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"BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!"

—IT CANNOT FAIL TO THRILL YOU!

THE GEM 2^D

"FIVERS" THAT
HE DIDN'T WANT!

—starring Tom Merry in
"THE BOY WITH A BAD
NAME!"





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.

B. D., of Manor Park, writes:

Congratulations on answering my questions about the "William" books. Some more! Do you think we shall see these headlines in the papers in 1959?

1. "BILLY BUNTER ELECTED CHIEF CHEF OF GREYFRIARS, SALARY £500 PER YEAR!"

2. "BERNARD GLYN, RENOWNED SCIENTIST, COMPLETES COLOUR TELEVISION APPARATUS!"

3. "DETECTIVE - INSPECTOR KERR CATCHES ARCH-CROOK AUBREY RACKE!"

4. "JACK BLAKE APPOINTED CAPTAIN OF ENGLAND'S FOOTBALL XI AGAINST SCOTLAND!"

5. "DICK PENFOLD APPOINTED POET LAUREATE!"

6. "MARK LINLEY APPOINTED CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER!"

7. "HARRY MANNERS RETURNS FROM AFRICAN JUNGLE WITH PICTURES OF WHITE NATIVES!"

8. "OGILVY PLANS REBUILDING ST. PAUL'S!"

ANSWER:

1. Make it £5,000—a fellow has to eat! 2. This really is "seeing" into the future! 3. Racke threatens libel suit if I label him a crook! 4. You flutter me. Still, it might happen. 5. At a whacking salary, Penfold hopes. 6. Well, "Marky" of Greyfriars Remove would certainly be careful how he spent other people's money! 7. Snaps of white "blacks," so close you can see the "whites" of their eyes, what? 8. Not all in one afternoon, I trust! Write again, old fellow—before 1959!

Gordon Melville, of Bayswater, W.2, writes:

I've never written to you before. All these questions concern D'Arcy. 1. Where does he buy his suits? 2. Does he play for St. Jim's at football or cricket? 3. Does he enter for the school sports? 4. What is his strongest subject? (Don't say French!) 5. Is he very artistic? 6. Which is his home county? 7. His favourite song? 8. St. Jim's colours?

ANSWER:

1. At an exclusive tailor's in Wayland, and at a tailor's in London. 2. Yes—and how! 3. I should say so. 2nd in 100 yards recently! 4. English! 5. Ycs. He doesn't wear his hair long, or affect "Chelsea" styles, though! 6. Hampshire. 7. La Donna e Mobile. 8. Red
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and white. Now you've broken the ice, I hope you'll write again.

R. T., and J. B., of Earl Shilton, write:

In what order do the Forms run?

ANSWER: Sixth, Fifth, Shell, Fourth, Third, Second. But St. Jim's Forms never "run." They always stand their ground!

M. A., of Birmingham, writes:

Talbot's the grandest chap among you. You can pass on the bouquet if you like. At a guess, Talbot should be a pianist, and should like Chopin. Put me right, please.

ANSWER: Grand chap, Talbot; right first time. Pianist, yes. Favourite composer, duano. Talbot will "Liszt" to Wagner, Mendelssohn, or Mozart. "Note" the come "Bach"?

"Curious," of Sutton, Surrey, writes:

Tell Cardew I admire his nonchalant manner. What is Mr. Raitton's height? Which is your favourite cricket team? Who is best composition writer in the Fourth? Can Fatty Wynn take Sixth Form wickets? Who is boxing champ of St. Jim's, and who is vice-captain of the Fourth cricket XI? P.S.—Tell Racke he is a thumping ass!

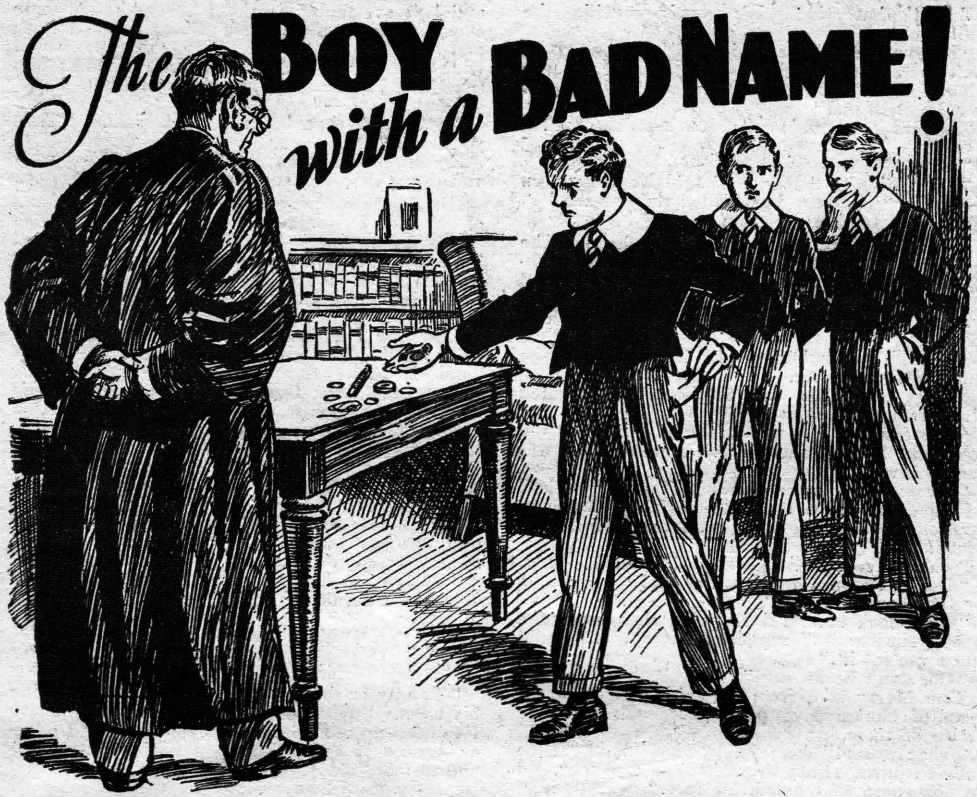
ANSWER: Cardew started slightly when I told him, and said: "Gud, what can a fellow say to that?" Mr. Raitton is 6 feet 1 inch. I naturally support my own county—Yorkshire! D'Arcy writes excellent essays. Fatty Wynn snorted when I asked him—he had just taken Knox's wicket twice, and Sefton's three times at nets practice, bowing to the First XI! Kildare boxes best. Figgins is vice-captain of the Fourth. P.S.—Racke's reply unprintable!

Norman F. Wardale, of West Bridgford, Notts, writes:

Who is the best boxer—Levison, Cardew, or Clive? Who's fattest—Bunter or Trimble?

ANSWER: Clive, just. Bunter has always led Trimble by a stone or two in the fatness stakes, but recently Trimble has been coming up rapidly and threatens to "burst" all records. However, Bunter is making a great 1939 effort, and his supporters feel he can be relied on to keep his 14st. 12½ lbs. record unbeaten.

UNDER SUSPICION FOR THEFT! TOM MERRY FINDS HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN THE VICTIM OF THE CROOK MASTER'S SCHEMING!



As Tom Merry turned out his pockets, Mr. Linton watched him with a cold, scrutinising gaze.

CASH NOT WANTED!

"FIVERS!"

"Rolling in it!"

Manners and Lowther stared in astonishment.

Coming into Study No. 10 in the School House at St. Jim's, they beheld an unexpected and amazing sight.

Tom Merry was sitting at the study table, with a black frown on his usually sunny brow. Seldom had Tom looked so savagely and intensely angry.

But it was not at Tom that his chums were staring. Their eyes were fixed on a little heap of crisp slips of paper on the table, which had, apparently, been taken out of a registered envelope which lay near them.

Five-pound notes were uncommon in the Lower School. D'Arcy of the Fourth sometimes had a fiver; Racke of the Shell often had two or three.

But the average junior at St. Jim's counted his money rather in shillings or half-crowns than in pounds; and fivers were few and far between.

And even Aubrey Racke never had so many fivers as this. A heap of five-pound notes in a junior study was not merely an uncommon sight, it was unheard-of! It was astonishing! It was incredible! It made Manners and Lowther blink.

"Fivers!" repeated Monty Lowther blankly.

"How the dickens many?" asked Manners.

Tom glanced at his chums.

"How many? I don't know—five or six, I think," he answered.

Monty Lowther grinned.

"You don't know how many?" he asked. "If somebody sent me a fistful of fivers, I should count them."

"But who the dickens has sent you that stack of money, 'Tom'?" asked Manners. "You'd have the Housemaster on your track if he knew you

**Powerful New Yarn
of Tom Merry & Co.
of St. Jim's**

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

had all that tin! It's yards outside the limit."

"I knew there was a registered letter for you," went on Lowther. "But I never guessed it had a fortune in it. What the thump are you going to do with it, Tom?"

"I don't know, unless I chuck it on the fire!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I owe this to Silverson!" said Tom, between his teeth. "That cur has landed this on me."

His chums blinked at him.

There were six banknotes in the heap. The total sum was thirty pounds—such a sum, probably, as no junior at St. Jim's had ever possessed before. Any fellow who had received so magnificent a tip might have been expected to look pleased.

Tom did not look pleased. He looked savage and black and bitter.

"You owe this to Silverson?" repeated Manners.

"The cur—yes!" muttered Tom. "It's my old governess, Miss Fawcett, who's sent it—but it was due to him."

"Blessed if I make you out!" said Lowther. "I shouldn't call a man names if he got one of my jolly old relations to send me a fistful of fivers!"

"The rotten rascal!" breathed Tom.

"Don't you want that stack of tin?"

"Of course I don't!"

"Well, look here, I'll be pally, then, and take it off your hands!" suggested Monty. "I could find a use for it!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Tom Merry rose from the table. He gave the heap of banknotes a glare, but took no other notice of them.

"That worm!" he said. "That toad! If he hadn't squirmed into this school as a master, I'd go down now and punch his face."

Manners shut the door. Whatever else Tom's distant relative, James Silverson, was, he was a master at St. Jim's, and not to be punched.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"The toad!" he said. "This is the limit! You fellows know, as well as I do, that that worm is after old Miss Priscilla's money, and he has been scheming ever since he barged in here to get me into disgrace, and cut me out with my guardian. Now—"

"Well?" asked Manners.

Tom pointed to the banknotes on the table.

"Now it's come to that!" he said savagely.

"The brute has been on my track all this term—he's tried to make out that I crawl round the back doors of pubs, like Racke, or Cutts of the Fifth—he's tried to make out that I owe money to shady racing men. He's never been able to get away with it, but he's started so much talk that some mud was bound to stick. You fellows know that Railton and Linton have an eye on me—the pretects have, too. That plotting cur has made me into a dog with a bad name, and nobody would be surprised if I got bunked."

"That's ancient history," said Lowther. "What's the latest?"

"That is!" snapped Tom, with another gesture towards the banknotes. "He's made old Miss Priscilla think I'm in debt—with bookies, of course—"

"Oh!"

"He's as big a fool as rascal!" said Tom savagely. "He wants to disgrace me with her—"

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and he's succeeding in that; but he hasn't sense enough to understand such things as good faith and loyalty—he doesn't know that she would stick to me even if I turned out the rotter he's tried to make me out. But she would."

"But what—"

"Oh, read that letter!" said Tom. "Then you'll see!"

He grabbed a crumpled letter from his pocket and threw it to Manners.

His chums read it together; it was in the hand of old Miss Priscilla Fawcett.

The handwriting showed signs of an agitated hand, and the letter was much briefer than most epistles from the old lady at Laurel Villa, Huckleberry Heath.

"Darling Tommy,—I am so terribly distressed to think that you are in debt. Dear James has done his best to reassure me—but, reading between the lines, I can see only too clearly that he is distressed also, and very uneasy for you. Darling, I will not reproach you—I am so, so sure that you mean no harm, and have only been thoughtless. I am sending you some money in this letter to pay all you owe. If it is not sufficient, let me know at once. Dear James is so considerate of my feelings that he will tell me nothing; but I fear that you are in very great difficulties, my dearest boy. I shall be so, so glad, my darling, to hear that you have paid all your debts; and do, do try to keep clear of such things in future.

"Your loving guardian,

PRISCILLA FAWCETT."

"Twenty or thirty pounds!" said Tom, gritting his teeth. "What has that cur made her believe I've been up to? Backing horses right and left—owing money to bookies and billiard-sharpers—and instead of turning me down, as that fool and rogue expects, she weighs in with a heap of money! I'm not standing any more from Silverson! I'll—"

He made a step towards the door.

Manners promptly put his back to it.

"Chuck it, old man!" he said. "You can't row with a beak. Not even with a temporary beak, who's pushed in here to dish you. Keep cool!"

"The rotter!"

"By gum, he's a deep blighter!" said Lowther, glancing at the letter again. "Nobody would guess, from this letter, that he had been making a fool of that poor old soul—Miss Priscilla least of all! If you showed this letter to Railton, or Linton, he would only think that your dear relative, James, was worried about you."

"Don't I know it?" said Tom. "He's too deep for me. I can't keep my end up with a plotting cur like that! But I know what I'm going to do. I'm going down—"

"Not to Silverson!" said Manners hastily.

Tom gave a savage laugh.

"No! That's no good! I got six from Railton last time I cheeked him. What's the good of another row with Railton?"

"Well, I'm glad you can see that. But what—"

"I'm going to Railton," said Tom. "He's my Housemaster, and whether he thinks I'm a bad hat or not, he's got his duty to do. I'm going to take these banknotes to him."

Lowther whistled.

"It won't do you any good, Tom, to let it

come out that your guardian thinks you're deep in some rotten scrape," he said.

"I don't care! Railton's got to send this money back to Miss Fawcett. And if he's still fool enough to think that I owe money to bookies after that, he can think so, for all I care!"

And Tom Merry jammed the banknotes into his pocket, and tramped out of the study.

BUMPS FOR BAGGY!

"I SAY, Merry!"

"Oh, buzz off, and don't bother!" snapped Tom.

He was tramping across the study landing to the staircase, when Baggy Trimble butted in. He was in no mood to tolerate the fat Baggy. He tramped past Trimble of the Fourth.

But Baggy was not to be brushed aside in that brusque manner. Baggy of the Fourth had something to say, and he was going to say it. Baggy clutched at Tom's sleeve with a grubby paw, and jerked him to a halt.

"Look here, you know—" burred Trimble.

"Let go, you grubby ass!" grunted Tom. "I'm in a hurry! I've got to see Railton!"

"That's all very well," said Baggy Trimble. "Railton can wait. Perhaps you'd like me to come with you to Railton, and tell him that you've got something of mine, and won't give it to me? So I jolly well would, if it wasn't cigarettes!"

"You howling ass!" roared Tom.

"You can call a fellow names," hooted Trimble, "but you've got to give me my smokes back, and I can jolly well tell you so!"

A dozen fellows on the study landing sat up and took notice, so to speak, as they heard that Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 all looked round.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Is that fat gwampus off his wockah?"

"Somebody bagged your smokes, you unclean little sweep?" asked Jack Blake. "Let's boot him for having any!"

"Let's!" said Herries.

"Turn round, Trimble!" said Digby.

"Yah!" retorted Baggy. "Tom Merry had my smokes, and he's keeping them. I've offered him halves—"

"Is he wandewin' in his mind, Tom Mewwy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Tom gave an angry laugh.

"The fat chump bunged a packet of cigarettes on me the other day when a prefect was after him," he answered. "He got rid of them just in time, landing them on me. I chucked them in my study fire."

"Gammon!" said Baggy Trimble. "As if a chap would chuck away two dozen cigarettes—good ones, too! Cutts of the Fifth always has good smokes."

"Oh, my hat! Were they Cutts?" ejaculated Blake.

"Well, I found them in his study," admitted Baggy. "And Darrell of the Sixth spotted the packet in my hand, and got after me, and I had just time to pass them on to Tom Merry before I was copped. I trusted him," said Baggy sorrowfully, "and now he's keeping my smokes."

"I threw them into the fire!" roared Tom.

"Oh, come off!" said Trimble. "You did nothing of the kind! You're pretty keen on a smoke, from all I hear. But you can't have smoked the lot yet. I can't find them in your study."

"Let me catch you in my study!"

"Well, you won't catch me there again!" said Baggy. "I've looked for them there. I expect you've got them in your pocket."

"Tom Mewwy has told you that he threw them away, Twimble, you uttah ass!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"I don't think!" said Baggy. "Look here. Tom Merry! Are you going to give me back my smokes, or not?"

"I'll boot you if you say another word about it!"

"Well, if you want your watch back, you jolly well give me my smokes back!" said Baggy. "That's fair. Mind, I'm keeping your watch, so long as you keep my smokes!"

"You blithering grampus, my watch is in my pocket!"

"I don't mean that watch! I mean your other watch," said Baggy. "You jolly well know what watch I mean! The one you kept in your desk in your study."

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"The one I kept in my desk in my study," repeated Tom Merry blankly. "You benighted ass, I don't keep any watch in the desk in my study! I have only one watch, and I've got it in my pocket now."

Baggy Trimble chuckled.

"Hark at him!" he said. "That chap's called me a fibber more than once! Now hark at him!"

"I tell you—" roared Tom.

"You can tell me whoppers till you burst your crop!" said Baggy defiantly. "But I jolly well came on that watch in your desk when I was looking for my cigarettes there, and I jolly well bagged it to keep till you give me back my smokes. And I've put it in a safe place, too, and if you want it, you can have it when I have my cigarettes, and not before, so yah!"

"Mad, I suppose!" snapped Tom; and he pushed the fat Baggy out of the way, and went down the stairs.

Baggy spluttered with wrath.

"I say, what do you fellows think of that?" he gasped. "Bagging a chap's smokes and keeping them, and making out that he, chucked them in the fire, and then telling silly whoppers about his watch. As if I don't know whether I got it out of his desk or not. I jolly well know that he won't get it back till I get my smokes back, anyhow!"

"You blithering ass!" said Blake. "Tom
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Merry knows whether he had a watch in his desk or not."

"So do I, as I jolly well snooped it to keep till he gave me back my smokes," said Baggy. "I say, Blake, you call yourself captain of the Fourth. Well, if you're captain of the Fourth, you ought to make that Shell rotter give a chap back his smokes!"

"You won't get those smokes back if Tom Merry chucked them in his study fire," said Blake. "But you'll get something else for being a smoky, little fat swab! Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, I say—" roared Trimble in alarm, as Study No. 6 closed round him. "I say—leggo! I say—whoop!"

Bump!

"Oh jiminy!" roared Trimble.

The study landing almost shook as Baggy landed on it.

Bump!

"Stoppit!" roared Trimble.

"Give him another!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Baggy. "I say, chuck it! I say, I'll let Tom Merry keep my smokes if you chuck it!"

"Shut up, you ass!" called out Levison of the Fourth. "Here comes Silverson!"

Mr. James Silverson, the master of the Fourth, was coming up the stairs, perhaps drawn by Baggy's frantic roars.

Study No. 6 ceased to bump that fat youth on the landing. Baggy sat and bellowed.

"Oh! Oh jiminy! He can keep the smokes! Oh! Ow! I say—ow!"

Mr. Silverson stepped on the landing. Baggy's frantic roar died away at the sight of him. He scrambled to his feet, spluttering. Study No. 6 exchanged glances. James Silverson often heard things that were not intended for his ears. They suspected that he had heard Baggy's words as he was bumped.

"Trimble!" said Mr. Silverson, his sharp eyes fixed on Baggy's dismayed fat face.

"Y-e-s, sir!" mumbled Baggy.

"I heard what you said, Trimble! What do you mean by Tom Merry keeping your smokes?"

"Oh!" gasped Baggy. "N-n-nothing, sir! N-n-not a thing, sir! I—I never had any smokes, and Tom Merry never bagged them from me, and—"

"Tell the truth at once, Trimble!" rapped Mr. Silverson.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Baggy.

