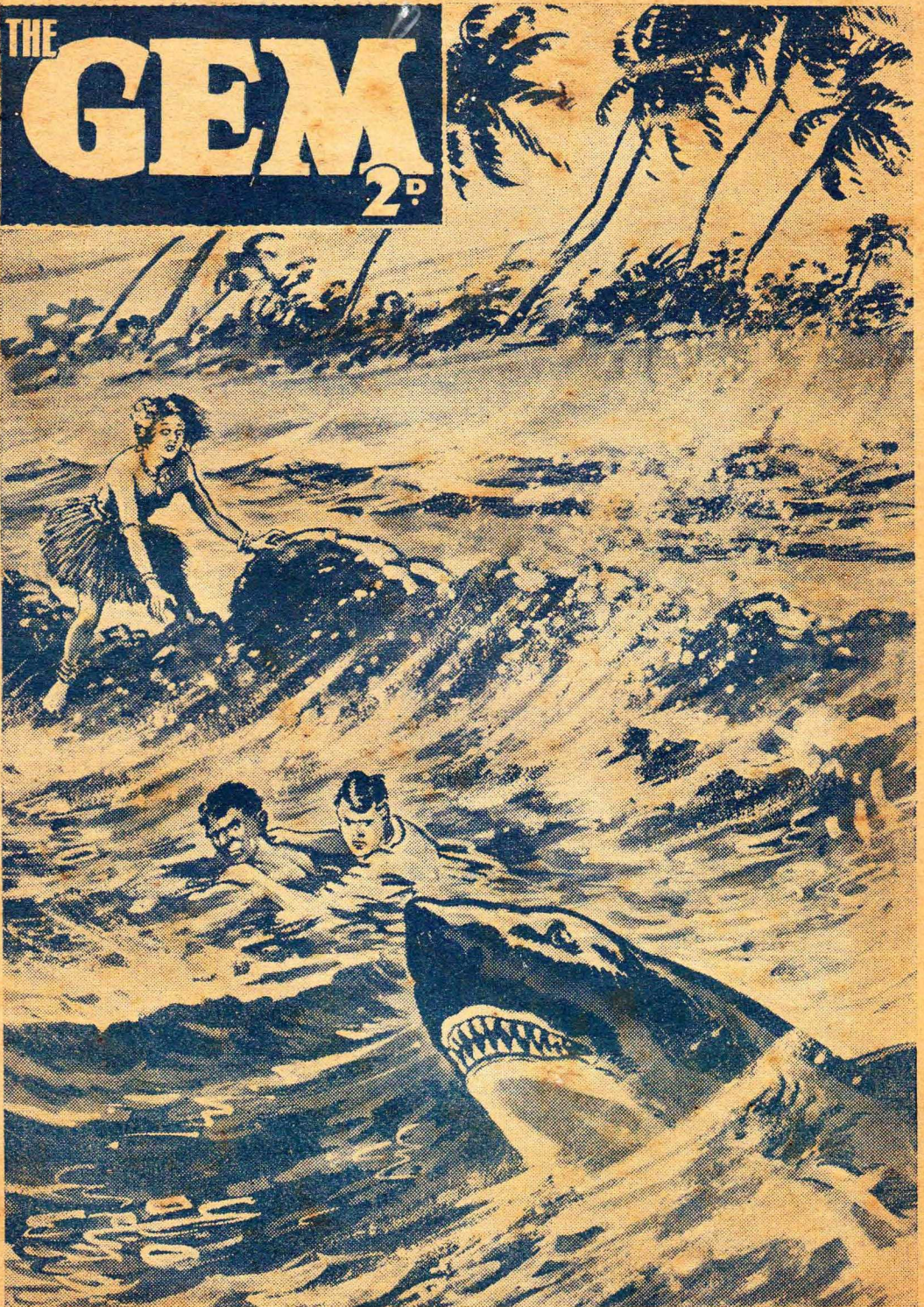


*Thy 132*  
TOM MERRY & CO. and BIGGLES IN GREAT YARNS WITHIN!

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





# 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.

**"Impatient," of Grantham, writes:**

Give me a careful and detailed list of the kings of England since 1066. I want it for an exam, so if I fail it will be your fault. Look lively!

ANSWER: Gussy, hand me my thinking cap, will you? Thanks! Oh, yes! We begin with William the Conqueror, 1066, and all that. Then Rufus the Red, though why his face was red I haven't the palest notion. Oh, and Richard of the Lion's Heart, though how he came by such an unusual organ I can't imagine. He must have simply roared with laughter when Saladin made a joke about captives being stewed in boiling oil and what-not. And don't forget King Canute, sometimes spelt Cnut, according to whether you want to make a pun on "knut" or knot. King Knut (sorry, Cnut) was rather before the Conquest, but it would be a pity to leave him out. It was Cnut who sat on the seashore and said: "Back, rollers!" His attendants thought he had said "Back rashers," and brought him a breakfast of sizzling hot bacon. This Cnut wisely ate, remarking that they should have picked a time when the tide was going out for a stunt of that kind. Next, if you have time, you might include Ethelred the Unready, who was knocking round then, being a bit backward in coming forward, as his name implies, but always glad of a mention. "Turned out nice again to-day?" he would venture, even when it was raining hard, and look quite crestfallen if you didn't agree with him. Henry the Fifth is a good man to put on any short list, as he was a whale of a fighter, and won away from home at Agincourt in 1415 by a handsome margin. You might jot down Henry the Eighth, and as many of his wives as you can remember, the first three, anyway. Then Bonnie Prince Charlie, who was almost as popular in his time as Charlie Chaplin, and William Prince of Orange to finish up. This was the fellow who first said: "Eat more fruit," and the idea caught on to such an extent that there was a shortage of oranges, and he had to go without any himself. Not that he minded, actually, for he said that, although they were jolly good for you, oranges always gave him the pip.

Well, that ought to get you into a nice old mess in your exam!

**"Boxing Fan," of Fordingbridge, writes:**

What are the standard championship weights for boxers? Light on your feet, now—or have your arches fallen already?

ANSWER: Thanks for the kind inquiry about the tootsies, and glad to say the corns are much THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,657.

better, and I have been out several times this week without the bathchair. On your toes, now: Fly-weight, 8 stone; Bantam, 8 st. 6 lb.; Feather, 9 st.; Light, 9 st. 9 lb.; Welter, 10 st. 7 lb.; Middle, 11 st. 6 lb.; Light-heavy, 12 st. 7 lb.; Heavy-weight, any weight you like.

**"Nibbo," of Henley-on-Thames, writes:**

Can you tell me why some proverbs contradict each other? For instance, mine happens to be, "He who hesitates is lost." On the contrary, my friend believes in "Look before you leap"! Also, "Too many cooks spoil the broth," while "Many hands make light work"! More stories featuring Wally D'Arcy, please. He's my favourite!

ANSWER: Proverbs are "proverbially" misleading at times! Personally, I believe whatever I want to; I can usually find a proverb to fit it! So if I feel economical, I say "Waste not, want not," while if I feel gay, I say, "Laugh while you may." Of course, "a still tongue shows a wise head"—but who wants to go about mute? However, if you DO feel like talking, "a merry heart is a purse well lined." I've passed your request regarding Wally to the Ed.

**K. Prior, of Walthamstow, writes:**

I'd like to ask:

Which House generally comes out on top—School or New? What's the name of your Scout patrol? If you aren't patrol-leader, who is? Have you ever met Horace Coker of Greyfriars? If so, what do you think of him?

ANSWER:

I'd like to tell you:

School House ALWAYS comes out on top (I'm speaking as a School House man; speak to Figgins for rival version). Curlew patrol is led by Tom Merry. Yes, I've "met" Coker. Ran right into him, so the silly ass said. My idea was that the silly chump ran into me—on his mo'-bike. No, no great damage. But don't ask me what I thought of the "meeting"!

**"Watcher," of Dolgelly, writes:**

You said in answer to a correspondent that you were counting the stars for him. Have you finished yet?

ANSWER: I make it 49,999,999,999,999, but as an eminent astronomer gives the figure as a round 50,000,000,000,000 I am having a recount. Shall I wire you the result?

THERE'S NO HOLDING GUSSY WHEN HE'S ON THE WARPATH—AS HIS FORM-MASTER PAINFULLY DISCOVERS!

# GUSSY GETS AWAY WITH IT!



"Oh!" came a howl as Arthur Augustus' knuckles crashed on Silverson's chin. Next moment Gussy leaped away.

## A NARROW ESCAPE!

"QUICK!" gasped Baggy Trimble.

"What—"  
"Quick! Take it! Quick!"

Tom Merry stared at the fat Baggy of the Fourth Form.

He was on the study landing in the School House when Baggy came up the stairs. Baggy came up those stairs at an unusual speed. He fairly flew. His face was red, he panted for breath, he gurgled and he gasped; but he did not pause for breath—he raced.

It looked as if somebody was after Baggy.

In his podgy paw something was clutched. He held it out to Tom Merry—or, rather, he jammed it at him. Tom, in amazement, took it, wondering whether the fat Baggy was off his rocker.

"Keep it dark!" breathed Baggy.

Tom did not even notice what it was, except that it was a small cardboard packet. He held it in his hand, staring at Baggy.

Baggy, quite winded by his race up the stairs,

leaned on the landing balustrade, gasping for breath.

Then Tom looked at the packet in his hand.

It was a packet of cigarettes.

"Why, you fat sweep—" gasped Tom.

"Quiet!" hissed Baggy.

Another figure was coming up the staircase—evidently Baggy's pursuer. It was Darrell of the Sixth Form, a School House prefect. Tom, as he saw him, promptly put his hand into his pocket—with the packet in it.

He understood now.

Baggy had been spotted with those cigarettes. A prefect was after him. Baggy had landed the packet on him to get rid of it before he was collared.

Tom Merry looked at the gasping Baggy expressively.

He said nothing.

He was not going to give Baggy away. But after Darrell of the Sixth was gone he was going to boot Baggy. He was going to boot him hard for his unexampled cheek in landing that packet of forbidden smokes on him.

LIVELY NEW LONG  
YARN OF ALL YOUR  
ST. JIM'S FAVOURITES

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

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Darrell was on the landing in another moment.

He did not glance at Tom Merry. He bore down on Baggy Trimble, and Tom moved a little farther away. No St. Jim's fellow was allowed to have smokes in his possession, and it would have been extremely awkward for the captain of the Shell had Baggy's packet been found on him. Luckily the prefect fixed his attention on Trimble.

"You young ass!" said Darrell. "Hand it over, and then I shall have to give you six!"

"Eh? Hand what over?" asked Baggy.

"That packet of cigarettes, you young sweep!"

"What packet of cigarettes?" asked Baggy coolly. Having got rid of the guilty goods, Baggy was quite cheerful about it.

Darrell stared at him.

"I saw it in your hand!" he exclaimed. "You young rascal, what do you mean? Hand it over at once!"

"But I haven't got any cigarettes!" protested Baggy Trimble indignantly. "Look here, Darrell, don't you go saying I've got cigarettes! Silverson would give me six if he heard you. Don't you make out that I've got smokes. I'll turn out my pockets, if you like."

Darrell stared the fat Baggy. There was nothing in his podgy paws. He glanced over the study landing. There was no sign of a packet of cigarettes hastily thrown away.

"Well, turn out your pockets!" he snapped.

"I saw you with a packet of cigarettes, I know that."

"It was toffee," explained Baggy. "I've got it in my pocket now. You can see it if you like."

Baggy Trimble cheerfully turned out his pockets under the prefect's eye. His property was varied, but not of a smokable nature. There was a handkerchief that looked as if it had not been washed for several terms. There was a stray bullseye. There was a penknife with a broken blade, with another bullseye sticking to it. There was a penny and a halfpenny—all Baggy's wealth in a lump. There was a packet of toffee, with one chunk of toffee left in it. But there were no cigarettes.

Baggy turned out the pockets to their sticky lining. Darrell's face grew more and more puzzled. Baggy's grew more and more virtuously indignant. He had been accused of having smokes, and he was proving his innocence.

Tom Merry, at a little distance, looked from a window and said nothing. He was not going to betray the fat and fatheted Baggy; but he was feeling intensely exasperated.

"What have you done with those cigarettes, you young sweep?" demanded Darrell, at length.

"I never had any!" explained Baggy. "It was this packet of toffee."

"Then why did you bolt when I called to you?"

"I—I thought you were after my toffee."

The Sixth Form man stared at him; burst into a laugh, and went down the stairs.

Baggy grinned at the back of his head.

He had escaped—by the skin of his teeth! Had not another fellow happened to be on the study landing, on whom he had planted his packet of smokes in time, Baggy would have been inevitably copped.

Now Baggy was safe; the prefect had departed. Whether quite satisfied or not, he was gone. Baggy, grinning, watched him disappear down the staircase, and then trundled across to Tom Merry.

"He, he!" gurgled Baggy. "I say, you know. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,657.

that was a jolly close shave—what? Gimme my smokes, old chap! I'm dying for a smoke!"

"You fat, frowsy, footling freak!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "You've been telling Darrell a string of lies!"

"He, he! He jolly nearly had me!" grinned Baggy. "You see, he came round a corner suddenly and saw that packet. Hand it over."

"Turn round!" said Tom.

"Eh? What for?"

"I'm going to kick you!"

Baggy bounded back like a kangaroo.

"Eh? You jolly well ain't!" he exclaimed.

"Wharrer you getting shirty about, Tom Merry, I'd like to know? Look here, you can have some of the smokes."

"What?" roared Tom.

"You needn't yell at a chap! Darrell would have got them if you hadn't minded them for me," said Baggy. "I'll let you have some—nothing mean about me, I hope. Gimme the packet!"

Tom Merry made a grab at Baggy Trimble. He grabbed him by the collar and spun him round.

"I say, you leggo!" roared Baggy. "I say, I'll go halves, if you like! You're not going to have the lot. Don't you be a greedy pig, Tom Merry! Don't you jolly well think you're going to have the lot—you jolly well ain't!"

Thud!

"Whooop!" roared Baggy Trimble, as Tom's foot landed. "Oh! Ow!"

Thud!

"Yurrrrooop!"

Baggy Trimble tore himself away and bolted into the Fourth Form passage. He did not worry any more at the moment about reclaiming his smokes. He was only anxious to get out of the reach of a boot!

He disappeared, yelling.

Tom Merry, with a frowning brow, walked up the Shell passage to his study, No. 10. In that study Baggy's packet of cigarettes was hurled into the fire. Tom Merry stirred the embers over them, and the packet and the cigarettes vanished. If the fat Baggy was, as he had stated, dying for a smoke, it looked as if he was doomed.

### BY WHOSE HAND?

"MR. LINTON!"

"Well?"

The master of the Shell snapped.

Generally Mr. Linton was a very polite gentleman, in his dry, precise way. But he did not like James Silverson, the new master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Neither did he like a man bursting into his study with a red and angry face. This meant, he knew, some fresh complaint from Mr. Silverson about boys in his Form. And Linton was fed-up with complaints from Silverson about boys in his Form.

Moreover, Mr. Linton was already in an irritated frame of mind when James Silverson banged into his study.

It was quite a small matter that had annoyed him. The strap of his wrist-watch had broken. Unluckily, it had parted suddenly, the watch had dropped on the floor, and the glass was cracked across.

Mr. Linton had just picked it up, and was regarding it with a frown of intense annoyance, when Silverson happened.

It was one of those little things which are more

irritating than big things. It annoyed Mr. Linton more than the European war did!

Moreover, it was difficult to get things repaired in these hectic days. Everybody, it seemed to Mr. Linton, was talking war and air raids, instead of getting on with his job! It might be a week—two or three weeks—before he got that watch repaired. It was very annoying.

So he actually barked at Mr. Silverson, instead of asking him politely what he wanted!

Besides, he knew in advance what he wanted. It was some more of his endless complaining about Shell fellows! Linton guessed that at once!

"Tom Merry—" said Mr. Silverson.

The master of the Shell almost banged that offending wrist-watch down on his study table. He had expected that name! Now he heard it!

"Merry again!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; Merry again!" snapped Mr. Silverson. "Kindly step along to my study and see that boy's latest outrage."

Mr. Linton breathed hard. But he followed the angry master of the Fourth.

It was possible, after all, that the complaint was well-founded—in which case, the master of the Shell had to deal with the matter. Tom Merry, that term, had been in an unusual amount of trouble; and his feud with the new master of the Fourth was well known.

"Look!" snarled James, as he threw open his study door wide, and the master of the Shell stepped into the room and looked.

It was Mr. Latham's old study, now occupied by the new master of the Fourth Form. Over the mantelpiece was a large glass. On that glass an inscription had been painted in black paint in large letters. It ran:

"WORM!  
WRIGGLE AWAY!  
YOU'RE NOT WANTED AT ST. JIM'S!"

Somebody—Tom Merry or not—had evidently visited Mr. Silverson's study, and left that cheery inscription to greet his eyes when he came in.

Mr. Linton looked at it.

He frowned.

Mr. Silverson was the most unpopular master in the school. Linton knew that he was disliked, not only in his own Form, but in other Forms. But Linton was a whale on discipline! Nothing, in his eyes, could excuse this—this was a matter for a flogging, if the perpetrator was discovered.

But Mr. Linton was rather more particular than James about getting the right man! Neither was he going to believe that the man was to be found in his Form, without more proof than was enough to satisfy Silverson.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Linton?" asked the master of the Fourth, his voice trembling with rage.

"Outrageous!" said Mr. Linton. "No doubt some member of your Form—"

"A member of your Form, sir!" hooted James. "That is the handiwork of Merry of the Shell—and it is of a piece with the rest of his incessant insolence to me ever since I have been at this school."

"You have seen Merry here?" asked Mr. Linton.

"I have but just come in! Do you suppose that the young rascal would be likely to let me see him at his work?" snarled James.

"Then upon what grounds do you accuse Merry?" asked the master of the Shell coldly.

"It appears to me much more probable that this is the work of some boy in your own Form."

"It is nothing of the kind! It is the work of Tom Merry—and you know it as well as I do!" exclaimed James Silverson.

It was rather unfortunate for James, in his campaign against Tom Merry, that he had an evil temper, which he was unaccustomed to keeping in control.

Often and often had James succeeded in putting Tom in the wrong—but that was when his cool cunning had the upper hand. He was more likely to put himself in the wrong when his evil temper, and his bitter dislike of the schoolboy whom he regarded as his rival for a fortune, held sway!

James was certain that Tom Merry had done this! Everything that happened to James, he put down to Tom Merry. It was so clear, to James, that he had no doubt that it was equally clear to Tom's Form-master—and that Linton did not choose to admit it!

The master of the Shell gave him a cold, grim look. He was not to be browbeaten by a member

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## EXCITING NEW SERIES OF STORIES

By GEO. E. ROCHESTER

STARTS THE WEEK AFTER NEXT!

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LOOK OUT FOR THE FIRST  
GRIPPING YARN!

=====

of the staff who was, after all, only a temporary master—merely filling the place of the absent master of the Fourth.

"Kindly measure your words, Mr. Silverson!" he snapped.

"I repeat that you know—" hooted James.

"I know nothing about it—and I am well assured that you know nothing, either!" retorted Mr. Linton. "Merry has been guilty of some serious faults this term. When he has failed in respect to you, sir, I have punished him. But I am beginning to think, Mr. Silverson, that I have not made sufficient allowance for the boy's natural resentment of what almost amounts to persecution."

