hurt and distressed, and fearfully cut up—but she'd never leave her money to a fellow who would play ducks and drakes with it on horses and dogs and cards! I've seen her often enough to know her pretty well. She's as soft as dough because she's fond of you, Tom—but she's got principles as hard as rock."

"I know that. But I suppose I'm not going to turn out a fellow like Racke, and turn her against me," said Tom. "What do you mean, fathead?"

"You are—if Silverson can work it!" said Manners coolly. "He's a horse-racing, gambling rotter himself, though he keeps it so precious dark. He thinks you're no better than he is—that's the sort of worm he is! He's jumped at the chance of barging into your school to get at you! And this comes from him."

"But how?" gasped Tom.

"How?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Think a man like that doesn't know all sorts of bookmaking, horse-racing blackguards?" exclaimed Manners impatiently. "He's fixed it up with one of them to send this letter to Tom."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"They knew Linton would spot the letter—and would have to see it. It was all as easy as falling off a form. I dare say Silverson tipped Mulligan

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a ten-bob note to put it through," said Manners contemptuously. "There's no mystery about it—it's the Worm's next wriggle."

"Oh!" gasped Tom again.

Monty Lowther whistled.

"Manners, old man! You think—"

"It's as plain as your face," said Manners, "and that's saying a lot."

"You silly ass!"

"The man's a crook!" said Manners. "He's no schoolmaster really—he's taken on a job he loathes for want of something better—his real business is backing horses and losing money on them—and I can make a pretty shrewd guess where he goes for money when he's dropped a packet, too! If we saw old Miss Fawcett's cheque book, we'd see the name of Silverson on the counterfoils of a good many cheques, I'll bet my hat on that."

Tom Merry nodded in silence. What Manners only guessed, he knew for a fact.

"Now he's got a chance, he's going for the gloves," said Manners. "That is, he's going to cut you out by piling up all the lies he can think of—and this is one of them. This is one of the Worm's wriggles."

"No good telling Linton that," said Tom, with a faint smile.

"No. But we know his game, and can keep wary," said Manners. "And he's got a chap to deal with that's as sharp as he is, I flatter myself! I can't kick goals like you can, Tom, and I can't knock old Figgy out with the gloves on as you can, but I'm about ten times your weight in dealing with a rogue like Silverson!"

"Thanks!" said Tom, laughing.

"It's a fact, old man—you'll see!" said Manners. "Haven't I made it clear to you why that letter came from the man at the Black Ball?"

"Admitted!" agreed Tom. "But if you're right—"

"If!" sniffed Manners.

"Well, I think you're right—but if you are, that won't help me with Linton and Railton. They're going to confab over that letter—goodness knows what will come of it! Not much good telling them that I suspect Silverson of planting it on me."

"No good at all," said Manners. "But this isn't the end—this will be followed up."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

"This letter from Mulligan of the Black Ball sets the ball in motion," said Manners. "The next step will follow—to fix you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And when the Worm takes the next step, we may be able to fix him, instead of him fixing you!"

"By gum," said Tom, "I wish old Lathom would get off the sick list and take his place again with the Fourth. Silverson would have to go then."

"We've got to beat him till he goes," said Manners. "Lathom's about again now—he may be back in the Fourth in a few days. Silverson hasn't much time—and he's making the most of it."

Tom Merry stood silent. Monty Lowther eyed Manners with an extremely dubious expression on his face.

Manners smiled sarcastically.

He was quite sure that he had elucidated the mystery of that mysterious letter from the Black



Bull. He had, at all events, furnished an explanation of what was otherwise a hopeless puzzle.

But Lowther did not seem quite able to swallow it—and Tom hesitated. That James Silverson was a bad egg, they both knew. That he was double-faced in his dealings with old Miss Fawcett, that he would lose no opportunity of blackening Tom to his old guardian, they were assured. But a deep-laid, Machiavellian scheme like this seemed to them very steep. It was hard for them to realise that even a bad egg like James had no limit.

"You think I'm barking up the wrong tree?" grunted Manners.

"Well——" said Lowther slowly.

"No," said Tom. "But——"

"Leave it at that!" said Manners. "You stick to football, Tom—and you keep on coughing up chestnuts for the 'Weekly,' Lowther—and leave it to me to put paid to that plotting rogue. Luckily, I've got more brains in my little finger than you two chaps have got in your heads."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I know you've got most of the brains in the study, Manners, old man," he said. "I've never set up to be a fearfully brainy chap. But——"

The bell rang for third school, and interrupted the conference. Manners, at least, had no doubt on the subject—that letter was a manoeuvre of the Worm's, to prepare the ground for some harder knock that was to follow, and knock Tom Merry out—that was how Harry Manners looked at it. And Manners was going to be on the watch for the Worm's next "wriggle," as he called it.

### FIGGINS IN A FIX!

"**B**AI Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

He grinned.

After class that day, the swell of St. Jim's was coming up to his study, No. 6 in the Fourth.

As his noble nose rose above the level of the study landing, Arthur Augustus had a glimpse of a long-legged figure disappearing across that landing into the Shell passage.

Whereat Arthur Augustus grinned.

That long-legged figure was the figure of George Figgins of the Fourth Form, the great chief of the New House juniors.

It required a fearful amount of nerve for a New House junior to dodge up the staircase in the School House, and dodge into School House studies.

Really, Figgy could hardly hope to get by with such a reckless venture.

But evidently Figgy, in pursuit of the captured football, was ready to take all risks.

And fortune, which is said to favour the brave, had rather befriended Figgins. He had cut swiftly up the stairs, and passed no one. He had found nobody on the study landing but Skimpole of the Shell. And Skimpole was a youth of scientific tastes, whose vast brain was so crammed with scientific knowledge that it had no room for such trivial matters as House rivalry and House rows.

Skimmy had only blinked benevolently at Figgins through his spectacles, and asked him if he would like to look at a book he had under his arm, which bore the brief and attractive title of: "Evolution Considered in its Relation to the Origin of Non-Existent Species," by Professor Balmcrumpet.

Figgins had nobly refrained from braining Skimmy with that volume, and, with great tact, asked Skimpole if he could sit in his study while he looked at it.

Skimpole, beaming, assented at once, and marched up the Shell passage, with Figgins at his heels.

The delay on the landing had been brief.

But it had been too long, for, as the long-legged chief of the New House juniors disappeared into the Shell passage, the noble nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rose over the level of the study landing, and he spotted Figgins.

Arthur Augustus grinned and followed on.

Figgins was not going to recapture that football. Arthur Augustus crossed the study landing at unusual speed.

He looked up the Shell passage.

Skimpole had gone into Study No. 9. Figgins' voice floated down the passage.

"Wait a minute, Skimmy!"

And Figgins, pushing on, disappeared into Study No. 10.

Arthur Augustus, grinning, cut up the passage at a run. Arthur Augustus was prepared to do battle for that football. And though Gussy was full of pluck, and full of beans, he was no match for Figgy in combat. But the first sounds of conflict would draw unnumbered reinforcements to the spot. Figgy was not going to have that footer.

Patter, patter, patter! rang Arthur Augustus' running feet up the Shell passage. He burst into Study No. 10.

Tom Merry & Co. were in the changing-room downstairs. Figgy had probably spotted them going there before he made this venture. Figgins found the coast clear when he arrived.

Arthur Augustus, to his astonishment, found it clear also.

He could hardly believe his eye or his eye-glass as he glanced round Tom Merry's study, and discerned no man therein.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

The captured football was in its place on the study shelf. Figgy had not handled it yet. Figgy, indeed, seemed to have disappeared into space.

For a moment Arthur Augustus was quite bewildered by the strange and mysterious disappearance of George Figgins.

Then it dawned on his noble brain that Figgins had heard footsteps cutting up the passage, and had hunted cover.

Assuredly he was still in the study; but he was out of sight. No doubt Figgy, hearing those running feet in the passage, had supposed that it was a fellow running up to the study for something in a hurry, in which case, naturally, he would take it and go, leaving Figgy, unseen, to carry on.

Grinning, Arthur Augustus looked round Study No. 10 again.

The cupboard door was a few inches ajar. That cupboard extended from floor to ceiling, the upper part serving the purpose of a larder, the lower a receptacle for all sorts of lumber.

As there was nowhere else where a fellow could have taken cover, Arthur Augustus concluded—justly—that Figgins had curled up his long legs in the lower half of the cupboard, and was waiting there out of sight for the coast to be clear again.

Arthur Augustus stepped to the cupboard door.

Bang!  
Click!

It was quick work. That cupboard door was shut and locked in the twinkling of an eye.

There was a startled gasp from within. Figgy had not expected that.

Arthur Augustus chuckled and stepped to the study window. He lifted the sash and looked down.

As he expected, Kerr and Wynn of the New House were standing below.

Figgins had not hoped to be able to walk out of the School House with that recaptured footer under his arm. He would certainly have lost it again in transit. He had been going to toss it from the study window, and the Co. were ready to seize it and scud with it to the New House. Arthur Augustus had rather upset the programme.

He smiled down at two upturned faces. "You fellows waitin' for anythin'?" he called out. "Waitin' for a football, or anythin' of that sort? Ha, ha!"

The New House Co. glared up at him. "Go on waitin', deah boys!" called out Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't go away! I am just goin' to thwow down some ink! Pway don't go!"

Arthur Augustus disappeared from the window. He reappeared with an inkpot in his hand.

But there were no longer two upturned faces below. Kerr and Wynn had decided hastily to depart without waiting for the ink.

Arthur Augustus chortled. From the study cupboard came an angry roar: "Tom Merry, you ass! Let me out of this!" "Tom Mewwy has gone down to footah pwactice, deah boy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "He won't be heah for an hour yet."

"Is that that idiot D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Is that that potty chump Gussy?"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Is that that blithering tailor's dummy?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let me out of this, will you? Did you know I was in the study, you frabjous foozling fat-head?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I was on your twack, you New House boundah! Ha, ha!"

"Will you let me out?" roared Figgins.

"Not at all, deah boy! You are a prisonah of war," chortled Arthur Augustus. "If you barge into the School House, old bean, you cannot complain of stayin' a little longah than you wanted to—what?"

"You pic-faced apology for a pug-nosed poodle!"

"Bai Jove! That sounds as if you are gettin' watty, Figgins. Are you gettin' watty, deah boy?"

"I'll push your silly face through the back of your silly head when I get out of this cupboard!" roared Figgins.

"Are you offahin' that as an inducement to let you out, Figgay?" inquired Arthur Augustus.

"You—you—you—" gasped Figgins.

"All wight, deah boy! Take your time—don't stuttah!"

"You blithering, blethering monkey-faced misfit!"

"Bai Jove! I wefuse to wemain heah and listen to such vewy personal wemarks! Good-bye, Figgins!"

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And Arthur Augustus, slipping the cupboard key into his pocket, walked gracefully out of Study No. 10. And George Figgins, locked in the lower half of that cupboard, among a variety of lumber, was left to his reflections, which at the moment, were not agreeable.

### THE NEXT MOVE.

"TRIMBLE!"  
"Oh, yes, sir!"  
"What are you doing?"  
"Oh, nothing, sir!"  
"Why are you not at games practice, Trimble?" asked Mr. Silverson.  
Baggy Trimble blinked at him.

Baggy was loafing on the study landing. He was, as he had told his Form-master, doing nothing. Baggy never was doing anything, if he could help it. So far as he had any occupation at the moment, he was waiting for fellows to come up to tea, in the hope that someone among them might allow a fat and fatheaded youth to roll in to tea along with him.

Nobody was coming up to tea yet; but Mr. Silverson, the new master of the Fourth, came up.

He gave Baggy a frown of annoyance. Why he was annoyed to see Baggy there Baggy did not know; but it was clear that he was.

"It isn't a compulsory day, sir!" Trimble explained in haste.

The idea of turning up for games practice, when the same was not compulsory, had never yet occurred to Baggy Trimble.

"This is mere slacking, Trimble!" said Mr. Silverson. "I will not allow this idle, lazy loafing! Go down to the changing-room at once!"

"Wha-a-t!" gasped Baggy.

"In ten minutes," said Mr. Silverson. "I shall look in at the football ground. If you are not there, Trimble, I shall deal with you very severely."

Baggy gave him a look. Then, speechless with indignation, the fat Baggy waddled down the stairs. He was ordered to games practice—on a day when it wasn't compulsory! Baggy would have dearly liked to tell his new Form-master what he thought of him.

But he didn't. He went!  
Mr. Silverson glanced over the landing balustrade, and watched him disappear. Then he glanced round the study landing again.

Everybody, or nearly everybody, was out of doors in the fine weather after class. But a man who did not want eyes to fall on him had to be careful.

James, in carrying on his peculiar game at St. Jim's, had to take some risks. But he wanted to take as few as possible.

So far there was nothing suspicious in his movements. Any master might come up to the study landing. But when he entered the Shell passage he did not want to be observed. The master of the Fourth had no business in the Shell studies. And that was James' destination.

Quietly the new master crossed the landing. He looked into the Shell passage. Had a single Shell fellow been in sight, James would have had to postpone or abandon his present little scheme. But nobody was to be seen in the passage.



"Who is this man Mulligan who has written to you?" asked Mr. Linton. "I don't know, sir," answered Tom Merry.

James knew that most, if not all, of the Shell fellows were out of the House. He had put in some careful observation before coming up. One or two fellows might be in the studies. He had to chance that.

He walked quickly, but very quietly, up the passage to No. 10.

Had a study door opened and a junior come out, James would have had to pass on and affect to be merely walking through the passage.

But no door opened: no fellow came out. James was in luck. He stepped quickly into Tom Merry's study and shut the door.

He breathed rather hard when he was inside.

But he was in no danger there. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were all at football practice with a crowd of other fellows. James had picked his time well. Only Trimble had seen him upstairs at all; and Trimble, being in his Form, could be ordered off—and James had carefully cleared him off the scene.

He looked round Study No. 10 as, a quarter of an hour ago, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had looked round it. He made little sound, moving almost on tiptoe.

From an inner pocket he drew a folded newspaper. It was a paper entitled "Sporting Snips."

With that paper in his hand James stepped towards the study cupboard.

There was a lock on the cupboard door—and James breathed hard and his eyes glinted green as he found that it was locked and the key gone.

But the next moment he smiled.

This was all the better for James. No one was likely to suspect that a racing paper had been specially concealed in Tom Merry's study shortly before a search by the Housemaster was due. But if anyone did, no one could suspect that it had been concealed in a locked cupboard!

There was sufficient space under the cupboard door for the paper to be pushed in. James stooped, compressed the folded paper as flat as possible, and pushed it under the cupboard door.

He pushed it completely out of sight.

Later, when Railton came up, "Sporting Snips" was going to be found in Study No. 10—inside a locked cupboard!

James smiled sourly.

Probably he would not have smiled had he been aware that that study cupboard had a human occupant, who was gazing in dumb-founded amazement at the sporting paper that had been pushed under the cupboard door.

But James, of course, had no idea of that. James was wary, he was watchful, he was suspicious; but he never dreamed that a junior would

did not even belong to the House was locked in the cupboard in Study No. 10.

Having disposed so neatly of that paper, James turned back at once to the study door.

He opened it a few inches and listened, and then glanced out, his heart beating a little fast.

But the coast was still clear.