"You had cigarettes in your possession?" demanded the new master of the Fourth Form.

"I—I—I found them, sir!" stammered Baggy.

"I—I—I just happened to—to find a packet of cigarettes, sir. I—I never smoked any—"

"Did Merry of the Shell take them from you?"

"He—he's got them, sir," mumbled Baggy.

"I understand," said Mr. Silverson grimly. "And Merry has not returned them to you? He had these cigarettes from you, and has kept them?"

"He—he wouldn't give them back to me, sir."

"Then they are still in his possession?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Tom Mewwy threw them into the fish, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

James Silverson's sharp eyes shot round at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Did you see him do so, D'Arcy?" he asked.

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"Oh, no, sir! I nevah knew anythin' about it!"

"Then how do you know that he did so?"

"I heard him tell Twimble so, sir, a few minutes ago."

"You utterly stupid boy, take a hundred lines for talking nonsense to me!" snapped Mr. Silverson.

"Bai Jove!"

Mr. Silverson went down the staircase again. The fellows on the landing gave Baggy expressive looks.

"You burbling toad!" said Blake. "You've given that rat another chance at Tom Merry with your burbling! Bet you he's gone straight to Linton about this!"

"Yaas wathah, the wottah!"

"It isn't my fault!" snorted Baggy. "Tom Merry shouldn't have kept my smokes! If his beak makes him hand them over, I shan't get them back at all now! I jolly well think—"

"Boot him!" said Blake.

"Oh! Ow! Stoppit! Wow!" roared Trimble, and he bolted up the Fourth Form passage with four boots lunging after him.

A SURPRISE FOR RAILTON!

MR. RAILTON, Housemaster of the School House, glanced up as a tap sounded on his study door.

"Come in!" he said.

Tom Merry came in.

The Housemaster frowned a little as his eyes fixed on the captain of the Shell. Tom was not in his Housemaster's good graces that term; and, at the present moment, he did not look exactly as a fellow ought to have looked entering a Housemaster's study. Fellows were not expected to call on beaks with knitted brows and set lips and a look of barely keeping an angry temper in check!

"Well?" said Mr. Railton coldly. "What is it, Merry?"

"This, sir!" answered Tom.

He groped in his pocket and drew out six crumpled five-pound notes, which he laid on the Housemaster's table, under Railton's astonished eyes.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Where did you get all this money, Merry? This is far beyond the amount that any boy at this school is allowed to have. Where did you obtain this?"

"I received it in a registered letter to-day, sir," answered Tom. "It was sent me by my guardian, Miss Fawcett."

"For some special reason?"

"Yes, sir—to pay gambling debts!" said Tom bitterly. "To settle up with swindling racing-men."

The School House master almost bounded out of his chair.

"Merry," he exclaimed, "what do you mean? What—"

"I mean, sir, that Miss Fawcett has been made to believe that I am in debt, and has sent me this money to get clear. As I'm not in debt and owe nobody anything—except a half-crown to Manners—I don't want or need this money, and I want you to send it back to my guardian, with a letter explaining that nothing of the kind is the case."

Mr. Railton looked at the banknotes and looked at Tom Merry's flushed and angry face.

All through that term there had been rumours about Tom Merry. Actual accusations, when they had been made, had never been proved. But there was a vague impression about that there was no smoke without fire, and that Tom Merry was a fellow who required to have the official eye kept on him.

But if Tom was in difficulties, owing to disreputable actions outside the school, this did not look like it.

A fellow who backed horses and owed money to racing men was hardly the fellow to hand over thirty pounds in a lump sum, about which he need have said nothing had he not chosen to do so.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Railton at last. "If the matter is as you state, Merry, I am extremely glad to hear it!"

"If!" repeated Tom. "I understand, sir! You don't think you can take my word. You would have taken it last term."

"You appear to have changed very considerably since last term, Merry, and not for the better!" said the Housemaster dryly. "But your present action, at all events, clears my mind of some very disagreeable doubts."

Tom's lip curled.

"You don't believe that I should bring this money to you, sir, if I was being dunned by racing men from the Black Bull in Wayland?" he said sarcastically.

"I do not; but you must not speak to me in that tone, Merry!" said the Housemaster quietly. "You desire me to return this sum of money—thirty pounds—to Miss Fawcett?"

"Yes, sir. And I want you to tell her that there is nothing for her to worry about—that I am not in debt, and never have been. It's no good my telling her so—but she will understand when you tell her."

Mr. Railton looked at him very keenly.

"Miss Fawcett must have supposed that you were in very great difficulties, Merry, to send you such a sum as this," he said slowly.

"I know, sir! She's been made to suppose so," said Tom.

The Housemaster started a little.

"Your guardian has written to me more than once, Merry," he said sternly. "In answer to her anxious inquiries, I could only tell her the facts—that your conduct this term has been far from satisfactory."

"Oh, I know!" said Tom bitterly.

"If you are alluding to your relative, Mr. Silverson," said the Housemaster, with increasing sternness, "this is not the first time you have given me such a hint! I am aware that there is personal dislike between you—at least, on your side—"

"Plenty of it!" said Tom. "I think I've reason, too! I should never have been in trouble this term if Mr. Silverson had not come to St. Jim's."

"That is mere absurdity, Merry, founded upon a personal antipathy," said Mr. Railton. "You appear to me to dislike your relative and to have set yourself in every way to treat him with disrespect. Your Form-master, Mr. Linton, has punished you for this—on more than one occasion—I myself have done so.

"However"—he glanced at the banknotes again—"by handing this money over to me, Merry, to be returned to your guardian, you certainly have cleared yourself of the suspicion of being in debt outside the school. Miss

Fawcett appears to have taken a somewhat exaggerated view of what she may have heard."

He paused a moment.

"I shall return this money to her," he went on, "and I shall accompany it with a letter, explaining that you have handed it over to me of your own free will, having no need of it—and I am sure that that will clear Miss Fawcett's mind of any doubts on that subject. This has relieved my mind very much, Merry; I am extremely glad that you have taken this step."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

And he left the study.

Mr. Railton was left in a very thoughtful mood. He had had his doubts about Tom Merry, doubts that had grown as the term advanced. But the little heap of banknotes on the table answered those doubts.

Obviously, no fellow in money troubles—especially money troubles that he dared not make known—would have taken the step that Tom Merry had just taken. That was unthinkable. Equally obviously, no fellow with a fancy for spending money in forbidden ways would have parted with such a sum of his own accord. Tom, clearly, was satisfied with his usual allowance of pocket-money; he owed nothing, and had no unusual or secret expenses.

It was a relief to the Housemaster's mind.

It would not have been a relief to James Silverson if he had known.

But James did not know—he was blissfully unconscious of the actual effect of his specious letters to Miss Priscilla, and was quite unaware that the latest outcome of his cunning scheming had been to enable Tom Merry to clear himself of the suspicion James had laboured so long and so industriously to put upon him!

LINTON WANTS TO KNOW!

"MERRY!"

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was standing in his doorway when Tom left his Housemaster's study. He called to Tom as he came out.

"Yes, sir!"

Tom caught sight of Mr. Silverson, farther up the passage, going into his own study. Evidently, James had just been speaking to the master of the Shell.

Tom, with a glint in his eyes, wondered what was coming now. It was plain enough that Silverson had reported him to his Form-master once more—on what account he could not guess.

Mr. Linton scanned Tom's face keenly and sharply. Like the Housemaster, he had his doubts that term about that member of his Form. At the same time, he was tired of hearing James on the subject of Tom Merry, and he had made that fact plain to the master of the Fourth.

"What is it now, sir?" asked Tom, with a stress on the word "now." He was in far too angry a mood to care how he put it.

Mr. Linton set his lips a little.

"Have you any cigarettes in your possession, Merry?" he asked sharply—the sharpness brought into his voice entirely by Tom's sarcastic tone.

"No, sir. If Mr. Silverson has told you so, he is making one more of his mistakes," said Tom coolly.

"Have you had cigarettes in your possession at all this week?"

Tom paused and coloured.

He would have answered "No" without even thinking, but for his recent encounter with Baggy Trimble on the study landing. That had reminded him of the fat and fatheaded Baggy's smokes, which had been in his keeping, if not in his possession, for ten minutes or so.

"Answer me at once, Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"No, sir, I haven't!" answered Tom.

But his brief hesitation had not passed without notice, and the face of his Form-master set sternly.

"Have you taken a packet of cigarettes from a Fourth Form boy, Merry?" asked the master of the Shell.

Tom Merry laughed. That question showed him that James had somehow nosed out the affair of Baggy's smokes. He had, of course, taken it at once to Mr. Linton in a garbled form, whether intentionally garbled or not.

"This is not a laughing matter, Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Linton angrily. "How dare you laugh when I ask you a question!"

"Isn't it, sir?" said Tom. "I should have thought that it was. Mr. Silverson should make sure of his facts before he reports a fellow to his Form-master."

"You have not answered my question!" snapped the master of the Shell. "Give me a direct answer. Have you, or have you not, taken a packet of cigarettes from a boy in the Fourth Form?"

"No!"

Tom Merry most certainly had not taken that packet from Baggy. Baggy had shoved it into his hand to get rid of it before Tom even knew what it was. James had either misunderstood what he had nosed out, or misrepresented it—he was equally liable to do either.

"Take care what you say, Merry," said Mr. Linton. "Mr. Silverson informs me that a packet of cigarettes was taken from a boy in his Form, who found it, and that it was taken by you."

"Does he, sir?" said Tom indifferently.

"He does!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"Is that all, sir?"

"What do you mean, Merry—is that all?" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"I mean, if that's all, can I go?" asked Tom coolly.

Mr. Linton looked at him long and hard. His expression showed that he was strongly inclined to order the captain of his Form to step into the study, there to take six. But he checked that inclination.

He had, as a matter of fact, had so many unsubstantiated reports from James that he was getting very doubtful of the accuracy of any report from that new member of the staff. And if James had discovered another mare's nest, there was some excuse for the junior's contemptuous indifference.

"Do you mean that Mr. Silverson has made a mistake, Merry?" he asked, very quietly. "Do you mean that there was no question of a packet of cigarettes at all, and that no such thing came into your hands?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then what do you mean?"

Tom paused again. He had nothing to hide on his own account, but he did not want to land Trimble in trouble. He had booted Baggy for planting that packet of smokes on him, but he did not want to give him away. Fortunately

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Mr. Linton was quite keen enough to see the cause of his hesitation.

"You may speak frankly, Merry," he said. "I shall not repeat your answer to Mr. Silverson in respect of any member of his Form."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom. "It's quite simple. A Fourth Form fellow bunged that packet on me because a prefect was after him. I never knew what it was till it was in my hand."

"I think I see. But the point is, did you return it? With the Fourth Form boy, and what he intended to do with it, I have no concern; but you are a boy in my Form, and you must tell me—"

"I did not return it, sir," answered Tom. "If you wish to know exactly what I did—"

"I am waiting to hear."

"Very well, sir. I booted the silly ass round the study landing for his cheek in bunging his filthy smokes on me!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And then went to my study and chucked them into the fire," concluded Tom.

Mr. Linton stared at him.

"The fellow's such a silly chump that he doesn't believe that I did so," added Tom. "He keeps on asking me for his silly smokes back, and I keep on telling him that I chucked them in the study fire. That's all, sir."

Mr. Linton smiled.

"Very well, Merry. I am glad the explanation of this incident is so simple," he said. "You may go, my boy."

Tom Merry departed. Mr. Linton stepped along to the Fourth Form master's study and glanced in at James.

James had a rather expectant expression on his face. But it faded away as Mr. Linton spoke in a tone of dry sarcasm.

"You will be glad to hear, Mr. Silverson, that Merry has explained the matter you mentioned to me to my complete satisfaction," he said. "As Merry is your relative I am sure you will be glad to hear this."

And without waiting for a reply the master of the Shell walked back to his own study. He left James looking anything but glad.

MYSTERIOUS!

"WOTTAH!"

"What?"

"Wat!"

"Eh?"

"Wapscaillon!"

Tom Merry and Manners fairly jumped as they heard that voice from Study No. 10 in the Shell.

They had come up to the study to tea, and as Tom turned the door handle he found that the door did not open. Somebody inside had a foot against it.

Naturally, they supposed at first that it was Monty Lowther; but when that voice came from within they did not, of course, suppose that it was Monty. Only one fellow in the School House spoke with that remarkable accent, and that fellow was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form.

"D'Arcy, you howling ass!" exclaimed Tom.

"Wats, you wottah!"

"What is the mad ass burbling about?" exclaimed Manners, in astonishment. "What's he doing in our study? Gussy, you cuckoo—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Open that door!"

"Wats, you wotten wapscaillon!"

"Right off his rocker!" said Tom Merry, in

EVERY WEDNESDAY

wonder. "What the thump are you calling your old pals names for, Gussy?"

"I regard you as a wottah, Tom Mewwy!"

"Well, my hat, this beats it!" said Tom. "Anyway, we're coming into the study. Shove, Manners!"

The two Shell fellows shoved together at the door. Up to that moment it had been blocked by a foot within. But that foot, it seemed, had now been withdrawn; for as they shoved together the door flew open so suddenly that the two of them went in headlong, stumbled over, and landed on their hands and knees.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Ooogh!" spluttered Manners.

They bounded up and glared round for Arthur Augustus. Whatever was the cause of that elegant youth's mysterious antics, they were prepared to reward him with a bumping on the study floor.

But, to their surprise, the swell of St. Jim's was not to be seen. Monty Lowther stood there with a grinning face, but he seemed to be the only fellow in the study.

"Hallo!" said Lowther genially. "That a new way of coming into a study?"

"Where's that silly ass?" exclaimed Tom.

"Where's that goat Gussy?" roared Manners.

"Gussy! Is he here?" asked Lowther.

"Don't be an ass!" hooted Tom. "You must have seen him here, as he was holding the door shut a minute ago, and gabbling through it."

"Was he?" asked Monty.

"Don't you know he was, fathead?"

"No; I never saw him."

"You never saw him!" yelled Manners. "Blind?"

"Not at all. If he's here, where is he?" asked Lowther. "Blessed if I knew Gussy was in the study! Where is he?"

"Oh, don't be a goat!" said Manners. "You know he's here as well as we do! Where is the silly goat hiding himself? Come out, D'Arcy! I'm going to boot you!"

"Bet you he's not here!" said Lowther.

"Oh, chuck it, ass! Where are you, Gussy, you goat?"

Tom Merry and Manners looked round the study.

There was not much room in a junior study for a fellow to hide out of sight. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy certainly was not to be seen.

They looked under the table and behind the old, tattered screen in the corner, then into the study cupboard. Then they stared at one another in amazement.

"Where the dickens is he?" exclaimed Manners.

"Lowther, you grinning goat, where is that ass D'Arcy?"

"I believe he's gone over to Wayland," answered Lowther.

"Don't talk rot!"

"Well, you asked me."

"You know he's here, fathead!"

"I jolly well don't!" said Monty. "I jolly well know that I saw Railton give him a lift in his car half an hour ago. Railton's driving over to Wayland, and Gussy had the nerve to ask him for a lift because the roads are muddy, and Railton fell for it."

"He was here a minute ago!" yelled Manners.

"I hardly think so."

"Idiot!"

"Well, I'll help you look," said Monty Lowther.

He put his head round the old screen in the corner. "Anybody here?"

"We've looked there," said Tom. "Oh, my hat!" he added in a yell of astonishment, as a voice came from behind the screen:

"You wottah, Lowthah! Wun away!"

"He's there!" gasped Manners.

"We never saw him," said Tom.

"Well, he's there!"

Monty Lowther stepped back from the screen. Tom Merry and Manners grasped it together and whirled it out of the corner.

They fully expected to see the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy revealed, having heard his voice. They fairly goggled into an empty corner. No one was there!

"Where——" gasped Tom.

"How——" stuttered Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Monty Lowther. The funny man of the Shell seemed doubled up with merriment.

"What's the joke, you gurgling ass?" exclaimed Manners.

"You are, old bean!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Where's D'Arcy?"

"I've told you."

"Oh, dry up, idiot! Where the thump is that blithering ass? Is this study haunted, or what?"

Tom and Manners stood staring into the empty corner, Lowther grinning behind them. Suddenly behind them came that well-known voice again:

"You uttah asses!"

Tom and Manners spun round like two humming-tops. But they did not see Arthur Augustus behind them. They saw only Monty Lowther.

Then suddenly it dawned on them.

"You funny ass!" roared Tom Merry

"You——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Monty.

"You!" roared Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha! Weally, you uttah asses, you might have tumbled to it befoah, you know, if you had the bwains of a bunnay wabbit!" said Monty, in a remarkable imitation of the delightful accent of the swell of St. Jim's. "Weally, you know, you are a pair of feahful fatheads!"

"Bump him!" said Manners. "He's too funny! Bump him!"

Monty Lowther backed round the study table.

"Peace, my infants!" he said soothingly. "It's a jape—a jape on the Worm! I've been practising for an hour or more, and when you fellows came up I thought I would try it on you. Trying it on the dog, you know! Did I take you in?"

"You did, you potty ass!" said Tom Merry.

"We thought it was Gussy in the study. Shouldn't have thought you could do it."

"Well, farmyard imitations like that need brains!" remarked Lowther modestly.

"Yes; that's why I should never have guessed it was you."

"Look here, you silly ass——"

"But what's the idea?" demanded Manners.

"How can you jape Silverson by imitating Gussy's burble?"

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Now I know I've got it all right, it's as easy as falling off a form," he answered. "Railton's gone to Wayland, and a fellow could drop into his study and use his telephone."

"Well?"

"Well, Silverson gets a call—in the voice of the one and only. He's slanged right and left—wottah and wascal and wapsallion—see?"

"You unspeakable idiot! He will take poor

old Gussy's skin off for it if he thinks it was Gussy! Gussy's in his Form."

"No, he won't," grinned Lowther, "because it will happen while Gussy's gone to Wayland with Railton, our beloved Housemaster—a witness that Gussy was not the man that did it, and couldn't have."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

"The Worm's always making mistakes, accusing the wrong chap," said Monty. "Now he's going to make another—and make a fool of himself, as per usual! He will be looking for Gussy with his biggest cane, in his worst temper, with Railton to prove that Gussy never did it—after the Worm's made a proper idiot of himself. Railton will know whether Gussy's phoned or not."

"But—"

Monty Lowther looked at his watch.

"No time for butting!" he said. "It's half-past five, and Gussy will be back at six—that's the time Railton's car comes back, and Gussy will be in it. I've got to get through before Gussy blows in."

"But—"

"You fellows can get tea ready. I'll be back in ten minutes or so," said Monty Lowther cheerily; and he faded out of Study No. 10, deaf to argument on the subject of his latest stunt for a jape on Silverson.

SLANGING SILVERSON!

JAMES SILVERSON gave a grunt as the telephone-bell rang in his study.

James was seated in his armchair—Mr. Lathom's old armchair—smoking cigarettes, one after another, at a great rate. James had some thinking to do, and he fancied that he did it better if he smoked the while.

If smoking was an aid to thinking James ought to have solved his problem, for sixteen or seventeen fag-ends lay in his fender, and the study was quite hazy with smoke.

But the expression on his face did not indicate that he was satisfied with the result of his reflections.

James was, in fact, worried and disgruntled. He was waiting for news that seemed never coming.

His deepest, darkest scheme had been laid, which could not, as far as James could see, fail. It was certain, absolutely certain, to end in Tom Merry's disgrace—in his being driven from his school in ignominy. But the success of that scheme depended on action by others, and the others so far had not played up, as it were.

Secretly, unseen and unsuspected, James had abstracted from Mr. Linton's study the wrist-watch which Linton had laid aside, owing to the strap having broken and the glass having cracked as it fell. And within ten minutes of having done so he had contrived to send Tom Merry to his Form-master's study—for Mr. Linton to find the captain of the Shell waiting for him there.