"I tell you—"

"Listen to me, Mr. Silverson! You are a relative of Merry's—possibly there is some family dispute at the bottom of this! Certainly you have shown a dislike to the boy—a desire to find him in fault on all occasions. You have made accusations against him which have proved continually to be mistakes. Only last week, when a series of extraordinary actions were perpetrated by three boys disguised in Guy Fawkes masks, you persisted in accusing Merry and his friends, Manners and Lowther, although it was conclusively proved that they were not concerned—"

"I am still absolutely certain—"

"That is merely obstinacy!" said Mr. Linton. "And I refuse to hear another word on the subject! If that insulting inscription on your glass has been placed there by a Shell boy, that boy

shall be reported to the headmaster for a flogging. But no boy in my Form, sir, shall be punished, or even questioned, on an accusation founded merely on personal dislike."

James gasped for breath.

"Will you send for Merry?" he panted.

"No, sir; I will not!"

"Will you question him?"

"No; I will not! Adduce any evidence, and the matter shall be inquired into—otherwise I decline to take the slightest notice of it."

"I tell you——" roared James.

"I decline to remain here and listen to a raised voice, Mr. Silverson!"

With that, the master of the Shell walked out of the study, and shut the door after him with a bang.

James Silverson was left alone—breathing rage.

He took a duster, at last, to wipe the painted words from the glass. But the paint had had time to dry, and it was not to be rubbed out! That glass required a lot of cleaning before that message could be obliterated.

James went to the bell—but he paused.

He did not want a servant to see that message on the glass—and to report below stairs that Mr. Silverson was nicknamed the "Worm," and that he had been told to "wriggle away." James realised that he had better scrape that glass clean himself.

He proceeded to do so—with deep feelings. It was Tom Merry—he was sure it was Tom Merry! His feelings towards Tom Merry, always bitter, were pure acid as he scraped and scraped, and rubbed and rubbed, at the glass—in the very worst temper ever!

### BLACK-OUT IN STUDY No. 6!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form uttered that ejaculation suddenly.

Arthur Augustus was in Study No. 6. He was standing by the table, his eyes and his eyeglass fixed upon an object that lay thereon.

That object was a biscuit-tin. It was a large, square biscuit-tin. Once upon a time it had contained biscuits. Now it contained something much less attractive. It was full, almost to the brim, with tar!

Tar was not the kind of thing that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy might have been supposed to like. A single spot of the same on his well-fitting jacket or his elegant bag would have caused Gussy deep distress.

Yet now the swell of St. Jim's was contemplating it with smiling satisfaction—till there was a sound of footsteps at the door.

At that sound, Arthur Augustus ceased to contemplate the tin of tar, seized it suddenly, and lodged it on the top bookshelf.

There were two bookshelves in Study No. 6, and the upper one was over the level of a fellow's head. Having landed the biscuit-tin, with its peculiar contents, there, Arthur Augustus turned hastily away—breathing rather quickly, as Blake and Herries and Digby came into the study.

Those three youths looked rather fixedly at Gussy.

"Oh! Here you are!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

"What have you been up to?" demanded Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

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"We've caught him in time," said Herries. "Nothing's happened to Silverson, so far, or we should have heard."

"What have you done with it, Gussy?" demanded Dig.

Arthur Augustus coloured a little. He stood with his back to the bookshelves. Probably he was hoping that his chums would not notice that big biscuit-tin on the upper shelf.

It was large enough to be seen. It was a ten-pound tin, big and square. And it was rather brightly coloured, and the words "Garibaldi Biscuits" appeared on it in large letters.

But at the moment the attention of Blake & Co. was concentrated on Gussy himself.

"Where is it?" went on Dig.

"Where is what, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus mildly.

"The tar!" said Blake.

"The tah!" repeated Gussy.

"Yes, tar! You've been bagging tar!" said Blake accusingly. "Chap saw you lading it out of Taggles' tar-bucket at his shed."

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Think we don't know what you're at?" went on Blake. "You're thinking of a jape on Silverson. That's as plain as your face, which is saying a lot."

"Weally, you ass——"

"Well, japing Silverson is all right," said Blake. "The more the Worm is japed, the better. But you're not the man to do it, see?"

"Weally, Blake, if that wat is to be made to sit up, the mattah cannot be in bettah hands, I think. It wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment to get away with a wag on Silvahson."

"You howling ass!" said Dig. "I'll bet a dozen fellows saw you getting away with that tar. What did you carry it in?"

"Two or three beaks, too, very likely," said Herries. "I dare say Railton saw it, and very likely the Head."

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"If Gussy was going to jape Silverson with tar, he would walk the tar round right under Silverson's nose," said Blake. "He would make it a special point."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Look here, did you get that tar for Silverson or not?" demanded Blake. "If you did, tell us where you've parked it?"

"Pway let the mattah dwop, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wefuse to allow you fellows to butt in! If you cannot wely on me to wag that wat Silvahson, it only shows what asses you are! You have not tweated me well in this mattah."

"Where's that tar?"

"It was my ideah to wag Silvahson, got up in Guy Fawkes masks, so that the wat would not know us," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "and you left me out! You fellows had a turn, Figgins & Co. had a turn, and Tom Merry and Mannahs and Lowthah had a turn, but I——"

"You're such an ass, you know, old chap," said Herries. "You'd have given yourself away on the spot."

"I wefuse to answah such a dewogatory wemarrk as that, Hewwies. I am now takin' the mattah into my own hands," said Arthur Augustus. "I am goin' to wig myself up in a Guy Fawkes mask, and mop a lot of tah ovah Silvahson—and you will see how I shall handle the mattah."

"Let me catch you at it!" said Blake. "We're not going to see you flogged or sacked either, Gussy. Ain't we your keepers?"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I uttably wefuse to wegard you as my keepahs!"

"Where did you park that tar?"

"I wefuse to tell you, Blake! You will heah about that tah when it is mopped ovah Silvahson, not befoah!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "Silvahson is goin' to be blacked out! I am goin' to black him out. Wait till you see him smothahed with tah!"

"What about bumping him?" suggested Herries.

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus moved towards the door.

This was rather astute on Gussy's part, as it gave an impression that the tar was not in the study. Gussy was very anxious for that tar not to be discovered by his comrades.

Having an absolute lack of faith in Arthur Augustus' tact and judgment, Blake & Co., keen as they were on making Mr. Silverson "sit up," were still keener on stopping Gussy from trying to bring about that desirable result.

Gussy, they had not the slightest doubt, would be spotted on the spot—with dire and painful results.

"Stop him!" said Blake, as the swell of St. Jim's progressed towards the door. "He's not going after that tar."

"Weally, Blake—"

Three juniors lined up between Gussy and the door.

"Have you parked it in the box-room?" demanded Blake.

"Wats!"

"Have you left it downstairs in the lobby?"

"More wats!"

"Well, you're sticking in this study, and we're going to keep an eye on you," said Jack Blake.

"Now let's have tea. And if you try to get out of the study, Gussy, we'll jam some jam on your clobber!"

"I am quite willin' to stay till aftah tea, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I am not goin' to jape Silvahson till dark."

"You're not going to jape Silverson at all!" roared Blake.

"Wats! Pway don't argue any more, deah boy! I am goin' ahead!"

"Well, let's have tea," said Digby. "Keep away from that door, Gussy! Did you bring in anything for tea, any of you?"

"Gussy seems to have," said Blake, his glance falling on the big biscuit-tin on the shelf. "Bikkers, by gum! Hand them over, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus caught his breath. Blake supposed, rather naturally, that a biscuit-tin contained biscuits. But it didn't; it contained tar! Gussy did not want that biscuit-tin closely inspected.

"Pway don't gwab down that tin, Blake!" he said hastily. "I—I'm not standing biscuits for tea! There's plenty of bwead, and some buttah, and some sardines, I believe."

Blake looked at him.

"Getting stingy in your old age, Gussy?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Well, my hat!" said Herries. "Gussy's getting mean. He's got stacks of biscuits, and doesn't want to whack them out with his pals."

"Gussy!" said Dig.

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

Stinginess or meanness were not in Gussy's line at all. Whatever Gussy had was freely at the disposal of his friends. But really he could

not whack out the biscuits in that tin, as there weren't any. Neither could he demonstrate that there weren't any, without revealing the hidden tar. It was an awkward situation.

"The fact is, deah boys," he stammered, "I—I don't want to be stingy, you know, but I feah that I cannot offah you a whack in the—the biscuits. I want all that is in that tin myself."

The three gazed at him.

"Well, this takes it!" said Blake. "No end of bikkers—and we're short of tuck for tea—and he doesn't want to whack out. If you're joking, Gussy—"

"Not at all, deah boy. You—you see—"

"I see," said Blake. "If I were a touchy sort of chap, I should get on the high horse, and say 'Keep your mouldy biscuits! Don't offer even one to me! I decline to touch it!' But, as it happens, I'm not touchy; I'm hungry. So we're going to have those bikkers!"

"You bet!" agreed Herries.

"What-ho!" said Dig.

"Weally, you fellows," stammered Arthur Augustus, in great distress, between the imputation of stinginess on the one hand and the desire to keep the tar undiscovered on the other, "you—you see—"

"Chuck it!" said Blake, and he reached up to the biscuit-tin on the upper bookshelf.

Arthur Augustus grabbed at his arm.

"Stop it!" he exclaimed. "I wefuse to allow you to touch that biscuit-tin, Blake! You heah me?"

"My only hat!" gasped Blake. "He's a regular miser! First time I've seen anything of that kind in Gussy! We'll jolly well cure him at the beginning! We'll jolly well scoff all the bikkers we can pack in, and give the rest to Baggy Trimble, as a lesson to him—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I wefuse!" roared Arthur Augustus. "I wepeat that I wefuse to allow you to touch that biscuit-tin, Blake!"

He dragged at Blake's arm to jerk him away from the bookshelves. Blake perked his arm loose, and gave Arthur Augustus a shove on his chest, which sent him staggering back against the study table.

Then, before Gussy could rally, Blake snatched the biscuit-tin down from the shelf.

Naturally, he supposed that there was a lid on it, and that it contained biscuits. Both suppositions were erroneous; there was no lid on it and it did not contain biscuits!

It tilted down from the shelf as Blake grabbed it. The contents—nothing like biscuits—streamed over Blake.

From that biscuit-tin shot a sudden stream of tar, splashing full into Jack Blake's upturned face.

Blake gave a gasp of amazement and horror.

"Ooogh!"

"What—" gasped Herries.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Dig.

"You uttah ass!" howled Arthur Augustus.

"You are wastin' all my tah!"

Blake did not answer. He couldn't!

Streaming tar was all over his face. He clutched at it, he grabbed at it, he clawed at it, making his hands as black and tarry as his countenance. His features disappeared under tar—blacked out as suddenly and efficaciously as the most exacting air-raid warden could have required.

"Gurrgh!" Blake gurgled through the streaming tar. "Urrgh!"

The biscuit-tin, still half full of its sticky contents, crashed at his feet. Blake did not heed it. He clawed at tar.

"Oh cwombs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries. "Oh, my hat! That's where Gussy parked the tar. It wasn't bikkers—it was tar! Ha, ha!"

Blake gouged at tar and glared round for Arthur Augustus.

"Groogh! I'll give him tar! Ooogh! I'll tar him! Where is he? I'll bung his head in it! I'll—"

Arthur Augustus made one bound for the door. He dodged rapidly out of the study! Gussy wanted to keep that tar for Silverson, but he did not want any for himself!

"Keep off, you ass!" he gasped. "Ha, ha! You look feahfully black, Blake! Ha, ha, ha! Pewwaps you wish now that you had let me keep it for Silvahson."

Blake made a rush, and Arthur Augustus, chuckling, skipped along the passage and vanished. Herries and Dig stood staring at Blake. Something comic in his tarry aspect seemed to strike them, for they roared.

"Groogh! You chortling chumps!" gasped Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig.

"You cackling cuckoos—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sniggering swabs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it funny?" yelled Blake. "Then you can have some, too!" He stooped and grabbed up the biscuit-tin!

Herries and Dig did not wait to have some, too. They bolted out of the study, still yelling. Jack Blake was left alone—with the tar! Nobody else wanted any—Blake had the black-out in Study No. 6 all to himself!

### BANGS FOR BAGGY!

"TRIMBLE!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther uttered that name together.

Coming into Study No. 10 in the Shell, they sighted a fat figure bending over Tom Merry's desk near the window.

The lid of that desk was raised. The fat Baggy was scanning the interior. His podgy paws were shifting papers, letters, old exercises, all sorts of odds and ends that had accumulated during the term in that desk, which Tom had been going to sort out some day, but had never yet sorted out.

"Oh jiminy!" exclaimed Baggy, startled by the sudden exclamations behind him.

He whirled round from the desk.

The three Shell fellows stepped in. They eyed Baggy Trimble with grim eyes. What Baggy had been exploring that desk for they did not know, but they were immediately agreed on one point—Baggy was going to have a tip about exploring desks in other fellows' studies.

"You prying porker!" said Monty Lowther. "What are you up to?"

"Nothing to eat in that desk!" said Manners.

"Boot him!" said Tom.

Baggy Trimble backed round the study table, with wary eyes on the Terrible Three.

"I'm going to have my smokes!" he said defiantly. "If Tom Merry thinks he can pinch a

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fellow's smokes I can jolly well tell him he's got another guess coming—see?"

"What?" exclaimed Lowther and Manners together.

Tom Merry stared at Baggy. He realised that the fat Baggy was not, for once, playing Paul Pry! He was after those smokes. Tom had already forgotten about that packet of cigarettes. It seemed that Baggy hadn't!

"You blithering chump!" said Tom. "I chucked those cigarettes into the fire!"

"Draw it mild!" suggested Baggy.

"What the dickens—" asked Manners.

"That fat chump bunged a packet of cigarettes on me this afternoon when a prefect was after him," explained Tom. "I couldn't give the blithering ass away, and I might have been spotted with his filthy smokes on me! So when Darrell went down I booted him and chucked his cigarettes into the fire. He seems to fancy I kept them!"

Baggy favoured him with a fat wink.

"Come off!" he suggested. "You jolly well never threw them away! You like a smoke now and then as much as any other chap."

"What!" roared Tom.

"You can bellow at a fellow!" retorted Baggy. "My beak's been after you more than once for pub-crawling at the Green Man—though you've always got out of it somehow. Everybody knows that Silverson thinks—"

"Silverson's a fool and a rascal!" roared Tom.

Baggy chuckled.

"Better tell him so," he said. "No good telling me! Look here, you wouldn't give me my smokes back, and I came here to get them. You can't expect to keep a fellow's smokes! Haven't you any of your own?"

Tom Merry's face crimsoned with wrath.

Baggy evidently had no doubts on the subject. He fancied that he liked a smoke himself, and he had no doubt that the captain of the Shell shared his taste.

This was the outcome of James Silverson's system of throwing enough mud in the hope that some of it would stick!

All through the term there had been talk of this kind about Tom Merry, and fellows like Baggy did not believe that there was nothing in it—they believed that Tom had been lucky to get off.

"I offered to go halves!" went on Baggy warmly. "A chap couldn't say fairer than that. But bagging the lot—I call that thick!"

"I've told you what I did with your filthy smokes!" roared Tom Merry.

"You can keep on telling me till you're black in the face!" retorted Baggy. "But you won't make me swallow it! Look here, make it halves. I don't mind telling you that I found that packet of cigarettes in Cutts' study—Cutts of the Fifth, you know—so they didn't cost me anything. If I let you have half will you hand them over?"

This seemed, to Baggy, a generous offer, and he goggled inquiringly at Tom Merry with his gooseberry eyes.

"It was a packet of two dozen," he went on. "Well, a dozen for you and a dozen for me—what? You can let your pals have some of yours!"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"This is what I owe to that rat Silverson," he said. "He's made every fool and rotter in the House believe that I'm a smoky, dingy, pub-crawling outsider like Racke!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Baggy, grinning. "Fellows know you pretty well by this time, Tom



Merry! Don't you owe money to a racing man at the Black Bull in Wayland?"

"No!" howled Tom.

"Paid him?" asked Baggy. "I heard that you owed him money! I know the man came here and kicked up a row about it."

"He came here and pretended to know me, and it was proved that he didn't even know me by sight!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yes, I know you wangled out of it somehow," agreed Baggy. "It was jolly clever of you. I'll say that! Still, among ourselves, you know—Here, you keep off! Yarooooop!"

Baggy bounded—but he did not bound fast enough! Tom Merry's grasp was on him.

Bang!

The fattest head in the School House at St. Jim's came in contact with the top of the study table.

Baggy's wild roar rang far and wide.

Bang!

"Ow! Help! Yarooooop!" roared Baggy. "Leggo! I say, you can have the smokes if you like—you can have the lot! Yaroop!"

Bang!

"Yooo-hoop!"

"Now get out, you fat freak!" roared Tom; and with a swing of his arm he sent Baggy Trimble spinning towards the door.

Baggy staggered in the doorway. Manners and Lowther let out a foot each at the same moment.

Thud! Thud!

Trimble tottered into the passage, roaring.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! Yah! Who pinched a fellow's smokes?" he bawled, and trundled down the passage at top speed.

Tom Merry was left with a flaming face. "That cur Silverson!" he breathed. "It all comes from him. By gum, I've a good mind to go down to his study and—"

"And a better mind not to," said Manners. "Don't be an ass, Tom! What does that fathead matter, anyhow?"

"He does matter!" panted Tom. "I don't like even a potty pig like Trimble thinking such things about me. And there's others—"

"We're giving the Worm something back every time," said Monty Lowther, "and we're drawing his teeth, Tom. He's fed Linton up to the back teeth with his lying accusations, and Railton's getting fed-up, too. Silverson's dishing himself more than he's dishing you."

"The rotten cur!" muttered Tom.

"We're drawing his teeth," repeated Monty. "Think he didn't go to Linton about that message on his looking-glass to-day? Of course he did! But you've heard nothing about it. Linton's stopped taking notice of him. He's overdone it, and dished himself."

"That's so," agreed Tom; "but—"

"And we'll give him more," said Lowther. "We'll make him as glad when Lathom comes back, and he can go, as the Fourth will be. He's not here for ever, Tom, so forget about him, and let's have tea."

Tom Merry nodded, and the Terrible Three sat down to tea and dismissed James Silverson from mind—for the time!

### JAMES' DARKEST DEED!

MR. JAMES SILVERSON came along by Masters' Studies slowly.

Mr. Silverson had been at tea in Common-room with the other masters. But he had left before tea was over, leaving the other members of the staff in the Common-room.

He was, therefore, aware that of the staff who boarded in the School House not one was, at the moment, in his study, or likely to come to his study for some little time.

James had that row of studies to himself—for the moment!

He paused outside Mr. Linton's study

He gave a glance up the passage, and a glance down the passage. Then he entered the study of the master of the Shell, and closed the door after him.

Inside that study, James breathed quickly and uneasily.

He was safe enough for ten minutes, at least. He had left Mr. Linton in the Common-room, deep in conversation with Mr. Railton, the House-master, over the tea-table. And even if Mr. Linton stepped in, James could affect to have something to say to him, as a member of the staff, and to have waited in his study for that purpose. But he was uneasy, all the same.

James was aware that, as Monty Lowther put it, he had overdone it, and dished himself. He had succeeded to some extent. He was making Tom Merry regarded rather as a dog with a bad name. But malice and evil temper had hurried him into mistake after mistake, with the result of undoing a great deal of the effect of his own scheming.

The incident of that afternoon had made it very clear to James. But if Mr. Linton refused even to question Tom Merry on the subject of what had happened in Silverson's study, what would be the result if he found that something had happened in his own study?

Certainly he was not likely to suspect a colleague—another member of the staff!

A pile of Form papers lay on the table, which Mr. Linton had to correct for his Form. James stretched out a hand to them.