Quietly but swiftly James stepped out and shut the door after him. With stealthy but swift steps he went back to the study landing.

There he paused to wipe a spot of perspiration from his brow.

He had had to take some risk—but the risk had not materialised. Cunning and caution had served him well. With quite a casual air, he went down from the study landing and walked out into the quad.

### NO ESCAPE.

**G**EORGE FIGGINS almost wondered whether he was dreaming.

He was absolutely astounded.

Figgins had been a quarter of an hour in that study cupboard. He had not enjoyed those fifteen minutes.

How long that ass D'Arcy was going to leave him there, after catching him so neatly, Figgy did not know. But he had little doubt that he was going to stay there till the fellows came up to tea.

That would be a good time yet.

In the meantime, Figgins devoted concentrated thought to the problem of getting away. He did not want a crowd of School House juniors to root him out of that cupboard. It was only too certain that Figgy would be ragged for his unexampled cheek in penetrating into a School House study in quest of that captured football. Figgy was fearfully anxious to get away before the School House fellows came in.

But it was rather a problem.

The upper part of the cupboard was shut off by a large shelf which extended from the back nearly to the door, and under which the long-legged Figgy was uncomfortably ducked. It was not very easy to get at the lock.

Still, he got at it, and tried his pocket-knife on it in the faint hope of snapping it open from inside.

He made many attempts. They all failed. And Figgy, almost in despair, was trying to think of other means when he heard a sound in the study.

For a moment he supposed that it was Tom Merry & Co. coming in, and that the game was up.

Figgy clenched his hands, ready for hitting out when the door was thrown open. But the next moment he realised that it was not the arrival of the owners of the study.

There was no sound of footsteps—no sound of voices—no click of a key in the cupboard lock. The sound he heard was that of a quiet movement, as of some fellow moving stealthily.

Figgins remained quite quiet.

Who it was sneaking into Tom Merry's study in that stealthy way he had no idea, but he supposed, as a matter of course, that it was some School House fellow.

Whoever it was, did not know that he was in that cupboard—that was clear. It was not some fellow who knew that D'Arcy had locked him in and had looked in on that account.

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Figgy did not want to draw attention.

If he was going to escape from his prison he had to do it while there was no one in the study.

If that fellow did not know that he was there, he had only to wait till that fellow was gone before recommencing his attempt to get the cupboard door open.

He waited in silence.

What happened next made him wonder whether he was dreaming. There was a dim twilight in that cupboard with the door closed. But Figgy's eyes were used to it by this time.

He saw a folded newspaper pushed under the door of the cupboard. He gazed at it, as it came, with popping eyes.

He was already sure that the unseen fellow in the study did not know that he was there. But this was proof of it.

Somebody was parking that sporting paper in the cupboard by the extraordinary method of pushing it under the door.

Who he was, and why he was doing it, Figgins could not even begin to guess. He could only gaze in astonishment.

There was hardly a sound from the fellow outside the cupboard. What he was doing he was doing secretly, stealthily, surreptitiously.

Faintly Figgins heard the sound of a closing door. The mysterious visitant to Tom Merry's study was gone.

Figgins rubbed his eyes.

He would have fancied that he had dreamed this strange episode but for the sporting paper that lay folded at his feet.

"Well, my only hat!" breathed the astounded Figgins.

He moved at last and picked up the paper. He gave quite a jump as he discerned the title, "SPORTING SNIPS," on the front page.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Figgins.

He blinked at that racing paper.

Figgins, like the rest of St. Jim's, had heard that Green Man story about Tom Merry & Co. He remembered it now, with that racing paper in his hand.

But it was clear that it was no member of Study No. 10 who had pushed that paper under the door. Fellows would not creep on tiptoe about their own study; neither would they put a newspaper away by the extraordinary method of slipping it under a locked door.

It was, Figgins had to conclude, some sort of a jape—some fellow, with that Green Man story in mind, sticking a racing paper in Tom Merry's study. Racke of the Shell, perhaps. He was the kind of fellow to think that sort of thing a joke.

Figgins gave a grunt as he thought of that explanation.

It was a rotten sort of a joke, if it was a joke, for if official eyes fell on that paper by some chance it meant serious trouble for the fellows to whom the study belonged.

Figgy had come to Study No. 10 on the war-path, and he fully expected a ragging if he did not succeed in escaping before Tom Merry & Co. came in to tea. But the warfare of the rivals of St. Jim's was always above board, and, House rivalry apart, they were very good friends.

This sort of thing was not above board. This was hitting below the belt. And Figgy's mind was made up at once.

For whatever reason that putrid rag had been parked in Tom Merry's study, it was not going to remain there.

Figgins packed that racing paper away very

carefully under his own waistcoat to carry away with him when he left.

It was not the sort of thing a fellow liked to carry about with him, but once outside the House it would be easy enough to get rid of it.

Then Figgins devoted his attention once more to getting out.

Once more he strove, with manful determination, to get that lock open from the inside with his pocket-knife.

There was still ample time before tea, and nobody was likely to come to the study before then and hear him.

He hacked and he jabbed and he wriggled and waggled the pocket-knife, and was suddenly rewarded by a sharp snap.

The blade had gone!

"Blow!" breathed Figgins.

Figgy was a determined fellow and a handy fellow, but he was no cracksmán. That cupboard lock was not a specially good one, but it defied his efforts from inside.

Figgins breathed hard and deep. He had another blade to his pocket-knife, and he was not going to give in.

But time was passing, and it was drawing perilously near the time now when the School House fellows might come in. Then it would be too late.

"Oh scissors!" gasped Figgins suddenly.

He heard a door open.

Some unspeakable brute was coming to the study again. Was it the Terrible Three at last?

Then Figgins jumped as he heard a deep voice—a familiar voice. It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

"Merry is not here, Mr. Linton."

"No, sir. The boys are coming in to tea now—probably it is a matter of only a few minutes."

Figgins heard the rather thin, reedy voice of the master of the Shell.

"Perhaps we had better wait," said Mr. Railton. "It will be better for Merry to be present."

"Undoubtedly, sir."

Figgins heard the two masters enter the study. Figgy could have groaned.

Why a Housemaster and a Form-master had barged into Tom Merry's study at that unlucky moment he could not guess. It was extremely unusual, and utterly unexpected.

What they would say if they discovered a junior of the other House locked in the study cupboard, Figgins could not imagine. And if they waited there till Tom Merry came in, they could hardly fail to make the discovery.

Mr. Railton's deep voice came to his ears again. "This matter seems quite inexplicable, Mr. Linton. Yet I am not disposed to give up my faith in Merry."

"I agree with you, sir. I shall not easily believe that I have been so grossly deluded, and yet—"

"A careful search of the study should make the matter clear," said Mr. Railton. "If it is the fact that Merry has dealings with disreputable racing men, as that letter would imply, it is scarcely possible that some evidence of it will fail to be found in his study."

"I have no doubt about that, sir."

"I have every hope," said Mr. Railton, "that no such evidence will transpire. If, however, any such thing is found, the matter must go before the headmaster."

"Undoubtedly!"

"No hint has been given that a search is to

be made; no preparation can have been made here for it?"

"None whatever, sir. No one is even aware that I have consulted you on the subject, except Mr. Shivers, who stepped into your study while we were discussing the matter."

"It is a disagreeable task," said Mr. Railton, "but it must be gone through. I think I hear the boys coming."

Figgins caught his breath.

There was going to be a search of Tom Merry's study as soon as Tom came in. He was suspected of "blagging" in Aubrey Racke's style. And if that racing paper had been found in his study cupboard, instead of being safely parked under Figgy's waistcoat—

"Oh gum!" breathed Figgins.

Figgy was not so keen as his Scottish chum, Kerr; but Figgy was no fool. He knew now why that racing paper had been pushed under the door of the study cupboard. It was not a malicious jape. It had been done by someone who somehow had found out that a search of the study was being discussed, and it had been put there to be found by the searchers. That was as clear as daylight now to George Figgins, and he was glad, from the bottom of his heart, that Arthur Augustus had turned that key on him.

### A VERY UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY!

"TOM MEWWY, deah boy—"

"Hallo, old ass!"

"You had bettah take this key."

"That key!" repeated Tom, staring at it.

A crowd of fellows were in the changing-room after games practice. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther had changed, and were about to leave, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a cheery grin on his aristocratic visage, held out a key to the captain of the Shell.

"It's the key of your studdy cupboard," explained Arthur Augustus.

The Terrible Three gazed at him.

"And what," asked Monty Lowther, "are you prancing about with the key of our study cupboard for?"

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"There's wathah a surprise for you in that cupboard, deah boys," he answered. "Pewwaps it is time you let Figgins out."

"Figgins!" ejaculated the three.

"Yaas, wathah! You see, about an hour ago I spotted Figgy dodgin' into your studdy aftah that foothah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"The cheeky New House sweep!" exclaimed Manners.

"He dodged out of sight when he heard me comin' into the study!" chortled Arthur Augustus. "He dodged into the cupboard to keep doggo, and I turned the key on him. Ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey! Mean to say that Figgins is locked up in our study cupboard?" exclaimed Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! Ovah an hour!" chirruped Arthur Augustus. "I thought it would be wathah a lesson to him about sneakin' into the School House aftah foothahs, you know. He seemed vevy watty when I left him to it, and I have no doubt that he is in a fighwful wage by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Yaas, it's wathah funnay, isn't it?" grinned Gussy.

"Fancy old Figgy catchin' himself in a twap like that! He will be wagin' wildly by this time. He was woahing with wage when I left him."

"Poor old Figgy!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll go and let him out—"

"And spill some ink over him!" said Lowther. "I've got a bottle of gum in the study," said Manners. "Figgins can have it. We'll teach New House swabs to sneak into our study! Come on!"

And the Terrible Three, with grinning faces, lost no time in getting to the Shell passage. At the doorway of Study No. 9, Skimpole of the Shell gave them a solemn blink through his spectacles.

"Have you seen Figgins?" he asked.

"We're going to!" said Tom, laughing.

"It is very odd," said Skimpole. "He was coming to my study to look at my book—a very interesting, indeed enthralling, volume called 'Evolution in Relation to the Origin of Non-Existent Species.'"

"Help!"

"And he said 'Wait a minute,' more than an hour ago, and I have not seen him since," said Skimpole. "Do you think he can have forgotten, Merry?"

"I think he's been unavoidably detained!" said Tom, with a chuckle. "Lend me the book, will you, Skimmy—I want to light the study fire for tea!"

"My dear Merry—"

The Terrible Three, grinning, went on to their study, leaving Skimpole blinking. They were laughing as they went into Study No. 10—never dreaming of what awaited them there.

But at the sight of two masters with faces as serious as owls, they left off laughing quite suddenly, and stared blankly instead at Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton.

"Mr. Railton!" exclaimed Tom.

The School House master rose to his feet.

"You may shut the door, Merry!" he said.

Tom, in amazement, shut the door.

Tom had not forgotten the mysterious episode of the letter from Wayland that morning. It had, in fact, haunted him through the day. But in the rush of football practice, it had passed from his mind, and at the present moment he was thinking of George Figgins, locked in the study cupboard. So it did not occur to him to connect the presence of the two masters in his study with that mysterious letter. He was simply astonished to see them there. He was not long in being enlightened.

"I am here to search this study, Merry!" said the Housemaster quietly. "Your Form-master will be present, and I desire you to be present also."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

His face flushed.

An unexpected descent was sometimes made on a study belonging to some fellow under suspicion. It had happened to Racke of the School House, and Clampe of the New House. But it was a new experience for Tom Merry, and it gave him a very unpleasant shock.

"Mr. Linton has shown me that letter received by you this morning," went on Mr. Railton. "We have both decided upon a search here. You have, I presume, no objection to make."

"None at all, sir!" said Tom. "I have nothing in my study that I should be ashamed for any master in the school to see."

"I hope and trust that that is the case, Merry; and such a search, taking place entirely without warning to the parties concerned, can only be for

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your benefit in the event of no discovery being made."

"I understand that, sir!" said Tom.

His friends stood silent.

"Very well, Merry, hand me your keys, if you keep anything locked in this study," said the Housemaster.

"I keep nothing locked, sir—I've nothing to hide!" said Tom proudly. "Neither have my friends."

"I feel sure of it, Merry," said Mr. Railton kindly. "But I have my duty to do, as you must understand, in the very unusual circumstances."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

The Terrible Three stood by the shut door in a row; Mr. Linton stood by the window, and the Housemaster proceeded to examine the study.

Tom's heart was beating faster. Baggy Trimble's tattle, Silverson's enmity, and that mysterious letter from the Black Bull in Wayland had placed him in this unpleasant position. It was distinctly disagreeable to have his study searched as a spot under suspicion, as Aubrey Racke's had been.

Mr. Railton did not believe that a discovery was to be made. But his search was very thorough, all the same. Nothing of a suspicious nature was to be seen—but anything of the kind, naturally, would be put out of sight. Still, in a junior study, there were few places where things could be put out of sight, and it was not long before Mr. Railton had got through, with the exception of the study cupboard. He came to that at last, and turned the handle to open it; and then uttered an exclamation as he found that it did not open.

"Is this door locked, Merry?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered Tom. "We never keep it locked—but it—it's locked now!"

His colour deepened as he saw the two masters exchange a glance. Both their faces grew sterner.

"This door is locked, and the key taken away!" said Mr. Railton coldly. "Kindly give me the key at once, Merry."

"Very well, sir! But—"

"Am I to understand, Merry, that there is something in this cupboard that you do not desire me to see?" exclaimed Mr. Railton sternly.

"Ye-e-s, sir!" stammered Tom. "But—but I suppose it can't be helped now."

"It certainly cannot," said the School House master in a very grim tone. "Give me that key instantly."

Tom handed over the key.

Mr. Railton unlocked the cupboard door and threw it wide open. Mr. Linton stepped to his side, both looking into the cupboard. And both gave a start of surprise as a New House junior emerged from the cupboard with a crimson face.

### NO EVIDENCE!

"WHAT—" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Wha-a-t—" stuttered Mr. Linton. Figgins stood crimson.

The two masters gazed at him as if he had been the grisly spectre of a New House junior.

The Terrible Three stood silent. Monty Lowther—behind the two masters—winked at his comrades.

"Figgins!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Ye-e-s, sir!" gasped Figgins.

"You—you—you were locked in that—that cupboard!" stuttered the Housemaster. "What does

this mean, Figgins? What are you, a New House boy, doing here at all?"

"I—I—" stammered Figgins.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Were you aware that this New House boy was here?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Is that why you did not desire me to look into the cupboard?"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Tom. "You—you see, sir, Figgins came here for a lark, that's all, and a fellow shut him in that cupboard, and took the key away! He only gave it to me a few minutes before I came up."

"Absurd!" said Mr. Railton.

"Ridiculous!" said Mr. Linton.

"Figgins, you should not play these foolish pranks!" said Mr. Railton. "Neither, certainly, should a thoughtless boy have shut you in that cupboard. This is—is absurd!"

"I—I—" stammered Figgins, covered with confusion. "I—I—"

Mr. Railton waved his hand towards the door.

"You had better go, Figgins!" he said. And

Mr. Linton gave a sniff of annoyance. Schoolboy larks were not much to the taste of the master of the Shell.