What would Linton think when he missed the watch, especially in view of the rumours that were about of Tom Merry's dealings with shady characters outside the school, of his owing money to a betting man?

In the dark hours of the night James had hidden that purloined watch in Tom Merry's study—No. 10 in the Shell.

There it lay, unknown to the owners of the study.

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It was waiting to be found.

All that was necessary was for Mr. Linton to miss it, to guess that it had been stolen, to suspect that Tom Merry had taken it while he was in the study that Tuesday afternoon—and to find it hidden in Tom Merry's desk.

It was James' best, as well as his worst scheme.

But it did not seem to get into action somehow. Mr. Linton had missed that watch; but, instead of supposing that it had been stolen, as James expected, he merely thought that he had mislaid it.

Not until he came to make a serious search for it was he likely to get it into his head that it was no longer in his study.

In the meantime, there was danger, if there was too much delay, of the hidden watch coming to light. Suppose Tom Merry, for instance, had a fancy for turning out the lumber in that desk and found it?

It was not likely, but it might happen.

James had banked on Linton taking action on Wednesday at the latest. Now it was Thursday, and nothing had happened.

Really, it was fearfully annoying to a schemer who put so much brainwork into his schemes.

James, if he had missed a watch, would have jumped to it at once that the article had been stolen. That was the sort of man James was. It was quite disconcerting to find that Mr. Linton, on whose actions it all depended, was quite another sort of man.

James was trying to think out how he could give Linton a push to get on with it without revealing his own interest in the matter—which, of course, James had to keep very dark.

But it was not easy. On Wednesday afternoon he had offered to take the broken watch to be repaired as he was going over to Wayland. That had merely caused Mr. Linton to notice that it was no longer in sight, but had not in the least caused him to suppose that it was actually missing.

James realised that it would be injudicious to refer to that watch again. He had to wait.

But if he had to wait too long the whole thing might come to nothing. It was disconcerting and exasperating.

The buzz of the telephone-bell interrupted James Silverson's annoyed and disgruntled reflections.

He gave a grunt, turned to the instrument, and jerked off the receiver.

"Well?" he grunted.

"Is that Silverson?" came a voice over the wires.

The master of the Fourth started.

He knew that voice—or, at least, that remarkable accent—and he wondered what on earth D'Arcy of his Form could be ringing him up for. And his eyes glinted at the junior's nerve in addressing him as "Silverson."

"Yes!" he snapped. "What—"

"You wotah!"

"Wha-a-t?"

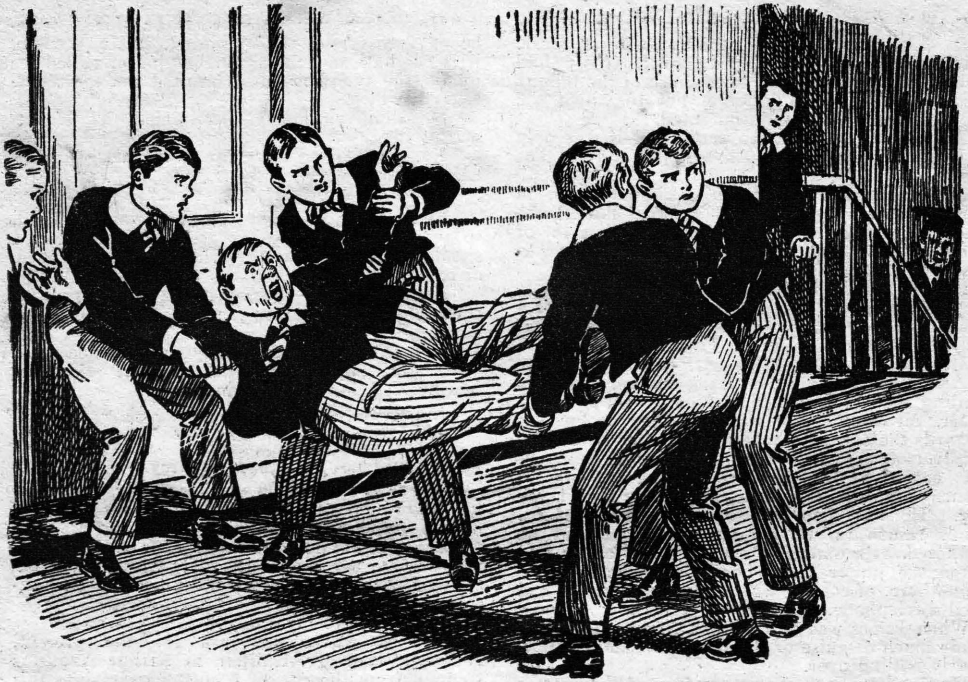
"You wat!"

"D'Arcy—"

"You disreputable wapsallion!"

James Silverson sat clutching the telephone and glaring at it in mingled amazement and rage.

He was aware of the feelings in the Fourth Form towards him. He knew that the whole Form, School House and New House alike, loathed him and longed for Mr. Lathom, their old Form-master, to come back. And he knew



“Yow-ow-ow-ow!” roared Baggy. “I say, I’ll let Tom Merry keep my smokes if you chuck it!” “Shut up, you ass!” called out Levison. “Here comes Silverson!”

that every fellow in the Form would have liked to slang him.

But he had never supposed that any fellow would venture to do it. He was utterly amazed.

“Are you there, you wat?” went on the voice over the wires. “Can you hear me, you wascally wapscallion?”

“You impertinent young scoundrel!” James fairly roared into the transmitter. “D’Arcy, come to my study at once!”

“Wats!”

“I shall come you—”

“Wubbish!”

“You young rascal, do you think I do not know who is speaking?”

“I am quite suah you don’t, you wascally wottah! You haven’t bwains enough to guess, you wat!”

James gasped with rage.

He understood—or thought he did. The young rascal was slanging him over the telephone, fancying that, as he could not be seen, he would not be known. Any other fellow, perhaps, could have got by with it, but not D’Arcy. D’Arcy’s aristocratic accent gave him away right on the spot!

“I wefuse to come to your stunday, you wat!” went on the voice. “You are not my Form-mastah, you wapscallion, and I wefuse to take the slightest notice of your ordahs, Silvahson!”

“You—you young imbecile!” gasped James.

“I know you—”

“Wats!”

“I—I—I will—”

“I wegard you as an uttah wottah, Silvahson! I wegard you as a wank outsidersah! I despise you feahfully!”

James almost foamed over the telephone.

“If Dr. Holmes knew what a wottah you are, you wat, you would be booted out of the coll! You are a disgwace to the school, you wascally wat!”

“D’Arcy! I—I—you shall be flogged—expelled!” gasped James.

“Wubbish! I have wung you up, Silvahson, to tell you what ewery fellow in the House thinks of you! Wottah! Wat! Wascal! Wapscallion!”

James panted. Whether this call came from one of the school telephones or from an instrument outside the school, he did not know, but he knew that it came from Arthur Augustus D’Arcy of his Form. On that point, of course, James had not the slightest doubt.

“Wottah! Wat! Disweputable wagamuffin!”

Bang!

James Silverson banged the receiver back with a bang that almost cracked it. Then he leaped to his feet, grabbed a cane from his table, and rushed out of the study—to look for Arthur Augustus!

WHOSE VOICE?

“HERE comes the one and only!”

A little crowd had gathered outside the School House to watch Mr. Railton drive in in his car. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were there, with Blake, Herries, and Digby, Levison, Clive, and Cardew, and several other fellows. They were all smiling.

Arthur Augustus D’Arcy sat in the little two seater with the Housemaster, bright and cheery.

Gussy had wanted to go over to Wayland after class to call for a war map he had ordered there. As Mr. Railton was driving over, Gussy had politely requested a lift—which most of the fellows regarded as a fearful nerve, but to which the Housemaster had kindly consented.

He had to pass the bookshop, and it was only a minute's work for Gussy to step out and get that map.

Gussy, happy in possession of his new map, on which he was going to chronicle the Boche disasters, as fast as they happened, with a lot of little coloured flags, had no idea that a storm was waiting him on his return to the school.

He noticed Mr. Silverson standing on the House steps, and noticed that he looked as pleasant as a thunderstorm, but otherwise he took no special notice of the master of the Fourth.

Mr. Railton stopped the car, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy bestowing an answering smile on a dozen smiling faces that looked at him.

Mr. Silverson's face was unsmiling as he shot towards the car. He hardly waited for it to stop.

Silverson had discovered that Arthur Augustus was out of gates. He was waiting for him to return—his rage, like wine, improving with keeping. He was surprised to see the swell of St. Jim's return in the Housemaster's car, but he supposed, as a matter of course, that Railton had given the junior a lift home from somewhere—somewhere, of course, where the young rascal had used a telephone.

When James was in a furious temper he seldom made much disguise of the fact. And he was now nearly boiling over.

Mr. Railton gave the angry face of the master of the Fourth a glance of cold disapproval.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Silverson?" he asked in a tone that implied that Mr. Silverson would do well to pay a little more regard to appearances before a crowd of juniors.

"Yes, sir!" gasped James. Even in speaking to the Housemaster he could scarcely check his rage. "That young rascal—"

"What?"

"That impertinent young rascal D'Arcy—"

James almost choked.

"Bai Jove! Are you alludin' to me, Mr. Silvahson?" asked Arthur Augustus in surprise.

"Pway what have I done?"

"Come to my study! Come to my study at once! I—"

"Weally, sir—"

"Please moderate your tone a little, Mr. Silverson!" said the Housemaster icily. "A number of junior boys are within hearing. Kindly tell me what is D'Arcy's offence: I really fail to see what he can have done as he has been absent from the school in my company."

"I will tell you, sir!" gasped James. "I have been insulted—outrageously insulted, sir, by that insolent boy!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Less than half an hour ago, sir, that young rascal rang me up on the telephone and recited a string of insulting epithets."

"D'Arcy did?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, in astonishment.

"He did! I will not repeat what he called me, sir—a string of the most outrageous and insulting names!"

"Bai Jove! I think you must be dweamin', sir!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, in bewilderment. "I have not spoken to you on the telephone at all, sir."

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"How dare you utter such barefaced falsehoods?" Silverson almost roared. "Mr. Railton, it is not half an hour since that junior called me up on the telephone and insulted me most outrageously!"

"Not half an hour?" exclaimed the Housemaster blankly.

"No, sir. I was rung up in my study barely half an hour ago—"

"Not by D'Arcy, Mr. Silverson."

"Yes, sir, by D'Arcy! The boy was so stupid, so insensate, that he appeared to fancy that I should not know that it was he! I knew at once, of course."

"But I nevah—" gasped Arthur Augustus, staring at Mr. Silverson from the car. "I weally nevah—"

"Silence! Follow me to my study at once!"

Mr. Railton stepped from the car. His face was puzzled and rather grim.

"There is some mistake here, Mr. Silverson," he said.

"There is no mistake, sir."

"It could not have been D'Arcy."

"It was D'Arcy! Do you think, sir, that I do not know his voice, with its ridiculous accent?" hooted James.

"Bai Jove! You have no wight to chawactewise my accent as widiculous, Mr. Silvahson!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I considah—"

"Follow me to my study!"

"Remain where you are for the present, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton, as Arthur Augustus stepped from the car. "I must inquire into this extraordinary mistake."

"Yaas, sir."

"Mr. Railton," James panted, "kindly do not interfere between me and this boy of my Form!"

It was James' game when he was cool to "keep in" with the members of the staff, especially the Housemaster. But, as often happened, his bitter and evil temper was too much for his caution.

He had waited for D'Arcy to come in, growing more and more savagely enraged every minute that he waited. He was simply yearning to handle his cane on the junior who had slanged him.

Now the junior at last had come in. Even the Housemaster was not to be allowed to step between him and the victim of his wrath.

"Follow me, D'Arcy!" he panted.

"Weally, Mr. Silvahson—"

"At once!" hooted James.

"Mr. Wailton has told me to wemain heah, sir," said Arthur Augustus calmly.

"Really, Mr. Silverson, I think you forget yourself a little!" exclaimed Mr. Railton sharply.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged blissful grins.

More and more fellows were gathering round, staring on at this strange scene—a crowd of Fourth and Shell, and some of the Fifth. Figgins & Co. came cutting over from the New House.

Many of the fellows exchanged sarcastic looks, expressive of what they thought of a master who could not control his temper in public.

"Bargee!" whispered Figgins to Kerr and Wynn. Figgins did not allow his Form-master to hear that whisper.

"I repeat, sir, that D'Arcy insulted me on the telephone, and I insist upon punishing him immediately—immediately, sir!" panted James.

"If D'Arcy has done anything of the kind he shall certainly be punished with sufficient

severity!" said the Housemaster. "But it is quite clear to me that a mistake has been made, and that he has done nothing of the sort."

"I have told you what happened, sir."

"There is a mistake—"

"There is no mistake!" James almost roared. "Do you suppose that I could mistake that boy's voice?"

"Certainly it seems very odd," said Mr. Railton, looking puzzled. "But it is perfectly certain that you have done so, Mr. Silverson. You say that this talk on the telephone occurred about half an hour ago?"

"Barely half an hour, sir."

"D'Arcy left the school in my car more than an hour ago, Mr. Silverson. He has been in the car ever since, except for a couple of minutes when he stepped down at the bookshop to collect a parcel."

"Wha-at?"

"He has been in my presence—under my eyes—the whole time. Most certainly he has not used a telephone."

James Silverson blinked.

He was utterly taken aback.

That it was D'Arcy, with his delightfully distinctive accent, who had phoned him he had never dreamed of doubting for a moment. Now he knew that it was impossible—that it could not have been D'Arcy.

"I—I—I do not understand this, sir!" stammered James, his face crimson with rage and mortification. "If you are sure—"

"I am perfectly sure, Mr. Silverson," said the Housemaster coldly. "Whoever may have telephoned to you, it certainly was not D'Arcy, and could not have been."

"But—but—but his voice, sir! I—I knew his voice!" James almost babbled, so confused and taken aback was he. "I—I—I knew—"

"It was not D'Arcy's voice you heard, Mr. Silverson. And it is very fortunate," said Mr. Railton, with a stern note in his voice, "that D'Arcy was in my presence at the time, or it appears that you would have administered a severe and totally unjust punishment."

"Weally, sir, I assuah you that this is the first I have heard of it!" said Arthur Augustus, in wonder.

But Mr. Silverson did not need that assurance. He knew now that he had been mistaken and was on the wrong track.

"On another occasion, Mr. Silverson, I recommend you to make some investigation before resorting to punishment!" said the Housemaster icily.

"I—I certainly thought—I believed—" James broke off. "I—I have been deceived, deluded. I think I understand now. Someone must have imitated D'Arcy's voice—a very easy trick."

"Bai Jove!"

"That is possibly the explanation," said Mr. Railton. "It is clear, at all events, that D'Arcy was not concerned in the matter."

"No!" James' voice came hoarse with rage. "No! A trick, of course—an impudent trick!" He swung round at the group of juniors, his face flaming, his eyes blazing at the captain of the Shell. "Merry, you—"

He choked with rage.

Tom raised his eyebrows.

"What have I done, please?" he asked cheerfully. "It seems that I do everything that ever is done! But what have I done now?"

"It was you—you who played this trick!" panted James.

"Mr. Silverson!" The Housemaster broke in sharply. "You forget yourself, sir! I insist upon your saying nothing further! I will not permit these wild and groundless accusations to be made! Say no more, sir!"

James gave him a look. He was so enraged that a torrent of fierce words trembled on his lips. But a remaining spot of common sense made him check that torrent. Without another word, he strode into the House, leaving a crowd of fellows grinning at one another.

Mr. Railton, frowning, stepped into the car again, to drive it round to the garage. There was a buzz of chuckling among the juniors.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus, greatly puzzled. "Bai Jove, you know, this is weally vevy queeah! Do you fellows weally think that some chap may have imitated my voice on the telephone?"

"Yaas, wathah!" answered Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the crowd of fellows yelled.

SUSPECTED!

"LINTON'S shirty!" murmured Monty Lowther, when the Shell went into their Form-room the following morning.

"What's up?"

Nobody knew.

But all the Shell noticed that their Form-master was not quite in his usual mood.

Mr. Linton did not look exactly "shirty," as Lowther described it. He was unusually grave, there was a deep line of thought in his brow, and it was clear to the most casual glance that he was disturbed.

Something was wrong somewhere.

But if any fellow in the Shell was to be called over the coals Linton did not seem in a hurry to get on with it. Lessons proceeded as usual in the Form-room.

Aubrey Racke and Gerald Crooke exchanged rather uneasy glances. They wondered whether that grim gravity in Linton's face was caused by some discovery of their many delinquencies.

But they were relieved by finding that the master of the Shell gave them no special attention. His glance did not rest on them, but many times it turned to another member of the Form. That member was Tom Merry.

From which the Black sheep of the Shell drew comfort. It was Tom Merry who was in the Form-master's mind—Tom who was "for it" again.

The other fellows noticed it, too, and wondered what was Tom's latest. He had been in trouble so often that term that no one was surprised to see trouble looming on the horizon again.

Tom himself noticed it at last, catching his Form-master's eyes fixed on him with a curious intendment. A flush of anger came into his face, and a sullen look, very unusual there.

Something was coming, and he had no doubt, not the slightest, that it came, in some underhand way, from James Silverson.

That was a little perplexing, too, for of late Mr. Linton had shown more and more annoyance at Silverson's continual harping on the string of Tom Merry and his misdeeds. Once he had actually asked the temporary master of the Fourth to mind his own business. Many times he had snubbed him severely. Tom realised that if this new trouble came from James he must

have been very circumspect about it and played his game with unusual cunning.

Yet from whom else could it come?

Tom, so far as he was aware, was guilty of no fault. He had done nothing. Skylarking in the passages, rags with the New House men, were not serious enough to bring that look to Linton's face, or to cause him to fix his eyes on Tom with that peculiar penetrating gaze.

It was something serious this time. But what? It was not till the Form were dismissed in break that Tom learned. He half-expected what came then—an order to stay behind when the Form went out.

"Please remain, Merry!" said Mr. Linton.

Manners and Lowther looked anxiously at their chum as they went out with the rest of the Shell. Manners' look was almost beseeching.

He could read that black look on Tom's face, and he dreaded what his chum might answer when some new accusation came. Cheeking Linton could only make matters worse, not better.

But Tom did not heed that look.

His face was flushed and his eyes glinting as he stood before his Form-master's desk, waiting. He had done nothing, and he was called on the carpet again. He was angry and indignant, and quite likely to be reckless.

Mr. Linton waited till the door had closed on the juniors. Then he spoke, quietly.

"Merry, on Tuesday afternoon you were in my study. I found you there, waiting for me, when I came from Common-room."

Tom simply stared.

That was utterly unexpected. It was now Friday, and he had quite forgotten that incident on Tuesday, though, of course, he remembered it as soon as Mr. Linton mentioned it. But of what consequence it could possibly be he had not the faintest idea.

"You remember this, Merry?"

"Yes, now you mention it, sir," said Tom, in wonder. "Mr. Silverson told a Shell fellow that you wanted to see me, and I went to your study. As you were not there, I waited. It turned out to be a mistake, and you didn't want me, after all. What does it matter?"

"Nothing, I hope," said Mr. Linton slowly. "But I must ask you a question. Did you see a watch lying on the table on that occasion?"

"A watch!" repeated Tom.

"It happens," said Mr. Linton, "that the strap of my wrist-watch was broken, and I left it on my study table. Did you see it?"

"I don't remember seeing it," said Tom blankly. "I never looked at the things on your table."

"Did you see it or not?"

Tom made an effort to recall the minutes he had spent in that study, waiting for his Form-master. If there had been a watch on the table he might or might not have seen it, but naturally it would make no impression on his mind, any more than seeing a book or an inkstand. But after a few moments' thought it was clear in his mind that he had not noticed a watch there.

"No, sir," he answered. "I never saw it."

"It is missing!" said Mr. Linton abruptly.