Mr. Linton, when he came back to the study, was going to find those Form papers torn across and scattered about the floor. He could suspect whom he liked of that outrage, but James had little doubt that his thoughts would turn to the junior who all through that term had been in more or less trouble with the masters. He could hardly fail to attribute the act to some boy in his own Form. And what boy so likely as Tom Merry?

But even as James touched the heap of Form papers with his hand, he stopped and drew it back.

His eyes fell on another object that lay near the papers.

It was a wrist-watch with a broken strap and a cracked glass.

He remembered that Linton had had it in his hand when he looked into the study that afternoon. James' eyes fixed on that watch.

His greenish eyes glinted.

It was rather a good watch. It must have cost a good sum. Second-hand, it would sell for a few pounds, at least.

James Silverson's face paled a little, as if he was startled himself at the wicked thought that had come into his mind. He hesitated.

But his hesitation was brief.

He left the Form papers alone. He picked up the wrist-watch and slipped it into his pocket under his gown.

Then, with beating heart, he stepped to the door and peered out.

No one was in sight. He left the study quietly, and closed the door after him without a sound.

He walked away quietly. A few minutes later he was looking into the doorway of the junior day-room, where a number of School House juniors had gathered after tea.

"Is Merry here?" he asked.

Every fellow in the room looked round at that question. Silverson was after Tom Merry again. That was the general impression.

"No!" answered Kangaroo of the Shell, forgetting to add the "sir."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I think he's in his study."

"Very well. Will one of you go and tell him that his Form-master desires to see him in his study?"

With that, Mr. Silverson turned away. But his request, of course, had to be complied with, and Kangaroo went up to the Shell studies.

The Terrible Three were finishing tea when the Australian junior looked into Study No. 10.

"Linton wants you, Tommy!" said Kangaroo.

"Blow!" said Tom. "What for?"

"Silverson didn't say."

"Silverson?" repeated Tom.

"He gave me the message," explained Harry Noble. "I suppose Linton asked him." And with a nod to the Terrible Three, Kangaroo went down again.

Tom Merry rose from the table.

"Silverson again!" he grunted.

"Looks as if Linton's going to inquire into that jolly old message, after all!" remarked Lowther. "Well, that won't hurt you, as it was Levison of the Fourth who put it up."

"He was bound to think of me, of course!" said Tom. "Fat lot of good it will do him!"

And Tom went downstairs to his Form-master's study.

He found that study vacant, rather to his surprise. He had no doubt that Mr. Linton had sent for him in connection with that advice painted on Silverson's glass for the Worm to wriggle away, and as Mr. Linton was not there he waited. There was nothing else that he could do, as he had been sent for.

In the meantime, James Silverson had walked back to Common-room. He waited casually by the door of that apartment till Mr. Linton came out.

The master of the Shell would have passed him without a word or a glance, but James made a gesture.

"One moment, Mr. Linton!" he said.

"What is it, Mr. Silverson?" The master of the Shell stopped.

"I have sent Merry to your study, sir," said James.

Mr. Linton raised his eyebrows.

"Indeed! And why?" he asked icily.

"So that you can question him concerning the insulting message painted up in my study to-day," answered James.

Mr. Linton set his lips.

"I have already said, Mr. Silverson, that I decline to put a single question to any boy in my Form on that subject," he said, very distinctly. "And I regard your action in sending a Shell boy to my study as unwarrantable impertinence."

With that, and without waiting for an answer, Mr. Linton walked on.

James had asked for that snub, which was severe enough; but he did not seem to mind. He smiled as he watched the master of the Shell rustle away down the passage.

Tom Merry was in Linton's study. James had needed to explain his action in sending him

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there, and he had explained it. That was all that James wanted. He walked away—smiling!

Mr. Linton, with a heightened colour, hurried to his study.

He was deeply annoyed by James' action. But it did not, of course, occur to him that Mr. Silverson could have had any other motive for sending Tom to that study than the one he had stated.

He found Tom Merry waiting in the study.

"I hope you have not waited long, Merry," he said in quite a kindly voice.

"Only about ten minutes, sir," said Tom. "I had a message that you wanted to see me, and—"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Linton. "It was an error, however. I am sorry that you have had to come here for nothing. You may go, Merry."

And Tom, in considerable surprise, went.

From the corner of the passage James Silverson watched him as he went—still smiling! Tom Merry had been alone in a study from which it would be discovered that a valuable watch was missing! It was the darkest and most dastardly act in all James' unscrupulous campaign against his rival for the money-bags of old Miss Priscilla Fawcett! But it looked to James as if it was going to be a winner at last!

## IN THE DARK!

**B**ANG!

"Oh cwikey!"

Jack Blake opened his eyes

It was intensely dark in the Fourth Form dormitory. The hour was late—and blacked-out windows barred the faintest glimmer of starlight. Blake could not have seen his hand before his eyes had he held it up. But he could hear!

"Gussy!" he breathed.

No answer.

"Is that you, Gussy, you ass?"

Silence.

Blake sat up in bed. Something had been knocked over—and it had been followed by an ejaculation in Gussy's well-known voice. Gussy was out of bed—he knew that.

"Are you up, you born idiot?" hissed Blake. "Will you answer, you pie-faced apology for a tailor's dummy?"

"I wefuse to answer a question expressed in such vevy oppwobwious terms, Blake!" came a voice of icy, chilling dignity from the darkness. "I shall not tell you whethah I am up or not!"

"You benighted ass—"

"Wats!"

"Hallo! What's up?" came a sleepy yawn from Herries.

"What's the row?" asked Dig.

"It's all wight, deah boys—nothing's up, and there's no wow!" said Arthur Augustus' voice from impenetrable gloom. "Pway go to sleep! I knocked ovah a chair in the dark—that is all! Nothin' to wowwy about."

"Oh, jiminy!" Baggy Trimble was awake now. "Is that Gussy going out on the tiles?"

"Weally, Twimble, you fat wottah—"

"Go back to bed, you image!" hissed Blake. "Think you're going larking in the middle of the night?"

"I wefuse to go back to bed, Blake!"

"What's the game, Gussy?" came Levison's voice.

"I don't mind tellin' you, deah boy! I am goin' to wag that wat Silvahson!" answered Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "Blake wasted



From the biscuit-tin shot a sudden stream of tar, splashing full into Jack Blake's upturned face. "Oooogh!" he gasped.

most of my tah this aftahnoon, spillin' it on his sillay head—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But there is some left in the biscuit-tin. I am goin' to let that wat have it!"

"Oh gad!" came from Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Good-bye, Gussy, in case we don't see you again before you're bunked!"

"Weally, Cardew—"

There was a sound of somebody getting out of bed. It was followed by the sound of two other fellows getting out.

"Collar him!" breathed Blake.

Arthur Augustus retreated to the door, groping his way. His alarmed chums were not going to collar him if he could help it.

Gussy had intended to slip out of the dormitory without making a sound, leaving his comrades fast asleep. He had not meant to knock over a chair in the dark. He had done that without meaning to! Now most of the Fourth Formers were awake—and three of them were going to stop Gussy if they could!

Gussy groped to the door. But the blackness was impenetrable. He arrived at the wall at a little distance from the door.

Jack Blake, whose sense of direction was rather more reliable, made a straight cut to the door.

He groped over it, finding it still shut.

Arthur Augustus had not got out of the dormitory yet!

Blake faced round from the door and extended his hands to collar Gussy when he arrived there—unaware that Gussy was groping along the wall.

"Oh!" came a startled gasp, as an unseen figure bumped into Blake's outstretched hands in the darkness.

"Got you!" grinned Blake, and he grabbed—and there was a gasping howl as his arm went round an unseen neck and the unseen figure was dragged to the floor.

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Have you got him?" came Digby's voice. "Got him, Blake? Got him, Herries? Either of you got him?"

There was no reply. Arthur Augustus, creeping along the wall, was only a couple of feet from Dig, and he grinned in the dark and was careful to make no sound.

Sound enough came from the unseen one collared by Jack Blake in the dark. He spluttered and howled frantically as he bumped on the floor.

"Got him!" gasped Blake, tightening the grip of his arm around a wriggling neck. "Keep quiet, Gussy, you ass—don't play the goat—I've got you—"

"Gurrroooooogh!"

"Lend a hand here, Dig. He's trying to get away!" panted Blake. "We've got to keep the silly ass in the dorm!"

"Yurroooogh!" gurgled Blake's captive, in suffocated accents, vainly striving to wriggle his head out of chancery. "Gurrgh!"

Dig groped in the dark towards the sound. He groped and grabbed and got hold of a head of hair.

"I've got him!" he exclaimed. "I've got his hair—"

"Leggo!" shrieked Blake.

"Eh?"

"You thumping chump, you're dragging my hair out by the roots!" yelled Blake. "Leggo! Ow! Leggo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a ripple from the darkness.

Most of the Fourth were sitting up in bed, and they seemed to be entertained by what they heard.

"Oh!" gasped Dig. "I thought it was Gussy—"

"You silly idiot!"

"Well, I thought—"

"Idiot! I've got Gussy. He's wriggling like a centipede!" howled Blake. "Get hold of him—grab his ears—"

Dig grabbed in the dark. He captured an ear.

"I've got him—"

"Leggo my ear!" shrieked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grrgh! Urrgh! Leggo!" came a suffocated voice from within the circle of Blake's arm. "Will you leggo?"

It was not Gussy's voice. Up to that moment Blake had no doubt that he had got hold of Arthur Augustus. But it appeared that he hadn't! Those choked and suffocated tones belonged to George Herries.

"Oh!" gasped Blake. "Isn't that Gussy?"

"Gurrgh! Leave off chook-chook-choking me—Gurrgh! No, you idiot, it isn't—wurrgh!—Gussy, it's—wurrgh!—me! Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a howl from the whole dormitory.

"I say, that's old Herries you've bagged!" gasped Dig. "What the thump did you bag old Herries for?"

"I—I thought I'd got Gussy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, where's Gussy, though—"

"If he's gone—" gasped Blake. "You fathead, Herries, butting into a chap in the dark and making me think it was Gussy—"

"You burbling idiot, grabbing a chap in the dark and nearly twisting his head off—Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get a light!" gasped Blake. "For goodness' sake get a light! Hasn't anybody got a blinking light?"

Levison of the Fourth, chuckling, turned out and flashed on a pocket-torch. The light revealed Blake and Herries and Digby by the door, Herries sitting on the floor, gasping for breath, the other two standing.

But it did not reveal Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus was gone!

While Blake, under the delusion that he had got Gussy, was half-suffocating George Herries with a grip round his neck, Arthur

Augustus had groped along to the door and slipped out—and he was gone!

Blake stared round for him in vain!

"Gone!" he breathed. "That mad ass—gone! Silverson will get him, of course—he's done for! The potty chump—"

"Gurrgh!"—from Herries. "Blow him! Blow you! You've jolly nearly throttled me, you chump! Gurrgh!"

"Br-r-r-r!" snorted Blake.

He went back to bed. It was hopeless to think of following Gussy down dark passages and stairs and recapturing him. Gussy had to be left to his own devices!

And that, if Gussy started japing Silverson, Silverson would get him, Blake & Co. had not the slightest doubt—neither had any other fellow in the Fourth Form dormitory! Unless the unexpected happened, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's number was up!

But the unexpected did happen—it was happening in those very moments!

### UNEXPECTED!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY grinned serenely as he groped down a dark passage, unlighted by a single gleam.

Leaving confusion behind him in the dormitory, Gussy had escaped from his anxious chums—and now he was happily on the warpath!

He groped across the dormitory landing and cautiously descended the stairs to the next landing below—the study landing.

Gussy's plans were cut and dried.

He was going to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage for that biscuit-tin and the tar that remained in it. Then he was going to disguise his identity with an old coat and a Guy Fawkes mask. Then he was going, with silent tread, down to Silverson's study to jape Silverson.

The other fellows did not believe that Gussy was a great man at ragging. They would jolly well see! Gussy was going ahead, anyhow!

Silverson was going to get that tar! Gussy was going to escape uncaptured and unrecognised—perhaps! That, at all events, was the programme.

Silently, groping down the curving banisters, Arthur Augustus descended to the study landing, off which many passages opened.

It was as black as a hat!

With his arm extended before him, lest he should bump into a wall, Arthur Augustus trod across the landing.

"Ooooooh!" he breathed suddenly.

He came to a halt, the blood thrilling in all his veins from head to foot. His outstretched hand had come into sudden and unexpected contact with something. It was not a wall or an article of furniture. Gussy knew, with a startling shock, what it was.

It was a human face!

He was not alone in the blackness on the big study landing! Someone else, as silent as himself, was there in the darkness!

It was an utter surprise.

Who could be groping about there in the dark, unless it was a burglar, was a mystery. Gussy had a reason for his groping; he was making his way to Study No. 6 in the Fourth to get that tin of tar. But who else in the School House had a reason for tiptoeing about in the dark?

Gussy sensed rather than felt a sweeping hand as he backed away with a startled gasp. The

unseen one with whom he had collided was grasping at him.

He backed more swiftly and side-stepped. He was surprised, startled, and rather alarmed. He was not going to be grabbed by unseen hands in the dark if he could help it.

He felt a grab at his shoulder the next moment. That grab closed like a vice, and there was a low, snarling voice:

"Tom Merry! I've caught you!"

Gussy fairly bounded.

It was Mr. Silverson's voice!

He understood in a flash. It was the Worm who was there in the dark, and he fancied—as he had fancied before—that he had caught Tom Merry breaking bounds after lights out.

Gussy had intended to see Silverson—later, in deep disguise, and with a tin of tar. He did not want to see him now.

As that fierce grasp closed on his shoulder Arthur Augustus swung in a rapid fist, judging the position as well as he could in the dark.

Crash!

"Oooh!" gasped Gussy as his noble knuckles, crashing on a chin in the dark, felt a sudden pain.

"Oh!" came a howl; and the grasp on his shoulder relaxed, and the invisible Silverson staggered over.

Bump!

Arthur Augustus leaped away in the dark.

He was not thinking of carrying on with his jape now. He was not going to Study No. 6 for that tar. After this unexpected and exciting encounter even Gussy realised that that jape had better be postponed—and that he would be lucky if he got back to his dormitory undetected.

He flew for the upper staircase.

He heard a gasping, grunting sound behind him. That jolt on the chin seemed to have rather damaged James Silverson.

In dread every moment of a flash-lamp streaming light, Arthur Augustus did not grope up the dormitory staircase—he bounded!

He had, in the wild excitement of the moment, and under the necessity of getting loose, punched Silverson. If he was captured now, if he was recognised, the result would be dire—it would be the sack from St. Jim's! James Silverson might be a spy and a rotter and a worm, but he held, for the present, the position of a beak—and Gussy had punched him! Gussy flew!

He bounded from the stairs to the dormitory landing.

From the study landing below he heard gasping and grunting and the scuffling sound of a man dragging himself to his feet.

But he did not stay to listen.

He fled for the Fourth Form dormitory.

Whether James flashed on the light or not Gussy never knew. He tore open the dormitory door, bounded in, and shut it behind him.

"Oh cwikey!" he gasped.

"Gussy!" came a gasp from Blake's bed.

"Oh cwumbs!"

"Is that Gussy?" howled Herries.

"Yaas, watah! Quiet, deah boy—Silvahson's up!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwumbs! He neahly had me on the studay landin'!"

Arthur Augustus groped to his bed and plunged in. He was gasping for breath.

"On the study landing!" repeated Blake. "What the thump was Silverson doing on the study landing?"

"Spyin', as usual, I suppose, Blake! I wan into him in the dark! Oh cwikey! He gwabbed me— Oh cwikey! I should nevah have got away if I hadn't punched him!"

"You punched Silverson?" gasped Cardew.

"Yaas. I've barked my knuckles on his beastlay sharp chin!"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Levison of the Fourth. "We'd better all be fast asleep if Silverson looks in here!"

"Punched Silverson!" gurgled Blake. "Oh, my hat!"

"It's all wight, deah boy; the sillay ass fancied he had gwabbed Tom Mewwy. He is always spyin' aftah poor old Tom Mewwy!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "He won't come heah! And he won't go to the Shell dorm aftah the wov Linton made last time he went! He can't do anythin'—except wub his beastlay chin where I thumped it! Ha, ha!"

But, in spite of Arthur Augustus' assurance, the juniors listened rather anxiously for the sound of a footstep.

It did not come, however.

Evidently Mr. Silverson had no idea that the invisible fellow he had grabbed on the study landing was a member of his own Form.

While Gussy was relating his breathless tale in the Fourth Form dormitory Mr. Silverson was standing in the dark on the study landing rubbing his chin—with deep feelings. He had no doubt that it was Tom Merry who had narrowly escaped his clutches—Tom Merry, breaking bounds at night, as the Worm had often suspected him of doing!

He had seen nobody. But he knew that it was a junior—and he had heard Gussy's breathless flight up the dormitory staircase.

The young rascal—Tom Merry, of course—was safe back in his dormitory. There was nothing that the Worm could do—except rub his chin and grit his teeth.

But it was not, as a matter of fact, to spy that the Worm was there in the dark on that particular night. James had quite other objects in view; that encounter in the dark had startled him as much as it had startled Gussy.

Having, while he rubbed his chin, listened for several minutes and made sure that the junior, whoever he was, had escaped back to the dormitory he had left, James Silverson moved away at last across the landing.

He went quietly up the Shell passage till he came to Study No. 10.

James had business in Tom Merry's study while St. Jim's was sleeping.

James was only a few minutes in that study. He came out, closed the door quietly, and tiptoed away.

If Tom Merry, fast asleep in the Shell dormitory, was dreaming, he certainly did not dream of James and his surreptitious treachery and trickery. And Arthur Augustus, as he settled down to slumber in the Fourth Form dorm, had not the remotest suspicion that James had been on his way to a Shell study when he bumped into him in the dark.

Only James knew that—and only James knew that a watch, missing from a master's study, was now hidden under a pile of old papers in Tom Merry's desk in Study No. 10. Only James knew as yet—but later all St. Jim's was to know!

## NOT BISCUITS!

"ROT!" said Figgins.

"I saw it!" declared Fatty Wynn.

"Bosh!" said Kerr.

"I tell you he had it under his arm!"

It was morning break, and Figgins & Co. of the New House at St. Jim's were in the quad.

In morning break many fellows drifted to the school shop for a little light refreshment to carry them on through third school. Fatty Wynn seldom failed so to do.

On this particular morning, however, Figgins & Co. did not roll down to Dame Taggles' little establishment. Funds were short—a thing that sometimes happened. No doubt that was why Fatty Wynn recalled having seen Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the previous afternoon, with a big biscuit-tin under his arm.

Fatty was no grub-raider like Baggy Trimble. In the ordinary way any fellow's tuck was safe from Fatty. But a raid on Study No. 6 was a House raid—it was one up against the enemy—and the tin of biscuits, if captured, was the spoils of war—though it was probable that Fatty was thinking more of the biscuits than of giving the School House one in the eye.

"No end of bidders!" said Fatty eagerly. "Huge tin—ten-pound tin, I should think! They can't have scoffed half such a lot yet!"

"Rot!" repeated Figgins. "No fellow would be allowed such a cargo these days."

"Well, the tin may not have been full," admitted Fatty. "I couldn't see into it, of course. But there must have been a lot, or he wouldn't have had a tin that size! Garibaldi biscuits—I saw the name on the tin! I say, I like that kind of bidders."

"Any kind of bidders you don't like?" asked Figgins sarcastically.

"Well, look here, it would be one up against their mouldy old House!" urged Fatty. "Let's cut in and chance it."

"Um!" said Figgins.

"The coast's clear now," said Fatty Wynn. "Everybody's out of the House. Chance of a lifetime!"