"Oh! Certainly, sir!" stammered Figgins. "I—I'm sorry if I—I made you jump, sir!"

"Nonsense! Go, at once."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

Figgins went to the door. His glance dwelt for a moment on an old footer on the shelf as he went! But he had no chance of grabbing that footer. Anyhow, he had escaped—without a ragging. The presence of the masters was, after all, a spot of luck for George Figgins. He had got out of his fix.

He gave the Terrible Three a rather sheepish grin as he departed. And he lost no time in scudding down the passage. There was a shout on the study landing—and then a roar of voices:

"New House tick!"

"Bai Jove! There's Figg!"

"Collar that New House bounder!"

"Scrag him!"

"Roll him down!"

"Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Plenty of School House fellows were coming up now, and Figgins seemed to be having to run the gauntlet. Mr. Railton stepped hastily out of the study.

"Boys!" he called. "Order, please!"

"Oh cwumbs! There's Waiton!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Rotten luck!" grunted Jack Blake.

The Housemaster's word was law. Figgins, grinning, cut down the stairs, and departed in peace.

Mr. Railton turned back into Study No. 10.

The incident had been absurd and disconcerting. However, he proceeded to search the study cupboard.

Tom Merry & Co. waited in silence. They did not, of course, expect the Housemaster to discover anything there—as there was nothing to be discovered. They did not even dream of what would have been discovered had not Figgins so fortunately been a prisoner in that cupboard.

Mr. Railton found all sorts of things in that cupboard, from jam and pickles to a broken tennis racket and an old football boot. But he found nothing that could be supposed to have

the slightest bearing on any "blagging" proclivities of the members of that study.

His face had quite cleared when he had concluded. And Mr. Linton was looking quite genial.

"I am sorry, Merry, that this has been necessary," said the Housemaster, "and I am glad to say that I am quite satisfied; and your Form-master, I think, is quite satisfied, also."

"Quite!" said Mr. Linton, with a nod.

"That very strange letter remains unexplained," continued Mr. Railton. "You have no explanation to offer, Merry?"

Tom hesitated a moment.

Obviously, he could not mention Manners' suspicion, of which there was not a remote spot of proof. And yet—

Mr. Railton gave him a searching look as he hesitated to answer.

"If you have anything to say, Merry—" he said.

"Only this, sir," said Tom slowly. "Whoever wrote that note knew that my Form-master would see it. I believe it was written specially for my Form-master to see. I cannot help believing, now I have thought over it, that it was done by somebody who dislikes me and would be glad to see me landed in trouble. I think somebody got Mulligan to write that letter."

"And I am sure of that, sir!" said Manners quietly.

"I don't see how it can mean anything else, sir, as I know nothing of the man!" said Tom.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Railton, staring at him. "That is a most extraordinary suggestion!"

"It's the only way I can account sir, for a man I do not know having written a letter which he must have known would do me harm," said Tom steadily. "Someone must have told him my name, or he could not have written. Whoever told him my name must be the person who got him to write that letter."

There was a brief silence.

"Further investigations, so far as possible, will be made in this matter," said Mr. Railton at last. "For the present, Merry, you must not consider yourself under suspicion, though the matter is very perplexing."

"Thank you, sir!"

With that the two masters quitted the study. And Tom Merry, little dreaming of the narrow escape he had had, or how much he owed to Figgins of the New House, sat down to tea with his chums.

#### FOOTER FOR FIGGINS!

**T**AP!

"Trot in!" called out Tom Merry. The door of Study No. 10 opened, and to the astonishment of the Terrible Three the rugged features of George Figgins appeared in the doorway.

They jumped up at once.

If Figg had returned for another attempt on that captured football they were prepared to smite Figgins hip and thigh.

But Figg held up his hand in a sign of peace.

"Pax!" he said.

"If you're after that footer, you New House swab—" said Monty Lowther.

"Never mind that footer now," said Figgins. "I'm after something else—something a bit more important to you, Tommy."

"Is this a friendly call?" asked Tom, laughing. "Right on the wicket!"

"Fire away, then, and have some of this cake!"

Figgins grinned, and accepted a slice of cake. But his face became serious again.

"I've talked it over with Kerr," he said. "Kerr thinks I'd better put you wise and bring the goods with me. Kerr's pretty cute. There's somebody in this House, Tommy, who would like to see you up before the Head."

The Terrible Three looked at Figgins very attentively. They knew that much already, but how Figgy knew was quite a mystery to them.

Figgins groped under his waistcoat, and, to their utter amazement, he produced "Sporting Snips" from that unexpected hide-out.

"No chance of Railton coming back, I suppose?" he asked.

"No; he's through here," said Tom. "But I'd rather not have that muck in my study, all the same, Figgins! What the merry thump have you brought it here for, you unlimited ass?"

"Not in our line," said Monty Lowther, "and I never thought it was in yours, Figgins. Have you taken to backing your fancy, like Racke?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Figgins indignantly. "Think it's mine?"

"You carry other fellows' sporting papers about, tucked under your waistcoat?" asked Manners.

"Lucky for Tom Merry I did!" grunted Figgins.

"For me?" repeated Tom. "How's that?"

"You don't know anything about that paper?" asked Figgins.

"How should I know anything about it, fat-head?" demanded Tom. "Wandering in your mind—if you've got one?"

"Well," said Figgins, "whether you know anything about it or not, you came jolly near being walked in to the Head to answer for it."

"Is that a riddle?" asked Tom, mystified.

"Where do you think I got that paper?"

"Blessed if I know, unless you've been raiding Racke, or Cutts of the Fifth."

Figgins pointed to the study cupboard in Study No. 10.

"There!" he said.

Tom Merry's face flushed and his eyes glinted.

"Better chuck it, George Figgins," he said.

"We've always been pretty good friends, except in the way of House rows, but if that's what you call a joke you're the kind of joker that gets his head punched—and hard, too!"

"If you fancy you can punch my head, you School House tick, the sooner you get on with it the better!" said Figgins, warlike at once. "They say a dead donkey is a rare sight, but there'll be one seen here soon afterwards."

"What do you mean by saying that you found that putrid racing rag in my study?" demanded Tom angrily.

"Exactly what I say," retorted Figgins. "I generally do!"

"Then I'll jolly well——"

"Don't be a fool, Tom!" said Manners quietly.

"What?" roared Tom.

"Getting deaf? I said don't be a fool!"

"You silly ass, Manners, do you think I'm going to let a New House tick bring a racing paper here and say that he found it in my study?" hooted Tom.

"Why not, when he did?"

"He did?" gasped Tom. "Mad?"

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"Look here, Manners——" growled Monty Lowther.

"Don't you be a fool, either," said Manners. "Shut up, both of you, and give Figgy a chance to speak. I fancy I can see how it stands—but let Figgy tell us."

"I'm waiting to tell you," grunted Figgins. "But if a fellow talks about punching my head and——"

"Tom can't help being an ass," said Manners soothingly.

"Look here——" roared Tom.

"For goodness' sake shut up, and let Figgins speak!" exclaimed Manners testily. "Can't you see that he's saved your bacon? Is that how you thank a chap for getting you out of an awful row?"

"I don't see——"

"Do you ever see anything? Shut up and listen, instead of jawing."

"Keep your temper, old bean," said Figgins amicably. "I never said I thought the rag was yours, did I? I said I found it in that cupboard."

"Well, you couldn't have——"

"Look here——"

"Will you shut up?" shrieked Manners. "Let Figgy speak."

"I've come here to do you a good turn!" exclaimed Figgins wrathfully. "Kerr thought I'd better, and he knows. But——"

"Keep cool, old chap!" said Manners. "Tom will understand if you put it in words of one syllable."

Grunt, from Tom. But he stood silent.

"I was in that cupboard about an hour after that fathead, Gussy, locked me in," snapped Figgins. "While I was inside, that rag was shoved under the cupboard door by some toad who sneaked into this study on tiptoe to do it."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"And when I heard the beaks here I knew what it meant and took jolly good care that they never saw it," said Figgins.

"Oh!" repeated Tom.

"I never saw who did it," went on Figgins. "But whoever did it knew that the beaks were coming up. He must have found out somehow and stuck that rag into your cupboard, all ready for them to find! Now do you understand?"

Tom stood quite petrified. He did understand now, and his breath was taken away.

"By gum!" muttered Monty Lowther.

"I can't guess who the fellow was," went on Figgins. "Racke's a pretty bad hat; but I can't think he'd go so far, though he doesn't like you a lot. Croke wouldn't—— I just can't guess who the sneaking toad was. It was somebody in this House, that's all I know. Kerr said I'd better tip you to put you on your guard, and bring the rag here for you to see; though the sooner you stick it in the fire the better. Kerr said that a fellow who would do a dirty trick like that would do it again if it didn't come off. He says you'd better look out."

Figgins turned to the door.

"That's the lot," he said. "But if you fancy you can punch my head I'll wait for you round the corner of the gym."

"Hold on, Figgy," said Tom in a subdued voice.

"Well?"

"Don't mind what I said, old man. I didn't catch on, of course. You've done me a good turn—a bigger thing than you think," said Tom. "I'm up against a cur who won't stop at much—"



and you've stopped him. Don't mind what I said."

Figgins grinned. "No bones broken, old tulip!" he answered. "O.K.!"

"Wait a minute," said Tom. He stepped across to the shelf and took down an old footer—a footer well known to Figgins. Manners and Lowther stared at him for a moment, and then nodded.

"My footer—" said Figgins, staring. "Yours, old chap!" said Tom. "Shove it under your arm. I'd better go down to the door with you, or you won't get it out of the House. Manners, shove that rotten rag into the fire while I'm gone."

Figgins, grinning, departed with the disputed football under his arm. Tom Merry went down with him to see him safe out of the House with it.

Manners picked up the sporting paper from the table, but he did not stick it in the fire. Manners had quite another use for "Sporting Snips."

**RETURNED WITH THANKS !**

**J**AMES SILVERSON stood looking out of the doorway of the School House after third school the following day with a clouded brow.

James was deeply puzzled. Looking out into the quad, he could see a number of juniors punting an old footer about before dinner.

There were School House and New House fellows in the little crowd—Tom Merry & Co. mingling with Figgins & Co. on unusually amicable terms. In happy concert they punted the old footer that had been a bone of contention and a prize of war the previous day.

Mr. Silverson could not understand it. Tom Merry's face looked happy and careless. Manners and Lowther were as cheery as could be. They certainly did not look as if any disaster had happened in their study.

Yet how had it failed? James had caught a few words at Mr. Railton's door when the master of the Shell was consulting him, which had put him wise in time as to that intended search. He had planted "Sporting Snips" all ready to be unearthed in that search. And—nothing had come of it!

The discovery of that racing paper in a locked cupboard in Tom's study was surely enough to do the trick—after that letter from the Black Bull in Wayland. Yet nothing had transpired!

James could not make it out. He knew that the search had been made; he knew that the two masters had awaited Tom in his study; so he could not have found that incriminating evidence in time and got rid of it. Had Railton overlooked it? And Linton, too? It did not seem possible. In fact, it was not possible. So what?

Anyhow, it was clear that no trouble had fallen on the Terrible Three. They were as merry as could be that sunny morning. James' lips closed in a hard line as he watched them.

He turned from the House doorway at last and went to Mr. Railton's study. The School House master gave him a glance of inquiry. He did not like Mr. Silverson much, and he was rather glad that the new master's stay at St. Jim's was likely to be brief. But he was polite and courteous.

"You will excuse me, sir," said Mr. Silverson. "When I came to speak to you yesterday I caught a few words inadvertently which gave me an impression that some search was intended in the

study belonging to a junior here who is distantly related to me."

He coughed. "Naturally, sir, I feel a little concerned, as the boy is related to me," he said. "Possibly you would not object to telling me whether anything to his discredit has been discovered?"

"I am glad to say—nothing!" answered Mr. Railton.

"I am extremely glad to hear it, Mr. Railton," said James. "You are aware that I have had my doubts of the boy since it transpired that he was seen out of bounds in a disreputable resort, and—"

"That matter was explained to my complete satisfaction," said Mr. Railton.

"Perfectly so, sir; but it left me with a painful feeling of doubt," said Mr. Silverson. "I have received many acts of kindness, sir, from Merry's guardian—Miss Fawcett—and I could not help thinking of the distress that would be caused to that very estimable lady in the event of any disgraceful discovery."

Mr. Railton's manner thawed a good deal.

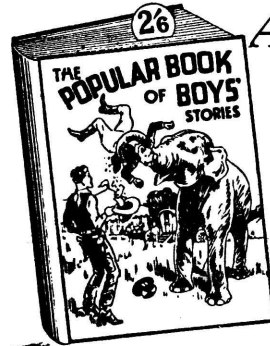
"I understand," he said. "And I am happy to assure you, Mr. Silverson, that no such discovery was made in Merry's study yesterday. The search was conducted with the greatest thoroughness, and nothing whatever to his discredit came to light."

"Thank you, sir. I am very much relieved," said Mr. Silverson, and he retired from the study, leaving the Housemaster with a rather improved opinion of him.

But if James was feeling relieved he did not look relieved after the Housemaster's door had closed on him. He looked as black as thunder.



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Then, as he saw Monsieur Morny in the passage and caught the French master's eyes turned rather curiously on him, he went hastily into his own study and shut the door.

In that study he clenched his hands and scowled as blackly as he liked without danger of being observed.

"The fools!" he breathed. "How did they miss it? How can they have missed it? Fools!"

He paced the study savagely. It was a few minutes later that he noticed a parcel lying on the study table.

He stopped and looked at it.

It was a small parcel, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. Evidently it had been brought there for him while he was absent from the study—which was rather perplexing, as he was not expecting a parcel of any kind.

He cut the string and unwrapped the brown paper.

Then he stared.

The contents of the little parcel were revealed. The contents consisted of a copy of the racing paper "Sporting Snips."

Mr. Silverson blinked at that attractive newspaper.

He knew all about "Sporting Snips." It was his favourite publication. But he kept that periodical very dark at St. Jim's. He was careful to purchase it at a distance from the school and to keep it strictly out of sight. Certainly he had never had a copy delivered to him before at the school—especially wrapped up in a brown paper parcel.

For a moment or two he was quite bewildered.

Then he spotted an inscription written on the margin of the folded paper. It was written with a brush in capital letters. James gazed at it; he goggled at it.

### RETURNED WITH THANKS!

That was the inscription.

Slowly James Silverson picked up that sporting paper and examined it. From its date, and from pencil-marks which had been carefully made against the names of some of the horses in the lists, he knew that paper. It was the one he had slipped under the cupboard door in Tom Merry's study the previous afternoon.

Railton had not found it, Linton had not found it; it had not been found till James himself found it now, wrapped up in brown paper on his study table.

Returned with thanks!

James wiped a spot of sweat from his brow.

Had that young rascal found it and guessed from whom it came?

How could he? James had kept his eyes open. He knew that Tom Merry had not gone up to the study till after the masters were there. Neither had his two friends.

Had somebody else found it, then? Was there someone in the House who suspected—who knew—who had, perhaps, watched him the previous day when he had made so certain that he was unobserved?

James felt something like a chill.

He could not understand this. But he had a feeling that he was treading on thin ice that might crack under his feet.

He stirred the embers of the study fire together and crammed the racing paper in and stirred it with the poker till it was consumed.

