

Towser's Narrow Escape

by Martin Clifford

*A Complete Story of the
Boys of St. Jim's*



framework enclosing a series of box-like compartments. And from the sides of this protruded three tiers of queer-shaped wings, covered with a vivid-patterned wallpaper, patched here and there with bits of newspaper.

"I give it up," remarked Monty Lowther, in answer to Tom Merry's question. "It's either a new device for scaring crows or an aeroplane designed and built by an inmate of Colney Hatch. We'd better investigate this, chaps."

And Monty Lowther led the way towards the little crowd surrounding the queer contrivance.

"Hallo! Just what I guessed!" chuckled Lowther, as the three pushed their way through the group. "It's another of Skimmy's giddy inventions. Cheerio, Skimmy! What is it this time? A giant

mouse-trap, or a patent bird-catcher?"

Herbert Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, who was busy winding thick cord on a small winch-like arrangement, turned an earnest and enthusiastic face to Tom Merry & Co.

"It is neither, my dear Lowther," he replied, with a glance of conscious pride at his invention. "It is a new type of flying machine."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"In its present state of construction, of course," pursued Skimpole, seeming oblivious of the chorus of chuckles, "it merely embraces



THE FIRST CHAPTER

Skimpole's Latest

"WHAT on earth is that box-of-tricks?" gasped Tom Merry, in astonishment.

The Terrible Three were crossing the quad on their way indoors from cricket practice when Tom Merry stopped short and pointed towards the wood-shed, where a grinning crowd of fellows were congregated round a—well, it would be hard to classify what the weird and wonderful contraption really was. It stood about six feet high, and appeared to consist mainly of a long bamboo

the simple properties of an ultra-powerful man-lifting kite. Before adding the motive power, however, it is necessary to test the lifting capacity of the—er—planes. That, my dear fellows, I am about to do. I am exceedingly gratified, my dear Merry, that you have arrived so opportunely. You will be willing to help, I am sure——”

“Like a shot, Skimmy!” smiled Tom Merry, good-naturedly. “What do you want me to do? Wind the thingummyjig up?”

“No; I will attend to that. I merely desire you to seat yourself in this,” beamed Skimmy, indicating a flimsy trapeze suspended from the body of his invention. “Unless the cord breaks, it will be quite safe, I assure you. When you have ascended to a thousand feet——”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Eh, what? Half a mo’, Skimmy!” said Tom Merry, hastily. “If it means going up in that blessed thing, then my help’s off—decidedly off!”

“But, my dear fellow! In the name of science——”

“Science be blowed!”

“But reflect upon the high honour of being the first——”

“A broken neck is too dear a price to pay, Skimmy, my dear ass. Why not test the thing yourself——”

“Ahem! Allow me to offer you the opportunity, Lowther——”

“Nothing doing, Skimmy,” said Lowther, gravely. “But I’ll remember your kind offer when I contemplate suicide, old fellow.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Manners, my dear fellow——”

“Rats!”

“Dear me!”

Skimpole sighed deeply, and blinked round appealingly, through his big glasses. But there were no takers—only grins. There was really very little chance of Skimpole’s flying-machine flying—his inventions never did work. And none of the grinning juniors seemed willing to take the risk of this one being a success. It was really most disheartening to the St. Jim’s inventor.

“Really, my dear Merry,” he began again, earnestly. “Pray reconsider——”

But Tom Merry & Co. did not stay to reconsider the matter. They walked away chortling. In the schoolhouse doorway they ran into Blake, Herries, Digby and D’Arcy of the Fourth, who were gathered round a large hamper standing in the Hall.

“My hat!” exclaimed Tom Merry. “That’s a whacking great hamper, Blake!”

“If it contains tuck, then we’re your friends for life,” said Lowther. “Who d——”

“Shush!”

The stealthy warning came from George Herries, who was kneeling by the hamper, putting the finishing touches to the rope that bound it.

“Shurrup, you silly asses!” he breathed. “He’s asleep.”

“Eh! Who’s asleep?” ejaculated Tom Merry.

“Towser, of course! He’s had a jolly good feed, and I want him to sleep all through the journey, if possible—he doesn’t like hampers,” explained Herries, rising to his feet. “And now about a label——”

“But—but is Towser in that hamper, Herries?” gasped Tom Merry. “Surely you’re not going to sell the beggar, Herries?”