George Figgins looked round. It was a November morning, but there was a spell of bright sunshine. Everybody seemed to be out of doors. Tom Merry and a crowd of Shell fellows were punting a footer with Blake & Co. and a lot of the Fourth. Study No. 6 were not at home, that was certain—they were all to be seen in the quad.

"Oh, all right!" said Figgins at last. "Let's chance it! May be able to cut up to the study, but we shall never get a big biscuit-tin away without being spotted."

"No need to get it away," said Fatty. "We can scoff the bidders and leave the tin for them! We'll leave a note in it—'Thanks!'"

Figgins chuckled.

That little joke on Study No. 6 appealed to him as much as the biscuits, appealed to Fatty Wynn.

"O.K.!" he said briskly. "Come on, then!"

The New House trio walked into the School House. So far it was easy going, the Form-rooms being in that building—but the studies were upstairs, and New House men spotted on the stairs were likely to descend those stairs headlong!

But luck favoured Figgins & Co. They cut up to the study landing, where they sighted nobody but Baggy Trimble, and they had only a back

view of the fat Baggy, who was disappearing up the Shell passage.

"Quick!" murmured Fatty.

The three cut across the landing and ran up the Fourth Form passage. They reached Study No. 6 just as a door opened, and Ralph Reckness Cardew came out of Study No. 9.

Cardew stared at the New House trio.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "What—"

He had no time for more. Figgins & Co. swooped on him. In the enemy's territory they could not afford to let a School House fellow give the alarm.

Cardew went down on the passage floor with a bump and a gasp. Figgins sat on him.

"Ooooooogh!" came a gasping howl from Cardew.

"Got him!" grinned Figgins. "I'll keep him quiet for a bit. Cut in and get those bidders, Fatty!"

"Get off, you New House tick!" gasped Cardew, struggling.

"You keep quiet, old bean," said Figgins. "You make a row, and I shall tap your head on the floor like that!"

"Owwww!"

"And like that!"

"Ow! Stop it!"

"Buck up, Fatty!"

Fatty Wynn did not need telling twice! Leaving Figgins sitting on Cardew's shoulders and Kerr standing on his legs, Fatty Wynn cut into Study No. 6.

He stared round for that big biscuit-tin.

He spotted it in a moment; it stood on the bookshelf. Fatty grabbed it down in haste.

The lid was on it now, jammed on tight; Arthur Augustus did not want chance eyes to fall on the contents of that tin! Even Gussy realised that if anything connected with tar was to happen to Mr. Silverson it was only prudent not to allow tar to be in evidence in his study!

Fatty grabbed that tin in haste and shot out of the study with it into the passage.

Cardew was wriggling frantically. Any fellow might come along at any moment. Fatty was keen to begin on the biscuits, but he gave up the idea of scoffing them on the spot; it was altogether too perilous to linger.

"Come on!" he panted. "Got it! Come on!"

He cut for the staircase.

After him cut Figgins and Kerr, leaving Cardew sprawling and spluttering. They reached the stairs by the time Cardew was on his feet. A breathless yell from him followed them:

"Look out! New House cads!"

"Hook it!" murmured Kerr.

The three hurried down the staircase. But the coast was no longer clear. On the middle landing, at the curve of the big staircase, was an elegant figure—coming up!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had only a glimpse of Figgins & Co. Then he was swept over.

"Bai Jove! Oh cwikey!" gasped Gussy, as he bumped.

The swell of St. Jim's sprawled. Over him flew Figgins & Co., leaping for the lower stairs. On the lower stairs was Racke of the Shell, coming up. Aubrey Racke hardly knew what happened to him.

A bumped, breathless, spluttering Aubrey was left sprawling on the stairs as the New House raiders careered on their way.

A minute more and Figgins & Co. were out of the School House. They cut away with grinning faces. The punt-about was still going on; Tom

Merry & Co. gave no heed to the New House trio.

That raid had been a complete success! Figgins & Co., in happy possession of the big biscuit-tin, came to a halt in a quiet corner under the old elms.

"O.K.—what?" chuckled Fatty Wynn.

"Right as rain!" grinned Figgins. "We'll let them have the tin back later with a little note in it!"

"I say, it's pretty heavy!" said Fatty. "A jolly good many bidders left in it, I fancy! We'll let them have it back empty!"

Fatty Wynn, holding the big tin under his left arm, jerked at the lid with his plump right hand. The lid slipped off, and Fatty plunged that fat hand inside for biscuits.

"Oooogh!" he gasped suddenly.

"What—" began Kerr.

"Oh crikey!"

Fatty Wynn withdrew his plump right hand from the biscuit-tin and gazed at it in astonishment and horror.

That plump hand did not contain a fistful of biscuits. It was thick with streaming tar! Fatty's eyes fairly popped at it! Figgins and Kerr stared at it!

"What the thump—" gasped Figgins.

"Tut-tut-tut!" stammered Fatty Wynn.

"L-l-look at it! There aren't any bidders in it! It's tut-tut-tut!"

"Tar!" gasped Figgins.

"Tar!" exclaimed Kerr.

"Tut-tut-tut! What the dickens have they got tar in their study for—in a bib-bub-biscuit-tin?" stammered Fatty. "Look!"

He glared into the tin. There was nothing but a thick mass of tar inside. He glared at his plump hand. It was covered with tar. Thick, sticky tar clung lovingly to that plump paw.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Fatty. "Look, I'm all sticky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins and Kerr.

"It ain't bidders—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's tut-tut-tut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins and Kerr yelled. Why Study No. 6 had parked that unexpected article, tar, in a biscuit-tin, they did not know; but that fistful of tar, and the expression on Fatty Wynn's plump face, made them roar. It had been quite a successful raid. Fatty had captured the biscuit-tin, and this was what he had got—a fistful of tar!

Fatty Wynn did not laugh. He failed to see anything funny in this incident. He executed a drop-kick with the biscuit-tin, and sent it spinning. Then he tramped off to get that tar washed off his plump hand before third school. He left Figgins and Kerr yelling.

### TRIMBLE KNOWS HOW!

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE trundled into Study No. 10 in the Shell, and shut the door behind him.

Baggy was grinning.

The Terrible Three were punting a footer in the quad, and this was Baggy's chance of getting after those cigarettes.

He swooped across the study to the desk at the window.

In a moment the lid was raised and Baggy was rummaging.

Baggy had not the slightest belief that Tom Merry had, as he had stated, pitched that packet of cigarettes into the fire. Baggy had no doubt

that those cigarettes were still in existence, except such as might have been smoked since the packet had been snooped from him. And Tom Merry couldn't have smoked two dozen cigarettes yet, even with the help of his pals.

There were all sorts of rumours afloat about Tom Merry that term, and though nothing, certainly, had ever been proved, masters and prefects had fallen into the way of regarding him with a dubious eye. In that, at least, James had had a good deal of success. Baggy, in his own fatheaded way, was rather inclined to be a bad hat in the style of Aubrey Racke, and he had no doubt that Tom was as black as he was painted, or a little blacker. A fellow who went pub-crawling and seeing racing men would smoke, and certainly he wouldn't chuck away a packet of two dozen good cigarettes.

He was most unscrupulously keeping those smokes for his own behoof—Baggy was sure of that. It was really shocking to Baggy, who rather overlooked the fact that he had himself snooped that packet from the study of Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form.

Baggy was jolly well not going to let him keep them! What were left of those cigarettes Baggy was going to recapture. And he had no doubt that they were in the study—out of sight, of course, for a fellow had to be careful about such things, especially when he was under suspicion like Tom Merry.

Tom's desk seemed the likeliest place, and Baggy proceeded to root through the old papers and letters and other lumber in that desk. Tom had interrupted him the day before, but he was not going to be interrupted now.

He was going to have that packet of cigarettes, and next time Tom Merry went there for a smoke he could jolly well find out that they were gone!

Baggy rooted and rooted, but he did not find a packet of cigarettes. But, to his surprise, he found something else.

So far as Tom was concerned, it was probable that the accumulation of lumber in that desk might never have been disturbed till the end of the term. All sorts of things were just dropped into that desk and left there. Some day Tom was going to put it all tidy, but what with one thing and another that day had not arrived.

"Oh jiminy!" ejaculated Baggy, as he picked up a wrist-watch, with a broken strap and a cracked glass, that had been hidden completely out of sight under the accumulation in the desk.

He stared at it. Then he grinned.

Baggy, of course, supposed that that watch belonged to Tom Merry, as he had found it in Tom's desk.

Some of the Shell fellows might, perhaps, have recognised it as Mr. Linton's; but Baggy of the Fourth had nothing to do with the master of the Shell, and had never noticed whether Linton wore a wrist-watch or not.

It was Tom's, as it was in Tom's desk. Baggy could hardly think anything else. The broken strap showed why it was there. It was laid aside because it could not be worn till a new strap was put on. That was clear enough—to Baggy Trimble.

"Exchange no robbery!" grinned Baggy. "If he jolly well wants his watch he can jolly well give me back my cigarettes, and I'll jolly well tell him so, too!"

This seemed no end of a bright idea to Baggy.

The packet of cigarettes was not in the desk. If it was hidden somewhere else in the study

Baggy did not know where. Break was nearing its end. He had no time for further search after putting in so much rooting through the desk.

Baggy slipped that watch into his pocket, shut the desk, and trundled out of Study No. 10.

He chuckled as he trundled down the passage. That watch was a hostage for his cigarettes! That watch was worth at least a few pounds, and was, therefore, immensely more valuable than a packet of fags. No doubt Tom would be glad to make the exchange!

One thing Baggy was determined on—he wasn't going to have his watch back till he handed back those cigarettes. That was only fair, and he could like it or lump it!

Baggy trundled along to the box-room in the Fourth Form passage. He was not going to keep the watch in his pocket. That was hardly judicious, as the captain of the Shell might take drastic measures to recover his property instead of handing back those cigarettes.

That watch was going to be in a safe place before Baggy mentioned the matter to Tom.

In the box-room Baggy blinked round him, and finally deposited the watch on the floor in a dusky corner, hidden from sight by a box.

It was safe enough there.

The bell was ringing for third school when Baggy emerged from the box-room and trundled off to the stairs.

When he got downstairs fellows were coming into the Form-rooms. Grinning, the fat Baggy headed for Tom Merry, among the Shell fellows.

"I say, Merry—" he squealed.

"Well, fathead?" said Tom, glancing at him.

"Are you going to give me back my fags?" asked Baggy.

"You howling ass, I've told you what I've done



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with your putrid smokes!" exclaimed Tom, in great exasperation. "Do you want another booting?"

Baggy backed away, grinning.

"Well, I can't find them in your study," he said.

"If you've been rooting in my study again——"

"All right," said Baggy, "I shan't go to your study any more. I know a trick worth two of that! He, he! If you want your watch——"

"My watch?" repeated Tom.

"Yes, if you want your watch, you give me my fags, and you can have it!" grinned Baggy. "Don't you get grabbing at a chap. I haven't got it on me!"

Tom Merry stared blankly at the fat, grinning Baggy. He did not grab at him; he just stared.

"See?" grinned Baggy. "You're keeping my fags, and I'm going to keep your watch till you hand them back. That's fair."

"You're going to keep my watch!" gasped Tom.

Tom Merry's watch—a rather solid silver article of the turnip variety—was in his pocket, so what the fat Baggy could possibly mean was a mystery to him.

That Baggy had found another watch, rooting in his study, was not likely to occur to him.

"That's it!" said Baggy emphatically. "You keep something of mine, and I'll jolly well keep something of yours, see?"

"You blithering idiot——"

"You can call a fellow names," said Baggy, "but I mean it. I'm going to stick to your watch as long as you stick to my smokes, so yah!"

And with that Baggy Trimble trundled off to the Fourth Form Room, leaving Tom Merry blinking.

"Is that fat chump off his rocker?" asked Tom, looking round at Manners and Lowther. "What the thump does he mean?"

"He hasn't snooped your watch, has he?" asked Manners.

"No; I've got it in my waistcoat pocket now."

"Must be wandering in his mind, such as it is," said Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I see how he thinks he's going to get hold of your watch. Better keep an eye on him. By gum, though, that would do it!" added Lowther, spotting at once a chance for a pun. "If you keep a watch on him, of course——"

"Fathead!"

The Terrible Three went in with the Shell, Tom Merry considerably puzzled by Baggy's mysterious remarks.

But Baggy and his mysterious remarks did not linger long in his mind. He forgot them as third lesson proceeded in the Shell Form Room, and after third school Tom Merry had forgotten all about Trimble of the Fourth.

### LINTON DOES NOT PLAY UP!

"THE old fool!"

In such disrespectful terms did James Silverson, master of the Fourth, allude to Mr. Linton, master of the Shell.

After dinner James was in his study, standing at the window, and looking out into the quadrangle.

He had a view of Mr. Linton walking there with Railton, the Housemaster. Linton's face was frostily serene, as usual. Whatever it was he was discussing with the Housemaster, it certainly was not a matter of a theft in the House.

Obviously he had not yet discovered that his



watch was missing. Or, if he had missed it, it had not occurred to him that it had been taken.

James was intensely annoyed.

That watch, when he had taken it, had been in full view on Mr. Linton's study table. He had had no doubt that Linton would miss it when he went back to the study, as it was no longer there.

Linton, it was clear, hadn't. Or, if he had, he attached no particular importance to the circumstance.

It was one of James' ways to judge others by himself. This led James into quite a lot of mistakes.

He had, for instance, no doubt that Tom Merry was a "bad hat"—being one himself. His own tastes ran to billiards at the Black Bull, with a pound note on the game—backing horses, and such dingy things. Indeed, it was an accumulation of racing debts that made him so fearfully keen to oust Tom Merry from the good graces of old Miss Priscilla, and turn the horn of plenty in his own direction.

Quite unable to believe that anybody in the wide world was better than himself, James judged Tom by the evidence he found in his own bad heart.

Another of James' weaknesses was suspiciousness. Had he missed a valuable article, his mind would have leaped at once to the idea of theft. He simply could not understand that there were other minds to which such a suspicion came slowly and reluctantly, if it came at all.

If Mr. Linton missed that watch from his table, the very last thought that would have come into his mind was that somebody had "pinched" it. That was beyond the scope of James' understanding. It would have been his own first thought. He could not realise that it might be another man's last.

But matters, at all events, had not gone as designed.

James had expected a hue and cry after that watch, even before he had had time to hide it in Tom Merry's study. Next morning, he had no doubt that the hue and cry must start.

Now it was afternoon, and nothing had been said. It was bitterly irritating to the schemer of St. Jim's.

The watch was in a safe place. Tom Merry was not likely to sort through the lumber in that desk, and happen on it by chance. It was not likely to be found except by a search of his study. No such search was possible till the article was missed, and suspicion of theft aroused. But if too long a time passed, something might happen to bring the hidden article to light.

James turned quite cold at that idea.

Suppose, by some chance, Tom found that watch in his desk before it was missed and inquired after? What would he do? As he was in the Shell, most likely he knew his Form-master's watch—he would know to whom it belonged. Suppose he took it to Linton? Ten to one he would!

That idea was enough to make James shiver.

There would and could be no charge of theft in such a case. It would be known that someone had put that watch in Tom's desk.

And that old fool, Linton, was doing nothing in the matter. There was danger ahead if the matter did not come to a climax pretty soon. And that depended on Linton—chattering there with the Housemaster, unaware of the eyes fastened on him from James' study window,

unaware even that that miserable watch was missing at all.

"Old idiot!" breathed James.

The two masters parted at last, and Mr. Linton came back into the House. He disappeared from James' sight, and in a few minutes Silverson heard his footsteps passing the study door.

The plotter of St. Jim's remained for some little time in perturbed thought. He was unwilling to appear in the matter at all. It was obviously only prudent to steer entirely clear. On the other hand, Linton had to miss that watch. He had to start the hue and cry, if all James' schemes were not to fall to the ground.

He left his study, at length, and went along to Mr. Linton's.

He tapped at the door and looked in, receiving an icy glance from the master of the Shell. Perhaps Linton, at the sight of him, expected to hear some more complaints—some more meddling with his Form.

But that was not James' cue this time. Heedless of icy looks, he gave Mr. Linton his most friendly and agreeable smile.

Mr. Linton had sat down to Form papers. Evidently he was not thinking of the watch. James had to bring it to his mind.

"I am going to Wayland this afternoon, Mr. Linton," he said. "Is there anything I can do for you while I am in the town?"

Mr. Linton's manner thawed considerably.

In war days of difficult travel and rationed petrol, and tradesmen reluctant to collect, and slow to deliver, the resource of Shank's pony was a general one, but the master of the Shell was rather too elderly for long walks in uncertain weather. Mr. Silverson, who was half his age, walked over to Wayland every half-holiday, for reasons of his own. Mr. Linton was not at all keen on covering such distances. And there were many little things that had to be postponed in consequence—the repair of that wrist-watch among other little things.

"Thank you, Mr. Silverson; that is very kind," said Mr. Linton; and he reflected for a moment or two to remember whether there was anything he wanted in the town.

James wondered whether he would, even now, remember that watch. If not, he had to go further, and remind him of it. Mr. Linton, however, remembered it.

"If you should be going near Codson's, in the High Street—" he said.

"The watchmaker?" James' eyes gleamed. "Quite! I shall be passing the shop, Mr. Linton. Anything there—"

Mr. Linton hesitated for a moment. The fact was that since his recent disagreements with Mr. Silverson, he did not like asking or receiving favours from him.

On the other hand, Silverson's manner was so genial, and his offer so apparently kind and thoughtful, that it would have seemed churlish to refuse it. And Mr. Linton, too, did want that watch repaired. He had rather missed it since it had had to be laid aside.

"A wrist-watch strap and a cracked glass," said Mr. Linton. "If you would, not mind dropping in as you pass, and leaving the watch with them."

"I shall be very glad," said Silverson.

"Thank you very much!"

Mr. Linton rose, and glanced round for the watch. He glanced over the table, then on the

mantelpiece, then into the pigeon-holes of a desk. He seemed a little perplexed.

James watched him with suppressed impatience.

Linton clearly did not specially remember where he had laid that wrist-watch. He had an impression that he had left it on the study table, but not seeing it there, he concluded that he had placed it somewhere else. So he looked in other places.

"Dear me!" said the master of the Shell at last. "The watch does not seem to be in sight. I must not waste your time on a half-holiday, Mr. Silverson. Pray do not bother about it!"

James was there to bother about it, though Mr. Linton was not aware of that fact.

"Not at all, sir," he answered. "I am in no haste. Perhaps I can help you find the watch."

"It really is of little consequence."

Mr. Linton, obliged as he was feeling to Silverson for his kind offer, did not want him in the study; also, he was anxious to get back to correcting Form papers, a task that had to be done.

"I think I noticed the watch," remarked Mr. Silverson casually. "Did you not leave it on the table? I think you had it in your hand when I spoke to you in this study yesterday, and I had an impression that you laid it down on your table."

"I think I did," said Mr. Linton. "But it is not on the table now, so I have no doubt that I must have moved it, or a maid may have done so in dusting the study. It really is of little consequence." The master of the Shell moved back towards his chair.

It was not easy for James to repress his irritation.

He had reminded Linton of that watch. He had made him notice that it was no longer where it had been laid. Yet not the slightest suspicion had entered Linton's mind—that it was gone from the study.

Obviously, he simply wanted to dismiss the matter, and get back to those Form papers. James had to go a step farther.

"My dear sir," he remarked, "surely it would be advisable to ascertain what has become of an article of some value. If it is missing—"

"Missing!" repeated Mr. Linton, with a stare.

"If it is gone from your study, sir, I should suggest inquiring about it without delay," said Mr. Silverson.