"Sporting Snips" disappeared from existence, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,649.

but it did not disappear from James' harassed mind. Surprise, perplexity, and alarm mingled in his breast. The Worm of St. Jim's was making the discovery, made before him by unnumbered rogues, that the way of the transgressor was a troubled and thorny one.

### SAUCE FOR THE GANDER!

"RAILTON'S gone out," said Monty Lowther.

"Has he?" said Tom Merry.

"Yes; I've had an eye on him."

Tom Merry and Manners looked at Monty



Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton both gave a start of surprise when they saw that the parcel was gone.

Lowther. Whether Mr. Railton had, or had not, gone out was a matter of complete indifference to them. Apparently it was not to Monty Lowther.

"I mean——" went on Monty.

"Oh!" said Manners. "You mean something?"

"Yes, ass! When a beak goes out, he's not in his study," said Lowther. "And when a beak isn't in his study, a fellow can borrow his phone."

"What the thump do you want a phone for?"

asked Tom Merry. "I was thinking of a spot of footer."

"Do you ever think of anything else?" asked Monty. "Never mind footer now. Don't you fellows agree that one good turn deserves another?"

"Yes, of course. What—"

"Suppose a man comes specially to your study to make you a present of something, without even being asked," argued Lowther. "Isn't it the right thing to take a little trouble to make him a present of the same kind?"

"I shouldn't wonder. What the dickens are you burbling about?" asked Tom, puzzled.



a New House junior emerged from the cupboard. It gins!

"Come into the House and see," answered Monty.

The three were in the quad some time after dinner. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and Tom was thinking of putting the junior House eleven through its paces, with a view to the House matches coming along. Manners was thinking of taking his camera for a walk. However, both of them followed Monty Lowther into the House.

Lowther's destination was Mr. Railton's study.

Borrowing a telephone in a master's study was a matter that required some caution. But the coast was clear. Railton had gone out, and Linton had gone with him. Other masters, perhaps, were in their studies, but the doors were closed.

In a few minutes the three Shell fellows were in Railton's study—two of them feeling a little uneasy, but Monty Lowther full of beans. Monty evidently had some jape in his fertile mind, and when Monty had a jape in his mind, he was like a dog with its teeth in a bone—there was no making him let go. So his chums had to give him his head.

Lowther glanced through the telephone directory. Then he rang up Wayland 2-double-2.

That, his chums knew, was the number of Pudsey's, the newsagent's. Pudsey's supplied them with "Holiday Annuals," and such volumes.

Monty made his chums a sign to listen-in, and they drew nearer the telephone.

"Pudsey's!" came a voice over the wires.

"Speaking from St. Jim's," said Monty Lowther, his voice taking on quite a change as he spoke into the transmitter, assuming a deep tone. "I require some papers urgently this afternoon. It is very special, and I should be much obliged if you could send them over."

"Certainly, sir! I will send a boy on a bicycle with them," came the answer from Pudsey's. "Is that Mr. Railton speaking?"

"No. The papers are for Mr. Silverson. Please make a note of the name. Mr. Silverson, master of the Fourth Form."

"Yes, Mr. Silverson."

"Please take down a list of the papers. 'Sporting Snips—'"

"Eh?"

"'Sporting Snips,' 'Racing Times,' 'Tinkler's Tipster,' 'Turf News,' 'Newmarket Gazette.' You have all these?"

"Yes, sir, certainly!"

There was a note of surprise in Mr. Pudsey's voice. It was probably the first time he had been rung up by a schoolmaster for a selection of racing papers.

"Monty, you ass!" breathed Tom Merry.

Monty winked at his chums over the telephone. Then he went on in that assumed deep voice into the transmitter.

"I require these papers very specially, Mr. Pudsey. May I rely upon their being delivered here at half-past five?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Pudsey! Please let your boy come to Masters' Common-room, and ask for Mr. Silverson."

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you!"

Monty Lowther rang off.

"See the point?" he murmured. "The Worm brought one of his precious racing papers to our study. Now he's going to have a collection of the same—handed to him in Common-room when all the beaks are at tea there."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

Manners chuckled.

"Good egg!" he said.

"But—" murmured Tom.

"Good egg!" repeated Manners. "Every time Silverson gives our study a knock, we give him a postman's knock back."

"How on earth will he explain away those papers to the other beaks?" gasped Tom Merry.

"How were we going to explain away the one he parked in our study, if old Figgy hadn't snopped it in time?" asked Monty.

Tom Merry laughed.

"All right. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We jolly well know he has racing papers, though he keeps them jolly dark."

"He won't keep this lot dark," grinned Monty Lowther. "This lot is going to be the talk of the House. He may get fed-up on racing papers before we do, if we feed him up to the chin on them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the three, grinning, left Mr. Railton's study.

When they came out into the quad they passed Mr. Silverson, who was walking there in company with Mr. Selby, the master of the Third.

Silverson gave them a sour glance as they passed.

Perhaps the cheery smiles on their faces did not afford him any pleasure.

"By gum, I forgot!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, suddenly coming to a halt within easy hearing of the master of the Fourth.

"Forgot what?" asked Tom.

"I've got to go to the House dame and ask her whether she's got any rat-killer," said Lowther.

Tom stared at him. Manners stared.

"Rat-killer!" repeated Tom. "What on earth for?"

"There was a rat in our study yesterday," answered Lowther.

"Wh-a-at?"

"A rat!" said Lowther. "It must have sneaked in while we were down at the footer. I don't like rats crawling into the study."

Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, glanced at his companion in surprise. He, like Mr. Silverson, heard Monty Lowther's words, but attached no importance to them. If there had been a rat in a junior study, it was natural that a fellow should go to the House dame about it.

So why James Silverson's face suddenly reddened with rage was quite a mystery to Mr. Selby. He looked at Mr. Silverson, quite astonished.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry. "I—I know! Yes, there certainly was a rat in the study!"

"A very nasty rat," said Manners. "We've never had a rat in the study before. I fancy it must have got into the school quite lately."

"Yes; new here, I think," said Lowther. "But we can't have rats crawling into our study, and sneaking round our study cupboard."

The Terrible Three walked on, gurgling.

They did not look round, but they could guess the effect of those remarks on James.

James was aware of the identity of the "rat" to which they alluded. And if looks could have slain, three cheery young lives might really have been in danger from the look that Mr. Silverson cast after them.

### A SURPRISE FOR SILVERSON.

"MR. SILVERSON?"

"Something for you, Silverson!" said Mr. Railton.

Tea was going on in Masters' Common-room.

Most of the St. Jim's staff boarded in the School House, and quite a number of masters were present when the boy from Pudsey's tapped

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at the door, with a bundle of papers under his arm.

Mr. Silverson glanced round, and half-rose from the table.

He was not expecting anybody or anything, and he glanced across the room in surprise at the lad who stood in the doorway with the bundle of newspapers under his arm.

Evening papers were delivered at St. Jim's, and put out in Common-room or in studies for the masters. But it was not yet time for the delivery of evening papers. It seemed that the newsagent's boy had arrived with a special delivery of some sort.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Silverson.

"Your papers, sir," said Pudsey's boy.

He came into the room and came round the long table to deliver the goods to Mr. Silverson.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Selby suddenly, as he saw the title on one of the papers under the lad's arm.

The "Newmarket Gazette" was rather a surprise to the master of the Third. He had never seen that periodical at St. Jim's before.

He stared at the paper, and stared at Mr. Silverson. He compressed his lips! If this young man, who was new to the school, imagined that he could have racing papers delivered to him in a bundle in the Common-room, it was time that the Housemaster spoke to him very plainly, in Mr. Selby's opinion.

"Your papers, sir!" said Pudsey's boy.

He held them out.

Every eye in the Common-room—about two dozen, at the moment—fell on those papers.

Mr. Silverson's own eyes, as they fell on them, almost popped from his face.

He was well acquainted with all those papers. They formed, indeed, his favourite reading. James Silverson was much more deeply interested in the form of Blue Bag or Bonny Barney, than in the form of which he had taken charge in Mr. Lathom's place at St. Jim's. But that predilection of his for racing papers was a strict secret. He never revealed it in the school—much less in the Common-room before all the other beaks!

"What—what—what does this mean?" he stammered.

He stared at the papers.

But he made no motion to take them. Pudsey's boy held them out to be taken—and, as they were not taken, they remained held out, under all eyes—suspended like Mahomet's coffin in the air!

"Your papers, sir, what you ordered!" said Pudsey's boy, in surprise. "They're all 'ere, sir—'Newmarket Gazette'—"

"Upon my word!" murmured Mr. Carrington.

"'Turf News'—"

"Amazing!" breathed Mr. Selby.

"'Sporting Snips'—"

"'Mon Dieu!' breathed Monsieur Morny.

"'Tinkler's Tipster'—"

"'Bless my soul!' said Mr. Linton.

"'Racing Times'—"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Silverson, finding his voice. "How dare you bring those papers to me here!"

Pudsey's boy blinked at him.

"Ain't you Mr. Silverson, sir?" he asked.

"I am, but—"

"This 'ere is the Common-room, ain't it, sir?" asked the perplexed boy from Pudsey's. "I asked the porter, sir, and he said it was, and so I come 'ere, sir, to deliver them papers, same as ordered."

Mr. Railton rose to his feet at the head of the table. The Housemaster's face was grim.

"Mr. Silverson," he said, "this is most extraordinary! There is no need to detain the lad—take your papers and let him go."

"They are not my papers!" gasped Mr. Silverson. "There is some mistake here. I gave no such order. I do not even know where this boy comes from."

"It is Pudsey's boy," said Mr. Selby dryly.

"I have never seen him before! I know nothing of him, or his papers! These papers must have been ordered by someone else!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. "I certainly gave no such order."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton, in a very dry tone. "My boy, were you instructed to bring those papers to Mr. Silverson?"

"Yessir!"

"Who gave you the instructions?"

"The gov'nor, sir—Mr. Pudsey," said the boy from Wayland, looking quite bewildered. "I hope I ain't done wrong, sir! Take them to Masters' Common-room and ask for Mr. Silverson, sir, was what the gov'nor says. And I come 'ere."

"It is extraordinary," said Mr. Railton. "No doubt you ordered other papers, and these have been sent in error."

"These papers was ordered, sir!" said the boy from Pudsey's. "I was there when the gov'nor took the list down. If the gentleman don't want them, after all, I s'pose I can take them back."

"I certainly did not order them!" almost shouted Mr. Silverson. "I know nothing about them!"

Pudsey's boy blinked at him, and blinked at Mr. Railton. He was still holding out the bundle of papers under all eyes.

"If you are sure that you did not order these papers, Mr. Silverson—," said the Housemaster.

"I suppose, sir, that I know whether I ordered papers or not!" spluttered Mr. Silverson. "Certainly I did nothing of the kind."

"In that case, the boy had better take them away again," said Mr. Railton. "Take the papers away, my lad, and explain to Mr. Pudsey that they were sent in mistake."

"Yes, sir, if you say so, but there wasn't any mistake, when I saw the order took down, sir!" said the boy from Pudsey's, putting the bundle under his arm again.

"You young rascal!" thundered Mr. Silverson. "Do you dare to say that you saw me give the order?"

Pudsey's boy backed away from him in haste. He was quite alarmed by the look on the face of the master of the Fourth.

"You did not see Mr. Silverson give the order?" asked Mr. Railton.

"Oh, no, sir; it was took down on the telephone, sir! But I see it took down!" said the boy from Pudsey's. "Them was the papers, sir. 'Newmarket Gazette,' 'Racing Times,' 'Sporting Snips,' 'Turf News,' and 'Tinkler's Tipster,' to be delivered to Mr. Silverson, sir—"

"On the telephone!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. Light dawned on his mind. "It is some trick, then—some practical joke—I gave no order on the telephone—my name has been used—"

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton.

"Hem!" said Mr. Selby.

"Um!" said Mr. Linton.

"Take the papers away, my boy!" said the Housemaster hastily.

"Yessir!"

Pudsey's boy retired from the Common-room, with the bundle of papers under his arm. Mr. Silverson sat down again with a crimson face.

The masters at the table exchanged glances. Two or three servants who were in the room were looking at one another curiously. One of them—unseen by the beaks—winked at the others.

Mr. Silverson gasped for breath. He turned at last to Mr. Railton.

"I assure you, sir, that I know nothing—absolutely nothing—of this!" he said. "Some person has used my name on the telephone without my knowledge!"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Railton. "Obviously some foolish practical joke. Let us dismiss the subject."

And the subject was dismissed. But if it was dismissed from speech, it was not dismissed from mind. Mr. Silverson, when he left the

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Common-room, knew perfectly well that all the beaks would be chewing over that extraordinary episode—and that it was not likely to be soon forgotten.

James left the Common-room in a boiling state.

NOT GUSSY!

"PUDSEY'S!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

James almost jumped.

James was boiling. He was almost boiling over. He had left the beaks in the Common-room, as he knew, in a buzz as soon as he was gone.

He knew—he could not doubt—that the affair of the racing papers was a trick on the telephone. But by whom?

Tom Merry or one of his friends—he could not doubt it. They knew somehow, or guessed somehow, what he had done and were hitting back.

He had to find out who had done it—if he could! He had to make it clear that it was a trick on the telephone—to stop the wagging of tongues in Common-room. But how—and who—

Pacing in the quad, James thought it over. It was one of the Terrible Three, or else one of their friends in Study No. 6, or else—really,  
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there were so many fellows to choose from that James felt quite beaten. And then, as he paced and pondered, and breathed rage, the familiar name of Pudsey's fell on his ear.

Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, were passing in the quad. They were not looking towards him, and evidently did not notice him. Their voices floated to his ears as they passed. They were speaking of Pudsey's! What did that mean?

If James had doubted what it meant he could not have doubted when Arthur Augustus' next words fell on his ears.

"I got them on the phone——"

That was enough for James Silverson. He made a bound.

"D'Arcy!" he thundered.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus stopped and turned round, fixing his eyeglass in surprise on the new master of the Fourth. "Yaas, sir!"

Blake, Herries, and Dig came to a halt also. They wondered what was up. They were used to a black and bitter temper from their new Form-master, but James generally kept up appearances in public. Now he was too utterly enraged to think of appearances.

"You young rascal!" he thundered.

Arthur Augustus raised his eyebrows.

"Did you call me a wascal, Mr. Silvahson?" he inquired. "You have no wight to use such an expression! I object to it stwongly."

"I heard what you said!" thundered Mr. Silverson. "Do you dare to deny, D'Arcy, that you telephoned to Pudsey's, the newsagent's in Wayland?"

"I was quite unawah that you were listenin' to my remarks to my fwriends, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "And I see no weason what-evah why my remarks should intewest you."

"You admit that you telephoned to Pudsey's?" roared James Silverson.

"Yaas, certainly!" answered Arthur Augustus.

"That is enough! I shall cane you! I shall thrash you! I—I——" James almost choked. "Come with me, you young scoundrel! I will teach you to play such tricks! Come!"

He grabbed Arthur Augustus by the back of the neck.

"Oh cwumbs! Welease me, Mr. Silvahson!" roared Arthur Augustus. "How dare you gwab me by the collah! I wefuse to be dwagged about by the collah! Welease me at once! Do you heah?"