“You—you dummy!” snorted Herries. “Of course not! I’m sending him to the show at Wayland, you—you ass! He’s going to bag the first prize for pure-bred bull-dogs, let me tell you. But we’re wasting time. I suppose you haven’t a tie-on label you can spare me, Merry?”

“Dare say we can find you one, if you’ll come up to No. 10,” grinned Tom Merry.

“Oh, good! I’ll leave you chaps to look after Towser, Blake, old man. And mind,” added Herries warningly, “you don’t wake the poor old chap.”

And Herries hurried away after the Terrible Three to get the promised label.

Blake, Digby and Arthur Augustus D’Arcy groaned wearily when he had departed. They had spent the best part of a sunny half-day helping to prepare Towser for the dog show, and all three were feeling “fed” with Herries and his beloved pet.

“I’ll be thumped if I’m going to waste any more time over that blessed animal!”



The crowd watched in agonised suspense, expecting every second to see the ivy break away in the plucky junior's grasp. (See page 48)

snorted Blake. "Let's go and get tea, and blow Towser and all his works!"

"Yass wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "I cannot say I dislike old Towser—though he has absolutely no wegard whatever for a fellah's twousers. But weally, Hewwies expects too much of his fwiends, bai jove! That hampah will be safe enough heah. Come along, deah boys."