Mr. Linton gave him a very sharp look.

"I hardly follow your meaning, Mr. Silverson," he answered. "Surely you are not supposing for one moment that the watch may have been abstracted from this study?"

"If it cannot be found, sir—"

"I have no doubt that it can be found when it is looked for!" answered Mr. Linton coldly. "Probably it is in one of the pigeon-holes of this desk—I shall look when I have time."

"My dear sir," said James, as the master of the Shell sat down at the table again, "I should really suggest looking for the watch without delay. Surely, if it is missing, it would be only advisable to lose no time—"

"I do not suppose for one single moment that the watch is missing, Mr. Silverson!" said the master of the Shell, in a voice of ice. "Pray say no more about the matter. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Silverson—but as the watch is not at hand, I will not trouble you."

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Mr. Linton picked up his pen and dipped it into the ink in the most pointed manner.

James could hardly say more! He had, indeed, already shown more interest in the matter than was cautious.

"Very well; good-afternoon, Mr. Linton!" he said, and withdrew, shutting the door after him.

Mr. Linton, when the door was shut, gave a sniff! That expressed his opinion of Mr. Silverson, and what Mr. Silverson thought. Then he resumed work on Form papers, dismissing the matter from his mind.



"Now, Merry—" began Mr. Silverson, peeling off the face revealed was that of Arth

James walked away with set lips!

"The old fool!" he breathed. "The old fool!"

There was nothing doing! James could only hope that his hint would remain in Mr. Linton's mind, and that it would germinate there.

No doubt that would be the case when the master of the Shell came to make a serious search for that watch, and made the discovery that it was no longer in the study.

When that would happen, James had no means of telling.

James scowled as he walked out of gates that afternoon.

His scheme was carefully laid—he had neglected no detail! But it was brought to a

standstill by Mr. Linton refusing to play up, as it were.

So far from suspecting for a moment that Tom Merry had pinched that watch while he was waiting in the study, Linton did not even suppose that the watch was gone at all—and was only annoyed by James' suggestion that it might be! A suspicious man like James himself would have been much more useful to James.

James' system of judging others by himself had let him down again. Mr. Jimmy Mulligan, at the Black Bull, found James in an extremely



the mask. But he broke off and gasped, for the Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

bad temper over the billiards table that afternoon!

**GUSSY GETS GOING!**

**I** WEGARD you as wottahs!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that statement. He made it in crushing tones, his noble eye gleaming indignation and scorn through his eyeglass.

Six fellows made soothing gestures. But Arthur Augustus was not to be soothed like a baby. Arthur Augustus was indignant. He was, as Blake described it, on the high horse. When Gussy was on the high horse, he was not in a hurry to dismount.

"You see——" said Tom Merry. "I do not see, Tom Mewwy!" interrupted Arthur Augustus icily. "You're such an ass!" explained Herries. "Wats!" "You'd give yourself away first shot!" urged Dig. "Wubbish!" "And there'd be an awful row!" said Manners. "The sack, very likely!" said Monty Lowther. "We can't let you be turfed out of St. Jim's, Gussy," said Blake. "We rely on your tact and judgment in our study, you know."

"I wegard you," repeated Arthur Augustus, "as wottahs! Whose ideah was it, in the first place, to wag Silvahson, got up in Guy Fawkes masks so that that wat couldn't spot the waggahs?" "Yours, old chap!" said Tom, "and a stunning good idea it was!" "Topping!" said Manners.

"The very best ever!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "Gussy thinks of these things," said Blake. "It's brain that does it!" "Intellect!" said Dig.

The soft answer is said to turn away wrath. But all these soft answers had no effect on the wrath of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He remained wrathful, scornful, and indignant.

Really, he seemed to be understudying Achilles of old, whose wrath, as the poet tells us, was to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumbered!

"Yaas!" said Arthur Augustus, his manner that of a refrigerator far below zero. "Yaas, it was my ideah! Bein' the bwainy man of the studay, I thought of that ideah! And you blightahs have left me out! First those New House boundahs, Figgins & Co., waggid Silvahson—then you thwee asses—then you Shell chaps! Where do I come in?"

It was not really easy to answer Gussy. As the originator of that great idea of ragging Silverson, disguised in Guy Fawkes masks that hid identity, Gussy was entitled to take his turn.

The difficulty in the way was that only Gussy believed that he would be able to carry on without discovery—and discovery meant awful consequences.

Those consequences were altogether too awful for Gussy's pals to be willing to let Gussy-rush on his fate!

But it was no use explaining this to Gussy! Gussy's confidence in his own tact and judgment was boundless.

"This mornin'," went on Arthur Augustus, "that wat, Silvahson, made himself as obnoxious as usual in class. He had the feahful cheek to wap my knuckles with a wulah!"

"We'll make him sorry for himself, old chap," said Blake.

"I am goin' to make him sowwy for himself, Blake! I am goin' to wig myself up in a Guy Fawkes mask and wag him. And I am goin' to do it to-day! Two of you fellows can join up!"

"You see——" said Blake. "Wats!"

"Come along to the changing-room, old chap!" said Tom Merry. "We're playing a pick-up this afternoon——"

"I wufuse to come along to the changin'-woom, Tom Mewwy!" "But we want you in the footer," urged Tom.

"It encourages the fellows to see really first-class play!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Come on, Gussy!" urged Blake.

"I wefuse to come on, Blake! I am goin' to wag Silvahson for havin' the feahful cheek to wap my knuckles! And I wepeat that I wegard you all as wottahs! I wegard you with uttah scorn! And you can go and eat coke!"

With which, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned on his noble heel, and walked away—evidently very much offended.

"Look here, Gussy, you ass——" roared Blake.

"Wats!" answered Arthur Augustus over his shoulder; and he walked off with his noble nose in the air.

Six fellows looked at one another in dismay, mingled with exasperation.

Arthur Augustus had ridden off, as it were, on the high horse, and they could not deny that he had a grouse. On the other hand, it was fearfully and awfully risky to rag Silverson; and they were quite determined that Gussy was not going to take that risk—which, in his case, was rather a certainty than a risk.

"The ass!" growled Blake. "He wants to ask for it. He wants to beg for it. We're jolly well not going to let him!"

"No fear!" agreed Tom.

"Too jolly risky—for Gussy!" said Monty Lowther. "He doesn't know what an ass he is! We do!"

"We've told him often enough!" said Herries. "But he can't get it into his head. But Gussy isn't going to get himself flogged or sacked."

And Tom Merry & Co. went off to the changing-room to change for the pick-up—and Arthur Augustus, as he loftily refused to join up with his friends, was left to the company of the high horse.

Arthur Augustus—in a state of deep indignation—went up to the Fourth Form passage. He headed for the box-room.

In one of the many boxes there was parked an attache-case, in which was packed the outfit of old coats and Guy Fawkes masks, which the "Mystery Three" had used for the laudable purpose of ragging the Worm undiscovered.

Since his pals declined to back him up in giving the Worm that for which he had asked, Arthur Augustus was going to carry on on his own!

Three trios of fellows, one after another, had ragged Silverson in that outfit, and escaped discovery. It was mere rot to suppose that Arthur Augustus, a fellow of tact and judgment, could not do the same. At least, that was Gussy's fixed opinion.

He was going to show them. He had stated that he was going ahead. Now he was going.

But a surprise awaited him in the box-room. He opened the lid of a trunk and looked in. Empty space met his eyes!

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

He was pink with wrath.

The outfit was gone!

Gussy gazed into the empty box with deep feelings.

Those cheeky asses—those footling fatheads—had parked the Mystery Three outfit somewhere else—only too clearly to keep it safe from Gussy, if he thought of playing the goat!

"The cheeky wottahs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! I have a great mind to give them a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

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For several minutes Arthur Augustus gazed into that empty box. Then, with deadly determination in his aristocratic face, he walked forth.

If those asses, duffers, and rotters fancied that this would stop him, those asses, duffers, and rotters had another guess coming.

Tom Merry & Co. were at football when Arthur Augustus, in coat and cap, went down to the gates and walked out.

About an hour later he walked in again, with a little package under his arm.

In Study No. 6 he unpacked that little package. It contained a Guy Fawkes mask—purchased at Aunty Hobbs' in the village. It was a grotesque looking mask, with eyeholes, painted cheeks, enormous mouth, and an elongated nose curled at the end.

Arthur Augustus grinned at it.

Under that mask his aristocratic face would be quite invisible—just as the faces of the Mystery Three had been invisible. Nobody was going to know that it was Gussy when he had that mask on—not James Silverson, at all events!

The Worm had rapped Gussy's noble knuckles in the Form-room—not for any reason, but from sheer irritable temper. The Worm was going to be sorry for that outburst of irritable temper.

Gussy had it all out and dried.

There was an old jacket in the study he could slip on—his own elegant clobber was too well known. Then, when the November dusk fell, he was going to stroll out into the quad. In the dusk by masters' windows he would slip on the mask.

A rap at Silverson's window would cause the Worm to look out. A squirt of ink would greet him. He would see a fellow in a Guy Fawkes mask—that was all. That fellow would vanish long before the Worm could get after him.

What could be simpler?

Those silly asses fancied that Gussy could not pull off an easy thing like this. They would find out that he could. Then, when they admitted their error, and owned up that Gussy was the man for these things, he would come down off the high horse and forgive them.

Arthur Augustus smiled cheerily at the prospect.

It was not time for action yet. Even Gussy's powerful intellect realised that he had better not get going till the dusk fell.

Having time on his hands, Arthur Augustus proceeded to try on the mask and the old jacket, to make assurance doubly sure that the disguise was complete.

He sorted out that old jacket and slipped it on over his own, which not only gave him a shabby look, but made him look bigger, which was all to the good for the purpose of disguise. He adjusted the Guy Fawkes mask on his face, and tied the strings at the back of his noble head.

He grinned under the mask at his reflection in the glass.

Certainly his nearest and dearest relation would never have dreamed that this was Gussy—the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the School House at St. Jim's.

And as Gussy, his eyes glimmering through the eyeholes of that hideous mask, grinned at his reflection, there was a footstep at the door of Study No. 6.

### JAMES MAKES A CATCH!

JAMES SILVERSON jumped.

In fact, he bounded.

Mr. Silverson had come in in a bad temper—which was not uncommon with Mr. Silverson.

Jimmy Mulligan, at the Black Bull, had taken two pound notes off James, which did not please him or improve his temper. And when he came into the House he saw Mr. Linton in the doorway of the Housemaster's study, chatting to Mr. Railton—only too evidently still unconscious of any theft, and still unconsciously failing to play his part in James' deep-laid scheme.

When James was in a bad temper it was his happy custom to take it out of somebody, if he could. Had James been Form-master of a perfect Form, he would probably have contrived to find fault somehow. But the St. Jim's Fourth were far from being a perfect Form, so James had many opportunities.

Now he remembered that Herries of the Fourth had lines, which Herries had not handed in, as Herries certainly should have done, and would have done, had not the pick-up on Little Side claimed him.

So the worthy James slipped a cane under his arm and went up to the Fourth Form studies to inquire about those lines.

James was always pleased to hand out a few to that study. Blake & Co. were pally with Tom Merry, and Tom was almost as often in their study as his own. Anybody who liked Tom Merry was sure of James' dislike. James had little or no doubt that Study No. 6 knew all about that mysterious trio in Guy Fawkes masks who had ragged him, though he did not suspect them of sharing in the rag. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were the three. James was sure of that, evidence to the contrary being of no use to James.

With the cane under his arm, James came up the Fourth Form passage from the study landing. He threw open the door of Study No. 6 without a knock—in his usual polite way.

Then he fairly bounded at what he saw!

Blake & Co. were not in the study. But a fellow was in the study who looked bulkier in figure than any of them, and whose face was concealed under a grotesque Guy Fawkes mask.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Silverson.

"Oh!" came in equally startled tones from under the mask.

Arthur Augustus gazed at James through the eyeholes in startled horror.

It had not occurred to his noble mind that Silverson might barge into that study, or certainly he would not have been trying on the mask at that unlucky moment.

"You!" panted Silverson.

He fairly leaped into the study.

"Tom Merry! So I have caught you!"

His grasp was on Arthur Augustus the next moment. He gripped him by the back of his collar with a grip of iron. Arthur Augustus gurgled, half-suffocated.

"Gurrrrgh!"

"So I have caught you at last, Tom Merry!" James fairly gloated. "What rascally trick were you about to play in that disguise? But I need not ask! Come! Come with me at once—"

"Urrgh!"

"Just as you are!" breathed James. "You shall have no chance of getting rid of that disguise, and lying your way out of this as you have done before, Tom Merry! Mr. Railton shall see you—as you are! You will be taken directly to the headmaster!"

"Yurrrgh!" gurgled Arthur Augustus, wriggling frantically in the suffocating grasp on his noble neck.

"Come!" hooted James. "This is the last time

you will play tricks in that disguise, Tom Merry! Come!"

He hooked the masked junior to the door.

He had no doubt that it was Tom Merry. It was, at all events, one of the mysterious three—James could not possibly doubt that, finding him in such a disguise—Tom Merry, or Manners, or Lowther. Most likely the ringleader. Anyhow, James had got him, and he was going to the Housemaster just as he was. It would not be much use for him to deny anything now—caught in the Guy Fawkes mask.

Arthur Augustus wriggled and gurgled as James bundled him headlong down the passage to the stairs.

A dozen fellows stared at him as he went. There were exclamations on all sides at the remarkable sight of a junior in a Guy Fawkes mask bundled along by a Form-master.

"Who the dooce is that?" exclaimed Cardew.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Baggy Trimble.

"What the thump—"

"Who—"

"What—"

"Gurrrrgh!" gurgled Arthur Augustus.

James whirled him down the stairs. Arthur Augustus, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, went headlong. Downstairs, quite a crowd stared at him in amazement.

James did not heed them, and Arthur Augustus was spun along to his Housemaster's study. Spluttering and gurgling wildly for breath, the masked junior whirled up to the doorway, where Mr. Linton still stood talking to the Housemaster within.

Mr. Linton spun round, staring, his eyes almost popping. Mr. Railton stepped to the doorway in amazement.

"What is this?" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Who is this?" stammered the Housemaster.

James, gripping the tottering, gurgling figure by the back of the neck, rapped his answer:

"Tom Merry!"

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Merry!" repeated Mr. Linton.

"Gurrrruurgh!" moaned Arthur Augustus.

"I have brought this boy to you, sir, just as I found him," said Mr. Silverson. "He had put on this grotesque disguise as he has done before, obviously to play some such disrespectful trick again. I demand, sir, that this boy be taken to the headmaster, to be expelled for a series of outrages he has committed in this disguise. I imagine, sir, that you will listen to no denials from this boy Merry, now that he has been caught in the very act."

"Urrrgh!"

"Is that Merry?" asked Mr. Railton. "Boy, are you Merry of the Shell?"

"Gurrrgh!"

"I have no doubt of his identity, sir," said Mr. Silverson. "But you shall see. Take off that mask, boy. It will serve no purpose now, you young rascal! Take it off at once! Do you hear me?"

"Yurrrgh!"

"I will remove it," said James.

He grabbed at the strings while Arthur Augustus gurgled helplessly. He grabbed the mask loose, and peeled it off.

"Now, Merry—" began James grimly.

He broke off.

"Oh!" he gasped.

And he gazed at the crimson, breathless face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

## NOT TOM MERRY!

"D'ARCY!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.  
 "D'Arcy!" repeated Mr. Linton.  
 "Did-did-dud-D'Arcy!" stuttered James Silverson.

He stared at Arthur Augustus. He glared at him. He had been certain that it was Tom Merry. If not Tom Merry, it should have been Manners or Lowther. But it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form—crimson, breathless, gasping.

"D'Arcy!"

"Gussy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

A crowd of fellows had followed on to the Housemaster's study. They all stared at Gussy.

Among them were a bunch of juniors who had just come from the changing-room—the pick-up being over. Tom Merry & Co. gazed at Gussy's crimson face.

"Oh, the ass!" breathed Blake. "Fat lot of good trying to put the stopper on! Look at him!"

"But what—" muttered Tom Merry. "Where the thump did he get that mask? What the dickens has he been up to?"

"This is D'Arcy of your Form, Mr. Silverson." Mr. Railton was speaking. "Certainly it is not Merry of the Shell."

"I—I—I thought," stuttered James, "I—I had no doubt—knowing that it was Merry on previous occasions—"

"Knowing nothing of the kind!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"D'Arcy!" rapped Mr. Railton.

"Gwooooh! Yaas, sir!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am wathah out of bweath, sir, aftah Mr. Silvahson dwagging me along by the neck. Pewwaps Mr. Silvahson will explain, sir, why he dwagged me along by the neck, without givin' a chap a chance to speak—urrgh!"

"Mr. Silverson supposed you to be one of the three boys who have on several occasions appeared in a similar absurd disguise," said Mr. Railton. "Were you one of those three, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir."

Arthur Augustus was glad at that moment that he had never been included in the masked three. Had he been the position would have been very awkward. But he hadn't been, so that was all right. This was Gussy's first exploit in a Guy Fawkes mask, and it was likely to be the last, also.

"You were not, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir."

"Why had you put on that absurd mask, D'Arcy?"

"I was twyin' it on in my studay, sir, when Mr. Silvahson wushed in, and gwabbed me," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "There is no wule in the House, sir, against a fellow twyin' on a Guy Fawkes mask if he likes."

"Not at all," said Mr. Railton. "But, in the circumstances—"

James broke in with a snarl.

"That is one of the masks, sir, used by the young rascals! D'Arcy must explain where he obtained it. Then it will be possible to trace the—"

"Is that the case, D'Arcy?"

"No, sir," answered Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I bought this Guy Fawkes mask this aftahnoon, sir."

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And again Gussy was glad that he had not found the outfit in the box-room, after all.

"That is an untruthful statement!" barked Mr. Silverson. "It is perfectly clear to me that—"

"I wufuse to hear my wemarks chawactewised as untwufeful!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I wepudiate the suggestion. I wpeat that I bought this Guy Fawkes mask in the village this aftahnoon."

"You did nothing of the kind, you young rascal!" James could not control his bitter rage and disappointment. "You—"

"Let the boy speak, Mr. Silverson!" rapped Mr. Railton sharply. "D'Arcy, where did you buy that Guy Fawkes mask?"

"At Auntie Hobbs', in the village, this aftahnoon, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "If Mr. Silvahson cannot take a fellow's word, pewwaps he had bettah ask Mrs. Hobbs, and she will tell him so."

"I have no doubt of it, my boy," said the Housemaster. "Mr. Silverson, obviously this Guy Fawkes mask, purchased to-day, has nothing to do with those worn by three unknown boys last week. Really, I fail to understand you, Mr. Silverson. Any boy in the House is at liberty to buy a Guy Fawkes mask, and try it on in his study, if he chooses to do so. You appear to jump at conclusions very quickly—"

"And very erroneously," said Mr. Linton.

"Very erroneously," agreed the Housemaster. "D'Arcy has been brought to me in a very rough manner for no offence at all. You supposed him to be a Shell boy, instead of a boy of your own Form. You insist that that mask is one of those used last week, when it appears that it was purchased as recently as this very afternoon. Really, Mr. Silverson, I am bound to say that a little more circumspection than this is expected of a master in this school."

James almost choked.

"D'Arcy, my boy, you may go!" added the Housemaster kindly. "You are not to blame in any way. The mistake was Mr. Silverson's."

"Thank you, sir!" said Arthur Augustus.

And he went.

Tom Merry & Co. gathered round him as he went, and marched him off to Study No. 6.