James did not release the indignant swell of St. Jim's. He hooked him off towards the House by the collar.

Had James had a cane with him, he would have caned Arthur Augustus there and then. As he hadn't, he marched him off to the House, to cane him in his study.

But if James fancied that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the fellow to be hooked about by his collar, James was under a misapprehension.

"Will you welease me?" roared Arthur Augustus. "I can tell you that this sort of thing will not do for St. Jim's! Welease my collah at once!"

"My only hat!" gasped Blake. "Has the man gone dotty?"

"Let D'Arcy go!" shouted Herries.

"What on earth's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming up at a run with Manners and Lowther. "What——"

"Welease me, you wuffian!" yelled Arthur Augustus, resisting with all his strength. "I

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wepeat that I will not be dwagged about like a sack of coke!"

"Shame!" shouted three or four voices.

"Oh gad! What a bargee!" exclaimed Cardew of the Fourth.

"But what——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Goodness knows!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat! Look!"

"Great pip!"

Arthur Augustus, in a state of indignant wrath to which no words could have given expression, suddenly hooked Silverson's leg as James half-led, half-dragged him towards the House.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Silverson, as he tottered.

Bump!

Arthur Augustus wrenched himself away as Silverson bumped on the earth. He jumped away from the sprawling Form-master, panting for breath, his eyes flashing fire.

"The wottah!" he gasped. "The cheekay wottah! Gwabbin' a fellow by his neck, bai Jove! The wank outsidah!"

James scrambled to his feet. He had been enraged before; he was absolutely furious now. He made a spring at Arthur Augustus like a tiger.

But Arthur Augustus was on his guard now. He jumped aside from the rush, and dodged round the Terrible Three.

Perhaps it was by accident that Monty Lowther's leg shot out as James rushed in pursuit. Perhaps it was not. Anyhow, James stumbled over that leg, and for the second time went over in the quad. He gave a loud yell as he crashed.

"Man down!" yelled Figgins of the New House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Is the man pottay?" gasped Arthur Augustus. "What is the mattah with the man? If he has gone off his wockah, I am not goin' to be gwabbed by a wagin' lunatic!"

"Mad as a hatter, I think!" exclaimed Digby.

"Look out, Gussy!" yelled Lowther.

"He's after you!" squealed Baggy Trimble.

"Dodge him, Gustavus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus dodged actively. He really wondered whether Silverson had suddenly taken leave of his senses. He dodged round other fellows, all of whom got into Silverson's way as much as they could.

There was a buzz of excitement. Such a scene had never been witnessed before in the old quad of St. Jim's.

Fellows of both Houses crowded up, staring, exclaiming, laughing. But Mr. Silverson was so frantic with rage by this time that he gave no heed to the sensation he was causing. He came down on Arthur Augustus like a wolf on the fold. Arthur Augustus dodged and twisted and hopped with great activity.

"Go it, Gussy!"

"Dodge him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Here comes Railton!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton was striding on the scene, with a brow of thunder. He had witnessed that extraordinary scene from the window of his study, and had lost no time.

"Mr. Silverson!" he thundered. "Calm yourself! What does this mean? What does this unprecedented scene in the quadrangle mean? I demand an explanation!"

(Continued on page 36.)

# THE REBELS' SURRENDER!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## NO GRUB !

"POOL li'l' Chinee velly hungly—oh, yes!" Thus Yen Chin, the Chow of Cedar Creek, in piteous tones.

Frank Richards & Co. were in deep conversation by the window of the lumber schoolhouse, and did not hear Yen Chin's remark. There were serious expressions on the faces of the three chums. The present state of affairs at the school in the backwoods gave them plenty of food for thought. The lumber school had gone on strike against the dismissal of Miss Meadows.

Mr. Gunten and Mr. Peckover—the master who was to take the place of Miss Meadows—had undauntedly tried to force the rebels to surrender, without success. Frank Richards & Co. had held the fort against all comers, and were prepared to do so in the future, providing they could obtain sufficient food to satisfy their appetites.

Had Chunky Todgers been there the situation would have been far more serious, for Chunky always ate enough for four or five. It was Chunky who had created the food shortage. The fat fellow had succeeded in spending a short time alone in the kitchen. But, however short the time had been, it had been sufficient for Chunky to "polish off" pretty nearly all the remaining stock of food.

Yen Chin had proposed killing him, and, for the sake of a little humour, the other fellows had backed him up. Needless to say, Chunky had become terror-stricken at such a suggestion. In fear of his life, he had dashed away from the school and streaked for home as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

He had left his schoolfellows roaring with laughter, but the smiles soon disappeared from their faces as they discussed the present food situation. If they were to carry on with the strike, and force old man Gunten to accede to their demands, then food must be obtained—and quickly, too.

During the previous night Frank Richards & Co. had made an attempt to get away from the school for the purpose of replenishing the larder. They had had the misfortune, however, to fall foul of two rascals named Four Kings and Dave Dunn, and had been forced to return.

Now day had dawned again, and the fear of being captured by old man Gunten made it risky to make another attempt to get away before nightfall. Meanwhile, there were aching pains in the rebels' stomachs, and not enough food to pacify them. Small wonder, therefore, that Frank Richards and his chums were looking very serious!

Suddenly Frank Richards felt a clutch at his arm, and turned round to find Yen Chin standing beside him.

"Chinee hungly!" said Yen Chin meekly.

"Well, you're not the only one!" replied Frank Richards shortly.

"Pool li'l' Chinee velly hungly!" sighed the Chow of Cedar Creek.

"I guess poor little Chinee will have to remain

hungry!" said Bob Lawless, with a grin. "We've got just about enough food for one meal. We shall have to hold on to that till we get some more."

"I guess that's hoss sense!" said Eben Hacke.

"If we eat up all our grub, how the merry dickens are we going to hold out?" said Bob Lawless grimly.

"Pool li'l' Chinee velly hungly!" sighed the whined Yen Chin. "Gettee velly bad—p'l'aps die!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "We shall have to risk that!"

"Handsome Bob velly funny!" said Yen Chin. "Gettee me some glub!"

"Come back again this afternoon," said Bob Lawless. "We'll see what we can do for you then."

"Pool li'l' Chinee helpee himself to glub, then!" said Yen Chin. "Li'l' Chinee know where glub keepe! Chinee go and——"

Bob Lawless made a grab at the Chow's shoulder and dragged him back.

"I guess you'll do nothing of the kind!" he said emphatically.

"Lettee me go!"

"You're staying with us!"

Yen Chin turned a pleading look in Frank Richards' direction.

"Handsome Flanky gettee me glub?" he asked.

"Sorry, kid! Grub's too short."

"Handsome Beau," said the Chinee, smiling affably at Vere Beauclerc, "you gettee pool li'l' Chinee glub?"

Vere Beauclerc grinned, and shook his head.

"Better ask Bob," he replied. "He's in charge of the kitchen."

"Ugly Bob velly obstinate!" said Yen Chin. "No gettee——"

"What's that, you blessed heathen?" demanded Bob wrathfully. "What am I?"

"Velly obstinate!" said the Chow of Cedar Creek. "Ugly Bob! Yah!"

"By gum," exclaimed Bob Lawless fiercely, making a clutch at the Chinee, "I'll show you whether I'm ugly!"

Bob made a dash towards the Chinee. But Yen Chin was wily. He dodged between the desks, taking care that he did not get near the fellows grouped by the window.

"Yah!" he shouted. "Bob no cathee pool li'l' Chinee! Bob no see! Eyes allee squintee! No lookee staight!"

"You let me catch you, you blessed heathen!" yelled Bob Lawless. "I'll slaughter you! I'll—Ow! Yow! Yoooop!"

Bob Lawless uttered a piercing shriek. In taking a quick turn, his knee had caught the edge of the desk. Next moment Bob stood on one leg, holding the other with his hands and uttering deep lamentations.

"Hard luck!" said Eben Hacke sympathetically. "I guess the galoot deserves lynching!"

"I'll lynch him!" shrieked Bob Lawless. "I'll—Ow! My leg! Yow-ow-ow!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Yen Chin. "Serve ugly Bob right! Allee own fault for nottee gettee pool h'l' Chinee glub!"

"Come here, you little beast! I'll—"

"My hat! Look!" exclaimed Frank Richards, pointing out of the window. "They're going to attack again!"

"What?" ejaculated Bob Lawless, forgetting about his aching knee and darting towards the window.

"There's somebody coming along the trail," said Frank Richards. "It looks like—"

"Jerusalem crickets!" said Eben Hacke, in surprise. "It's an Indian!"

"It is, by gum!" ejaculated Bob Lawless. "It's Injun Dick! What the merry dickens does he want?"

The rebels waited eagerly by the window while Injun Dick rode into the playground, jumped off his horse, and strolled towards the schoolhouse.

### A FATEFUL MESSAGE.

"HIS got a note," said Eben Hacke, as the Indian, drawing his tattered blanket round him, neared the window.

Injun Dick waved a letter in his hand.

"Perhaps old man Gunten's given in and sent us a note to say so," suggested Vere Beauclerc.

"Cheerio, Injun Dick!" sang out Frank Richards. "What's the game?"

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin, moistening his lips with his tongue.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You're never otherwise! What's that note you've got in your hand?"

"Letter for young white chief," said Injun Dick, pointing a grubby forefinger at Bob Lawless.

"For me?" exclaimed Bob.

"Co-rect!"

"Hand it over, then!"

Injun Dick made no attempt to do so.

"Injun thirsty," he said.

"Plenty of water in the creek," said Bob Lawless shortly. "If that note is for me, you'd better hand it over."

"Give Injun twenty-five cents," said the Redskin. "Injun bully boy with glass eye. Ride like the wind to bring note to young white chief."

"I don't think," said Bob Lawless disbelievingly.

"Injun hire horse in Purville," went on the Redskin, still holding the note firmly in his hand.

"What the dickens were you doing in Purville?" demanded Frank Richards. "That's twenty miles away, isn't it, Bob?"

"Nearly," said Bob. "I guess Injun Dick's pulling our legs. He doesn't usually get much farther than the Red Dog at Thompson."

"Injun work," said the Redskin. "Injun meet white chief's father."

"You met my father?" demanded Bob incredulously.

"Co-rect!" said the Redskin. "Great white chief's father meet with accident. Bully boy with glass eye try save him. Injun too late."

"What?" ejaculated Bob Lawless, his face turning pale.

"Injun too late to save great white chief," went on the Redskin. "Tell off horse. Horse kick great white chief in stomach. White chief bad. Write note for Injun."

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"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "You're dreaming—you're—"

"Injun tell frozen truth," said the Redskin. "Young white chief read note. See Injun speak truth."

Bob Lawless' face was deathly pale now.

"Well, hand the note over," he said impatiently.

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin.

"Hang your blessed thirst!" exclaimed Bob irritably. "If you don't give me that note, I'll jolly well come out and take it from you!"

"Injun want drink," insisted the Redskin. "Injun dry."

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "I'm not going to put up with any more of this!"

Bob slid his leg over the window-ledge.

Injun Dick backed away.

"Injun take twenty cents," he said.

"Come here, you coyote!" roared Bob, slipping to the ground.

"Injun take fifteen cents," he said.

"You'll take a thump on the cabeza if you're not careful!" exclaimed Bob, making a grab at the Redskin. "Give me that note! D'you hear?"

"Young white chief welcome to note," said Injun Dick, realising further argument would avail him little. "Injun still thirsty!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Lawless.

He snatched the note from the Redskin's hand and commenced to read the words it contained. As he did so his face went white, and he staggered back.

"Bob," muttered Frank Richards, "what—what's the matter?"

Bob Lawless pulled himself together quickly.

"My popper!" he muttered.

"It's true, then, Bob, what Injun Dick said?" murmured Frank Richards.

"Every word," said Bob Lawless, in broken tones. "He's been kicked in the stomach by his horse at Purville. He's not expected to live, and—"

"Bob!"

"I—I must go to him at once!" said Bob Lawless quickly. "My mother," he added, turning to Injun Dick—"have you told her?"

"Injun tell young white chief's mother," said the Redskin suddenly. "She go see great white chief."

"Oh, gosh!" moaned Bob Lawless. "I shall have to go home for my horse, and—"

"Injun lend young white chief horse," said the Redskin, with unusual willingness.

Bob Lawless brightened up at once.

"Good!" he said. "Where is it?"

"Injun want ten dollars," said the Redskin craftily. "Injun poor man. Lose work if no horse."

"Ten dollars," said Bob Lawless, feeling in his pocket. "I—I've only got five. Will you take those?"

"No take less," said the Redskin, shaking his head. "Injun poor, but Injun generous."

"Here you are, Bob!" sang out Frank Richards, holding out a handful of money to his chum. "Take this, old son!"

Bob Lawless took the money eagerly, and gave his cousin a grateful look as he did so.

"I—I don't know when I shall get back, you fellows," he said, in broken tones. "But whatever you do, stick it out. Don't give in to that galoot Gunten!"

"No fear!" sang out the rebels.





"Get out, you swindling galoot!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, planting his broom in the middle of the new master's back.

Frank Richards reached out of the window and gripped his chum's hand.

"Good luck, Bob, old man!" he said as cheerfully as possible. "I—I hope you won't find uncle so bad as Injun Dick says."

"I hope not," said Bob Lawless.

All thoughts of the barring-out were dismissed from Bob Lawless' mind as he followed Injun Dick to the gates. His one aim was to get to his father as soon as possible, and very soon he was cantering down the trail at a rapid speed, hoping against hope that he would find his father alive when he reached Purville.

Meanwhile, there were anxious faces in the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek. Bob Lawless' trouble was shared by all his schoolfellows. Rancher Lawless was a favourite with them all.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Eben Hacke. "I guess I didn't expect this."

"It's rotten—jolly rotten!" said Frank Richards dismally. "I do hope Bob's popper will pull through."

"So do I," said Vere Beauclerc.

"It ain't much good going on with the strike," said Eben Hacke miserably. "There ain't many of us left, and—"

"We're going on with it," said Frank Richards determinedly. "D'you think we're going to knuckle under to that rotter Gunten just because we've lost old Bob?"

"No, but—"

"If you've had enough, Hacke," said Frank Richards, "you can buzz off!"

"I guess I ain't vamoosing the ranch yet awhile," said Eben Hacke at once. "If you galoots are hanging on, Eben Hacke don't intend to light out."

"Good!"

"Anybody else want to throw up the sponge?" asked Frank Richards.

"Me wantee glub," whined Yen Chin. "Me velly hungly. Handsome Flanky gettee me glub, and—"

"Well, I think we may as well have a little," said Frank Richards. "We shan't be able to fight Gunten and his gang on empty stomachs."

"That's true."

"It won't be much of a feed," said Frank Richards. "It'll fill a corner, though, and help us to carry on for a while."

The schoolboys trooped into the kitchen, and partook of a little of the remaining food. It could hardly be called a meal, but, nevertheless, it helped to appease the rebels' pangs of hunger.

The spirits of the schoolboy strikers were at a very low ebb, but under Frank's cheery influence they improved wonderfully. And when at length the meal concluded, the rebels were resolved to carry on the strike until their demands were acceded to, and Miss Meadows was reinstated schoolmistress at Cedar Creek.