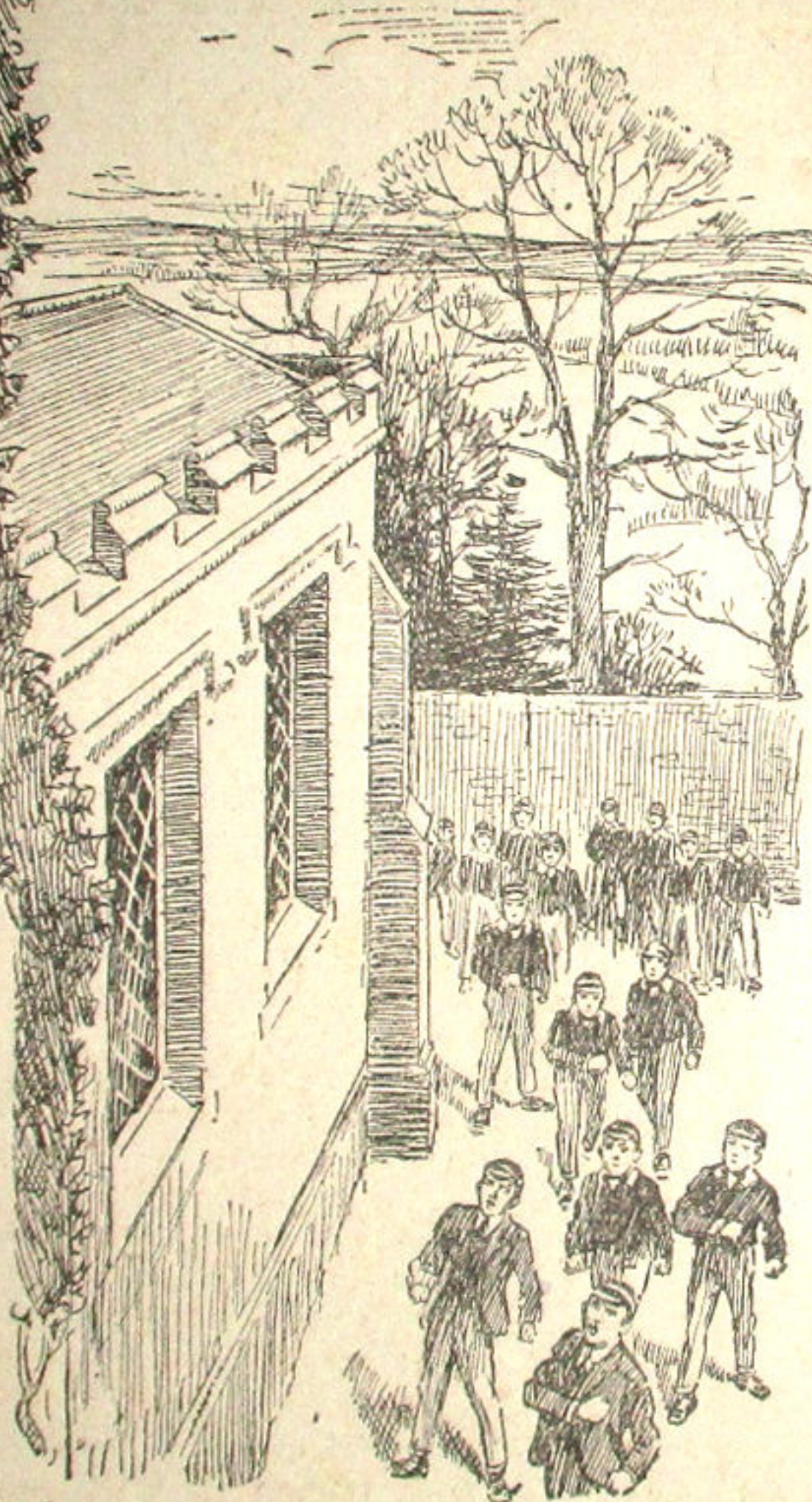
And the three Fourth Formers departed,

leaving the hamper containing the sleeping Towser to take care of itself.

But, as it happened, Towser was by no means "safe enough heah." Barely had Blake & Co. gone when three juniors entered the Schoolhouse. They were Racke, Crooke, and Mellish—three shady juniors who were always ready to harm anyone or anything.

"My hat!" exclaimed Racke, spotting the hamper. "That's a stunnin' hamper, by gad! Whom does it belong to, I wonder?"

Crooke stooped and peered between the interstices of the basket-work.



"It's that dashed bulldog of Herries'," he grunted. "He's fast asleep, too, the lazy brute. I say, there's nobody about. Let's roll the beast down the steps, Racke."

"Toppin' wheeze, Crookey," grinned Racke. "He'll think it's an earthquake. Yank hold."

He gripped one handle of the hamper and Crooke was about to grasp the other when Herbert Skimpole came ambling up the Schoolhouse steps. There was a decidedly dispirited expression on the inventor's brainy features, and Racke & Co., who had been amongst the crowd in the quad, chuckled as they saw it.

"Ah, my dear fellows," he began, eyeing Racke & Co. somewhat doubtfully, "I wonder if I can prevail upon one of——"

"Oh, buzz off, you tame lunatic!" said Crooke with a sneer. "If you jolly well think we're fools enough to play with your potty toys——"

"Half a mo'!" said Racke quickly. "I suppose you haven't persuaded anyone yet to test your invention, Skimmy?"

"Unfortunately, no," replied Skimpole sadly. "But I——"

"And you won't, I'm afraid," observed Racke gravely. "But if I might make a suggestion, why rely upon anybody when your object can be attained by tying a heavy weight—say that hamper of rubbish there, on to the trapeze—eh, what?"

Skimpole looked from Racke to the hamper, then he placed a bony finger to his bulging forehead reflectively.

"Ah, h'm, yes! Your argument is certainly logical, Racke, my dear fellow," he observed somewhat doubtfully. "An inanimate object would undoubtedly serve my purpose equally well. It would also be much—ahem!—safer. But are you sure that hamper only contains rubbish?"

"Certainly; we were just carrying it out to chuck away," said Racke glibly. "Catch hold, old sport—carefully, though."

"But—er—ahem! Very well!"

As Racke gripped a handle of the hamper, Skimpole, still a little doubtful, grabbed the other, and a moment later all four were ambling across the quad towards the wood-

shed. And with them went poor old Towser—a burnt offering, as it were on the altar of Skimpole's genius.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Towser's Peril

MEANWHILE, Towser's master, George Herries, had arrived at No. 10 study with Tom Merry & Co. But, unfortunately, Tom Merry's assurance to find a label did not materialise. For about ten minutes Herries waited impatiently whilst the three Shell fellows searched drawers and cupboards, and at last Tom Merry gave it up.

"Sorry, old chap," he murmured apologetically. "I'm jolly certain, though, we had some somewhere, but they've gone."

"Well, you silly asses!" growled Herries ungratefully. "Making me wait all this time for nothing. B-r-r-rr!"

And George Herries was about to retire wrathfully when through the open window sounded a loud and decidedly ironical cheer.