"Is it?" said Tom, not for a moment understanding the implication of his Form-master's words.

Mr. Linton sat looking at him, grave and troubled.

He had discovered at last that that watch was missing. The previous day, when Mr. Railton had driven over to Wayland, he had intended to

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ask the Housemaster to take it to the watch-maker's for repair. He had been unable to find it.

Up to that time he had given no special heed to the matter. A small article might easily get out of sight in a study. But when a careful search failed to unearth it, Mr. Linton could not help realising how the matter stood.

In the evening he had made another search, so thorough that it was made clear that the watch was not in the room at all—not, as he had supposed might be the case, pushed behind other objects in a pigeon-hole of his desk. It was gone.

It had been taken away from the study; on that point there was no doubt. The only question was—who had taken it?

That was a troublesome question.

Mr. Linton recalled that it had been left on his study table, and must have been there when Tom Merry waited in the study.

He had come back to the study to find Tom waiting for him there. Later he had noticed that the watch was not on the table, but only supposed that he had placed it somewhere else. Now he knew that he had not done so. The watch had been taken from the table.

It had been taken away from the study, and that was theft. And the boy who had been waiting in the study was the boy about whom rumours had been current all the term—the boy who had been claimed as an acquaintance by a disreputable racing man, who had declared that Tom owed him money. It was no wonder that Mr. Linton was sorely troubled in mind.

Suspicion had to fall upon somebody. Upon whom could it fall except the boy who had had the opportunity, and seemed to have the need?

There was a long, long silence, as Mr. Linton looked keenly, intently at the schoolboy's face before him.

It seemed impossible to suspect Tom Merry of such an act. But facts were facts, and could not be disregarded.

Tom for some minutes did not grasp what was in the Form-master's mind; but as the grim silence was prolonged it dawned on him at last.

The colour flushed in his face till he was scarlet.

It was Tom who broke that long silence at last.

"Did you say that the watch was missing, sir?" His voice trembled.

"I did, Merry."

"Do you mean that it is lost?"

"It cannot be lost."

"Then you mean that it has been taken from your study?"

"There is no doubt whatever that it has been taken from my study, Merry."

Tom's face burned.

"Now I understand," he said. "I'm a bad hat—I've got into debt with racing men—now I've pinched a watch! I understand. Did Silverson tell you I'd pinched it?"

"Do not speak to me in that tone, Merry!" said Mr. Linton sharply. "Mr. Silverson is not concerned in the matter. He does not know that the watch has been taken, and certainly has not mentioned you to me in connection with a matter of which he knows nothing."

"Oh, this isn't from him, then!" said Tom bitterly. "You don't need a hint to make out that I am a thief. Do you want an answer, sir?" Tom's voice rose to a shout, and his eyes blazed at his Form-master. "Well, I won't answer! I won't say a word! Think what you like! You

won't get a word out of me! That's all I've got to say."

He turned his back on his Form-master and tramped across to the door.

"Merry!" roared Mr. Linton.

Tom did not even look back. He went straight to the door and dragged it open.

"Merry, I have not finished yet! Do not dare to go—"

Slam!

The slam of the door closing behind Tom Merry was all the answer the master of the Shell received.

DEFIANCE!

"TOM!"

"For goodness' sake—"

Manners and Lowther were waiting at the end of the passage. They stared in alarm at Tom as he came tramping from the Form-room, his face white, his eyes burning like live coals. Manners caught him by the arm.

"Tom, stop! What—"

"What's happened?" panted Lowther. "For goodness' sake, what is it this time?"

Tom Merry panted.

"Oh, nothing much!" he said savagely. "I'm a thief this time, that's all! I pinched a watch from Linton's study the other day. I suppose I've pawned it, or sold it. I owe so much money to bookies and billiards sharpers that I have to pinch a watch to pay up. That's all."

"Linton can't have said—" stammered Lowther, in a scared voice.

"He has!"

"Is he mad?" gasped Manners.

"The rotten thing's missing, it seems, and was missed after I'd waited for Linton in his study the other day. It isn't Silverson this time—this is Linton on his own!" panted Tom. "The old fool!"

"Tom!"

"He knows," breathed Tom, "that I wouldn't—I couldn't! If he doesn't know, he ought to know. If he thinks I'm a thief, he's as big a fool as Silverson is a rotter and a rascal!"

"Quiet, old chap!" muttered Manners.

"What's the good? I'm going to be sacked for this. Think they'll let a fellow stay here to pinch watches out of beaks' studies?" roared Tom. "Linton's taken up Silverson's game, and playing it for him. It comes from that cur in the beginning. He's got me a bad name. That's done it! Give a dog a bad name, and hang him! Who could have pinched Linton's watch, except the fellow who's supposed to owe money right and left among pub-crawling, racing men? Silverson started the ball rolling—this is what has come of it. Of course, Linton thought of me first thing, the old fool!"

"Quiet, old man! He'll hear!"

"Let him! Think I care what he hears? A man who calls me a thief is a fool, and a liar as well!"

"Shut up, old man!" implored Manners, in dread of seeing the Form-room door open, and Linton come out. "Look here, we've got to be cool about this. Temper's no good."

"Oh, let's keep cool!" exclaimed Tom. "Nothing to get excited about in being called a thief, I suppose."

"Keep cool, anyhow. You're not dealing with that cur Silverson now, but with Linton. What makes him think—"

"I've told you. He's missed a watch from his

study. He thinks it went at the time I was waiting for him there. He thinks I had it, or pretends to."

"Don't be a silly ass, Tom!" said Monty Lowther. "First of all, is it certain that the rotten thing went?"

"Linton says so. I suppose he knows whether he's lost a watch or not. He's got that much sense."

"That means that it was pinched, anyhow."

"I suppose it does."

"Well, if it was pinched, somebody pinched it," said Lowther. "It will have to be fixed on somebody."

"And why not me?" snapped Tom. "I was there, it seems. He says it was on the table when I went to his study. It was missed after I'd gone. Of course, I walked off with it in my pocket. Plain enough, isn't it? Plain enough for an old fool who's had his leg pulled by a rotten rogue!"

"Do shut up!" implored Manners. "We've got to get through this, Tom. Silverson's at the bottom of it, somehow."

"Oh, no, not this time! Linton says that the dear man doesn't even know what's happened. This is Linton on his own. The old ass—he beats James at his own game!"

"Shut up, old man! Here he comes!"

The door of the Shell Form Room opened. Mr. Linton came out with such intense anger in his face that even Tom was a little subdued. Never had the master of the Shell looked so bitterly angry.

"Merry," he said, in a sharp, bitter voice, "go to my study, and wait there! Have you told these two juniors what has happened?"

"Yes, I have!"

"Then they will go with you. I do not desire this matter to become the talk of the school," said Mr. Linton, with angry contempt, "though it appears that you have no objection."

"I've a right to tell my friends if I am slandered," retorted Tom Merry. "And they have a right to know."

"Be quiet, will you?" hissed Manners, pressing Tom's arm. "Haven't you a spot of sense? Shut up!"

"Don't mind him, sir!" stammered Lowther. "This has knocked him over."

"I shall take no notice of that boy's insolence," said Mr. Linton icily. "I shall investigate this matter without, at present, allowing it to become public. Go to my study, and remain there—all three of you!"

Tom Merry did not stir. But his chums took him by the arms, and walked him away, the Form-master's eyes glinting after him.

Tom Merry's action in the Form-room had been dictated by uncontrollable indignation. But it had made the worst possible impression on his Form-master. It looked to Mr. Linton like reckless insolence added to dishonesty, and his mind was now very nearly made up.

The three Shell fellows went to Linton's study. What their Form-master was going to do they did not know, but they could see that he was deferring his next step until the school was in the Form-rooms again. It was only a few minutes now to third school. Mr. Linton did not want to start St. Jim's buzzing with a new sensation.

Tom Merry glanced round the study as they waited there.

"Nothing about to pinch," he said, with angry

sarcasm. "But perhaps he thinks his things are safe with you fellows keeping an eye on me."

"Don't be an ass, Tom!" said Manners. "You've got Linton's back up, and it was a fat-headed thing to do. He's a good man, and a just man, and you will get fair play."

"I shall get it from the Head, anyhow," said Tom. "If they try to fix this on me, there's always the Head."

He looked from the study window. Blake & Co. were punting a footer, and Figgins & Co. making an attempt to capture it from them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, shouldered over in a charge, was sitting down, spluttering, and groping for his eyeglass. But for what had happened, Tom would have been in that cheery crowd—ragging with Figgins & Co. Now it seemed to him strangely far away, as if years, instead of minutes, had passed since the bell had rung for break. He stared out at the scene with a set, savage face.

A bell rang at last, and the fellows cleared off for the Form-rooms. The quad was deserted.

A minute or two later Mr. Linton came to the study. The Shell had been left to themselves for the time in their Form-room. Mr. Linton came in with a face like iron.

His look dismayed Manners and Lowther. But Tom Merry met his eyes, cool and undaunted. He was quite as angry as his Form-master, and he did not care if Linton saw it. Indeed, he wanted him to see it. A man, Form-master or not, who accused Tom Merry of theft had nothing but angry and scornful defiance to expect from him in return.

"Merry!" said Mr. Linton, in a voice of ice.

"Well?" snapped Tom, without the slightest affectation of respect.

Linton's eyes glinted at him.

"Your conduct, Merry, has left little doubt in my mind," he said, in a cold, cutting voice. "A watch has been taken from this study. You had the opportunity, and your general conduct this term places you under suspicion. You have added reckless and insolent defiance to this. A search will now be made. First of all, you will turn out your pockets under my eyes."

"I won't!" retorted Tom.

The master of the Shell breathed hard.

"If you carry your insolence to the length of disobedience, Merry, a Sixth Form prefect will be sent for, and you will be searched by force!" he said. "You may take your choice."

"Tom, you mad ass!" whispered Manners.

"Tom, have a little sense!" muttered Lowther.

"Oh, all right!" Tom gave a scornful laugh. "I won't give a prefect the trouble of handling me. Here goes!"

And he turned out his pockets to the lining. Mr. Linton watched him with a cold, hard, scrutinising gaze. But it was very soon clear that the missing watch, wherever it was, was not on Tom Merry.

"Very well," said the master of the Shell, at last, "you may replace those articles in your pockets, Merry, and follow me to your study. I shall search your study next."

"You're welcome to what you find there!" retorted Tom.

"Silence! Follow me—the three of you!"

And the three followed their Form-master up to the Shell studies—Manners and Lowther in dismal dismay, Tom Merry with angry mockery in his face. Linton was, as he had said, welcome to anything he found in Study No. 10; and he

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little dreamed what Linton would have found there, but for Baggy Trimble's searching for his cigarettes.

Tom had forgotten the existence of Baggy Trimble. Had he remembered it, he was little likely to have guessed what he owed to that fat and fatheaded member of the Fourth Form.

NO EVIDENCE!

MR. LINTON stepped into Study No. 10 in the Shell.

At a sign from him the three juniors to whom it belonged remained standing in the doorway.

They watched him in silence.

None of the three, of course, had the slightest expectation that Linton would make any discovery in that study. The Terrible Three had no secrets to hide.

Down below in the Form-rooms all the school was in class. No one had an inkling of what was going on in the studies. Even James Silver-son, much as he had longed, and eagerly as he had waited for this very thing to happen, did not know that it was now happening. Silver-son was in the Fourth Form Room with his Form, as unaware as anyone else of the action Mr. Linton was taking.

Manners and Lowther, in the study doorway, stood in troubled silence—Tom Merry with the look of mocking scorn still on his face.

Linton moved about the study, making a very thorough search. When he came to Tom Merry's desk he spent a good many minutes on it.

That desk was almost full of papers, old letters, old exercises, games memoranda, all sorts of things that had accumulated through the term. A small article like a wrist-watch could very easily have been concealed there.

Mr. Linton left nothing to chance. He lifted every article out singly till the desk was empty.

Had that purloined watch still been where James had left it, in the dark hours of a night, infallibly it would have been brought to light, to the overwhelming dismay of the chums of the Shell.

But nothing was there now, nothing but the usual contents of the desk, and Mr. Linton at last replaced the articles he had removed, and turned to other places.

The study cupboard, a box or two, and anything that might have concealed a watch were thoroughly searched.

Then the master of the Shell paused in the middle of the study, and stood looking about him.

He had rooted through that study with the careful scrutiny of a detective, and he had found nothing. The watch was not on Tom Merry; it was not in his study. So far there was no actual evidence against Tom, nothing but a vague suspicion that had been hardened by his defiant manner into something like certainty.

He looked at Tom at last, a faint flush coming into his cheeks at the cool, mocking look the junior gave him.

"Have you found anything, sir?" asked Tom with unconcealed sarcasm.

"You have seen that I have not, Merry," said Mr. Linton coldly. "But I am not satisfied. The watch has been missing since Tuesday, and it is now Friday."

Tom's eyes flashed.

"Of course, I've had ample time to get rid of it!" he said. "You haven't found a pawnticket, I suppose?"

"I warn you to cease this insolence, Merry!" said the master of the Shell, breathing hard.

Tom did not heed.

"Am I going to the Head?" he asked. "Are you going to ask the Head to sack me because you've lost a watch and forgotten what you did with it?"

"That watch, Merry, was deliberately taken from my study—whether by you or by another person! There exists no reason whatever for suspecting any other person, and suspicion therefore rests on you."

"Because I owe money outside the school that I can't pay?" said Tom. And he laughed, remembering his interview with Mr. Railton. "Well, it that's what you think, I could knock it right on the head this minute if I chose."

Mr. Linton's lip curled.

"I should be glad to hear you do so!" he snapped.

"Well, I won't! I won't say a word! Think what you like—I don't care what you think! Tell all the school that I've pinched your watch; nobody will believe you but that cur Silverson! He will be glad to hear it! It's what he'll be glad to hear. And when you find your rotten watch you'll have to own up that you've made a silly mistake."

"Are you aware that you are speaking to your Form-master, Merry, and that you may be expelled for this insolence?"

"I'm speaking to a man who suspects me of being a thief, and if it were the Head himself I should speak in the same way!" retorted Tom. "Take me to the Head as soon as you like—I'm not afraid to face my headmaster."

"Will you shut up?" breathed Manners.

"No, I won't!"

Mr. Linton compressed his lips in a hard line.

"Manners! Lowther! You may go to the Form-room," he said. "For the present, I trust you to say nothing about this matter."

"Very well, sir!"

"And I'm not to go to the Form-room?" asked Tom.

"No!" snapped Mr. Linton. "Until this matter is cleared up, no! You will remain in this study, Merry, until you are sent for."

"Is that quite fair to Manners and Lowther, sir?"

"What? What do you mean?"

"If I'm left alone in this study their things are here; mayn't I pinch them while their backs are turned?"

"Be quiet, you dummy!" breathed Manners.

"I'm only asking," said Tom. "I suppose I'm as likely to pinch things in one study as in another."

Mr. Linton did not speak. With a set, angry face, he passed the juniors, and Manners and Lowther followed him to the stairs.

Tom Merry remained in the study.

He was excluded from his Form—under suspicion! What was coming next he did not know—further search, perhaps, or inquiry after the missing watch in places outside the school where it might have been disposed of.

That watch, perhaps, might have been sold for two or three pounds—and only yesterday he had handed six banknotes to his Housemaster, to be returned to Miss Priscilla Fawcett with an explanation that he was not in need of them.

What would Linton think of that if he knew? Obviously it would knock on the head the idea that he was in want of money to such an extent as to be driven to pilfering!

He could have told Mr. Linton. But he was savagely and passionately determined to tell him nothing. If Linton chose to make him out a thief, let him get on with it. That was Tom Merry's mood, and during third school he remained in his study—with anger and resentment for his companions!

WHAT RAILTON KNEW!

"MR. RAILTON!"

"Please step in, my dear Linton."

Third school was over. Mr. Railton had been taking the Sixth, and when he came to his study he found Mr. Linton at the door.

He glanced rather curiously at the clouded face of the master of the Shell. It was easy for him to see at a glance that something serious had occurred.

"What—" he began.

"Merry—" said Mr. Linton.

"Merry!" repeated the Housemaster. "Is that boy in trouble again? He has changed strangely this term, Mr. Linton."

"He has indeed!" said Tom's Form-master, with a sigh.

"Is this another complaint from Mr. Silverson?" asked the Housemaster. "If so, I suggest investigating with some care. I am afraid there is no doubt, sir, that, troublesome as Merry has been this term, Mr. Silverson jumps to conclusions regarding him very easily."

"Mr. Silverson is not concerned in this, sir. This is not a matter of impertinence or disrespect—it is a matter of dishonesty."

"In connection with Merry?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

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"Yes!"

The Housemaster's face was very grave.

"If it has come to that it will be a very painful surprise to me," he said. "The boy appears to have become self-willed, headstrong, wanting in respect—but dishonesty! What has happened?"

"That is what I desire to consult with you about before placing the matter in the hands of the headmaster," said Mr. Linton. "There is no actual proof at present, but—"

"Please tell me exactly what has occurred."

The Housemaster listened quietly while Tom's Form-master explained. He did not interrupt Mr. Linton once, but a very singular expression was growing on his face.

"This is extraordinary, Mr. Linton," he said at last. "The watch, I have no doubt, was of some value?"

"A few pounds," said Mr. Linton. "But even a few pounds might be a desperate necessity in certain circumstances."

"That is true! And if it transpired that the boy was in debt—"

"That is a matter difficult to prove definitely," said Mr. Linton. "But there have been so many doubts concerning this boy—"

"He is not in debt, Mr. Linton."

"Indeed, sir! If that could be known as a fact—"

"I have the clearest evidence on that point," said Mr. Railton. "Only yesterday, sir, Merry came to me and placed in my hands a sum of no less than thirty pounds."

Mr. Linton almost jumped.

"Thirty pounds!" he ejaculated. "What—"

"It appears, sir, that his guardian, Miss Fawcett, having heard that he was in difficulties for money, or fancied so, sent him that sum!"

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

"This sum Merry placed in my hands, requesting me to return it to Miss Fawcett, with an explanation that he had no need of it."

"Oh!"

"I have done so," added Mr. Railton. "Such an assurance from a Housemaster is sufficient to set the old lady's mind at rest; added, of course, to the fact that Merry had no hesitation in acquainting his Housemaster with the matter."

Mr. Linton stood dumb.

"The watch is missing—and if it cannot be found, clearly it has been taken by a dishonest hand!" went on Mr. Railton. "Merry had the opportunity, but that in itself counts for nothing."

"Nothing!" said Mr. Linton slowly. "But—"

"But after what happened in this study it cannot be supposed that he had the need—"

"It cannot!" said Mr. Linton more slowly still. "But—"

"One thing is clear," said the Housemaster, "in spite of all that has been said and suspected on the subject, Merry has no money troubles of a secret nature."

Mr. Linton nodded.

"A boy who can obtain such a sum as thirty pounds for the asking—indeed, without the asking—and has no use for it, can hardly be suspected of being driven to pilfering to raise money, Mr. Linton! The bare idea is ludicrous."

Another nod.

"If you had been aware of this, Mr. Linton, would you have suspected Merry in the matter of the watch that is missing?"

There was a pause.

"No!" said Mr. Linton at length. "I am bound to say no. Only a desperate need of money—"

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"Which certainly did not exist on the part of a boy who parted lightly with a handful of bank-notes, which he could have retained had he chosen to do so."

"True!"

"If there were any other grounds—"

"None, except his reckless defiance when I taxed him with the matter," said the master of the Shell. "Yet, indeed, if the boy is really innocent, I can make allowance for his natural indignation at such a suspicion. Yet"—he paused again—"the watch is missing, Mr. Railton."

"That is a matter which must, of course, be investigated," said the Housemaster. "But I think Merry may be excluded—in view of what I have told you."