#### MISS MEADOWS' MESSAGE.

"JERUSALEM crickets! Here's that Injun again!"

Eben Hacke made that remark as the schoolboys arrived at the window of the schoolhouse once again. Injun Dick was not walking as straight as before. There was a decided lurch in his gait, which told the juniors only too plainly that he had been imbibing in fire-water with the money he had received from Bob Lawless.

He pulled up before the window, and gave the juniors a sickly grin.

"Injun come again," he said.

"Well, what the dickens do you want this time?" asked Frank Richards sharply.

"Injun walk 'long trail," said the Redskin, swaying unsteadily on his feet. "Injun meet beautiful missy. Beautiful missy give Injun note. Injun take note—"

"Who the merry dickens are you referring to?" demanded Frank Richards.

"Missy Meadows," said Injun Dick. "She wait for buggy take her to Thompson. She in great hurry; going long journey. Wah, I have spoken!"

"You've spoken a lot of rot, if that's anything!" said Frank Richards.

"Injun speak words of wisdom. Injun bring note for young white chiefs."

"A note from Miss Meadows?"

Injun Dick nodded his head in assent.

"Well, hand it over, then!" said Frank Richards firmly.

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin. "Injun want twenty-five cents," said Injun Dick determinedly.

"Missy Meadows say young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents."

"Oh, rats!" said Frank Richards disdainfully. "Miss Meadows wouldn't ask us to give you money."

"I guess not," said Eben Hacke.

"Beautiful missy write down on paper," said the Red man. "All O.K.! Injun tell truth, you bet!"

"Well, show us the note, then," said Frank Richards. "If Miss Meadows says you're to have the money we'll give it you. If not—"

Frank Richards paused as Injun Dick drew a piece of paper from the folds of his blanket and proceeded to double it in half. Then he held the folded note in front of the juniors.

Frank Richards read the words on the paper—words which had been scrawled in pencil and which were hardly legible. A serious frown came over his face as he at length deciphered the last words in the note, for this is how the message ran:

"Give Injun Dick twenty-five cents. Injun thirsty."

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards, giving the Redskin a hard look. "Miss Meadows didn't write those words! You've written them yourself!"

"Injun no can," said the Redskin, backing away slightly. He did not quite like the angry gleam in Frank Richards' eyes.

"Well, you won't get a penny out of us!" said Frank. "You're a scheming rascal, Injun Dick, and I guess you'll find yourself in the calaboose one of these days if you aren't careful. Give me that note you've got there, or—"

"Injun wait for twenty-five cents!" said the Redskin. "Young white chief give— Yow! Yoooop!"

Before Injun Dick could move, Frank Richards had shot through the window and hurled himself at the Redskin. With a thud, the two landed on the ground, Frank Richards uppermost.

Frank made a snatch at the note in Injun Dick's hand, and, rising to his feet, commenced to read the message it contained. As he did so, his face changed colour, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter, Frank?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

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"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "This note's from Miss Meadows, and she says—"

"Miss Meadows?" said Eben Hacke. "Then the Injun was telling the truth, after all?"

"Well, about the first part of the letter," said Frank Richards slowly. "That's in Miss Meadows' handwriting. The bit about the money Injun Dick wrote himself."

"Injun Dick no write," said the Red man. "Injun no can."

"I guess you'd better vamoose the ranch, Injun Dick!" said Eben Hacke. "You ain't exactly welcome hyer. Read out the note, Richards."

"Right-ho!" said Frank. "This is how it runs:

"My dear Boys,—Whilst I very much appreciate your loyalty to me, I must say how much I resent the means you are adopting to get me reinstated as schoolmistress at Cedar Creek. In fact, were you successful in your efforts, I could not think of returning to the school after the way you have behaved. I have accepted a post at Montreal, and therefore I am leaving Cedar Creek for good. I should advise you to cease your disgraceful behaviour, and accept Mr. Peckover as your headmaster, otherwise your actions may have most unpleasant results.—Yours sincerely,  
E. MEADOWS."

For a few moments none of the schoolboys spoke, so thunderstruck were they at the tone of the letter Frank Richards had read out.

"Surely Miss Meadows didn't write that?" asked Vere Beauclerc, at length.

"Can't be much doubt about that," said Frank Richards dolorously. "Have a look at it. It's her handwriting right enough."

The rebels at the window took charge of the note and inspected it closely. They shook their heads, for there was no doubt in their minds that the note had been written by Miss Meadows.

"Young white chiefs no like letter," remarked Injun Dick.

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, looking up. "Why ain't you vamoosed the ranch, Injun Dick?"

"Injun stony," said the Redskin. "Injun wait for twenty-five cents."

Eben Hacke grabbed at a broom which rested against the wall, and held it in front of the Red man in a threatening manner.

"Now, are you going to absquatulate?" he demanded.

"Injun absquatulate if young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents. Injun— Ow! Yow! Yoooop!"

The broom caught the Red man full in the face, sending him staggering. Injun Dick did not stop to press his claims any further. He drew his tattered blanket round him, and stalked away towards the gate.

"Now that gopher's gone we'll discuss things," said Eben Hacke. "Hev' you decided what to do, Richards?"

"Don't see what we can do," said Frank Richards dismally. "If Miss Meadows refuses to come back it isn't much good carrying on the strike."

"I guess that's so," said Eben Hacke.

"We shall have to put up with that rotter Peckover," said Frank Richards. "I suggest that we give him a trial, and if he comes it too much we might chuck him out and strike for a new master."

"Not a bad notion," agreed Eben Hacke. "I

guess— Jerusalem, if I ain't blind that's Kern Gunten coming in at the gate!"

The rebels looked in the direction of the gate and observed a boy of their own age crossing the playground.

"It is Gunten," said Frank Richards. "I wonder what he wants?"

"Perhaps he thinks he's coming back to school."

"We won't have him."

"No fear!"

Gunten, the fellow Miss Meadows had expelled from the school for blackguardism, came striding towards the rebels, quite unperturbed by the angry expressions on their faces.

"I've come back, you see," he said, with a confident air.

"You can jolly well buzz off!" said Frank Richards firmly. "We're done with you, you cad, and we refuse to have you here!"

"I guess you haven't much choice in the matter!" said Gunten triumphantly. "Mr. Peckover is coming along now to take charge. Here he comes."

At that moment there was a clatter of horse's hoofs outside, and a few moments later Mr. Peckover rode into the playground.

### MR. PECKOVER SURPRISES THE REBELS.

"GOOD-MORNING, boys!" Mr. Peckover jumped off his horse and greeted the schoolboy strikers in the most affable manner. On the previous occasion on which he had spoken to the rebels he had addressed them most abruptly. The change in his manner, therefore, came as a great surprise to Frank Richards & Co.

"I understand that Miss Meadows has departed for Montreal," said Mr. Peckover in kindly tones.

"We knew that already!" said Frank Richards brusquely.

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Peckover. "No doubt you boys are very disappointed?"

"We are!" said the rebels.

"I quite appreciate your disappointment," said Mr. Peckover. "At first I was inclined to blame you for taking the course you did, but now I understand how annoyed you must have been at the dismissal of your schoolmistress."

"We were."

"I must say I disapproved of the way in which you treated me," said the new master, smiling genially. "But I will forgive all that in the circumstances, and I hope you will accept me as your new headmaster."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" muttered Eben Hacke, astounded by Mr. Peckover's affability.

"I trust you will not bear me any malice," said the new master, "and that we shall always remain on the best of terms. If one of you boys will open the door, we will prepare the school for afternoon lessons."

Frank Richards hesitated.

"There's one thing we've got to settle first," he said. "Is that cad there going to return to the school?"

Frank Richards pointed to Kern Gunten, whose face still bore a cynical smile.

"Don't you wish him to return?" asked Mr. Peckover.

"I guess not," said Eben Hacke. "He ain't the sort of galoot we want here. The calaboose is the place for him."

"Very well, my boys," said Mr. Peckover condescendingly. "I will grant your wishes. Gunten shall leave the school at once, and not be allowed to return."

"I say—" began Gunten, giving the new master a savage look.

"That is sufficient, Gunten," said Mr. Peckover, turning to the cad of Cedar Creek. "I must uphold these boys in this matter. If they do not want you here, I cannot allow you to return."

"But my father—"

"Your father has nothing to do with this matter," said Mr. Peckover sharply. "Take your departure at once, my boy!"

Mr. Peckover pointed towards the gate. Gunten gave his former schoolfellows a savage glare, turned on his heels and strolled disconsolately towards the gates.

Mr. Peckover beamed on the schoolboys.

"Bad boy, that!" he said. "It isn't right that he should mix with boys like you. He shan't come here whilst I'm master!"

"But—but supposing his father kicks up a row?" remarked Frank Richards.

"I am quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten," said the new master firmly. "He is a braggart and a bully, and I shall certainly not allow myself to be dictated to by him. Would one of you boys mind opening the door so that I may enter the school?"

The rebels did not move.

Mr. Peckover gave Frank Richards a beaming smile.

"Why do you hesitate, my boy?" he asked.

"I am wondering what will happen if old man Gunten comes along and—and—" Frank Richards paused.

"You're afraid that Mr. Gunten will want his revenge for the manner in which you have handled him?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Peckover broke into a hearty laugh. "My boy, you have no need to be concerned on that score. I do not think Mr. Gunten will give the matter further thought."

"He will when he learns that you won't have his son in the school," said Frank.

"You must not worry about that," said the new master.

"We're not worrying about it," said Frank Richards gruffly. "We're quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten if he starts browbeating us again. All the same, we don't want to give him an advantage."

"An advantage?" said Mr. Peckover slowly.

"I don't understand—"

"I mean that if we shift away the things from the door we shan't be able to defend ourselves against Mr. Gunten," explained Frank Richards.

"You have no need to feel anxious about that," said the new master. "We can soon barricade the door again if Mr. Gunten makes an attempt to attack."

"We!" ejaculated Frank Richards, in surprise.

"Yes, we!" said Mr. Peckover promptly. "I shall be only too pleased to assist you in dealing with Mr. Gunten. I am standing by you, boys, no matter what happens!"

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke. "I guess that's straight talk. Open the door, Richards!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank Richards, moving

towards the window. "Will you lend me a hand, Beau?"

"Certainly!" said Vere Beauclerc.

And he and Frank Richards climbed through the window of the lumber schoolhouse.

The rest of the strikers remained in the playground conversing with Mr. Peckover.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc did not find it an easy job to remove the barricade in front of the door. That barricade had been built to withstand any form of attack. Forms and desks and chairs were piled one on top of the other, but Frank and Beauclerc set about clearing a path to the door in an earnest manner.

"Well, this is a nice finish to our barring-out," remarked Frank Richards regretfully.

"Can't be helped," said Vere Beauclerc. "I had no idea Miss Meadows would give in like that."

"Neither had I," said Frank Richards. "And neither did I think that old Peckover was such a decent sort."

"You think he's decent, Frank?"

"Well, he seems all right," said Frank Richards. "Far different from when he came up with old man Gunten. We must have been mistaken, Beau."

"I don't know," said Vere Beauclerc thoughtfully.

Frank Richards looked at his chum in surprise. "Surely you don't think that Peckover's taken us in?" he said.

"I shouldn't like to say," said Vere slowly. "He seems all right, but—but I can't forget what a brute he seemed when we wouldn't let him and old man Gunten enter the school."

"Well, the chap might have been a bit wild, you know," said Frank Richards. "We weren't exactly kind to him, and—"

"Are you ready, boys?"

The two chums looked up, and observed Mr. Peckover looking at them through a broken panel in the door.

"Shan't be a minute, sir!" said Frank Richards; and he proceeded to clear away the remaining articles of furniture.

At length the door was opened, and Mr. Peckover and the rest of the schoolboys entered. The new master was looking as affable and cheerful as he possibly could.

"Lend a hand, boys!" he said. "If you have no objection we will tidy up the classroom, and place the forms in position for afternoon school. I understand that most of the boys and girls will be returning then."

The fellows lent their assistance, and very soon the schoolhouse was perfectly tidy. This task finished, Frank Richards & Co. partook of the remaining stock of food in the kitchen, and at Mr. Peckover's suggestion they went out into the playground to wait for their school-fellows to arrive for afternoon school.

Although they were disappointed at the result of the barring-out, the Cedar Creek fellows were considerably comforted by Mr. Peckover's affable manner. The new master was by no means the tyrant they had thought him to be.

### NO LUCK FOR MR. PECKOVER!

"VERE!"

Vere Beauclerc looked round as he heard his name called, to find Frank Richards strolling towards him. Vere was

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standing at the gate, a thoughtful look upon his brow.

"I wondered where you'd got to, old son!" said Frank Richards cheerfully. "What the dickens—"

Frank Richards paused as he heard the sound of a horse's hoofs on the trail. He looked out of the gate, and next instant he uttered an exclamation.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "It's Bob! I wonder—"

Frank Richards did not have time to say anything more, for Bob Lawless came tearing up, and jumped off his horse in front of the chums. There was a set and anxious expression on Bob's usually sunny face.

"What the dickens are you galoots doing here?" he said breathlessly.

"How's your father, Bob?" asked Vere Beauclerc, feeling that this matter was far more important than their being outside the school.

"Popper's right as rain," said Bob Lawless quickly. "It was all a put-up job. I'll lynch that galoot of an Indian when I see him again!"

"A—put-up job?" stammered Frank Richards, in perplexity.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless. "I shouldn't be surprised if that galoot Gunten wrote that note and paid Injun Dick to bring it here, so as to get me away. Has Gunten made an attack?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"No," he said. "The barring-out is over, Bob."

"Over?" gasped Bob incredulously.

"We had a note from Miss Meadows saying that she had gone to take a job in Montreal," explained Frank Richards. "She advised us to give in, and we thought it best to do so. Old Peckover's arrival, and he said Miss Meadows had gone— What's the matter, Bob?"

Bob Lawless' face was a study.

"You dunderheaded galoots!" he roared. "Who's in there?"

Bob Lawless pointed towards the schoolhouse.

"Mr. Peckover," said Frank. "The school's ready for afternoon classes, and—"

"Great gophers!" broke in Bob Lawless. "I never met such a lot of simple galoots in my life! You've been taken in! Miss Meadows hasn't gone away. I met her on the trail, and she said that she hoped to be back at the school soon."

"But—but we had a note from her saying—"

"Great pip!" roared Bob. "That must have been a forgery, like the one I received! It's Gunten's work! I'll bet you that old man Gunten's coming here with the Red Dog crowd to take charge of the school and force us to give in!"

Frank Richards was flabbergasted by Bob's statements.

"But, Bob," he said, "Peckover's a pretty decent chap, really. He says that if we have any trouble with old man Gunten he'll take our part."

"What!" roared Bob. "Peckover—that chap who behaved like a blessed tyrant when he came here with Gunten?"

"Yes; but—"

"You simple jay!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "That galoot has taken you in! He's put on his best manners in order to get into the school! I'm going to put a few questions to him. You get all the fellows together, and come in after me. There may be a bit of a dust-up."

Next instant Bob Lawless darted towards the

lumber schoolhouse. He walked in quietly and found Mr. Peckover, a grim, set expression on his face, standing by the window. Bob coughed as the master did not hear him approach.

Mr. Peckover turned round at once and gave Bob a savage glare.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded sharply.