"Hallo! What's up?" said Tom Merry, stepping to the window. "Well, my hat! Ha, ha, ha! It's Skimmy's flying machine——"

"And actually flying," chortled Manners. "The only giddy invention of Skimmy's that ever worked. Look at it wobbling! Oh, crumbs!"

Manners broke off with a gasp of alarm, echoed a second later by Lowther and Merry. Out above the quad was Skimpole's wonderful flying machine, and, more wonderful still, it was, without a doubt, steadily rising in the air. But they were not alarmed at that, but at the sight of a large hamper swaying gently like the basket car of a balloon beneath the body of the queer-looking machine.

"Towser!" shouted Tom Merry. "What the dickens——"

At Tom Merry's startled shout, Herries jumped to the window and looked out into the quad. Then he gave a howl of horrified dismay and wrath.

"Towser!" he almost shrieked. "It's poor old Towser! Oh, that fool Skimmy! I'll—I'll——"

And Herries dashed from the study and clattered down the stairs like a madman.

"After him—there'll be trouble!" snapped

Tom Merry sharply. "What on earth is that idiot Skimpmy thinking about?"

Followed by his equally alarmed chums, Tom Merry dashed hot-foot after Herries. Out in the quad the ironical cheers and howls of laughter ceased abruptly as George Herries dashed amongst them, horror in his heart and fury in his eyes.

"Skimpole, you mad fool, bring him down again!" he shouted frantically. "Oh, you—you——"

Herbert Skimpole backed hastily, and blinked in astonishment at the wild-looking Herries.

"My dear, dear Herries," he gasped. "Wha—what, pray, is the——"

He was interrupted by a shout from the fellows watching the progress of the weird-looking "flying machine" as a sudden gust of wind caught the thing and it ducked and "stunted" in an alarming manner. Then came a crash as it nose-dived and jammed itself in a confused mass of splintered bamboo and torn wallpaper on an ancient chimney of the Schoolhouse tower.

And a second later came a muffled yelping as the hamper containing the unfortunate Towser swung with a dull thud against the ivy-clad wall of the old tower. Evidently that concussion had awakened Herries' fat and lazy pet, not only from his slumbers, but to the fact that something was seriously amiss.

As yet he stood in little danger—so long as the cord held; for Skimpole's unlucky invention was jammed too securely on the chimney-pot to be shifted by anything short of a hurricane. But Towser's terrified yelps were enough for Herries.

Before anyone could raise a hand to stop him, Towser's master had dashed to the foot of the old tower, and was climbing swiftly and recklessly up the thick and twisted ivy.

"Come back, Herries, you idiot!" shouted Tom Merry in alarm.

Herries went on climbing doggedly, hand over hand. Then came a shout, and Kildare and Darrel of the Sixth rushed up.

"Herries, you young fool, come down!" shouted Kildare angrily. "Stop!"

But Herries would not have obeyed even the Head just then. He would have cheerfully

given his life for his beloved pet, and Kildare knew it.

In tense silence the horrified crowd watched in agonised suspense, expecting every second to see the ivy break away in the plucky junior's grasp. But the old gnarled roots were thick and tough, and happily they held.

Foot by foot the junior climbed steadily until he reached the hamper swinging sixty feet above the ground. Clinging with one hand to the ivy he reached out and grasped the hamper. Then, as if he realised the hopelessness of doing anything that way, he drew back and began to climb higher to the parapet a few feet above his head.

Then came the tense moment to the watchers below. The parapet jutted outwards dangerously, and it seemed impossible for the reckless junior to accomplish the task. But Herries did not attempt it—not there. Clinging desperately to the ivy tendrils he moved slowly sideways to where the broad top of a square drainpipe broke the evenness of the parapet.

Even there the task was highly dangerous. But George Herries was not troubled with nerves. And in dead silence, save for the yelping of the imprisoned Towser, he hauled himself up with the help of the pipe and vanished over the parapet. He reappeared a moment later over the spot where the hamper swung in mid-air, and leaning over, grasped the cord and prepared to haul.

"Wait!" shouted Kildare from below. "Wait—we'll be up there in a moment, Herries!"