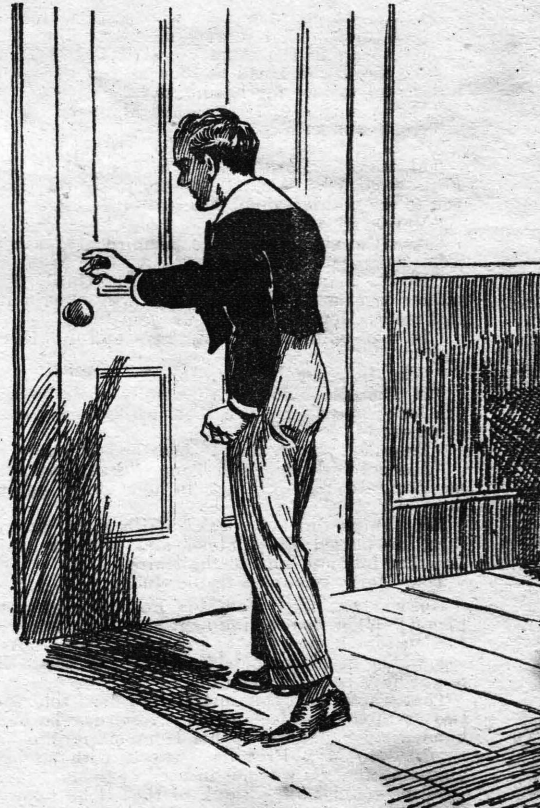
"Quite!" said Mr. Linton.

He left the Housemaster's study in a thoughtful and troubled mood.

James Silverson, from his study doorway, watched him go and wondered whether the harassed expression on his face meant that the affair of the missing watch was progressing.

James hoped that it was.

He little dreamed that it was through his own act, in instilling doubt and suspicion into Miss Priscilla's mind, that Tom Merry had been cleared in the eyes of his Housemaster and Form-master. It was not the first time that the



Tom Merry turned his back on his Form-master and roared Mr. Linton. "I have no"

schemer of St. Jim's had, in his cunning scheming, over-reached himself.

ALL CLEAR!

"TOM, old man——"

"Rot!"

"My dear chap——"

"Rubbish!"

Manners and Lowther had cut up to the study immediately after the Shell was dismissed from third school.

They found Tom Merry there, sitting by the window, with a book on his knees. He did not seem to be reading it very attentively, however.

For several minutes Tom's chums had been arguing with him, but they seemed to be wasting their breath.

"Rot! Rubbish!" said Tom deliberately. "If Linton thinks I pinched his mouldy watch, let him go on thinking so! I won't say a word."

"Do you want to be sacked for being a silly, obstinate ass?" hooted Lowther.

"The Head won't sack a man in a hurry, with nothing to go on!" said Tom contemptuously.

"Rot!"

"You ought to tell Linton about those banknotes."

"Let him find out!" said Tom savagely. "If

he chooses to think that I've been playing the goat, getting into debt with all sorts of shady sharpers, let him find out his mistake for himself."

"Look here, Tom——" said Manners.

"Oh, cut it out!" growled Tom. "I'm barred from the Form-room as a bad character. Might pick the other fellows' pockets! Pah!"

"Will you listen to a fellow?" roared Manners.

"Oh, you can run on!" said Tom. "I won't eat humble pie to Linton after what he's said! I'd be bunked first."

"Well, listen! If Linton has got these ideas in his head, you know who put them there!"

"Oh, yes—Silverson! I owe it all to him from start to finish!" said Tom, between his teeth.

"Well, then, that rat's to blame; not Linton! You're a hot-headed fool to get your silly back up like this with so much at stake. Go to Linton now——"

"I'll watch it!"

"And tell him about those banknotes. Think he would believe that you pinched a watch to raise money if he knew that?"

"He can think what he likes."

Manners and Lowther looked at their chum in great exasperation.

They could understand his feelings of deep and bitter indignation, and sympathise with him, but this was not the time for riding the high horse.

"Will you go to Linton?" demanded Manners.

"No!"

"Well, if you won't, I will!" said Harry Manners. "Linton ought to know—and he's going to know!"

"Stop where you are! I tell you——"

"You can tell me what you like; I've told you what I'm going to do! If you want to worry old Miss Fawcett by being sent home in disgrace, I'm going to see that you don't!"

Tom Merry's expression changed.

"Don't be a cheeky ass, Manners!" he muttered. "I'd do anything rather than bring trouble to her, as you jolly well know!"

"Go and do it, then!" said Manners. "This thing can be knocked on the head before that rat Silverson has a chance of getting it as far as Laurel Villa! It's up to you to do it."

Tom Merry was silent for a moment or two.

But Manners had touched the right chord. On his own account, Tom felt passionately that he would have been sacked a dozen times over before he would have eaten humble pie to the man who suspected him. But when it was a question of bringing more trouble on the old lady at Huckleberry Heath it was a different matter.

"All right," he said at length, "I'll go!"

"And be civil to Linton," said Monty Lowther anxiously.

"Oh, rather!" growled Tom. "I'll tell him how pleased I am at having my study searched for stolen goods!"

And with that he marched out, his friends following him downstairs in a worried mood. They followed him as far as masters' passage and watched him uneasily from a distance as he tapped at Mr. Linton's door.

"Come in!" said the master of the Shell.

Tom entered the study.

Mr. Linton was seated at his table, his chin resting on his hand, in deep and troubled thought; but he looked up at Tom, and, to the surprise of the captain of the Shell, gave him a kind smile.



and trapped across to the door. "Merry!"
 and yet. Do not dare to go!"

"Ah! You, Merry!" he said. "I intended to send for you, my boy."

"Oh!" stammered Tom. He could see that there had been a change of some sort since he had last seen his Form-master.

"I have received a communication from your Housemaster, Merry, which places the matter in a very different light," said Mr. Linton.

"Oh!" repeated Tom.

He could guess what that communication was, in view of his Form-master's changed manner.

"There have been many circumstances this term which have caused certain suspicions to arise," said Mr. Linton. "What Mr. Railton has told me, Merry, has quite cleared them away. Why did you not tell me of this, my boy, when I was questioning you?"

Tom was silent.

"What has become of the missing watch is a matter that I have still to investigate," said Mr. Linton. "But so far as you are concerned, the matter may be considered at an end."

"I—I'm sorry I never told you, sir!" said Tom impulsively. "I—I hope you will excuse me for—for what I said and did; but—but I was quite knocked over, sir, by your thinking such a thing of me—"

"Very well, Merry; the matter is now, at all events, at an end, and I can make allowances for your feelings," said Mr. Linton quite kindly.

"I really beg your pardon, sir!" said Tom contritely. "I came here to tell you, sir. My friends made me come; but I can see now that I was a hot-headed fool not to come before."

Mr. Linton smiled.

"Very well; we will say no more about the matter," he said.

Tom left his Form-master's study with a bright face.

"Well?" said Manners and Lowther together, as he joined them at the corner of the passage. "All clear!" said Tom. "Linton's a brick!"

"Oh! Not what you called him in break?" asked Manners sarcastically.

Tom coloured.

"Dont rub it in, old man!" he said. "I was rather wild—wouldn't any fellow have been? It seems that Railton's told him about those bank-notes, and it's cleared the air. I was a fool to cheek him as I did."

"Passed unanimously!" said Monty Lowther. Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's get out and punt a footer before dinner," he said. "I want a spot of fresh air, after sticking in a study, and—and— Oh, come on!"

And the Terrible Three, in the best of spirits, went out into the keen wintry air to punt a footer. James Silverson's eye fell on them from his study window, and James frowned, a puzzled and disgruntled frown. From Mr. Linton's look, he had hoped that the affair of the watch was progressing. From Tom Merry's look, it did not appear to be progressing favourably for James!

TRIMBLE TAKES THE CAKE!

BAGGY TRIMBLE sniffed.

Three fellows in Study No. 10 stared at Baggy—seeing no cause for that sniff as Baggy put a fat head in at the door.

"Oh!" said Baggy. "You're not smoking 'em!"

Then the chums of the Shell understood.

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Baggy was on the track of those cigarettes again. Apparently he had suspected that the Terrible Three might be smoking them surreptitiously in their study. Baggy sniffed for a scent of cigarette smoke.

"You burbling blitherer!" said Tom Merry. "If you say another word about those smokes—"

Baggy, with one hand on the door, ready to slam it and bolt, blinked at him with his goose-berry eyes.

"Well, have you got any of 'em left?" he asked. "The truth is I'm dying for a smoke and you've got all my cigarettes, and—"

"You'll be dying of something else soon if you don't shut up!" roared Tom Merry. "Hand over that fives bat, Monty!"

"Look here, you know," protested Baggy, "fair's fair! I've offered you halves—"

Tom Merry rose to his feet as Lowther handed him the fives bat. The door slammed and Baggy's podgy face disappeared.

Tom breathed hard as he sat down again.

He was more than tired of Baggy and his smokes! However, Baggy was gone, and the chums of the Shell went on with their tea.

But Baggy was not gone for good. A few minutes later the study door opened again about a foot, and Baggy peered in.

"Look here, you know, Tom Merry—" he began.

"Hook it!" roared Tom, in exasperation.

"You've got a cake there!" said Baggy, pointing with a fat and grubby finger. "Well, I'll do the fair thing. If you've smoked all those fags, you can't hand them over—and I suppose that's how it stands! Pretty thick, I think, to bag a chap's cigarettes and smoke the lot! But—"

"You frabjous, fooling freak, I chucked them in the fire the day you bunged them on me!" howled Tom.

"Well, if you did, it was like your cheek!" said Baggy warmly. "Not that I believe it, of course! You've smoked 'em! It would serve you right if I kept that watch—"

"That watch?" repeated Tom.

"Yes. You've kept my cigarettes, and I've a jolly good mind to keep your watch. Still, I'll do the fair thing—I'll take that cake!"

The Terrible Three all fixed their eyes on Baggy.

They had forgotten his mysterious burlings about a watch—which, hitherto, had seemed to have no sense of meaning to them. But after what had happened in break that morning, the mention of a watch had a new significance to their minds.

Tom Merry caught his breath.

"I mean it," said Baggy. "Fair's fair! You've had my cigarettes. I'll take that cake in exchange. That's fair! I don't mind saying that I'd rather have a cake than cigarettes. What about it? You hand over that cake and you can keep the smokes, if you've got any left! Then I'll let you have your watch back."

"What watch?" asked Tom in a low voice.

Manners and Lowther did not speak, but their faces were startled.

"You know jolly well!" said Baggy. "Blessed if I can make you out, saying that there wasn't a watch in your desk when I found it there while I was looking for my smokes."

"You found a watch in that desk?"

"Haven't I told you so two or three times?"

demanding Baggy. "Didn't I tell you I was going to keep it, so long as you kept my cigarettes? I said so plain enough! But if you like to make it a cake, it's a go."

"What sort of a watch?" asked Tom Merry, with a quiver in his voice.

He was beginning to understand.

Baggy stared at him.

"Eh? I suppose you know your own watch!" he said. "What are you talking about?"

"Was it a wrist-watch?" panted Tom.

"You know it was."

"Was the strap broken and the glass cracked?"

"What's the good of asking me when you know?" said Baggy. "I suppose you left it in your desk because the strap was broken. Didn't you?"

"By gum!" breathed Manners.

"Tom!" muttered Lowther huskily.

Tom's face was almost white.

"If you're telling the truth, Trimble——" he said.

"You can look in the desk, if you like—you'll find that your wrist-watch isn't there," said Baggy.

"What have you done with it?"

Baggy winked.

"That's telling!" he answered. "You do the fair thing, and I'll fetch that watch fast enough! I haven't got it on me, so you needn't think of grabbing a chap. It's in a safe place, you can bet! You do the fair thing—if you've smoked all my cigarettes, I'll take that cake in exchange, and then you can have your watch back. I can't say fairer than that."

Tom drew a deep breath.

"Go and fetch the watch and you can have the cake," he said.

"Honest Injun?" asked Baggy eagerly.

His fat face beamed. Baggy fancied that he liked cigarettes. But he knew that he liked cake. Nothing could have suited Baggy better than that exchange!

"Yes. Buck up!"

"O.K.!" said Baggy, and he trundled away promptly, heading for the box-room where that watch had been hidden ever since Baggy had abstracted it from Tom's desk.

The three Shell fellows looked at one another.

"You fellows understand?" said Tom Merry in a low voice. "I thought that fat fool was talking out of the back of his silly neck—so far as I thought about his gabble at all. But now——"

"He did find a watch in your desk, Tom!" said Lowther.

"A wrist-watch," said Tom bitterly. "He thinks it's mine, as he found it in my desk. He doesn't know that our Form-master's lost a wrist-watch. If he knew what Linton had been after this morning——"

Manners clenched his hands.

"Tom, unless that fat dummy's off his chump and wandering in his mind, he found Linton's watch hidden in your desk in this study!"

"Yes!" said Tom between his teeth. "And but for his meddling, Linton would have found it there this morning!"

"Tom!" muttered Lowther.

"And what would have happened then?" breathed Tom. "Those banknotes I handed to Railton have settled the matter—as it stands! But if that watch had been found hidden in my desk——"

"Who put it there, if it was there, Tom?" muttered Lowther.

"Who?" Tom's eyes blazed. "Who would? That's an easy one!"

"Silverson!" said Manners.

"Who else?" said Tom. "Nobody else! I've been thinking that Linton might have mislaid that mouldy watch! Now I know—it's missing, and it was put where it could be found! And that crook did it!"

"Crook—that's the word!" said Manners. "We can't fix it on the villain—he doesn't show up in this affair at all. But I said at the start that Silverson was at the bottom of it! Now we know!"

The juniors broke off as Baggy Trimble came trundling back. Baggy trundled into the study, with a cheery grin on his grubby face and a small article clutched in a grubby hand.

"Here you are!" he said.

Baggy laid the watch on the table. The Shell fellows looked at it. All of them knew their Form-master's wrist-watch—they had seen it often enough in the Form-room. It was Mr. Linton's watch, with its cracked glass and broken strap! And but for Baggy Trimble that watch would have been found hidden in Tom Merry's desk by Mr. Linton that morning!

Baggy stretched out a grubby paw to the cake.

Tom Merry gave him a nod without speaking. Baggy grabbed the cake and backed rapidly out of the study. There was a sound of munching in the passage as the fat Baggy departed; he was losing no time.

Tom Merry shut the door after him.

Then the three Shell fellows stood looking at the watch that lay on the table. Tom's face was pale and set.

"Linton's watch," he said, "parked in my desk! He's got to have it back, and he's going to know that——"

He paused.

"N.G.," said Manners quietly. "We shall have to get the watch back to him—stick it somewhere in his study where he can find it. That's all we can do. We've nothing against Silverson—not a thing. We know he did it—at least, we're pretty sure—but that's no good for anybody else. We can't make an accusation without a leg to stand on."

"No," said Tom slowly. "No."

"Silverson doesn't show up in this; he's behind the scenes all the time," said Manners. "If Linton knew that Trimble had found that watch in your desk, Tom, it would come to the same thing as if he'd found it there himself."

Tom nodded without speaking.

"We've got to follow Silverson's cue, and keep behind the scenes," said Manners. "But there's one thing—the villain's banking on this, and he will be fairly flummoxed when nothing comes of it."

Manners picked up the watch and slipped it into his pocket.

"Linton can find this in his study when he comes back from tea in Common-room," he said. "Least said, soonest mended! But, by gum, we've got to watch that crook after this!"

Mr. Linton, a little later, had a surprise—quite a pleasant surprise, though a perplexing one. In taking some papers that were needed for next morning's lesson in the Shell from a pigeon-hole

in his desk, he caught a glimmer of glass in that pigeon-hole, and, in great amazement, drew out the missing wrist-watch. It was really amazing to Mr. Linton that he could have overlooked it in his search, which had been very thorough. It looked, however, as if he had, for there it was.

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

It was surprising—indeed, astonishing. But it was a great relief to his mind. And, in a mood of great satisfaction, he went along to Railton's study to tell him that the missing watch had been found, and that, after all, there was no question of a theft—which was a relief and a satisfaction to both masters.

FLUMMOXED!

JAMES SILVERSON looked into Mr. Linton's study on Saturday afternoon.

James wanted to know.

His hope that the affair of the watch was progressing had proved unfounded. Nothing had been heard of it—not a word on the subject of a missing watch or a theft in the School House.

James was puzzled, perplexed, and a little alarmed. He had waited and waited, and nothing had happened. Now he was going to give the affair a push to help it on its way.

"I shall be going to Wayland again this afternoon, Mr. Linton," he said, with his most agreeable smile. "I think you desired to send your watch for repair to the watchmaker's there?"

"Quite so," agreed Mr. Linton.

"I think I remember that you had mislaid it when I looked in on Wednesday," said James. "No doubt you have found it since; and, if so, I shall be most happy—"

"Thank you very much, Mr. Silverson!" said the master of the Shell. "If it is not too much trouble—"

"None at all, sir," said James.

"Then I shall be very glad if you will leave the watch at Codson's for repair."

Mr. Linton rose and stepped to his desk. James smiled—a cat-like smile.

On the previous occasion when he had made that kind offer Mr. Linton had failed to find the watch, and had supposed that it was mislaid. But surely, after this lapse of time, even an unsuspecting old ass could not continue to think so.

Mr. Linton turned from the desk with something in his hand that he had taken from a pigeon-hole there.

James' eyes popped at it.

It was not easy for James to believe his eyes. The article in Mr. Linton's hand was a wrist-watch, with a broken strap and a cracked glass!

It was the missing watch which James, right up to that moment, had believed to be where he had left it—hidden under the papers in Tom Merry's desk in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

"Here is the watch, Mr. Silverson."

"The—the—the watch!" gurgled James. He did not stretch out his hand to take it; he simply goggled at it.

"Yes," Mr. Linton looked surprised. He could not quite understand Mr. Silverson. "If you will be kind enough to leave it for repair with Codson's—"

"That—that—this is the watch?" stammered James.

The surprise in Mr. Linton's face caused him to make an effort to pull himself together. It was not easy, for he was absolutely overwhelmed and dumbfounded. But he stretched out his hand and took the watch.

"Then you—you—you have found it?" he stammered.

"Yes, as you see."

"And you know by—by whom it was taken?"

"Eh?"

"It was taken from your study."

"Not at all. Somehow I had overlooked it in that pigeon-hole behind some papers," said Mr. Linton.

James blinked at him.

He had parked that watch in a Shell study. Mr. Linton had found it in his own study. It was too much for James. He felt as if his head was turning round. He was, as Manners had expressed it, flummoxed—absolutely flummoxed!

"If you will kindly ask them to put in a new glass and affix a new strap—" said Mr. Linton.

"Oh, yes! Quite! Certainly!"

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Silverson!"

"Oh, not—not at all!"

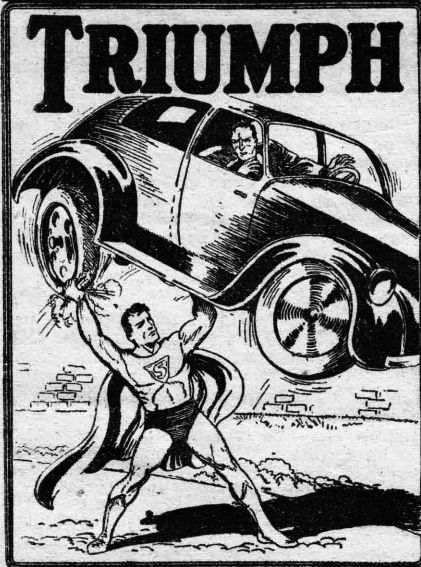
James hardly knew how he got out of the study. He went away—with the watch—like a man in a dream.

This was the outcome of his deepest, darkest scheme—this! James tried to think it out. But it was no use. Unless he had only dreamed that he had parked that watch in Tom Merry's desk, there was no understanding it. It was too much for James, and he had to give it up.