"I want to have a chat with you," said Bob Lawless. "I understand you're the new headmaster."

"I am!" snapped Mr. Peckover angrily. "I'll trouble you to speak to me a little more politely, boy!"

"Who told you to come here as headmaster?" asked Bob coolly.

"Boy," thundered Mr. Peckover, "how dare you—"

"And who told you that Miss Meadows had gone to Montreal?"

"You impudent young hooligan!" exclaimed the new master. "Miss Meadows told me so herself, and—"

"Great gophers!" exclaimed Bob, darting towards Mr. Peckover. "That's enough! Come on, you gaolots!"

Next instant Frank Richards and the other rebels came rushing into the schoolhouse.

Mr. Peckover had bowled himself out by stating that Miss Meadows had acquainted him with her intention to take up a post in Montreal. This was a deliberate lie, and the rebels realised now that Mr. Peckover had tricked them.

"Stand back!" roared the new master, as the schoolboys dashed at him. "I— Ow! Yow! Yoooop!"

With a thud, Mr. Peckover landed on the floor, with half a dozen fellows on top of him.

"A rope—quick!" cried Bob.

"Let me go, you young scoundrels!" roared Mr. Peckover fiercely. "I'll—I'll—"

"You jolly well won't!" declared Bob firmly.

"Got that rope? Good! Now, then, Mr. Peckover, we're going to tie your hands behind you!"

"You won't! I—"

"Turn him over!" said Bob. And Mr. Peckover was promptly turned over. It was the work of an instant to tie the new master's hands behind him. "Now give me that dunce's hat!" said Bob Lawless.

Eben Hacke procured the hat and handed it to Bob.

"Don't you dare put that thing on my head!" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Kim up!" exclaimed Bob cheerfully. "You haven't got any choice in this! Hold your cabeza still! That's O.K.! Now lift him up, you gaolots!"

The new master was promptly raised.

"Now run him out on the trail!" shouted Bob, giving Mr. Peckover a kick to start him.

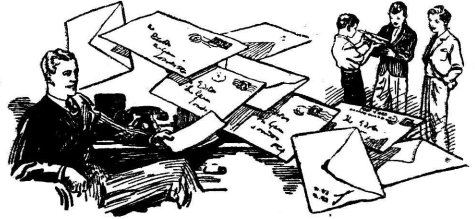
Out of the door shot the new master, closely followed by the excited rebels, who armed themselves with brooms and rulers and sticks and any other weapons that they could lay hands on.

"Ow! Yow! Yarooogh!" yelled Mr. Peckover, as Bob Lawless planted his broom in the middle of the new master's back.

"Hurry up, you swindling galoot!" exclaimed Bob. "And don't you show your chivvy here again! Savvy?"

Mr. Peckover made no reply, except to shriek and roar. But he understood, and when he reached the gates he tore down the trail as fast as his legs could carry him.

(Continued on page 35.)



## THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

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

**H**ALLO, CHUMS! A reader in Liverpool has been reading about bread-fruit in a story, and he wants to know what it is, what it tastes like, and how it is eaten. Well, to start with, bread-fruit grows to about the size of a melon, and in the South Seas it is baked whole in hot embers. When it is cooked the inside is soft and smooth and tastes like potatoes boiled in sweet milk. Mixed with treacle or sugar it makes a splendid pudding. It can also be preserved by being cut into slices and dried in the sun. The natives make a flour out of these dried slices. They also abstract glue from the stem of the bread-fruit-tree, and canoes are built from the wood. So the tree and its fruit are put to full use.

This same reader also wants to know how many years the "Holiday Annual" has been published. He's trying to make a collection of them, he says. I admire him for his enthusiasm, but I think he has set himself a difficult task. The "H.A." first appeared as long ago as 1919, and with the grand volume just on sale, this popular school-story annual has just come of age. So our Liverpool reader will have to collect twenty-one annuals to get the full set.

I should advise him and all other readers to make sure at least of the 1940 edition. It has been published only a few weeks, but as it is always a best-seller it is as well to place an early order for it.

### "THE PLOT AGAINST TOM MERRY!"

This is the title of the gripping new St. Jim's yarn which will be in your hands next Wednesday. Having failed so far to bring disgrace on Tom Merry, Mr. Silverson makes yet another attempt. Tom and his chums are wise to the new Form-master's tricks, and they are keeping their eye on him, but will they succeed in defeating his latest plot against Tom? That remains to be seen in next week's story. Look out for it!

### "THE HUNGRY REBELS!"

The chums of Cedar Creek are keeping the rebels' flag flying at the backwoods school, but feeding the schoolboy garrison becomes an acute problem. And with Four Kings & Co. on the watch outside the school there seems little chance of breaking through to buy food. However, food must be got, and Frank, Bob, and Beau make the attempt—with what results you will see when you read this exciting story.

### "JACK DRAKE AT GREYFRIARS!"

The old school ship Benbow is back in England again, and there are exciting prospects ahead for Jack Drake. He's booked for Greyfriars School, where he will meet Harry Wharton & Co., and Bunter and all the other favourites. How Jack arrives at his new school, causing something of a sensation by the manner in which he makes his advent, is thrillingly told by Frank Richards next week.

All the best, chums!

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HAVING TAKEN FRENCH LEAVE, JACK DRAKE & CO., OF THE BENBOW, NOW HAVE TO FACE THE MUSIC!



### THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS.

**H**ERE'S the giddy prodigals!" Sawyer major of the Fourth grinned over the side of the old Benbow, anchored in the tropical sunshine on the Orinoco.

There was a buzz of voices on the school ship. As Sawyer major called out, there was a line of faces along the Benbow, staring down at the canoe floating alongside.

"They've come back!"

"Here's Drake—"

"And Toodles! You've grown thin, Toodles!" It was rather a ragged-looking crew in the canoe. Jack Drake & Co. had been more than a week in the wilds, and the expedition had told upon them.

Their faces were burnt brown by the sun; their clothes were in tatters; they were almost barefooted.

Daubeny of the Shell—brown, tattered, untidy—would certainly not have been recognised as the dandy of the school ship. Torrence and Egan showed no trace of their pristine elegance. Jack Drake and Rodney and Tuckey Toodles were in like bad case. Only Tin Tacks, the black gentleman of Barbados, looked much the same as usual. The sun had no effect on his black skin, and his garments had never been elegant. He grinned cheerfully as he caught a rope thrown by Mr. Piper, the boatswain, and brought the canoe under the accommodation ladder.

"Berry glad to be back, Mass' Jack?" he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" said Jack Drake.

"Now for a ragging from Mr. Packe!" murmured Rodney.

There was a yelp from Tuckey Toodles.

"You fellows will own up that it was all your fault, I suppose? You'll explain to Packe that I only came to look after you—"

"Shut up, Toodles!"

"Hallo, there's Packe!" said Daubeny.

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# HOMeward BOUND!

By Owen Conquest.

The severe features of Mr. Packe showed at the head of the accommodation ladder as the juniors were preparing to board the Benbow.

Mr. Packe was frowning.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "You have returned, Drake?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have been more than a week absent from school."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Are you all safe?"

"Oh, quite, sir!"

"I am glad of that," said Mr. Packe. "You have caused me much anxiety."

"Sorry, sir—"

"Come aboard at once!"

The juniors came aboard meekly. The Benbow fellows gathered round them in a grinning crowd.

"Did you find the giddy treasure?" chuckled Sawyer major.

Evidently the juniors guessed what was the quest that had taken Jack Drake & Co. into the wilds of the Orinoco. A chuckle followed Sawyer's question. The adventurers did not look much like successful treasure-seekers.

"We found the place," said Drake.

"And the treasure?"

"It was gone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now Toodles won't be able to pay me the bob he owes me!" remarked Rawlings.

And there was another laugh.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Packe. "Drake, I hardly know what to say to you and the rest. You have absented yourself without leave, and caused me great anxiety. You were almost given up for lost. You had some absurd idea of seeking for a buried treasure—"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"You might have met your death in the forest!" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

Drake suppressed a grin.

He did not intend to explain how near death the treasure-seekers had been more than once during that trip into the wilds. Their narrow escapes would only have made Mr. Packe angrier if he had known of them.

"We've come back quite safe, sir," he murmured.

"Quite so! And are you aware that you have delayed the sailing of the Benbow?" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

"Oh, sir!"

"Four days ago we should have sailed down the Orinoco, and we have been compelled to wait," said Mr. Packe. "We could not leave without news of you."

The juniors were silent.

Now that they were back on the deck of the school ship, they realised rather more clearly the seriousness of their escapade.

"However, I will not deal with the matter now," said Mr. Packe. "You are in need of rest and refreshment. You may go below, and I will deal with you to-morrow."

Which was not a happy prospect for the treasure-seekers.

However, they went below for a much-needed change of clothes, and for the remainder of that day they were kept busy relating their adventures to the curious crowd of juniors who wanted to know. The story of the missing treasure elicited many chuckles from the Benbow fellows.

"You're lucky to get back!" said Sawyer major sagely. "Might have been gobbled up by Indians or jaguars, or might have caught malaria. But you look quite fit on it."

"Fit as a fiddle!" said Drake, laughing.

"I'm not!" growled Tuckey Toodles. "I've been practically starved! I feel as if I shan't be able to eat enough for weeks! I expect I shall be ill to-morrow!"

"Then you'll get out of a licking," said Rodney consolingly.

Tuckey Toodles' little round eyes gleamed.

Rodney's remark had put a new idea into his mind, and his powerful brain was working.

When, the next morning, the delinquents were called aft to be dealt with by their Form-masters, there was one who did not obey the call. That was Rupert de Vere Toodles. He was down with malaria in his hammock in Cabin No. 8, and couldn't go.

### A QUICK CURE!

THE Benbow was gliding down the mighty stream of the Orinoco, on her way to the Atlantic, when Jack Drake and Rodney presented themselves before Mr. Packe in his cabin. Daubeny & Co. were being dealt with by the master of the Shell.

Mr. Packe had a cane ready.

"Where is Toodles?" he asked.

"In his hammock, sir," answered Drake demurely.

"Why is he not up?" exclaimed Mr. Packe.

"Malaria, sir—he says."

Mr. Packe started.

"The unhappy boy! You see the result of your utterly reckless escapade, Drake, in Toodles' illness."

"Ye-e-es, sir!" murmured Drake, looking as contrite as he could.

As a matter of fact, he did not believe in Toodles' illness, but he could not explain that to Mr. Packe.

"I shall cane you both severely," said Mr. Packe—"all the more severely on account of what has happened to Toodles!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the two juniors simultaneously.

They exchanged a glance.

The idea of being caned with extra severity because Toodles was malingering in his hammock to elude a licking was not agreeable.

Rodney opened his mouth, and closed it again.

"Hold out your hand, Drake!" said Mr. Packe, frowning.

The scene that followed was painful. Mr. Packe had a painful duty to perform, and he performed it painfully.

When Mr. Packe had done his duty, Drake and Rodney limped out of the cabin, rubbing their hands. They had "been through it" before in the course of their schoolboy careers, but never quite so severely as on this occasion.

On deck they came on Daubeny, Egan, and Torrence. The three Shell fellows were clasping their hands in anguish, and murmuring sounds of woe.

"Had it bad?" asked Drake, with a ghastly grin.

"Ow! Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"That beast Vavasour fairly laid into us!" groaned Torrence. "Jawed us for ten minutes, and then let himself go! Ow!"

"Catch me treasure-huntin' on the Orinoco again!" said Daubeny, with a feeble smile. "No fear! I've had enough!"

"We've had it extra hard on account of Toodles' illness!" groaned Rodney.

"Toodles ill?"

"Not at all; just shamming, the beast! Ow!"

"Never mind; the doctor will take it out of him," said Daubeny. "That's a comfort."

While the five juniors were bemoaning their damages, Mr. Packe and Dr. Pankey were visiting Tuckey Toodles in Cabin No. 8. Mr. Packe was looking anxious and alarmed; but there was a twinkle in the medical gentleman's grey eyes. He knew his Toodles!

Tuckey Toodles gave a deep groan as they entered the cabin.

He had been keeping a wary eye on the door, expecting the visit. His groan sounded dismal enough, and Mr. Packe looked deeply concerned.

"My poor boy, do you suffer very much?" he exclaimed.

Groan!

"Where is the pain, Toodles?"

"All over, sir!" moaned Tuckey Toodles. "Red-hot pincers jabbing at me, sir——"

"Bless my soul!"

"And burning daggers sticking into me, sir!" said Toodles, growing eloquent.

"Calm yourself, my poor boy——"

"But I'm suffering fearful agonies, sir!" said Toodles pathetically. "I'm not a fellow to complain. But this awful agony, sir——"

"You can do something for the poor boy, doctor?" whispered Mr. Packe.

The doctor smiled grimly.

"I have no doubt whatever that I can," he answered. "Toodles!"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Tuckey Toodles.

"It appears that you have caught malarial fever——"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case it will be necessary for you to be sent ashore," said Dr. Pankey. "I have no doubt, Mr. Packe, that the boy can be landed at one of the Indian villages——"

Mr. Packe stared.

Tuckey Toodles sat up hurriedly in the hammock and nearly pitched out.

"Wha-a-at—what's that?" he stuttered.

"If you survive you can return to England later," said Dr. Pankey. "There is no special need for you to return in the Benbow."

"But I—I—I——" babbled Tuckey.

"With the Indians, you will——"

"I'm not going to be left among the Indians!" shrieked Tuckey Toodles, in dire consternation.

"I fear that it is unavoidable, Toodles, if you have malarial fever," said Dr. Pankey soothingly.

"I—I don't think I have, sir!" gasped Toodles. "I—I think now that it—it's very likely smallpox, sir."

"Bless my soul! Then you must be sent ashore at once."

"I—I mean rheumatism, sir——"

"What?"

"Or—or gout!" stammered Tuckey. "My father has gout, sir, so—so I think it may be gout. Most likely gout, sir. Gout ain't catching, is it? I—I don't want to be left with the Indians, sir!"

Mr. Packe stared at Tuckey, with his eyes almost bulging through his spectacles.

The rapid changes in the diseases that afflicted Toodles might well astonish his Form-master.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Packe, the truth dawning upon him. "The—the boy is—"

"Shamming!" said Dr. Pankey cheerfully. "There is nothing whatever the matter with him! Toodles, you young rascal, turn out of that hammock at once!"

"Oh, sir, I c-c-can't! I—I think I'm dying!"

"Quite a mistake," said Dr. Pankey. "For instance, if I should pull your ear in this way—"

"Yaroooh!"

"And keep on pulling it—"

"Yoooop!"

"I have no doubt whatever—"

"Yow-ow! Leggo!"

"That you will be able to rise! I shall try the experiment, at all events!"

"Yow-ow! Wow-wow! Woop!"

Tuckey Toodles turned out of the hammock with an activity and celerity very creditable in a fellow who was dying of malaria, rheumatism, smallpox, and gout. He landed with a bump on the cabin planks. His fat ear was very red from the doctor's cure for his remarkable complication of diseases.

"Do you feel better now, Toodles?" asked Dr. Pankey genially.

"No!" howled Toodles. "Worse!"

"Then I'll try the other ear—"

"Yaroooh! Keep off! I'm better!"

"Are you sure?"