"The wat!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "I was goin' to wag him, you know. I was gettin' weady to wag him, when he wushed in and gwabbed me. I suppose it would be wathah too wisky to wag him now in that mask—"

"Just a few!" gasped Tom Merry.

"It's wathah a pity," said Arthur Augustus.

"I had it all cut and dwied, you know. I was goin' to wag him just to show you fellows. But weally, you know, the sillay ass has wagged himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

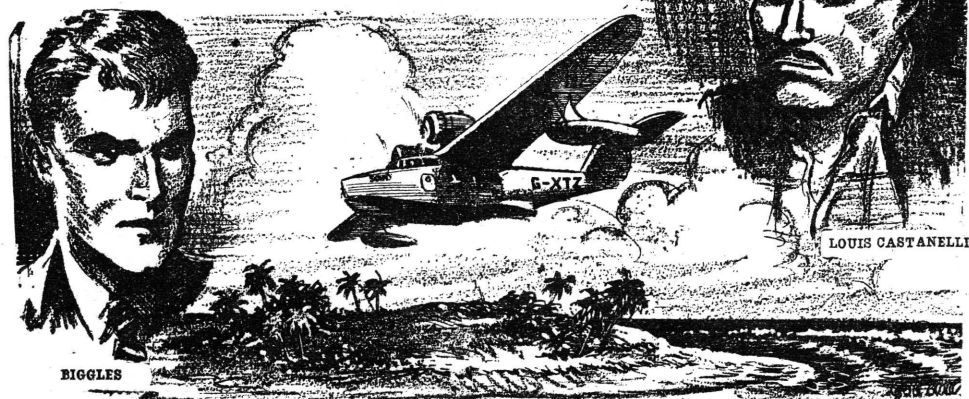
There was loud laughter in Study No. 6; but in James Silverson's study there was no merriment. In that study James clenched his hands, and gritted his teeth, and really looked as if he was understudying a demon in a pantomime. James had only one consolation—the hidden watch was still in the desk in Tom Merry's study, waiting to be missed—at least, James supposed that it was. It was just as well for James' comfort that he knew nothing of the antics of Baggy Trimble of his Form.

Next Week:

"THE BOY WITH A BAD NAME!"

A HURRICANE RAGES OVER SANDY'S ISLAND, LEAVING DESTRUCTION IN ITS WAKE!

# BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!



By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS.

## THE GUARDIAN OF THE CAVE!

**M**AJOR JAMES BIGGLESWORTH and his companions, the Hon. Algernon Lacey, Ginger Hebblethwaite, and Sandy Macaster, are in the South Seas on a pearl-diving expedition, Sandy having discovered a rich pearl-bed.

His discovery is known to Louis Castanelli, the crook skipper of a schooner trading among the islands. But in the Scud, a flying-boat, Biggles & Co. are first on the scene, and they make a rich haul of pearls, which they hide for safety in a cache on Sandy's Island.

Ginger Hebblethwaite and two Polynesians with the party—Shell Breaker and Full Moon—go for a bathe and discover a secret cave. A furious storm then strikes the island, and Biggles & Co. are compelled to take off to save the Scud, having failed to find Ginger. Reaching Rutuona Island safely, Biggles then remembers the pearls. They have been left behind!

Had Ginger told the others of the existence of the fairy grotto they would have guessed at once where he was, in which case their attempts to get into touch with him might well have ended in tragedy. So although it was hard to believe at the time, it was really just as well that Ginger had withheld the information.

He had no intention of going to the grotto when, with Full Moon and Shell Breaker, he had set off at Sandy's request to get some fish. Naturally, they made their way to the same cove where they had done so well on the previous occasion, and they soon had a good supply of fish flapping about on the coral.

So quickly were they supplied with all the fish they were likely to need that Full Moon's suggestion of a swim in the pool was promptly

taken up, and they were soon all splashing about in the pure water.

In these circumstances a visit to the grotto was almost automatic. Full Moon shouted that she was going, and took a header. The others were on her track before the splash had subsided, and together they swam through the short cave into the fairyland beyond. They climbed up on the ledge where they had sat before, and reaching down kicked spray into the air with startling results, for it flashed like a myriad blue sparks. However, the best fun must come to an end, and for a time they sat talking in low tones about their exquisite surroundings.

At last Ginger got up.

"It's time we were getting back," he said. "In fact, we've stayed too long already. I have an idea Sandy was waiting to fry those fish for supper. The sun must be going down. The water is turning mauve. Incidentally, I believe it is getting rough outside; look at the ripples coming in."

For a moment or two longer they stood watching the colour transformation that was taking place before their eyes; then Ginger balanced himself on the ledge, hands together, ready to plunge. He was looking over his shoulder at Shell Breaker, who he suspected from previous experience might push him in, and so he did not see what Full Moon saw. Her wild scream filled the cave with sound.

Ginger spun round, not a little alarmed.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Full Moon pointed at the water.

"Mako!" she said.

Ginger turned again, and saw an enormous triangular fin projecting above the water just inside the entrance to the cave. It was moving forward slowly.

For a full minute Ginger could only stare, stunned to speechlessness. It was the first time

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he had seen a shark inside the lagoon, and his skin curled with horror at the realisation that a few minutes earlier he must have been swimming about in close proximity to the monster.

"What are we going to do?" he asked, in dismay.

Shell Breaker made a grimace.

"Me stay," he said.

"But the mako may not go for a week."

Shell Breaker shrugged his shoulders.

"Me stay," he repeated resolutely.

Ginger looked back at the shark. Its back projected out of the water not ten feet from where he stood. The creature was so huge that it seemed almost to fill the pool inside the cave. In the confined space it looked larger than a whale.

They were safe where they were, for the ledge was between two and three feet above water level, but to put hand or foot in the water would obviously be committing suicide in a very unpleasant manner.

"We're trapped," thought Ginger, aghast. "We're trapped as effectively as if the cave had closed up." Which in a way was true. "Why has the brute come in here?" he asked Shell Breaker.

"Big storm at sea, maybe hurricane," replied Shell Breaker. "When big fella sea come, fish swim in lagoon and stick head in hole."

"What can we do about it? You know more about this sort of thing than I do."

Shell Breaker merely made another despairing gesture.

"Me stay," he said yet again.

"Can't we kill it, or drive it out somehow?"

"Aue! No kill. Outside plenty water, me kill. In cave, no kill. Mako plenty kai-kai me."

Ginger stared again at the shark's huge dorsal fin, standing upright like the sail of a boat.

"What will the others think when we don't go back?" he muttered.

Full Moon squatted down on the coral. She picked up a loose piece and hurled it at the shark, screaming what was obviously an insult in her own language. The creature moved its great body languidly, showing the dirty grey of its stomach.

Ginger saw the mauve tint of the water deepening, and knew that the sun had nearly set. He visualised the others coming to look for them, searching the island from end to end, but there was nothing he could do to relieve their anxiety. At first he found himself regretting that he had not told Biggles about the grotto, but on second thoughts he was glad he had not, for in that case Biggles would certainly have sought them there, and, not knowing the cause of the delay, would have encountered the shark.

Ginger had been in many difficult and dangerous situations, but never before had he been up against such a terrible guardian. The thought that appalled him was, the shark might stay there for days, a week, or even longer, in which case they were all likely to starve to death.

In the fast-fading light Ginger saw that there was now a definite movement in the pool, which previously had been absolutely motionless. The water surged to and fro with a regular movement that could only mean that a big sea was running outside.

"I think you are right about the storm," he told Shell Breaker.

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"Storm pass, mako go," replied Shell Breaker briefly.

"How long do you think the storm will last?"

"Two days—three days—maybe." Shell Breaker held up all his fingers. He seemed resigned to their predicament.

Ginger leaned back against the wall of the grotto and watched Full Moon relieving her feelings by pelting the shark with lumps of coral; but the great fish did not seem to mind in the least.

Swiftly it grew dark. They were, of course, without any means of illumination, so it was now certain that they would have to remain in the cave all night, at least, for even if the shark departed they would have no means of knowing it until daylight came again. The darkness was intense. The only sound was the eerie gurgling of the rising and falling water.

At last Ginger sat down and cupped his chin in the palms of his hands, prepared to pass what he suspected was likely to be the longest night of his life.

In this he was correct. The night seemed like eternity. Indeed, the first reflection of morning light was so long in coming that he began seriously to wonder if the mouth of the cave had fallen in. It was possible, he reflected, for the movement of the water was now much more pronounced, and it was clear that a storm was raging outside.

Not once did Ginger close his eyes, although he longed to. More than once he found himself nodding in spite of the discomfort of his position, and when that happened he struck the coral with his hands to keep himself awake, for he was terrified of dozing and falling from his perch into the water.

In the end the thing became a nightmare, and he hardly knew whether he was awake or dreaming. But at long last the first suspicion of light came through the tunnel, and he breathed a sigh of relief to know that the passage was still open. But the light was no longer blue; it was grey, dull and depressing.

Ginger looked along the ledge and saw that both Full Moon and Shell Breaker were sleeping peacefully, as if there were no such thing as danger, and he envied them their unconcern. He awakened them and directed their attention to the water.

Side by side they sat and watched the grey light spreading farther into the cave, until such time as it was possible to see all the water inside the grotto. At last the matter was no longer in doubt. The shark had gone.

Ginger could have shouted with relief and satisfaction, but his optimism received a rude check when Shell Breaker announced calmly that the mako might still be in the cave. That, Ginger realised, was a possibility that would always exist, for it was impossible to see into the cave without entering the water. They waited for a little while, but when the shark did not reappear Shell Breaker stood up.

"Me go," he announced casually.

"But suppose you meet mako in the cave?" asked Ginger.

"Me fight. Kill mako maybe. Maybe mako eat me."

Ginger shook his head in horrible indecision, realising that he would have no means of knowing what had happened inside the cave unless he himself went in and found out.

"Me go," said Shell Breaker again. "You stay. If mako gone, me come back."



Ginger did not like the idea of Shell Breaker taking such a desperate risk on his behalf, but such was his fear of the shark that he raised no objection, comforting himself with the thought that even if he went with the native, and they encountered the shark, he would be more likely to get in the way than be of any assistance.

Full Moon said nothing, but the instant Shell Breaker had dived into the water she put her knife in her pareu in such a manner that she would be able to get at it easily, and followed him.

With what trepidation Ginger watched the two forms disappear into the cave can be better imagined than described. He became a victim of every sort of pessimism. He fancied that the swirl of the water suddenly increased, as if a struggle were going on inside the cave. He imagined that he could see dark shadows moving just inside the entrance. The minutes passed with nerve-racking slowness. Then one of the shadows materialised and sped towards the ledge, and a moment later Shell Breaker's head appeared above the water.

"Come—come plenty quick!" he shouted.

"Has the mako gone?" asked Ginger.

"Come quick, keep close, plenty big wave," was all Shell Breaker answered. And kicking off from the coral with his feet, he streaked again towards the cave.

Ginger braced himself. Never in all his experience had he hated anything as much as the task that lay before him. But Shell Breaker had gone and clearly expected him to follow; so, with a shudder of apprehension, he dived in and struck out in the wake of the vague form which he could see some distance in front of him. Every moment he was prepared to see the shark loom up; but even this fear was soon half forgotten in a more pressing peril.

Unseen currents were forcing Ginger against the coral side of the cave. Twice he was carried back nearly to the grotto by a surging flood of water, and then sucked towards the open lagoon by the tremendous backwash, as helpless as if he had been a piece of seaweed.

He could only fight to keep himself clear of the rough coral, which would have torn his flesh had he collided with it, but at last an unusually vicious backwash shot him clear into the open, and he struggled to the surface. He was almost spent, and clutched at the shoulder of Shell Breaker, who was waiting for him. The native at once struck out for the coral bank, against which waves were dashing in impotent fury.

Shell Breaker had almost reached the bank when Ginger happened to glance back over his shoulder. He suddenly felt sick with horror at the sight of the big shark coming up behind them, ready to attack!

It was touch and go—and how Ginger got up the bank before the shark reached them he never knew. He had no clear recollection of anything except Shell Breaker pushing him from behind and Full Moon dragging him up by the hair. Finally a mighty wave cast them up together, and they landed clear of the shark, bleeding from a dozen scratches.

Shell Breaker was in even worse case than Ginger, in spite of his ability in the water. Staggering to his feet, he pointed at the centre of the cove, where, as the water rose and fell, the dark fin of the shark projected.

"Mako leave cave—plenty big fella sea," he muttered.

## THE HURRICANE!

LOOKING about him, Ginger perceived for the first time the full force of the storm. The wind, which had now reached gale force, clutched at his body and beat the palms so far over that their fronds swept the ground. The reef was hidden under monstrous seas that broke with a roar like thunder and flung spray a hundred feet into the air. The surface of the lagoon was being whipped into a smother of foam. Overhead the sky was flat grey.

Ginger's heart sank, for he knew that the Scud could not live in such a gale. The force of the combers crashing on the beach was such that he knew without looking that if the flying-boat were still there it must be a tangle of fabric, wire, and three-ply. What were the others doing?

Ginger shouted to Full Moon and Shell Breaker that he was going, and, bending forward into the wind, he set off at a laborious run towards the camp. He soon came within sight of it—or where it had been. There was nothing there. Only a pile of fallen palms, and a few scattered wooden cases, showed where the camp had been. Of Biggles, Algy, and Sandy there was no sign.

"They've gone!" exclaimed Ginger.

Heedless of the protests of Shell Breaker and Full Moon, he forced his way along the beach just out of reach of the waves, looking for what he dreaded to find—the remains of the mangled flying-boat—but, to his infinite relief, he could see no signs of it.

"They must have gone when the storm started," he told himself hopefully, and, in order to confirm that they had not taken refuge elsewhere, he dragged himself up the incline towards the centre of the island, ducking and dodging as coconuts and palm fronds whirled past him.

Not until he reached the ridge did he realise the full fury of the hurricane, for it was coming from that side of the island. The sea was a succession of giant combers, their tops torn into spray, which made it impossible to see more than a few hundred yards. The waves, rearing high into the air, flung themselves towards the place where he stood. Already the whole side of the island was submerged, the waves breaking far above the place where the shell had been stacked.

As for the shell, it had all been swept away. More terrifying still, the whole island shook under the impact of the rollers, and in many places waterspouts shot high into the air from coral that was above the water-line.

At first Ginger could not understand what caused this; then he realised that the sea was pouring under the island, into caves such as the one he had just left, and under the tremendous pressure was bursting through flaws in the coral. Every now and then a mass of coral would be flung into the air, as if by an explosion.

Finding it difficult to remain on his feet, Ginger dropped on to his hands and knees, and clung to some low-growing shrubs to prevent himself from being blown away.

Not until a mighty comber broke and raced up to the spot where he knelt, so that the foam surged right across the ridge, did he realise that he was in peril. Vaguely to his memory came something Sandy had said about big seas sweeping right across the islands. He turned his head to see what the others were doing and saw Shell Breaker forcing his way towards him.

As soon as he saw that Ginger was looking at him the Marquesan beckoned vigorously and

pointed to the palms. Knowing that there must be a reason for this, Ginger made his way towards him, clutching at such handholds as he could find to check his headlong progress.

He could no longer see Full Moon. Shell Breaker's mouth was opening and shutting, and he knew that he was shouting, but he could hear nothing; the wind was snatching the words from his lips as fast as they were uttered. The native, realising the futility of attempting to speak, could only point towards a mass of coral, under which he crouched, and there Ginger joined him.

The Marquesan cupped his hands round his mouth and shouted into Ginger's ear.

"When wind drop, big seas come."

"Bigger than these?" yelled Ginger.

"Yes, waves come right over island."

As if to confirm Shell Breaker's words, a giant wave did at that moment sweep right across the ridge and reach the lagoon on the far side.

"Come!" shouted Shell Breaker.

Ginger followed him to the palms. The nuts had ceased to fly, for they were all on the ground. He saw Full Moon clinging to one of the thickest boles. She had evidently been busy, for a series of notches had been cut in the smooth trunk nearly up to the swaying crown. She still gripped her knife in her hand. Round her body was a length of rope which she must have found on the site of the camp. She was now knotting it into a double coil.

When she saw Ginger and Shell Breaker coming she arranged the coils round her body and the trunk of the palm, and indicated that Ginger was to go with her.

Ginger, still not quite sure what was expected of him, joined the girl at the palm. She did not speak. She pushed him inside the coil of rope, and, starting to climb, motioned him to do the same. So, with the rope round both their bodies, and the trunk of the palm between them, they began to clamber up the palm.

To Ginger it was a nightmare journey. The violent swaying of the palm, the tearing of the wind, the noise, and the flying debris were beyond human imagination; and as they mounted slowly towards the threshing fronds, the imminent prospect of a fall into the depths below did nothing to allay Ginger's fears.

Full Moon glanced upwards, and evidently decided that they were close enough to the great fronds to make further progress doubly dangerous, for she started tightening the rope, lashing them both to the bole.

Ginger could only admire the efficiency with which she went about a task; it would have made many experienced sailors pause. Finally, she took her knife and hacked furiously at the trunk immediately above them, so that the chips whirled away in the wind.

When she was half-way through it a tremendous gust tore the crown away bodily, and the green mass disappeared into the driving spindrift. The palm, relieved of its dragging weight, at once leapt to a vertical position, and, without offering any appreciable resistance to the wind, remained more or less stationary.

A minute later Ginger saw the wisdom of her action in cutting off the top of the palm, when another one, not far away, snapped off short just above the roots and disappeared into the seething lagoon. Another followed it soon after.

Looking down, Ginger saw that the whole island was now buried under a raging sea of water as the breakers swept it from side to side. Turning his head with difficulty, he could just make out Shell Breaker. He had lashed himself to another palm with his pareu, and was hacking at the crown as Full Moon had done.

Suddenly it was whipped away, and he was left clinging to the stump, like a bear up a pole. His face twisted into a smile when he saw Ginger looking at him; and Ginger smiled back, although his mood was anything but gay.

"By gosh! These kids have got some courage!" he thought admiringly.

They could do nothing except cling to the tree, and so to some extent prevent the rope from chafing them. An hour passed—two hours—and then, amazingly, there was a sudden lull. The wind died away altogether. Immediately overhead there appeared a round patch of blue sky.

Ginger shouted in relief, but Full Moon shook her head.

"Plenty wind bymeby," she said. "Centre of storm. Soon he pass, then plenty wind."

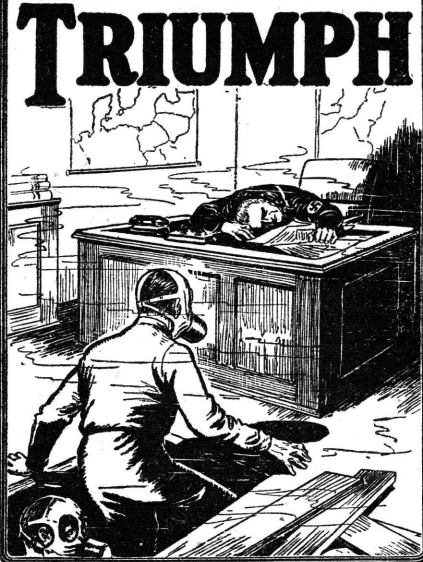
Ginger vaguely understood what she meant, and soon discovered that she was right, for the lull, which was the centre of the hurricane, did not last long. The blue sky disappeared and the wind returned with as much violence as before.

Hour after hour it raged, its force slowly weakening as the centre of the hurricane swept on over the ocean; but at a time that Ginger judged to be about four o'clock, the gale had dropped to a steady breeze, punctuated by occasional gusts.

He was more than a little thankful, for he was exhausted with the strain. He was hungry and

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thirsty as well as tired, for he had had neither food nor sleep for many hours.