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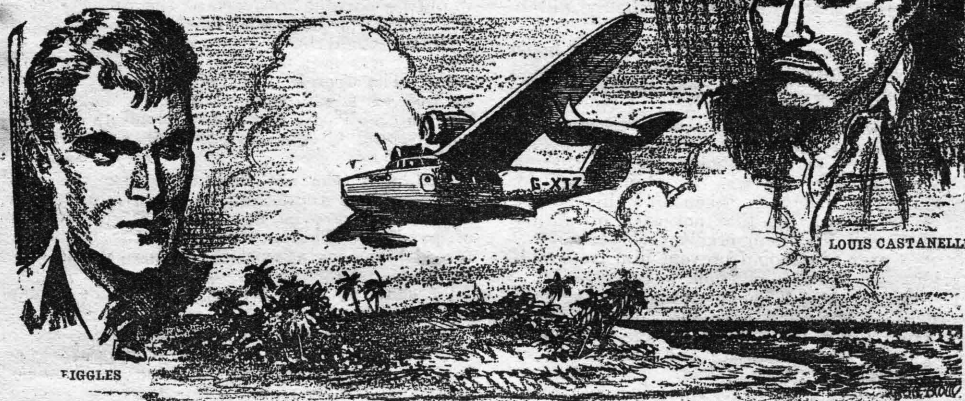


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MORE BIG-THRILL ADVENTURE WITH AIR-ACE BIGGLES AND HIS PALS!

BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!



By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS.

A PRISONER!

MAJOR 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 hurricane then strikes the island. Biggles & Co. are compelled to take off to save the Scud—having failed to find Ginger—and they land safely on Rutuona Island.

The hurricane passes, leaving Ginger and the two Polynesians still safe on Sandy's Island. But Castanelli arrives in his schooner, and Ginger falls into his hands.

"Where are your pals?" asked Castanelli coldly.

"I wish I knew," returned Ginger bitterly.

"You speak lies wis me, eh?"

Ginger shook his head.

"No," he said wearily. "They disappeared in the hurricane. That's all I know. I was trapped in a cave by a shark at the other end of the island, so I don't know what happened. I only just had time to climb into a palm before the seas swept over everything."

Castanelli was silent for a moment. The obvious sincerity of Ginger's words, and the tone of voice in which he said them, evidently made an impression on the Corsican.

"Get plenty pearls?" he asked smoothly.

"We got a few," admitted Ginger, who saw no

reason to lie. "We might have got more, but a swordfish holed our ship, and we had to jettison the diving gear to save it from sinking."

"Where are ze pearls?"

"On the ship, wherever that is."

"You know where ze bed is, eh?" leered Castanelli.

"Yes, roughly," admitted Ginger.

"You show me in ze morning—yes?"

"I'll think about it," promised Ginger, who was anxious to gain time to think, for his brain was still in a whirl, and there were now so many factors to be taken into consideration.

Castanelli drew his knife and fingered the point significantly.

"You tink hard about it," he suggested softly.

"And when you tink, remember zis. My boys Solomon Island boys. You know what zey eat in ze Solomons? Zey eat men—yes! And my boys are very hungry for fresh meat. You tink hard about zat."

He said something to his crew in a language which Ginger did not understand. Rough hands seized him, and dragged him to the companion. Down the stairway he was bundled, and along a corridor. A door was opened, and he was pushed into the same evil-smelling compartment from which he had once rescued Shell Breaker. It was pitch dark. The door closed, and a bolt shot. For a moment he stood listening to the soft pad of retreating bare feet; then he sat down on the damp board floor to think.

In spite of his insalubrious quarters Ginger eventually fell asleep. His head ached from the blow he had received. It was not unnatural, too, that he was depressed, for the whole expedition, which had started so well, had suddenly gone to pieces. Its members were scattered, he knew not where. The island was a wreck. The shell had been lost.

Full Moon was presumably still on the island,
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where she might escape harm as long as Castanelli did not find her. As for Shell Breaker, anything could have happened to him. He, too, might have been captured. On the other hand, he might still be in the water near the schooner, although it was more likely that he had swum back to the island and rejoined Full Moon. There was always a chance that he might have been seized by the shark which was probably still in the lagoon.

With one thing and another, in a few hours disaster had overtaken the party at the moment success seemed assured. Ginger was not accustomed to look on the black side of things, but it is not to be wondered at that as he stretched himself out on the damp, evil-smelling boards he was a prey to melancholy. He felt that he could do nothing. He was not even armed, for his automatic had been taken from his pocket. But so weary was he that not even his dismal thoughts, and the innumerable cockroaches that swarmed over him, could prevent him from sinking into a sleep of exhaustion.

He was awakened by an uproar on the deck above him. He could hear the Solomon Island boys jabbering in their own language, and Castanelli cursing like a maniac; but what it was all about he had no means of knowing. Getting on his feet he was relieved to find that his cubby-hole of a prison was at least provided with light—a small circle of thick glass let into the deck—and the fact that it was now dull grey suggested that the hour was dawn.

Hardly had he made this observation, when there was a patter of bare feet in the passage outside, and the door was thrown open. Without any preamble two of the Solomon Island boys entered, seized him, and hurried him up on deck, where Castanelli was standing, white with rage, spitting like an angry cat. The Corsican eyed his prisoner malevolently through half-closed eyes as he advanced slowly towards him. His fingers were opening and closing like claws.

"Who else was on island wiz you?" he grated.

Ginger did not answer.

Castanelli flew into a fury. Indeed, he lost control of himself.

"Who take my dinghy?" he screamed.

Ginger drew a deep breath. So that was it. The dinghy had gone. Then Shell Breaker and Full Moon, or one of them, must have returned to the schooner after he had been captured, and succeeded where he had failed. The knowledge gave him new hope, and he allowed a smile of satisfaction to cross his face, which, in the circumstances, was a mistake. Castanelli noted the smile. Already beside himself, he snarled like a wolf as he struck Ginger a blow across the face that sent him reeling into the scuppers.

Ginger picked himself up slowly, wiping blood from his lips.

Castanelli stood watching him, panting with suppressed rage.

"Who was wiz you last night?" he purred, advancing towards Ginger again.

To attempt to conceal the truth was futile, and Ginger realised it. Obviously someone had been with him, or the dinghy could not have been stolen.

"Shell Breaker," he said quietly, hoping by this time that he was far away.

The Corsican eyed Ginger with such an expression of hatred that he fully expected to be murdered on the spot.

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"Zat sneaking little Kanaka!" breathed Castanelli. "Where he go?" he screamed, with such violence that Ginger took a pace backwards.

"To Rutuona, I hope," he replied. "If he started early he should be nearly there by now."

Castanelli caught his breath and looked around the sky. Ginger could read what was passing in his mind. He was trying to work out if it would be possible to overtake the dinghy before it reached the larger island.

Ginger could have answered the question for him. It was not, for there was not a breath of wind. The open sea, as well as the lagoon, was as flat as a millpond. Not a catspaw ruffled the water. There was not a cloud in the sky, or anything else to suggest that a breeze was on the way.

Castanelli was not slow to realise this, and the knowledge did nothing to improve his temper. On the contrary he flew into a fresh paroxysm of passion. Taking Ginger by the throat, he forced him back against the mainmast and drew his knife.

"I show you my way wiz rats!" he ground out through his teeth.

Ginger knew that he was within an ace of death, but he did not lose his head. He knew that in his present state of mind the Corsican was capable of anything.

"Kill me, and you will never find the pearl-bed," he said.

Castanelli hesitated, and nodded slowly as the truth of this statement penetrated into his frenzied brain. He lowered his arm.

"Ah!" he breathed. "Ze pearls—yes. I tink I keep you alive for a leetle while."

He released Ginger suddenly, and rapped out an order at the boys who were standing round watching the proceedings with amused interest. The way they jumped to obey their bullying skipper revealed their fear of him.

They ran to the longboat, and in a few minutes it was on the water by the schooner's side. Six of them got into it and picked up the oars.

"You come wiz me," Castanelli told Ginger; and they got into the boat, which was quickly rowed ashore.

Ginger wondered what the man was going to do; but he was not left in doubt for very long, for as soon as they were ashore the boys started collecting the shell that lay strewn along the beach at high-water mark. Now that the sea had gone down, Ginger saw that there was quite a lot of it lying high and dry, and still more in the shallow water. That which had been on the far side of the island had apparently been thrown right over the ridge when the waves swept across. So Ginger thought idly, for he was not particularly interested. He watched four of the boys throwing the shell into a pile; another was carrying it to the longboat, and a sixth was collecting nuts.

Castanelli, taking Ginger with him, began rummaging about on the site of the camp, putting together anything worth saving, the remains of the stores and a few odd pieces of tackle. Occasionally he asked a question, but there was little Ginger could—or would—tell him.

From the speed the Corsican was working, Ginger judged that he was anxious to get the work finished, in which case it was not unreasonable to suppose that he had no intention of remaining in the lagoon. Perhaps he had Shell Breaker in mind, and was anxious to get away in case he returned with assistance.

GINGER IN PERIL!

THE sun climbed up into an azure sky, and as the day advanced the island shimmered in the heat. Ginger continued watching Castanelli's activities in a desultory fashion, turning over in his mind the possibility of escape. There seemed little chance of it. He had not overlooked the hidden cave as a hiding-place if he could get away, but the chances of this were remote.

For one thing, Castanelli was watching him closely, and the butt of a heavy revolver protruding from his hip pocket discouraged the idea of making a dash for it. In any case, the boys were working on the beach between him and the cove, so to reach it without being intercepted was manifestly impossible.

His interest quickened as Castanelli approached the spot where the pearls had been hidden; it was now half-covered by a pile of seaweed, which had wrapped itself around the coral. Castanelli dragged some of it aside with his hands, and cleared the remainder with his foot, and was about to turn away when something caught his eye. He went back and reached down.

Ginger's heart stopped beating for an instant, and then raced in a burst of palpitation. In spite of the heat, he felt a chill creep over him. Sticking up out of the sand was the top half of a tin. It was a biscuit tin, and he recognised it instantly. It was in such a tin that Sandy had put the pearls, and there could hardly be two such tins in the same place. The waves had washed most of the sand away, and so partly uncovered it.

For a brief moment Ginger hoped that Castanelli would not see it; but when it became obvious that he had, he prayed fervently that he would not trouble to investigate it. But the Corsican was leaving nothing that was worth taking away. Without the least suspicion of its contents, he kicked the sand aside with his foot and dragged the tin from its bed.

Without even glancing at Ginger—whose face might have betrayed the secret, for it had turned pale—he tossed the tin amongst the others. Ginger almost gasped his relief as it spun through the air; for while Castanelli did not know what it contained, there was always a chance that he might recover it. But his hope was short-lived. The lid either fitted loosely or struck one of the other tins, for, as it rolled into the pile, the top flew off, and its contents streamed in a gleaming cascade across the sand.

Castanelli had already half-turned away, but his eyes remained on the tin just long enough to see it fly open. For a second he stood like a man petrified, his little eyes bulging in their sockets; then he let out a hoarse yell, shouted something in a language Ginger did not understand, and in a moment was on his knees, picking up the pearls with trembling fingers and putting them back into the tin. Once he paused to turn to Ginger a face flushed with exultation. He was panting with excitement. His crew ran up, and gave vent to their feelings in a series of staccato ejaculations.

Ginger, sick to the very soul, could only watch helplessly. The appearance of the tin had been as great a shock to him as the sight of the pearls had been to the schooner captain. Why or how they had come to be left behind he could not remotely imagine. It was unbelievable, incredible. Everything had looked black enough before, but now he was swept by a wave of depression that left him weak with misery. But behind the depression there grew a fierce hatred of the man

who was now chuckling with glee, and he began to understand why so many crimes had been committed for these gems of the sea.

At the time of Castanelli's startling discovery the longboat had just left for the schooner with the first load of shell. Seeing the commotion ashore, the two boys who had gone with it now shouted to know what it was about, and their companions joyfully informed them. The work of unloading was hastened, and the boat was soon flashing back towards the silver beach.

There was still a big pile of shell lying there, and when the boys started loading afresh Ginger marvelled at the mentality of a man who, with a fortune already in his pocket, could bother about a few hundreds of pounds extra.

However, Castanelli evidently saw no reason why he should not have the shell as well as the pearls, for he remained on the island supervising the work until the last shell had been collected. Occasionally he glanced at Ginger, whose downcast face seemed to amuse him; he was no longer vindictive, but smiling with supreme content.

"Why you not tell me ze pearls still here?" he questioned once.

"I did not know myself!" returned Ginger, with such bitterness that the Corsican laughed aloud.

"Your friends save me all ze trouble," he murmured. "Always ze way wiz pearls," he added cryptically, tossing Ginger a coconut.

He had already punctured one, and, after drinking the milk, was crunching the soft, spongy flesh.

Ginger was in no mood for eating, but he drank the milk with relish, for his throat was parched.

The sun was touching the horizon by the time the last few shells and the remainder of the stores had been thrown into the longboat. The rowers took their places. For some time Ginger had been hoping that Castanelli would go, leaving him marooned on the island, because he felt sure that sooner or later Biggles would return to look for him. But this hope did not materialise.

Castanelli looked at him thoughtfully for a moment or two with a curious expression on his face, and then motioned him to get into the boat. Ginger obeyed, and the Corsican got in behind him. From the way he looked round to make sure that nothing had been left behind, it was fairly clear that he had no intention of returning.

The boat was pushed off, and cut an ever-spreading ripple across the still water as it sped towards the schooner. Ginger watched it with the calm of utter despair. All day he had been listening, hoping to hear the familiar roar of the Scud, but in vain. Now that night was closing in it certainly would not come until to-morrow, if then, and by that time anything could have happened.

As they climbed up on the schooner's deck a slant of wind sent a succession of curving ripples sweeping across the lagoon, and the schooner rocked gently. Castanelli let out a yell of triumph, and Ginger's mouth turned dry with bitterness as he realised that even Nature was playing into the Corsican's hands. First the hurricane, which had driven the Scud away and disclosed the pearls, and now a breeze just when Castanelli most needed it. With a fair wind the schooner would be a hundred miles away by the next day; so even if Biggles did return it would avail him nothing.

Castanelli, the pearl tin in his hand, went below, but was soon on deck again without it.

In a vague sort of way Ginger noted that the wind appeared to have an immediate effect on his plans where he himself was concerned; for, after speaking in a low voice to the crew, he turned to his prisoner with such an expression on his face that Ginger felt a qualm of alarm.

"You no like my ship? I tink you best stay here," purred Castanelli.

Ginger drew a deep breath of relief. Nothing would have suited him better, but he did not say so.

"But perhaps you talk too much," went on Castanelli smoothly. "I am very sorry, but I tink you talk no more."

Then, with a nod to the crew, he turned and walked towards the wheel.

Four of the boys ran to the capstan, and a chain clanked as the anchor came up. A sail bellied out against the fast-darkening sky.

Two of the repulsive-looking Solomon Islanders had remained beside Ginger, who, interested in watching the schooner get under way and approach the entrance to the lagoon, barely noticed them. But when he felt them lay hands on him, he turned sharply to see what they were doing. Not until then did a terrible suspicion come into his mind.

One of them had tied a length of rope round his waist, and the other was now attaching the loose end to a piece of rusty iron piping. For a moment Ginger could only stare in mute horror, still refusing to believe what his eyes were telling him; but when the natives started dragging him towards the side of the ship, there was no longer any doubt as to their intention. He knew that they were going to throw him overboard. The piece of iron was to take him to the bottom.

As soon as he realised this he began to struggle violently, trying to free himself from the rope; but the natives seized him, and in their powerful hands he was helpless. One dragged his arms behind him, and the other whipped up his feet, so that he could not even kick. As helpless as a rabbit in the hands of a poacher, he was carried to the rail.

One of the natives grunted, and Ginger was swung into the air. He made a last frantic clutch at the rail, but his hand missed it by a foot, and the next instant the water had closed over his head. Even before he could get to the surface and fill his lungs, he felt the weight of the iron take effect and drag him down.

Struggling with a desperation near to madness, Ginger seized the rope, but the iron was far below him, and he could do nothing to check his descent. He felt the weight of the water pressing on him.

Then suddenly the downward movement ended, and he knew that the iron had reached the bottom. Frantically he dragged at the rope. All around him was in darkness.

A NIGHTMARE JOURNEY !

BIGGLES was still at Rutuona with Algy and Sandy. His difficulties were not as alarming as those of Ginger, although he suffered considerable anxiety on his account, but they were bad enough.

To start with, his fears had been only too well-founded when, during the hurricane, he had expressed a hope that no debris would fall on them. A palm frond had crashed down on the port wing-tip, and while the wing had not been

torn off, the leading edge had been crushed, so that flying was out of the question until it had been repaired. Lighter matter, such as brush-wood, had been piled up around the Scud, and by the time the hurricane had passed the machine was almost buried.

For those on board to get ashore had been no easy matter, for the flimsy rubbish would not support their weight, and at the same time it made swimming impossible. In the end they had piled rubbish upon rubbish, and then trampled it down until it formed a bridge of sufficient strength to carry them.

By this time it was dark, and they passed the night in even more discomfort than Ginger, who was, of course, in the hidden cave, where he was at least free from the disturbing attentions of the myriads of mosquitoes that attacked Biggles, Algy, and Sandy as they rested in a swamp by the edge of the creek in which the machine had come down.

As soon as it was light they had set off for the village, hoping that it would not take them more than an hour or two to reach it, since by their reckoning it was not more than six miles away. But unexpected difficulties presented themselves. Biggles had seen many jungles, but never growth so impenetrable as that which fringed the creek.

It was impossible to move in any direction without hacking every inch of the way with their knives—an exhausting business in the heat; apart from which their faces were soon covered with spots of blood from the vicious bites of sand flies.

Then, just as they thought they were through, and not more than a quarter of a mile from the beach which they knew ran all the way to the village, they came to an obstacle which not even Biggles' agile brain could devise a means of crossing. It was the mouth of a river, which was not so much a river as a swamp—a stagnant lake which had formed in the low ground at the foot of the hills.

Had it been only water it would have been a simple matter to swim across, for the distance was not more than a hundred yards; but there was more than that to consider. The water was choked by a riotous growth of water-lilies, great pink blooms which, in different circumstances, would have called forth their admiration. The fact that the huge, flat, fleshy leaves were the homes of revolting-looking centipedes nearly a foot long did not make the prospect of trying to swim across any more agreeable.

However, it was obviously impossible to swim, for the thick white roots of the lilies formed an almost solid mass under the water, and as they were too pliable to bear any weight, the only alternative was to go round.

So, blood-stained and weary, they had to start hacking a new path inland along the edge of the swamp. The depressing part of the task was, they did not know how far the swamp extended, although Sandy held the view that it could not be far, on account of the hills, which rose steeply no great distance away. And in this assumption he was correct.

A few hundred yards and the swamp began to narrow, until, at length, they came to a place where a fallen bread fruit-tree offered a passage across. By this time it was nearly dark. Far from reaching the village in a few hours, they had been all day in the jungle, and had covered less than a mile.

They crossed the swamp by means of the tree just as the sun was setting, only to discover,

when they were on the other side, that the jungle was again so thick that it was useless even to think of going on until daylight came.

Even so, Biggles was in favour of pushing on, but Sandy declared that it was madness. Even if they did not wander into a swamp as deadly as quicksand, which was probable, they would certainly lose their way in the darkness, and make so little progress that the labour was not worth while.

After considering the matter, the others were reluctantly compelled to agree. So, again beset by countless mosquitoes, and surrounded by alarming, phosphorescent fungus, they remained in the fallen tree, prepared to pass another night of misery.

"I'm beginning to understand why pearls are expensive," remarked Biggles grimly, as he slapped at the insects that were settling on his face.

As the night wore on, the mosquitoes became so bad that he lit a fire, and sat in the smoke, although the pungent reek of the wood was nearly as hard to endure as the bites of the mosquitoes.