Followed by his chum, Darrel, the captain of St. Jim's disappeared through the doorway of the tower. Several breathless seconds passed; then the figures of the two seniors appeared on the roof of the tower alongside Herries. Fortunately, Herries had had the good sense not to attempt to haul the heavy hamper up single-handed, and the rest was easy.

Inch by inch the hamper was raised, and when it topped the parapet, Kildare and Darrel grasped a handle each and dragged it into safety.

And then the tension of the past few minutes broke, and a wild cheer rose from the

watchers in the quad below. And a still greater cheer rang out as Herries, with his beloved bulldog in his arms, emerged from the doorway of the old tower a minute or two later

"You—you old ass!" said Blake, in a husky whisper. "You—you might have been killed, Herries!"

Herries did not reply. He strode over to where the unhappy Skimpole was standing, whitefaced and shivering.

"Now, Skimpole," he ground out harshly, "what do you mean by that—that dirty trick? If you weren't a born idiot, I'd—I'd——"

"Steady on, Herries," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't believe Skimmy had any idea Towser was in the hamper."

"Really, I—I—I most emphatically assure you that I did not," gasped the unhappy inventor feebly. "Racke assured me that the hamper merely contained rubbish, and I——"

"Oh!" Herries turned and looked at Racke & Co., who were now wishing they had made themselves scarce.

"Is that true, Racke?" asked Herries furiously.

Aubrey Racke glanced uneasily at the angry faces hemming him in.

"I—I never—that is, I never thought that thing would really fly," he stammered, licking his dry lips. "It—it was only a joke."

Herries' eyes blazed, and he seemed about to hurl himself—Towser and all—at Racke. But Jack Blake was before him.

"Then perhaps this," he snapped, shooting out his fist, "will make you see the point of the joke, you rotter!"

The blow was straight from the shoulder, and it sent the rascally schemer with a crash to earth.

"Here, stop that!" snapped Kildare, striding up. Then, without a second glance at the prostrate and howling Racke, he turned to Herries. "Herries, you young ass, you may think yourself jolly lucky you're safe and sound. It was a mad thing to do. But all the same, it was jolly plucky, and—and I'm glad old Towser's safe. Now clear away, the lot of you."

Glad enough to get away, Racke & Co scuttled across the quad.

"Never mind; it can wait," said Herries, through his teeth. "I'll settle with those cads later."

"And we'll help you," said Tom Merry grimly.

"Yass, wathah, bai jove!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

And they did. After tea that evening Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. visited Aubrey Racke's study in a body, and Messrs. Racke, Crooke and Mellish had good cause to regret, from the bottom of their hearts, being the cause of Towser's Narrow Escape!