"Ow! Quite! I'm quite well! Yarooooh!"

Dr. Pankey smiled genially.

"I am happy to say, Mr. Packe, that Toodles is quite restored to health," he said. "He is perfectly fit to be caned, if a caning is due!"

"A caning is undoubtedly due!" said Mr. Packe, glaring at the hapless Toodles over his spectacles. "Toodles, you unscrupulous young rascal, follow me to my cabin at once!"

"Oh dear! I—I'm so weak, sir, I—I can't walk—"

"I will assist you," said Dr. Pankey, stretching out a finger and thumb.

Tuckey Toodles dodged.

"I—I'm all right! I can walk!"

"I thought so!" said the medical gentleman.

Tuckey Toodles found that he was strong enough to walk to Mr. Packe's cabin. And there he received his due, with a few extra strokes for the trouble he had given; and for the rest of that day Rupert de Vere Toodles, like Rachel of old, mourned and could not be comforted—not that anybody felt disposed to comfort him.

### HOME AGAIN!

"HOMEWARD bound!" remarked Dick Rodney.

The wide waters of the Atlantic were rolling round the school ship now.

South America was a blur on the western horizon.

The Benbow had touched at Trinidad, where Drake and Rodney had had a run ashore, to  
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greet their West Indian chum, Arthur Cazalet, and say good-bye to him. Then the Benbow turned her prow in the direction of Barbados, the last stopping-place before she spread her white wings for the homeward run across the ocean.

Jack Drake looked thoughtful.

"It's been a jolly trip, taking it all together," he said. "Now that it's over, I'm glad we had that run into the wilds on the Orinoco; it will be something to remember."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Rodney. "On the whole, I think I've had enough of mosquitoes and tropical smells, though. We've got to part with old Tin Tacks at Barbados."

"I suppose that can't be helped," said Drake, his brow clouding.

Both the chums had grown attached to the black gentleman of Barbados, and they felt the coming parting. So did Tin Tacks, whose black face wore quite a woe-begone expression.

The faithful coloured gentleman had even suggested that he would come to England to continue attending upon "Mass' Jack"; but that was evidently out of the question. When the voyage of the school ship was over, Drake would be at a school in the Old Country, where Tin Tacks would have been rather out of the picture, so to speak. And Tin Tacks himself felt that the English climate was something that it would require all his courage to face.

"P'r'aps you come back some day, Mass' Jack," he said hopefully when the Benbow anchored at Barbados, and the time came for the black gentleman to go ashore.

"I hope so, Tin Tacks," said Drake. "In fact, I'm sure to. When I leave school I'm going round the world; we've settled that, haven't we, Rodney?"

"Quite!" said Dick Rodney, with a smile.

"And we'll make Barbados our first port of call," said Drake. "Mind you don't forget us, Tin Tacks."

"Me nebber forget Mass' Jack!" said the black man simply. "You find ole Tin Tacks jest de same as ever when you come to Barbados."

Jack Drake wrung the big black hand.

"Good-bye, Tin Tacks, old chap!"

"Good-bye, old fellow!" said Rodney, shaking hands with the black man. "Best of luck!"

"Good-bye, Mass' Jack! Me tink of you coming back, and me keep one eye open, you bet!"

And Tin Tacks went down the side into the boat. Jack Drake felt a lump come into his throat as he watched the boat pull away with Tin Tacks on board.

He waved his hand to Tin Tacks till he was out of sight, and then turned away.

The next day Barbados was only a blue cloud to the south-west as the Benbow plunged on her way through the Atlantic billows. Jack Drake watched the blue cloud sink into the horizon, thinking of Tin Tacks, and comforting himself with his resolution to revisit the Western paradise in later days.

There was a good deal of excitement on the school ship as every day brought her nearer and nearer to European waters.

School work went on the same as usual, but the fellows were all thinking of "England, home, and beauty."

The voyage of the Benbow to tropical climes had been quite an enjoyable one, and they had seen strange things in a strange new world; but



all of them were glad to think that they would soon be treading their native shores again.

There was much discussion as to where they were going after getting home. St. Winifred's was not yet completely rebuilt, and there was not yet accommodation at the old school for all the Benbow crowd.

Jack Drake talked it over with Dick Rodney in Cabin No. 8.

"The Benbow's going to be laid up," he remarked. "A good many of the fellows will get back to St. Winifred's, but not all. From what the pater said in his last letter, which I got at Barbados, I think he intends to send me to another school, now the voyage is over. He asked me about my friends at Greyfriars."

"Greyfriars?" repeated Rodney.

"I know some chaps at Greyfriars," said Tuckey Toodles. "There's a chap there—not half a bad sort—named Bunter. I know him."

Jack Drake grunted. He had had the pleasure of meeting Billy Bunter of Greyfriars, and had not been much impressed by that youth.

"I was thinking of Wharton and Bob Cherry and those fellows," he said. "I don't know what the pater's decided, but if I'm going to another school I'm going to make it Greyfriars if I can. And you'll have to do the same, Rodney; we're not going to part."

"No fear!" said Rodney.

"Same here!" said Tuckey Toodles affectionately. "If you go to Greyfriars, Drake, old chap, I'll manage it somehow."

"Don't take the trouble, Tuckey!"

"He, he, he! You will have your little joke!" said Tuckey. "My dear old fellow, I wouldn't part with you for anything! Rely on me!"

"Look here—"

"After the way I've stood by you all through the voyage, Drake, and rescued you from dangers on the Orinoco—"

"Rescued me?" said Drake dazedly.

"Yes, at the peril of my life," said Toodles.

"After that I'm not likely to part with you, old fellow. It's a sort of bond of union, you know, having faced fearful dangers together like—like lions—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Drake and Rodney burst into a roar, and Tuckey Toodles frowned. He reflected that it was just like his cabin-mates to laugh at the wrong moment.

"Consider it done, anyhow," he said. "I'll never desert you, old chap!"

"I'm afraid you won't!" said Drake disconsolately. "You always were a thumping good stickler, Tuckey!"

Wheroat Rupert de Vere Toodles sniffed. This was a most ungrateful return for his affectionate devotion, but Tuckey Toodles had given up expecting gratitude in this hard-hearted world.

Even the chops of the Channel were welcome to the Benbow fellows after their long sojourn in strange climes, and the sight of the white cliffs of England was cheering.

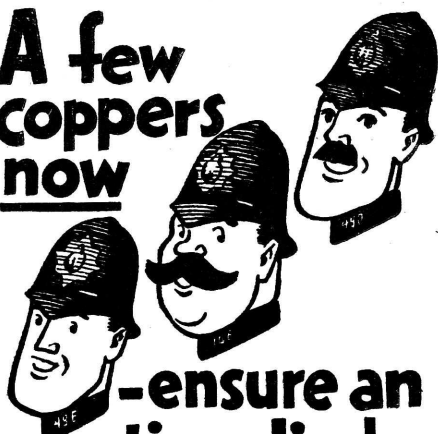
And it was a merry day when the Benbow ran into harbour, and the anchor fell into English mud, and they were able to stretch their legs once more upon British soil.

**TAKING IN TUCKEY!**

"**WHARTON!**"  
A group of three rather serious-faced juniors stood on the deck of the Benbow, lying at anchor at Chadport.

*(Continued on the next page.)*

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"Right-ho!" he exclaimed. "I—I—I could send a wire to my uncle——"

"Exactly!"

"And the car could take us to Toodles' place, and——"

"Easily."

"Done, then!"

Harry Wharton had "caught on" with great promptness. The three juniors turned smiling faces upon Tuckey Toodles.

That fat youth seemed rooted to the deck of the Benbow.

"I—I say——" he stuttered.

"Come on, Toodles! Let's get in the car!"

"But—I say——"

"No time to lose, if we're to get to Toodles Towers by dark!" exclaimed Drake briskly.

"But, I—I say, on second thoughts——"

"No time for second thoughts now; we want to get off!"

Drake and Rodney and Harry Wharton descended to the wharf, and Tuckey Toodles followed them like a fellow in a dream. His reckless invitation had been accepted—that invitation which had only been so recklessly made because Tuckey supposed that it was impossible for it to be accepted. The hapless Tuckey was caught.

Drake and Rodney's belongings were stacked on the big car that stood waiting. The chauffeur bent over Toodles' bags.

"Leave them alone!" yapped Toodles.

"They've got to be put on, Tuckey——"

"I—I—I think we—we shall be rather a crowd in that car, you fellows——"

"Lots of room."

"I—I don't like being crowded. I—I think I'll—I'll take a taxi with my bags."

"But we want you to show the chauffeur the way to Toodles Towers!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I—I——"

"Jump in!"

"I—I'll show you the way in my taxi!" gasped Toodles. "See? I'll drive ahead, and—and show you the way——"

"Don't get out of sight, then," said Drake, with great gravity. "We can't find Toodles Towers without your help."

"Or with it, for that matter!" murmured Rodney, unheard by Tuckey Toodles.

## THE REBELS' SURRENDER!

(Continued from page 29.)

Frank Richards & Co. watched him go with satisfaction, but suddenly Bob Lawless uttered a warning cry.

"Hear that, you galoots?" he asked.

The schoolboys listened, and plainly to their ears came the sound of horses' hoofs on the trail.

"That's old man Gunten and his gang, for a cert!" said Bob Lawless. "Back to the schoolhouse, you galoots, and get those barricades up again!"

"What-ho!"

The rebels tore back to the lumber school, and were soon busily engaged in getting the barricades into place once more. They had just finished their task when a number of horsemen dashed into the playground.

Thump!

"I—I'll be careful!" gasped Tuckey.

He scrambled into a taxicab, and his bags were bundled in. The taxi started, and the big car followed in its track. The three juniors in the car were grinning.

They understood Tuckey's unhappy feelings. The hapless Rupert de Vere Toodles felt quite faint at the bare idea of arriving at his father's villa with three unexpected guests and a big car and a stack of luggage, to say nothing of the inevitable discovery of the real dimensions of "Toodles Towers." Tuckey was thinking only of escape, and was quite unaware of the fact that Jack Drake & Co. knew perfectly well that he was only thinking of escape. As a matter of fact, the juniors in the big car were thinking of escape, too.

## PEN PALS

Owing to pressure on space, Pen Pals notices have been unavoidably held over this week. Another big batch will be published next Wednesday, together with the Pen Pals' coupon.—Editor.

The taxi buzzed on, and turned the first corner and flew. The big car passed on without turning the corner. At the railway station Tuckey Toodles waited in breathless trepidation to learn whether he was tracked. But he wasn't; he was in no danger, if he could only have known it. Relieved of his terrors at last, Tuckey ventured to take his ticket—what time the big car was whizzing away across country, with three merry juniors chortling in it, en route for Harry Wharton's home and a merry holiday.

And a merry holiday it was, in spite of the fact that Tuckey Toodles wasn't there—or perhaps because of it. But the chums of the Benbow were destined to see the fat and fatuous Tuckey again—when, at the new term, they became members of Greyfriars School.

Next Wednesday: "JACK DRAKE AT GREYFRIARS!"

Somebody was banging on the barred window of the schoolhouse.

"Too late, you gophers!" shouted Bob Lawless. "Come back another time!"

"Open this window, d'you hear?" roared old man Gunten furiously.

"No fear!" chortled Frank Richards. "We've done you brown this time! Your forged letters haven't exactly worked out all right for you! Better try some other dodge!"

"I—I——"

Mr. Gunten faltered and spluttered. He was too overcome by the failure of his cunning scheme to make a coherent remark. He had been beaten all along the line; and when at length, thoroughly discomfited at not being able to gain entrance to the schoolhouse, he moved away from the barred window, it was with the knowledge that the rebels of Cedar Creek were still holding out.

Next Week: "THE HUNGRY REBELS!"  
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## SCHOOLMASTER AND SCHEMER!

(Continued from page 22.)

James came to a breathless stop. At the voice of the Housemaster he realised the exhibition he was making of himself. But even the Housemaster's presence could hardly restrain his rage.

"That boy, sir—that boy of my Form—D'Arcy—" he spluttered. "He—he—that young rascal—I ordered him to come with me, and he—he—he—"

"You dwagged me along by my collah!" roared Arthur Augustus, quite as angry as Mr. Silvester. "I wufese to be dwagged by my collah! St. Jim's men are not dwagged along by their collahs, Mr. Silvahson! I don't know where you have come from, but at this school fellows are not dwagged along by their collahs!"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I was taking him to the House, and he—he—he—" James gurgled for breath. "That, sir, is the impudent young rascal who played the trick on the telephone—"

"What?"

"I heard him, sir, discussing it with his friends—discussing it as he passed me a few minutes ago!" gasped Mr. Silvester. "He has admitted that he telephoned to Pudsey's!"

"D'Arcy, you admit that you telephoned to Pudsey's, the newsagent's?" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "You have admitted to Mr. Silvester that you did it?"

"Yaas, sir, certainly. Dawwell of the Sixth gave me leave to phone in the prefect's-loom, sir, and I—"

"He admits it!" foamed James. "He has already admitted it."

"D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "You will receive a severe punishment—a very severe punishment—"

"What for, sir?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"What for?" exclaimed the Housemaster. "You have admitted that you played a foolish practical joke on the telephone, ordering a number of racing papers to be delivered here to Mr. Silvester—"

"I didn't!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"What? Mr. Silvester states that you have admitted it."

"But I don't know anythin' about his wacin' papahs! How should I know anythin' about his wacin' papahs?" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"You telephoned to Pudsey's!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir! Why shouldn't I?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in bewilderment. "I want my copy of the new 'Holiday Annual'—"

"Your what?"

"My 'Holiday Annual,' sir!"

"Bless my soul! Why did you telephone to Pudsey's, D'Arcy?"

"To ordah my 'Holiday Annual,' sir! They are our wegulah newsagent's! Dawwell said I could use the phone, so I wang them up to ordah my copy—"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Oh!" gasped James Silvester.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "This passes all patience, Mr. Silvester. You heard D'Arcy mention that he had telephoned to the newsagent's—and without a word of inquiry jumped to the conclusion that he had played a trick on you this afternoon—you were about to punish him—to punish him unjustly, sir—"

"I—I—"

"It transpires that he rang up the newsagent's for the harmless purpose of ordering a copy of an excellent publication. If you had asked him a single question he would have told you so. Really, sir—"

"I—I—"

"Were you aware, D'Arcy, that Mr. Silvester supposed that you were the person who played a trick on the telephone this afternoon—"

"No, sir. I thought he had gone mad—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Mr. Silvester—"

"I—I—I—" stuttered James. "I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton, with a snort of impatience, strode back to the House. James followed him. He was rather anxious to get out of the public eye.

He realised that Arthur Augustus was not the trickster on the telephone. Arthur Augustus certainly had telephoned Pudsey's, the newsagent's—but it was only to order the harmless and necessary "Holiday Annual." Once more James' suspicious mind and angry temper had landed him in the soup.

"Ha, ha, ha!" A roar from about a hundred fellows followed him. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The uttah ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has anybody been playin' twicks on the telephone?"

"Sort of!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought he had gone off his wockal, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwabbin' a fellow like that for wingin' up a newsagent to ordah his 'Holiday Annual.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

James disappeared into the House with burning ears. He left the crowd of St. Jim's fellows rocking with laughter.

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