"I wouldn't mind so much if I knew that those kids were all right," he muttered once. "I can't imagine what could have happened to them."

Neither Sandy nor Algy replied. Perhaps they both hesitated to express their views.

Slowly the night wore on, the swamp water glowing with phosphorescent light as it was moved by unseen creatures. Strange noises came from the tree-ferns; not even Sandy knew what made them. Great moths flitted silently across the fiery area, and once an enormous bat gave them all a fright by dashing itself against the tree.

The darkness was incredible; it hung over them like a weight. In the silence invisible creatures crept and rustled.

Once Algy dozed, to awake from a fitful dream with the feeling that something was crawling on his leg. By the light of the dimly burning fire he saw a reddish-brown centipede ten inches long clinging to his bare ankle. With a convulsive shudder, he tore it off with a quick jerk, and flung the thing from him. A double line of scarlet spots rose on the place where the centipede had been; his ankle started to swell; and it remained painful for many days. Sandy puffed at his pipe incessantly, and Biggles smoked all his cigarettes.

"Thank goodness it's getting light at last!" muttered Algy, after a long silence. "One more night of this and I shall be ready for the madhouse. These South Sea islands aren't all that they're made out to be."

Biggles stood up stiffly. "Well, let's be moving," he said. And, although it was still only grey twilight, he commenced cutting a path down the far side of the swamp towards the beach.

The others joined him. The strain of the last two days and nights was beginning to tell on them, and they were all nearly exhausted by the time they staggered from the undergrowth on to the open sand, where they spent some minutes looking for water; but there was none except that of the swamp, which they would not touch.

"Never mind; let's get along. We ought to be in the village inside a couple of hours," murmured Biggles. And with dragging feet they set off along the sand.

They stopped at the first coconut-palm they reached, and, hunting about, found several nuts

that had been dislodged by the hurricane. They drank the milk greedily, and, strengthened by its cool sweetness, made better time for the rest of the journey.

They had nearly reached the village when Algy stopped suddenly, staring at something ahead. The others, following the direction of his eyes, were just in time to see a native disappear like a shadow into the dense shade of the trees. It was not an ordinary native, such as those they had previously met in the village; he was smeared from head to foot with white chalk or mud, put on in the most fantastic designs.

"Something's happening here," muttered Sandy, looking worried.

(Continued on next page.)

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"What do you mean? What could happen?" inquired Biggles.

"You saw that chap? He was in war-paint—and he was carrying a war club. I haven't seen such a thing in years. He means business, or he wouldn't be got up like that. They take these things very seriously. It's against the law, anyway. They are not allowed to do any of this war stuff nowadays, because once they start they're not responsible for their actions. There you are! Hark at the drums!" A hollow booming sound echoed weirdly through the jungle. "If you listen you'll hear others answering it," declared Sandy. "They're calling the warriors together. Something must have happened since we were here last. I only hope some fool hasn't been causing trouble, or we may find ourselves in the cooking-pot presently. When they get the war fever on them they're not particular who they kill."

"But they're not cannibals, surely?" put in Biggles unbelievably.

Sandy threw him a sidelong glance.

"Not one of them would admit it, and I doubt if any of the youngsters would have anything to do with 'long pig,'" he muttered. "But I wouldn't trust the old 'uns. I'll warrant plenty of the old men here pine for the days when the enemy was served up for supper. The authorities have done everything they can to suppress cannibalism, and generally speaking they've succeeded, but once in a while there are rumours of it back in the hills. Mind you, these people were never cannibals for the sake of it; they've all the other food they need. It was just a custom to eat a part of some particularly hated enemy."

"Well, it's no use hanging about," declared Biggles. "We'd better go to see what's going on."

Two more natives appeared just in front of them. Both were in war-paint, and both carried war clubs. They bolted like rabbits at the sight of the white men, who soon reached the village and marched straight into it. Only two or three women were in sight. The drums had stopped booming.

Sandy walked up to an old woman and spoke to her in her own language, but she only sniggered. He turned to Biggles.

"They're all hiding in the bush," he said. "I'll bet the whole lot of them are within earshot, but they won't show up for fear we report them." Cupping his hands round his mouth, he yelled for Roaring Wave.

A few moments later the bushes parted, and a slim figure stepped out. A white band encircled his forehead and his chest was painted with a hideous cannibalistic device.

Algy clutched Biggles' arm.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed incredulously. "It's Shell Breaker!"

ON THE WARPATH!

"SHELL BREAKER, come here!" ordered Sandy sternly.

The boy approached nervously.

"What for you make war?" asked Sandy curtly.

"Make war on Atanelli," muttered Shell Breaker sullenly.

"Ask him where the others are," Biggles told Sandy.

Sandy spoke to the boy in his own tongue, whereupon Shell Breaker broke into a torrent of

explanation, waving his hands to add expression to his story. At last he broke off.

Sandy drew a deep breath and turned to the others. His face was a picture of wonderment and dismay.

"Ginger's a prisoner on Castanelli's schooner," he said.

"What?" exclaimed Biggles and Algy together.

"Shell Breaker's story rings true enough," went on Sandy. "And there doesn't seem to be any reason why he should lie to us. He says this is what happened. After they had finished fishing they went for a swim in a cove; while they were there a shark appeared in the entrance and trapped them. They had to stay there all night. In the morning the shark had gone, so they swam out, only to find that we were no longer there. Then the hurricane hit the island and pretty well wrecked it. No sooner had the hurricane moved on than Castanelli sailed into the lagoon. They waited until dark, and then tried to pinch the schooner's dinghy. Ginger was caught in the act and taken aboard. Shell Breaker got to the reef, but came back later on and got the dinghy and rowed it single-handed to Rutuona. Full Moon stayed behind to watch what happened. Shell Breaker only got here about an hour ago, and his story has sent everybody war-mad. Roaring Wave has sworn to have Castanelli's blood. They've got their big war canoe all ready; apparently they were just going to start when we turned up."

Biggles listened to this story in silence, his first expression of relief on hearing that Ginger was still alive changing slowly to one of amazement.

"If Ginger is on Castanelli's schooner we've got to get him off," he said slowly. "I'm relieved to learn that nothing more serious has happened."

Algy looked dubious.

"It might be harder to get Ginger back than it sounds," he muttered. "Castanelli's got a tough crew, and there are only three of us. The machine is out of action, anyway. In any case, with Ginger on board we couldn't shoot the schooner up, anyway."

"I wouldn't say that the Scud is out of action," returned Biggles quickly.

"But you can't fly it with a busted wing."

"I didn't say anything about flying it; there's no reason why we shouldn't taxi it across to the island, if we can get it clear."

"I don't want to raise difficulties, but Castanelli will hear our engines," Algy pointed out. "All those toughs of his are armed, and they're likely to sink the Scud before we could get it near enough to board them. We must look at the thing sanely. To suppose that we could taxi right up to the schooner without one or more of us being hit would be expecting too much. We've got to get Ginger off, of course, but getting the Scud sunk won't help us."

Biggles nodded.

"I agree," he murmured. "It would need a dozen men to take that schooner by force, unless surprise tactics were employed. We've no proof that the schooner is still there, if it comes to that. There ought to be some way in which we can use these Marquesans." Biggles thought for a moment. "I don't like the idea of them going without us," he continued. "If there is a general attack Ginger is as likely to get hurt as anybody."

"That's true," remarked Sandy. "Once they start on a job they're apt to go crazy. Why not taxi the machine across and take a bunch of

them with us? We could get ten or a dozen in the cabin at a pinch."

"Why not take the whole blessed war canoe in tow?" suggested Algy.

"By gosh! That's an idea!" exclaimed Sandy.

"We might as well do both," Biggles pointed out. "We could put some of them in the machine and tow the canoe as well. How many will the canoe hold, Sandy?"

"I don't know; I haven't seen it. But judging from others I've seen, it will probably carry thirty or forty. But we shall have to watch what we're doing. If we once set these boys on to Castanelli, there will be no holding them, and if they kill him we shall be answerable for it."

"That doesn't worry me," declared Biggles. "We've a witness to prove that Ginger is on board, a prisoner, so we should be justified in trying to get him off. What worries me most is the time limit. How long is Castanelli going to stay in the lagoon, even supposing he is still there? It's going to take us some time to get the machine clear, don't forget. It's after mid-day already. Whatever we do, it is going to be dark before we get to the island."

"Ay, that's true enough," admitted Sandy. "I agree with you, I think it would be dangerous to let these Marquesans go without us. I reckon our best plan would be to explain the position to Roaring Wave; if he falls in with us he could lend us some men to get the Scud out of the creek."

"After that it wouldn't take us long to get to the island. We could tow the canoe most of the way. Then, when we got near the island, we could let the canoe tow the machine. In that way we should make no noise, and we might be able to get right up to the schooner without being seen."

Biggles nodded.

"That's it," he said. "If we towed the Marquesans nearly to the island they would still be fresh when we got there. If we find that the schooner has gone, the only thing we can do is to repair the wing as quickly as possible and fly round as long as we have any petrol left."

"That sounds like common sense to me," agreed Sandy. "I'll go and have a word with Roaring Wave, or tell Shell Breaker to go and fetch him."

He turned to Shell Breaker, who still stood by him, and spoke to him at some length.

Shell Breaker dashed off into the trees, where his voice could be heard raised in a long harangue. His speech was concluded in a pandemonium of yells, and a few moments later about some three score painted warriors, some carrying clubs and some spears, burst out of the bushes.

"They're a pretty tough-looking crowd to try to keep in order," observed Biggles, regarding the striped warriors with misgivings.

"You leave 'em to me," said Sandy confidently, going to meet them.

Somehow he managed to pick out Roaring Wave, and held a brief conversation with him.

At the finish the chief gave a shout and disappeared again into the bushes, followed by his pack.

"It's all right," said Sandy, returning to the others. "In fact, I believe the old man is tickled to death that we are going into the business with him. One thing is certain; they hate

the sight of Castanelli, and once they get started there will be no stopping them."

"Where have they gone now?" asked Algy.

"To get the canoe," replied Sandy. "Here they come."

Both Biggles and Algy stared in astonishment as from under the trees appeared the grotesque, painted prow of an enormous canoe. It was a beautiful piece of work, carved from end to end in a regular pattern and gleaming with oil. It was not less than forty feet long and needed nearly forty men to carry it.

In dead silence the warriors carried it down to the water and launched it on the bay.

"Come on," said Sandy.

"Where to?" asked Biggles.

"Back to the Scud, of course. There is no sense in walking. The canoe will have us there in half the time."

"That suits me," agreed Biggles.

In a few minutes the three white men were seated in the stern of the canoe, staring at the broad, painted backs of thirty natives, in a double row, fifteen on each side, each holding a beautifully carved paddle. Their weapons lay at their feet.

Roaring Wave stood in the bows, looking ahead. He raised his spear and pointed. Instantly thirty paddles dug deeply into the water and the canoe streaked forward like an arrow. Roaring Wave's spear fell, and the flashing paddles dipped again. And so it continued, the paddles keeping perfect time with the strokes of the spear.

In less than an hour they were at the creek, where Sandy, pointing to the Scud, explained to the chief what was required.

After that there was nothing more to do but sit in the canoe and watch the natives hacking at the brushwood and other debris with their heavy, keen-edged knives.

At first they worked from the canoe, but as the Scud was neared many of them got into the water and tore the stuff away with their hands.

As soon as a fairway had been made, Biggles climbed on board and the others followed him. He went forward into the cockpit and made ready to start the engines.

It was a long, tedious business getting the machine entirely clear, and darkness was closing in by the time the work was nearly complete. At length a line was thrown to the canoe; the natives took their places and towed the aircraft into the clear water of the creek.

The canoe was cast off and was eased alongside, whereupon Sandy climbed up on to the centre section and explained the plan in detail, to make sure that it was understood.

The engines were then started. Ten of the natives were transferred to the Scud to reduce the drag of the canoe, which was then taken in tow. Slowly, with her engines roaring, the aircraft taxied towards the open sea. The ancient war chant of the Marquesans rose into the still air.

Biggles glanced at Sandy and smiled; but he would not have done so if he had known that at that very moment Ginger was just being dragged down to the bottom of the lagoon!

There seems to be no hope of rescue for Ginger. Is he doomed to drown? More thrilling chapters next week.

REVENGE IS SWEET—BUT IT PROVES VERY BITTER FOR SKINNER OF THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE!



CATCHING IT!

"NICEY ole Drake!"

Jack Drake grinned. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese junior at Greyfriars, squirmed into Study No. 3, casting an uneasy glance back into the passage as he came.

He made Drake and Rodney an Oriental bow, and addressed the former in his oiliest tones.

Evidently Wun Lung wanted something.

"Well, what's the game?" inquired Drake.

"Deal ole fellee!" said Wun Lung affectionately. "Me likee you top-side, and likee handsome Lodney velly muchee."

Rodney laughed.

"And what do you want?" he asked. "Leave out the soft sawder and come to the hosses."

"Me wantee stoppee in studee," said Wun Lung. "Me likee heal you talk—you fellee so clevee."

"You can stop in the study if you like," said Drake. "We're going out soon, but stop as long as you like. But why don't you try to tell the truth, you yellow heathen?"

"Me tellee thuth," protested Wun Lung. "Likee healee you talk—you so velly clevee."

"Give his pigtail a jerk, Rodney," said Drake.

Wun Lung jumped back in alarm.

"No touchee pigtail!" he exclaimed. "Me tellee thuth. Me wantee gettee away ffrom Skinner and Stott."

"Oh, have Skinner and Stott been ragging you?" asked Drake. "Why couldn't you say so at first, you saffron image?"

It was not much use asking Wun Lung that question. He had a mind of truly Oriental tortuousness, and never took a straight path if there was a crooked one available. The Remove fellows sometimes wondered whether he really knew the difference between truth and falsehood. Even Billy Bunter was a model of veracity in comparison with Wun Lung. Bob Cherry had re-

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SKINNER'S REVENGE!

By Frank Richards.

marked that the little Chinese beat George Washington at his own game!

"Pool li'l Chinese lun 'way ffrom Skinnee," said Wun Lung pathetically. "Skinnee say cutty off pigtail."

"Only pulling your Chinese leg, you young ass!" said Drake.

"Stott kickee pool li'l Chinese. Aftee me now," said Wun Lung.

"Well, if they come here after you we'll give them a surprise," said Drake.

"My hat! Here they come!" exclaimed Rodney.

Skinner and Stott of the Remove loomed up in the study doorway. They grinned as Wun Lung darted round the table.

"Here's the little beast!" exclaimed Skinner. "Have him out!"

"Hold on!" said Drake.

"Mind your own business, dear boy," answered Skinner. "We're after Wun Lung—"

"And we're jolly well going to rag him!" said Stott warmly. "He stuck a pin into me in class this morning, and Quelch jawed me for yelling."

"Stott stampee on pool li'l Chinese's foot!" said Wun Lung.

"Have him out!" growled Skinner.

The two juniors came into the study, and Jack Drake and Rodney stepped into their way at once.

Whatever the rights and the wrongs of the dispute between Wun Lung and the two black sheep of the Remove, Drake and his chum did not intend to allow the little heathen to be ragged.

Jack Drake pointed to the door.

"Outside!" he said briefly.

"Look here—" blustered Skinner.

"Are you going out on your feet or your neck?" inquired Dick Rodney politely.

"We're not going out!" roared Stott.

"That's your mistake!" said Drake pleasantly.

"You take Stott, Rodney, and I'll take Skinner!"

"Right-ho!"

Study No. 3 advanced to the attack, and Skinner and Stott backed a little. They did not want a scrap with those two hefty youths.

But it was too late to retreat.

Drake grasped Skinner and swung him round towards the door. The next moment Stott was struggling in the grasp of Dick Rodney. Stott was a tougher antagonist than Skinner, and he kept Rodney rather busy. Harold Skinner swung towards the doorway in Drake's strong arms, resisting savagely but vainly.

"Let me go, you rotter!" he yelled.

Drake chuckled.

"You're just going!"

And Skinner went!

With arms and legs flying he shot through the doorway into the Remove passage.

Crash!

There was a terrific collision.

Skinner ought to have landed on the floor, but by sheer ill-luck, Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was coming along the passage just then. The Remove master had heard the uproar in Study No. 3, and hurried his steps to look into that study. It was at the psychological moment, so to speak, that he looked in. He was exactly in time to meet Skinner coming out.

Skinner landed full and fairly upon Mr. Quelch.

There was a startled gasp from the Remove master as he staggered back across the passage.

"Ooooooooooh!"

Skinner rolled at his feet, yelling.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Quelch, staggering against the opposite wall. "What—what—what—"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Drake. "It's Quelchy!"

Rodney and Stott released each other instantly. All three stared in dismay into the passage, where Skinner was rolling on the floor, and Mr. Quelch was leaning against the wall, spluttering.

The Form-master recovered his breath at last.

"Skinner!" he thundered. "Get up immediately! How dare you grovel on the floor in that manner!"

"Ow-wow!" mumbled Skinner.

He scrambled dizzily to his feet.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on him like a gimlet.

"Skinner! You—you hurled yourself into me—you almost knocked me over—you—you—"

"Ow! I didn't!" gasped Skinner. "Drake chucked me out of the study! Ow! I couldn't help myself, sir!"

"Drake, did you hurl Skinner out of the study as I came up?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Drake.

"And what do you mean by it, sir?" thundered the Form-master.

"I—I—"

Mr. Quelch strode into the study, his eyes glittering. His wrath was turned upon Jack Drake now.

"Drake! You—"

"Nicey ole Drake protect pool li'l Chinee!" interjected Wun Lung. "Not whacky pool ole Drake. Skinnee wantee lag li'l Chinee—"

"Shut up!" muttered Drake.

"Silence, Drake!" The little heathen's words had given Mr. Quelch a glimmering of the facts, and he meant to know more. "Wun Lung, you may go on. Skinner came here to rag you, as you call it?"

"Yes, sir," said Wun Lung. "Ugly Skinnee and ugly Stott lag pool li'l Chinee; nicey ole Drake protect him. Drake velly good ole boy."

"What have you to say to this, Skinner?"

"I—I—"

"And you, Stott?"

"I—I—" mumbled Stott.

"I have punished you before for persecuting the Chinese boy," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "You are in need, it seems, of another lesson. I shall do my best to give you one. Follow me to my study!"

Skinner and Stott followed Mr. Quelch as he rustled away. Their faces were like unto those of demons in a pantomime. Wun Lung gave a soft chuckle as they disappeared.

"Ole Quelchy lickes Skinnee now," he remarked. "Li'l Chinee jollee glad. What you tinkee?"

"You shouldn't have given Skinner away to Mr. Quelch," said Drake.

"No savvy!"

"Don't you know you mustn't sneak?" demanded Rodney.

"No savvy!" said Wun Lung innocently.

Evidently the junior from the East did not intend to savvy. He smiled sweetly and ensconced himself in Drake's armchair.

"Me stoppee hele," he said. "You fellee talkee—me likee heal you—you so jolly clevee!"

But as Wun Lung curled up in the chair, and almost immediately went to sleep, he probably did not benefit much from the conversation of the chums of Study No. 3.

SKINNER'S SCHEME!

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

"Yow!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

Skinner and Stott were making those remarks in the window-seat of the lower passage when the Famous Five came along. Harry Wharton & Co. stopped to look at them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Been through it?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ow! Yes."

"What have you been up to, then?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Drake and Rodney came by, in sports coats and grey flannels. They were going out for a bike spin that afternoon.

"Quelchy's walloped them for ragging Wun Lung," said Drake, as he heard the question asked by the captain of the Remove. "Serve them jolly well right!"

Skinner gave him a venomous look.

"I'll make you sorry for it!" he muttered.

Drake laughed.

"Go ahead!" he said. "I'm just going out, but I can spare a couple of minutes to give you a hiding, if you want one."