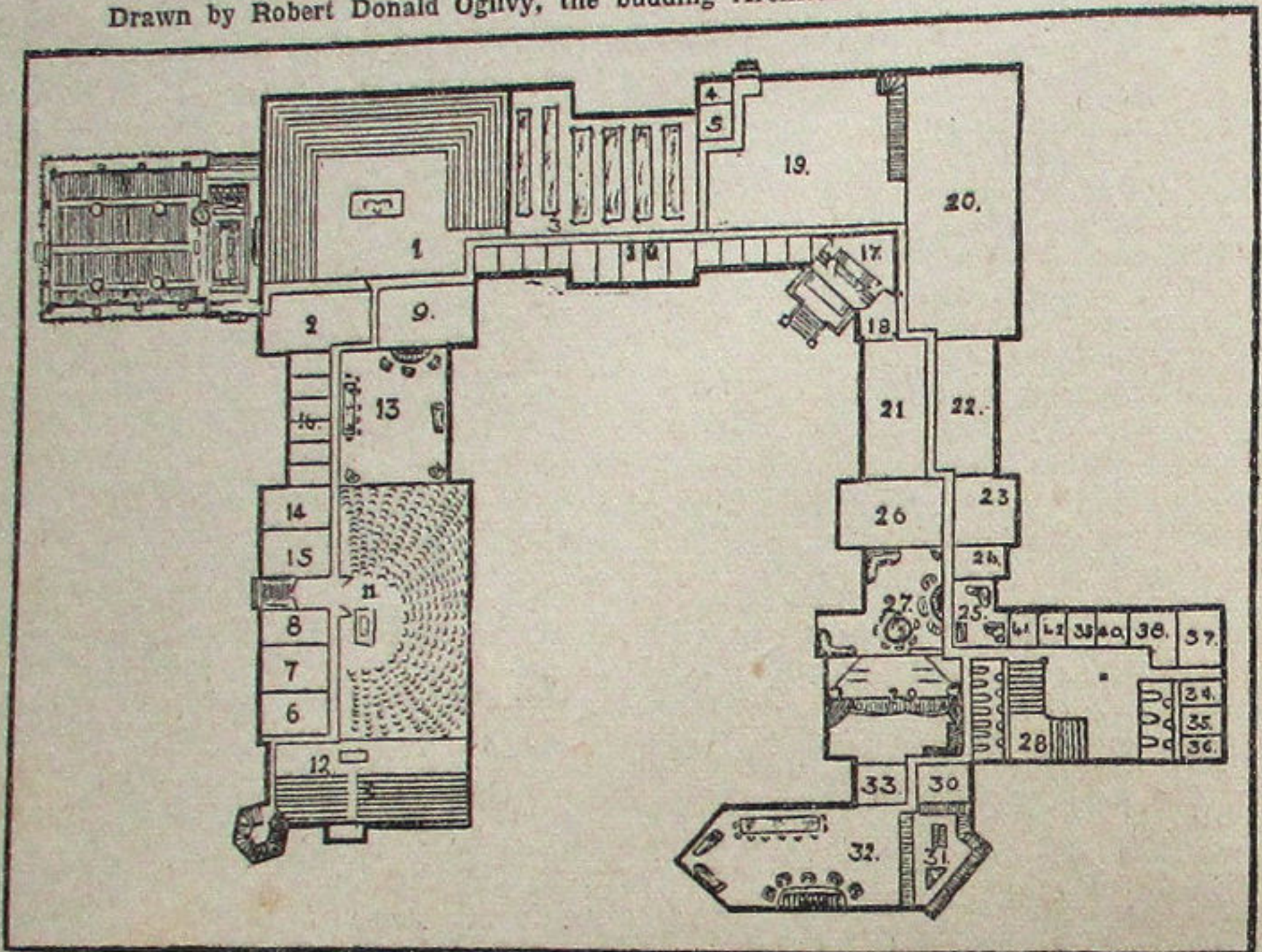
THE



END

GROUND-FLOOR PLAN OF GREY-FRIARS SCHOOL

Drawn by Robert Donald Ogilvy, the budding Architect of the Remove Form



- No. 1.—Big Hall (to left, School Chapel).
- No. 2.—Prefects' Room.
- No. 3.—Dining-hall.
- No. 4.—Coalcellar.
- No. 5.—Larder.
- No. 6.—The Head's Study.
- No. 7.—Governors' Room.
- No. 8.—Masters' Room.
- No. 9.—Senior Lab.
- No. 10.—Sixth Form Studies.
- No. 11.—Assembly Hall.
- No. 12.—Shell Form Class-room.
- No. 13.—Senior Common-room.
- No. 14.—Shell Laboratory.
- No. 15.—Senior Workshop.
- No. 16.—Guests' Rooms.
- No. 17.—Lobby.
- No. 18.—Waiting-room.
- No. 19.—Kitchen.
- No. 20.—The "Rag."
- No. 21.—Art Museum.
- No. 22.—Natural History Museum.
- No. 23.—Tuck-shop.

- No. 24.—Junior Lab.
- No. 25.—Music-room.
- No. 26.—Reception-room.
- No. 27.—Masters' Common-room.
- No. 28.—Remove Staircase.
- No. 29.—Remove Rehearsal Room.
- No. 30.—Drawing Studio.
- No. 31.—Library.
- No. 32.—Junior Common-room.
- No. 33.—Electrician's Room.
- No. 34.—German Master's Study.
- No. 35.—Maths. Master's Study.
- No. 36.—French Master's Study.
- No. 37.—Fags' Laboratory.
- No. 38.—Science Room.
- No. 39.—Boxroom.
- No. 40.—Fire-apparatus Room.
- No. 41.—Hot-water Room.
- No. 42.—Photography Dark Room.

NOTE.—The top floor at Greyfriars comprises mainly eight large dormitories, the punishment-room, and a number of box-rooms.