His thirst was aggravated by the salt spray which still filled the air, but there was as yet no question of leaving his refuge, for as the wind dropped the size of the mighty Pacific rollers increased.

The whole island rocked under their weight as they streamed across the ridge, carrying all before them. The sand and shell dust which formed the subsoil, and the herbage that grew on it, was swept away, leaving the foundation of coral exposed.

Piles of sand, stone, and seaweed were flung up where before there had been none. Water boiled up through the coral as the seas drove under it. Only a few palms remained standing.

Not until evening did the clouds break and the crimson orb of the sun appear, far down in the west. By that time the waves were subsiding. By nightfall only an occasional breaker managed to reach the ridge, and by then its force was too far spent for it to be dangerous.

Ginger, with Full Moon's approval, made his way stiffly to the ground. He was encrusted with salt; his hair and eyebrows were stiff with it; he ached in every limb.

The others joined him, but they did not share his depression. As far as they were concerned the storm had passed, and they had survived, so there was no need to worry any more about it. Even when Ginger pointed out that all the fresh water on the island would certainly be tainted with salt, they only laughed.

Slowly they made their way through a scene of utter ruin to the site of the camp. It was by no means easy to find, for the whole shape of the island had altered.

Masses of coral had disappeared entirely, while sand had been torn from one place and flung up in another. Palms and the fronds that had been stripped from them lay about in wild confusion. Huge masses of seaweed and shells of all shapes and sizes were strewn about everywhere. Over them crawled countless crabs, sea-slugs, and other marine creatures, all making their way back to the sea from which they had been thrown.

Dragging the trailing seaweed aside, Ginger groped about on the site of the camp and managed to find a few odds and ends. A case of bully beef had been wedged into a lump of coral; a few tins of condensed milk, biscuits, and similar commodities lay half-buried in the sand.

Borrowing Full Moon's knife, he cut open a tin of beef and another of biscuits, but he soon found that his mouth was too parched to eat, so he made his way to the spring from where they had obtained the fresh water. It was no longer there. The spot was buried under many tons of sand.

Ginger looked at Shell Breaker with startled eyes.

"If we can't get water we shall soon die of thirst," he said.

Full Moon only laughed.

"No die," she said. "Plenty drink," she went on, picking up one of the many coconuts that lay on the ground.

Taking her knife, she cut off the top of one with an expert slash and passed it to Ginger, who emptied the shell and picked up another. Never had anything tasted so delicious as the milky juice.

The other two were also drinking, and Ginger derived consolation from the realisation that they would not starve or die of thirst while the nuts held out.

For a long time they sat in silence, nibbling a curious meal of bully beef, biscuit, and coconut. When it was finished, Ginger gazed out across the moonlit sea for a little while, wondering what had become of Biggles, and deploring the tragic ending of their expedition. Presently, looking round at the others, he saw that they were both lying down, sleeping peacefully.

"I might as well join them," he thought, and stretched himself out on the damp sand.

### ENTER CASTANELLI !

GINGER was the first to wake in the morning. He opened his eyes and lay still for a minute or two, staring at the blue sky, worried by a sense of something wrong. Then in a flash he remembered everything. He did not move.

The air was fresh; the breeze was no more than a caress, and the warm sun soothed his tired body. So he lay still on his back, hands under his head, trying to get events into some sort of order.

What had happened to the others, he reasoned correctly, was this. When he and the two natives did not return, Biggles would at once make a search. In the ordinary way, no great harm would have been done by their enforced absence, but the coming of the hurricane altered everything.

In order to save the machine, Biggles had been obliged to abandon them and fly the Scud to a safer anchorage, in which case he would soon reappear. In fact, he might come back at any moment.

Ginger did not believe that Biggles had been taken unawares by the hurricane, and the Scud destroyed.

However, the fact remained that he and the two Marquesans were marooned and could do nothing but await the arrival of a rescue party. That sooner or later it would come he had no doubt.

Full Moon opened her eyes and smiled up at him. Stretching, she sat up, her eyes wandering out over the lagoon. Suddenly she stopped, tense, rigid. Into her eyes came the shadow of fear.

"Atanelli—he come!" she hissed.

Ginger sat up as if he had been propelled by a spring, and followed the direction of her eyes. A schooner, obviously in a bad way, if not actually in distress, was making her way carefully under a few strips of ragged sail, through the entrance to the lagoon. That it was the Avarata was beyond doubt.

For a second Ginger stared at it, hardly able to believe his eyes, or make up his mind what to do. First of all he awakened Shell Breaker by striking him on the leg, which happened to be the only part of his body within reach.

"Shell Breaker, wake up!" he said tersely. "Atanelli is here."

Shell Breaker sat up, wide awake on the instant. He gazed out across the lagoon.

"Aue! Plenty bad!" he said.

"Don't move; they may not have seen us,"

said Ginger. "Let me think. What is the best thing to do? If he doesn't know we are here, he may soon go."

Shell Breaker shook his head.

"No go," he said. "Avarata been in hurricane. Plenty damage. He stay long time, maybe."

"In which case, they'll come ashore for water and nuts," reflected Ginger. He thought swiftly, looking about for some place of concealment.

"Let us get over the other side of the ridge," he said at last, in desperation, and began squirming through the debris towards the far beach.

Every moment he expected to hear a shout announcing that they were discovered; but if they were, no sign of it was given, and they crawled over the ridge where, of course, they could not be seen from the lagoon.

As soon as they were out of view of the schooner, Ginger got up and ran to the farthest end of the island, followed by Full Moon and Shell Breaker. Finding a hiding-place among coral, they turned to watch the schooner. It was just dropping anchor in the lagoon. The tattered sails lay about the deck. Over them walked the Solomon Island boys, in a desultory fashion, as though they were exhausted. Castanelli was leaning against the wheel.

Ginger lay still, his eyes on the schooner, anxious to know what Castanelli would do next. There was just a chance, he thought, that the Corsican might depart after a short rest, for the sea outside the lagoon was going down fast.

But this hope was soon squashed. Having got the deck of the schooner more or less shipshape, Castanelli ordered a dinghy to be lowered—his voice reached the watchers clearly—and he was soon being rowed to the island by two members of his crew.

Ginger bit his lip.

"I'm afraid we're in for a bit of bad luck," he said. "Castanelli must know that this is the island near the pearl-bed. Even if he doesn't recognise it, he must know that it is somewhere in this district. He may have got the taint of the rotting oysters either before or after the hurricane blew up. Maybe it brought him here."

Neither Full Moon nor Shell Breaker had anything to say about this, so, continuing watching, they saw Castanelli step ashore, and commence a systematic search along the lagoon side of the island. He soon found the wrecked camp, and stood smoking a cigar while his boys dragged the debris aside, to disclose the remains of the stores.

Suddenly Castanelli stooped and picked something up—something that flashed in the sunlight. Ginger knew what it was. The shell that had been stacked on that side of the island had been strewn all over the place. He remembered seeing several among the seaweed. Castanelli had found one, and Ginger realised that it would settle any doubts in his mind about the last occupants of the island.

Ginger watched Castanelli show the shell to his boys before tossing it on one side. Fortunately, it did not occur to Ginger that the pearls might still be in the cache, or his depression would have been worse, for the Corsican was standing within a yard of the spot where they had been buried.

Castanelli stayed on the island for about an hour, at the end of which time he got back into the dinghy, and was rowed to the schooner, which

lay about twenty yards from the shore. Again Ginger hoped fervently that he would go, for now that the island was devastated, there appeared to be no reason why he should stay; but no move was made to suggest that Castanelli had any such intention.

All day the schooner remained at anchor, its captain sometimes on deck supervising the repair of gear and sails, and sometimes out of sight below.

As the day wore on Ginger became more and more worried. But he was still convinced that Biggles and the others had departed as soon as they had been warned of the hurricane's approach, in which case they would be certain to return. He knew that they would be anxious about him.

For some reason or other it did not enter Ginger's head that he had been given up as lost. What alarmed him most was the thought that Biggles might return at any moment. Apart from the presence of the schooner, the surface of the lagoon was strewn with obstacles, palm-trunks, and the like, which Biggles might not see, and if he struck one in landing the aircraft would unquestionably be wrecked.

But when the sun began to sink into the western ocean, and there was still no sign of the Scud, Ginger knew that there was little likelihood of him returning that day, and for the first time serious doubts entered his mind about the flying-boat's survival of the hurricane.

It might easily have been blown out to sea, he thought miserably. On the other hand, it might have reached Rutuona safely, and Biggles was only waiting to make sure that the weather had cleared before he returned, in which case he ought to try to stop him. He turned to Shell Breaker.

"How long would it take us to get from here to Rutuona in a small boat?" he asked.

Shell Breaker thought for a moment.

"One day—two days, maybe. Depend on sea and wind."

Ginger pointed to the dinghy, now moored under the schooner's counter.

"How long in that boat?" he asked.

Shell Breaker, by words and actions, indicated that if they started at nightfall, it might be possible to reach Rutuona by the morning of the following day. In reply to another question by Ginger he declared that he would be able to find his way across the intervening ocean.

"Then if Atanelli no go by night, we steal boat," announced Ginger.

The others agreed that they were ready to put the plan into execution, so Ginger told Shell Breaker to gather some nuts together, which they would pick up after they had succeeded in getting the dinghy.

It looked simple enough, Ginger thought, as he gazed across the lagoon at the schooner. Castanelli would hardly consider it necessary to set a watch in such a place. The swim was only a short one, and under cover of darkness the removal of the dinghy ought to present neither difficulty nor danger.

Ginger's only fear, although he did not mention this to the others, was that the shark might still be in the lagoon. The idea of swimming in water that harboured such horrors as he had already seen became more and more repugnant to him. However, he was prepared to take the risk.

The short twilight faded and darkness fell; only a single light showed where the schooner lay at anchor. Ginger did not move at once. He was

anxious to put the plan into execution as quickly as possible, because the sooner they started the earlier they would reach Rutuona; but he decided that it would be wise to give the schooner time to settle down for the night.

He could tell by the diminishing noise of the breakers on the reef that the sea was still going down, for which he was thankful. He was fond of the water, but not so much as to make him look forward with pleasure to a trip in an open boat across a stretch of ocean during the hurricane season.

At last he rose to his feet. The moon had not yet risen, but the stars were like lamps hanging from the blue dome of heaven, and provided ample light for their purpose. Indeed, more would be dangerous. At the last moment he turned to Full Moon.

"There is no need for us all to go," he said quietly. "You gather all the nuts you can carry and take them out to the place where the reef joins the island." He pointed to the spot. "As soon as we've got the boat we'll come round and pick you up."

Shell Breaker agreed that this was a good idea, so they set off, leaving Full Moon to make her own way to the rendezvous. They reached the edge of the lagoon and waded quietly out into deep water, where they began to swim, using a steady breast-stroke that made the least noise.

In a few minutes the dark silhouette of the schooner could be seen, and it was possible to make out that the solitary light came from a porthole—probably Castanelli's cabin, thought Ginger. As they drew nearer their strokes became slower, and their approach more cautious.

Shell Breaker found a piece of driftwood, and, resting his hands on it, pushed it slowly in front of him, paddling with his feet only. Ginger looked for a similar piece, but, unable to find it, he had to go on without any cover. His toes curled with shock when he saw a long black object on the water in front of him, but, to his unspeakable relief, he discovered it was only the bole of a floating palm.

They were now only a few yards from the

schooner's side, and from the dinghy. All remained quiet. Not a soul was in sight.

Ginger swam quietly to the boat, and rested his hands on the stern for a moment, listening; then, hearing nothing, he pulled himself into it. It lurched under his weight, so, in order to balance himself, he dropped forward on his hands and knees. He landed on something soft—something that moved violently as soon as his hands touched it, and too late he knew what it was.

A man had been lying in the dinghy all the time, probably asleep. He awoke with a wild yell.

Ginger tried desperately to get back into the water, but a pair of vice-like hands gripped his throat, and he was forced down under a hot, reeking body. What happened after that he did not know, for he was too near to suffocation. Subconsciously he was aware of shouts and a general uproar; then something crashed against his jaw, and the world exploded in a flash of blinding light.

He could not have been unconscious for many minutes, for when he came round he was lying on the deck of the schooner in an area of light cast by a lantern, the centre of several spectators. Blinking, he raised himself on his right hand, and, looking up, he saw Castanelli grinning down at him. The others were his crew of shock-haired native boys.

"Get up!" ordered Castanelli, in his soft, purring voice.

Ginger did as he was told. He was still somewhat dazed, and his brain was whirling with shock, but the thought uppermost in his mind was what had happened to Shell Breaker. He could not see him, so he assumed that he had escaped, in which case he could only hope that he had not been seen, otherwise his capture was only a matter of time when daylight came.

"So we meet again—yes?" sneered Castanelli.

Ginger did not answer.

*Ginger's in a tight spot now, but worse trouble is to follow, as you will read in next week's thrilling chapters. Don't miss them.*

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**BUNTER EXPECTS!**

“**D**RAKE, old chap—”

“Buzz off!”

“I’m expecting—”

“Bow-wow!”

“A postal order—”

“Rats!”

“For five bob!” said Billy Bunter calmly.

Jack Drake and Dick Rodney were wheeling out their bicycles when William George Bunter stopped them in the gateway of Greyfriars. The two new juniors at Greyfriars were going for a spin that sunny November afternoon. But the Owl of the Remove was thinking of a far more important matter than a bicycle spin.

“Bound to come by the afternoon post,” said Bunter, blinking at them through his big spectacles with a look of owlish seriousness—or tomorrow morning by the latest. If you wouldn’t mind lending me—”

“Now, look here, Bunter,” said Drake in measured tones, “we haven’t been long at Greyfriars. But the first thing we heard of when we came was your postal order. It’s the chief thing we’ve heard of ever since. We’re fed-up on that postal order—see? Drop it!”

“Oh, really, Drake—”

“Drop it!” said Rodney. “Chuck it! Give it a rest! It’s worn out! Wait till another new chap comes!”

“Oh, really, Rodney—”

“And now get out of the way!” said Drake.

“I say, you fellows—”

“Do you want me to wheel this bike into you?” demanded Drake.

“I say, old fellow, that postal order—”

Drake wheeled his bike on.

As Billy Bunter did not move, the front wheel came into contact with his portly person—suddenly and forcibly. There was a howl from Billy Bunter, and he sat down.

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# PULLING BUNTER’S LEG!

By Frank Richards.

“Oh!”

“Take a rest, old barrel!” said Drake.

“Ow! Yow! I’m hurt!” roared Bunter.

“Help!”

“Drake!” Loder of the Sixth came in at the gates. “What do you mean by pushing your bicycle at Bunter?”

“I meant to push him out of the way, Loder!” answered Drake coolly.

“Yow-ow-ow!” roared Bunter. The arrival of a prefect on the scene was a sufficient hint to William George to make the most of his injuries.

“Yow-ow! My leg’s broken! Ow!”

“Stop!” snapped Loder, as the two juniors were passing on. There had been trouble already between Drake and the bully of the Sixth, and Loder did not mean to lose this opportunity. “You fags must keep your horse-play within limits, as you will find! Take a hundred lines, Drake!”

“Look here, Loder—”

Loder raised his hand.

“And go back and write them at once!” he said.

Jack Drake looked rebellious. Billy Bunter, forgetting for a moment that he was seriously injured, grinned.

“Come on, Drake!” whispered Rodney; and Drake, with feelings too deep for words, wheeled his bike in again.

Loder walked on loftily.

Billy Bunter got to his feet, and emitted a fat chortle.

“He, he, he! Serve you right!”

Drake and Rodney put up their machines, and repaired to Study No. 3. The bike spin was unavoidably postponed; the command of a Sixth Form prefect was law.

Jack Drake’s handsome face was very grim as he sat at the study table and ground out his lines. Rodney sat in the window-seat and waited for him to finish.

“Rotten hard luck, old chap!” said Rodney sympathetically. “Loder’s had his eye on us, and he was glad of the chance!”

Drake grunted.

“It was that fat owl’s fault! Bother him and his blessed postal order! If he says ‘postal order’ to me again I’ll burst him!”

Drake’s pen travelled over the paper at a great rate.

But a hundred lines were a hundred lines, and it was some time before Drake was ready to take them to Loder’s study.

When he arrived there with his impot Loder

was not there, and he left them on the table. Then he rejoined his chum, and they went for their bikes.

"A blessed hour wasted!" growled Drake.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Clear off!" roared Drake, as Billy Bunter blinked into the bike-shed. "Are you asking to be slaughtered, you fat chump?"

"My postal order will——"

Drake seized a bike pump and made a jump at the fat junior.

"Ow!"

Billy Bunter fled.

The chums of the Remove wheeled out their machines, and this time there was no stoppage. They mounted in the road, and pedalled away towards Friardale.

There was a thoughtful expression on Jack Drake's face, and a glimmer in his eyes.

"That fat idiot is growing a bore with his blessed postal order," he said. "He never knows when to stop. I've got an idea!" He chuckled. "Let's stop at the post office in Friardale, Rodney."

"The post office? What for?"

"To get a postal order."

Rodney stared at his chum.

"What the thump do you want a postal order for?" he inquired.

"For Bunter."

"Bunter?" ejaculated Rodney.

"Yes; he's been expecting a postal order so long that it's a pity he shouldn't get one!" said Drake, laughing.

"You ass——"

"Only a tanner one——"

"Oh!"

"Payable at an office a good distance from Greyfriars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be worth while watching his face when he gets it," said Drake. "Here we are!"

He jumped off his machine outside the village post office. His purchase was soon made, and a few minutes later a letter for Bunter, containing a postal order, was dropped in the box.

Billy Bunter had been expecting a postal order for a long, long time, and he was going to receive one at last!

### THE POSTAL ORDER THAT CAME!

"ANY letters for me, Wharton?"

Billy Bunter asked that question the following day after morning lessons. Harry Wharton & Co. were looking over the rack for letters when the Owl of the Remove rolled up.

"Expecting a postal order, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry, with deep sarcasm.

Bunter nodded.

"You've hit it, old chap," he answered. "From one of my titled relations, you know——"

"The marquis or the duke?" asked Johnny Bull.

"The baronet," answered Bunter calmly—"a very wealthy old fellow who's shown me a lot of kindness——"

"Unremitting kindness!" suggested Bob humorously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Exactly!" said Bunter, quite insensible to Bob Cherry's playful pun. "Sends me no end of remittances. Is that letter for me, Wharton?"

"By Jove," exclaimed Wharton. "there is a letter for Bunter! Here, you are, tubby!"

Billy Bunter caught the letter eagerly.

Bunter had stated so often that he was expecting a postal order that he almost believed the statement himself. He jabbed a fat thumb into the envelope and tore it open.

"Gather round, my infants!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Prepare to behold Bunter's postal order! If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Break it gently, Bunter!" chuckled Nugent. "Don't show it to us all at once!"

"If you fellows think there isn't a postal order in this letter——"

"We know there isn't, you spoofing porpoise!" growled Johnny Bull. "Don't you understand yet that that chicken won't fight?"

"I say, Wharton, will you——"

"No!" said Harry Wharton, without waiting for Bunter to finish.

"Why, you beast, you don't know yet what I was asking!"

"Yes, I do!" chuckled the captain of the Remove. "You want me to cash a postal order that's coming by the next post!"

"I want you to cash the postal order that's in this letter!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, that's a different matter!" said Harry Wharton. "Hand out the postal order, and I'll hand out the cash. But the postal order has to be handed out first."

The Famous Five chuckled.

They had not the remotest idea that there was any postal order in Bunter's letter. As Bob Cherry would have said, the age of miracles was past.