"Good!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "I'll hold your jacket, Skinner."

"I'll carry you to the mortuary afterwards!" offered Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pile in, my esteemed Skinner," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Skinner scowled savagely and did not answer. Drake and Rodney passed on with smiling faces.

"So that's what you were licked for," said Harry Wharton sternly. "You were worrying that kid again. If Quelchy hadn't licked you for it, Skinner, I'd give you a thumping myself."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Skinner.

The Famous Five walked away, and Skinner and Stott were left to bemoan their injuries.

They were feeling their punishment very keenly. Mr. Quelch had not spared the rod in dealing with them.

For a considerable time the two young rascals rubbed their hands and moaned and groaned in unison.

"I'll make that rotter Drake sit up for this!" groaned Skinner, at last. "Quelchy, too, somehow."

"Better leave the brutes alone!" groaned Stott. "I'm fed-up, for one! Ow! My hands!"

Skinner wrinkled his brows in thought.

He was not of a forgiving nature, and he yearned to retaliate upon both Drake and the Form-master; but neither was a safe object for revengeful schemes. Skinner was a very deep

and cunning youth, but he hated taking risks, and vengeance in this case seemed very risky indeed.

He caught sight of Mr. Quelch in the distance, leaving the School House, and his eyes glittered after the Form-master.

"Quelchy's gone out," he said to Stott.

"Ow! Let's hope he'll get run over by a motor-lorry!" said Stott charitably. "Wow!"

"I've been thinking—"

"Might hunt up that little Chinese beast now," said Stott.

"Never mind Wun Lung now. I expect he'll be hidden away somewhere now his noble protectors have gone out," sneered Skinner. "Never mind him. I'm thinking of Drake and Quelchy."

"Yow-ow! Hang them both!"

"The coast is clear now," said Skinner. "The whole gang are out. We're nearly the only Remove chaps left in the House." He lowered his voice. "We could nip into Quelchy's study now as safe as houses."

"Both Quelchy's study! Catch me going there again!"

"Quelchy's been at work on his typewriter," said Skinner, sinking his voice. "He had it repaired the other week, and new type put into it. New type for a machine costs no end of money. I fancy the job must have run Quelchy into a fever."

"Yow-ow!" said Stott.

"Oh, leave off grunting!" said Skinner testily. "Listen to me—it's a stunt. With a pair of nippers we could extract all the type from Quelchy's machine. What a surprise for him when he starts typing again on his precious fat-headed 'History of Greyfriars,' to find there isn't any type in the machine!"

Stott chuckled feebly.

"Too risky!" he said.

"No risk at all the way I think it out," said Skinner confidently. "We can get all the type out of the machine in a few minutes, and if anybody is lagged for it, it won't be us."

"You ass!" said Stott. "Quelchy would make the very dickens of a fuss about it. He would have every fellow searched to the skin to find his blessed type. Why, there would be a terrific row!"

"I mean him to find the type," said Skinner coolly. "And I mean him to find it in Jack Drake's pocket!"

"Eh?"

Skinner rubbed his hands.

"Just figure it out," he said. "Quelchy as mad as a hatter over the damage to his machine—excitin' search for the missing types—discovery in Drake's pocket—terrific flogging for Drake! Isn't it good?"

"Too jolly good to be true!" answered Stott. "You couldn't work it."

"I'm going to!"

For ten minutes more Harold Skinner pursued the subject, explaining and persuading. By the end of that interval he had brought Stott to his way of thinking. Stott was almost as sore and revengeful as his chum, and he agreed that the risk was small, the way Skinner worked it.

Having arrived at that decision, the two young rascals left the window-seat. Skinner borrowed a pair of small pliers from Bob Cherry's tool-chest, and they proceeded cautiously to Mr. Quelch's study. It was a half-holiday and a fine afternoon, and almost all Greyfriars was out of doors. The two juniors succeeded in slipping into their Form-master's study without attracting notice.

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Skinner closed the door.

"You watch from the window, Stott," he said. "You'll see Quelchy when he comes back from his walk, and we shall have lots of time to clear. Keep a sharp look-out while I work the oracle."

"What-ho!" said Stott.

He placed himself at the window, under cover of the curtains, to watch.

Harold Skinner set rapidly to work.

Mr. Quelch had been using his typewriter earlier in the afternoon, and it stood upon his table, with the cover placed over it.

Skinner removed the cover and produced the pliers from his pocket. Then he started on the task he had set himself. A twist or two of the pliers jerked each type out of the little socket at the end of the type bar.

Skinner did not handle the machine gently. His twists were rough, and one or two of the type-bars cracked, and several were bent. But Skinner did not mind. All the damage was to be put down to the account of Jack Drake, so there was no reason to be very careful.

In a short time the machine was bereft of type, and the latter lay in a little heap on the table.

Skinner wrapped the loose types in a sheet of notepaper, and put the little bundle into his pocket.

"Come on!" he breathed.

They left the study quietly and strolled away.

The first half of Skinner's task was done. The remainder was even more easy.

"How are you going to get at Drake's pocket, though?" asked Stott, as they reached the Remove staircase.

"Easy as falling off a form. You noticed them going out. They were going for a spin, and they'd changed into sports coats and grey flannels. Drake's left his jacket in his study."

"Oh, good!" breathed Stott.

"Come on!"

And the two young rascals, assuming an air of careless detachment, strolled along the Remove passage to Study No. 3.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT!

WUN LUNG sat up.

The little Chinese had remained in Drake's study after the departure of Drake and Rodney, but he did not venture to go to sleep in the armchair again. He was in fear and dread of Skinner and Stott. Mr. Quelch had given the two black sheep a lesson; but Wun Lung was well aware that that lesson would probably only make them all the more revengeful, and now that his protectors were gone he half-expected them to hunt him out.

The sound of footsteps in the passage made him sit upright in the chair, listening like an alarmed cat.

The footsteps were coming along from the stairs.

Wun Lung was aware that Drake and Rodney had gone for a long bicycle spin, so they were not likely to be coming in yet. Most of the other fellows were out of doors. If those footsteps portended the approach of his persecutors, Wun Lung was in for a bad time.

The little Chinese realised that quickly enough, and he curled out of the armchair and scudded across the study to the cupboard.

The upper part of the study cupboard was used chiefly for tuck; but the lower part, which had a separate door, was the receptacle of bats and footballs, and such-like things. There was room, however, for the diminutive Chinese.

In a twinkling Wun Lung was ensconced in the narrow space, and had drawn the little door shut after him.

There he crouched, listening, with beating heart. If the footsteps passed on—
But they did not pass on. They stopped at the study door, and the door opened.

"All serene!"
It was Skinner's voice as he looked into the study.

Wun Lung breathed hard. It was, as he had suspected, Skinner and Stott, though their object, as a matter of fact, was not what he supposed. Skinner was glad to find the study empty.

The little Chinese crouched as still as a mouse when the cat is near. He hardly breathed as he watched from the narrow slit of the cupboard door, which was a half-inch opening.

That slit gave him a partial view of the study. Skinner and Stott came in, and, after a careless glance round, closed the door.

"Buck up!" said Stott. "No joke if those rotters came back and caught us here!"

"It won't take me a minute," answered Skinner. "They've left their jackets here. Which is Drake's?"

Wun Lung's almond eyes dilated. The words astonished him; and he realised now that it was not on his account that Skinner and Stott had come to the study. It was on Jack Drake's account, and evidently a trick of some kind was to be played.

Wun Lung grinned silently. Skinner and Stott fumbled with the jackets Drake and Rodney had left carelessly lying on the table.

"Here's Drake's," said Skinner. "Now, then!"
He took the little packet of types from his pocket and opened it.

"No good putting in a packet," he said. "Drake might notice it. I'll shove them in loose. He'll never notice that—in an inside pocket, too."

"Good!"
"Only a merry search will bring the goods to light," chuckled Skinner; "and that will take place when Quelch misses his types!"

"Good egg!"
Skinner fumbled with the jacket for a few minutes, and then, with a suppressed chuckle, the two schemers quitted the study, closing the door after them.

Wun Lung did not move till their footsteps had died away.

After a safe interval, the little Chinese crept out of the cupboard, and for some moments he doubled up in a silent paroxysm of merriment.

His little yellow face wore a beatific grin as he fumbled in the pocket of Drake's jacket. His hand came out full of types.

With meticulous care, he searched the jacket till every one of the types was in his possession. He twisted them into a packet in a sheet of paper, and the packet disappeared into his loose garments.

"Velly funnee!" murmured Wun Lung. "Ugly Skinnee playee tick on nicey ole Drake! Me chippee in, me tinkee! Oh, yes!"

Wun Lung peered cautiously into the passage. Skinner and Stott had disappeared, and the coast was clear.

The little Chinese quitted the study, still grinning. Evidently the heathen was very much entertained by the turn affairs had taken.

A SHOCK FOR SKINNER!

"UPON my word!"
Mr. Quelch quite jumped. The expression on his face was extraordinary.

The Remove master was in his study. A cheery fire crackled and blazed. The shaded light glimmered on the keys of the typewriter. Mr. Quelch had sat down for an hour's pure enjoyment. How the Form-master could derive any enjoyment from clicking on his typewriter, and adding to the ever-increasing bulk of his celebrated "History of Greyfriars," was a deep mystery to his pupils. But Mr. Quelch did enjoy it. His typewriter was to him what Bob Cherry's own special bat was to Bob.

But the first click on the typewriter this evening was not a click, but a thud. Mr. Quelch turned up the carriage, and stared at the sheet in the machine. There was a dent in it instead of a printed letter.

Under the impression that a type had fallen out—as types sometimes will do in the best regulated typewriters—Mr. Quelch lifted the ribbon and looked into the machine. Then he made the astounding discovery that took his breath away.

"Upon my word! Bless my soul! What wretch—what rascal!"

Words failed Mr. Quelch. Not a type remained on the machine! Those beautiful new types which had cost Mr. Quelch the sum of four pounds five shillings and sixpence only a week before were all gone! Not one of them remained, and the twisted rods showed how roughly they had been wrrenched out.

It was an outrage—an intentional, deliberate outrage! It was the last word in disrespect and in hooliganism! Mr. Quelch's face grew crimson with wrath as he gazed into his machine. The damage was considerable; there was a repairing job for a mechanic, even if the types were recovered.

And were they recoverable? Surely nobody could be rascal enough to throw away types for which the Form-master had paid the considerable sum of four pounds five shillings and sixpence? But even the loss of the types was not so enraging as the outrage itself. Mr. Quelch rose from his table, with a glitter in his eyes that would have made Harold Skinner quake if he had seen it.

He was very calm. When Mr. Quelch was furious, it was with a cold, quiet fury, which is the most dangerous kind.

Often the Removites, when they had exasperated their Form-master, would have preferred to see him "ramp" as Mr. Hacker of the Shell sometimes did. But Mr. Quelch never ramped; but he was much more feared than Mr. Hacker.

He stepped out of his study and glanced along the passage. Wingate of the Sixth was in sight, and the Form-master called to him.

"Wingate!"
The captain of Greyfriars came towards him. "Will you be kind enough to assemble the Remove in their Form-room?" said Mr. Quelch. "An outrage has been perpetrated in my study, and I am anxious to investigate the matter at once."

"Certainly, sir!" said Wingate. He hurried away to the Remove passage. Most of the Remove were at prep just then, and the Greyfriars captain found them in their studies. Little Wun Lung, the Chinese, was

loafing in the passage, and he looked at Wingate with bright, intelligent eyes as he came up. Wingate looked into Study No. 1, and called to Wharton and Nugent.

"Remove to assemble in the Form-room at once! Pass the word along!"

"Hallo! What's up, Wingate?" asked Nugent. "You'll see! Get a move on!"

The word was passed along the Remove passage fast enough, and it caused a good deal of excitement.

Skinner and Stott exchanged a glance when the news was bawled into their study by Bob Cherry. "Now for the merry ordeal!" murmured Skinner.

Stott grinned.

"What on earth's on?" asked Snoop, their studymate.

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know!" he replied. "Quelchy's got some bee in his bonnet, I suppose. We'd better go."

They joined the crowd of Removites pouring towards the stairs. Jack Drake and Dick Rodney came out of Study No. 3, with Ogilvy and Russell. All four were looking surprised.

"Know what this means, anybody?" asked Drake.

"Give it up," answered Harry Wharton. "I suppose Quelchy will tell us."

Bunter's fat face was anxious as he rolled along with the crowd. He had many sins on his fat conscience. But the other fellows were only surprised.

Skinner scowled at Wun Lung as he passed him on the landing. It was the first time he had seen the little Celestial since the scrap in Study No. 3 that afternoon.

Wun Lung grinned at him.

"Ugly ole Skinnee!" he said, with unaccustomed defiance.

"What!" snapped Skinner.

"Ugly facee!" said Wun Lung. "Hollid, ugly ole Skinnee!"

Skinner made a swipe at him with his arm in passing. To his surprise, Wun Lung fastened on him like a cat, and so sudden was the attack that Skinner went rolling over on his back in the passage, with the little Chinese clawing and clutching on top of him.

"Yoop!" roared Skinner. "Why, you little villain! I'll—I'll— Yaroooh! Drag him off!"

"Here, chuck it, and come along!" said Bob Cherry, laughing, as he jerked Wun Lung away from the struggling Skinner.

"Me comee with nicee ole Bob Chelly!" murmured Wun Lung.

And he kept close by Bob Cherry as he went to the Form-room; and Skinner scrambled up breathlessly and followed, promising Wun Lung all sorts of things later.

"Hurry up, there!" called out Wingate from the stairs impatiently. "Mr. Quelch is waiting for you in the Form-room!"

The juniors hurried down and marched into the Remove room. Mr. Quelch was there, stiff as a ramrod, with a set, stern face.

"Boys," he said, "an unparalleled outrage has been committed in my study! The types have been removed from my typewriter, and the machine considerably damaged!"

"Phew!" murmured Drake.

"This outrage has been committed, I fear, by some boy in my Form," said Mr. Quelch. "I can only suppose that it is a mean and miserable revenge for some just punishment. I shall be very pleased if it is proved that no Remove boy was guilty. But it is my duty to examine my own Form first. Is any boy here acquainted with the occurrence?"

There was a dead silence.

There were two present who were well acquainted with the occurrence, but they had no intention of speaking.

"This matter is not an ordinary practical joke," continued Mr. Quelch. "It is a dastardly outrage! Damage to the extent of five pounds has been done—unless the missing types are recovered! It is the duty of all of you to give me any information in your power."

Harry Wharton spoke up.

"I don't think anybody here knows anything about it, sir," he said. "If I knew anything I should certainly tell you."

"May I speak, sir?" said Skinner.

"Yes, Skinner, certainly."

"This matter places the whole Form in a very painful position, sir," said Skinner. "If anything has been stolen, ought there not to be a search, so as to clear innocent fellows?"

"I do not think the types were stolen," said Mr. Quelch. "They are of little value to anyone without a machine. This outrage was perpetrated from a wicked desire for destruction. But the types were taken away from my study—no doubt in the pocket of the perpetrator. He may have them about him still—or one or two that he may have overlooked, if he had thrown them away, as they are such small objects. My intention is to ascertain whether such a clue exists. Every boy present will pass my desk and turn out his pockets."

(Continued on page 36.)

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B. Tapp, Seventh St., Murray Bridge, South Australia; age 13-14; sports, photography and stamps; Canada, China, Siberia, Mozambique, and Nyassa.

K. Freeman, 74, Devereux Street, Warracinaeal, Victoria, Australia; age 13; stamps; British Possessions.

W. Dascot, 17, Phillips Street, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, British West Indies; age 12; stamps, scouting and photography; any part of the world.

Miss L. Lewis, 64, Westerfield Terrace, Semilong Road, Northampton; girl correspondents, age 18-21; interested in all subjects; any part of world; all letters answered.

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SKINNER'S REVENGE!

(Continued from page 34.)

Led by Harry Wharton, the Removites filed past the Form-master's desk.

Each fellow as he came to the desk turned out his pockets, and showed the total of the contents, pulling out the lining to prove that his pockets contained nothing more.

Mr. Quelch's eyes were like gimlets. Nothing was likely to escape them. And Harold Skinner drew a deep, deep breath as Jack Drake came up to the desk.

Drake turned out his pockets carelessly enough. Skinner caught his breath as Drake jerked out the lining of his inside pocket. That action should have scattered a dozen or so types on the floor at his feet.

But it didn't!

Skinner stared, dumbfounded.

What had happened?

If Drake by some chance had discovered the types hidden in his inside pocket, surely something would have been said about such a strange discovery. That was certain. And if he had not discovered them, they must be still there. Yet they were not there!

Skinner felt quite dazed.

He was still in a state of great mental confusion when his own turn came, and he stepped up to the desk. His hand went into his pocket—and then he started. His hand did not come out; but a strange pallor overspread his startled face.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on him instantly—more like a gimlet than ever.

"Turn out your pocket, Skinner!"

Skinner's hand came out limply—and empty.

"There—there's nothing there—" he stammered.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Remove whatever it is Skinner has hidden in his pocket!"

Wharton turned the wretched junior's pocket inside out. He laid a little paper packet on the desk. Mr. Quelch opened it.

"The missing types!" he said, with a terrible look at Skinner.

Skinner's jaw dropped.

He had felt them in his pocket, in amazement and consternation, almost fainting with the horror of the discovery. But even now that he saw them he could scarcely believe his eyes. Was his mind wandering? He knew—Stott knew—that he had placed those types in Drake's pocket. And here they were in his own—proof of his guilt that could not be mistaken.

"So it was you, Skinner!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice. "This was your contemptible revenge for the caning I was forced to administer to you this afternoon! I shall not cane you for this, Skinner." The wretched schemer's face

brightened for a moment. "I shall take you to Dr. Locke, and request him to administer a severe flogging!"

"I—I—" Skinner licked his dry lips. "I—I—I meant no harm, sir, only—only—" "Come!"

Mr. Quelch's hand dropped on Skinner's shoulder in a grip of iron, and the young rascal was led from the Form-room.

WUN LUNG EXPLAINS.

"JEVER hear of such a silly owl?" said Jack Drake, in Study No. 3, ten minutes later.

"Wrecking Quelch's typer, and then taking the giddy types around in his pocket! Might have known Quelch would make a search!"

"He suggested it!" said Rodney, in wonder. "You heard him? Just as if he wanted to be found out!"

"Beats me hollow!" said Ogilvy.

The study door opened, and Wun Lung glided in, with an expansive grin on his yellow face.

"Skinner catchee it!" he remarked. "Headee lay in with cane—me heal Skinner how! What you tinkee?"

And he chuckled.

"Nicey ole Drake nearly get flogging," added Wun Lung. "Me savee you! Oh, yes!"

"What the dickens are you burbling about?" demanded Drake, in amazement.

"Me hidee in studee when Skinner comee in here," explained Wun Lung, with a gurgle of enjoyment. "Me watchee Skinner hidee typee in your pocket!"

"What?" yelled Drake.

"Skinner hid the types in Drake's pocket!" gasped Rodney.

Wun Lung nodded.

"Me take outee Drake's pockee," he said. "Me keepee. Li'l while ago me callee Skinner naames, he punchee, me jumpee on Skinner, he loll over, me loll over him—"

"I saw you," said Drake. "But—"

"Loll on Skinner and puttee typee in Skinner pockee," said Wun Lung coolly. "Him goey in Form-loom, tinkee still in Drake's pockee; but in Skinner pockee allee tinnee, and Skinner not know!"

And Wun Lung fairly doubled up in a paroxysm of mirth.

The juniors stared at him blankly.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Drake at last. "Wun Lung, you grinning young rascal, I'm no end obliged to you! My hat! But for you—"

"Me lookee aftel nicey ole Drake!" grinned Wun Lung. "Wun Lung, velly nicey li'l chap! Velly clevee li'l lascal! What you tinkee?"

And Study No. 3 agreed that he was.

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