To their amazement, William George Bunter drew a postal order from the envelope. There was no letter inside, but undoubtedly there was a postal order. The Famous Five stared at it as Bunter held it up triumphantly in his fat paw. Bob Cherry leaned on the wall and breathed heavily.

"Fan me, somebody!" he murmured.

"He—he—he's got a postal order!" babbled Nugent. "It's come!"

"The comefulness is terrific!" gasped Hurree Singh. "O day worthy to be marked with a white stone!"

"A—a—a postal order!" stuttered Wharton. "Bunter's got a postal order! My only hat!"

Bunter grinned gleefully.

He had already noted that the postal order was for the princely sum of sixpence, and that it was payable in Courtfield, which was a good long walk from Greyfriars. It was very doubtful whether Billy Bunter would have undertaken that walk for the sum of sixpence.

But sixpence without the walk was very welcome.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" roared Bob Cherry in a formidable voice. "Walk up, gents! Come and see Bunter's postal order! The only one on record! Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a rush of Removites to the spot.

"Bunter——"

"A postal order!" gasped Peter Todd.

"Gammon!"

"Spoof!"

"I say, you fellows, I've told you a lot of times I was expecting a postal order——"

"You have!" chuckled Squiff. "Quite a lot of times! Millions of times, in fact!"

"Billions!" said Ogilvy.

"Trillions!" chuckled Russell.

"It—it's only for sixpence!" said Bunter. "Hand out the tanner, Wharton, please! You've agreed to cash it."

"Only sixpence!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Is the duke hard-up?"

"Couldn't the viscount squeeze out more than a tanner?" said Nugent.

"This is rather mean of the marquis!" said Johnny Bull, shaking his head.

Harry Wharton felt in his pocket for a sixpence. He received the postal order in exchange.

"Hallo! This dashed thing is payable in Courtfield!" he exclaimed. "I'm not going to Courtfield for a tanner!"

Bunter chuckled.

"Just as you like about that," he said airily.

"Thanks for the tanner!"

And William George Bunter rolled away cheerfully, to expend that small but useful coin at Mrs. Mimble's shop forthwith.

Harry Wharton stared at the postal order in great disgust.

"Have it framed and hung up in the Common-room!" suggested Bolsover major. "Keep it as a curiosity."

Drake and Rodney came up, smiling.

"What's the news?" asked Drake. "Has Bunter got a postal order at last?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Tanner, payable in Courtfield!" said Harry Wharton. "Anybody like to give me fourpence for it?"

"You!" exclaimed Drake.

"I—I've cashed it for Bunter—before I saw it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Rodney.

Drake jumped.

"Oh, you ass!" he exclaimed. "Lot of good a fellow spending sixpence on pulling Bunter's leg with asses like you butting in and spoiling the joke!"

"You!" howled Wharton.

"Did you think it came from Bunter's uncle, the duke, or his cousin, the earl?" snorted Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that accounts for the milk in the coconut!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "In the circs, it's not worth framing!"

"I'll give you threepence for it, and try again," said Drake.

"Done!" said Wharton, laughing.

And the postal order changed hands. Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was enjoying himself—to the extent of sixpence. Mrs. Mimble knew him too well to allow the account to run as far as sixpence-halfpenny. Bunter came along to dinner with a satisfied smile and a smear of jam on his fat face. So far, the Owl of the Remove had had the best of the joke; there was no doubt about that.

### A NICE AFTERNOON FOR BUNTER!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

It was Saturday morning, and the Remove had been dismissed by Mr. Quelch. Harry Wharton & Co. were discussing in the interval before dinner, the football match that was to take place that afternoon, when the Owl of the Remove joined them.

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"I think I told you fellows I was expecting a postal order?" remarked Bunter, blinking at the Famous Five.

"I think you did!" assented Bob Cherry.

"The thoughtfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Well, it's come!"

"Again!" chuckled Bob.

"I don't know what you mean by again, Bob Cherry. I suppose you know that I get remittances pretty often. Will one of you fellows cash it for me?"

"Where's it payable?" asked Wharton, laughing.

"Oh, quite near!"

"Let's see it."

"It's only for sixpence," said Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is the duke still going in for economy?" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We're not cashing any more postal orders," said Harry Wharton, with a shake of the head. "Ask Drake."

"I say, you fellows, you might oblige a chap!" urged Bunter. "I can't walk to Courtfield, can I?"

"Why can't you?"

"Well, I mean I don't want to. And—and my bike's out of order. You know you refused to mend it for me, Bob Cherry. You can't deny that I asked you several times. I pointed out to you at the time that you were selfish."

"Why can't you mend your own bike?" boomed Bob Cherry.

"It's no good yelling at a chap because he mentions that you've acted selfishly. You've landed me now without a bike, and I think you ought to cash this postal order for me."

"Go and eat coke!" snorted Bob Cherry.

"I say, Nugent, you're not a selfish beast like Bob Cherry. Will you—"

"My dear chap, I'm worse than Bob!" answered Nugent. "Bob's only said 'No,' and I'm going to kick you as well!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter beat a rapid retreat, with the sixpenny postal order still clutched in a fat finger and thumb.

Bunter had already hawked that postal order up and down the Remove, without finding any takers.

Everybody in the Remove, excepting Bunter, knew whence it had come, only the Owl remaining in blissful ignorance. Nobody saw any reason why they should make the journey to Courtfield Post Office instead of Bunter—in fact, Bunter was shocked at the amount of selfishness he encountered that morning in the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

Mrs. Mimble, at the tuckshop, would not look at it. It was payable to W. G. Bunter, at Courtfield Post Office, and Mrs. Mimble declined even Bunter's offer to accept a threepenny tart for it.

Bunter came in to dinner with a frowning brow.

It really was hard lines, he felt, that when his postal order had arrived at last, it should prove to be a white elephant in this way. He anathematised the sender for not making it payable in Friardale. Who the sender was he had no idea; it was the second time he had received a sixpenny postal order unaccompanied by a letter, and he did not even know that it was the same order. Its arrival at all was rather mysterious, but Bunter did not give much thought to that. His thoughts were occupied with the



problem of exchanging it for current coin of the realm to the value of sixpence.

After dinner he joined Drake and Rodney as they went out, and caught the former by the sleeve.

"Drake, old chap, I suppose you've got a tanner about you?"

"Several," answered Drake.

"Will you—"

"No!"

"You might give a chap a tanner for a tanner order!" said Bunter reproachfully. "Look here, I'll take fivepence!"

"You'll take a dot on the boko if you don't let go my sleeve!"

"Fourence!" said Bunter desperately.

Drake chuckled. Evidently William George was far from guessing that he was speaking to the sender of the postal order.

"Not a penny!" said Drake. "Walk to Courtfield; it will do you good!"

"I can't! I—I'm lame to-day," said Bunter. "I—I hurt my leg in a fall from my bike yesterday—"

"Go on your bike, then," said Rodney.

"Can't; it's crocked. I haven't been able to use it for weeks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, Drake, you bike down to Courtfield for me, and I'll stand you half the postal order! There!"

"Buzz off, you fat bluebottle!"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad in a state of troubled and anxious thought.

It began to look as if he would have to negotiate the three miles to Courtfield personally, or lose that remittance.

He drifted round to the bike-shed to look at his bike—but he shook his head over it hopelessly. It was indeed in a hopeless state; a bike could not be neglected for whole terms without getting rather "rocky." With one pedal gone and the other twisted, with a break in the chain, and one tyre burst, the bike did not look useful for a six-mile spin.

"I—I wonder if I could borrow a bike!" murmured Bunter, glancing round at the stands. "There's Ogilvy's—that's a rather nice machine—"

He lifted Ogilvy's bike off the stand. It was sheer ill-luck for Bunter that Robert Donald Ogilvy came in just then to take out his machine.

"What are you doing with my bike?" roared Ogilvy, in a voice resembling that of the Great Huge Bear in the pantomime.

Bunter, startled, jumped so suddenly that he let go the machine, and it went with a terrific crash to the floor.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say—I—I was only going to mend a puncture for you, old chap—"

Ogilvy stared a moment at his curled-up machine, and then leaped at Billy Bunter. Bunter dodged him frantically round the bike-shed, and two or three more machines went over as he fled among them. But Ogilvy caught him at the door.

"Take that—"

"Yoop!"

"And that—"

"That" was Ogilvy's boot, and the Scottish unior seemed to be under the impression that he

was kicking for goal from midfield. Billy Bunter's roar would have put the famous Bull of Bashan to the blush.

"Yarooop! Help!"

"And that—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Ogilvy landed Bunter outside the shed with the last drive, and went to pick up his machine. William George Bunter tottered away. He was feeling hurt. In the quad he came upon the Famous Five going down to football.

"I say, you fellows, will one of you lend me—"

"A football-boot?" asked Bob Cherry. "Certainly! Stand steady—why, the silly ass has cleared off!"

Skinner of the Remove was mounting his bike at the gate, and Bunter, as he spotted him, bore down on him at full speed.

"Skinner! I say, Skinner, old chap—"

"Bow-wow!" said Skinner. "I'm not cashing any postal orders—"

"I—I want a lift into Courtfield—"

"My bike doesn't carry two tons," answered Skinner pleasantly.

"I say, old chap, you might give me a lift behind," said Bunter persuasively. "I simply must get to Courtfield. I—I'll hold on, you know—"

"Well, get on!" said Skinner unexpectedly.

"Thanks, old chap."

Skinner grinned. He had not the slightest intention of carrying Bunter's terrific weight behind him on his bicycle; indeed, he was not at all sure that the bike would have stood it. But he had no objection to expending a few minutes in pulling Bunter's leg.

Bunter got one foot on the foot-rest, and took hold of Skinner's shoulders from behind. Skinner started before Bunter's other foot was ready. The fat junior swayed to and fro, as he was dragged away from the wall by the aid of which he had mounted.

"Hold on!" he gasped.

"You hold on!" said Skinner.

"I'm not—yow—safe yet—"

"Dear me!"

"Stop, you beast—"

"That's all right—you're as safe as you're going to be, old nut," said Skinner agreeably; and he proceeded to make his bike wobble.

"Beast!" yelled Bunter. "Lemme get down!"

"Who's stopping you?" inquired Skinner. "You'll be down soon, dear boy. I'm expecting you to go any minute."

"Yarooop!"

Bunter went!

Unfortunately for the practical joker in front of him, Bunter fastened a desperate clutch on Skinner's hair as he went.

So Skinner went, too!

There was a crash of the bicycle, and Bunter and Skinner rolled on the hard, unsympathetic road together.

Bunter roared and Skinner howled.

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm killed!"

"You fat idiot!" shrieked Skinner.

"Oh dear! My back's broken!"

"And now your neck's going to be broken!" hissed Skinner.

Skinner was damaged, and Skinner was furious. He staggered up and hurled himself at Billy Bunter.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Yooop! Help! Murder! Fire! Thieves!" yelled Bunter.

Thump, thump, thump!

"There!" gasped Skinner. "Now I feel better!"

And Skinner, feeling better, mounted his machine and rode off.

Bunter sat in the road and roared, and was still gasping long after Skinner was out of sight. He did not clamber upon his feet again till he spotted Loder and Carne of the Sixth come out at the school gates and start towards Courtfield.

Then Bunter regained the perpendicular with an effort, and intercepted the two great men of the Sixth.

"I—I say, Loder—" he began.

"Hallo!" grunted Loder, looking down at the dusty Owl with great disfavour.

"You—you're going to Courtfield, ain't you, Loder?"

"What the thump does it matter to you?" snapped Loder, greatly incensed at being questioned by a fag of the Lower Fourth.

"I—I say, will you take a postal order for me and c-c-cash it at the post office in Courtfield, Loder?"

Loder looked at him.

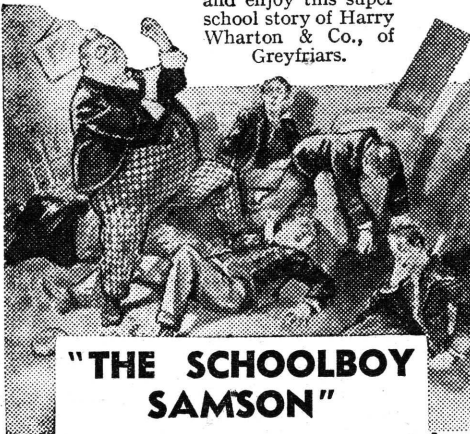
For a moment or two he could scarcely believe his ears. He—Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form—a prefect of Greyfriars—was asked to perform an errand for a Remove fag! It was time for the skies to fall!

"Will I—what?" stammered Loder, recovering the use of his voice at last. "Will I—by gad! No, I won't fag for you, Bunter—not quite! But I'll give you a thundering good hiding for your cheek!"

## Bunny Rabbit Becomes Lion!

Ordinarily, Billy Bunter, the fat and fatuous Owl of the Greyfriars Remove, hasn't the strength of a bunny-rabbit. Suddenly he blossoms out as STRONG BUNTER, with the muscles of a Samson—and things happen! Read

and enjoy this super school story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.



### "THE SCHOOLBOY SAMSON"

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Loder had a walking-cane in his hand, and he proceeded at once to suit the action to the word.

His cane rang round Bunter's fat circumference.

"There—and there—and there——"

"Ow! Wow! Yah! Beast! Oh crumbs!"

Bunter dodged and ran for his life. Loder followed him a few paces, making active play with the cane.

The Owl of the Remove dodged in at the gates and sprinted. He did not stop till he had put the quadrangle between himself and Loder of the Sixth. For the next hour or two William George Bunter was chiefly occupied in rubbing various parts of his fat person where he felt a pain, and mumbling dolorously. And the postal order was still uncashed!

## THE BORROWED BIKE!

JACK DRAKE came into the Junior Common-room after tea with Rodney, and smiled at the sight of William George Bunter.

Bunter was seated in an armchair by the fire, slowly but surely finishing a large chunk of toffee. The toffee had been a large chunk—but Bunter had travelled through it—and he was lingering over the remains with relish.

Drake and Rodney had been out of gates that afternoon, rambling on the cliffs, and both of them were interested to know how the Owl of the Remove had progressed with his unnegotiable postal order.

Bunter blinked at them through his big spectacles sourly.

Drake gave him a cheery nod.

"How's the postal order getting on?" he asked.

"Which one?" asked Bunter carelessly. "I get such a lot of postal orders, you know—with my rich relations, I——"

"The tanner one," said Rodney.

"Oh, that! That's cashed."

"Walked to Courtfield, after all?" asked Drake, with a smile.

Bunter shook his head.

"Ha, ha! Did you mend your bike?"

"I did not!" answered Bunter, with dignity. "I would have, but Toddy refused to let me have his new tyre to put on it—you know you did, Toddy——"

"I did, old pippin," assented Peter Todd.

"And Russell raised a mean objection to my taking a pedal off his machine," said Bunter. "He knew I needed a new pedal. The selfishness of some fellows makes me angry, it does really. I had to borrow a bike to go to Courtfield."

"Must be some awful ass about if anyone lent you a bike," commented Drake. "And did you survive the six miles on a bike?"

"Only three to Courtfield."

"But you had to come back, didn't you, ass?"

"I got a lift in the carrier's cart coming back, luckily," said Bunter.

"My hat! The carrier took you and your bike on board!" ejaculated Rodney.

"Oh, no! I didn't tell him I had a bike, or he mightn't have given me a lift," said Bunter sagely. "I put the bike behind the hedge just outside Courtfield, when I saw the carrier's cart coming along."

(Continued on page 36.)

## "GEM" and "MAGNET" PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. If you wish to reply to a notice published here you must write to the Pen Pal direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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18-11-39

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(More Names and Addresses in this week's  
"Magnet.")

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## PULLING BUNTER'S LEG!

(Continued from page 34.)

Drake stared.

"And you left it there?"

"Left it there?" repeated Bunter. "Of course! What else was I to do with it, I'd like to know?"

"You left a bike on the road all on its own!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I suppose I couldn't sit down there and watch it, could I?" asked Bunter sarcastically.

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton. "Well, the fellow who lent you his bike knew what to expect, I suppose. Ten to one some tramp will walk off with it!"

"If it's pinched, that's not my fault," said Bunter. "I asked at least a dozen fellows to go to Courtfield for me. They all refused. They can't deny it. I wash my hands of the whole affair."

"Well, a wash would do 'em good!" commented Rodney.

"Ob, really, Rodney—"

Jack Drake chuckled.

"Well, I never thought any chap would be as enough to lend you a bike, Bunter," he remarked. "If I had, I shouldn't have wasted sixpence in sending you a postal order."

Bunter started.

"You sent it?" he howled.

"Yes, ass! Not your uncle, the duke."

"Not your cousin, the marquis!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Little me!" grinned Drake. "I thought a walk to Courtfield would do you good."

"You awful beast—that's why it was made payable in Courtfield, was it?" said Bunter warmly. "Why couldn't you lend me the tanner and save all the trouble you gave me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I call it inconsiderate," said Bunter—"and inconsiderate fellows always have to suffer for it. If you lose your bike—"

"Lose my bike?" repeated Drake.

"Well, Wharton says some tramp may pinch it—"

"Mum-mum-my bike!" stammered Drake. "You—you said you'd borrowed a bike—"

"Yes, I borrowed yours!"

Jack Drake seemed transfixed. Apparently he found it difficult to realise that Billy Bunter had taken out his bike, without permission, and had left it stranded on the Courtfield Road.

"You—you—you—" he gasped. "You—you took my bike and—and left it on the road to save the trouble of riding it home—"

"Well, I'd had a couple of upsets," said Bunter. "One of the pedals was twisted, and the chain had come off. I suppose you don't think that I'm going to slog about riding a bike with a twisted pedal, do you? But I shouldn't be surprised. Some fellows are so selfish—"

Bunter did not stop to finish.

Jack Drake was rushing upon him with a face of thunder, and Bunter had just time to whip out of the armchair and avoid the charge.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" yelled Bunter, as he fled round the table. "What's

the matter? I haven't done anything, have I? Yaroooh!"

Drake came round the table after him like greased lightning, amid shrieks of laughter from the Removites.

But fear lent Bunter wings.

He dodged out of the Common room and fled for his life, with the enraged owner of the borrowed bike foaming on his track.

The wild chase went on up the staircase—and then came a sound of a fall in the Remove passage—and a continual heavy sound as of someone beating a carpet.

But it was not a carpet that was being beaten.

Judging by the wild yells of woe, it was Billy Bunter.

It was not till Wingate of the Sixth came up the stairs, two at a time, asphalt in hand, that the carpet-beating ceased. Then Jack Drake went to look for his bike—and Billy Bunter crawled into his study and collapsed in the arm-

## EXCITEMENT ON THE HOME FRONT WITH HARRY WHARTON & CO.!

Someone has played a rascally trick on Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, and Coker has been adjudged the guilty one. But is the great Horace guilty? That's what Harry Wharton & Co. are determined to find out. For the latest news, read:

### "THE REMOVE DETECTIVES!"

By Frank Richards,

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chair. And for a good hour afterwards Bunter's voice might have been heard uttering ejaculations, and his ejaculations were chiefly:

"Wow! Wow! Wow!"

Fortunately, Jack Drake found his bike before a tramp found it. He had to wheel it home, as it was too dark for repairs, bikes generally needing repairs after Bunter had used them—and Drake's was no exception.

When he arrived with it at Greyfriars he had the pleasure of receiving a hundred lines from Mr. Quelch for absence from calling-over.

Exactly who had the best of the postal order joke Drake could not quite decide—but the Removites generally agreed that it was not Drake. There were, as Bob Cherry remarked, more kicks than ha'pence in pulling Bunter's leg.

Next Wednesday: "SKINNER'S REVENGE!"